

# The chariot, the horse, the winged *depos*

Once again on the journey  
of the Sun-god

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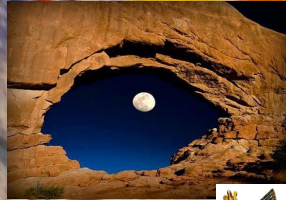


# Schedule

- Solar-deities: some universals
- Indo-European Sun-god
- A case study: Mímnarmir and the travel of the Aśvinā/Nāsatyā







## a. Sun is life

- Primary importance
- Sun cannot disappear  
'to be alive' : 'to see the light of the sun'



## a. Source of light and life

## b. Round shape

## c. Motion

b. Sun (and full moon) are round, they resembles:

- A face
- An eye (powerful view, omniscience)

wheel, spiral, disk



[\*k<sup>u</sup>(e)k<sup>u</sup>lo- \*seh<sub>2</sub>u(e)l-(i)io-]



wings and feathers



boat



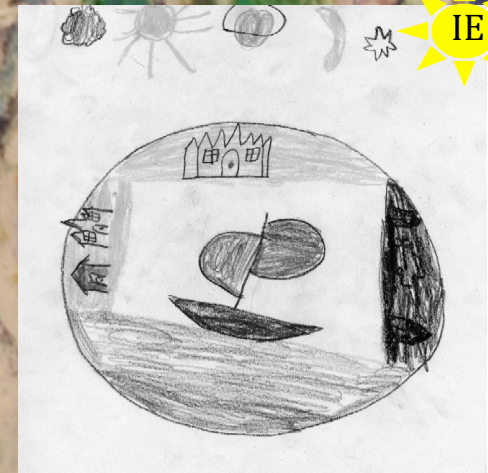
chariot



[\*(H)roth<sub>2</sub>- \*seh<sub>2</sub>u(e)l-(i)io-]  
[\*seh<sub>2</sub>u(e)l-(i)io- ueǵ<sup>h</sup>eti]  
[\*meǵh<sub>2</sub>- \*h<sub>2</sub>ógmo-]

c. Geocentric universe:

- Earth is flat
- Sun and moon move

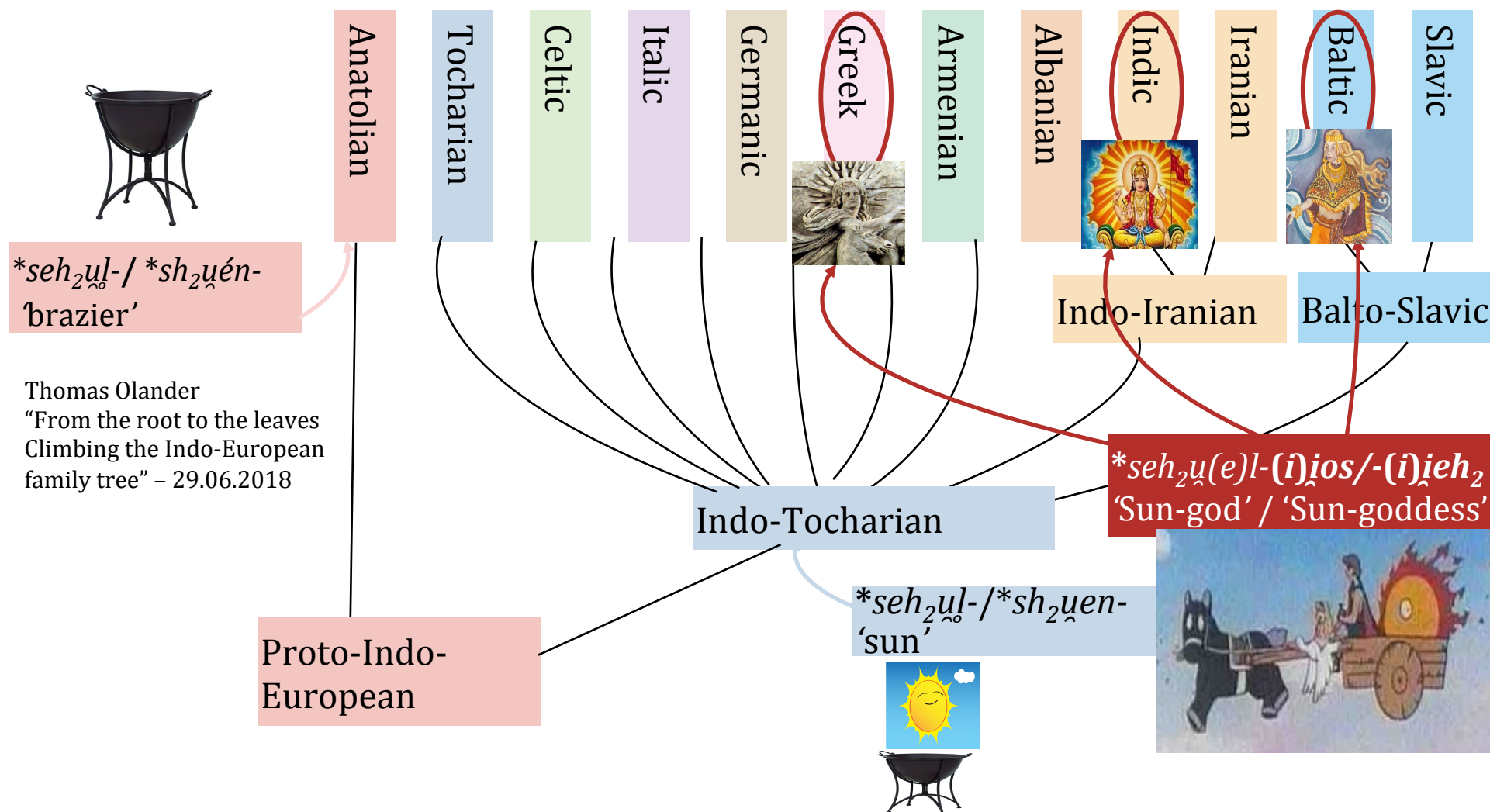






# The Indo-European Sun-god

- is called *\*seh<sub>2</sub>ul̥- / \*sh<sub>2</sub>uén-* Cluwian *še-ḥu-wa-a-a[ʔ]* **'brazier'**  
Vedic *sú<sub>ṽ</sub>ar*, Avestan *hvarə*, Gothic *sauil*,  
Gothic *sunno*, English *sun* → **'sun'**  
→ **'sun'**
- or *\*s(e)h<sub>2</sub>u(e)l̥-(i)io̯- / -ieh<sub>2</sub>* compare Vedic *sūr(i)ya-*, Greek *\*ἄ(φ)ἔλιος*, Lithuanian *saulė* → **'sun'**







# A thought experiment (I)

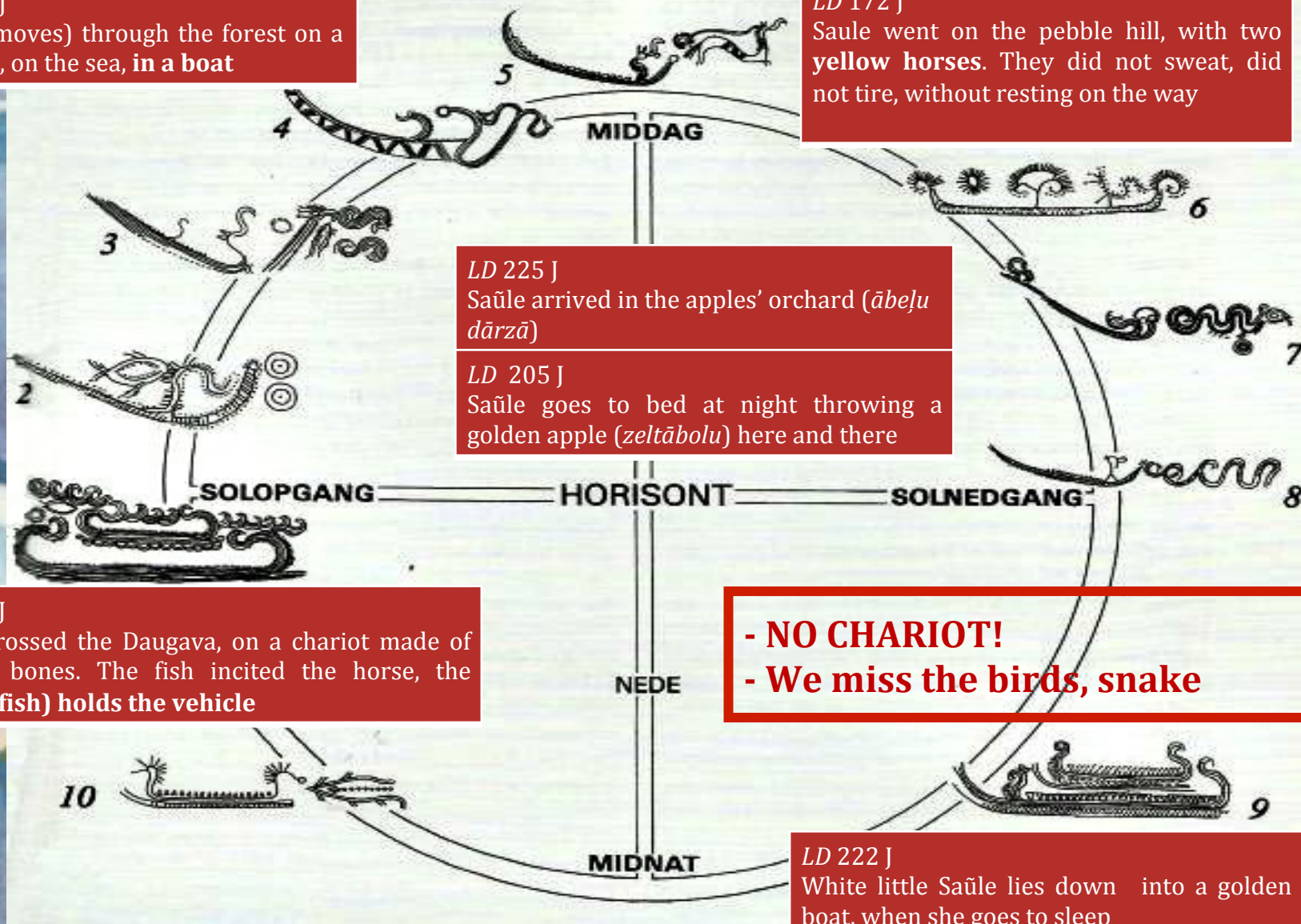
## Saūle in the Latvian *Daiņas*

LD 167 J

(Saule moves) through the forest on a **chariot**, on the sea, **in a boat**

LD 172 J

Saule went on the pebble hill, with two **yellow horses**. They did not sweat, did not tire, without resting on the way



## A Greek fragment

- Mimnermus: Lyric (elegiac) poet, 7th century BCE, Ionia (for instance, Helios is spelled ἥλιος)
- *Plus in amore valet Mimnermi versus Homero: / carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor*  
“In love the verses of Mimnermus prevail over those of Homer. Gentle love calls for soft songs”  
– Propertius (1st century BCE – 1st century CE)
- Fragment preserved by Athenaeus *The Learned Banqueters*, book 11:

- **Heracles robs Helios:** “But Heracles drew his bow against him, as if he meant to shoot him: and the Sun bade him desist, and so he, being afraid, did desist. And in return for his forbearance, the Sun gave him the golden cup (τὸ δέπας τὸ χρύσειον) in which he himself used to travel with his horses when he has set, **going all night across the ocean to the east, where he again rises.**” (Athenaeus 11.39 K)



*Pelike*, ca. 350 BCE,  
Hermitage Museum  
St. Petersburg

*Skyphos*, ca. 500 BCE,  
Archaelogical Museum Taranto





## Mimnermus fr. 12 W (Athenaeus 11.38 K)

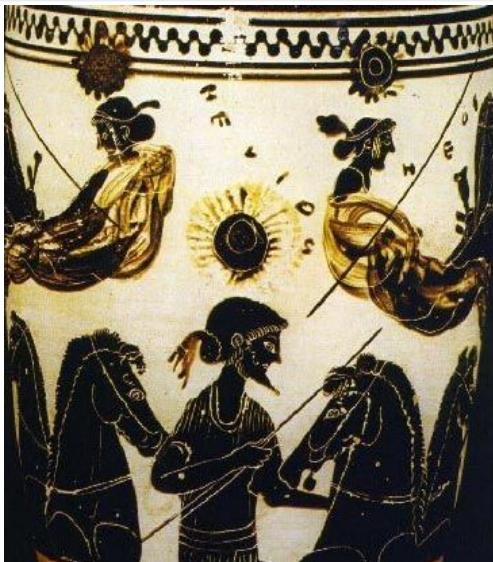
Athenaeus 11.38 K: “**the poet** (: Mimnermus) **hints at the hollow of the cup** (τὸ κοῖλον τοῦ ποτηρίου). His words are:”

Ἡέλιος μὲν γὰρ ἔλαχεν πόνον ἥματα πάντα  
οὐδέ ποτ' ἄμπαυσις γίνεται οὐδεμία  
ἵπποισιν τε καὶ αὐτῷ, ἐπεὶ ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως  
Ὠκεανὸν προλιποῦσ' οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβῆ.  
τὸν μὲν γὰρ διὰ κῦμα φέρει πολυήρατος εὐνή,  
κοιῖλη, Ἡφαίστου χερσὶν ἐληλαμένη,  
χρυσοῦ τιμήεντος, ὑπόπτερος, ἄκρον ἐφ' ὕδωρ  
εὐδονθ' ἀρπαλέως χώρου ἀφ' Ἑσπερίδων  
γαῖαν ἐς Αἰθιοπῶν, ἵνα δὴ θοὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵπποι  
ἔστᾱσ', ὄφρ' Ἥως ἡριγένεια μόλῃ.  
ἔνθ' ἐπέβη ἐτέρων ὀχέων Ὑπερίονος υἱός

“For the Sun’s lot is toil every day and there is never any respite for him and his horses, from the moment rose-fingered Dawn leaves Oceanus and goes up into the sky. A lovely bed, hollow, forged by the hands of Hephaestus, of precious gold and winged, carries him, as he sleeps soundly, over the waves on the water’s surface from the place of the Hesperides<sup>1</sup> to the land of the Ethiopians, where his swift chariot and horses stand<sup>3</sup> until early-born Dawn comes. There the son of Hyperion mounts his other vehicle ”  
(Gerber 1999)

Ἡέλιος μὲν γὰρ ἔλαχεν πόνον ἡματα πάντα  
οὐδέ ποτ' ἄμπαυσις γίνεται οὐδεμία  
ἵπποισιν τε καὶ αὐτῷ, ἐπεὶ ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως  
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“For the Sun’s lot is toil every day and  
there is never any respite for him and his  
horses, from the moment rose-fingered  
Dawn leaves Oceanus and goes up into  
the sky. [...] to the land of the Ethiopians,  
where his swift chariot and horses stand  
until early-born Dawn comes”

- **On horses** (ἵπποισιν, ἵπποι) **and chariot** (ἄρμα)
- **Begins when Dawn moves from the ocean to the sky**, compare ἐπεὶ ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως ... οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβῆ, ὄφρ' Ἥως ἡριγένεια μόλῃ;
- **From the land of the Ethiopians** (to that of the Hesperides = East→West), compare ἐς Αἰθιοπῶν, ἵνα δὴ θεὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵπποι / ἔστᾱσι



Black figures lekythos attributed to the Sappho Painter, 500–475 BCE, Metropolitan Museum of Arts





τὸν μὲν γὰρ διὰ κῦμα φέρει πολυήρατος εὐνή,  
κοῖτλη, Ἥφαίστου χερσὶν ἐληλαμένη,  
χρυσοῦ τιμήεντος, ὑπόπτερος, ἄκρον ἐφ' ὕδωρ  
εὐδονθ' ἀρπαλέως χώρου ἀφ' Ἑσπερίδων  
γαῖαν ἐς Αἰθιοπῶν [...]

“A lovely bed, hollow, forged by the hands of Hephaestus, of precious gold and winged, carries him, as he sleeps soundly, over the waves on the water’s surface from the place of the Hesperides to the land of the Ethiopians”

- **On something which Athenaeus compares to a cup**, compare ‘hollow’ (κοῖτλη), ‘winged’ (ὑπόπτερος)
- While **Dawn is in the Ocean (= night)**
- From the land of the **Hesperides to that of the Ethiopians** (West→East), compare χώρου ἀφ' Ἑσπερίδων / γαῖαν ἐς Αἰθιοπῶν



Attic red figure *hydria*, Berlin Painter, ca. 490 BCE, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, Città del Vaticano

“Eurystheus ordered Herakles to get **golden apples from the Hesperides** [...]. An immortal Serpent guarded them”  
(Pseudo-Apollodorus 2.113–114)



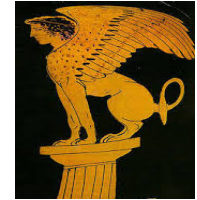
Campanian red figured *amphora*, 5th BCE, British Museum, London



Attic red figure volute krater, attributed to Kleophrades Painter, 490 BCE, Paul Getty Museum



What is *traditionally* BOTH ‘hollow’ and ‘under-winged’?



### HOLLOW

*Iliad* 22.115–116

πάντα μάλ’ ὅσσά τ’ Ἀλέξανδρος κοίλῃς ἐνὶ νηυσὶν  
ἤγάγετο Τροίηνδ’(ε)

“All the many treasures that Alexander brought in his **hollow ships** to Troy”

### UNDER-WINGED

Pindar *Olympian* 9.23–25

καὶ ἀγάνορος ἵππου  
θᾶσσον καὶ ναὸς ὑποπτέρου παντᾶ  
ἀγγελίαν πέμψω ταύταν

“More swiftly than either a high-spirited horse or a **winged ship** I shall send this announcement everywhere”

Indeed,

*Odyssey* 11.125

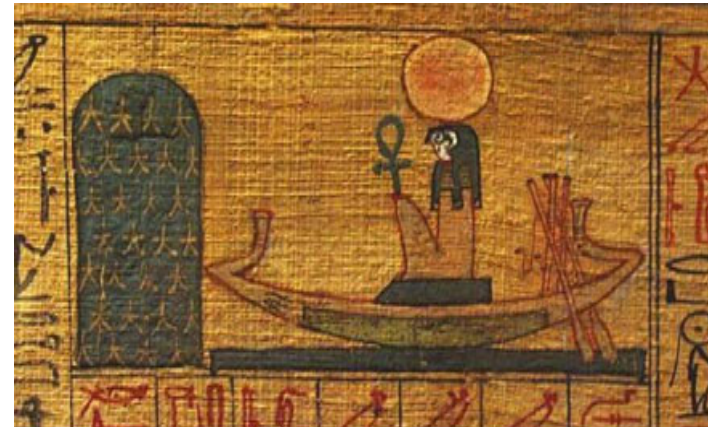
οὐδ’ εὐήρε’ ἔρετμά, τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται

“Shapely **oars**, which are a **vessel’s wings**”

**IT’S A BOAT!**



# Is this the boat of Râ?



## Common features

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Association of boat and wings</li> <li>- Idea of the earth floating like a log (Thales)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Association of boat and birds</li> <li>- The earth floats on Nun's water</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

## Differences

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complementary distribution: boat/wings :: chariot/horses</li> <li>- The boat travels ABOVE the water (ἄκρον ἐφ' ὕδαρ)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No chariot of Râ</li> <li>- The boat travels UNDER the earth – underworld: Râ sails through a succession of caverns bringing light and happiness to the souls below</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**HELIOS'S BOAT MIGHT BE *LIKE* THE BOAT OF RÂ, NOT THE JOURNEY OF RÂ**



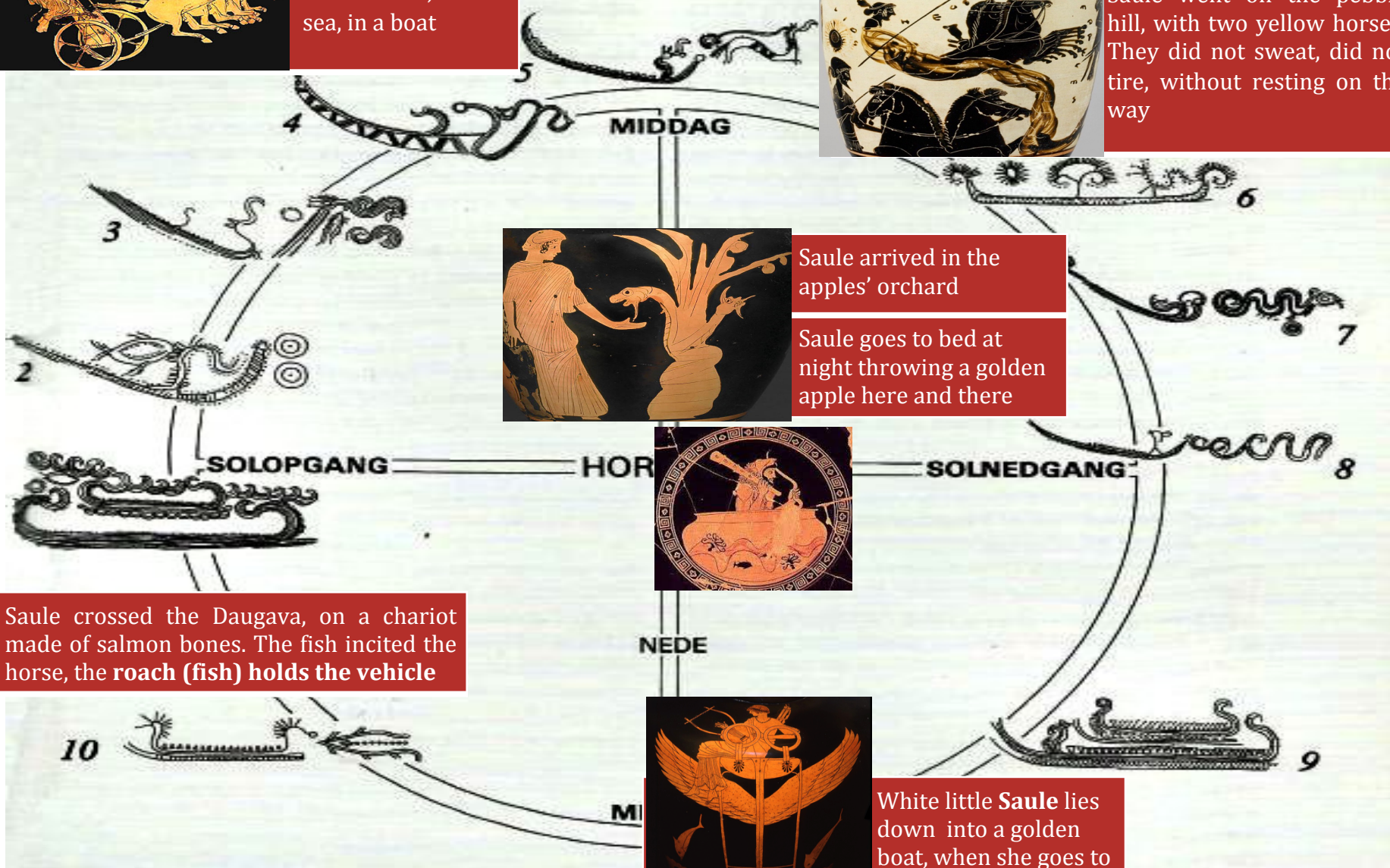
# A though experiment (II)



(Saule moves) through the forest on a chariot, on the sea, in a boat



Saule went on the pebble hill, with two yellow horses. They did not sweat, did not tire, without resting on the way



Saule arrived in the apples' orchard

Saule goes to bed at night throwing a golden apple here and there



Saule crossed the Daugava, on a chariot made of salmon bones. The fish incited the horse, the **roach (fish) holds the vehicle**

White little **Saule** lies down into a golden boat, when she goes to sleep



*(Rigveda, Atharvaveda, second part II mill. – 500 BCE)*

- References to the chariot of Sūrya are *extremely* common.  
What about his boat?
- Two passages mention Sūrya and a ship, namely:

*Rigveda 5.45.10*

*ā sūr.yo aruhac chukráṁ árṇó, 'yukta yád dharíto vītáprṣṭhāḥ  
udnā ná nāvam anayanta dhīrā, āśṇvatīr āpo arvāg atiṣṭhan*

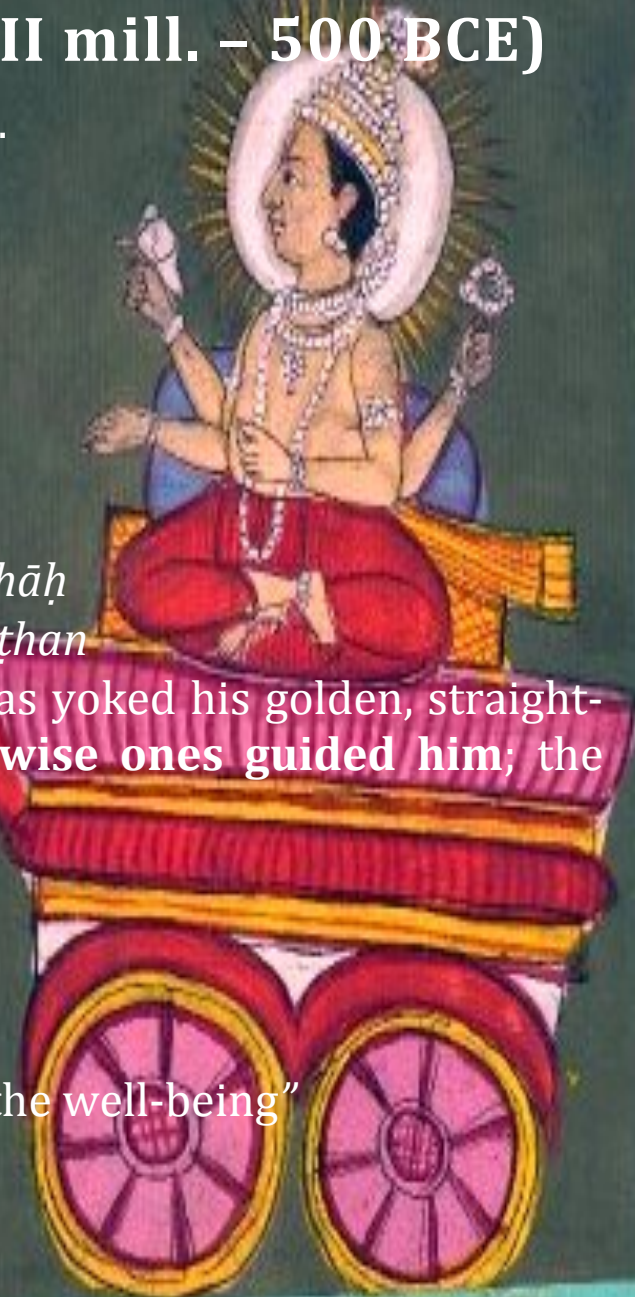
“The Sun has mounted the gleaming flood, now that he has yoked his golden, straight-backed (horses). **Like a boat through the water the wise ones guided him;** the waters, giving heed, stood still nearby”

*Atharvaveda Śaunaka 17.1.26 (compare also 25)*

*sūrya nāvam āruksaḥ śatāritrāṁ svastāye*

“Sūrya has mounted a ship with one hundred oars for the well-being”

Has Sūrya no boat?







- **Helpers of the Sun-god**, compare
  - *yābhiḥ sūryam pariyāthāḥ parāvāti* “those (helps) with which **you drive around the sun** in the distance” (*Rigveda* 1.112.13)
- **‘Bright, full of light’**, compare Vedic *śubhrā* (*Rigveda* 7.68.1), *śubhāḥ pātī* ‘lords of lustre’ (*Rigveda* 8.22.14), *pūruścandrā* ‘much-gleaming’, Greek *Polu-deukēs* < \**Poluleúkēs* ‘very lucent’
- **Two young spouses of the Sun** (Sun-daughter: *Sūryā*), compare:
  - *tād ū śú vām ajiráṃ ceti yānaṃ, yéna pātī bhāvathaḥ sūryāyāḥ* “Your speedy vehicle has just appeared, with which you two become **the masters [/husbands] of Sūryā**” (*Rigveda* 4.43.6cd)
- Identified as two appearances of Venus (‘Morning and Evening Star’), two separated ‘myths of each star’ (Hesperus, Lucifer) which merged

- Divine Twins with **different parents** and/or **birth places** (like the Dioskouroi in Greece), compare:
  - “One of you is lauded as the victorious patron of the good battler, **the other as the son of heaven dispensing a good portion**” (*Rigveda* 1.181.4)
  - “One is called **Son of the night**, the other **Son of the Dawn**” (Yāska Nirūkta 12.2)
  - “**Born separately**, faultless, you two together have come to kinship with us.” (*Rigveda* 5.73.4)
- **Different names**, namely:
  - **Aśvinā/Aśvinau** or **Nāsatyā/Nāsatyau** = the two Aśvins or the two Nāsatyas = Aśvin and Nāsatya
  - **Aśvin** ‘the one possessing a horse’ (Vedic *áśva-*, compare Latin *equus*, Indo-European *\*h<sub>1</sub>ek<sub>u</sub>o-*)
  - **Nāsatya** ‘the one who *nas*’ (Vedic *nas* “to gladly reunite”, Greek *νέομαι* “to come back”)





- **sūr.yāvasū:** ‘having/carrying/bringing Sūryā as goods’, compare

*Rigveda 7.68.3*                      *prá vāṃ rátho mánojavā iyarti, tiró rájāṃs.y aśvinā śatótiḥ*  
*asmábhyaṃ sūr.yāvasū iyānáḥ*

“O Aśvins, your chariot swift as thought rises forth across the airy spaces, bringing hundredfold help, speeding to us, **o you who bring Sūryā as goods**”

- **Has a wheel on the top**, compare

*Rigveda 1.30.19*                      *ny āghnyásya mūrdhāni, cakráṃ ráthasya yemathuḥ*  
*pāri dyām anyád iyate*

“**You two keep (one) wheel of the chariot on the top** (of the head) of the inviolable (bull); the other speeds around heaven”

- **Threefold**, compare

*Rigveda 1.118.2ab*                      *trivandhuréṇa trivṛtā ráthēna*  
*tricakréṇa suvṛtā yātam arvāk*

“Journey toward us by your smooth-turning chariot with its **three chariot boxes, with its three wheels, and three turnings.**”



## • Boat of the Nāsatyā

### • ‘hundred oars’

*Rigveda 1.116.5cd*

*yád aśvinā ūháthur bhujuúm ástam*

*śatāritrām nāvam ātasthivāṃsam*

“when, Aśvins, you carried Bhuju home after he mounted **your ship of a hundred oars**”

### ▪ ‘winged’

*Rigveda 1.182.5ab*

*yuvám etám cakrathuḥ sīndhuṣu plavám  
ātmanvāntam pakṣīnam taugriyāya kām*

“For Tugra’s son (Bhuju) in the rivers you made **the boat, with a body and wings**”

## • Boat of the sun

### ▪ ‘hundred oars’

*Atharvaveda Śaunaka 17.1.25*

*sūrya nāvam āruksaḥ śatāritrām*

“Sūrya has mounted a ship with one hundred oars”

### ▪ ‘beautiful winged’

*Atharvaveda Śaunaka 13.2.2bc*

*supakṣám āśúm patáyantam arṇavé  
stávāma sūryam*

“We shall praise the swift flying **sun**, who flies in the flood, **beautiful-winged**”

NB1 *Odyssey 11.125* οὐδ’ ἐυήρε’ ἐρετμά, τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται

“Shapely **oars**, which are a **vessel’s wings**”

NB2 *Rigveda 1.112.13 yābhiḥ sūryam pariyāthāḥ parāvāti*

“those (helps, *ūtíbhīḥ*) with which **you drive around the sun** in the distance and you”

## “We can recover really two different ways in each element of their journey”

### • **Aśvin’s journey**

#### ▪ **With quadrupeds (horses)**

Ex. *Rigveda* 7.67.8cd “**They do not become exhausted** (*ná vāyanti*)—these your surpassing (horses) of powerful presence (*subh<sub>u</sub>vò*), which, yoked by the gods on their yoke-poles (*deváyuktā*), carry you two”

#### ▪ **Across the sky**

Ex. *Rigveda* 4.43.5a “Your chariot (*vāṃ ráthaḥ*) reaches widely (*urú ... nakṣati*) **around heaven** (*pári ... dyāṃ*)”

#### ▪ **During the day (after the Dawn)**

Ex. *Rigveda* 8.5.2c “you **accompany Dawn**, o Aśvins” (*sá<sub>u</sub>cethe aśvin<sub>ā</sub> śásam*)

#### ▪ **By chariot**

Ex. *Rigveda* 8.8.2ab “Now drive here **with your sun-skinned chariot** (*ráthena sūryatvacā*)”

### • **Nāsatya’s journey**

#### ▪ **Led by birds**

Ex. *Rigveda* 1.118.4a “Let **the falcons** carry you here (*ā vāṃ śyenāso ... vahantu*)”

#### ▪ **Over the sea**

Ex. *Rigveda* 1.118.4cd “Those (winged, Vedic *patamgāḥ*) that, **crossing the waters** (Vedic *aptúro*) high in the heavens like vultures, carry you to (our offered) enjoyment, o Nāsatyā (*abhí ... nāsat.yā váhanti*)”

#### ▪ **Through the night**

Ex. *Rigveda* 1.46.6 “Bestow on us such luminous nourishment (: the dawn) that should carry (*rāsāthām*) us **across the darkness** (*tāmas tiráḥ*)”

#### ▪ **By ship of hundred oars / winged**

Ex. *Rigveda* 1.116.5cd “you carried Bhuju home (*ūháthur ... ástam*) after he mounted **your ship of a hundred oars** (*śatāritrāṃ nāvam*)”

Who	1 Helios (day)	2 Aśvin	3 Helios (night)	4 Nāsatya
Where	— (not in the water)	around the heaven ( <i>pāri ... dyām</i> ) East → West	over the waves on the water's surface	crossing the waters ( <i>aptúraḥ</i> ) (West → East)
When	from the moment rose-fingered Dawn leaves Oceanus and goes up into the sky	<u>you accompany</u> <u>Dawn</u> , o Aśvins ( <i>sācethe aśvinā</i> <i>śāsam</i> )	until early-born Dawn comes	across the darkness ( <i>tāmas tirāḥ</i> )
How	swift chariot	sun-skinned chariot ( <i>rāthena sūryatvacā</i> )	a lovely bed, hollow ... of precious gold	ship of a hundred oars ( <i>śatāritrāṃ nāvam</i> ) winged ship ( <i>plavām ...</i> <i>pakṣīṇam</i> )
Animals	untiring horses	horses which do not become exhausted ( <i>nā vāyanti</i> )	— 'wings'	let the falcons carry you here ( <i>śyenāsaḥ</i> )





*Rigveda* 8.35.7–9

“Like **hāridrava-birds** (to the woods) (7) / Like **geese** (8) / like **falcons** (9) you fly right to the wooden (cups). – In concert with Dawn and the Sun, drive your circuit”



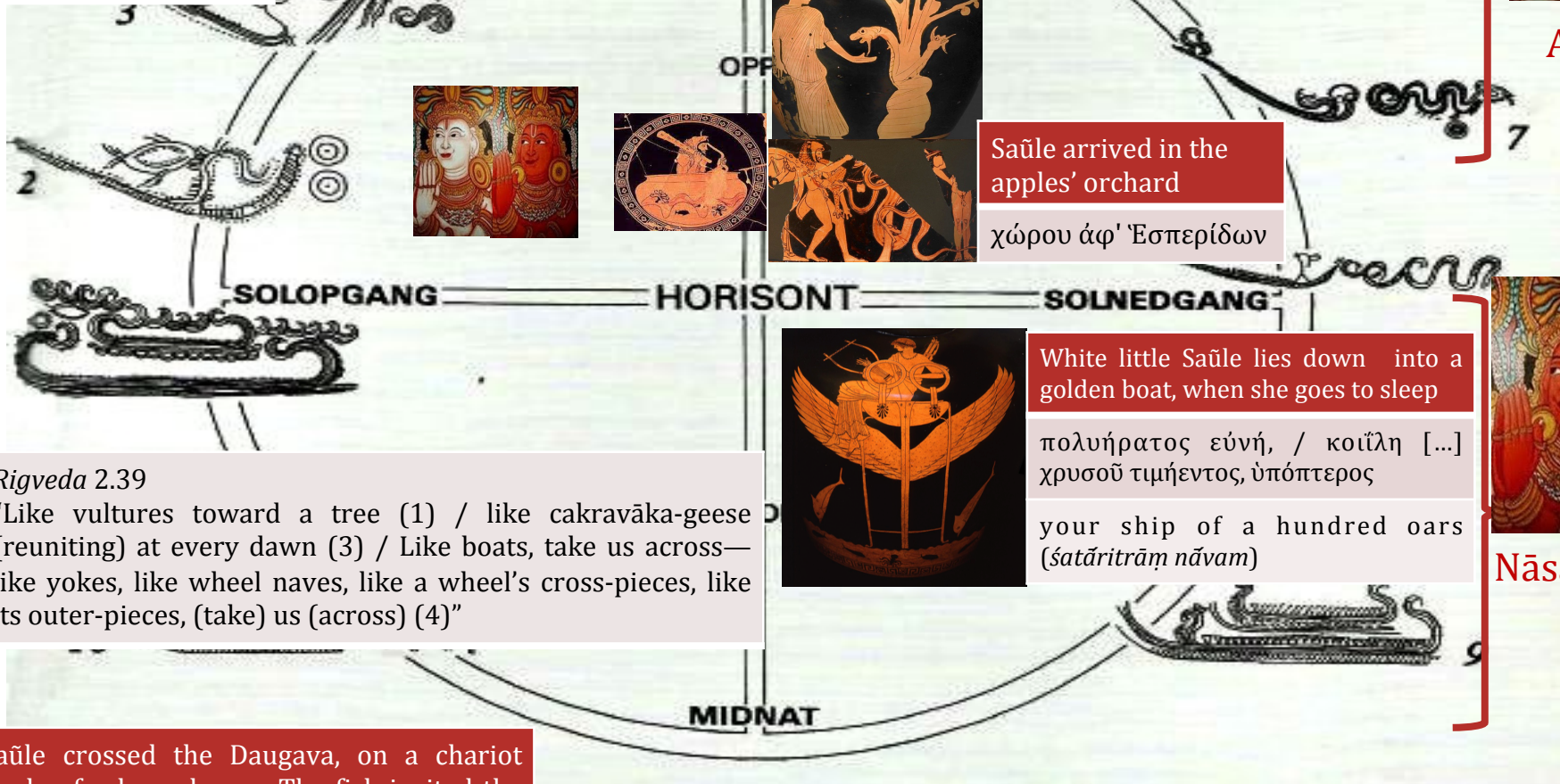
(Saūle’s) two yellow horses. They did not sweat, did not tire, without resting on the way

οὐδέ ποτ' ἄμπαυσις γίνεται οὐδεμία ἵπποισιν τε καὶ αὐτῶ

They do not become exhausted (*ná vāyanti*)—these your (Aśvin’s) surpassing (horses)



Aśvin



*Rigveda* 2.39

“Like vultures toward a tree (1) / like cakravāka-geese (reuniting) at every dawn (3) / Like boats, take us across—like yokes, like wheel naves, like a wheel’s cross-pieces, like its outer-pieces, (take) us (across) (4)”

Saūle arrived in the apples’ orchard

χώρου ἀφ' Ἑσπερίδων

White little Saūle lies down into a golden boat, when she goes to sleep

πολυήρατος εὐνή, / κοιῖλη [...] χρυσοῦ τιμήεντος, ὑπόπτερος

your ship of a hundred oars (*śatāritrāṇ nāvam*)



Nāsatya

Saūle crossed the Daugava, on a chariot made of salmon bones. The fish incited the horse, the roach (fish) holds the vehicle

**Thank you for your attention!**

