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THE DEATH-SUN AND THE MISIDENTIFIED BIRD-BARGE: A REAPPRAISAL OF BRONZE AGE SOLAR ICONOGRAPHY AND INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY¹

DUŠAN VALENT – PAVOL JELÍNEK – IVAN LÁBAJ

Keywords: Europe, Carpathian Basin, Bronze Age, solar cult, iconography, Indo-European comparative mythology.

Abstract: *The Death-Sun and the Misidentified Bird-Barge: A Reappraisal of Bronze Age Solar Iconography and Indo-European Mythology.* Archeological evidence suggests that there was a strong, widespread and long-lasting close association of the Sun with death in Central Europe and its neighboring regions during the Bronze Age. We interpret it based on etymological, phraseological, motivic, and narrative correspondences of Indo-European traditions that point towards an ancient Indo-European belief about the souls of the blessed dead “going to the Sun”, most likely to an island in the sea which the Sun deity visits during the night. In contrast to ancient Near-Eastern and Egyptian beliefs, this Indo-European Sun deity did not descend into a subterranean realm of the dead and was not associated with rebirth. Based on iconographic and other archaeological evidence, we conclude that there was a belief in a solar deity envisioned in an anthropomorphic feminine form with a Sun (symbol) on the lower part of her abdomen during the Bronze Age in Central and Northern Europe. She was the central character of an important mythic narrative about the diurnal voyage of the Sun, along with its helpers and foes, that has been concurrently reconstructed using material culture or comparative mythology. In Central Europe, this solar cycle has been linked to portrayals of pairs of bird protomes connected to a Sun symbol, interpreted as (Sun-)bird-barges. However, this interpretation was based on a superficial resemblance and does not take into account the cultural and artistic context. Accounting for artistic conventions of the Urnfield culture, we propose that the supposed (Sun-)bird-barges actually often represent pairs of birds directly pulling the Sun, similar to Scandinavian depictions of the Sun pulled directly by a horse (or several horses). Therefore, these depictions portray the day part of the solar cycle and not the nocturnal sailing in the waters of the Netherworld.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the Bronze Age society, architecture, and material culture in Central Europe and especially the Carpathian Basin has long been explained as the result of strong Eastern Mediterranean influences (Bouzek 1985; Furmánek/Veljačík/Vladár 1991, 331; Podborský 2006, 224). However, recent studies tend to reject this view in favor of a largely autonomous, internal development (e.g. Alusik 2012; Dietrich/Dietrich 2011; Fischl 2012, 47; Šalkovský 1980).

The abundance of solar symbolism of the European Bronze Age (c. 2300–800/750 BC), especially in its latter half, found on prestigious metalwork and grave pottery, has led archeologists to assume the existence of a belief in an important Sun deity (Kristiansen 2013, 83), a central, Sun-related cos-

mological “mythical narration” (Kaul 1998; 2018; Wirth 2010), or even some kind of proto-monotheism centered around the Sun (Paulík 1993). As in the case of other aspects of Central European Bronze Age religion (Podborský 2006, 229), the solar cult and iconography were mostly interpreted through the lens of Eastern Mediterranean, and even ancient Egyptian religions (e.g. Bouzek 1977; 2000; Furmánek 1997; Greene 1991, 18; Hänsel 2000; Klontza-Jaklová 2018; Müller-Karpe 2001; Panchenko 2012, 13; Wirth 2010, 8).

This approach to Bronze Age religion was influenced by the notable study of Northern European Bronze Age symbolism by E. Sprockhoff (1954). In this conscientious and thorough analysis, the author discussed the classification and origin of religious symbols while also attempted to discern their meaning, all in line with the culture-historical

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paradigm. In his point of view (*Sprockhoff 1954*, 65), the Carpathian Basin was a Late Bronze Age cultural center influencing the religion of Northern Europe and the Aegean, as well as other regions. The religious parallels were to be preserved in Greek mythology to such an extent that it enabled to interpret the Central European and especially Nordic symbolism of the Late Bronze Age – such as the depictions of the Sun chariot, the Sun barge, the Divine Twins, a “tree-like” symbol, a fish and a snake (*Sprockhoff 1954*, 103). Sprockhoff considered the apparent differences, e.g. the absence of fish depictions in Central Europe, as artifacts of the state of research in the Carpathian Basin. In his conception, the most common Nordic depictions were of foreign, Carpathian origin. He did not recognize the autochthony of at least some of the symbols, nor the similarities possibly resulting from common Indo-European heritage.

In contrast to past research of Central European Bronze Age religion, recent studies have advocated a mostly autonomous development, based on Indo-European heritage (*Jelínek/Valent 2019*; *Valent/Jelínek 2020*), in line with contemporary studies of Nordic Bronze Age religion (e.g. *Kaliff 2007*; *Kristiansen 2010*; *2013*; *Kristiansen/Larsson 2005*). In this work, we would like to elaborate on our previous, rather preliminary studies (*Jelínek/Valent 2019*; *Valent/Jelínek 2020*) and pay closer attention to selected aspects of the Bronze Age solar cult of Central Europe and its neighboring areas, with special attention to archaeological finds of the Carpathian Basin.

2. METHODS

We review both archaeological and philological evidence and if possible, do so separately so that a possible concordance of results would strengthen the reliability of our conclusions.

Our archeological analysis is focused on finds associated with the solar cult: we attempt a deconstructive critique of past interpretations and a reinterpretation. At the same time, we try to find iconographic links between different types of solar images. We concentrate on finds of the Urnfield culture and the closely connected Nordic Bronze Age culture, with special attention

given to material from the Carpathian Basin. The Central European Late Bronze Age (BD–HB2/3) communities were part of a larger set of related cultures and genetically related populations (for a review see e.g. *Reich 2018*). Therefore, when dealing with basic concepts of solar symbolism and solar cult, we also seek a geographically and chronologically larger picture.

In our philological analysis, we narrow our focus down to religious traditions that are the most relevant for Central Europe in the Bronze Age. To do so, we use Indo-European comparative mythology instead of, as is often the case, classical Greek mythology (e.g. *Bouzek 2000*; *Varberg 2015*, 6). Classical Greek mythology, as a whole, is not a well-suited base of inferences about the religion of prehistoric Central Europe because it was greatly influenced by the myths of the ancient Near East (*Mallory/Adams 2006*, 426; *Puhvel 1987*, 126nn; *West 1997*), which suppressed or obscured much of its Indo-European heritage. In contrast, Indo-European comparative mythology enables us to identify numerous inherited strands of tradition in Greek, as well as Vedic, Baltic and other Indo-European mythologies (*Calin 2021*; *West 2007*).

Comparative Indo-European mythology is the comparison of religious traditions among linguistically related (Indo-European) peoples. The presence of languages that share a common descent indicates the possible presence of other traditions that evolved from a common archetype – in our case, religious traditions. These can be identified, for example, on the basis of phraseological and etymological analysis, the critical evaluation of properties, functions, associations and epithets of deities, as well as structural parallels of narratives (for a more detailed discussion of methodology see *Hultgård 2017*; *West 2007*, 19–24). Using this approach, we can reconstruct ancient Indo-European, and even probable Proto-Indo-European myths, rituals and deities.

The relevance of ancient Indo-European traditions for a Central European prehistorian is substantiated by the wide and robust consensus of historical linguists, archaeogeneticists and archeologists, that the expansion of late Proto-Indo-Europeans out of Eastern European steppes

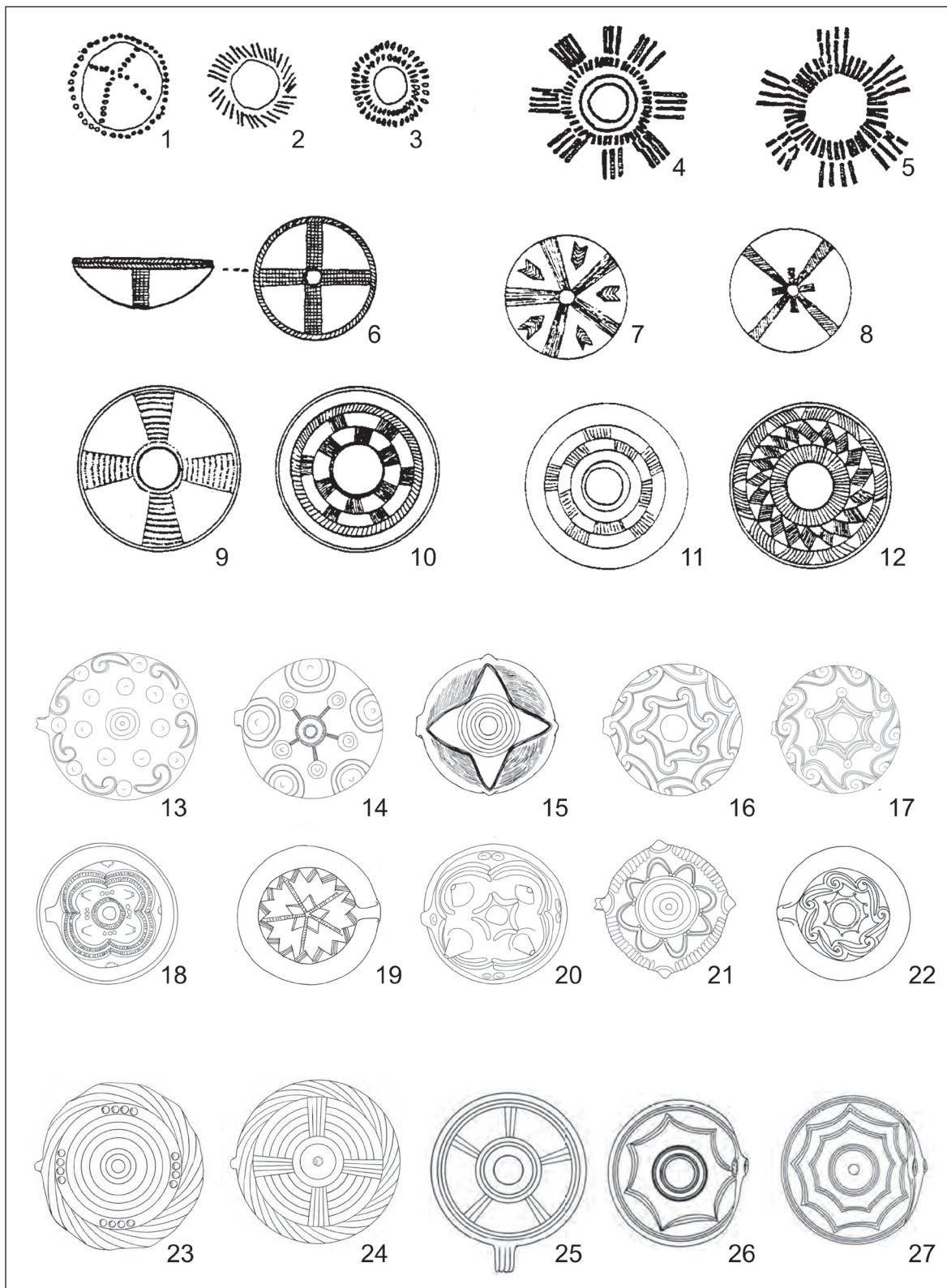


Fig. 1. Examples of solar decoration on Late Eneolithic and Bronze Age pottery. 1–12 – Fatyanovo culture (after Gimbutas 1965), 13–22 – bowls of Ottomány culture from the burial ground in Nižná Myšľa (after Olexa/Nováček 2013; 2015; 2017), 23–27 – pottery of Urnfield culture from Bohemia (after Jiráň ed. 2008). Different scales.

Obr. 1. Príklady solárnej výzdoby keramiky z neskorého eneolitu a doby bronzovej. 1–12 – fatjanovská kultúra (podľa Gimbutas 1965), 13–22 – misy otomanskej kultúry z pohrebiska v Nižnej Myšli (podľa Olexa/Nováček 2013; 2015; 2017), 23–27 – keramika kultúr popolnicových polí z Čiech (podľa Jiráň ed. 2008). Rôzne mierky.

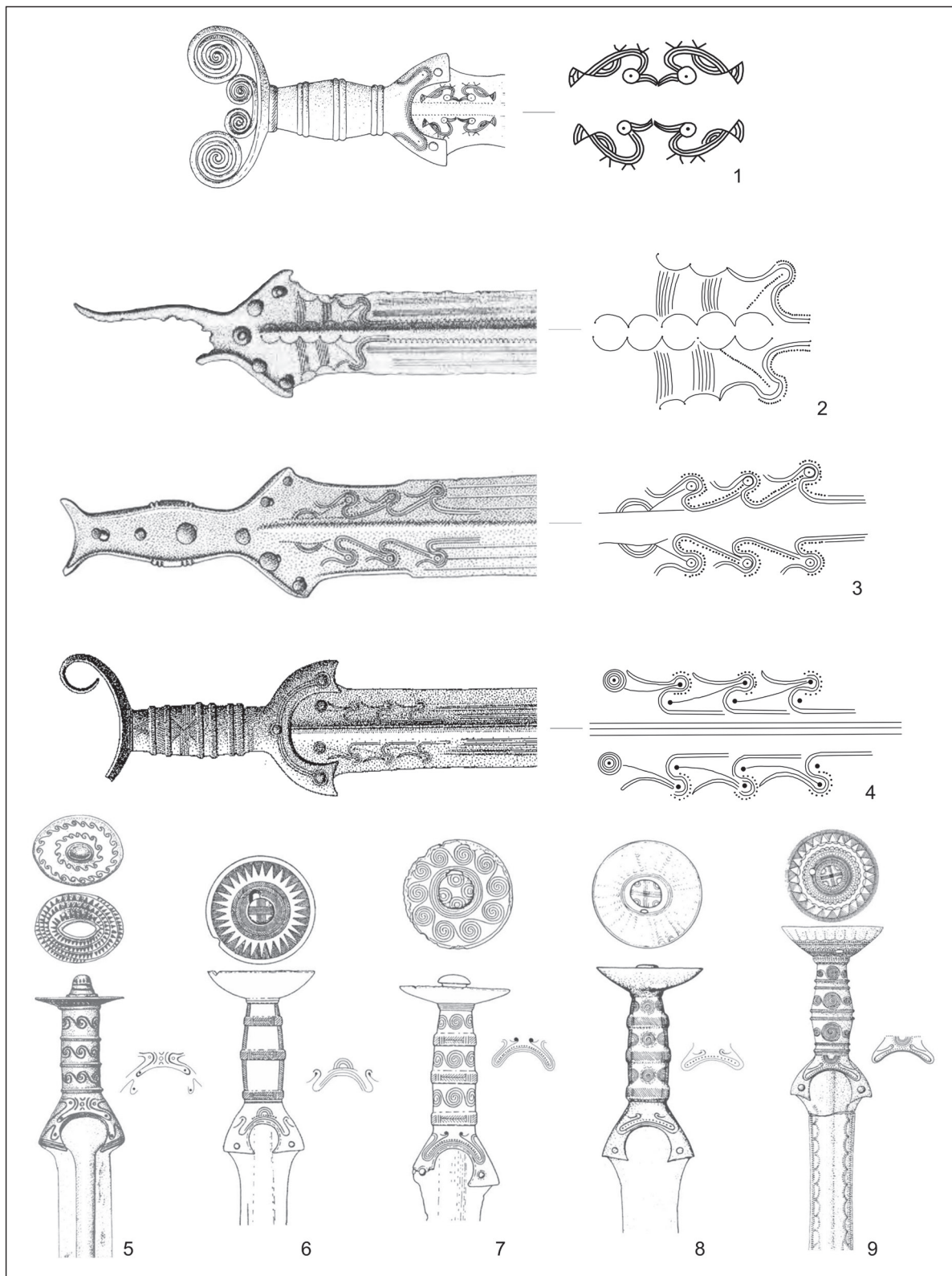


Fig. 2. Solar and ornithomorphic decoration on Central European Bronze Age swords. 1 – Bothenheiligen (after *Kaiser 2014*), 2, 3 – Podgorjany (after *Kemenczei 1988*), Șimleu Silvaniei (after *Bader 1991*), 5 – Prague, 6 – Derecske, 7 – Oradea, 8 – Szentés-Kaján, 9 – Pergine (after *Ilon 2015*). Different scales.

Obr. 2. Solárna a ornitomorfná výzdoba mečov doby bronzovej v strednej Európe. 1 – Bothenheiligen (podľa *Kaiser 2014*), 2, 3 – Podgorjany (podľa *Kemenczei 1988*), Șimleu Silvaniei (podľa *Bader 1991*), 5 – Prague, 6 – Derecske, 7 – Oradea, 8 – Szentés-Kaján, 9 – Pergine (podľa *Ilon 2015*). Rôzne mierky.

into other parts of Europe took place during the 3rd millennium BC (e.g. *Anthony 2007; 2017; Chang et al. 2015; Kortland 2018; Olander 2019; Reich 2018*). Therefore, we can assume that the religious beliefs of populations living in Central Europe a millennium later were generally close to the Proto-Indo-European religion that can be reconstructed using the comparative method. This assumption is supported by the fact that Rigveda, composed during the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, preserves an extraordinary quantity of Proto-Indo-European traditions (*Kazanas 2001*), as well as by the fact that Rigveda is proving to be more useful for inferences about the religion of the Nordic Bronze Age than the mythology of classical Greece (*Kaliff 2007, 47–54; Kristiansen 2011a*).

3. IDENTIFYING THE SUN DEITY

3.1 Solar Symbolism and its Meaning

Numerous symbols encountered in the archaeological record are interpreted as representations

of the Sun (for a thorough discussion see *Green 1991, 33–60*). In the Bronze Age of the Carpathian Basin, the most common ones are concentric circles, spoked wheels (the four-spoked ones are known as a cross-in-circle or a sun cross) and spirals. Some authors voiced doubt on their exclusive solar meaning, highlighting other, stellar, lunar, or cosmological alternatives (*Pásztor 2015a, 1346; 2017c*). However, there are several arguments that can be raised in favor of their exclusive solar meaning:

1. Presence of (mostly outer) Sun rays (Fig. 1: 1–5, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21–27; 2: 5, 6, 9; 3: 3, 6, 7; 4: 2a, 2c), a characteristic, and easily recognizable feature of the Sun, distinguishing it from the Moon or the stars of the night sky. The Sun rays can be depicted in the forms of straight and sometimes spiraling radiating lines or zig-zag lines. They can also appear plume- and fire-like (see Fig. 1: 16, 17, 21, 22; 3: 7; 4: 2c), in accordance with the Sun's fiery character. They appear in the depictions of four-spoked wheels (e.g. *Greene 1991, 33, Fig. 17; Nordqvist/Heyd 2020, 9, Fig. 4A*) and concentric circles (Fig. 1: 4, 5, 21–27).

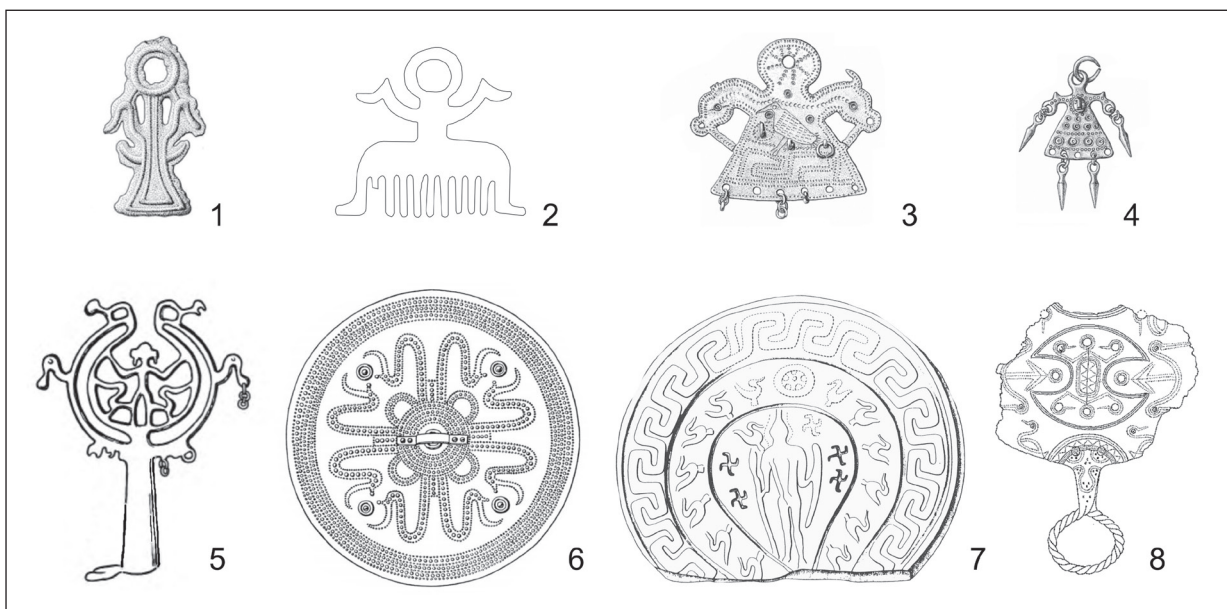


Fig. 3. Selected finds with anthropomorphic, ornithomorphic and solar symbolism from the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. 1 – Veji, 2 – Döle (after *Kossack 1954*), 3 – Sanzeno, 4 – Cles-Mechel (after *Kirchmayr 2017*), 5 – Capolimonte-Bisenzio, 6 – Monteveglio (after *Kossack 1954*), 7 – Valle dell'Idice (after *Kossack 1999*), 8 – unknown site (after *Jockenhövel 1974*). Different scales.

Obr. 3. Vybrané nálezy s antropomorfnou, ornitomorfnou a solárnou symbolikou z neskorej doby bronzovej a staršej doby železnej. 1 – Veji, 2 – Döle (podľa *Kossack 1954*), 3 – Sanzeno, 4 – Cles-Mechel (podľa *Kirchmayr 2017*), 5 – Capolimonte-Bisenzio, 6 – Monteveglio (podľa *Kossack 1954*), 7 – Valle dell'Idice (podľa *Kossack 1999*), 8 – neznáma lokalita (podľa *Jockenhövel 1974*). Rôzne mierky.

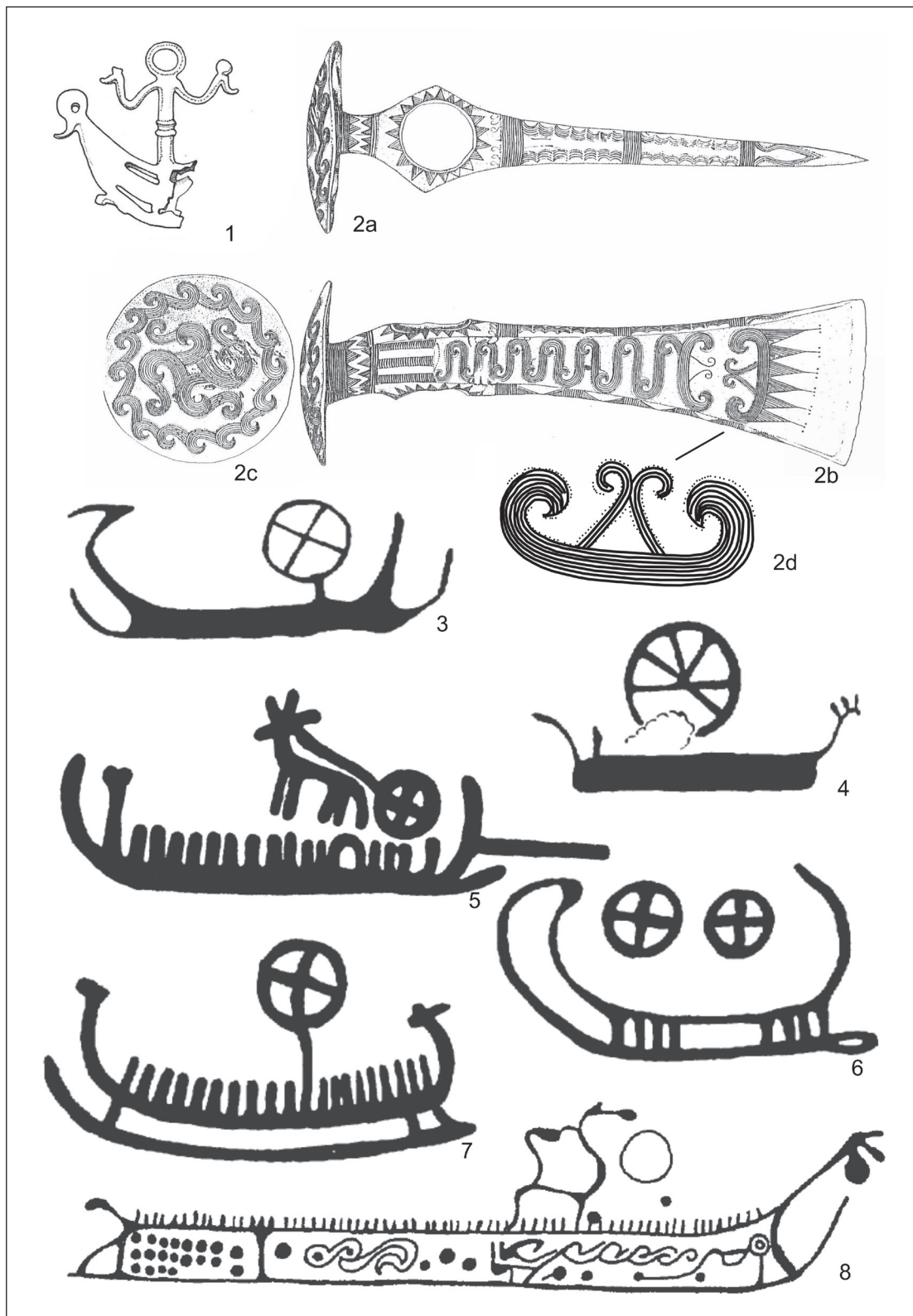


Fig. 4. Portrayals of ships from Central and Northern Europe with an anthropomorphic figure or solar symbol. 1 – Miskolc-Diósgyőr (after *Jankovits 2017*), 2 – Kelebia (after *Pásztor 2010*), 3–8 – Bohuslän, Östergötland (after *Panchenko 2012*). Different scales.

Obr. 4. Zobrazenia lodí zo strednej a severnej Európy s antropomorfnou postavou alebo solárnym symbolom. 1 – Miskolc-Diósgyőr (podľa *Jankovits 2017*), 2 – Kelebia (podľa *Pásztor 2010*), 3–8 – Bohuslän, Östergötland (podľa *Panchenko 2012*). Rôzne mierky.

2. The symbols often appear in conjunction, for example as a spoked wheel and concentric circles (Fig. 1: 23, 24; 2: 6, 9) or spirals and concentric circles (Fig. 2: 7). Among other finds, a spectacular Villanovan culture gravestone from Valle dell'Idice, Emilia-Romagna (Fig. 3: 7) portrays concentric rings, flame-like Sun rays, swastikas and a Sun wheel (as well as a human figure and duck-like birds). The lid of a cylinder from Sulm valley near Leibnitz in Austria is decorated with multiple six-spoked wheels inside concentric rings and pairs of bird protomes (Kossack 1999, 154, Abb. 98). Additional examples can be seen on Vučedol culture bowls, which may feature four-spoked wheels and concentric rings together with Sun rays (Durman 2001, 222, Fig. 14; Pásztor 2017a, 133, Fig. 10).

3. The symbols are interchangeable with naturalistic depictions of the Sun (Fig. 1: 1–12; 2: 5–9; 4: 2a, 2c, 3–8; cf. Nordqvist/Heyd 2020, 9, Fig. 4A). Furthermore, their systematic occurrence in identical contexts hints that they were at least to some degree interchangeable among each other (e.g. Fig. 5).

4. Written sources: There is much literary evidence confirming that the Sun was conceived as a wheel (West 2007, 201–203), and Hittite documents confirm that discs of gold, bronze and silver represented the Sun goddess (Haas 1994, 424, 510, 511). A large bronze disc found in Trundholm (e.g. Fig. 6: 6), has two sides with almost identical decoration, consisting mostly of concentric rings and spirals. It has one gilded “bright side” with an outer ring of radial lines (Sun rays), and a second darker side, which corresponds to the Indo-European conception of a visible day and invisible night Sun (Calin 2021, 65–73; West 2007, 209, 210). Consequently, symbols appearing on such “Sun discs” can safely be associated with the Sun.

5. Folk traditions: in Baltic folk art, the Sun is traditionally depicted as a ring, a wheel, a circle, a circle with rays, a rosette, or a daisy (Gimbutas 1963, 201).

Contrary to popular claims (e.g. Kristiansen 2013, 86; West 2007, 210), the four-spoked wheel (Sun-cross) symbolism was not inspired nor in other ways dependent on spoked wheels of light

chariots, invented around 2000 BC and spreading into Europe several centuries later (Švecová 2004, 388). As noted by Pásztor (2015b, 1346; 2017c), the symbol was already common during the 3rd millennium BC. Pásztor has advocated a plausible explanation for its origin, as well as the origin of other Bronze Age solar symbols (the spike-like central ornaments of Sun-discs, the motifs of solar barge and concentric rings): atmospheric halo phenomena such as the Sun dog (parhelium) and Sun pillar (Fig. 7; Pásztor 2015b; 2017a; 2017c).

The observed variability among depictions and symbolism of the Sun, found especially on wheel pendants (Kossack 1954, Taf. 16: 1–19), may be explained by the high diversity of solar atmospheric phenomena, human artistic creativity based thereupon, diversity of mythological associations (see below), variable apotropaic functions (e.g. on talismans) and possible usage as insignia for individuals with a specific function or status in the society.

3.2 Arguments for Anthropomorphism

3.2.1 Introductory Remarks

If the spoked wheel, concentric rings and spirals indeed do represent the Sun, we have to ask if they were associated with the veneration of a natural force or an anthropomorphic Sun deity. Both hypotheses have been advocated (Green 1991, 83, 84; Hänsel 2000, 333; Kaul 1998; 2018; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005, 353–356). In our opinion, there is substantial evidence proving that they were associated with an anthropomorphic female deity.

Indo-European deities seem to be conceived anthropomorphically since the earliest times (West 2007, 138). The near absence of explicitly anthropomorphic depictions of deities during the Central European Bronze Age is reminiscent of a similar situation in early Hinduism (Kaliff 2007, 49), despite the fact that its sacred texts in the Rigveda contain traditions of explicitly anthropomorphic deities (Keith 1925, 58).

In the case of the Sun deity, it has recently been observed that the narrative of the cyclical voyage of the Sun, depicted most notably on prestigious razors of the Nordic Bronze Age (Kaul 1998; 2018) in the form of Sun symbols

and animal characters, finds a close correspondence in Baltic and Greek myths that feature a fully anthropomorphic Sun deity (*Massetti 2019*). The interchangeability of a (female) human figure and Sun symbol can be found on Early Iron Age pendants from the central Alps (*Kossack 1999, 102, Abb. 70*).

3. 2. 2 “Carpathian” Iconographic Evidence

Anthropomorphic pendants (Fig. 5, 8, 9) are among the oldest relevant depictions, with the earliest dating to the Early Bronze Age (BA1–BA2). The finds are of varied craftsmanship quality and are known from several sites in Hungary. One of the oldest is probably the find from

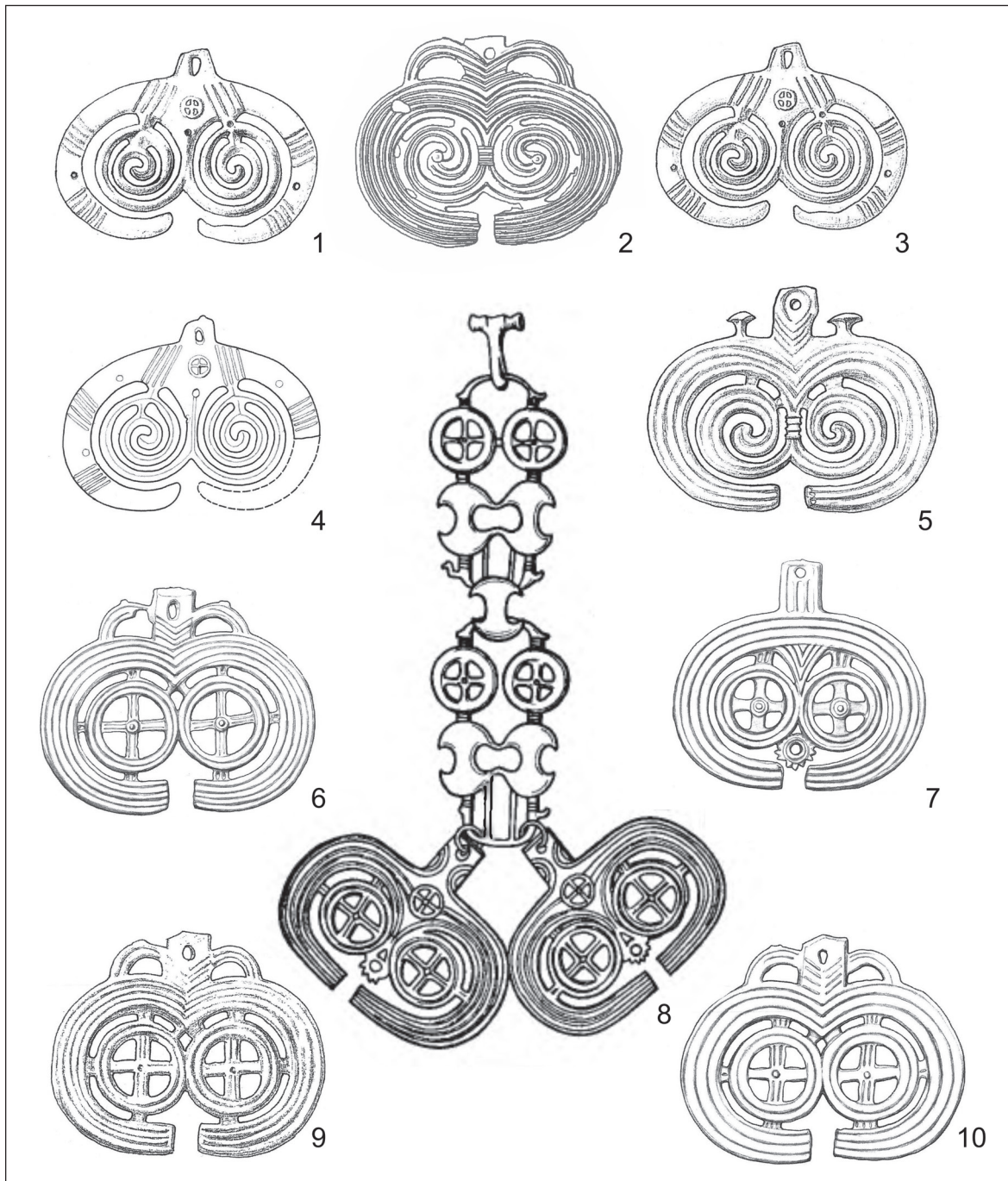


Fig. 5. Anthropomorphic pendants with solar symbolism. 1, 3–7, 9, 10 – Kisterénye (after *Jankovits 2017*), 2 – Zvolen (after *Furmánek 1982*), 8 – Rimavská Sobota (after *Kossack 1954*). Different scales.

Obr. 5. Antropomorfné závesky so solárnou symbolikou. 1, 3–7, 9, 10 – Kisterénye (podľa *Jankovits 2017*), 2 – Zvolen (podľa *Furmánek 1982*), 8 – Rimavská Sobota (podľa *Kossack 1954*). Rôzne mierky.

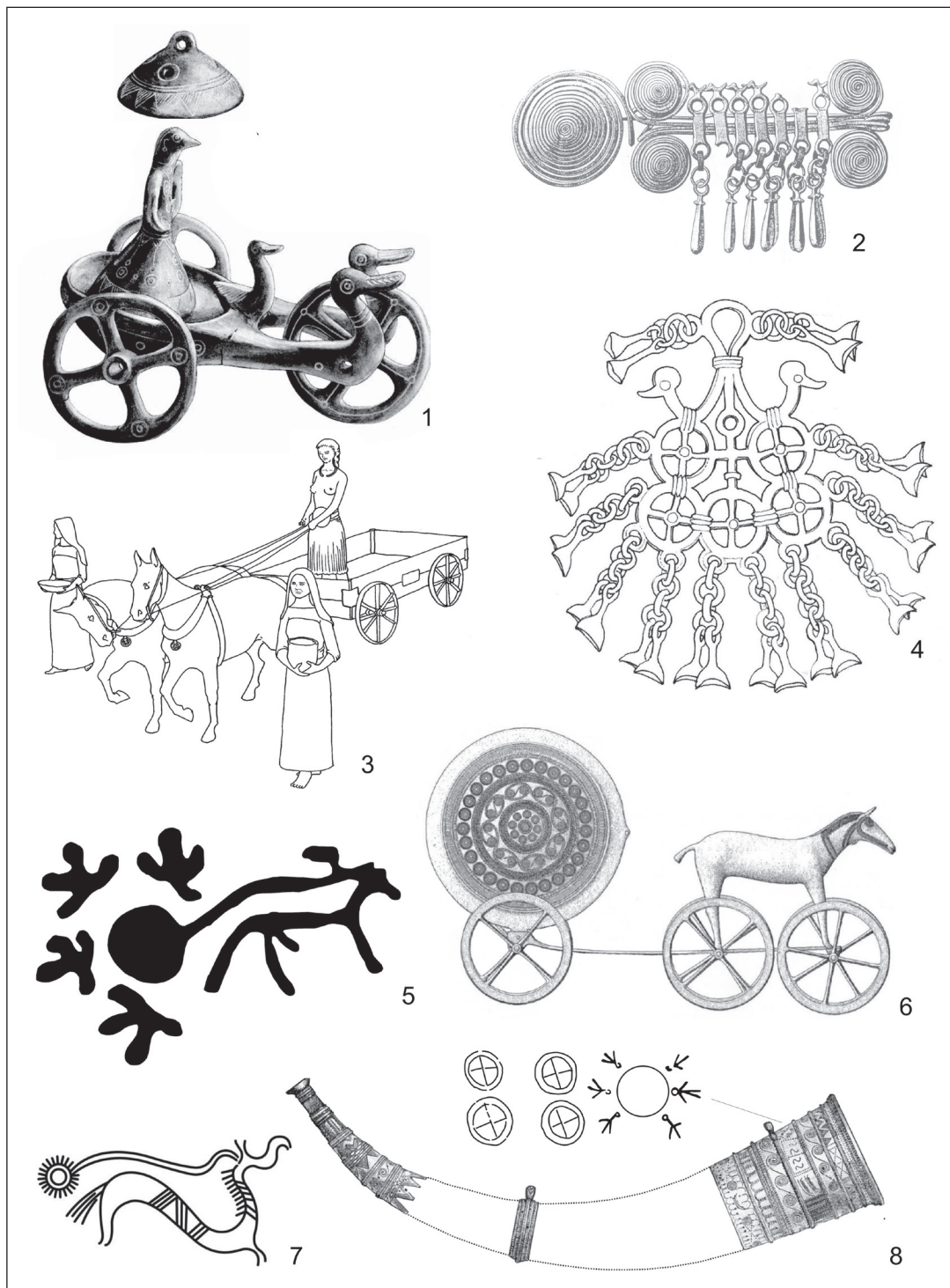


Fig. 6. Northern and Central European evidence for the Sun or Sun deity being pulled by horses or birds. 1 – Dupljaja (after Podborský 2006, *graphically modified*), 2 – Krivoklát (after Novotná 2001), 3 – reconstruction of a Sun priestess on a wagon, based on a hoard from Brøndumgård (after Varberg 2009), 4 – “Kingdom of Hungary” (after Jankovits 2017), 5 – Tanum–Lilla Arendal (SHFA, *modified*), 6 – Trundholm, 7 – Neder Hvolris (after Kaul 2002), 8 – Wysmar (after Jockenhövel/Kubach 1994). Different scales.

Obr. 6. Doklady slnečného božstva alebo slnečného kotúča a jeho „ťahačov“ zo strednej a severnej Európy. 1 – Dupljaja (podľa Valent/Jelínek 2020), 2 – Krivoklát (podľa Novotná 2001), 3 – rekonštrukcia slnečnej kňažky na voze na základe nálezů z Brøndumgård (podľa Varberg 2009), 4 – „Uhorsko“ (podľa Jankovits 2017), 5 – Tanum-Lilla Arendal (podľa Bertilsson ed., graficky upravené), 6 – Trundholm, 7 – Neder Hvolris (podľa Kaul 2002), 8 – Wysmar (podľa Jockenhövel/Kubach 1994). Rôzne mierky.

Öreglak and hoard B from Kölesd-Nagyhangos (Fig. 8: 7, 8, 9, 11; *Jankovits 2017*, 366, Taf. 30: 991–995). It is typologically followed by pendants found in Vértesszőlős and hoard A from Nagyhangos (Fig. 8: 6, 10, 12–14; *Jankovits 2017*, 366, Taf. 30: 988–990; *Kisné Cseh 2014*). Anthropomorphic figures are also depicted on pottery (*Kiss 2012*, 104, 107, Fig. 33: 9).

The symbol of a four-spoked wheel appears on finds from Včelince in Slovakia (Fig. 8: 1) and Oszlár in Hungary (Fig. 8: 3). Pendants of this type are also known from sites along the Danube and beyond the Carpathian Basin, for example from Neumarkt an der Ybbs in Austria (*Reiter 2014*; Fig. 8: 2) and from Baley in Bulgaria (*Alexandrov et al. 2018*, 546, Cat. № 562, 563; Fig. 8: 4, 5). In the western catchment area of the Danube, we encounter a similar motif – a pendant from the Königswieser Forst in the shape of a Sun disc with a central thorn, with two bird-shaped arms (or arms with birds; *Torbrüge 1990*, 504, Abb. 4: 3). The most recently analyzed finds from Baley and Tata are unanimously considered to be anthropomorphic, for example by K. Jankovits (*2017*, 81, 82).

Some researchers (*Hänsel 2012*; *Paulík 1999*, 39) interpret the Včelince- and Nagyhangos-type pendants (Fig. 8: 1–14) as a barge with horse or bird protomes carrying a Sun disc. In our opinion (*Jelínek/Valent 2019*, 60), an interpretation of the pendants should be based on the observation that they show a discernible development beginning with a clearly (female) anthropomorphic shape that gradually became more abstract during the Koszider horizon era. Later, these pendants, resembling a human figure with hands in an adoration gesture, evolved further. An element resembling a solar disc was replaced with a four-spoked wheel, while the outstretched hands morphed into the form of bird protomes. Typologically similar pendants are known from Kőszeg in Hungary and Batina in Croatia (Fig. 8: 15–20; *Jankovits 2017*, 366, Taf. 30: 1002, 1003), which depict a female figure with arms akimbo and a four-spoked wheel on the lower part of the abdomen. Besides the Carpathian area, they are also known from Poland, but are considered as imports there (*Janiak 2002*, 144).

Similar symbolism is present in the gynecomastonomorphic pendants from Nagyrovány and Kisterenye in Hungary and Zvolen and Rimavská Sobota in Slovakia (Fig. 5; *Jankovits 2017*, 377, 378–380, Taf. 41: 162A, 162B; 42: 1278, 1288; 43; 44: 1295, 1296; *Kossack 1954*, Taf. 10: 5). These sheet-metal and cast pendants depict a female torso with hinted arm-jewelry, breast spirals, or breasts in the form of Sun wheels and, in addition, four-spoked wheel pendants or engraved depictions of the Sun.

These pendants could be interpreted as depictions of some sort of “Sun-priestess” or as portrayals of contemporary ideas about the appearance of the Sun deity. We favor the latter, since it may help explain the rarity of Včelince type pendants in comparison with the much more common spoked-wheel pendants. Unlike wheel pendants, which could function as apotropaic protective amulets (*Green 1991*, 70, 103, 104), Včelince type pendants could be insignia of important persons associated with the solar cult.

3. 2. 3 Nordic-Carpathian parallels

The pendants of the types Nagyhangos and Včelince (16.–14. century BC; Fig. 8: 1–14) and related finds, as well as pendants from Kőszeg or Batina (13.– 6. century BC; Fig. 8: 15–20) and gynecomastonomorphic pendants (c. 18.–9. century BC; Fig. 5, 9) show striking iconographic correspondences with the “Sun charioteers” from Dupljaja (15.–14. century BC; Fig. 8: 21, 22): they all seem to represent a female figure with a solar symbol (Sun disc, Sun cross, concentric circles with Sun rays, swastika) located on the abdomen and a standardized arm position.

The same concept seems to be embodied by several less or more synchronous (15th and 14th centuries BC) finds from southern Scandinavia: the prestigious graves of young females buried with a decorated bronze Sun disc (e.g. the Egtved Girl) or a decorated bronze Sun-cross (four-spoked wheel; graves from Stroehøj or Tøblø) that was worn on a waist belt (*Kristiansen/Larsson 2005*, 298–303). Kristiansen and Larsson (*2005*, 298) interpret these young women as priestesses of the Sun goddess. In the light of their parallels to the above-discussed finds from Central Europe,



Fig. 7. Examples of halo effects. 1 – Parhelia during Sunset (Photo Gabor Szilasi, license: CC BY 4.0); 2 – Haloes around the Sun in the form of concentric rings (Photo Pixabay, public domain).

Obr. 7. Príklady halových javov. 1 – Parhélium počas západu slnka (autor Gabor Szilasi, licencia: CC BY 4.0); 2 – Slnčné halo v podobe koncentrických kruhov (zdroj Pixabay, public domain).

we suggest they all embody a common underlying mythic concept of a Sun goddess bearing a Sun symbol on the lower abdomen (Fig. 10).

During rituals and religious processions, the priests and priestesses substituted or even represented the deities (*Marinatos 1993*, 108; *Varberg 2015*, 23). A bronze hoard from Brøndumgård, Denmark (1100–900 BC) has been associated with such a ceremonial procession (Fig. 6: 3) that included solar-symbol wielding priestesses, hors-

es, and a wagon. The hoard contains horse gear and female ornaments, including a partial neck ring with a stylized horse head, bronze (Sun) disc decorated with solar symbols (concentric rings, spirals), two four-spoked and one eight-spoked wheel pendant (*Varberg 2009*, 40–42). A similar but younger (900–700 BC) hoard from Eskelhelm, Sweden contains figures of waterfowl attached to a Sun disc decorated with rayed concentric rings (*Varberg 2009*, 43, Abb. 7).

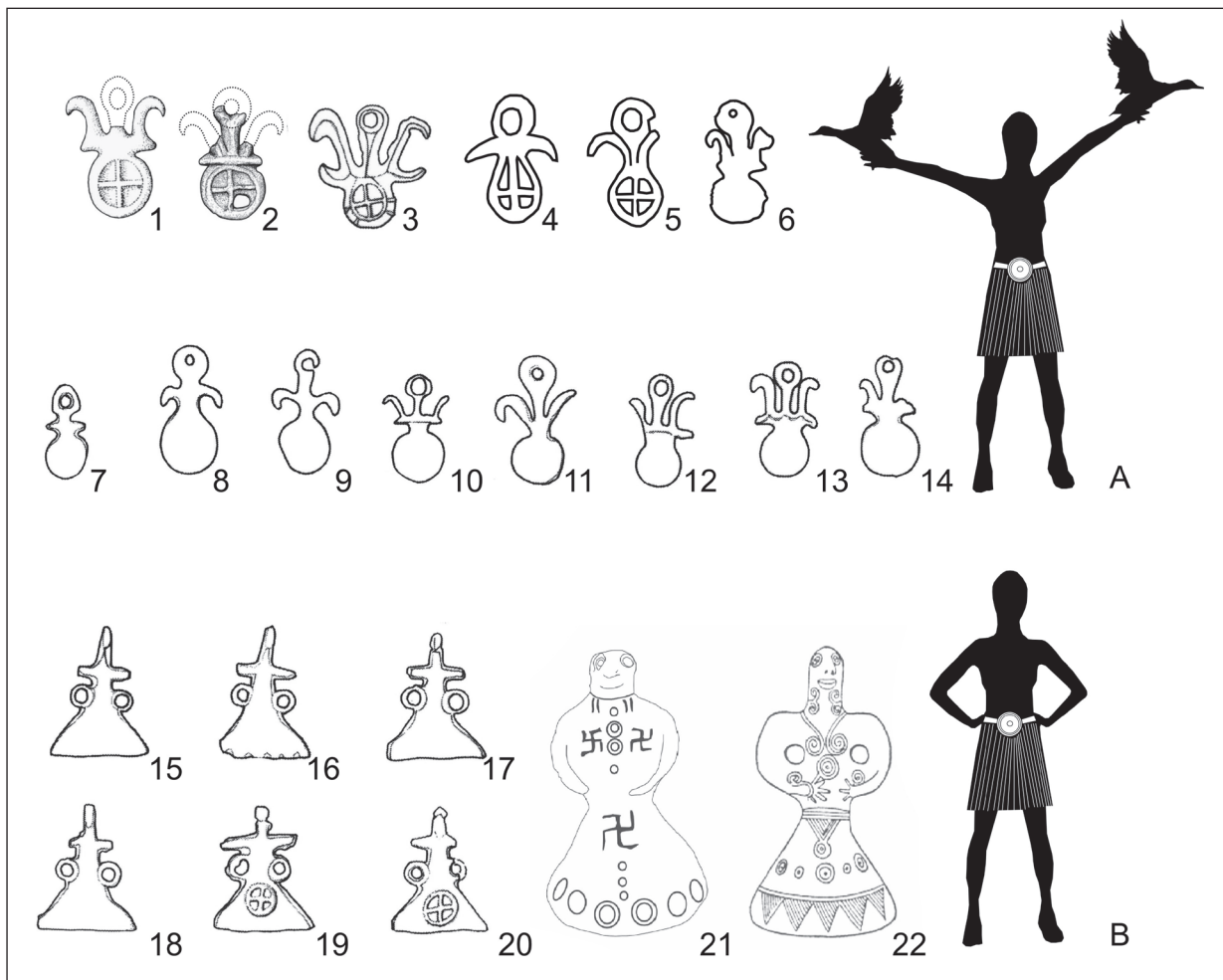


Fig. 8. Anthropomorphic depictions of the solar deity. A: Pendants from the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. 1 – Apiary (after *Furmánek 1982*), 2 – Neumarkt an der Ybbs (after *Reitar 2014*), 3 – Oszlár (after *Jankovits 2017*), 4, 5 – Baley (after *Alexandrov et al. 2018*), 6 – Vértesszőlös (after *Kisné Cseh 2014*), 7 – Öreglak, 8–14 – Kölesd-Nagyhangos A, B (after *Jankovits 2017*); B: Late Bronze Age figures and Late Bronze Age pendants. 15–21 – Kőszeg or Battina (after *Jankovits 2017*), 21, 22 – Dupljaja (after *Valent/Jelínek 2020*). Different scales.

Obr. 8. Antropomorfne zobrazenia solárneho božstva. A: závesky zo staršej a strednej doby bronzovej. 1 – Včelince (podľa *Furmánek 1982*), 2 – Neumarkt an der Ybbs (podľa *Reiter 2014*), 3 – Oszlár (podľa *Jankovits 2017*), 4, 5 – Baley (podľa *Alexandrov et al. 2018*), 6 – Vértesszölös (podľa *Kisné Cseh 2014*), 7 – Öreglak, 8–14 – Kölesd-Nagyhangos (podľa *Jankovits 2017*); B: Mladobronzové plastiky a neskorobronzové závesky. 15–21 – Kőszeg or Battina (podľa *Jankovits 2017*), 21, 22 – Dupljaja (podľa *Valent/Jelínek 2020*). Rôzne mierky.

4. CHARACTER OF THE SUN DEITY: ARCHEOLOGY

4.1 Association with Death

In Central, Northern and Eastern Europe, there seems to be a consistent association of the Sun with death, which was already present and common in Late Eneolithic cultures whose bearers were closely related to expanding populations of the Pontic-Caspian steppe (*Furholt 2019*). The above-discussed types of solar symbolism appear,

among others, in the Kemi Oba culture (depictions of grave cists and steles; *Kozhukhovskaia 2020*, 310, Fig. 5), Afanasievo culture (pottery; *Anthony 2007*, 311), Central and Northern European Corded Ware (pendants and pottery; *Kysely/Dobeš 2020*, 153; *Neustupný 2008*, 137, obr. 48; *Turek 2011*, 89, 90, 96) and Bell Beaker groups (buttons, pottery; *Cahill 2015*; *Endrödi/Pásztor 2006*; *Turek 2011*, 96), and Fatyanovo culture (grave pottery, Fig. 1: 1–12; *Gimbutas 1965*, 589, 594, Fig. 409; 416: 5–8; *Nordqvist/Heyd 2020*, 9, Fig. 4). Sun

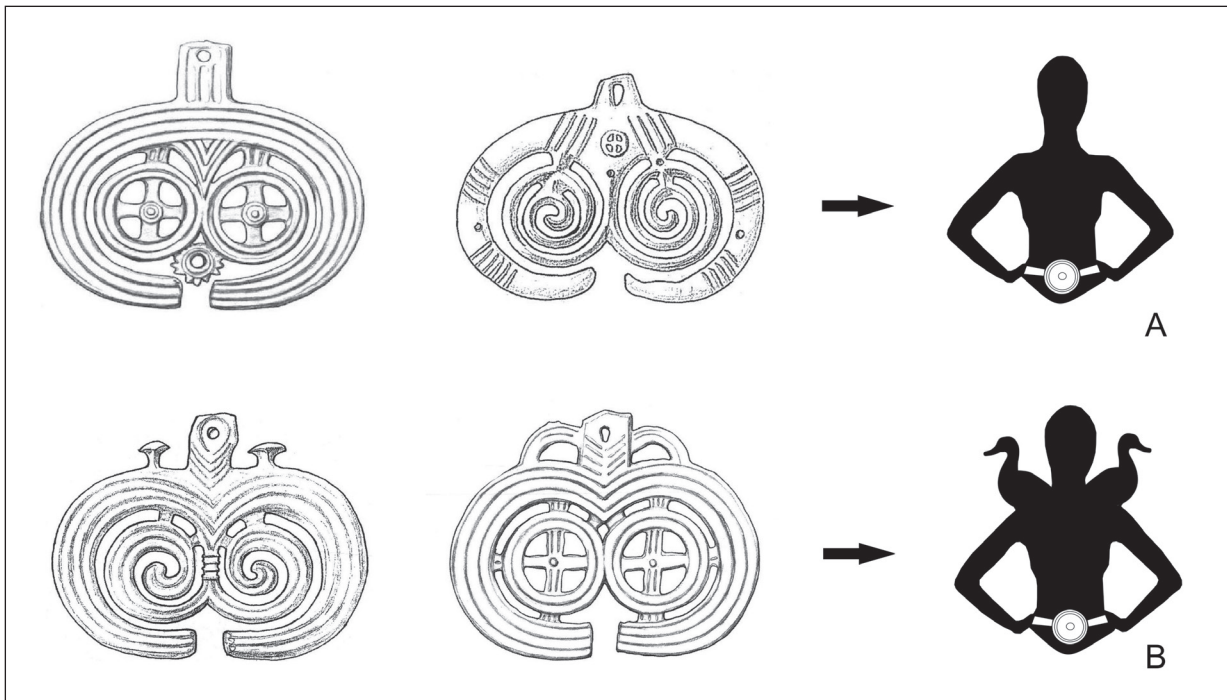


Fig. 9. Visual metamorphosis of Kisterénye type curtains. A: variant in the shape of a human torso with solar symbols, B: variant in the shape of a human torso with solar symbols and ornithomorphic (?) protrusions. Different scales.

Obr. 9. Vizuálna metamorfóza záveskov typu Kisterénye. A: variant antropomorfného torza so solárnymi znakmi, B: variant antropomorfného torza s ornitomorfými (?) výčnelkami. Rôzne mierky.

crosses appeared already during the 5th millennium BC on grave finds of the Eastern European Samara Culture (Vasiliev/Matveeva 1979).

Additional evidence for a close connection between the Sun and death comes from the orientation of graves. The orientation of the grave (or rather the buried person's view) according to cardinal directions was an extremely important element of prehistoric eschatological customs.

In Central Europe, and especially in the northern part of the Carpathian Basin, the orientation of the dead with faces oriented to the south seems to have been important for many prehistoric cultures (Furmánek/Veliačik/Vladár 1991, 283, 284), and there is evidence that the Sun probably played an important role here. Deviations (e.g. SW–NW, NW–SE) in the orientation of the bodies are caused by the apparent movement of the Sun over the horizon during the year. This is in accordance with the hypothesis that the fixed azimuth was not observed, but instead the Sun, perceived as a living (divine) being with a psychopompic function. For cultures that preferred the meridian orientation (e.g. Únětice culture, Ottomány culture),

the direction of view to the east prevails, which would advocate for a variation of a similar solar eschatology (Jelínek 2019, 92).

In Central Europe and its neighboring regions, solar grave orientation was common already during the Late Eneolithic (Nordqvist/Heyd 2020, 15; Turek 2011, 96). It is, at least regionally, rigidly observed during the Early Bronze age, even among cultures which otherwise lack solar symbolism in their material culture. During the Middle Bronze Age (BB–BC2), this type of burial rite was mostly replaced with cremation. Cremation rites are often a priori connected to the Sun (Furmánek/Veliačik/Vladár 1991, 295; Veliačik 1979, 79). A possible explanation is that fire had often been regarded as an aspect of the Sun or as a part of the same essence as the Sun (Kaliff 2007, 91, 164).

During the Middle and especially Late Bronze Age, after the decreased frequency of solar symbolism during the Early Bronze Age, the association of the Sun with death was very prominent in the material culture – Sun imagery became a common decoration of grave pottery (Fig. 1: 13–27), while Sun symbolism appears on pendants, pins

and other bronzework found in graves or hoards in Southern Scandinavia, Central Europe, and Italy (Fig. 2: 5–9; 4: 2, 5; 6: 2, 4, 6; 8: 1–20; Green 1991; Kossack 1954; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005).

Barrows and tumuluses, especially those of the Middle and Late Bronze age, may be another manifestation of the association between death and the Sun. This can be argued for based on the circular ground plan, outer circular stone ring, and often additional structural elements in the form of a spoked wheel or several concentric rings, with the barrow itself added as a symbol of the rising Sun (Kristiansen 2013, 84; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005, 243, 244, Fig. 111). The association of Sun and death is also seen in the decoration of graves, such as the famous Kivik grave in Scania, Sweden (Kristiansen/Larsson 2005, 186–199), or gravestones, such as those of the Villanovan culture from Italy (Fig 3: 7).

The traditional association of solar symbols with death continued regionally during the Iron Age. For example, in some regions, wheel pendants are common in Celtic graves – sometimes being the only grave goods (Green 1991, 74, 131). Furthermore, as A. Andrén (2014, 157, 158) notes for Scandinavia: “*In the Iron Age, there are obvious links between the Sun and mortuary practice, since ship-forms, wheel-crosses, and other geometrical rings, as well as the picture stones, were directly connected with graves in many areas.*” In the Baltic, the tradition of using solar symbols as part of the decoration of graves continues to the present day (Reichstätter 2019, 147–152).

Admittedly, some of the evidence presented here is, by itself, not straightforward and self-evident. For example, grave goods with solar signs need not necessarily imply a connection of this symbolism to death, especially in the case of cultures known from little more than burial grounds. On the other hand, grave pottery was often produced particularly for burial rites (it was only weakly fired and unwieldy for practical use; Olexa/Nováček 2013, 16), which supports the assumption of the special meaning of its decoration. In addition, we are confident that, based on the entirety of the evidence, we may conclude that there was a strong, widespread and long-lasting association of the Sun with death in Central



Fig. 10. Artistic impression of the Bronze Age Sun goddess, taking souls of the deceased to the Isle of the Blessed (in the background). The portrayal is based predominantly on religious iconography from Carpathian Basin. Restoration by Loles Romero under the guidance of the authors. © Loles Romero.

Obr. 10. Umelecké vyobrazenie slnečnej bohyne doby bronzovej, založené prevažne na náboženskej ikonografii Karpatskej kotliny. Malbu zhotovila Loles Romero pod vedením autorov štúdie. © Loles Romero.

Europe and its neighboring regions. It was probably based on a conception of the afterlife that focused on the Sun and was present already in the Late Eneolithic.

4.2 Who Pulled the Sun? The Issue of Sun-Bird-Barges

One of the most distinctive symbols of the Central European Late Bronze Age is the motif of the solar boat – the bird-barge (*Vogelbarke*; including its variety or subtype, the Sun-bird-barge – *Vogelsonnenbarke*). It appears in a highly uniform form (mostly) on prestigious metal objects, such as on Hajdúböszörmény and Kurd type bronze

buckets, in a vast region between Italy and Scandinavia and is associated with the spread of an important religious concept (Hänsel 2012; Jockenhövel 1974; Nebelsick 2016; Wirth 2010).

The term solar barge was introduced by Gero von Merhart (1969, 338–340) who apparently presented it as a *terminus technicus* or interpreted it straightforwardly without comparative analysis with other religious systems. A possible Nordic – Egyptian connection concerning portrayals of Sun boats and Sun ships (*Sonnenbarke*, *Sonnenbot*, *Sonnenschiff*) was already discussed by O. Montelius (1934) who based his theory on completely different portrayals. Von Merhart understood it as an antithetical connection of two bird protomes with a disc or a circle in between, which he interpreted as the Sun. Later authors followed his approach (e.g. Kossack 1954; Bouzek 1985). In one of the firsts attempts to explain this religious motif, E. Sprockhoff interpreted the bird-barge as a carrier of the Sun on the daytime sky (1954, 79). Paulík (1999, 36) followed this approach when analyzing finds from Central Europe. Other researchers differentiated the motif of a day and night barge (Ilon 2015; Wirt 2010).

Paulík also put forward several supposed bird-barge finds from present-day Slovakia (Paulík 1999). However, his interpretations are doubtful. Paulík's supposed ceramic bird-barges are heavily and rather unreliably reconstructed, for example, by mirroring specimens of animal protomes or the addition of protomes to cylindrical or angular curved ceramic fragments (Paulík 1999, 38, Fig. 6: 3, 5–8, 15). His claims of metal bird-barges are based on antithetical oriented avian protomes or even figurines of water birds (Paulík 1999, 38, Fig. 6: 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20–24). A reevaluation of Paulík's supposed bird-barges led us to critically review other supposed bird-barges as well.

When evaluating the motif of the “bird-barge”, it is necessary to realize that, as we stated above, it was interpreted outside its cultural context and described as a bird-barge because of its superficial resemblance to a boat. The highly stylized two-dimensional artistic form of the European Bronze Age, uses characteristic lateral-view depictions of animals, protomes to substitute

for whole animals, and combinations of these motifs into more complex compositions. Accounting for this “artistic style” leads to the conclusion that many depictions of supposed bird-barges actually depict pairs of waterfowl pulling the Sun symbol without any boat.

Individual bird protomes can be seen, for example on the blades of the swords from Podgoryany from Ukraine and Şimleu Silvaniei from Romania (Fig 2: 2–4; Bader 1991; Kemenczei 1988). They are not terminated, and they are not connected to another object. Evidently, they represent whole figures of birds, as can be seen on the sword from Bothenheiligen (Kaiser 2014, 40, Abb. 7). They, too, support the conclusion that the protome can represent the whole individual, here specifically the swan. On sheet metal objects (Fig. 11: 1), the bird protomes can be depicted as connected to the solar wheel and diverging from each other to form an aesthetically symmetrical image of two bird protomes pulling the solar disc (compare with Pare 1987, 58). The significance of these depictions becomes apparent when compared to three-dimensional objects – the Dupljaja chariot, where a pair of birds (see below) pull a chariot with a Sun deity, and especially when compared to the decorated swords analyzed by M. Kaiser (2014).

The motif of the “bird-barge” is relatively common on the crossguards of Late Bronze Age swords (compare with Ilon 2015). However, from the side view, it is evident that the “barge” motif on the sword creates a frontal view of a swan's head (Fig. 11: 2). The crossguard of the sword, therefore, emulates two swan heads. When we take into account the solar disc, which usually decorates the pommel of the sword (Fig. 11: 3), we get a composition equivalent to the above-discussed sheet metal finds or the chariot from Dupljaja – a pair of waterfowl pulling a solar disc/deity. A similar motif was depicted on a two-arm-pickaxe from the vicinity of Bratislava (Novotná 1970, Taf. 24: 402), where antithetical inverted figures of two water birds are found on the arms of the pickaxe and the Sun disc is located on the upper side of the upper disc (Fig. 11: 4). In our opinion, it is possible that on armor and weapons, the motif of two waterfowl/swans was more important than the “central” solar motif.

To multiply its “strength”, it is therefore sometimes doubled or tripled.

The birds may pull a solar disc, as well as a two- or four-wheeled wagon. Besides the well-known chariot from Dupljaja, they also appear to be pull-

ing the Sun disc placed on a four-wheeled wagon as depicted on passementerie fibulae of type B (according to *Novotná 2001*) and on the splendid pendant decoration from “the Kingdom of Hungary” (Fig. 6: 4; *Jankovits 2017*, Taf. 87: 3103).

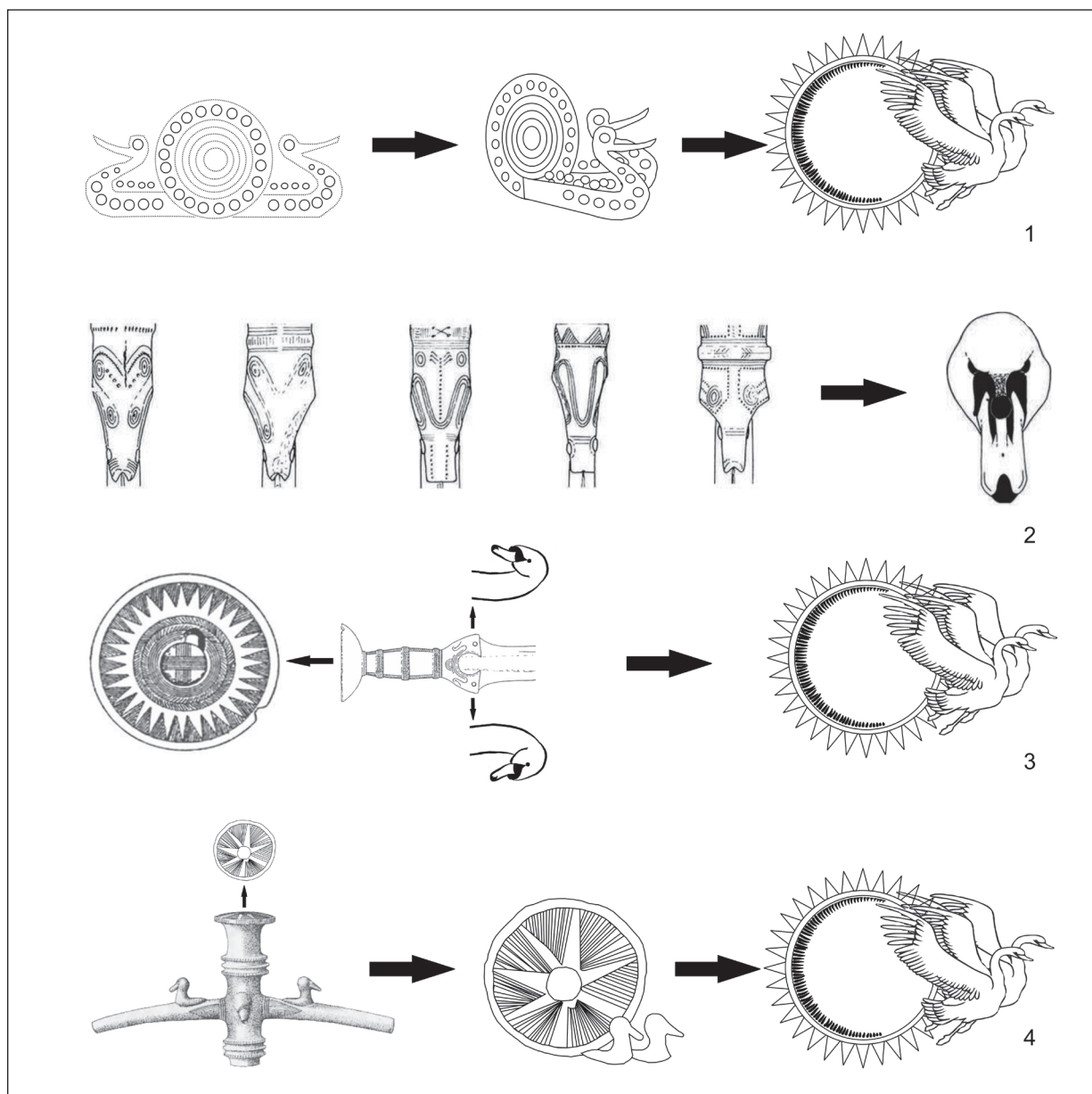


Fig. 11. Metamorphoses of solar symbols from the Late Bronze Age Central Europe. 1 – representation of a solar disc and two bird protomes on buckets of the Kurd and Hajdúböszörmény type, 2 – sides of the holding part of a bronze sword handle in the shape of a swan head (after *Kaiser 2014*), 3 – metamorphosis of a bronze sword handle to a swan-pulled solar disc (after *Novotná 1970*), 4 – two-arm-pickaxe from the vicinity of Bratislava with the motif of water birds pulling a Sun disc. Different scales.

Obr. 11. Metamorfózy solárnych symbolov z mladšej doby bronzovej zo strednej Európy. 1 – zobrazenie solárneho kotúča a dvoch vtáčích protóm na vedrách typu Kurd a Hajdúböszörmény, 2 – bočné strany záchytnéj časti rukoväte bronzových mečov v tvare labutej hlavy (podľa *Kaiser 2014*), 3 – metamorfóza rukoväte bronzového meča na labutí poťah slnečného kotúča, 4 – dvojramenný mlat z okolia Bratislavy (podľa *Novotná 1970*) s rozvinutím motívu vodných vtákov ťahajúcich slnečný kotúč. Rôzne mierky.

Despite our criticism above, boat-like finds do rarely occur in the Bronze Age material culture of the Carpathian Basin, such as, for example, on the pendant from Satu Mare and the pendants from Miskolc and Salgótarján (Fig. 12: 2, 6, 8; *Jankovits 2017*, Taf. 80: 3024; 81: 3027, 3028). However, these are isolated finds with unknown archaeological contexts. Boat-like finds are also represented by Marhaň type pendants (Fig. 12: 1, 3; *Furmánek 1982*; *Jankovits 2017*, Taf. 80: 3023; *Podborský 2012*, Abb. 3: 1). Paulík (1999, 40) identifies their protomes as horse heads, yet, in our opinion, they are stylized to the extent that it is impossible to determine their identity. Other boat-like shapes have been identified on sheet metal objects (*Valent/Jelínek 2020*) or as part of rich stamped decorations on the battle-axe from Kelebia (Fig. 4: 2; *Pásztor 2010*, 661, Fig. 2). The above-mentioned finds (with the exception of the battle-axe from Kelebia) are characterized by the absence of solar symbolism. However, bird protomes and anthropomorphic figures with hands morphing into birds/bird protomes are present (Fig. 12: 4–8). It is therefore probable that these depictions were not associated with a solar deity.

The motif of the Sun pulled directly by animals without a boat or chariot is known in Scandinavia. Despite the spread of the chariot, a prestigious form of transport, associated with many ancient gods, Nordic Bronze Age rock art and depictions on razors show the Sun being pulled directly by its horse(s) (Fig. 6: 5, 7; *Kaul 2018*, 203, Fig. 2: 204; 3). Even on the Trundholm chariot (Fig. 6: 6), the Sun disc was actually directly attached to the horse, which suggests the “chariot part” was an addition for purposes of practical demonstration and was not a part of the mythic imagery (*Kaul 1998*, 30–34; *2018*, 201–205; *West 2007*, 203). Since bird imagery replaced horse imagery and was used in comparable contexts in the Nordic Bronze Age (*Kveiborg 2018*), the role of Sun-birds may have been at least in part similar to that of the Sun-horse.

4.3 Bird-Arms?

As implied above, Včelince type pendants represent an intermediate between anthropomorphic

pendants depicting a Sun-disc bearing female figure with raised arms and depictions of the supposed Sun-bird-barge which, in our opinion, frequently portray a bird-pulled Sun. As such, the raised arms of the pendant from Včelince have been identified as horse or bird protomes. Here, we would like to argue that, based on typological development, the Včelince type pendants specifically depict a solar figure with arms morphing into (or holding) two aquatic birds (Fig. 8: A; 10). Comparable to the concept of the bird-pulled Sun, the underlying conception may have been a long-lasting and widely known mythical idea as suggested by numerous corresponding finds in the area of the Urnfield culture and its vicinity. We would like to highlight the following examples:

- An Urnfield (Proto-Villanovan) culture razor from Italy (Fig. 3: 8; *Jockenhövel 1974*) bears Sun symbols (rayed concentric circles), water birds, human figures on two bird protomes (usually interpreted as a Sun-barge). Most importantly, the find features a mirror image of a human figure whose arms are morphing into the necks and heads of two birds.
- A lid of a “rippenziste” found in a grave in Monteveglio, Italy contains a depiction of a Sun symbol (concentric rings) with rays/flames morphing into eight protomes of water-birds (Fig. 3: 6; *Kossack 1999*, 58); a less explicit expression of the same concept is shown at a bronze belt found in grave 543 in Bologna, Emilia (*Kossack 1999*, 55, Abb. 35).
- The handle of a bronze vessel from Bisenzio, Italy shows a (female?) figure whose both hands and feet extend into ornithomorphic forms, sometimes described as a circular Vogelbarke (Fig. 3: 5; *Kossack 1954*, 58; *Bilic 2016*, 452), but, instead, the birds, forming a Sun symbol (concentric rings), may actually directly pull the Sun.
- A figurine-pendant from Kolindsund in Jutland, Denmark portrays a woman with her raised arms ending in what appears to be heads of birds (*Varberg 2015*, 4). The accentuated loop perhaps functioned as a Sun symbol.

Several types of anthropomorphic (in most cases, arguably, female) pendants with bird arms, but without obvious solar symbolism, are known

from the Early Iron Age Alps region and Italy (Fig. 3: 1, 2; *Kossack 1954*, Taf. 11: 9, 17, 20; 12; for a recent overview see *Kirchmayr 2017*). They possibly hint at a related or derived tradition concerning a female deity associated with birds. However, strong solar symbolism is present in other, structurally equivalent female anthropomorphic pendants from the same region and period that contain horse protomes instead of bird ones (Fig. 3: 3, 4). In the Carpathian Basin, this “human figure with birds” type of pendants (*Jankovits 2017*, 85, 86) is known from the

Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age from Velem-Szentvid (*Jankovits 2017*, 367, Taf. 31: 1007, 1008). The most realistic portrayal can be seen on the Early Iron Age pendant from Miskolc-Diósgyőr, where a stylized human figure, with arms terminated with bird-heads, stands on (“grows out of”) two antithetically connected bird torsos, resulting in a shape reminiscent of a barge (Fig. 12: 6).

Based on the reviewed evidence, we propose that Včelince type pendants and their bird-arm solar-figure analogies are expressions of the same

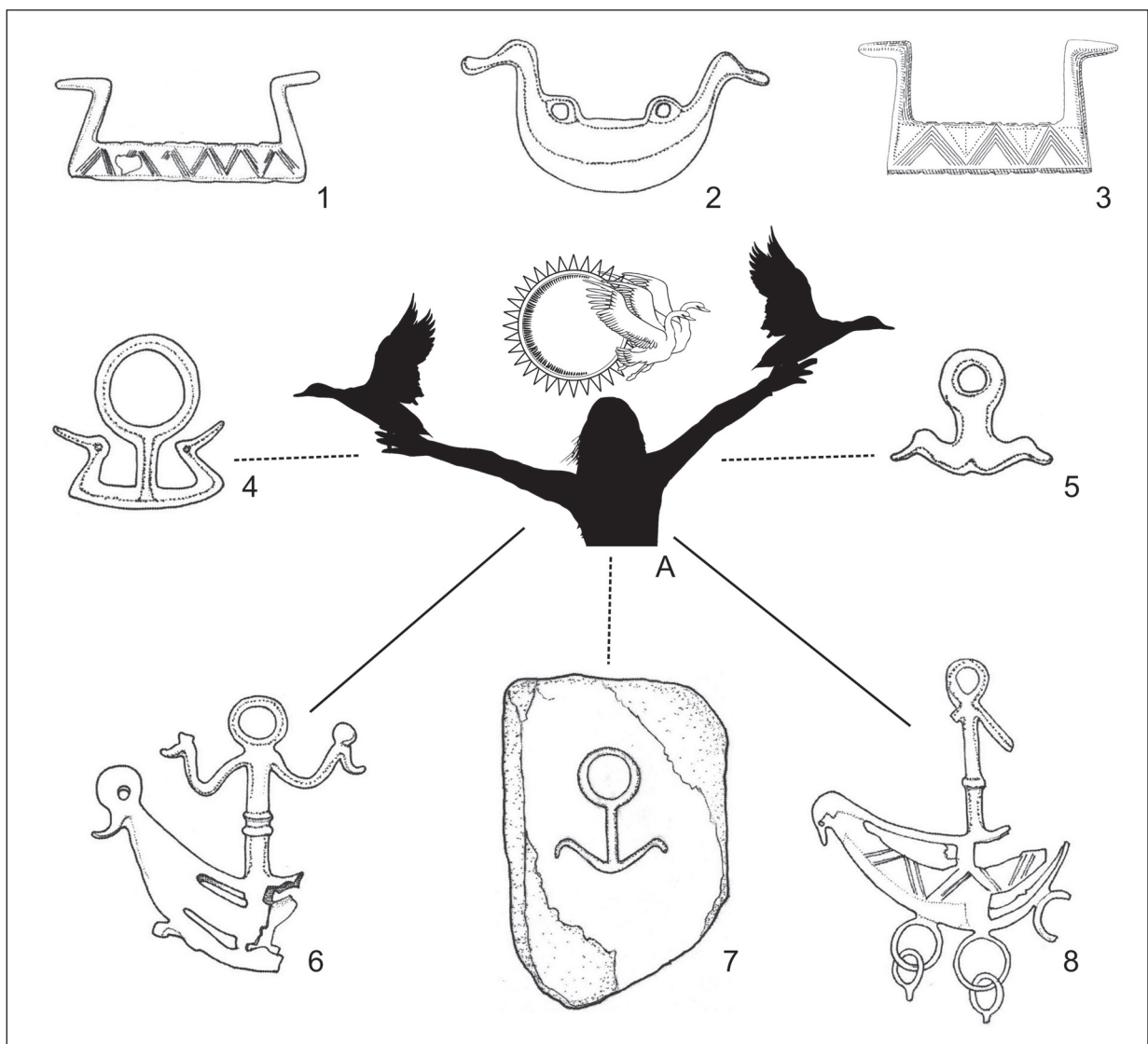


Fig. 12. Boat-shaped and ornithosolar pendants. 1 – Nádudvar, 2 – Satu Mare (after *Jankovits 2017*), 3 – Marhaň (after *Furmánek 1982*), A – portrayal of a solar deity based on the ornithosolar pendants. 4 – Hungary, 5 – Velem-Szentvid-Berg, 6 – Miskolc-Diósgyőr, 7 – Velem-Szentvid-Berg, 8 – Salgótarján (after *Jankovits 2017*). Different scales.

Obr. 12. Lodkovité a ornitosolárne závesky. 1 – Nádudvar, 2 – Satu Mare (podľa *Jankovits 2017*), 3 – Marhaň (podľa *Furmánek 1982*), A – predstava solárneho božstva na základe ornitosolárnych záveskov, 4 – Uhorsko, 5 – Velem-Szentvid-Berg, 6 – Miskolc-Diósgyőr, 7 – Velem-Szentvid-Berg, 8 – Salgótarján (podľa *Jankovits 2017*). Rôzne mierky.

mythic concept, a Sun-deity imagined as being pulled directly by several waterfowl during at least part of her voyage and holding or even morphing into a pair of waterfowl (Fig. 10).

4.4 Character of the Deity – Evaluation of Archaeological Evidence

Overall, on the basis of the archaeological record, we can conclude that during the Middle and Late Bronze Age in Central Europe and Scandinavia, there was a belief in a solar deity envisioned in an anthropomorphic, feminine form with a Sun symbol on the lower part of her abdomen (in material from Italy, the gender of this solar figure is ambiguous). Originally, this Sun-goddess was believed to be pulled directly by a horse/several horses, and this line of tradition survived at least regionally, for example in the Alps. In a later period and especially in the Urnfield area, she was believed to be pulled directly by aquatic birds (Fig. 10), that is without any wagon or chariot, at least during a part of her journey.

In southern Scandinavia, we can securely associate the diurnal movement of the mythic Sun with a boat (*Kaul 1998; 2018*). Further inland, however, many depictions interpreted as Sun-barges are rather Sun-birds pulling the Sun. Besides Sun-birds, Sun-horses, and “true solar barges”, we find also possible rare depictions of the Sun being pulled by four-wheeled wagons and a chariot. Further research is needed to clarify the relationship among these types of depictions, possibly caused by different regional and/or temporal development of underlying mythology. The association of the Sun with Death, as seen in Central, Northern, and Eastern European cultures since the late Eneolithic and possibly earlier, hints that the Sun deity was a god or goddess of death and possibly considered a psychopomp.

5. IDENTIFYING THE BRONZE AGE SUN GODDESS: MYTHOLOGY

5.1 A Word of Caution

Archeology attests to the high importance of the Sun deity in Bronze Age Europe (e.g. *Kristiansen 2013; Lincoln 1991, 6; Paulík 1993*), and it

seems that the Sun was the only heavenly body worshipped by the Indo-Europeans (*Matasović 2018*). In principle, it should be possible to reconstruct the character of this deity using comparative Indo-European mythology. For example, we could use the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European Sun mythology as a proxy or base our conclusion on Indo-European mythologies of peoples historically attested in the area (or close to the area) of the Urnfield culture and Nordic Bronze Age culture that could be considered descendants of their bearers. However, both approaches come with considerable obstacles.

- The dramatic change in religion, demonstrated by a discontinuity of religious symbolism of Central Europe/early Celts, at the transition to the La Tène culture (*Harding 2007, 17*).
- The lack of written sources that would inform us about the areas where the Urnfield Bronze Age “religious package” seems to survive the longest, for example, the territories of ancient Illyrians (*Wilkes 1992, 244*).
- Most of our sources about Nordic mythology postdate a sharp decline in the importance of the Sun/Sun deity during the 6th century AD, probably caused by the solar dust veil catastrophe of 535–537 AD (*Andrén 2014, 178–182*).
- In ancient Greece, the importance of Helios was marginal, mostly restricted to regions with a Doric population (*Larson 2007, 68*), and overshadowed by Apollo, who was originally not a Sun god (*Bilić 2016, 447; Farnell 1907, 144; West 2007, 148*).
- Rigveda is the chronologically closest source to the Proto-Indo-European archetype. Yet, it does not contain “pristine” Proto-Indo-European mythology. After centuries of interactions with central Asian cultures, it is of syncretic character, mixing Indo-European with a heavy influence of non-Indo-European traditions (*Mallory/Adams 2006, 424; Anthony 2007, 454–456, 462*). In addition, the Sun god with many Indo-European cognates, Sūrya, has already become a rather vague figure (*Keith 1925, 59, 60*).

As a result, we are often forced to work with fragments of traditions. Luckily, many of them seem to point to a common archetype of possibly Proto-Indo-European origin.

5.2 The Proto-Indo-European Sun Deity

Several lines of evidence point to the existence of a common Proto-Indo-European antecedent for many Indo-European Sun deities:

- Linguistics: names derived from the Proto-Indo-European expression for the Sun **Séh₂ul* (respectively **Séh₂wl*; Pinault 2017): Greek *Helios*, Latin *Sol*, Germanic *Sunna*, Old Norse *Sól*, Vedic *Sūrya*, Baltic *Sáulė*, Hittite *^dUTU -li-i-aš*, Avestan *Huuarə* or *Huuarə Xšaēta* (“Sun” or “shining Sun”), Celtic *Sulis* (?)², Slavic *Tsar Solnce* “Sun the Tsar” (epithet or perhaps a title of Dažbog) and *Matuschka krassnoje solnce* “Mother red Sun” (von Schroeder 1914–1916, ii. 39, 40; West 2007, 194, 195; Wodtko/Irslinger/Schneider 2008, 606–611).
- Common basic features (West 2007, 198–208, 227–233): they have a daughter, are considered “all-seeing”, witnesses of oaths and cross the sky on chariots pulled by horses which are called “never tiring” and “swift”.
- A shared complex mythological background about the diurnal voyage of the divine Sun through the day-sky and, in a boat, through the night-ocean, accompanied by various supernatural helpers and adversaries. Massetti (2018; 2019) identified several closely corresponding fragments of this myth in Greek, Baltic and Vedic mythology. This narrative has also been recognized in Nordic Bronze Age iconography (based on which it has originally been reconstructed; Kaul 1998; 2018; Kristiansen 2010; Massetti 2019, 236–239) and English Iron Age coins of the Belgae (Nash Briggs 2009).

5.3 Association of the Sun with Death

5.3.1 Going to the Sun

Indo-European traditions contain multiple concepts of an afterlife (or absence thereof), and it cannot be determined with certainty which one(s) represent the original Proto-Indo-European belief (Lincoln 1991, 49). However, some basic

very common themes have been recognized, such as the location of the Otherworld behind some form of water (West 2007, 389–391).

We can additionally identify many motifs and fragments of motifs about the afterlife that are associated with the Sun. Some authors even concluded that there was a Proto-Indo-European tradition locating the Otherworld of the blessed dead at the end of the Sun’s path (Matasović 2018). This view is based on the etymology of the Sanskrit term *svarga* – “heaven” found in the Rigveda, and the Greek *olbos* – “bliss” (used to describe the blessed heroes of Elysion), as both can probably be derived from a Proto-Indo-European compound **su(h₂)ol-g^wh₂o-* “that which goes towards the Sun” (Janda 2005, 257–286; 2006, 23, 24; Matasović 2018).

We would like to add several additional pieces of evidence that support this conclusion and point to a very old Indo-European, perhaps Proto-Indo-European conception of an afterlife for the blessed in the realm of the Sun.

- Vedic Myth
 - » King (essentially a god) of the dead Yama and the blessed dead are said to dwell in a realm of light, in the vicinity of the Sun: the ancestors are with the Sun (*RV 10.107.2*) or guard it (*RV 10.154.5*); they dwell with Yama at the highest point of the Sun (*RV 9.113.9*). There are mentions of “shining” (*jyótiṣmant-*, *RV 9.113.9*, *AV 9. 5. 6*) or “Sun-possessing” (*sūryavant-*, *AV 9. 5. 18*) worlds to be attained after death. According to Norelius (2019, 258, 260): “This realm, it is clear, is connected with Sunset and the night.”
 - » Savitr, a solar god who is according to some passages of the Rigveda identical to *Sūrya*, grants immortality (Keith 1925, 105, 106).
- Greek Myth
 - » Pindar mentions a tradition, according to which the Sun shines on the blessed dead during the earthly night (*Fr. 129.1*).
 - » Homer mentions that the gate to the Underworld is called “the gate of Helios” (*Od. 24.12*).

² A deity worshiped at the thermal spring of Bath in present-day England. The solar character of this goddess is based mostly on the solar etymology of her name, which has been questioned but is still favored among most linguists (for a comprehensive discussion, see Birkhan 1997, 579, 580 and Hofeneder 2010, 97–100). It seems that, even if this was not the case in later periods, Sulis was at least originally a Sun goddess, since, among the Celts, solar deities were often associated with hot springs, e.g. the Celtic “Venus” and the Celtic “Apollo” and possibly others (Green 1991, 110, 118; Hofeneder 2010, 100).

- Avestan (Early Iranian) Myth
 - » King Yima who, as hinted by the function of his closely related Vedic counterpart Yama, was originally probably a god of death, possesses the standing epithet of *xšaēta* – “shining” – which is also the epithet of the Sun. He is said to be “like the Sun to look at among men”, his life is “Sun-filled”, and, according to some scholars, he was originally the setting Sun (*Skjærvø 2012*).
 - » Mithra, a deity that voyages the world much like a Sun god, is located in Paradise at midnight (*Gershevitch 1959*, 39).
- Baltic Myth
 - » Balts call the otherworld *viņa saule*, literally “that Sun”, which stands in opposition to *ši saule*, literally “this Sun”, meaning “this/our world” (*Karulis 1992, II*, 22).
 - » There is evidence of an ancient Baltic worldview claiming that the leaving souls of the dead follow the Sun along its path, suggested by Baltic folksongs and reflected in the custom of funerals taking place at Sunrises or Sunsets (*Vaitkevičienė 1997*, 29–31). This belief explains the predominating Sunrise/Sunset-directed orientation of the Iron Age (5th century BC – 5th century AD) graves (*Vaitkevičienė/Vaitkevičius 2018*).
- Hittite Myth
 - » Luwians of Kizzuwatna and Hittites worshipped a chthonic Sun deity of the Night named “The Sun Goddess of the Earth” (*Haas 1994*, 421–423; *Taracha 2009*, 109). She was titled “the Queen of the Netherworld” and purified the Earth of evil. During the Middle Kingdom, she was influenced by and eventually identified with the Hurrian goddess Allani (who was not a Sun goddess). Since retention of Indo-European traditions has been identified even among Hittite gods with a non-Indo-European etymology (e.g. *Ginevra 2019*), it is possible that at least some traditions associated with The Sun Goddess of the Earth have an Indo-European origin.

5.3.2 The Night Sun and the Island of the Blessed

The above-mentioned traditions and fragments of traditions can be connected to a more specific

belief about an island visited by “the Night Sun”, a deity associated with the ocean.

- Baltic Myth
 - » The imagery of a “solar deity associated with an afterlife in a permanent paradise according to Latvian dainas, “the Sun rests at night: in the middle of the sea, on the Rock” (*Calin 2021*, 7).
- Greek Myth
 - » According to Hesiod, the Isles of the Blessed are located along the shore of a “deep swirling Ocean” (*Op. 170*) with eternal light shining even at night (*Pindar, Ol. 2*: 61–67).
 - » As highlighted by Calin (*2021*, 66, 75, 76), many motifs and traditions associated with the Sun of the night/dead seem to be present in the daughter of Helios Circe: e.g. she travels by ship, her home is a mythological island (the island of Aeaëa, also home of the Dawn goddess and the “risings of the Sun”, *Od. 12.3–4*), she bathes in the sea in the morning, and in the *Odyssey*, she explains to Odysseus how to cross to the ocean (“something the Night Sun would be accustomed to doing every night” according to *Calin 2021*, 75) and how to reach the underworld (*Od. 10.503–540*, 561); she does this during the night, and when the “golden-throned Dawn” appears, Circe leaves. We can also conclude that Circe’s “Sunrise island” lies in the vicinity of Hades – a fact that has perplexed some commentators – and that Circe has a role very similar to a goddess of death (*Marinatos 2001*, 399, 401; *West 2014*, 122). Furthermore, according to the fragmentarily known *Chrestomathia* of Proclus, our most important source of information on the Epic Cycle, she is the one to send Odysseus and Penelope to the Isles of the Blessed after they die (*West 2013*, 13). There are additional elements associating Circe with death and the night. For example, Circe turns men into pigs, which had chthonic connotations for the Greeks, who associated them with Persephone and the Underworld. (*Marinatos 2001*, 404).
- Celtic Myth
 - » *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (8th century AD) contains a Christianized description of Paradise, the imagery of which is “purely Indo-European”.

This *Terra Repromissionis Sanctorum*, “land promised to the Saints”, lays at the end of the world and is a place of omnipresent, perpetual light (*Lincoln 1991*, 25).

- » Old Irish afterlife *Tír na n-Óg* is an island-paradise and supernatural realm of everlasting youth, beauty, health, abundance and joy (*Koch 2006*, 1671).
- » Old Irish island-realm *tech Duinn* “The House of Donn”, to which the eponymous deity (“The Dark One”) invited his descendants, the Irish people, to come after death (*Matasović 2018*).
- » The imagery of a “solar deity associated with an afterlife in a permanent paradise of the ever young on the island where the Sun sets” has been identified on the 1st century BC golden Chiemsee Cauldron of the Armorican Veneti (*Olmsted 2020*).
- Slavic Myth
 - » In Russian folklore, the home of the dead called Buyan is often depicted as an oceanic island paradise and the “Home of the Sun” which goes there every evening after it sets. Other inhabitants are monstrous beings and Zoryias, the goddesses of the Dawn and Evening (*Dietrich 1857*, 23; *Ralston 1872*, 363, 368, 374–377).
- Vedic myth
 - » Savitr, a solar god granting immortality and sometimes considered identical to Sūrya, possesses the epithet “Of the Waters” (*Keith 1925*, 105, 106).

5. 3. 3 Island of Magical Golden Apples

There is a set of related, widely attested and probably related or complementary traditions about an island associated with the Sun and a fruit providing eternal life (*Calin 2021*, 218–221; *Mallory/Adams 1997*, 165; *West 2007*, 159):

- Greek Myth
 - » Golden apples grow in a garden in the land of the Hesperides (“Evening” goddesses) and are guarded by a great serpent.
 - Note that Massetti (2019) identified traditions, according to which Helios uses a boat to travel during the night from the land of

the Hesperides to the land of the Aithiopes and is guided by the Hesperide Erytheia “The Red One”. There is a perfect etymological and functional match in Baltic mythology, where the fish Rauda “The Red One” guides the Sun goddess Saule in the same manner as the fish in Nordic Bronze Age iconography guides the Sun.

- Baltic Myth
 - » Magical golden apples (providing one with a wealthy and blissful life), mentioned by several dainas, are connected to Sun goddess Saule, the Sundaughters and the Divine Twins.
- Hittite Myth
 - » The connection between the Sun-goddess and an apple (tree) was already known in Hittite mythology (“*An apple tree stands over a spring... the Sun-goddess of Arinna saw it and spread her splendid garment over it*”).
- Germanic (Nordic) Myth
 - » Apples providing one with eternal youth are in the custody of the goddess Idunn.
- Celtic Myth
 - » Ancient Irish sources mention berries providing one with immortality that grow in the Land of Promise or on an island in a loch, guarded by a dragon.
 - » Avalon (“The Isle of Fruit/Apple Trees”), the legendary island of the Arthurian legend, may be based on the same concept.
- Indo-Iranian mythology
 - » Rather surprisingly, this seems to be the only Proto-Indo-European motif not known in Vedic mythology (*Kazanas 2001*, 29). However, the Ossetian legends of the Narts mention magical, healing golden apples.

5. 3. 4 No Descent into the Underworld?

For the Sun deities of European Late Prehistory, a mythic descent into the underworld is often assumed (e.g. *Andrén 2014*; *Green 1991*; *Kaul 1998*; *2018*).³ A voyage into a subterranean realm of the dead is a well-known motif of the Egyptian Sun god Re, the Canaanite Sun-goddess Shapshu and the Mesopotamian Sun-god Shamash

³ However, it is often not clear whether the above-mentioned and other authors really mean the realm of the dead located under the surface or simply use the term “Underworld” for the realm of the dead without presupposing its location.

(*Taracha 2009*, 109; *West 1997*, 470, 542). This Near-Eastern motif might have spread to Greek mythology, too. However, Indo-European Sun deities did not descend into a realm of the dead located in the subsurface, but rather crossed the waters of the night sailing east (*Masseti 2018, 2019*). In the Vedas, it is even explicitly stated that the Sun not only does not descend underground, but it even never really sets: after reaching the western horizon, it turns its shiny side and returns to the east unnoticed – a motif embodied in the Sun-disc of the Danish Trundholm chariot (*West 2007*, 209, 210).

This scenario is actually what the archeological evidence hints at: taken at a face value, Nordic Bronze Age rock art images of ships as well as Iron Age early Gotlandic picture stones indicate that the Sun returns to the East overnight by sailing a ship across the dark sea of the night (*Andrén 2014*, 123), with no hint of a subterranean descent.

5.3.5 Sun and Death: Summary

The Sun-death association seen in the archaeological record of Europe can be interpreted in various ways. Some authors (*Panchenko 2012*, 13; *Wirth 2010*, 8), who base their interpretations on the religious ideas of ancient Egypt, connect this association to a belief in a rebirth similar to the daily “rebirth” of the Sun. Comparative Indo-European mythology leads to a very different conclusion, claiming that symbols of the Sun represent the desired goal of the imaginary posthumous journey of souls. This journey was imagined in an ancient (probably Proto-Indo-European) and widespread tradition as an island located far away in the ocean, in a place where the Sun sets and comes to rest.

5.4 Gender of Indo-European Sun-Deities

The original Proto-Indo-European designation of the Sun was probably neuter (*Mallory/Adams 1997*, 556; neuter or masculinum according to *Pinault 2017*). In the Graeco-Aryan traditions, the Indo-European Sun deity is male (e.g. Greek Helios, Vedic Sūrya), whereas, in North-Western Indo-European traditions, it is typically female

(Baltic Saule and the fragmentarily known Germanic and Celtic goddesses Sól, Sunna and Sulis). Here, we are going to review selected important correspondences among the latter and, for a fuller understanding of the issue, also those concerning the Sundaughter, which is another possibly relevant class of Indo-European Sun deities.

The Germanic Sól and Baltic Saule share a close relationship with the Moon deity, who is a suitor (Saule) or brother (Sól). In Slavic mythology, there seems to be a place left vacant by a similar Sun goddess. Although the male Dažbog is often considered to be the main Sun deity of ancient Slavs, most folkloric tales about the Sun do not refer to him (*Dixon-Kennedy 1998*, 268) and in some instances feature a female Sun that may be the bride of the Moon, as in the Baltic myth (*von Schroeder 1914–1916*, ii. 39, 40).

In Vedic mythology, the Sundaughter blends with the male Sun deity in her name: Sūryā “the Sun” is simply a feminine version of Sūrya, the male Sun God. However, she also blends with another cognate female Sun goddess, Saule, in that she is the wife of a Moon deity (*Dexter 1984*, 137, 142; *West 2007*, 227). In the Baltic mythology, the Sundaughter (Lit. *Saulės dukė*, Lat. *Saules meita*) is courted, among others, by the Moon deity, and associated with golden apples – in both cases, just like Saule –, and she even appears as a variant of Saule, that is, as the Sun in the form of a girl, literally meaning “the maiden, the Sun” (*Biezais 1972*, 184–190; *Calin 2021*, 111, 220; *West 2007*, 228).

Despite hints at “blending” with the Sun deity, the strand of tradition associated with Indo-European Sundaughters has several distinct elements. For example, the Baltic Sundaughter has a close relationship with the Indo-European Divine Twins (Latvian *Dieva dēli*, Lithuanian *Diėvo sūneliai* or *Ašvieniai*), who are her most typical suitors and rescue her from drowning (*Biezais 1972*, 279, 280; *West 2007*, 189). In the Vedic mythology, the Sundaughter Sūryā has a strikingly parallel relationship with the Vedic Divine Twins (the *Aśvinau/Nāsatyā*). However, Rigveda (1.112.13) retains a tradition of the Divine Twins (*Aśvins*) being helpers directly to the Sun-god Sūrya.

In Greek mythology, the situation is still more complicated. For example, traditions characteristic of the Sundaughter are present in Helen, who is associated with Greek Divine Twins the Dioscuri, her brothers and saviors (*Jaszczyński 2018; West 2007*, 137, 230–232). Another important solar figure of the Greek mythology is Circe. Despite being explicitly called the “Daughter of Helios”, she lacks any close relationship with a twin/brother pair and, as already noted above, embodies many motifs that make her, in part, the manifestation of the Indo-European Night (Death) Sun: she travels by ship, lives on an island that is the home of the “risings of the Sun”, is associated with the ocean, night and Realm of the Dead. But as noted by Calin (*2021*, 215–217), according to the *Odyssey* (10.544), she also wears a belt or a girdle of gold, just like the Baltic Sundaughter who is associated with a *zelta josta* “golden belt/girdle” in many dainas. Correspondences between the two deities run deeper, as both Circe and the Baltic Sundaughter *Saules meita* are associated with the night and bathing (and wading) in the sea (*Calin 2021*, 67, 68, 82). Coming full circle, the association with wading in the sea (during the night) is one of the few known characteristics of the Germanic Sun-goddess Sól (*Calin 2021*, 69).

Our comparison brought up an interlinked web of correspondences. There was evidently a strong line of tradition associating the Sun with a female deity, whether she was envisioned as the manifestation of the Sun itself or its daughter. The Sundaughter often, and in several ways, “blends” with the Sun deity itself, which hints at their historical interdependence, whether original or secondary. Calin (*2021*) argues for an original Indo-European dichotomy of a male day-Sun, and female night-Sun, the latter of which evolved into the Indo-European Sundaughters. However, in our opinion, an equally valid explanation is that Indo-European Sundaughters represent a female hypostasis containing the more emblematically feminine characteristics of the original female Proto-Indo-European Sun deity in areas where the term for Sun and the Sun deity itself became masculine. In the light of recent research (this study; *Calin 2021; Massetti 2019*), future studies should

seriously reconsider the possibility of a Proto-Indo-European Sun deity of the female gender (currently not a *communis opinio* among researchers).

6. SUN-BIRDS AND THE SOLAR CYCLE

6.1 Indo-European Solar Cycle

As already mentioned above, the narrative of the diurnal journey of the divine Sun and its helpers/adversaries (horse, bird, fish, snake) has been reconstructed by Kaul (*1998*) based on Nordic Late Bronze Age razors and, more recently, identified on Iron Age coins of the Belgae in south-eastern England by Nash Briggs (*2009*). Recent research on shared mythical elements of related (cognate) Indo-European Sun deities (*Massetti 2018; 2019; c.f. Calin 2021*, 70) identified what can arguably be termed as a “perfect match” to this narrative in Greek, Baltic, and Vedic mythology.

In addition to the well-known motif of a Sun deity crossing the sky in a chariot led by horses, Massetti’s work brought up evidence for another common motif – sailing the night-waters in a boat that is golden, winged and often equipped “with a hundred oars”. Among other details, she stressed that the golden “cup” of Helios was originally associated with typical epithets used in connection with ships (*Massetti 2019*, 225, 228, 229). In the Vedas, the Sun-god Sūrya is only rarely mentioned in connection with a voyage conducted by a boat (*AV 17. 1. 25–26, 13. 2. 2bc*), as, according to Massetti (*2018*), in the Vedic mythology, this element of the Indo-European Sun myth seems to be inherited by the Nasatyas (Divine Twins).

The narrative is vaguely similar to the voyage of the Sun god in Egyptian mythology, but despite some similarities in the night vehicle of the deities, the Indo-European night-time voyage takes place over waters of the night, with no hint of any descent into a subterranean realm.

6.2 Solar Cycle in Central Europe

In addition to the already mentioned reconstructions of the Sun cycle narrative based on Nordic

and English material, Croatian researcher Sineva Kukoč (2016) reconstructed a similar narrative – a daytime voyage of the Sun in the sky and its nighttime travel in the Netherworld based on archaeological material of the Adriatic region, namely Liburnian and Piceno grave jewelry of the latest Bronze Age and earliest Iron Age. In Central Europe, however, a similar effort is doomed to failure (Fig. 13) because iconographic depictions portray the Day Sun, pulled by two waterfowl. Finds clearly attributable to the “Night Sun” are extremely rare, if present at all. This may have been caused by the regional absence of this mythical motif in the belief system (which we consider unlikely), its artistic unattractiveness, inconspicuous features of

its artistic depictions, or a taboo (Alternatively, our conclusion might be wrong, and the motif of Sun-birds pulling the Sun does not designate the Day Sun).

Motifs of the night part of the solar cycle are better known from the material culture of southern Scandinavia possibly due to its maritime environment, with ships a far more common means of transport, or due to the natural environment with pronounced seasonal differences in the length of day and night. On the other hand, it should be noted that even in maritime Scandinavia, the nocturnal part of the solar cycle is only rarely depicted on rock art and the ships themselves are rare in areas farther from the seashore (Bradley 2006; Kristiansen 2010).

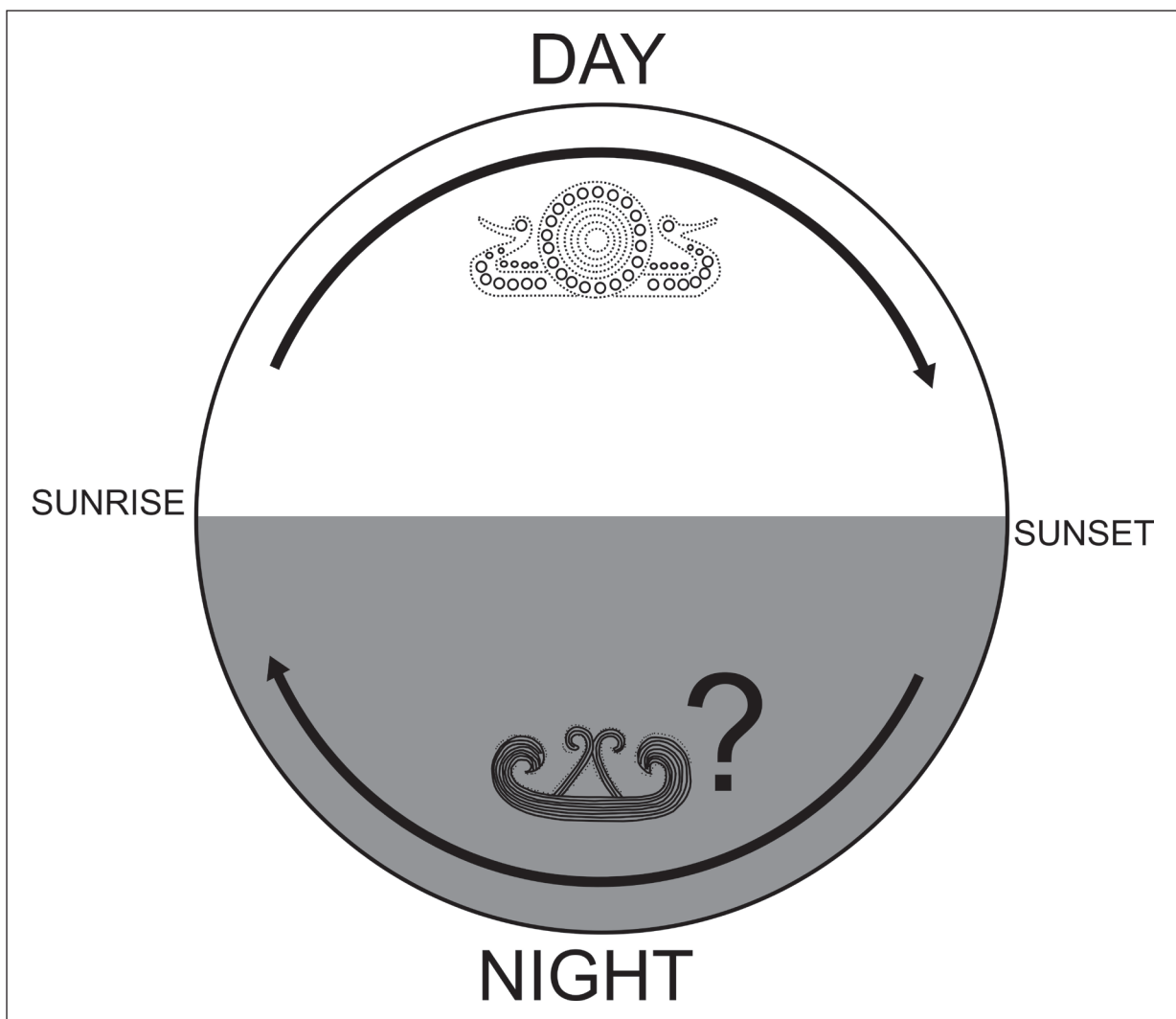


Fig. 13. Reconstruction of the day and night part of the diurnal solar cycle based on Central European findings.

Obr. 13. Rekonštrukcia denného a nočného cyklu na základe stredoeurópskych nálezov.

6.3 Deities of the Solar Cycle and Birds

In contrast to the rich archaeological record, available mythic traditions never talk about the Sun being directly pulled by a pair of waterfowl. On the other hand, we do find conspicuously numerous bird motifs associated with the solar cycle and associated deities.

As noted by Massetti (2018), the boat of the Sun deity (or the Vedic Divine Twins the Nasatyas who inherited the Sun's voyage of the solar cycle) is often described as winged. During their night voyage, the Nasatyas travel pulled by falcons yoked to their chariot (RV 1.118.4a). In addition to that, as noted by Calin (2021, 222, 253, 255), the Vedic Divine Twins are themselves compared to geese, hāridrava-birds, vultures and hawks and are said to possess gold feathered swans. Baltic Divine Twins are likened to hawks (Calin 2021, 255)

Associations of the Sun deity with birds, especially aquatic birds, go deeper. Twelve swans were sacred to Helios (Hard 2004, 44). Helen, who is, in part, a reflex of the Indo-European Sundaughter (Jaszczyński 2018; West 2007, 230–232), was said to be conceived by Zeus in the form of a swan and Nemesis in the form of a goose, and she was born out of a goose egg (e.g. Calin 2021, 255; Hard 2004, 438). According to some traditions, the Divine Twins were born out of the same or a similar egg (Hard 2004, 439). This motif is not extant in Baltic myth, but it was surely present, as suggested by the Estonian (Uralic) Salme, a mythological borrowing of the Baltic Sundaughter, who was born out of a goose egg just like Helen (West 2007, 231). As noted by Calin (2021, 255) the name of the sister of the Germanic Divine Twins Hengist and Horsa is Swana, and that “can hardly be a coincidence”. Another possibly relevant detail is the avian name of the Greek Sundaughter and Night/Death

Sun-goddess Circe: it is a feminine form corresponding to *kirkos*, meaning “hawk, falcon”, which is surprising, since there is nothing bird-like about her (West 1997, 408).

Judged on their own merit, it is hard to evaluate these fragments of tradition and in some cases rather obscure motifs. They may be remnants of a Proto-Indo-European solar deity with pronounced bird associations or a grouping of unrelated, coincidental bird associations. Or they may be, in part, both: several coincidental similarities with a few reflexes of a local Indo-European (but not Proto-Indo-European) tradition of a solar deity born out of a bird egg.

There are some helpful observations of the two Dupljaja solar chariots. The more complete chariot is actually pulled by two (not three!) aquatic birds, as in most Bronze Age portrayals of the bird-pulled Sun (Sun-bird-barges) – the third bird sits on the vehicle. Both solar-symbol-bearing “chariots” resemble an eggshell. The female figures⁴ on the chariot have a bird-like beak (or bird-mask) as if they had hatched out of the egg. Consequently, the find supports the existence of an ancient but possibly locally developed (post-Proto-Indo-European) myth about the avian birth of the Sun deity.

6.4 Birds as Souls of the Dead or Psychopomps

Since birds, especially water birds move freely between “cosmological spheres” (water, air, and the ground), they are the prime candidates for mediators between worlds. Indeed, in a wide variety of cultures, they are closely associated with death – e. g. they are considered to be the embodiment of the souls of the dead or psychopomps carrying the dead to the otherworld (Pásztor 2017b, 195; Waida 2005, 947). This way of thinking is reflected in Nordic mythology, where we find swans (Valkyries) flying above the battlefield

⁴ The figure of the more complete chariot is usually interpreted as male (Bilić 2016, with literature), sometimes as female (Kristiansen/Larsson 2005, 150, 307). She wears women's clothing (Bouzek 1977, 197) and women's ornaments. There is no plastically depicted bust, as is the case for other female figurines of the Cirna Žuto-Brdo culture (Chicideanu-Sandor/Chicideanu 1990, Figs. 3–8). In the place of the breast, we find solar symbols evoking breasts, similar to the Kisterenye pendants. The placement of these symbols on the chest (and abdomen) resembles the figurines of the Celtic “Venus” (Green 1991, 129) that presumably embody a solar goddess. The claim that the indefinite “lumpy” formation on the lower inner side of the figurine depicts a penis cannot be confirmed on the basis of available images: the lump may be simply an artifact of unpolished material (Holenweger 2011, note 446 on p. 134).

to take the souls of selected deceased warriors to Valhalla (*Ellis* 1943, 70, 71) and possibly in Greek mythology where several heroes, sons of the gods, named Kyknos (lat. *Cygnus* “swan”) were transformed into swans after their death or placed in the sky in the form of swans (*Hard* 2004, 45, 282, 451).

Archeology offers similar evidence: the bird symbolism of the Urnfield culture is equivalent to the symbolism of the equine psychopomp, which is well known among the Celts and Germanic peoples, and to a lesser extent among the ancient Romans and Greeks (*Coimbra* 2017).

Associating birds with death, especially as some kind of psychopomps, seems to be a quasi-universal motif of ancient religions. Based on congruence of ethnological, mythological and archaeological evidence, we can conclude that this association probably applied to Urnfield culture Sun-bird symbolism as well and offers further support for the association of the Divine Sun with death.

6.5 An Attempt to Identify the Sun-Birds

In Indo-European mythology, the Divine Twins are important helpers, rescuers and suitors of the solar deity (the Sundaughter), who are closely associated with horses and sometimes even envisioned as horses (*Ward* 1968; *West* 2007, 186–193). In Nordic Bronze Age artwork, we find pairs of human and horse helpers of the Sun, which are commonly interpreted as Divine Twins (e.g. *Andrén* 2014, *passim*; *Kristiansen/Larsson* 2005, 262–282, 297). Their cult is also documented in Central Europe, at least since the Early Bronze Age (*Jelínek* 2016; *Kristiansen* 2011b; *Neumann* 2020).

An intriguing development in Nordic Bronze Age iconography is the appearance of waterbirds, usually connected to influences of the Central European Urnfield groups, and the following decline of horse portrayals. For example, in rock art, the Sun was most often depicted as being carried by ships with horse-head protomes, but around 1000 BC, horse protomes were replaced with bird protomes (*Kveiborg* 2018). This development can be interpreted as a change of form but not in the identity of the divine helpers of the

Sun. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the Divine Twins are often associated with birds, waterfowl among others, as discussed above, and that Sun-birds pulling the Sun are most often depicted in pairs.

The identification of Sun-birds as the Divine Twins is supported by the fact that these deities were also venerated as helpers of the common people, whether on the sea or in battle. This fact may explain the, otherwise rather surprising, importance of the Sun-bird motifs on weapons, even to the extent of Sunbirds being more prominent than the Sun itself.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

As is true for material culture, the solar cult and mythology of Bronze Age Central Europe were the result of mostly internal development (compare *Zipf* 2004, 475) and probably were based on inherited Indo-European traditions, with some local variability and innovations not found in ancestral Proto-Indo-European traditions.

Some of the most emblematic and common late Bronze Age solar symbols, such as the Sun-crosses (four-spoked wheels) and concentric rings, sometimes found with the depiction of sunrays that attest their solar meaning, were already common in Late Eneolithic cultures of Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe. For Central Europe, *J. Turek* (2011, 97) even postulates a Late Eneolithic “dominance of solar cult”. Bearers of these cultures descended, as shown by archaeogenetic studies, to a large degree from the population of Pontic-Caspian steppes, considered by most relevant archaeologists, linguists, and geneticists (late) Proto-Indo-European.

Already in the Late Eneolithic, the solar symbolism was strongly associated with death. Despite the transient decrease in its frequency during the Early Bronze Age (with regional exceptions), the Sun retained its eschatological importance, as witnessed by the long-lasting rigid orthodoxy of solar grave orientation. We explain this strong link between the Sun and death using numerous etymological, phraseological, motivic, and narrative correspondences of Indo-European

traditions. Following and expanding on previous research we postulate an ancient Indo-European, and possibly Proto-Indo-European belief about the souls of the blessed dead “going to the Sun”, probably to an island in the sea, which the Divine Sun visits during the night. In contrast to Near Eastern and Egyptian chthonic Sun deities, the ancient Indo-European Sun deity did not descend into a subterranean realm of the dead, and was not associated with rebirth, but most likely with the desired destination in the afterlife and/or a psychopompic function. This conclusion may lead to different interpretations of some cult- and grave-related archeological finds featuring solar symbolism.

During the Bronze Age, a “revival” of the solar cult has been postulated and linked to an increased amount of volcanic material during the 17. century BC, that led to more intense atmospheric solar phenomena (*Pásztor 2015c*, 6; c.f. *Green 1991*, 17). In the following centuries, a much higher frequency of solar symbolism can be observed. However, its ubiquity (in the Carpathian Basin, an almost complete suppression of other religious symbolism can be observed), does not necessarily imply that the solar deity was the “chief deity” of the pantheon, nor was it worshipped henotheistically. Solar symbolism might have simply been artistically attractive, or the Sun deity was important for certain segments of the society or certain religious, calendrical, or human life events and activities.

Based on typological development of anthropomorphic pendants with solar-symbolism from Carpathian Basin, and their comparison to finds of culturally and chronologically related communities (e.g. chariots from Dupljaja, prestigious Scandinavian burials of young women with Sun-discs and Sun-wheels worn on belts) we propose that in Central and Northern Europe, the Sun deity was conceived in the form of a young female, most probably “carrying the Sun” on the lower part of her belly (Fig. 10). The golden belt of the Greek Sundaughter Circe and that of the Baltic Sundaughter Saules Meita may be a related motif, and if so, hint at the large antiquity of this tradition and its original wide occurrence. Mutual comparison of anthropomorphic and

non-anthropomorphic archaeological finds associated with the Sun, as well as a comparison of both with Indo-European religious traditions, suggests this Bronze Age Sun Goddess might have been represented by non-anthropomorphic solar symbols, despite being conceived in a human-like form.

Iconographic evidence of Nordic Bronze Age razors and rock art, Iron Age coins from England and grave finds from the Adriatic attest to the existence of a mythic narrative about the diurnal voyage of the Divine Sun and its helpers and adversaries. It finds close correspondences in Baltic, Greek, and Vedic myth and was probably a central mythical narration of Bronze Age and regionally even of Iron Age populations (*Andrén 2014*). The solar cycle was linked to portrayals of two bird protomes connected to a Sun disc, interpreted as (Sun-)bird-barges. However, this interpretation was based on a superficial resemblance and does not take into account the cultural and artistic context. After accounting for artistic conventions of the Urnfield culture, we propose a different interpretation: supposed (Sun-)bird-barges often actually portray pairs of birds (waterfowl) pulling the Sun (Fig. 11: 1, 3, 4), probably during the day part of the deity’s diurnal journey. Depictions of “true bird-barges” are rather rare (Fig. 12: 1, 3), as is the case for supposed portrayals of the Sun (deity) pulled by a wagon or a chariot (Fig. 6: 1, 2, 4).

In ancient religions, there seems to have been a quasi-universal association of birds with death, especially as a certain kind of psychopomps. Based on the congruence of ethnological, mythological and archaeological evidence, we can conclude that this association probably applied to Urnfield culture Sun-bird symbolism as well and offers further support for the association of the Divine Sun with death.

This interpretation corresponds to depictions of solar female figures with “bird arms” (Fig. 3: 5, 8; 8: 1), i.e. arms ending in bird protomes. Furthermore, this postulate is in line with numerous bird associations of Indo-European Sun-deities, as well as with those of the solar chariots from Dupljaja (Fig. 6: 1), with beak-like faces and egg-shell shaped chariots, reminding of the myth

about the birth of Helen, who has probably been a partial reflex of the Indo-European Sundaughter, born out of a goose egg.

The presumed female Sun deity of the Urn-field culture and Nordic Bronze Age shows close affinities to both the Indo-European Sun-deities (most notably in its diurnal voyage) and the Sundaughters (i.e. in its helpers). A comparative analysis of the Indo-European Sundaughters and Sun-goddesses suggests some kind of historical interconnection between these two classes of deities. We thus hypothesize two possible scenarios: 1) in the Bronze Age of Central and Northern Europe, Indo-European archetypes of the Sundaughter and Sun god(dess) merged into one deity; 2) Sundaughters represent a later hypostasis of the original Proto-Indo-European Sun god(dess).

A vivid example of such split can be found in Greek mythology, with astonishingly numerous motifs of the Night/Death Sun preserved in narratives about the daughter of Helios Circe (a figure usually overlooked in Indo-European comparative mythology), several important elements (birth, association with and rescue by the Divine Twins) preserved in narratives about Helen, and additional elements (diurnal voyage) preserved in narratives about the original Greek Sun-god Helios. Considering comparative mythology and archeology, it seems that if we combine motifs with solar associations of these three figures (the former two of whom also embody various non-solar traditions), we get a close approximation of the Sun Goddess of the Central European Bronze Age.

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“SLNKO SMRTI” A MYLNE INTERPRETOVANÁ SLNEČNÁ BÁRKA: PREHODNOTENIE SOLÁRNEJ IKONOGRAFIE DOBY BRONZOVEJ A INDOEURÓPSKEJ MYTOLÓGIE

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Vývoj spoločnosti, architektúry a materiálnej kultúry v strednej Európe doby bronzovej, a obzvlášť v Karpatskej kotline, sa dlho považoval za podmienený vplyvmi vychádzajúcimi z východného Stredomoria (*Bouzek 1985; Furmánek/Veliačik/Vladár 1991, 331; Podborský 2006, 224*). Novšie výskumy sa však od tohto pohľadu čoraz častejšie odkláňajú, uprednostňujúc prevažne autonómny vývoj (napr. *Alusik 2012; Dietrich/Dietrich 2011; Fischl 2012, 47; Šalkovský 1980*).

Častý výskyt solárneho symbolizmu v Európe doby bronzovej (predovšetkým počas druhej polovice tohto obdobia) na prestížnych bronzových predmetoch alebo pohrebnej keramike viedol archeológov k predpokladu existencie viery v dôležité slnečné božstvo (*Kristiansen 2013, 83*), ústredný kozmologický „mýtický naratív“ súvisiaci so slnkom (*Kaul 1998; 2018; Wirth 2010*) alebo dokonca akýsi typ pramonoteizmu (*Paulík 1993*). Podobne ako v prípade iných aspektov náboženstva stredoeurópskej doby bronzovej (*Podborský 2006, 229*), solárny kult a solárna ikonografia sa typicky interpretovali skrz perspektívy východomeditéranných, či dokonca staroegyptských náboženstiev (napr. *Bouzek 1977; 2000; Furmánek 1997; Greene 1991, 18; Hänsel 2000; Klontza-Jaklová 2018; Müller-Karpe 2001; Panchenko 2012, 13; Wirth 2010, 8*). Autori tejto práce vo svojich nedávnych, viac menej pilotných štúdiách naproti tomu považovali stredoeurópske náboženstvo doby bronzovej za výsledok prevažne autonómneho vývoja, založeného na indoeurópskom dedičstve (*Jelínek/Valent 2019; Valent/Jelínek 2020*). Podobný prístup vidíme vo výskume náboženstva nordickej doby bronzovej (napr. *Kaliff 2007; Kristiansen 2010; 2013; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005*).

V tomto príspevku nadväzujeme na naše vyššie citované práce, pričom sa podrobnejšie

zameriavame na vybrané aspekty slnečného kultu strednej Európy doby bronzovej a susedných oblastí, so špeciálnym zreteľom na nálezy z Karpatskej kotliny. Štúdiu tvoria archeologické aj filologické analýzy. Archeologické analýzy sa pokúšajú o dekonštruktívnu kritiku starších interpretácií slnečnej symboliky a ich reinterpretáciu. Zameriavame sa na nálezy kultúry popolnicových polí a ňou ovplyvnené kultúry nordickej doby bronzovej. Keďže stredoeurópske komunity mladšej a neskorej doby bronzovej boli súčasťou širšieho zoskupenia príbuzných kultúr a geneticky príbuzných populácií (*Reich 2018*), pri analýze základných konceptov slnečného symbolizmu a slnečného kultu prihliadame na chronologicky a geograficky širší kontext.

V snahe oprieť sa o čo najrelevantnejšie náboženské tradície, filologickú analýzu nezakladáme primárne na mýtoch antického Grécka. Starogrécka mytológia bola silne ovplyvnená mýtmi starovekého Blízkeho východu, ktoré do veľkej miery vytlačili do úzadia jej zdedené indoeurópske tradície (*Mallory/Adams 2006, 426; Puhvel 1987, 126nn; West 1997*). Namiesto toho sa obraciame na komparatívnu indoeurópsku mytológiu, ktorá dokáže odhaliť zdedené indoeurópske tradície nielen v gréckej mytológii, ale aj vo védскеj, baltskej a iných (*Calin 2021; West 2007*). Relevantnosť indoeurópskej komparatívnej mytológie opierame o konsenzus historických jazykovedcov, archeogenetikov a archeológov, podľa ktorého neskorí Praindoeurópania expandovali z východoeurópskych stepí do ostatných končín Európy počas tretieho tisícročia pred n. l. (napr. *Anthony 2007; 2017; Chang et al. 2015; Kortland 2018; Olander 2019; Reich 2018*). Môžeme teda predpokladať, že o tisícročie neskôr bolo náboženstvo populácií strednej Európy stále pomerne blízke praindoeurópske-

mu náboženstvu, ktoré možno rekonštruovať pomocou komparatívnej metódy.

Meno indoeurópskeho slnečného božstva je zväčša totožné s výrazom pre „slnko“ v príslušnom jazyku. Jeho praindoeurópsky tvar možno rekonštruovať ako **Séh₂ul* (resp. **Séh₂wl*; *Pinault 2017*). Z tohto praveku výchádzajú grécky *Helios*, latinský *Sol*, germánska *Sunna*, staronórska *Sól*, védsky *Sūrja*, baltská *Sáulē*, chetitské božstvo *dUTU -li-i-aš*, avestský *Huuarə* or *Huuara Xšaēta* („slnko“ alebo „žiariace slnko“), keltská *Sulis* (?), (východo)slovanský *Car Solnce* „cár Slnko“ (epitet alebo snáď titul boha Dažboga) a *Máťuška krásnoje solnce* „matička červené slnko“ (*von Schroeder 1914–1916*, ii. 39, 40; *West 2007*, 194, 195; *Wodtko/Irslinger/Schneider 2008*, 606–611).

V rozpore s populárnou predstavou (napr. *Kristiansen 2013*, 86; *West 2007*, 210), symbol štvorspicového kola (slnečného križa) nebol inšpirovaný ani inak závislý od vynálezu ľahkých bojových vozov a kolies so spicmi, ktoré sa niekoľko storočí po ich vynájdení okolo r. 2000 pred n. l. rozšírili v Európe (*Švecová 2004*, 388). Ako upozornila E. Pásztor, tento symbol bol rozšírený už počas 3. tisícročia pred našim letopočtom (*2015b*, 1346; *2017c*). S najväčšou pravdepodobnosťou bol slnečný križ, ako aj iné prvky solárnej symboliky doby bronzovej (trňovité centrálné výbežky slnečných diskov, motív solárnej bárky alebo koncentrické kruhy) inšpirovaný slnečnými halovými fenoménmi ako je parhélium alebo slnečný pilier (obr. 7; *Pásztor 2015b*; *2017a*; *2017c*).

Pozorovaná variabilita vo vyobrazeniach a symbolike slnka, ktorá sa prejavila predovšetkým na kolesovitých záveskoch (*Kossack 1954*, Taf. 16: 1–19), mohla mať viacero príčin. V prvom rade rozmanitosť slnečných atmosférických fenoménov, kreativitu umelcov, ktorí sa týmito javmi inšpirovali, ďalej rozmanitosť mytologických asociácií slnka, či „magických“ funkcií týchto predmetov, alebo ich používanie ako insignie pre členov spoločnosti so špecifickým postavením alebo funkciami.

J. Turek (*2011*, 97) na základe hojnosti solárnej symboliky postuloval dominanciu solárneho kultu už pre kultúry neskorého eneolitu. Po is-

tom útlme vo frekvencii solárnej symboliky nastáva v 17. storočí pred n. l. jej výrazný vzostup, spájaný so sopečnou aktivitou, ktorá viedla k intenzívnym solárnym atmosférickým fenoménom (*Pásztor 2015c*, 6; porovnaj *Green 1991*, 17). V nasledujúcich storočiach solárna symbolika v strednej Európe miestami zatláča do úzadia akúkoľvek inú náboženskú symboliku (*Paulík 1993*). Tento stav však podľa nášho názoru nevyhnutne neznamená, že slnečné božstvo predstavovalo „najvyššie božstvo“ panteónu, ani že bolo uctievanie henoteisticky, ako sa domnieval napr. *Paulík (1993)*. Solárna symbolika jednoducho mohla byť umelecky atraktívna, alebo slnečné božstvo bolo významné pre niektoré segmenty spoločnosti, prípadne pre významné náboženské, kalendárne alebo životné udalosti, aktivity a rituály.

Z našej archeologickej a filologickej analýzy vyplýva, že tak ako materiálna kultúra, aj slnečný kult a mytológia stredoeurópskej doby bronzovej boli výsledkom prevažne interného vývoja (porovnaj s *Zipf 2004*, 475). Ten pravdepodobne vychádzal zo zdedených indoeurópskych tradícií, pričom vykazoval lokálnu variabilitu a inovácie, ktoré nenachádzame v pôvodnejších, praindoeurópskych tradíciách.

Niektoré z najcharakteristickejších a najbežnejších slnečných symbolov mladšej a neskorej doby bronzovej, ako sú napríklad slnečné križe (švorspicové kolesá) a koncentrické kruhy, niekedy dopĺňané vyobrazením slnečných lúčov (obr. 1: 4, 21, 23, 24; 2: 6, 9), čo potvrdzuje ich slnečný význam, boli hojné už počas neskorého eneolitu v strednej, severnej a východnej Európe v kultúrach, ktorých nositelia boli blízko príbuzní expandujúcim populáciám pontsko-kaspickej stepi (*Furholt 2019*), ktoré vyššie zmienený odborný konsenzus považuje za praindoeurópske.

Už počas neskorého eneolitu pozorujeme úzku súvislosť medzi slnečnou symbolikou a smrťou, ako dokladá výzdoba hrobiek, náhrobných stél, a milodarov (*Anthony 2007*, 311; *Cahill 2015*; *Endrödi/Pásztor 2006*; *Gimbutas 1965*, 589, Fig. 409, 416: 5–8, 594; *Kozhukhovskaia 2020*, 310, Fig. 5; *Kyselý/Dobeš 2020*, 153; *Neustupný 2008*, 137, obr. 48; *Nordqvist/Heyd 2020*, 9;

Turek 2011, 89, 90, 96), ale aj solárna orientácia hrobov (Nordqvist/Heyd 2020, 15; Turek 2011, 96). Solárna orientácia hrobov pretrváva počas staršej doby bronzovej (Furmánek/Veličik/Vladár 1991, 283, 284; Jelínek 2019), a to dokonca aj v kultúrach, u ktorých bola v tom čase solárna symbolika v materiálnej kultúre vzácna. V strednej a predovšetkým mladšej a neskorej dobe bronzovej opätovne rastie frekvencia solárnej symboliky v materiálnej kultúre. Slnčná výzdoba je v tomto období typická pre pohrebnú keramiku (obr. 1: 13–27), ako aj závesky, ihlice a iné bronzové predmety nachádzané v hroboch (ale aj depotoch) od Škandinávie cez strednú Európu po Taliansko (obr. 2: 5–9; 4: 2, 5; 6: 2, 4, 6; 8: 1–20; Green 1991; Kossack 1954; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005).

Ďalším dokladom asociácie slnka so smrťou sú mohyly, ktorých kruhový pôdorys, doplnený o kruhový veniec a niekedy dodatočné kamené prvky v podobe štvorspicového kola alebo koncentrických kruhov sa považuje za prejav slnečnej symboliky (Kristiansen 2013, 84; Kristiansen/Larsson 2005, 243, 244, Fig. 111).

Dlhotrvajúcu pevnú asociáciu slnka a smrti vysvetľujeme na základe filologickej analýzy. Početné dôkazy založené na etymológii, frazeológii, korešpondenciách motívov a naratívov v indoeurópskych tradíciách naznačujú, že existovala praindoeurópska viera, podľa ktorej duše zosnulých „idú k slnku“, a to konkrétne na ostrov uprostred mora, ktorý Božské slnko navštevuje počas noci. Na rozdiel od chthonických slnečných božstiev starovekého Blízkeho východu a Egypta, toto dávne indoeurópske slnečné božstvo nezostupovalo do sveta mŕtvych v podzemí, a nebolo asociované so znovuzrodením, ale s vytúženým cieľom posmrtnej cesty duší.

Na základe typologického vývoja antropomorfných záveskov so slnečným symbolizmom, nájdených v Karpatskej kotline (obr. 5, 8), a ich porovnaní s nálezmi kultúrne aj chronologicky blízkyh komunit (napr. slnečné vozíky z Dupljaje, prestížne škandinávске hroby mladých žien s bronzovými slnečnými diskami alebo štvorspicovými kolesami, nosenými na opasku v oblasti spodnej časti brucha) usudzujeme, že slnečné božstvo strednej a severnej Európy sa

pravdepodobne vnímalo v podobe mladej ženy, zrejme „nosiacej slnko“ na spodnej časti brucha (obr. 10). Zlatý opasok dcér slnka v gréckej a baltskej mytológii môže predstavovať príbuzný motív a potvrdzovať archaickosť tejto predstavy. Vzájomné porovnávanie antropomorfných a neantropomorfných archeologických nálezov asociovaných so slnečným kultom, ako aj ich porovnávanie s indoeurópskymi náboženskými tradíciami naznačuje, že táto slnečná bohyňa doby bronzovej mohla byť znázorňovaná aj neantropomorfnými symbolmi napriek tomu, že sa vnímala v ľudskej podobe.

Ikonografia na petroglyfoch a prestížnych britvách nordickej doby bronzovej (Kaul 1998; 2018; Kristiansen 2010), ako aj na anglických minciach doby železnej (Nash Briggs 2009) a hrobových nálezoch z Jadranu z prelomu doby bronzovej a železnej (Kukoč 2016) zachytáva mýticky naratív o diurnálnej púti Božského slnka v sprievode pomocníkov a protivníkov. Tento príbeh nachádza detailné korešpondencie v baltských, gréckych a védskych mýtoch (Masseti 2018; 2019) a zrejme predstavuje centrálny kozmologický mýtus európskej doby bronzovej, ktorý si svoj význam miestami udržal aj počas doby železnej (Andrén 2014).

Tento solárny cyklus sa spája so znázoreniami dvoch vtáčích protómov napojených na symbol slnka, ktoré sú spravidla interpretované ako (slnečné) vtáacie bárky. Táto interpretácia je však založená len na povrchnej podobnosti a nezohľadňuje kultúrny a umelecký kontext. Na základe umeleckých konvencií kultúry popolnicových polí navrhujeme odlišnú interpretáciu: väčšina domnelých (slnečných) vtáčích bárok v skutočnosti znázorňuje páry vodných vtákov ťahajúce slnečný kotúč (obr. 11: 1, 3, 4), čiže slnečné vtáky, a to zrejme počas dennej časti diurnálnej púti slnečného božstva. „Skutočné“ vtáacie bárky sa v archeologickom zázname Karpatskej kotliny vyskytujú, sú však vzácne (obr. 12: 1, 3), rovnako tak znázornenia slnka či slnečného božstva ťahaného vozom (obr. 6: 1, 2, 4),

Zdá sa, že v dávnych náboženstvách existovala univerzálna asociácia vtákov, obzvlášť vodných vtákov, so smrťou, predovšetkým vo funkcii psychopompov (Pásztor 2017b, 195; Waida 2005,

947). Na základe zhody etnologických, mytologických a archeologických dôkazov predpokladáme, že spájanie vtákov so smrťou vysvetľuje symbolizmus slnečných vtákov kultúry popolnicových polí, a poskytuje dodatočnú oporu pre súvislosť medzi Božským slnkom a smrťou.

Spájanie vodných vtákov so smrťou a zároveň spájanie slnka so smrťou korešponduje s nálezmi slnečných ženských postáv s „vtáčimi rukami“ (obr. 3: 5, 8; 8: 1), s početnými vtáčimi asociáciami indoeurópskych slnečných božstiev. Taktiež korešponduje so stvárnením ženských postáv slnečných vozíkov z Dupljaje (obr. 6: 1), s tvármi v podobe vtáčieho zobáka a stojacich na vozíkoch v tvare vaječnej škrupiny, čím evokujú mýtus o zrode gréckej Heleny z vtáčieho vajca, mytologickej postavy, ktorá v sebe zahŕňa tradície indoeurópskej slnečnej dcéry (*Jaszczyński 2018*).

Predpokladaná slnečná bohyňa kultúry popolnicových polí a kultúry nordickej doby bronzovej vykazuje početné podobnosti ako s indoeurópskymi božstvami slnka (diurnálna púť), tak so slnečnými dcérami (asociácia s pomocníkmi – božskými blížencami a i.). Komparatívna analýza indoeurópskych slnečných dcér a bohýň slnka naznačuje bližšie neurčitý typ historickej previa-

zanosti týchto dvoch božských kategórií. Navrhujeme dva možné scenáre. 1. – v strednej a severnej Európe doby bronzovej došlo k spojeniu indoeurópskych archetypov slnečného božstva a slnečnej dcéry do jedinej bytosti. 2. – slnečné dcéry predstavujú neskoršiu hypostázu pôvodného praindoeurópskeho slnečného božstva.

Pozoruhodne úplný výsledok rozštiepenia staršieho slnečného božstva možno podľa nášho názoru rozpoznať v gréckej mytológii. Veľké množstvo motívov Nočného slnka (asociovaného so smrťou) nachádzame v naratíve o dcére Hélia Kirké (*Calin 2021*, 66, 75, 76). Niekoľko významných „slnečných“ elementov obsahuje Helena (zrodenie z vajca, asociácia a záchrana indoeurópskymi božskými blížencami; *Jaszczyński 2018*; *West 2007*, 137, 230–232). Dodatočné elementy týkajúce sa diurnálnej púte zachovávajú tradície o bohovi slnka Héliovi, ktorý, ako presvedčivo argumentuje L. Massetti (*2019*), sa pôvodne plavil na lodi, nie v pohári. Na základe komparatívnej mytológie a archeológie možno konštatovať, že ak spojíme solárne motívy týchto troch postáv (prvé dve menované už absorbovali taktiež početné nesolárne tradície), dosiahneme blízku aproximáciu slnečnej bohyne stredoeurópskej doby bronzovej.

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