



# Where the stone meets the sky: Elucidations on Indo-European Cosmological Thought

*Indo-European Religion and Poetics*, Copenhagen 11 October 2019

Adam Hyllested  
*Roots of Europe*  
Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Copenhagen  
ah@hum.ku.dk



## The Indo-European stone ~ sky connection

Reichert, Hans. 1913. Der steinerne Himmel. *IF* 32: 23-57  
Safest connection within Indo-Iranian \***aśman-** 'sky; stone'

Malzahn, Melanie. 2016. Vedic **aśáni-**: Another Stone from heaven? Fs. Klein 191-203.

Guizzo, Daniele. 2011. Natural and celestial bodies in Talêšī: Some onomasiological remarks. *The Persian language in history*. On Iranian \***aśuan-**

Indo-European equation not least based on a comparison of Indo-Iranian + PGmc. \***hamara-** allegedly 'hammer; stone' vs. \***himina-** 'sky' (cf. also Skt. **aśmará-** 'stony'). In Balto-Slavic only 'stone; anvil' with *-r-* ~ \**-n-*.

On the meanings of Gk. ἄκμων: Beckwith, Miles. 1998. 'The Hanging of Hera' and the meaning of Greek ἄκμων. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 98: 91-102.



## Meanings of Old Norse *hamarr*

- (1) hammer
  - (2) back of an axe
  - (3) crag, precipice (rather than just "stone");
- berghamarr*** 'rocky precipice',  
***hamarrifa*** 'rift in a crag'



The latter meaning is more likely figurative than primary. The Da. place-names ***Hammer Odde***, ***Hammerknuden*** (1539 ***Hammar***), ***Hammer Bakker*** (1503 ***Hammer***) refer to a hammerhead-shaped crag of granite – the meaning 'hammer(head)' is primary, its use of a rock is a figurative description of a steep rugged mass of rock projecting outwards and upwards. It mostly occurs in coastal areas and never seems to be used just of rocks or stones in general that are not protruding or hammer-shaped. This use is confirmed by a common noun ***hammer*** '(steep) crag' in Danish dialects.



## A loan from Finnic

PGmc. \***hamara-** ← Finnic \***hamara** (> Fi. **hamara** 'back of an axe', Est. **hamar**, **hammar** 'back of a knife').

Saami \***sxmērē** 'back/pole of an axe, back of knife' (> N **šibmar**, Lule **sjimēr**, Skolt **šammer**) and Mordvin \***šuvV** 'back of a knife' (Erzya **čov**, **čovone**, Moksha **šov**).

(Possibly borrowed, in turn, from Indo-Iranian \***aśmará-** 'stony' Common type of metathesis e.g. Fi. **haapa** 'aspen'); or even \***Haśmará-** for the laryngealists via \***hahmara** – similar confusion in PFi \***hahmV** 'shape' < Gmc. \***haman-**)

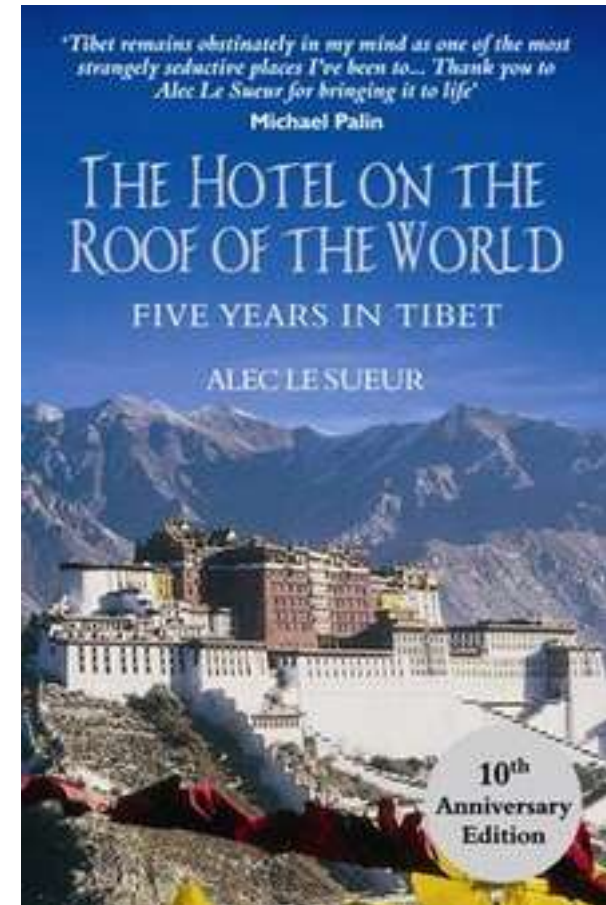
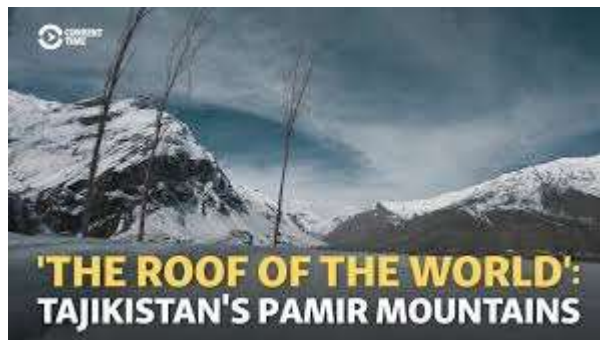


## Interpretations

- "The sky is made of stone"
- meteorites; thunderbolts – a divine weapon (West 2007)
- *The roof of the world* (originally an East Iranian concept, cf. also Skt. **párvata-** 'mountain; cloud') (Gamkrelidze + Ivanov 1994-95)
- the 'heavenly vault' (a modern metaphor)
- Iranian tradition: (hard stone →) rock crystal → 'iron; metal; precious stone'  
(Boyce 1975, Guizzo 2011)



## The Roof of the World



Irish ***grianchloch*** lit. 'sun-stone'

In the English lapidary  
(Cotton Tiberius A.iii),  
the appearance of the sapphire  
(listed as Lat. ***saphyrus***, l.5) is  
described as ***sunnan zelic***  
'like the sun'.

Sun = blue sky as a whole

The sky has 'edges of blue color'  
in Nizami's *Layla and Majnu*



Dias 7

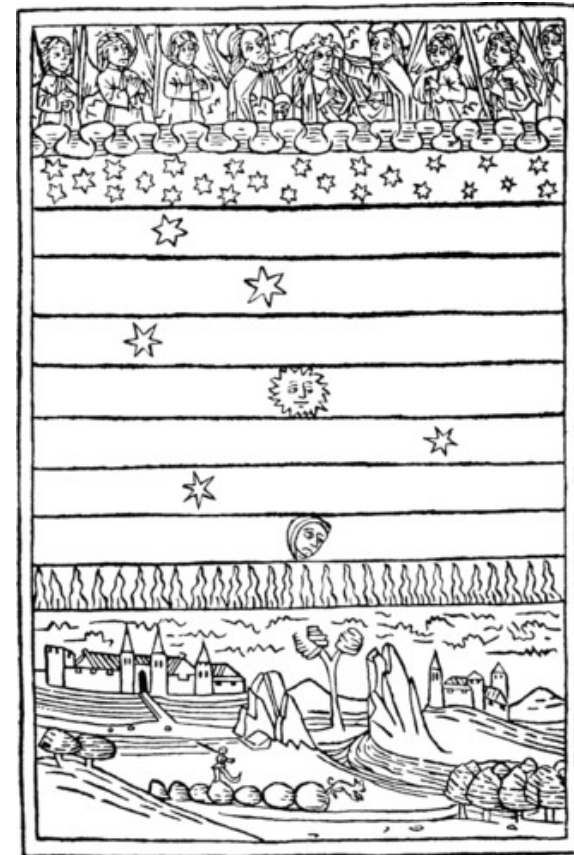
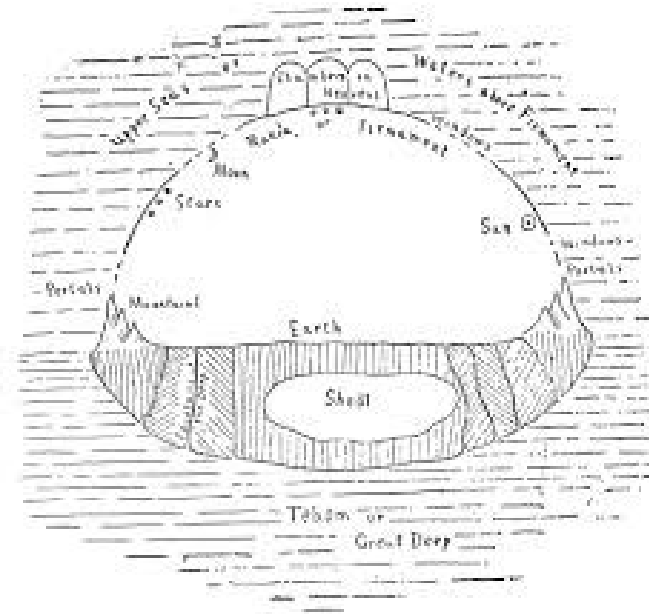


## Avestan **θwāša-**

Av. **θwāša-** 'firmament of the sky, hard sky'  
(but also 'God of the abstract space')  
~ **asman-** 'highest heaven'

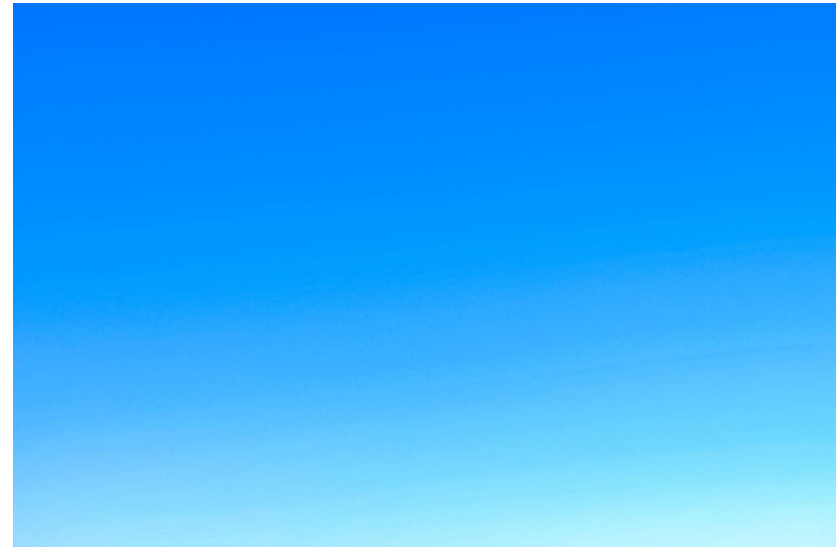
Homophonous with **θwāša-** < 'fast'  
< Indo-Iranian \***tvarta-** > Vedic **tvárta-**  
'fast'

Indo-Iranian  
\***-árt-** >  
Avestan  
\***-āša-**  
(cf. **vāša-**  
'wagon'  
< \***várta-**)





## Transparent vs. translucent



## Balto-Slavic, Germanic, Greek

Old Russian **tvьrdъ** 'heavenly vault; firmament'

OCS **tvřidĭ** 'citadel, base; firmament',

Ru. Poetic stilted **tverd'** 'dry land, earth; firmament';

Bulg. arch. **tvărd** f. 'earth; sky; citadel; firmament; stronghold, solid'

A meaning 'quartz' attested indirectly via MHG **twarc** 'quartz'

Copenhagen interpretation **\*-H-to-** > **\*-tho-**

Lithuanian **tvirtas** 'firm; solid, strong'

Walde, Anna Dybo: ~ Gk. **σάρδιον** 'sard, carnelian, red quartz'  
(= Hebrew **odem** in the Bible, translated **sardius**)

Alternative etymology: after Sardes or from Pers. **sered** 'red',  
cornelian 'cornel cherry', reshaped after Lat. 'meat'



## Firmament and quartz in Germanic

Meanings of ON **dverg**

1. dwarf; 2. pillar 3. 'brooch; dress pin'

Old Icelandic Homily Book:

— Þuertre es scorþa staflægior oc upphalda **dvergom**

*Crosstrees that prop the beams and upholding **pillars**,*

— [...] dúkr var á hálsi, / **dvergar** á öxlum; [...]

[...] **studs** on her shoulders, / and scarf on her neck; [...]

Pillars upholding heaven and earth (García Ramón, this conference)

Four dwarves **Norðri**, **Suðri**, **Austri** and **Vestri** (Gylfaginning, Prose Edda) together uphold the heavenly dome by each supporting one of the four cardinal points

Nw. **Dverg(a)stein**, **dvergsmide**, **dvergnøgel** 'rock crystal'

Da. **Dværgsten**, **dværgehammer**, **dværgenegl** 'rock crystal'



## The Swedish place-name *Dvärsätt*

***Dvärsätt*** near Krokoms in Offerdalen, Jämtland, Sweden  
 1431 ***Duærgasæter***, 1540's ***Duergestetter***  
 Literally 'pasture of the dwarves'

***dvärg*** 'dwarf', but also 'spider', i.e. 'pasture of the spiders'  
 (Mats Wahlberg (ed.), *Svensk Ortnamnsleksikon*, 1.ed. 2003,  
 p. 62)

Offerdalen is one of few places in Sweden with mining-locations  
 for rock crystal. Oldengruvan, the most important place – near  
 Krokoms



## Germanic *\*dwerga-* vs. *\*þwerga-*?

Norwegian dialectal variant ***tverg*** (Innh, Hal)

Also in the place-name  
***Tvergastein*** (Hallingskaret,  
 Eimeskarvet) vs.  
***Dvergasteinsbotn***  
 in Hardangervidda,  
 Farm-name ***Dvergstein***  
 at Gran in Oppland.



The German evidence is ambiguous – no Old High German evidence and merger of the two clusters in the Middle High German period

MHG ***twarc***, NHG ***Zwerg***  
 MHG ***twahen, dwahen, zwahen*** 'wash'

## Dvärsätt pronounced like *Tvärsätt*

Swedish place-name archives

1-16 Dvärsätt jr, by,  
Rödöns m, jämtl. n. doms. tj, jämtl. t.

tvärsät (ä)  
dvärsät

Dvärsätt Gn 66, Gn 66 NO, kGn 66 NO, kb.  
Byen ligger i en stark sluttning.

S. B. Jansson 1956.



## Dvärsätt pronounced like Tvärsätt (2)

Classical etymology:

1-9 Dvärsätt ml *keb keb NO k keb NO*  
~~ke, tyi~~ Rödöns sn, Lits och Rödöns tg, Jämtl. l.  
 tvärsätt;  $\varepsilon \sim = i d$ .

C. Lindberg 1930—31.



## Dvärsätt pronounced like Tvärsätt (3)

*Dvärsätt lodana, fab. i Dvärsätt,*

Rödöns sn, Lits och Rödöns tg, Jämtl. l.

*tvärsätt å en*

*Dvärsätt fab. i RÖDÖ RÖDÖ*

C. Lindberg 1930—31.





## Tversted, Jutland

1484 *Twærdstet* 1583 *Tuerdsted*

Danish geologist Victor Madsen (*Istidens foraminiferer i Danmark og Holsten, 1895*)



Paa min Rejse i Vendsyssel i 1891 besøgte jeg denne Lokalitet, paa hvilken [Japetus] Steenstrup velvilligst havde henledet min Opmærksomhed. Jeg fik herved Lejlighed til at iagttage, at der i den højre Bred og i Bunden af Tversted Aa, omtrent 300 M. NNV for Tversted Kirke, forekommer **blaat**, fedt, stenfrit Yoldialer, der i Aabrinken dækkes af 1 — 2.M. **blaaligt Grus og-Sand** med Zirphæalagets Fauna, som tildels findes nedboret i Yoldialeret. (...) Steenstrup har dog ogsaa deri fundet norske Rhombeporfyrer og **Blaakvarts** (...)

Martin A. Hansen (1952) on the building process of Tversted church:  
***Gned kvartsens skønhed frem ...***

