

Indo-European Mythology and Poetics

Instructor: Riccardo Ginevra

Indo-European
Mythology and Poetics

Dawn and Divine Twins

The Sun is a Wheel drawn by a Horse

- Vedic: Etaśa is the name of the Horse who pulls the Wheel of the Sun

RV 7.63.2: úd u eti prasavītā jánānām
mahān ketúr arṇaváh sūriyasya
samānám cakrám pariāvívṛtsan
yád etaśó váhati dhūrṣú yuktáh.

“And upward he rises, the one impelling the peoples forth—the great, undulating beacon of the Sun, about to turn **the common wheel that Etaśa pulls**, harnessed on the yoke poles.”

The Sun is a Wheel drawn by a Horse

- Scandinavia:
the Trundholm Sun Chariot
was found in 1902 in Denmark.
- Nordic Bronze Age (14th c. BCE) =
probably speakers of IE languages.
- A single horse draws a wheel:
exactly the same poetic image as in Vedic poetry.



The personified male Sun

IE male Sun-deities of oldest attestation:

- Hittite Sun-god *Šiuš*
- Other Anatolian Sun-gods: Luwian ^d*Tiwat-* and Palaic ^d*Tiyat*
- Vedic Sun-god *Surya*
- Greek Sun-god *Helios*

The personified male Sun

The IE male Sun-gods of oldest attestation reflect no IE Sun-god:

- Hittite Sun-god *Šiuš* and other Anatolian Sun-gods (Luwian ^d*Tiwat*-, Palaic ^d*Tiyat*), have names which connect them to the SKY-god.
- Main common features of the Vedic Sun-god *Surya* and of the Greek Sun-god *Helios* (epithets GREAT, ALL-SEEING, connection with OATHS) are features of the SKY-god as well.
- NB: **names of IE Sun-gods** always have **different origins**, we can **not reconstruct** an **IE animate** word for **SUN** (only the neuter, inanimate)

The personified male Sun

The IE male Sun-gods of oldest attestation reflect no IE Sun-god:

- Hittite Sun-god *Šiuš* and other Anatolian Sun-gods (Luwian ^d*Tiwat-*, Palaic ^d*Tiyat*), have names which connect them to the SKY-god.
- Main common features of the Vedic Sun-god *Surya* and of the Greek Sun-god *Helios* (epithets GREAT, ALL-SEEING, connection with OATHS) are features of the SKY-god as well.
- NB: names of IE Sun-gods always have different origins, we can not reconstruct an IE animate word for SUN. (only the neuter, inanimate)

Solution: there was **no IE male SUN-god**. The **IE male god** who was **associated with the SUN** was **FATHER HEAVEN**, god of the shining SKY.

The personified female Sun

Several IE languages and cultures attest a feminine SUN-word and a female SUN-deity.

- Germanic **sunnōn-*: English *Sun*, German *Sonne*
- Old Norse *sól*, poetic word for SUN and name of the SUN-goddess
- Baltic theonyms *Saule* 'sun' and Lithuanian *Saulyte* 'Sönnchen'
- Irish *súil* 'eye' (: PIE **séh₂u-l-* 'sun') and *grían* 'sun' are both feminines

The personified female Sun

Several IE languages and cultures attest a feminine SUN-word and a female SUN-deity.

West 2007:196 “This northerly feminine zone is perhaps to be accounted for in terms of influence from the substrate population(s)”

BUT the feminine gender could actually reflect an inherited IE theme.

The solar goddess Dawn

There is a female deity associated with the SUN which may be linguistically reconstructed for PIE: **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'Dawn'.

- Vedic: *Uṣ-as* < PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Greek: Ἥ-ώς 'Dawn' < PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Latin: *Aur-ōr-a* 'Dawn' < PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Germanic: OE *Eos-ter* : derivative of PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'

PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'

root **h₂u̯es* 'lighten' + -s-suffix

The solar goddess Dawn

There is a female deity associated with the SUN which may be linguistically reconstructed for PIE: **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'Dawn'.

- Vedic: *Uṣ-as* < PIE **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Greek: Ἥ-ώς 'Dawn' < PIE **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Latin: *Aur-ōr-a* 'Dawn' < PIE **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'
- Germanic: OE *Eos-ter* : derivative of PIE **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'

PIE **h₂éy̥s-ōs* 'dawn(-goddess)'

root **h₂y̥es* 'lighten' + -s-suffix

The solar goddess Dawn

We may identify other reflexes of this goddess, whose names are NOT reflexes of PIE **h₂éusōs* 'dawn(-goddess)':

- Greek: Aphrodite, goddess of love, and Helen, Zeus' daughter
- Latin: Mater Matuta 'Mother Morning' = Aurora
Venus, goddess of love
- Germanic: ON *Sól* 'Sun(-goddess)', OHG *Sunna* 'Sun(-goddess)'
- Baltic: Lithuanian Saulyte, Baltic Saule, and their daughter
- Vedic: *Suryā* the Sun-Maiden and *Saranyu* mother of the *Aśvins*

Dawn, Daylight and Night

- PIE **h₂éu̯s-ōs* ‘dawn(-goddess)’ originally meant ‘the goddess of DAYBREAK’, the initial part of the day
- But she was **associated** with **DAYLIGHT** in general and **opposed to NIGHT** in poetics and mythology:

RV 10.127.3: *nír u svásāram askṛta*
 uṣásam devī āyatī
 ápéd u hāsate támaḥ

“**[Night]** has expelled her sister, Dawn — she, the goddess, while coming hither —darkness will race away.”

The PIE female Sun-deity Dawn

- TO SUM UP: PIE **h₂é_us-ōs* ‘dawn(-goddess)’ originally meant ‘the goddess of DAYBREAK’,
- BUT she was associated with DAYLIGHT and DAYTIME in general (*pars pro toto* association, synecdoche)
- SO she may be described as a **SUN-deity**, the **only one whose NAME we can actually reconstruct** for Proto-Indo-European (≠ male Sun-gods).

The PIE female Sun-deity Dawn

Some features of DAWN:

- She is the DAUGHTER of the Sky, FATHER HEAVEN
- She is associated with the SEA
- She is associated with act of SMILING
- She is associated with LOVE
- She has arms, hands, fingers
- She is associated with Spring

The Daughter of the Sky

- Vedic epithet of the Dawn *divó* (PIE **d̥iéu-*) ***duhitár-*** ‘sky’s **daughter**’
- Lithuanian epithet of the Sun-goddess *Dievo* (PIE **de̯i̯u-ó-*, derivative of **d̥iéu-* ‘sky’) ***dukte*** ‘**daughter** of the (sky-)god’
- Greek: Aphrodite (among other goddesses) is called Διὸς **θυγάτηρ** “**daughter** of Zeus (PIE **d̥iéu-* ‘sky’)”

NB: Ved. ***duhitár-***, Lith. ***duktė***, Gk. **θυγάτηρ** < **d^hugh₂tér-* ‘daughter’

We may reconstruct a collocation:

[**DAUGHTER (PIE **d^hugh₂tér-*)** – of SKY-god (PIE **d̥iéu-*)]

The Daughter of the Sky

- Vedic epithet of the Dawn ***divó*** (PIE ****d̥iéu-***) ***duhitár-*** ‘sky’s daughter’
- Lithuanian epithet of the Sun-goddess ***Dievo*** (PIE ****de̥i̯u-ó-***, derivative of ****d̥iéu-*** ‘sky’) ***dukte*** ‘daughter of the (sky-)God’
- Greek: Aphrodite (among other goddesses) is called **Διὸς θυγάτηρ** “daughter of Zeus (PIE ****d̥iéu-*** ‘sky’)”

NB: Ved. *duhitár-*, Lith. *duktė*, Gk. *θυγάτηρ* < PIE ****d^hugh₂tér-*** ‘daughter’

We may reconstruct a collocation:

[DAUGHTER (PIE ****d^hugh₂tér-***) – of SKY-god (PIE ****d̥iéu-***)]

The Daughter of the Sky

- Vedic epithet of the **Dawn** *divó* (PIE **d̥iéu-*) *duhitár-* ‘sky’s daughter’
- Lithuanian epithet of the **Sun-goddess** *Dievo* (PIE **de̯i̯u-ó-*, derivative of **d̥iéu-* ‘sky’) *dukte* ‘daughter of the (sky-)god’
- Greek: **Aphrodite** (among other goddesses) is called Διὸς θυγάτηρ “daughter of Zeus (PIE **d̥iéu-* ‘sky’)”

NB: Ved. *duhitár-*, Lith. *duktė*, Gk. θυγάτηρ < PIE **d^hugh₂tér-* ‘daughter’

We may reconstruct a collocation:

[DAUGHTER (PIE **d^hugh₂tér-*) – of SKY-god (PIE **d̥iéu-*)]

A kenning for the goddess of **[DAWN]**. NB: NEVER said of male SUN-gods!

The Family of the Sky

- The PIE DAWN-goddess was the [DAUGHTER – of the SKY]
- FATHER HEAVEN also has two male children: the [SONS – of the SKY].
- Scholars also call them the Divine Twins or the Horse Twins.
- Act as **brothers, suitors** and even **children of Dawn / Sun-maiden**.

The Divine Twins

Reflexes in Vedic, Greek and Baltic; traces in Germanic and Sicilian

- Vedic: the Aśvins ('Horsemen') or Nāsatya ('Saviours')
- Greek: the Διόσκουροι Castor and Polydeukes
- Baltic: Lithuanian Diēvo sunēliai, Latvian Dieva dēli 'sons of (Sky-)God'
- Germanic: Alcis, Hengest and Horsa
- Sicily: Palikoi, worshipped by the Sicels

The Divine Twins

Features of the Divine Twins:

- **Sons of the Sky**

Sons of the Sky

- Vedic: the Aśvins are called *dívo napāt-* ‘descendants of the Sky’

Vedic *nápāt-* < PIE **népot-* (: Latin *nepōtes*)

RV 1.117.12: *kúha yāntā suṣṭutīm kāviyāsya*
 dívo napātā *vṛṣaṇā śayutrā*
 hiraṇyasyeva kalásam níkhātam
 úd ūpathur daśamé aśvināhan

“Journeying where?—Toward the good praise of (Uśanā) Kāvya? To a bed, **o sons of heaven**, o bulls?— you dug out the one who was buried like a tub of gold on the tenth day, Aśvins.

Sons of the Sky

- Greek: Castor and Polydeukes are born of Zeus and therefore called the Διόσκουροι ‘Zeus’ sons’

HH 33.1–3: ἀμφὶ **Διὸς κούρους**, ἐλικώπιδες ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι,
Τυνδαρίδας, Λήδης καλλισφύρου ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,
Κάστορά θ’ ἵππόδαμον καὶ ἀμώμητον Πολυδεύκεα

“Tell about **the Sons of Zeus**, O curly-eyed Muses—the Tyndarids, fair-ankled Leda’s splendid children, Castor the horse-tamer and faultless Polydeuces”

Sons of the Sky

- Latvian: the Divine Twins are called *Dieva dēli* ‘sons of Dievs’

LTD 11.33965: *Saules meita jūru brida,
Ne matiņus neredzeja;
Dieva dēli gan redzeja,
Kur met jūra burbulišus*

“Daughter of the sun went to walk in the sea, (and now) not even a hair to be seen, **the sons of the sky** only saw where the sea bubbled (over her)”

Sons of the Sky

- Sicily: the Sicels (whose language was similar to Latin) worshipped the Palici, twin sons of Iuppiter (PIE **d̥iēu-* *ph₂tér-* ‘Father Heaven’)

Mac. Sat. 5.18: *In Sicilia Symaethus fluvius est. iuxta hunc **nympha Thalia compressu Iovis gravida** [...] et **duo infantes** de alvo Thaliae **progressi** emerferunt appellatique sunt **Palici** ἀπὸ τοῦ πάλιν ἰκέσθαι, quoniam prius in terram mersi denuo inde reversi sunt.*

“On the banks of the river Symaethus in Sicily **the nymph Thalia was impregnated by Jupiter** [...] and the **two babies who came forth** from Thalia’s womb were named the **Palici**, from “coming back again” (palin hiesthai), seeing that they were first buried in the earth and then came back out again.”

Excursus: Sicily and the Sicels



Sons of the Sky

- Vedic: the *Aśvins* are called *dívo napāt-* ‘descendants of the Sky’
Ved. *dívo* gen.sg. of *Dyáu-* < PIE **d̥ieṷ-* ‘heaven’
- Greek: Castor and Polydeukes are born of Zeus and therefore called the *Διόσκουροι* ‘Zeus’ sons’
Gk. *Διός* gen.sg. of *Ζεύς* < PIE **d̥ieṷ-* ‘heaven’
- Latvian: the Divine Twins are called *Dieva dēli* ‘sons of Dievs’
Latv. *Dieva*, gen.sg. *Dievs* ‘God’ < PIE **deṷ-ó-* ‘heavenly, sky-god’
- Reconstruct a collocation (a derivative of PIE **d̥ieṷ-*)

[SONS – of the SKY-god (PIE **d̥ieṷ-*)]

The divine Twins

Features of the Divine Twins:

- Sons of the Sky
- **Two**

The Two Brothers

- Vedic: the Aśvins are always referred to in the dual number

RV 10.39.9ab: ***yuvám** ha rebháṃ vṛṣaṇā gúhā hitám*
*úd airayatam maṃṛvāṃsam **aśvinā***

“You two raised up Rebha, set in hiding and already
dead, **o** bullish **Aśvins**”

- Ved. ***yuvám*** ‘you two’: nom. 2nd dual

Ved. ***aśvinau***: nom. dual *aśvín-* ‘horseman’

The Two Brothers

- Greek: the Dioskouroi are two (Kastor and Polydeukes) and often attested in the dual number

//.3.236: **δοιῶ** δ' οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν
 Κάστορά θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν **Πολυδεύκεα**
 αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τῷ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ

“Yet nowhere can I see those **two**, the marshals of the people, **Kastor**, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, **Polydeukes, my brothers**, born with me of one mother”

- **δοιῶ** ‘two’
- **αὐτοκασιγνήτω**, acc.du. **αὐτοκασίγνητος** ‘own brother’

The Two Brothers

- Baltic: the Latvian sons of Dievs are sometimes two, sometimes 4, 5

LD 33766: ***Dievinam duj dēlini,***
Saules meitas precinieki.

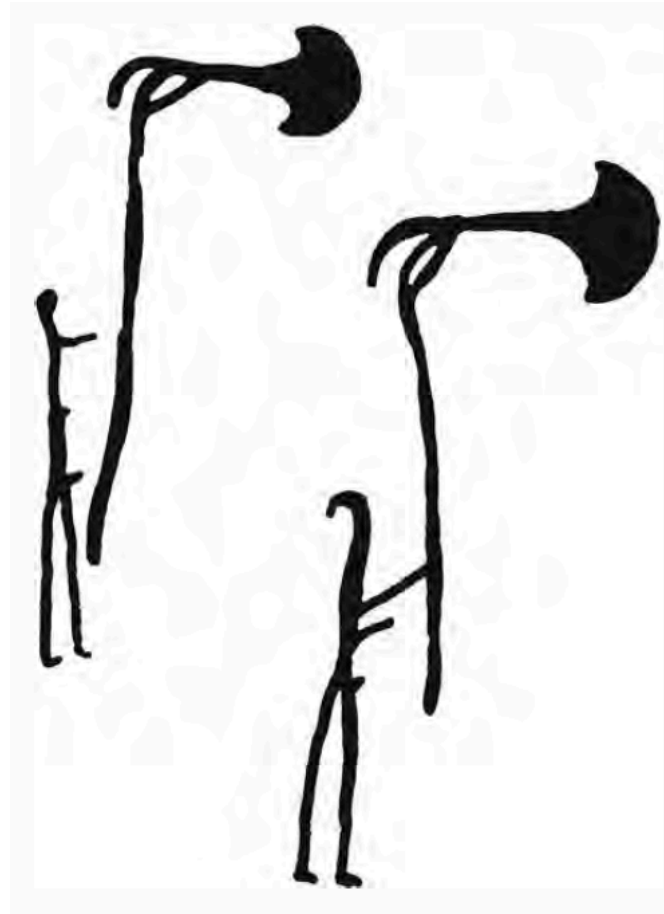
“Dievs has two sons,
suitors of the daughter of the Sun”

LD 33734: ***Dieviņam četri dēli,***
Es visiē vārdus zinu:
Mikužiņi, Andružiņi,
Pēteriši, Pāvuliši.

“Dievs has four sons,
I know all of their names, etc.”

The Two Brothers

- Scandinavia: rock art from the Nordic Bronze Age attests depictions of twin warriors yielding axes



Simris, Scania
1700–1500 BCE

The divine Twins

Features of the Divine Twins:

- Sons of the Sky
- Two
- **Horsemen**

The Horsemen

- Vedic: the Divine Twins are called *Aśv-ín-* ‘provided with horse(s)’ (-*ín-* derivative of *áśv-a-* ‘horse’ < **(h₁)ékwo-* ‘id.’ : Lat. *equus*, Gk. ἵππος). The **horses** that carry the **Divine Twins never get tired**.

RV 7.67.8: *ékasmin yóge bhuraṇā samāné
pári vāṃ saptá sraṁáto rátho gāt
ná vāyanti subhúvo deváyuktā
yé vāṃ dhūrṣú tarāṇayo váhanti.*

“In your single, joint trek, o energetic ones, your chariot encompasses the seven flowing streams. **They do not become exhausted**—these your surpassing (horses) of powerful presence, which, yoked by the gods on their yoke-poles, carry you two.”

The Horsemen

- Greek: the Dioskouroi Kastor and Polydeukes ride **on swift horses** over earth and sea.

Alc. Fr. 34.3–8: **Κάστορ / καὶ Πολύδε[υ]κες**
οἱ κατ εὐρηαν χ[θόνα] καὶ θάλασσαν
παῖσαν ἔρχεσθ' ὠ[κυπό]δων ἐπ' ἵππων,
ῥῆα δ' ἀνθρώποι[ς] θα[ν]άτῳ ῥύεσθε / ζακρυόεντος
“**Castor and Polydeukes, who go on swift horses**
over the broad earth and all the sea, and easily
rescue men from chilling death”

The Horsemen

- Latvian: Sons of Dievs associated with horses as well

LD 33769: *Divi bēri kumeliņi.*
Uz akmeņa auzas ēda:
Dieva dēla kumeliņi,
Saules meitas precinieka

“Two brown horses
ate oat on a rock.

They were the **horses of the Son of Dievs,**
the suitor of the Daughter of the Sun”

(The “Son of Dievs” singular! Innovative? Christian influence?)

The Horsemen

- Germanic: Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Britain were two brothers, Hengist and Horsa, descendants of Woden (< PIE Father Sky)

Bede, Hist. Eccl. Gent. Angl. 1.15: *Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres **Hengist et Horsa** [...]. Erant autem filii Uictgilsii, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, **cuius pater Woden**, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit.*

“The two first commanders are said to have been **Hengist and Horsa** [...]. They were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vecta, **son of Woden**; from whose stock the royal race of many provinces deduce their original.”

The divine Twins

Features of the Divine Twins:

- Sons of the Sky
- Two
- Horsemen
- **Brothers, children and even suitors of Dawn**

The Brothers of Dawn

- Vedic: Dawn, daughter of Sky, is the SISTER of divine twins Aśvins

RV 1.180.2cd:

svāsā yád vāṃ viśvagūrtī bhārāti
vājāya ṛṭṭe madhupāv iṣé ca

“[...] when your **sister [=Dawn]** will bring you, **o you welcomed by all**, and (the singer) solemnly invokes you for victory’s prize and for refreshment, **o honey-drinkers.**”

The Brothers of Dawn

- Greek: Helen, daughter of Zeus (*Sky), is the **SISTER** of the Dioskouroi

//.3.236: δοιῶ δ' οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν
 Κάστορά θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν **Πολυδεύκεα**
 αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τῷ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ

(Helen:) “Yet nowhere can I see those two marshals of the people, **Kastor**, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, **Polydeukes**, **my brothers**, born with me of one mother”

The divine Twins

Features of the Divine Twins:

- Sons of the Sky
- Two
- Horsemen
- Brothers, suitors and even children of Dawn
- **Saviours**

The Saviours

- Vedic: the Divine Twins are called *Aśvin-* ‘Horsemen’ or ***Nāsatyá-***
Nāsaty-a- , derivative of *nas-ati-* ‘act of saving’
PIE root **nes-* ‘save’ in German *ge-nes-en* ‘recover’
→ ***Nāsaty-a-*** ‘the Saviours’

The Saviours

- Vedic: the Divine Twins are rightly called ***Nāsatya-*** ‘the Saviours’

RV 7.71.5: ***nír áṃhasas támasa spartam átriṃ***

“You **recovered** Atri **from difficulty and darkness.**”

RV 1.112.5ab: ***yābhī rebháṃ nívr̥taṃ sitám adbhiyá***

úd vándanam aírayatam súvar dṛśé

“Those with which from the waters **you raised up** **rasping** Rebha, **who was confined and bound**, and **raised up** Vandana to see the sun.”

The Saviours

- Greek: the Dioskouroi are rightly called σωτῆρες ‘the Saviours’

PMG 1027c: ὦ Ζηνὸς καὶ Λήδας κάλλιστοι **σωτῆρες**

“O most handsome **saviors**, of Zeus and Leda (born),”

Alc. Fr. 34.3–8: **Κάστορ / καὶ Πολύδε[υ]κες**

οἱ κατ’ εὐρῆαν χ[θόνα] καὶ θάλασσαν
παῖσαν ἔρχεσθ’ ὠ[κυπό]δων ἐπ’ ἵππων,

ῥῆα δ’ ἀνθρώποι[ς] θα[ν]άτω ῥύεσθε / ζακρυόεντος

“**Castor and Polydeukes**, who go on swift horses
over the broad earth and all the sea, **and easily
rescue men from chilling death**”

The Saviours

- Baltic: the Sons of Dievs rescue the Daughter of the Sun from drowning in the sea.

LD 33969: *Saules meita jūru brida, / Vainadziņu vien redzēja.
Iriet laivu, **Dieva dēli, / Glābiet Saules dvēselīti***

“Daughter of the sun was wading in the sea, (and now) only her crown was visible, row your boat, **sons of Dievs, rescue the soul of the Sun**”