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The Myth of Baldr’s Death and the Vedic Wounded Sun: Old Norse Religion and Poetics from a Comparative Indo-European Perspective

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A1. The myth of Baldr’s love for Nanna and death at the hands of Loki and Hǫðr

Main sources: *Vǫluspá* (31–3), *Baldrs draumar* (passim); *Lokasenna* (27–8); *Gylfaginning* (49).¹

- The god Baldr, son of the supreme deities Odin and Frigg, is so bright that light shines from him.
- His wife is Nanna *Nepsdóttir* ‘daughter of Nepr/Nefr’.
- While playing a game with the other gods, Baldr is unintentionally killed with a mistletoe twig by the blind god Hǫðr, who is maneuvered like a puppet by the mischievous god Loki.
- After Baldr’s death, all the gods are confused and perplexed.
- Later, they send the god Hermóðr to search for Baldr. He finds him in the Realm of the Dead.
- In order to bring Baldr back to life, every creature of the world has to weep for his death. When this fails, Baldr is forced to stay among the dead until the end of time.

Latin (pseudo-historical) version of Balderus’ death in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum* (3.1–4).²

- The demigod Balderus (Baldr), son of Othinus (Odin), falls in love with the maiden Nanna, daughter of Gevarus, after spying on her while she bathes.
- Balderus woos Nanna. She refuses him, as she loves her adoptive brother Høtherus (Hǫðr), who loves her back and decides to kill Balderus.
- After several vicissitudes, Høtherus pierces Balderus with his sword. Balderus dies.

A2. The Vedic myth of Sun’s love for Dawn and wounding by Fire with darkness

Already in the RV. Reconstructed by Jamison 1991:133–303; see also Jackson 2006:63–93.

- Father Sky / the Sun desires the maiden Uṣas ‘Dawn’, the daughter of the Sky / Sun.
- As a punishment for his incestuous desire, he is pierced “with darkness” (possibly referring to smoke) by the fire-god Agni (called Rudra or Svarbhānu).
- The Sun falls from the heavens. All living beings are confused and perplexed.
- The gods realize the danger and send Atri to find the Sun. He succeeds and restores cosmic order.

A3. Proposal

New formal analyses and semantic interpretations for the names of Baldr’s wife *Nanna Nepsdóttir* and of his murderer *Hǫðr* as reflexes of PIE designations for the ‘dawn(-goddess)’ and ‘darkness’:

Myth of Baldr’s death as a Norse counterpart to the Vedic myth of the “Wounded Sun”.

¹ For a comprehensive review of the scholarship on Baldr, cf. Liberman 2016:197–260.

² Difference in genre (heroic legend) may account for the differences between the versions; several features, however, are shared.

B. The Names

Nanna: ON *nanna* ‘maiden, woman’ (Lieberman 2004:25; 47), originally a *Lallwort* (Henning 1908:478–9; de Vries 1962, s.v.) or reflex of **nanþ-ō-* ‘brave’ (Vries 1956–7:II,222–3).

Nepsdóttir: ‘daughter of Nepr/Nefr’; gen. sg. **Neps**, nom. sg. **Nepr** or **Nefr** (both attested, cf. Lind 1905–15), etymologically unclear (de Vries 1962, s.v.).

Hqðr: derivative of ON f. subst. *hqð* ‘battle’ (mostly in PNs, *Hqð-broddr*), reflex of PGmc **haþu-* ‘id.’ (OE *Heaðo*) and PIE **kó/á/Htu-* ‘hostility’ (Hitt. *kattu-* ‘id.’, OIr. *cath* ‘battle’) BUT the semantics find no support in the texts.

B1. ON *Nanna Nepsdóttir*

1. *Nanna*

Formation: identical to ON *nanna* ‘maiden, woman’, either a *Lallwort* (cf. Dial. Sw. *nanna* ‘mother’, Lat. *nonna*, It. *mamma*) or a reflex of PGmc **nanþ-ō(n)-* ‘the Desired One (?)’: root **nenþ-* ‘strive’.

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| PGmc * <i>nenþ-</i> ‘dare, strive’: | Goth. <i>ana-nanþjan</i> ‘dare’, ON <i>nenna</i> ‘strive’, OE <i>nēðan</i> ‘dare’ (PGmc * <i>nanþ-ja</i>). |
| PIE * <i>nent-</i> ‘id. (?)’: | OIr. <i>néit</i> ‘fight, struggle’ (Proto-Celtic * <i>nanti-</i> ; Matasović 2009, s.v.). |

Semantics: from a synchronic perspective, clearly means ‘**maiden**’, cf. the kennings for [VALKYRIE].

- [1] *Vsp.* 30⁹⁻¹²: *nú ero talðar nqnnor Herians,*
gorvar at ríða grund, valkyrior
 “Now are listed the **maidens of Herjann** (= **Odin**),
 ready to ride over the earth, the **valkyries**”

Kenning [MAIDEN – of Odin] for [VALKYRIE], cf. *Yggs drós* “**maiden** of Yggr (= **Odin**)” (*Háttatal* 50¹).

Valkyries often called ‘maidens’ in kennings, cf. *ósk-mær* ‘wish-**maiden** (= V.)’ (*Odd.* 16³).

Phraseology: *Nanna* characterized as *virgo* ‘**maiden**’ and *puella* ‘id.’ in Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum*.

- [2] Saxo, 3.2.2.1–2: *Tot iuvenis artibus [...] Nanna admodum delectata amplexum eius expetere*
coepit. Fit enim, ut virtute iuvenum virgines incalescant [...]
 “All these accomplishments of the youth pleased **Nanna** mightily, and she began to
 seek his embraces. For the valour of a youth will often kindle **a maiden**”
- [3] *ibid.*, .9.2: *[...] exquisitis verborum delenimentis puellam aggressus [...]*
 “Having approached **the maiden (Nanna)** with the most choice and cajoling words,”

2. *Neps-dóttir* and *Nefr*

Nanna only Norse goddess consistently referred to with both name and patronymic *Nepsdóttir*.³

Phonology: gen. sg. ON *Neps*^o, nom. sg. *Nefr* or *Nepr*? Originally ***Nefr***:

ON *Nepr* analogical levelling from *Nefr*, gen. sg. *Neps*^o < **Nefs* (frequently ON *-fs-* > *-ps-*,
cf. ON *repsing* < *refsing* ‘punishment’ : *refsa* ‘to punish’, cf. OE *refsan*, OHG *refsen*).

Gen. sg. **Nefs*^o outcome of **Nefrs*^o (with loss of *-r* in context *-CrC(-)*, Noreen 1923:214–5;
cf. ON gen. sg. *myrks* [*Gylf.* 45] < *myrks*, gen. sg. of *myrkr* ‘darkness’).

ON *Nefr*, gen. sg. **Nefrs* reflex of a proto-form **nebir-a*.

Formation: *Neps-dóttir* regular ON patronymic formation, type [FATHER_{gen.}]^o *dóttir* ‘daughter of X’.

Still regular in Modern Icelandic, cf. *Guðrún Þórhalls-dóttir* ‘daughter of Þórhallur’.

2nd element: *dóttir* ‘daughter’ : PGmc **duhter-* (PIE **d^hugh₂tér-* : θυγάτηρ, Ved. *duhitár-*, Lith. *duktė*)

1st element: ON *Nefr* (**nebir-a*-) expected⁴ reflex of PGmc **neb-iz-* and PIE **néb^h-es-* ‘sky, cloud’.

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| PIE * <i>néb^h-es-</i> ‘sky, cloud’ | Hittite <i>nepiš-</i> ‘sky’, Vedic <i>nábhas-</i> ‘humidity, cloud, sky’, <i>nábhasi</i> ‘sky and earth’ (elliptic), Avestan <i>nabah-</i> ‘air, sky’, Greek νέφος ‘cloud’, Old Irish <i>nem</i> ‘sky’, Lithuanian <i>debesis</i> ‘cloud’, Old Church Slavonic <i>nebo</i> ‘sky’ |
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Cf. also the Hitt. theonym *Nipas* (Paleo-Assyrian Kültepe/Kaneš texts), reflex of **néb^h-ōs* ‘the (personified) Sky’, individualizing derivative of PIE **néb^h-es-* (Höfler 2015:173).

Semantics: *Nefr* ‘sky’ or ‘cloud’; *Neps-dóttir* ‘daughter of the sky’ or ‘of the cloud’?

3. Indo-European parallels: the Maiden who is the Daughter of the Sky

(1) Greek: theonym Κόρη ‘Maiden’ and epithet Διὸς θυγάτηρ ‘daughter of Zeus (*Sky)’

Goddess Kore ‘Maiden’ referred to with patronymic Διὸς θυγάτηρ ‘daughter of Zeus’ (e.g. *Od.* 11.217).

Gk. Ζεὺς, gen. Διός : PIE **d^hieu-* ‘sky’ (Ved. *dyáu-* ‘id.’, Lat. *Iouis* ‘sky-god’).

Gk. θυγάτηρ ‘daughter’ : PIE **d^hugh₂tér-* ‘id.’ : ON *dóttir*, Ved. *duhitár-*, Lith. *duktė*.

Kore Διὸς θυγάτηρ (at least partially) reflects features of IE dawn-goddess: Janda 2000:153–7; 174–6.

(2) Vedic: epithets of Dawn *kaná-* ‘maiden’ and *divó duhitár-* ‘Sky’s daughter’

Goddess Uṣas ‘Dawn’ often called ‘maiden’ (*yuvatī-*, *yóṣā-*, *yóṣañā-*, *kaná-*) in the RV.

Formulaic patronymic *divó duhitár-* (= Διὸς θυγάτηρ), *duhitár diváh* ‘Sky’s daughter’ (RV +).

³ Only other case *Gylf.* 1, where Frigg called *Fjörgvinsdóttir* ‘daughter of Fjörgynn’. Euhemeristic passage, Snorri traces gods back to human beings who were later deified: patronymic was an integral part of the full name of a historical person in medieval Iceland.

⁴ With regular thematization, cf. ON *setr* ‘seat’ < **setir-a-* ← PGmc **set-iz-* < PIE **séd-es-* ‘id.’.

- [4] RV 10.61.5: *púnas tād á vṛhati yát kanáyā*
duhitúr á ánu bhṛtam anarvā
 “Again he (Sky) tears out **from the maiden**,
his daughter (Dawn), what had been “brought to bear” on her—he the unassailable”.

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| Phraseological parallels between ON | <i>Nanna</i> | | <i>Neps dóttir</i> , |
| | Gk. Κόρη | | Διὸς θυγάτηρ, |
| | and Ved. <i>kanā-</i> | | <i>divó duhitár-</i> : |
| reflexes of (PIE) collocation | [MAIDEN] | – | [SKY’S – DAUGHTER (* <i>d^hugh₂tér-</i>)]. |

(3) Lithuanian: epithet of the Sun *Diėvo duktė/dukrýtė* ‘daughter of Diėvas (*Sky-god)’

Female **Sun** (: PIE **dawn-goddess**), Saulyte: patronymic *diėvo duktė/dukrýtė* in traditional folk-songs.

Lith. *Diėvas*: PIE **deǵu-* ‘the **Heavenly** (god), **Sky-god**’ (cf. Finn. loanword *taivas* ‘sky’)

PIE **deǵu-* derivative of **dǵéu-* ‘sky’ (Gk. Ζεύς ‘sky-god’, Ved. *dyáu-* ‘sky’).

Lith. *duktė/dukrýtė* ‘daughter’: PIE **d^hugh₂tér-*: ON *dóttir*, Gk. θυγάτηρ, Ved. *duhitár-*.

Gk Διὸς θυγάτηρ, Ved. *divó duhitár-*, Lith. *diėvo duktė/dukrýtė*: reflexes of collocation [SKY’S (**dǵéu-*) – DAUGHTER (**d^hugh₂tér-*)], epithet of **PIE dawn-goddess** (Schmitt 1967:169–75; West 2007:186).⁵

ON *Nepsdóttir* ‘daughter of *Nefr* (‘Sky’)’ reflex of the same formulaic material.

To sum up: *Nanna Nepsdóttir* ‘Maiden Sky-daughter’ reflex of formulaic epithets of PIE dawn-goddess, with parallels in Gk Κόρη Διὸς θυγάτηρ, Ved. *kanā- divó duhitár-*, Lith. *diėvo duktė*.

B2. ON *Hqðr*

1. Proposal

Phonology: expected outcome of PGmc **hab-u-* and PIE **kót-u-*.

Formation: generalized strong stem of acrostic noun PIE **kót-u-/két-u-*.

Inherited formation: suffix *-u-* not productive in PGmc (Bammesberger 1990:154ff).

Derivational basis: PIE root *(*s*)*ket-* ‘conceal’ (cf. *LIV*⁵:357; *EWAia*, s.v. *CAT*; Jamison 1983:113–4).⁶

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| PIE *(<i>s</i>) <i>ket-</i> ‘conceal’: | Goth. <i>skadus</i> , OE <i>sceadu</i> ‘shadow’, OIr. <i>scáth</i> ‘covering, protection, shadow’, Ved. <i>cátant-</i> ‘concealing himself, <i>cātáya-te</i> ‘make (someone) hide’, Gk. σκότος ‘shadow, darkness’. |
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Semantics: (a) ‘concealment’ (abstract meaning), expected for this formation;

(b) ‘shadow, darkness’ (concrete), reconstructed on the basis of Goth., OE, Gk, OIr.

⁵ On this formula, cf. further Dunkel 1988–90:8–10; Jackson 2002:79.

⁶ The root is reconstructed as **k^(h)et-* ‘entweichen’ in *LIV*⁵:357, which exclusively takes into account Ved. *cátant-* and *cātáya-te*; the pure velar **k-* and the *s-mobile*, however, are required by Gk. σκότος, OIr. *scáth*, Goth. *skadus*, etc.

Phraseology: Hǫðr’s epithets and characterization reflect an original association with [DARKNESS].

(1) *blindi Ás* “the **blind, sightless** god” (*Skáld.* 13; cf. *Gylf.* 28); Hǫðr **can not see** (*Gylf.* 49).⁷

Antithetically parallels IE conception of the **Sun** as ‘he who **sees everything**’:

[5] *Il.* 3.277: Ἡέλιός θ’, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷς καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούεις
“and you **Sun**, who **see all things** and hear all things”

(2) *Baldrs bani* ‘killer of Baldr’ (*Skáld.* 13; *Bdr. passim*); Hǫðr **kills Baldr** (*Gylf.* 49). Baldr “bright” god:

[6] *Gylf.* 22: [...] *bjartr svá at lýsir af honum* [...]
“(Baldr is) so **bright** that **light shines from him**.”

Hǫðr vs. “bright” Baldr: cf. epithet of [NIGHT] *ó-ljós* ‘the **Not Bright One**’, negation of *ljóss* ‘bright’.

2. Inner-Germanic parallels: PGmc **skadwa-*, **hatt-(u/a)-*, and **hōd-a-*

(1) PGmc **skadwa-* ‘shadow’

Reflexes: Goth. *skadus*, OE *sceadu*, *scead*, OS *skado*, OHG *skato* ‘shadow’

Outcome of PIE **skotṷ-ó-* ‘dark, provided with concealment’, possessive derivative of *(*s*)*kót-u-* ‘concealment, darkness’ (ON *Hǫðr*).

Expected meaning still reconstructable for PGmc, cf. Goth. **gaskadwjan* ‘to cover’ (Casaretto 2004:353), a derivative of PGmc **skadw-a-*:

- Expected meaning ‘to shade’ if from **skadw-a-* ‘shadow’, cf. Go. *ufarskadwjan* ‘to shade’; cf. also Goth. *riqizjan* ‘become dark’, denominative to *riqis* ‘darkness’.
- But PGmc factitive *-ja-* verbs usually derived from adjectives (Ringe 2006:254):
factitive vb. **skadw-ja-* ‘to cover, make one concealed’ from adj. **skadwa-* ‘concealed’

Trivial semantic shift from ‘dark, provided with darkness’ to ‘shadow’:

cf. Eng. *in the dark*, Germ. *im Dunkel*, It. *all’oscuro*.

(2) Further Gmc parallels: reflexes of PIE **kot-ó-* ‘concealing’

Root variant **without s-mobile** **ket-* (ON *Hǫðr*: PIE **kót-u-*) attested by several Gmc reflexes of a PIE agentive derivative *(*s*)*kot-ó-* ‘concealing’ (of the type of Gk. *τομός* ‘cutting’):

Cf. Hom. *σχότος* ‘darkness’: **skót-o-* ‘a concealing’ (action noun, type of Gk. *τόμος* ‘a cutting’).

(a) PGmc **hap-an-/hatt-* ‘hat’ (acc. pl. **hatt-uns*).⁸

ON *hǫttr*, OE *hæt*, OFr. *hat* ‘hat’ : **hatt-u-* (reanalysis of acc. pl. as *hatt-u-ns*)

ON *hattr* ‘hat’ : **hatt-a-* (thematization)

Outcomes of **kót-on-/-n-* ‘the concealing one’, individualizing *-n-* derivative of *(*s*)*kot-ó-*.

⁷ NB: ON *blindr* < PGmc **blinda-* ‘blind’, but also ‘dark, concealed’ (EWA, s.v. *blint*). This kind of twofold semantics is typologically very common, cf. Ved. *andhá-* ‘blind, dark’, Lat. *caecus* ‘id.’.

⁸ On this formal analysis and the paradigm split, cf. Kroonen 2011:304–6; Lühr 2000:266.

(b) PGmc **hōd-a-* ‘hood, hat’.

OE *hōd* ‘hood’, OHG *huot* ‘hood, hat’, OS *hōd* ‘hat’.

Outcomes of **kōt-ó-*, *v̥rddhi* derivative of *(s)*kot-ó-* ‘the concealing one’.

3. Indo-European parallels: Proto-Celtic **skātu-* and Vedic °*catú-*

(1) PCelt. **skātu-* ‘pertaining to concealment, shadow’

Reflexes: OIr. *scáth* ‘shadow, reflection, mirror, shelter’, Welsh *ysgawd* ‘shadow, darkness’, Corn. *scod* ‘shadow’, Bret. *skeud* ‘shadow, image’ (Irslinger 2002:126)

Outcome of a **lengthened-grade derivative** of PIE *(s)*kót-u-* ‘concealment, shadow’ (ON *Hqðr*).

Possible (vague) meaning ‘**pertaining to concealment, shadow**’ reflected by (diverse) semantics in the daughter languages, cf. OIr. *scáth* ‘**shadow, reflection, mirror, shelter**’.

(2) Ved. *māñś-catú-* ‘moon-concealment’

Attested 3x (RV). Synchronic meaning “the time of the hiding of the moon” (Jamison-Brereton 2014).⁹

1st element: Ved. *mās-* ‘moon’, cf. Gk. μήνη ‘id.’, TocA *mañ* TocB *meñe* ‘id., month’.

2nd element: Ved. °*cat-ú-* ‘**hiding**’ (only **gen.** and **dat.sg.**): √*CAT* ‘hide’ (*EWAia*, s.v.).

Formation type (acrostatic *-u-* stem)¹⁰ not productive and most probably inherited:

Reflex of weak stem of Proto-Indo-Iranian **kát-u-/čát-u-* ‘**hiding**’, perfectly matching PIE *(s)*kót-u-/két-u-* ‘**concealment**’ (ON *Hqðr*).

To sum up: ON *Hqðr* as reflex of PIE *(s)*kót-u-/két-u-* ‘**concealment, shadow, darkness**’.

Indirect parallels in the PGmc (**skadwa-*) and Proto-Celtic lexicon (**skātu-*).

Exact match with Ved. (*māñś-*)*catú-* ‘the time of the **hiding** (of the moon)’.

C1. Baldr’s love for Nanna and death at the hands of Loki and Hqðr: new insight

Insight obtained: new understanding of the myth of Baldr, Nanna, and Hqðr. Important elements:

(1) The male protagonist is a god associated with [LIGHT], namely Baldr.

[7] *Gylf.* 22: [...] *Hann er svá fagr álitum ok bjartr svá at lýsir af honum* [...]

“He (Baldr) is so fair in appearance and so bright that light shines from him”

⁹ According to Jamison-Brereton 2014 (ad RV 7.44), it originally referred only to dawn and later came to refer to both twilights. *Aliter* Pinault 2008 (who analyses it as a loan from a language of the Nūristāni type, meaning ‘cutting up the flesh’).

¹⁰ The dat.sg. °*cat-v-é* (RV 9.97.52b; .54b) points to residual acrostatic inflection of the type of Ved. *krātu-* (dat.sg. *krátve*) and *mádhv-* (dat.sg. *mádhve*; *AiGr*:III,138–9), while the gen.sg. °*cat-ó-h* (RV 7.44.3c) points to a gradual shift to the standard (proterokinetic) inflection (cf. Ved. *vásu-*, gen.sg. *vás-v-ah* and *vás-o-h*). Oxytony is regular in such *tatpuruṣa* compounds (*uda-meghá-* ‘water-rain’).

(2) Baldr's love interest is *Nanna* 'Maiden', the daughter of *Nefr* 'Sky' (**néb^h-es*).

- [8] *Gylf.* 49: [...] *kona hans Nanna Nepsdóttir* [...] “His (Baldr's) wife is **Nanna daughter of Nefr.**”
- [9] Saxo 3.2.3 + 9.2: *Accidit autem, ut Othini filius Balderus* [...] *infinito amore corripetur.* [...] *exquisitis verborum delenimentis puellam aggressus* [...] “Now it befell that **Balder** the son of Odin [...] **was seized with boundless love.** [...] He approached **the maiden (Nanna)** with the most choice and cajoling words.”

(3) The maiden *Nanna* is spied upon by Baldr while she bathes.

- [10] Saxo 3.2.3: [...] *Othini filius Balderus Nannae corpus abluentis aspectu sollicitatus infinito amore corripetur.* [...] “**Balder** the son of Odin **was troubled at the sight of Nanna bathing,** and was seized with boundless love. [...]”

(4) Baldr is pierced by *Hqðr* (**(s)kót-u-* 'Darkness') at the direction of *Loki* (originally a fire-god).

- [11] *Gylf.* 49: [...] *Hqðr tók mistiltein ok skaut at Baldri at tilvísun Loka. Flaug skotit í gognum hann ok fell hann dauðr til jarðar* [...] “**Hqðr** took the mistletoe and **shot at Baldr at Loki's direction. The missile flew through him** and he fell dead to the ground”

Hqðr blind, only puppet in hands of Loki, the *ráðbani Baldrs* “killer of Baldr by plan” (*Skáld.* 16). Loki's original role as fire-deity supported inter alia by his association with the fireplace in Scandinavian folk traditions (Heide 2011), by archaeological findings (Gestsson 1961), and by analysis of his myths both within their Norse context (Ginevra 2018b) and in comparative Indo-European perspective (Ginevra 2018a).

(5) After Baldr is pierced to death, all gods are confused and perplexed at first.

- [12] *Gylf.* 49: [...] *Þá er Baldr var fallinn þá fellusk öllum Ásum orðtøk ok svá hendr at taka til hans* [...] *En er goðin vitkuðusk* [...] “When Baldr had fallen, then **all the gods' tongues failed them, as did their hands for lifting him up.** [...] And (later,) when **the gods came to themselves** [...]”

(6) The gods send *Hermóðr* to search for Baldr. He succeeds in finding him.

- [13] *Gylf.* 49: [...] *þá mællir Frigg ok spurði hvern sá væri með Ásum er* [...] *vili hann ríða á Helveg ok freista ef hann fá fundit Baldr* [...]. *En sá er nefndr Hermóðr inn hvati, sveinn Óðins, er til þeirrar farar varð.* [...] “Then Frigg spoke, and asked who there was among the Æsir who [...] was willing to ride the road to Hel and **try if he could find Baldr** [...]. **Hermóðr the Bold, Odin's boy,** is the name of he who undertook this journey.”

C2. Parallels in Vedic myth of Sun’s love for Dawn and wounding by Fire with darkness

Main correspondences with the Norse myth of Baldr’s love for Nanna and death by Loki and Høðr:

(1) The male protagonist is a god associated with [LIGHT], namely Father Sky or the Sun.

[14] RV 1.71.5a: *mahé yát **pitrá** īṃ rásam **divé** kár*
“When he made the sap [=semen] **for great Father Heaven**”

[15] RV 5.40.5a: *yát tvā **sūrya** súvarbhānus*
“When, **o Sun**, Svarbhānu...”

(2) The male light-god desires Dawn, who is called “Maiden” and “Daughter of the Sky”.

[16] RV 10.61.5: *púnas tād á vṛhati yát **kanáyā***
***duhitúr** á ánu**bhṛtam** anarvá*
“Again he (Father Sky) tears out **from the maiden**,
his daughter (Dawn), what had been “brought to bear” on her—he the unassailable”.

[17] RV 1.115.2ab: ***sūryo** devím **uśásam** rócamānām*
*máryo ná **yóśām** **abhí eti** paścát*
“**Sun approaches** the gleaming goddess **Dawn**
from behind, **like a dashing youth a maiden**”

(3) Uśas ‘Dawn’ is described as a woman who is spied upon while she bathes.

[18] RV 5.80.5ab: *eśá **śubhrá** ná tanúvo vidāná*
*ūrdhvéva **snāti** **ḍṛśáye** no asthāt*
“She, like a beauty who knows her body,
has stood up erect **like a bather for us to see**”.

Typical element of IE Sun-maiden myths: Steets 1993:33; cf. further Nikolaev 2012:571–2.

(4) The male light-god is pierced “with darkness” by Agni ‘Fire’ (= Svarbhānu; Jamison 1991:264–7).

[19] RV 5.40.5ab: *yát tvā **sūrya** súvarbhānus*
***támasávidhyad** āsuráh*
“When, **o Sun**, Svarbhānu **Āsura** pierced you **with darkness**”

(5) After the male light-god is wounded, all living beings are confused and perplexed.

[20] RV 5.40.5cd: ***ákṣetravid** yáthā **mugdhó***
***bhúvanāni** adīdhayuh*
“Then like **a befuddled man not knowing the territory**
did the living beings perceive.”

(6) The gods send Atri to search for the male light-god. Atri succeeds.

- [21] RV 5.40.6cd: *gūlhám sūryam támasāpavratena*
turīyeṇa bráhmaṇāvindad átriḥ
 “Atri with the fourth formulation found
 the sun, hidden by darkness because of (an act) contrary to commandment.”

C3. IE myths of a light-god’s love and wounding: comparison and reconstruction

Common origin for Norse myth of Baldr’s death and Vedic myth of the Wounding of the Sky/Sun.

- (1) The male protagonist is a god associated with [LIGHT].
- (2) The [LIGHT]-god’s love interest is a [MAIDEN], the [DAUGHTER – of the SKY].
- (3) The [MAIDEN] is described as being seen while she bathes.
- (4) The [LIGHT]-god is pierced (not just hit or slain)ⁿ by a [FIRE]-god with the aid of [DARKNESS].

NB: Baldr pierced by Hqðr (**(s)kót-u-* ‘Darkness’) who is maneuvered by Loki (**fire-god*).

- (5) After the [LIGHT]-god is pierced, all gods and living beings in general are in a state of confusion.
- (6) The gods send a character to search for the [LIGHT]-god. The character succeeds in finding him.

D. To sum up: the Maiden, Sky’s Daughter, Darkness, and a Light-god’s wounding

- (1) ON *Nanna* ‘Maiden’ (cf. *Vsp.* 30⁹); *Nefr* reflex of PIE **néb^h-es-* ‘sky, cloud’ (Hitt. *nepiš-* ‘sky’, Ved. *nábhas-* ‘humidity, cloud, sky’); *Nanna Nepsdóttir* “the Maiden, Sky’s Daughter”.

Exact matches in Greek (*Kore* ‘Maiden’, “daughter of Zeus [**Sky*]”), Vedic (*Dawn*, ‘maiden’ and “Sky’s daughter”); partial match in Lithuanian (*Sun*, “daughter of *Diėvas* [**Sky-god*]”).

- (2) ON *Hqðr* reflex of PIE **(s)kót-u-/két-μ-* ‘concealment, shadow, darkness’ (root **(s)ket-* ‘conceal’).

Exact match in Vedic (*māñś-catú-* ‘hiding of the moon’ : *két-μ-*); indirect reflexes in Germanic (**skadwa-* ‘shadow’) and Celtic (**skātu-* ‘pertaining to concealment, shadow’).

Root variant without *s*-mobile **ket-* also attested by PGmc **hab-an-/hatt-* ‘hat’ and **hōd-a-* ‘id., hood’

- (3) Comparative mythology: onomastics, phraseology, and narrative structures of **Baldr’s myth** match those of **Vedic myth** of “Sky/Sun’s love for Dawn and wounding by Fire with darkness”.

Possible reconstruction of an **IE myth** of “the Light-god’s love and wounding”, in which:

A god who is associated with light falls in love with a “Maiden”, the “Daughter of the Sky” (i.e. Dawn), and is thereafter “pierced” (as a punishment) by the Fire-god with the aid of “d/Darkness”, represented either as an object or as a divine personification.

ⁿ The terms employed imply a penetration of the weapon into the god’s body, unlike e.g. the root **g^{uh}-en-* ‘slay’ employed in dragon-slaying myths (Watkins 1995), which originally meant ‘hit repeatedly’ (García Ramón 1998), e.g. with a mace.

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