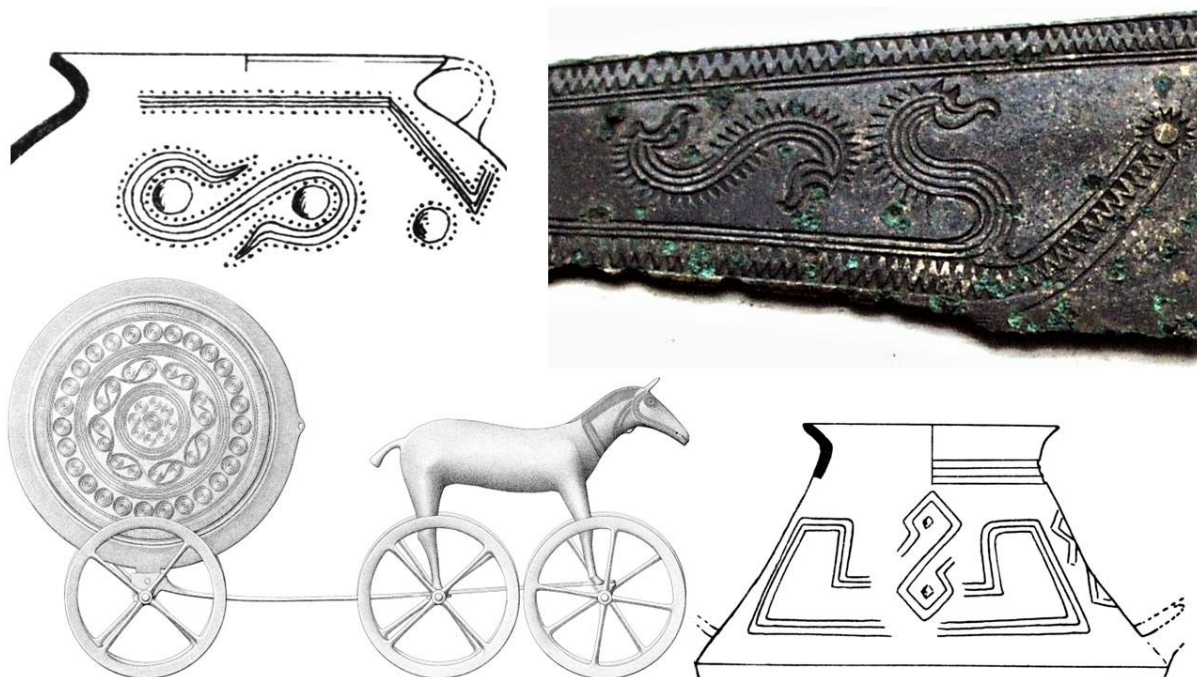


Following the Bronze Age Sun Horse and the Solar Iconography, from Denmark to the Mediterranean

By Flemming Kaul

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In 1902, “The Chariot of the Sun” was found, by ploughing, in Trundholm Bog, NW-Zealand, Denmark. Here we see the non-personified Sun-God, drawn by a divine horse, the Sun Horse, as an expression of religious beliefs around 1400 BC. The rich iconographical evidence demonstrates that the Sun Horse continued to be a prominent helper of the sun during the Late Nordic Bronze Age. The religious miniature art on bronze objects, like the razor, flourished between 900 and 700 BC. Other zoomorphic figures, the fish, the snake and the aquatic bird – together with the sun ship – brought the sun round and round on its eternal journey over the heavens at daytime and through the underworld during the night. A complex cosmological system has been revealed thanks to the varied imagery of the North.

Even though the Nordic Bronze Age iconography has its own style and characteristics, some of the elements can be traced further South. In North and Central Italy (Villanova Culture, around 700 BC), the Sun Horse manifests itself in different variants: ‘naturalistic’ versions, and highly stylized versions. As in the North, curious double-horses appear. In many cases the horse and the sun are not directly connected, but solar images are seen close to the horses. On this background, the rich horse iconography on Greek Geometric Period pottery can be studied, the horse figures closely related to solar symbols.



Flemming Kaul is MA in Prehistoric Archaeology, and since 1986 curator (later senior researcher) at the National Museum of Denmark. In 2006 dr. phil.: A dissertation on Bronze Age religion and iconography. His Bronze Age research is also focused on long distance exchange, glass beads and amber, connecting the Mediterranean with South Scandinavia.

