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THE HORSE IN ART AND IDEOLOGY OF INDO-EUROPEAN PEOPLES

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The article deals with the symbolic use of the horse by various Indo-European peoples from the Proto-Indo-European times to the Iron Age Celts, Teutons, and Scythians. By including representations of horses from a variety of cultures the author may stimulate mythologists interested in mythical portrayals of a divine horse.

The horse played an important role among the Indo-European peoples. Being not only the most preferred animal, the saddle-horse gave the nomadic hordes the possibility of quick movement and also became the principal sacrificial animal of funeral ritual as well as of religious life in general. It was connected with the cult of the sun deity and often mythicized. Fertility forces as well as magical power were attributed to it. Records tell us that the future or success of an enterprise was deduced from the snorting of the horse. Sometimes it received an honorable individual burial.

Proto-Indo-European, c. 4500-2000 B.C.

The domesticated horse emerged in the wooded steppe north of the Caspian and Black Seas. Evidence for the horse as a riding animal is documented by antler cheek-pieces and depictions of bridal equipment on horse sculptures in the Volga and Dnieper steppes from the second half of the fifth millennium B.C.. Horse bones are found at sites of the Srednij Stog complex (Kurgan I-II of the lower Dnieper region, c. 4400-3400 B.C.). Systematic excavations of Srednij Stog-type villages, such as Dereivka in the lower Dnieper basin, have uncovered evidence of up to 55 horses in a settlement with three dwellings.

The domestication of the horse seems to have prompted a disequilibrium between the supply of grazing land in the South Russian steppes and the dietary demand of rapidly increasing herds. Small semi-sedentary groups of people could easily have moved their herds west of the Black Sea where ideal pasturage was supported by soil high in lime. Theoretically, penetration of zones already under cultivation would have had greater

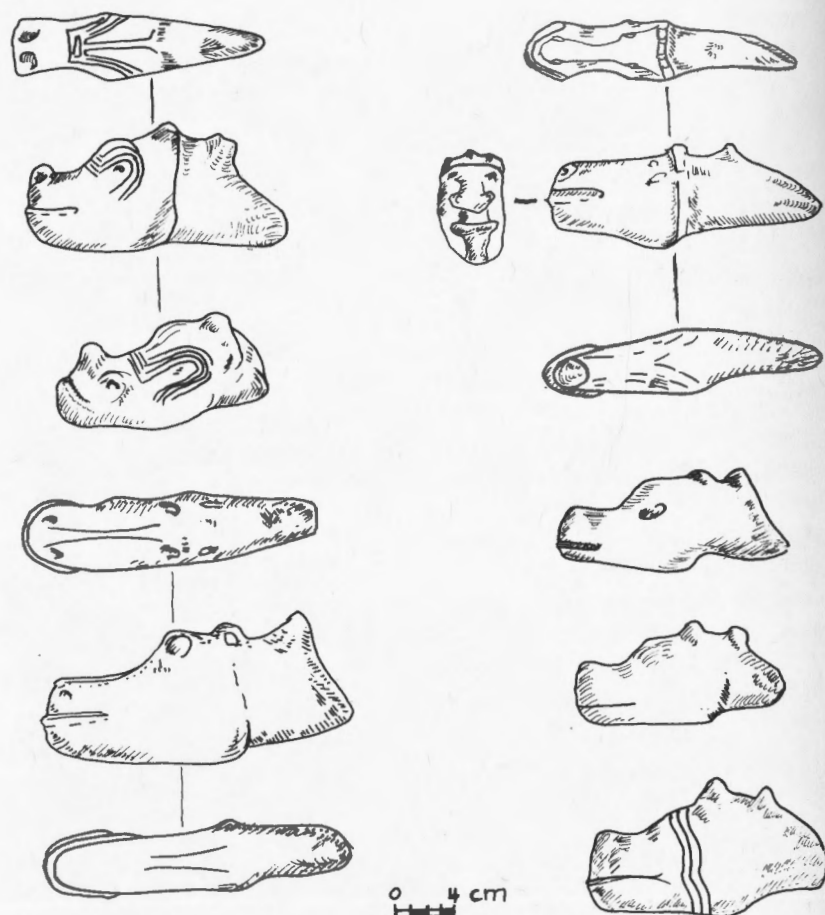


Fig. 1. Horse-head scepters of semi-precious stone from the northeastern Caucasus and west of the Black Sea: 1, Casimcea, Dobruja, eastern Romania; 2, Tereki-Mekteb, northern Dagestan, northeastern Caucasus; 3, Suvorovo on the lower Danube, Moldavian SSR; 4, Fedeleșeni, Moldavia, northeastern Romania; 5, Rzhvevo, central Bulgaria; 6, Salcuta, southwestern Romania. (After Gimbutas 1977; Danilenko and Shmaglij 1972).

appeal than the prospect of cultivating the steppe.

The steppe pastoralists, or "Kurgan" people, swept in repeated incursions across prehistoric Europe, creating cultural shocks and population shifts (Wave No. 1 at c. 4400-4300 B.C., Wave No. 2, c. 3400-3200 B.C., and Wave No. 3, c. 3000-2800 B.C.). Information essential to the Proto-Indo-European problem is provided by archaeological remains of Wave No. 1, for they contain the first traces of warlike horse people from the east (Gimbutas 1977: 277-81).

The earliest evidence of horse sacrifices occurs in Kurgan graves of Wave #1 northwest and west of the Black Sea. A horse skull was interred in a separate grave beside a Kurgan I burial at Zolotaja Balka, district of Kherson. A sacrificial hearth and a central grave containing paired heads of horses and bulls, were found north of the Danube delta in the region of Odessa (Gimbutas 1977: 286). Horse bones often found in graves of the north Pontic area, as for example in the cemetery of "Tri Brata" (Three Brothers) near Elista, indicate, according to M. Gimbutas (1956: 79), that the horse was a sacrificial animal.

Two early Kurgan graves at Casimcea and Suvorovo, in the Danube delta, yielded significant examples of Indo-European ideology, namely the horse-headed stone scepters which were recovered from both tombs (Fig. 1: 1+3); these graves attest to the worship of the horse as a divine animal. In addition to the scepter, the Casimcea man was equipped with five axe heads and fifteen spear points. The Suvorovo burial is the first suttee grave west of the Black Sea, with close parallels in the Srednij Stog II sites of Jamna and Aleksandrija in the lower Dnieper area. A cromlech, 13 m. in diameter, surrounded the Suvorovo double-grave which was contained in a central rectangular pit (Gimbutas 1977: 285). The Suvorovo chieftain was buried with a horse-headed scepter or porphyry, 17.1 cm long, flint knives, and a pestle for grinding ochre. Beside him was a female skeleton wearing a necklace of *Unio* shell beads and remnants of a dress covered with mother-of-pearl laminae. The only tool accorded her was a flint scraper.

Copper Age, Late Bronze and Iron Age: Caucasus

From the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age cemetery of Koban in Caucasia, was found a bronze needle, 25 cm. long and crowned with a 4 cm. high figure of a horseman (Hančar 1956:



Fig. 2. Richly decorated silver bowl from Maikop. (After Hancar 1956).

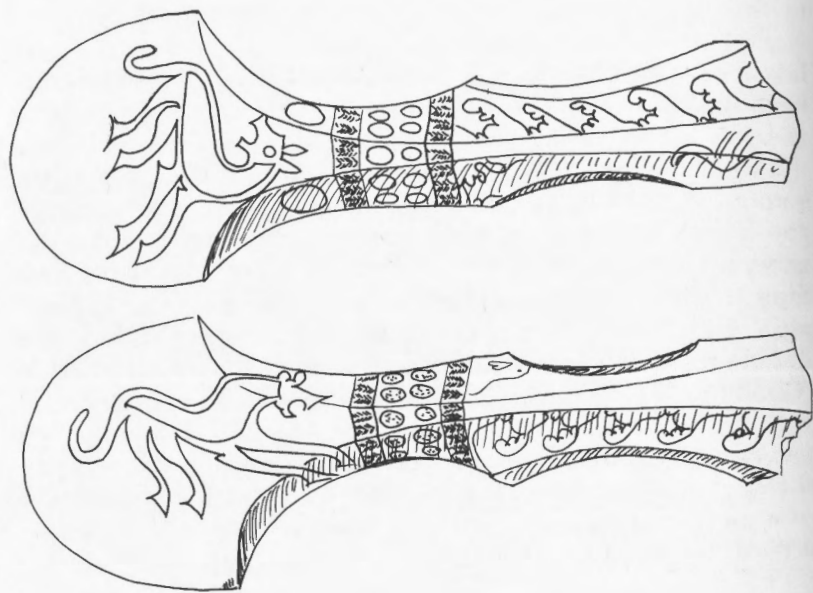


Fig. 3. Richly decorated bronze battle-axe from Vinica, Ukraine. (After Sulimirski 1962).

Taf. V). Possibly this horseman is purely decorative, but we will not exclude a mythical personality. Other horse figures in procession are engraved on the silver bowls from a rich burial of the Majkop culture at Majkop (Fig. 2) (Hančar 1956: 125). A bronze battle-axe of Koban type, which was discovered near Vinica in the Ukraine, should be mentioned: the curved, narrow axe, 18 cm. long, is richly decorated with engraved and punched lines, and figures of serpents, fishes, and a fabulous quadruped, to all appearances a horse (Fig. 3). The theme of the decoration is surely mythical, and the horse appears there transformed in an unreal shape. It seems to have been the principal actor of the mythical tale, alas, not unravelled to us (Sulimirski 1962: 269-71). Other finds from Koban comprise axes similarly decorated with horses (Fig. 4) and horse-shaped belt-buckles. (Fig. 5)

Bronze Age and Iron Age: Aegean

The horse was introduced into the Aegean Islands during the middle Bronze Age by the Indo-Europeans after their advance in the Near East. One of the small sides of the sarcophagus of Haghia Triada has a painting of a cart, drawn by two horses, in which stand two persons, probably women. Haghia Triada has, also, yielded a great many small bronze horse figurines (Zervos 1936: 35, 49, 50, 52, pl. VIII, Figs. 472, 473, 478).

From the acropolis of Chalandriani on the Island of Syros comes a silver belt-plate, richly decorated in dotted lines. Of special interest is a horse pulling a wheel, accompanied by a winged human figure. It would seem that the scene represents a ritual procession of the horse-drawn sun wheel, followed by a worshipper or another divine figure (Fig. 6). On Syros the horse appears closely connected with the sun (Zervos 1957: 257-58).

Bronze Age and Iron Age: Balkans

Horse sculptures have been found at several sites in Bulgaria: in Dorkovo, Etropole, and Garmoc. They belong to the Hallstatt or late Bronze Age-early Iron Age (Hansel 1969: 62-86, Abb. 8). Horse-head stone sculptures, the so-called scepters, have been found in Sárviz Kanal, in Komitat Turócz and Předmerice, Czechoslovakia, and Kisköszeg, Hungary (Hančar 1966: 114, Abb. 1). Of the same era is a horse-mounted male votary incised on an urn from Warischberg, Hungary (Althin 1945: Abb. 53).

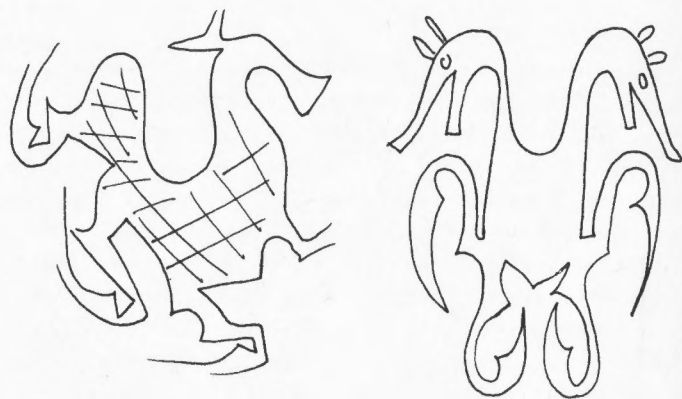


Fig. 4. Horse-shaped belt-buckle from Koban. (After Hančar 1931).

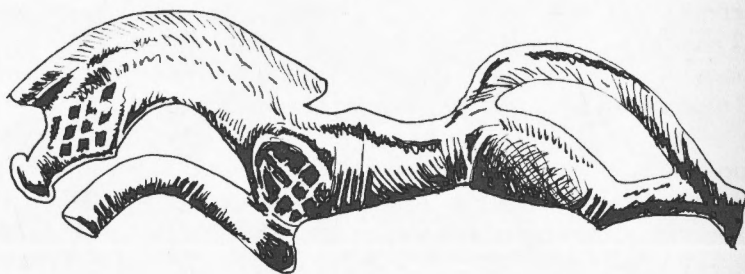


Fig. 5. Horse-shaped belt-buckle from Koban. (After Hančar 1931).

Bronze Age and Iron Age: Central Europe and Italy

In Central Europe evidence of the sacrifice of a horse was encountered in a grave of the Randow-Tal, Pomerania (Wilke 1929: 302); a late Bronze Age settlement at Zitz, Kr. Brandenburg-Land, contained a burial of two horses, as did a settlement of the late Bronze-early Iron Age at Siersleben, Kr. Eisleben (Buck u. Wetzel 1966: 138-41). Horse sacrifices have also been found in many bogs of north Germany; a bog at Manhagen, in Oldenburg, contained the skeleton of a horse together with a human skull and skulls of dogs. In the Riesdorf bog, at Oldenburg, parts of a human skull were associated with 25 skulls of horses. A burial place at Emst, the Netherlands, contained a horse buried alongside its owner (Struwe 1967: 75). At Obrány near Brno, Czechoslovakia, the figurine of a horse was found together with other bronze objects (Neustupný 1961: 119). In a burial mound at Strettweg in Austria, a bronze wagon was unearthed on which is represented a sacrificial chariot and a sacrificial scene, comprising the figure of a goddess, two horsemen, and two horse-head protomes (Bing 1918; Bing-Bergen 1934). From Beckersloh in South Germany came the clay figurine of a horse carrying a cup (Fig. 7), which K. Spiess (1931) interprets as representing the horse as the bearer of the Water of Life. A similar clay horse was unearthed from a grave only five kilometers away (Gries 1961: 235-36).

Several burials of the Migration Period further testify to the sacrifice of horses: at a cemetery of the Langobards at Rohrendorf, Austria, a horse was associated with the skeleton of a child (Hampl 1965: 47), and in a grave at Berlin Neukölln a horse was buried beside its owner (Kieckebusch 1912: 399).

In some cases the horse served as a foundation sacrifice. At Lenzburg, Switzerland, the skeleton of a horse found near the ramp wall of the Roman theatre was, according to E. Schmid (1966: 47), a foundation sacrifice. Similar finds were made at the wharf of Ezinge in the Netherlands, where the skeletons had been placed below the house walls (Hinz 1976: 111).

Snaffle bits, one in the form of a horse standing upon another horse, were found in Zolyom, Slovakia; between the forelegs are two birds. The combination of horses and birds is most probably mythical (Fig. 8).

In Italy the combination of horse and bird appears on decorative snaffle bits from Bologna, Vetulonia, Massa Maritti-



Fig. 6. Belt plate of silver richly decorated in dotted line-technique showing a horse drawn wheel, accompanied by a winged man from Chalandriani, Syros. (After Zervos 1957).

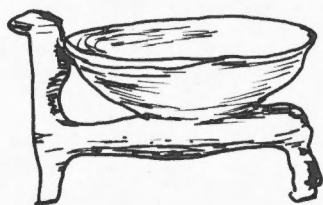


Fig. 7. Clay figurine of a horse carrying a cup. (After Spiess 1931).

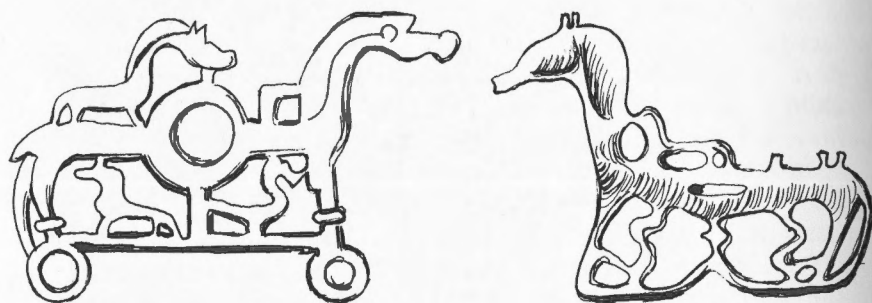


Fig. 8. Snaffle bits, one in the form of a horse standing upon another horse; between the forelegs are two birds; from Zólyom, Slovakia (After Kossak 1954).



Fig. 9. Rider, with radiating halo, leading a procession, from Val Camonica. (After Anati 1960).



Fig. 10. Horse and two worshippers around a cross-like standard. (After Anati 1960).

ma, and Volterra, and in Este and in the Villanova culture, horses and riders are depicted on ceramics. On situlae of northern Italy and in the eastern Alps, tiltings and processions of armed horsemen were often represented. Snaffle bits in the shape of a horse were found in tombs at Benacci-Caprara; from Este are vessels with modeled horses and a bronze fibula showing three horses and two riders (Kossak 1954: 54-56, 70, Taf. 12, 8: 16-17, and 14: 11). A carved stone horse-head amulet found in northern Italy depicts a high-spirited horse with flaring nostrils, bared teeth, and ears erect. The carving has tentatively been dated somewhere between the Neolithic and the Iron Age (Barfield 1966: 219-20).

The appearance of the horse in mythical scenes is frequent among the rock carvings of the Camonica Valley in north Italy. Thus, on the large Naquane rock, a horse leading a procession of worshippers carries a rider, adorned with a halo, with up-raised arms holding a spear in the right hand and a shield in the left (Fig. 9). In another scene, cultic in character, a horse attends the adoration of a cross-like standard by two figures (Fig. 10). On another rock, in what is perhaps a ritual plow scene, two horses are leading a four-wheeled cart (Anati 1960: Figs. 100 and 34).

Bronze Age and Iron Age: Western Europe/Celtic

A great many equestrian representations have been found in sanctuaries of Andalusia and the Spanish Levant. The sanctuary El Cigarralejo, in particular, was dedicated to the worship of a horse goddess, very much like the Epona of Gaul. Horse burials have been found in the cemeteries of La Pedrera de Balaguer, Prov. Lerida (Arribas 1964: 84, 141). And as for plastic art, there is the famous bronze cult-chariot from Merida in which a naked rider pursues a wild boar (Ross 1967: 323, Fig. 181).

Sacrifices to the dead have rarely been found on the continent, but are somewhat more frequent in Britain. In France several chariot burials have been discovered, and in Britain they have often been encountered in the tumuli of Yorkshire. A large burial place at Prethun near Calais contained about 100 horse heads (Wilke 1920: 302), obviously remains of lavish ceremonies at which the flesh was consumed in a sacrificial meal by the participants. In Spain horse burials are known from

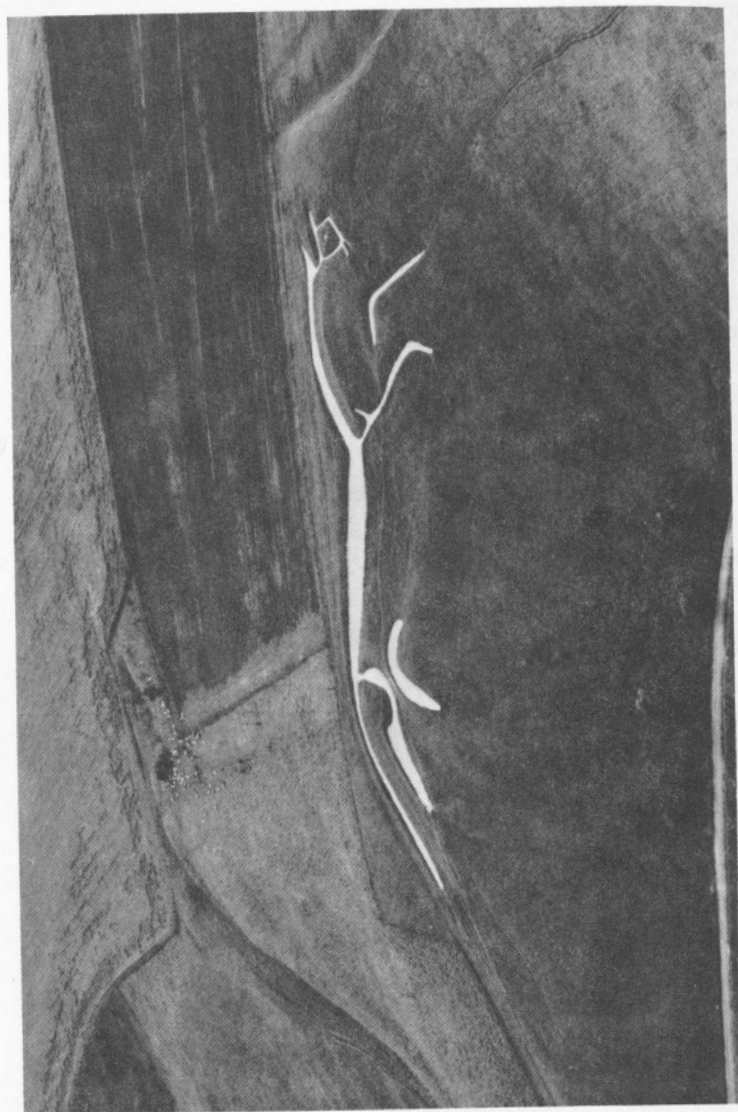


Fig. 11. The Uffington horse, nearly 100 m long, cut into the chalk at Uffington in Berkshire. (After Morau 1958).

graves at Solsona, near Tarragona (Arribas 1964: 302).

Works of art are abundant: the portico of the temple of Roquepertuse in southern France is surmounted by a slab with four incised horse-heads. Many small votive horses are known from several other Gaulish sanctuaries. Divine Twins, comparable to the Roman Dioscuri, appear with a horse on several Gallo-Roman monuments. The Gaulish Mars, mounted in the attitude of the Thracian rider, is known from Gaul, and occurs also in Britain. That the Celtic god, equivalent to the Roman Mars, was closely associated with horses, is obvious from many inscriptions and portrayals in Gaul. A statuette of a horse, dedicated to the god Rudiobus, comes from Neuvi-en-Sulias. The most important horse deity of Gaul, however, was the goddess Epona (Divine Horse), whose cult spread widely in Roman times. In her most typical iconographic configuration the goddess is seated side-saddle. Epona was also introduced into Britain, where she customarily appears seated between horses. From a native shrine at Cold Kitchen Hill in Wiltshire come many horse-and-rider brooches. A shrine at Willingham Fen, Cambs., yielded two small bronze rider-gods, and several more are known from Canterbury and from Brigstock, Northants. An altar at Bisley, Gloucestershire, represents the helmeted god riding a small horse; the god brandishes a large circular shield and holds what appears to be an axe in his right hand. A second relief depicting Mars as a horseman comes from Kingscoot, in the same area; it depicts a striking scene: a small, thick-necked horse bears a helmeted warrior who carries a circular shield whereas the center of the relief is occupied by an enthroned deity, seemingly female. In Gaul the native Mars is frequently associated with the goose and the horse. On a fourth century tile from Roussas, Epona rides a goose. Horses appear in the insular toreutic tradition, and, to a lesser extent, in the iconography of Roman Britain. A small bronze horse from Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) is of the same type as the animal at Uffington in Berkshire, where a great Celtic horse, nearly 100 m. long, was cut into the chalk, in close proximity to an Iron Age stronghold, dating probably from the first century B.C.; and possibly it represents the goddess Epona in zoomorphic form (Fig. 11).

Portrayals of the horse alone are rare in Roman-British iconography, except for the figures on a relief from Cilurnum, Chester, and on another from Lanchester. The temple of



Fig. 12. Flint dagger in the forehead of a foal, found in the Ullstorp Brook at Ingelstad in south Sweden. (After Ekholm 1927).

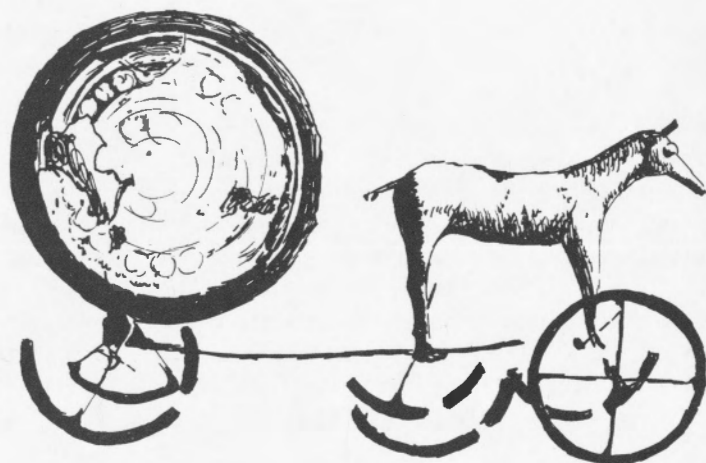


Fig. 13. Gold-plated, spiral-decorated wheeled disc, preceded by a horse, from Trundholm in Denmark. (After Müller 1897).

Worcester shows horses and gods in life size, as well as a broken model of a horse of white clay, and a four-horse chariot driven by a phallic emblem (Ross 1967: 66, 125-26, 189, 273, 325, Pl. 66 + 81: a, Fig. 29 + 125).

A grave at Freisen, Saarland, yielded a small bronze horse. A tumulus covering a princely grave at Reinheim, also in Saarland, yielded a bronze container; its cover, probably originally gilded, is provided with a grip representing a horse with the bearded head of a man (Moreau 1958: 251-52).

Bronze Age and Iron Age: Northern Europe/Germanic

The highest number of finds testifying to the horse iconography of the Germanic tribes is found in Northern Europe.

The oldest sacrificial find is from Ingelstad, south Sweden, where the skull of a foal with a flint dagger in the forehead was found in a brook (Ullstorp) (Fig. 12). G. Ekholm (1927: 52) dates this find to the final Nordic Neolithic, on the basis of the typology of the Nordic flint dagger. There is no certainty that the skull was of a domesticated foal.

Among the most important finds is the horse-drawn gold-plated wheel from Trundholm in Denmark (Fig. 13) dating from the end of the Montelius Period II of the Northern Bronze Age. A similar find (unfortunately now largely destroyed through ignorance and carelessness) was made at Tågeborgshövden in Hälsingborg, Sweden; it includes parts of a small wagon, a bronze disk, and two small bronze animal figures, doubtless horses. The two horses have elongated bodies and stand with straight legs and extended necks, as if pulling something. The head of one is missing, but in one eye of the other a piece of amber still glitters (Stenberger 1962: 89; Althin 1945: 190, Abb. 101).

On the island of Bornholm, some horse bones were found in a large pit on a farm at Sorte Muld. They differed from the other bones on the site in that they had not been gnawed by dogs, nor split for marrow and brain. They comprised a skull and foot-bones, and it is evident that some special ceremony lies behind their burial; the bog of Rislev, South Zealand, yielded similar finds. According to O. Klindt-Jensen (1957: 128, 1958: 81-86) these finds might well be explained by a practice followed until quite recently in Southern Siberia, namely that of raising the hide, head, and feet on a pole as



Fig. 14. Rock carving from Bohuslän depicting the killing of a horse. (After Schwantes 1939).

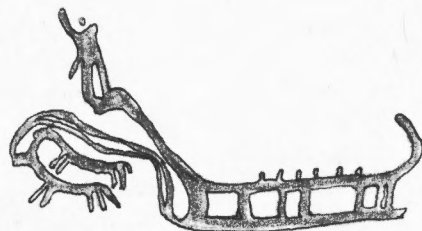


Fig. 15. Rock carving from Ostgotland depicting two horses pulling a boat. (After Schwantes 1939).



Fig. 16. Rock carvings from Bohuslän depicting horses pulling the sun wheel. (After Schwantes 1939).

sacrifice to the supreme god of heaven. Similar finds have been made in Vestervig, Jütland, and in the Rappendam bog, Zealand (Kunwald 1970: 50). In Skedemosse, Öland, the horse was the animal most frequently sacrificed; remains of some 50 horses have been identified (Hagberg 1961: 112-15). The horse sacrifice is likewise confirmed by finds from Bokarna near Uppsala, Sweden, and from Myresbjerg, Aasö, and Goldsted in Denmark (Davidson 1967: 90).

Horses often appear in the rock carvings at Skania, Sweden, which show two-wheeled carts drawn by two or four animals. Likewise on the rocks of Bohuslän, there occur horse-drawn four-wheeled carts. A large rock at Tegneby at Tanum presents two opposed groups of five horsemen each with a raised spear and shield. The scene probably represents a mythical battle, or some sort of ritual jousting. Incised on a rock of Fossum, near Tanum, is a scene of the killing of a horse, probably for a sacrificial feast (Fig. 14). A rock from Gotland shows two horses pulling a boat (Fig. 15). A horse-drawn sun wheel occurs thrice on a Bohuslän rock (Fig. 16), and on the rock of Backa Utmark near Brastad, there are two instances of a horse standing above a manned boat (Fig. 17 + 18). Finally, we can add two rock carvings from Skjeberg in Norway representing horses with radiating crowns; especially noteworthy is the first horse, mounted by a man, with two rays emanating from the brow (Fig. 19) (Marstrander 1963: 241).

Engravings of horses occur also on stone slabs. A slab at the unique grave of Bredför, near Kivik in Skania, shows a man driving a two-horse chariot, while two other horses face each other, as if for a fight — both scenes suggest funeral games (Althin 1945: 60-64, Taf. 74 + 75, Abb. 24; Davidson 1967: 48-50, Pl. 15 + 16).

Images of the horse are incised on bronze razors from Vester Lem, Viborg, and from Ketting, Laaland, Denmark (Fig. 20). The horse is likewise encountered on vessels, as, for instance on the eleven gold bowls from Mariesmine Bog at Lavingsgård, Fünen, believed to be imported objects to which native craftsmen added handles in the form of horse-heads with horns. The sacred horned animal (bull) had long been venerated in the North, and the increasing importance of the horse may have led to its investiture with that ancient symbol of power (Muller 1897: 434; Klindt-Jensen 1957: 74).



Fig. 24. Carved bone horse heads from Scythian kurgans. (After Hancar 1966).

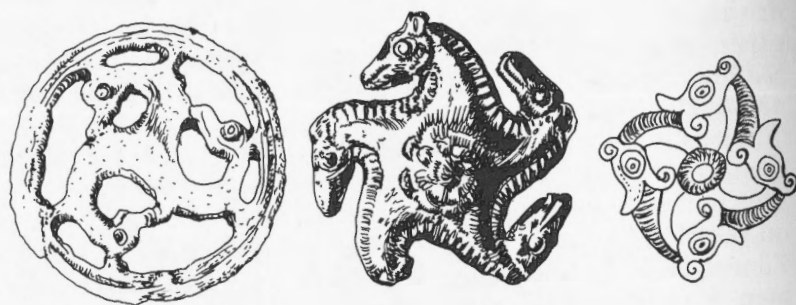


Fig. 25. Scythian bronze discs with three or four horse heads turning in a whirl. (After Roes 1937).

The large Iron Age burial mounds at Birka, Sweden, built for upper class people of the Viking Age, contained horse remains. The Vendel ship burials, which spread to Vestfold in Norway, enclosed, as a rule, horses slain at the funeral (Davidson 1967: 112, 114-15). Horses were also sacrificed in the spring cult. At three cult places in Scania, at Hagestad in Löderup parish, at Röckillorna (Red Springs) and at Gardlösa, the horse predominates among the animals sacrificed (stjernquist 1964: 180-84). The slaying of horses was, according to H.R.E. Davidson (1967: 121), in keeping with the worship of Vanir, for although there was a consistent link between the horse sacrifice and the sky god, horses were also sacred to Freyr and were sacrificed to him. A slain horse was also found in a ship grave at Aerby (Closs 1952: 72). The sacrifice of a horse at the burial of a warrior was also very common in Norway during the late Iron Age (600-1000 A.D.) (Hagen 1967: 151).

Small silver horse figurines were found in Swedish graves. A horse fight is clearly pictured on the Hageby stone from Uppland; the animals, which are being urged on by two men, have horns on their heads (Fig. 21). Two horses appear face to face also on a slab from Eskelhem. On a stone at Lärbro Tängelgård, an eagle is depicted hovering over an empty saddle, while the rider lies on the ground. Beneath this picture, the seemingly dead man is apparently being transported on horseback; lower still, in a scene of welcome, a woman greets a rider and warriors brandishing rings. This illustration appears to trace the progress of the dead warrior from the battlefield to Valhalla. Two stones from Alskog Tjängvide and Ardre show a rider on a horse with eight legs. On gold breastplates which served as amulets, the horse is clearly important; these have features not derived from Roman models, in particular, crescent shaped horns on the forehead, such as are seen on a breastplate from Alingas, Västergötland (Fig. 22), on which there is also a swastika above the horse's head. Sometimes a bird accompanies the rider (Davidson 1967: 104, 124-125, 130, Pl. 52).

Iron Age: Scythia

The most western Scythian documentation comes from Vetttersfelde, Prov. Brandenburg. In a gold treasure, buried by a Scythian chief, was found a 44 cm. long golden cheek-plate in the shape of a fish whose tail ends in two horse heads (Ebert 1929: Taf. 45; Jettmar 1964: color-printing on p. 38).



Fig. 17. Rock carving from Brastad, Bohuslän, depicting a horse standing over a manned boat; below a worshipper (After Bing 1937).

Fig. 18. Rock carving from Fossum, Bohuslän, depicting a horse standing above a manned boat; above that a bird and a horse over two foot prints. (After Bing 1937).

Fig. 19. Rock carvings from Skjeberg in Norway representing two horses with radiating crowns. (After Marstrand 1963).

The southern part of East Europe has exceeded all other areas in the number of tombs with horse burials and horse sacrifices. Thus a tomb near Krasnokutsk contained a human skeleton and the skeletons of two horses; other tombs at Kelermes, Tomashovka, and Slonovslj contained a single human burial with associated horse graves; in one barrow the horse was in what seems to have been a side chamber. The Ulskij Barrow on the Kuban contained remains of more than four horses. In a barrow at Chertomlyk were three horses, saddled and bridled, one with gold ornament; in two others four or three horses were bridled with gold or silver. In the Zabel in barrow of Krasnokutsk, a special tomb contained four horses with frontlets; the Tsymbalka barrow had, in a side tomb, six horses with bronze trappings and silver frontlets and two with gold frontlets. The Chmyreva barrow near Tsymbalka contained a pit with ten horses, which had evidently struggled towards the opening; their skeletons lay upon one another. Much of the material remains found in the tombs on the lower Dnieper was brought to light further upstream, in the districts of Kiev and Poltava. Beneath a mound near the Serebrjanka River was a pit with shelves at either end; on one lay the skull of a horse (Minns 1913: 152, 153, 165, 167, 175, 227).

The horse is represented in the Oxus or Amu-Darya treasure of the Scythians by cheek-pieces which often terminate with a hoof at one end and an admirably conventionalized horse head at the other. A barrow at Krasnokutsk yielded a silver cheek ornament of two conventionalized horses (Minns 1913: 161, 267, Figs. 46-48, 56).

To be mentioned among the art objects are the bronze horse-scepters scattered from the Caucasus to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Except for one specimen from the Caucasus and another from the Crimea, the other nine Russian specimens come from the forest steppe around the Dnieper (Fig. 23). In this connection, also, the horse heads of carved bone found in Scythian kurgans (Fig. 24), are of interest. According to Fr. Hančar (1966: 129) the scepters were probably emblems of sun-priests.

Bronze statuettes of riders come from Luristan, and among them are those which represent a goddess between two horses (Bleichsteiner 1939: 14-17).

Rich traces of equine sacrifice, burial, and representation

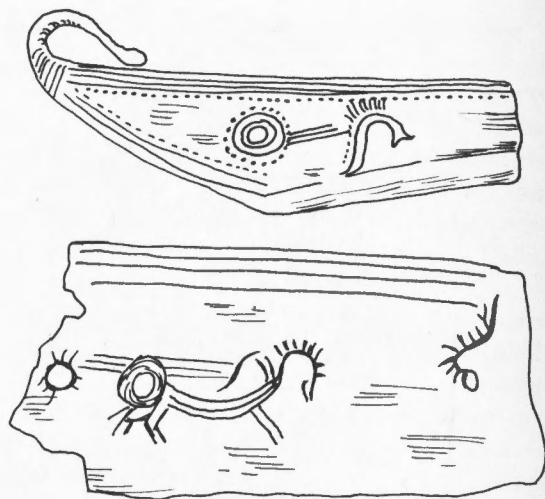


Fig. 20. Horses incised in bronze razors from Denmark. (After Althin 1945).

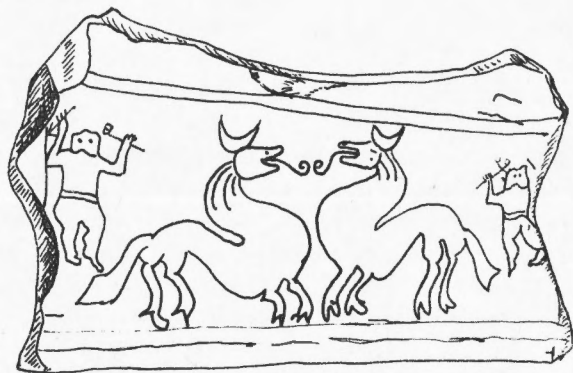


Fig. 21. Stone from Häggeby, Uppland, depicting a horse fight urged on by two men. (After Davidson 1967).

were brought to light, since 1947, from the kurgans of Pazyryk in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia. Kurgan burials contained, as a rule, from eight to fourteen sacrificed horses buried with their owner. Sometimes the horses were masked and wore a headdress of wood or leather antlers — in one case a horse carried the horns of a ram. Also found were sculptures of a horse or horsehead and gold plates with rich figural decoration such as a horse being attacked by a lion-griffin (Jettmar 1964: 89, 101, 110, 111, 119, 120, 163, 177, 179, 193, Fig. on p. 185).

Iron Age: The Southeast Baltic area/Baltic

In their love for the horse, the Balts were on par with the Scythians. In no other European country was the horse so highly esteemed through the ages, but the more complete treatment of the horse in this area is beyond the scope of this article. The urns from Grabovo and Starogard west of the lower Vistula show engravings of horses drawing four-wheeled wagons. According to M. Gimbutas (1963: 78) the figures pertain to deities of the sky and sun. A scene engraved on an urn from Grabovo (Grabau), Kr. Stargard, shows two horses with a chariot containing a man, three other men standing beside the chariot, and behind it a large oval figure, interpreted by E. Sprockhoff (1934) as a sun disc. On one of the three urns from Kerwald, Kr. Marienwerder, a rider stands on the back of the horse (Althin 1945: 212-13).

Conclusions

The early written records about the horse of the Indo-European peoples are, as we have seen, widely and abundantly substantiated by archaeological finds. Excavations as well as works of art have yielded rich evidence that horses were sacrificed to the dead and to deities. Works of art on rocks, in stone, bone, clay, bronze, and precious metal frequently portray the horse as a mythical animal, winged or horned; accompanied by birds; and as bearer of the Water of Life. It is pictured as the saddle-horse of a god or goddess and even represents the deity in zoomorphic form. Its magical power can be deduced from representations on pendants, amulets, and harnesses. The head especially was considered fraught with magical power as testified by sacrifices of the head, sometimes in great number, by stone sculptures of the head, and by the horse-head scepters.

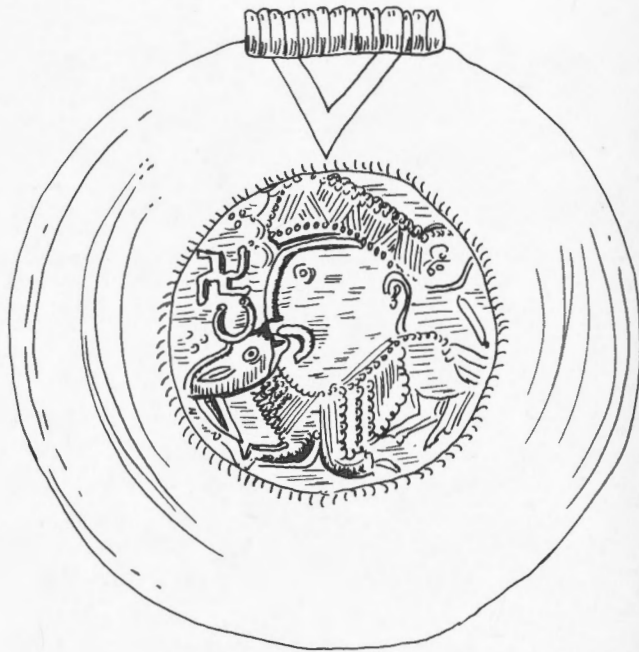


Fig. 22. Breastplate from Alingås, Västergötland with a swastika above the head of the horse. (After Davidson 1967).

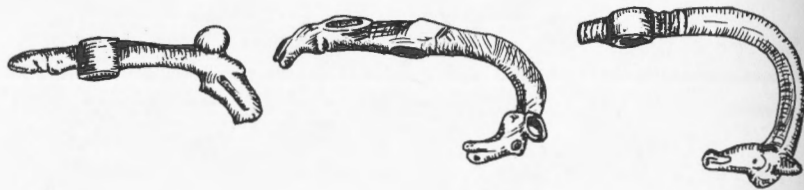


Fig. 23. Scythian bronze horse-head scepters from a Kurgan at Simferopol, from a Kurgan of the Romny group, and from the middle Dnieper. (After Hančar 1966).

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THE RITUAL TREATMENT OF THE HORSE IN THE EARLY KURGAN TRADITION

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The author surveys archeological evidence of the ritual treatment of the horse in the Pontic-Caspian region during the putative Proto-Indo-European period, c. 4000-2500 B.C.

This article is intended to augment the archaeological evidence surveyed in this issue by J. Maringer which bears on the ritual treatment of the horse among early Indo-European peoples. I have confined this survey entirely to the Pontic-Caspian region and to archaeological remains that may be roughly set to the period c. 4000-2500 B.C., i.e., the putative period of Proto-Indo-European. The first part of the review presents the basic archaeological evidence for the ritual treatment of the horse among the major groups of the Early Kurgan tradition, specifically the Srednij Stog, Jamna (Pit-Grave), and Catacomb-Grave cultures. With few exceptions the evidence surveyed will be limited to actual horse remains since iconographic evidence such as the horsehead 'sceptres' has already been treated elsewhere (Gimbutas 1977: 285; Maringer 1981). In the second section I attempt to extrapolate from the archaeological evidence the major ritual motifs that concern the horse. Finally, I discuss the relationship between the archaeological evidence and reconstructed Indo-European mythology.

The Archeological Evidence

Aleksandrija 18

Paired male burials of the Srednij Stog culture. Accompanying burial 18 was a long flint 'knife', a flint blade, pieces of sandstone, and two fragments of antler cheek-pieces (Telegin 1973: 110, 137).

Aleksandrovka

Catacomb burial of a child which included bones of horse and sheep (Privalova 1973: 325).

Bashtanovska 4

Horse skeleton at base of kurgan (Häusler 1976: 106).