

The Solar Chariot

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Strabon¹, many years before the establishment of the Olympic festival (776 B.C.). In its neighbourhood therefore we might look to find a parallel for the Rhodian bronzes. In point of fact it was near Calaceite in the province of Teruel that a farm-labourer in 1903 discovered, along with a bronze cuirass and two iron swords, the remarkable bronze here shown (fig. 264)². It is a horse which stands on a wheel and bears on its back a column topped by a similar wheel, the whole being some 20 cm. in height. Column and wheels alike are decorated with *guilloche*-patterns. The former has a bell-shaped capital and base; the latter have smaller wheels serving as spokes. The body of the horse is connected with the wheel-base by means of a stay or support with spreading foot. This Iberian bronze may be referred to the 'Dipylon' or 'Villanova' period of the Early Iron Age, *i.e.* approximately to the same date as the Rhodian bronzes. Like them it represents an animal on the solar wheel, or rather in between a pair of solar wheels. We are well on the road towards the conception of the solar chariot.

xii. The Solar Chariot.

The transition from solar wheel to solar chariot was perhaps facilitated by a half-forgotten belief that the sun itself was a horse. That belief meets us in the mythologies of various Indo-Europæan peoples³ and very possibly underlies the Greek practice of offering horses to Helios⁴. When the growth of anthromorphism made men no longer content to regard the sun either as a wheel or as a horse, it needed no great effort of imagination to combine both ideas and henceforward to believe in the driver of a celestial chariot⁵.

¹ Strab. 654.

² J. Cabré 'Objetos ibéricos de Calaceite' in the *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona* 1908 p. 400 pl., *Rev. Arch.* 1909 i. 320 f. fig. 10, *Jahrb. d. kais. deutsch. arch. Inst.* 1910 xxv Arch. Anz. p. 294 f. fig. 7 (from a photograph of the bronze as pieced together in the Louvre. Its discoverer, believing it to be of gold, had broken it into fragments; but fortunately J. Cabré had seen it while yet entire).

³ A. Kuhn *Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Göttertranks*² Gütersloh 1886 p. 51 ff., A. Rapp in Roscher *Lex. Myth.* i. 1998 f., A. A. Macdonell *Vedic Mythology* Strassburg 1897 p. 31, H. Oldenberg *La religion du Vêda* Paris 1903 pp. 38, 64 ff., 300, E. W. Hopkins *The Religions of India* Boston etc. 1895 p. 41, W. Mannhardt *Wald- und Feldkulte*² Berlin 1905 ii. 203, E. H. Meyer *Germanische Mythologie* Berlin 1891 pp. 59, 94, 293, R. M. Meyer *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* Leipzig 1910 p. 105.

⁴ *Supra* p. 180 n. 5.

⁵ A. Kuhn *op. cit.*² p. 51 ff., A. Rapp *loc. cit.*, J. Déchelette in the *Rev. Arch.* 1909 i. 307 ff. and *Manuel d'archéologie* Paris 1910 ii. i. 413 ff.

The conception of Helios as a rider on horse-back is not Greek (*pace Rapp loc. cit.* p. 1999), but hails from Asia Minor (Gruppe *Gr. Myth. Rel.* p. 381 n. 13 and p. 1532