

PIE Dieties and the Sacred

Proto-Indo-European Language and Society

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PIE Dieties

- The reconstructible dieties of the Proto-Indo-Europeans appear to be sky gods — ‘celestial dieties’ — of various sorts. Chief among these was the father god of the sky:

**deiu-ó-s* ‘god’: L *deus*, Skt *devá*, Av *daēwa* ‘demon’

**d̥iéu-s ph₂tér* ‘sky father’: L *Iūpiter*, Gk *Zeús patér*, Skt *dyáuṣ pitá*, Illyrian *Dei-pátrous*

**diu-íos* ‘divine’: L *dīus*, G *dīos*, Skt *divyá-*

Powerful Spirit

- In addition, Indo-Iranian and Germanic languages allow us to reconstruct a notion of a ‘powerful spirit’



**h₂éus-u-s* ‘god, spirit’: Skt *ásu* ‘powerful spirit’, the *Asuras*, Av *ahu* ‘lord, master’, *Ahura Mazdā* ‘chief god of Zoroastrianism’, ON *óss* ‘god’, ON *Æsir* ‘the Norse pantheon: Odin, Frigg, Thor, Baldr, Tyr, etc.’

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Dawn, Daughter of Sky

- Certainly a *Dawn* goddess can be reconstructed, and typically she is represented as the daughter of the sky (god)

**h₂éus-ōs* ‘dawn, goddess of the Dawn’:
L *Aurōra*, Gk *Ēōs*, Skt *Uṣās*,
Lith *Aušrine*, Latv *Auseklis*

**d^huǵh₂tér diú-os* ‘daughter of the sky’:
Gk *thugatēr Diós*, Skt *duhitá diváh*, Lith *diėvo duktė*



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Other gods

- *h₂epōm nepōt-s ‘grandson of the waters’: Skt *Apám Nápāt*
? = *nept-on-os ? L *Neptūnus*,
- *b^hág-os ‘god of apportionment’: Skt *Bhága-*, R *bog* (< Ilr.)
- ? *perk^wunos ‘thunder god’: Lith *Perkūnas*, ORuss *Perúnŭ*, ON *Fjörgyn*
‘mother of Thor, the Thunder God’, poss. Skt *Parjanya*

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Ancestor Figures

- *manu ‘Manu: Man, ancestor of humanity’: Skt *Mánu*, Germanic
Mannus ‘ancestor to humanity’
- *imH- ‘primordial twins’: ON *Ymir* ‘founder of the race of frost
giants’, Ved *Yama-*, Av *Yima-* ‘hero-king of Zoroastrian
myth’

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Primordial Twins

- The primordial twins, or two horse-riding sons of the Sky God, are represented in many traditions, but with distinct names.
- They can drive a ‘solar chariot’ to draw the sun across the sky.
- They normally have a sister (Dawn) who is a daughter of the Sky God

Gk The *Dioskuroi*: *Kastōr/Poludeukēs* + *Helenēs*

OE *Hengist/Horsa*

Welsh *Bran/Manawydan* + *Branwen*

Vedic The *Aśvinī* (sons of *Sūryā* ‘Sun’)

Avestan *Nāηhaiθiiā*

Lith *Ašvieniai*



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Phantom of Deceit

***d^hreug^h**- ‘to deceive’ gives a number of derivatives relating to a Phantom of Deceit.

Skt *drógha*- ‘phantom, spirit’, Skt *droha*- ‘hostility’

Av *druj*- ‘the Lie (cosmic principle)’

NHG *trügen* ‘to deceive’

(*not* NE TRICK, which prob. comes from Old French *tricher*)

OIr *airdrech* ‘phantom’

ON *draugr* ‘phantom’

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The Sacred

- *sakros ‘holy’: L *sacer*, H *saklāi* ‘rite, custom’, TB *sākre-* ‘happy’
- *k̂uen(to)- ‘holy’: OCS *svęntŭ*, Lith *šveñtas*, Av *spənta-*
 prob. < *k̂eu(h₁)- ‘to swell’, hence ‘swollen with sacred force’
- *noib^hos ‘holy’: OIr *noib*, OP *naiba*
- *seup- ‘pure’: H *suppi-* ‘pure’, H *suppa-* = Umbrian *supa* ‘viscera of sacrificial animal’
- *ueik- ‘consecrate’: L *uictima* ‘sacrificial victim’, Goth *weihan* ‘consecrate’, Skt *vinákti* ‘choose, select’

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Priest as Visionary or Trailblazer

- *kouh₁-ēi-s ‘seer’ < *(s)keu_h₁ ‘to note, see, realize, fear’
 Gk *kóēs* ‘priest’, *koéō* ‘to perceive’, *kūdos* ‘glory, fame’
 Lydian *kawés* ‘priest’, Skt *kaví-* ‘seer, sage’
 L *cauēre* ‘to beware’
 OE *scēawian* > NE *SHOW*

- *ponth₂- ‘path’ + *d^heh₁ ‘to put, establish’:

L *ponti-fex* = Skt *pathi-kṛt-*

Pontifex Maximus: Chief Priest of ROME



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Worship and Awe

- The notions of worship are often connected with roots relating to fear and amazement

**t̥ieg^w*- ‘to withdraw in fear, pull oneself back in awe’
Skt *tyájati* ‘stands back’
Gk *sébonai* ‘to worship’, *sobéō* ‘to frighten off, scare away’

*(H)*jaĝ*- ‘to honor, worship’
Gk *házonai* ‘to dread’, *hágios* ‘holy’
Skt *yájati* ‘worships’, Av *yazata-* ‘deity: worthy of sacrifice’

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Reconstructing Mythology

- Most sources ‘filtered’ through other religious traditions:
 - Germanic, Italo-Celtic, Balto-Slavic:** most sources are post-Christian
 - Gaulish:** sources are Roman
 - Latin:** tremendously influenced by Greek culture
 - Greek:** heavily dependent on Mediterranean substrates, e.g. Aphrodite
 - Anatolian:** syncretised with native Anatolian traditions (Hattic, Hurrian)
 - Iranian:** seen through the lens of Zoroastrianism
 - Indic:** probably the best resource, but long development of Hinduism complicates many original ideas
 - Tocharian:** most texts reflect Buddhism

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Chief Resources for Mythology

- 1 **Indo-Iranian: Vedas**, and to some extent the epic literature, e.g. Mahābhārata. The Avesta, to the extent that novelties of Zoroastrian thought can be excluded.
- 2 **Greek: Homeric and Hesiodic epic.** Vergil and Ovid, to a lesser extent, as reworkings of original myths as Roman history
- 3 **Germanic: Old Norse Eddas** (mythology) **and sagas** (narrative)

To a lesser extent: Irish mythology, Old Welsh heroic tales, Baltic folksong tradition, Old Russian mythology as reported in Christian sources