Viktor Rydberg's
Investigations into Germanic Mythology, Vol. II

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21.

Soma-Mimir.

63) I come now to that which seems to me to be the most curious and remarkable creation of the Indo-European mythic imagination: the king of the realm of the three subterranean fountains; the guardian of the world-tree; the owner of the soma-mead of creative power, inspiration, and wisdom; the master around which the primeval smiths gathered. He is the gods' friend. But of the mead over which he has power, he fills their cups with it only when the good of the world requires it. Otherwise, he does not. Consequently, the gods are dependent on him, the world's existence is dependent on him, and he is the wisest of all beings, and yet, he is not of the clan of the gods, but of giant birth. Due to these qualities and his inviolable position as the guardian of wisdom's well, Mimir acquires rank equal to the gods.

The concept of a being of lower birth that obtains divine dignity through wisdom and artistic skill is common to the Indo-Iranian and the Germanic mythologies. It goes back to the Proto-Indo-European era and perhaps reflects a social problem that already existed then, which the godsaga resolved in a reconciling manner.

The Indic Mimir's most common names or epithets are Soma and Brahmanaspati (Brihaspati).

He is called Soma, in his capacity as the possessor of the soma-mead. The drink lends its name to its owner. Its qualities are personified in him. Norse mythology supplies a parallel to this. *Sumbl*, which means mead, ale, and drinking-bout, has lent its name to a mythic personality who plays an active role in the myth about the mead. (See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, especially no. 89).

I have already given an account of Mimir's birth in the first volume of this work (no. 86). He is a giant and along with a sister, who becomes Odin's mother, was produced under the Chaos-giant's left arm. During the period when the *Rigveda*-bards composed, his Vedic counterpart was already elevated to divine status and eagerly invoked. As the prototype of Indo-European bards and sacrificial priests, he rose in significance to the same degree as their own class, until in the Brahmanic period, when the division of castes was completely secure and the bard-class was acknowledged as the foremost, he became the foremost person in the Indic trinity under another name, Brahmanaspati or Brahma. That notwithstanding, the ancient Indo-European myth about his lower origin, his giant-birth, still appears to be applicable in the *Rigvedic* era**.** In *La Religion Vedique*, II, 98 ff., [1] Bergaigne has pointed out many passages in *Rigveda* besides the song about the Chaos-giant Purusha that attest to the existence of the concept of a father, androgynous like Ymir, who accordingly produced other mythic beings, and

[1] Abel Bergagine's *The Vedic Religion*, pp. 98-113, chapter 4, section 7: "The Father of the Male" (*Le Père du Male*).

that King Soma was among those produced by him.[2] In addition, this androgynous being was evil. King Soma himself had to rob his malevolent father of his weapon and has triumphed over his tricks of wizardry, *Rigv*. VI, 44, 22 (according to Bergaigne's interpretation of the passage).[3]

According to the oldest concepts best preserved in Germanic mythology, the androgynous being from which Soma was produced is the same giant from whose limbs other beings were produced —among them the lowest creatures, hostile to the world, the giant monsters that were begotten by his feet. It is obvious that the myth about the origin of the bard- and priest-god Soma-Brahmanaspati from the same Chaos-being that produced the demons must have become increasingly offensive and incompatible with more recent ideas of hierarchy, since the more the class of bards and sacrificial priests approached the status they occupied afterwards as Brahmans, the more they found acknowledgement for their pretension of being "gods on earth," comparable with and equal to the celestial gods. Near the end of the Vedic period, we find the myth of the Chaos-giant not forgotten, but remodeled to suit the interests of the priest caste and the requirements of the new era. It is the previously mentioned hymn, *Rigv*. X, 90, in which this change is most evident. The song acknowledges the giant's primeval character as a monster; it gives him a thousand faces, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. But nevertheless he is now called *human, Purusha,* and his role as the source of the demons, the monsters, is concealed. The song further acknowledges that the gods killed him and that they fashioned the cosmos of his corpse, but the killing is now described as a sacrifice. The beings that were produced from his quartered corpse are now the four castes, of which naturally the lowest caste, the despised and oppressed Sudras, occupy the monsters' former position and are engendered by his feet. The giant's face becomes the Brahman, and when this is placed beside the ancient mythology's absolutely contrary statements that his mouth became Indra and Agni and his breath became Vâju, one finds that the song makes the Brahman, the son of his face, into the nearest kinsman of the foremost gods.

In Germanic mythology, Mimir has retained his original position. He continues to be a giant, but through his sister he becomes Odin's maternal uncle, and through his daughter Night, he becomes kinsman to other gods. That Soma-Brahmanaspati originally had the same birth as him and was produced from one of the Chaos-giant's more noble extremities is demonstrated by what has been cited above.

64) Now how has Soma, although of giant-birth and kinsman to the gods' enemies, become the gods' friend and the world's benefactor? Voluntarily. It was his achievement, says *Rigv*. IX, 97, 41, that he joined the gods. He has "acquired" Vâju's and Indra's friendship, according to *Rigv*. IX, 86, 9, 20, while *Rigv*. X, 86, 20 informs us that he acquired it because he let them drink of his mead.[4]

In *Rigveda*, it is expressly stated that three gods are allowed to enjoy the holy and wonderful liquid of which King Soma is the guardian. These three are Vata-Vâyu, Indra, and Agni.

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[2] Bergaigne writes: "The idea of a hermaphrodite is a matter of fact well-known to the Rsis," citing *Rigv*. IV, 1, 11 cp. 12; V, 2, 1 and 2; X, 124, 4, III, 29, 14; X, 124, 3 and 4; I, 164, 4; III, 38, 5 and 7; I, 160, 3 cp. I, 141, 2; X, 100, 2; III, 1, 9; IV, 22, 6, among others.

[3] Here Soma is called Indu: "This Indu stole away the warlike weapons, and foiled the arts of his malignant father." [Griffith tr.]. Bergaigne (II, 103) writes: "In *Rigv*. III, 9, Agni is addressed as follows: 'Protect us, remove the father.' As for Soma, at one time he tries to win over the 'ancient father,' IX, 86, 14, and another time escapes from the arms of the wicked father and triumphs over his wiles. VI, 44, 22."

[4] The second reference here is erroneous. Based on the content of the verses, I believe the references should read *Rigv*. IX, 86, 9; *Rigv*. IX, 86, 20.

Vata-Vâyu, as mentioned, is the same as Odin both in being and in name. Agni, the fire god, is the same as Heimdall as has already been demonstrated in the first volume of this work (no. 82) and further confirmation shall be provided later on. Indra, the hero with the lightning bolt, is the Teutons' Thor-*Einriði*.[5]

These same three gods, and no others, are reported in the Norse documents as those who in their time of development received drinks of the liquids in the subterranean springs. While quite young, Odin receives a drink of the undiluted liquid from Mimir's well, after he has made himself worthy through self-sacrifice (*Hávamál* 138-144; *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 53) and the drink grants him wondrous progress in power and wisdom. As a child, Heimdall receives drinks out of all three of the subterranean springs (*Hyndluljóð* 35-38; see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 21 and 72)[6] or receives a drink mixed with their liquids and through it becomes *aukinn*, "endowed with power." Also as a child, Thor (*Hyndluljóð* 43) receives a drink from Urd's spring, which contains *jarðar magn*, the power in nature's physical life (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 72), and through it likewise becomes *aukinn*, endowed with power.[7]

The concept that a god-child is strengthened for the calling that awaits him by a drink of soma is of Proto-Indo-European origin and is found again in *Rigveda*. Indra receives a soma-drink directly after his birth and immediately thereafter begins to fight against demons (*Rigv*. IV, 18, 3). Agni has many birthplaces. One of his oldest is by King Soma, who, as the archetype for bards and sacrificial priests, belonged to those who gave him one of his first forms of existence, who "ignited" him and presented the sacred drink to him.

King Soma's giant-birth, his connection to the gods, and his status as their ally are thus common to *Rigveda* and Germanic mythology. In both are found the concepts, that thanks to him, certain gods in their childhood enjoyed the liquids of creative power and wisdom, and in both, these gods are identical: Vâta-Odin, Indra-Thor, Agni-Heimdall. In the Norse, Odin bears the epithet Mimir's friend and Mimir bears the epithet Odin's friend. In *Rigveda*, King Soma bears the epithet Vata's (Odin's) friend, *vâtâpi* (*Rigv*. I, 187, 8-10).

65) A second name that the Vedic Mimir bears is Brahmanaspati (Brihaspati), "the lord of hymns, the lord of prayers." At the same time, he is the personification of the creative mead, as well as the personal representative of the mysterious, powerful prayer-formulas, the sacred songs, the original sacrificial hymns. In many places in *Rigveda*, King Soma is praised as he who "brought forth" these songs (*Rigv.* IX, 25, 5; IX, 95, 1; IX, 26, 4 and many others). He is their author, and without him the gods and the world would lack the weapon that these songs provide for the supremacy of nature's power, the defense against evil, and the vanquishing of demons.

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[5] From the prologue to Snorri's *Edda*, Trajectinus mss. variant of *Inðridi.*

[6] Here Rydberg interprets *Hyndluljóð* 38's expression *jarðar megni, svalködum sæ ok sónardreyra*, as the water of the three world-wells, "earth's strength" (Urd's well), "cool-cold sea" (Hvergelmir), and "Són's blood" (Mimir's well). Cp. *Guðrúnarkviða* II, 21: *urðar megni* ("Urd's strength"), *svalködum sæ ok sónardreyra.* See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 72, 73.

[7] Neither Heimdall nor Thor are named in the verses cited. However, Heimdall is usually identified as the subject of verses 35-38, because the child is said to have nine mothers, like Heimdall, a fact confirmed by the opening lines of the lost poem *Heimdalargaldr*, quoted by Snorri in *Gylfaginning* 27. The subject of verse 43 however is unclear, and Rydberg's identification of him as Thor is speculative. However, that said, the little information regarding him contained in the verse, does fit the description of Thor. According to *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Vol. 3 (2000), the three most common theories about the identity of the subject of verse 43 are: 1) Heimdall, the subject of verses 35-38; 2) a human prince (*stillir stóauðigr*, "a very rich prince"), who is compared to Heimdall; 3) a god that is compared with Heimdall, who, independent of his identity, represents the old order of the world before Ragnarök. In this case, the prime candidates are Odin, Thor, and Freyr.

They constitute "the highest wisdom which Soma proclaims for the family of gods" (*Rigv*. IX, 97, 7), and in number there are as many as seven, or as many as nine, presumably based on a different means of calculation. (See Bergaigne II, 145).[8]

One should compare this with *Hávamál* 140, 141, where Odin, as the origin of his power and wisdom, praises the gifts he received from Mimir: "nine *fimbul*-songs, and a drink of the precious mead that flows out of *Oðrerir*," as well as *Sigrdrífumál* 14, where Mimir, with wisdom, imparts "true staves" to Odin. Mimir, like King Soma, is the oldest, most active, and the holiest lord of songs, and through him, as through Soma, knowledge of these songs is granted to the gods. (Compare *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, nos. 26 and 86). King Soma is regarded as the proper sacrificer and priest in the world of the gods, he is the *brahman* among the gods (*Rigv*. IX, 96, 6; IX, 83, 5, and many other places), and to the nine songs he taught them belong the archetypes of sacrificial songs and prayers. Thus was the circumstance with the Germanic Mimir's nine fimbul-songs as well. Among them, certain ones have given reply to the questions: *Veiztu, hvé biðja skal? Veiztu hvé blóta skal? Veiztu hvé senda skal? Veiztu hvé sóa skal?* (*Hávamál* 144).[9] *Rigveda* distinguishes carefully between these archetypes and the sacrificial hymns used in historical times (I, 27, 4; I, 60, 3, and many other passages), but with this adds that the new are modeled after the old (I, 175, 6).

66) "The Lord of Hymns," Soma-Brahmanaspati, as the owner of the mead of wisdom and inspiration, is the source of all poetic art. The skald's tongue is moved by the insight that Soma gives, *Rigv*. I, 87, 5; inspired by him, he sings as the fathers sang. It is Soma that opens the door for the skald through which honor is won, *Rigv*. IX, 108. He who receives a taste of his "delightful," "rushing" drink becomes a seer. *Rigv*. I, 91, 14.

In Norse mythology, the seeds of poetry grow around the edge of Mimir's spring[10] and the mead in it is the mead of inspiration. The Norse skald likens the inspiration that will be

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[8] In a chapter on "*Mythological Arithmetic*" (ch. 5), Bergaigne demonstrates, using parallelisms, that the mythic groups known as the Rishis, Angiras, Navagvas, and Dasagvas, who are all associated with soma and depicted as empowering the gods throughout *Rigveda*, are represented by the numbers 7, 8, 9, and 10 respectively. Bergaigne demonstrates that the traditional number of sacred laws, which is seven, corresponds to the traditional number of Rishis, priests or founders who first worshipped the gods (cp. *Rigv*. X, 64, 5 and X, 71, 3), and that this number has cosmological significance. From *Rigv*. X, 8, 4 in which Agni, the instrument of sacrifice and the most excellent sacrificer, is described as retaining 'seven places' for the accomplishment of the law, one learns that the seven sacrifices are performed in seven different places, which according to analogy, Bergaigne believes represent as many different worlds. The number seven represents the six "firm" regions of the universe (three earths and three heavens), plus one corresponding to the threefold invisible space. (cp. *Rigv*. I, 164, verses 6 and 15). Similarly, by the addition of the number one, the seven Rishis together are ruled over by an eighth, who is above them and may be identified with Agni. Together, they are called the Angiras. Bergaigne writes: "The Navagvas and the Dasagvas are like the Angiras, with whom they have been identified (X, 108, 8 cp. X, 62, 6), ancient sacrificers and ancestors of human beings (VI, 22, 2; X, 14, 6), who are the first to sacrifice (II, 34, 12)." He adds: "There is a remarkable circumstance that the word *dasagva* is employed singly only twice (II, 34, 12; VIII, 12, 2) and figures in five other passages along with the word *navagva* (5 + 2 = 7), which is moreover used singly nine times. This would already be good reason to suppose that the myth of the Dasagvas was only an offshoot of the myth of the Navagvas; and in fact the number nine is that of the worlds according to the division of the universe into three heavens, three atmospheres, and three earths, the number ten being possibly formed by the addition of one."

[9] "Do you know how to pray (ask)? Do you know how to *blót* (offer through sacrifice)? Do you know how to how to send? Do you know how to sacrifice (slaughter)?"

[10] Rydberg repeats this statement often (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I , nos. 21, 59, 72, etc), and attributes it to a skaldic verse in *Skáldskaparmál* 3 by Eilíf Guðrúnarson, the author of *Þórsdrápa*. However, his interpretation is based on a misreading. The verse actually reads: *Verðið ér, alls orða/ oss grær of kon mæran/ á sefreinu Sónar/ sáð, vingjöfum ráða*, "Since for the great king, *Són*'s seed [poetry] grows on our word-meadow [tongue], you must decide on friendly-gifts."

released in song, moving in his soul, with the billows of *Oðrerir* or *Són* (i.e. Mimir's well) that swell and surge.

67) It has already been mentioned that Soma-Brahmanaspati, like Mimir, is the great primeval artist around whom the mythic smiths, nature's artisans, were gathered in the beginning. In *Rigveda*, these smiths are sacrificial priests as well. Around Mimir, seven sons work (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 94); around King Soma are seven sacrificers. Around Soma, the forging Âyus are also gathered, and for this reason, he himself is called an Âyu (*Rigv*. IX, 23, 2, 4; IX, 64, 17, and many other passages).[11] In Germanic mythology, the famous artist Völund, who has retained the name Ajo, forges for Mimir,[12] and, on his subterranean lands, dwells the great smith Sindri's family (*Völuspá* 37).[13]

68) In Germanic mythology, Mimir is father to Night and her sisters, the dises of the rosy dawn (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 84). In Vedic mythology, Soma allows the *Ushas* (Night and her sisters, the dises of the rosy dawn) "to be born glittering into the world," *Rigv*. VI, 39, 3. King Soma allows the day to rise, *Rigv*. IX, 92, 5. Mimir's daughter Night is mother to Day.[14]

69) The word Soma, when it does not mean the mythic person with this name, designates soma-mead of different kinds that are not mixed with one another. Soma-juices of greater and lesser holiness, of greater and lesser power exist. *Rigveda* X, 116, 3 distinguishes between "the celestial" soma and that which is pressed out by mortal human beings; the Iranian documents distinguish between the golden Haoma (Soma) and the white. The latter is the celestial, which imparts immortality (Justi, *Bundehesh*, pg. 279).[15] The golden grants health, strength, success, growth, victory, knowledge, skaldic inspiration, like the white, but not to the same degree it does.

The most sacred Soma is that which is found in the centermost world-well, in Id, the spring that is guarded by King Soma-Brahmanaspati, which is "the richest in mead," enclosed in a "hundredfold cleansing," possessing "divine nature" and is "a pleasure for gods and goddesses" (*Rigv.* VII, 47).[16] It is this kind of Soma that is granted by him to Vâju, Indra, and Agni when the good of the world requires it, but which no god gets to enjoy daily. The closest to the holiest of all types of soma is that which the gods use daily, that which is stored in the moon ship (see further), that which the demons once captured (see ch. 13 above), and that which mortal human beings prepare to offer the gods as a sacrifice. Of the latter, we are assured that it is of the same kind as the mead stored in the moon (*Rigv.* IX, 12, 5). Finally, soma-mead is present in the dews from the world-tree, since it sucks its sap from the world-wells, and in the rain showers, which get their nourishing power from there. (Compare Bergaigne I, 165, 172).[17]

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[11] The second reference appears to be erroneous. Soma is said to make the Âyus more beautiful in IX, 64, 23 [*dich putzen die Âyu's*, Geldner] and called Âyu in IX, 67, 8. Griffith translates Âyu as "the Living."

[12] Rydberg identifies Nidhad of *Völundarkviða* with Mimir. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 87.

[13] There Rydberg interprets *bjórsalr jötuns, en sá Brimir heitir*, "the beerhall of a giant, named Brimir," as Mimir's hall in the underworld near *sálar ór gulli Sindra ættar*, "the hall made of gold of Sindri's race." For a full account, see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I , nos. 88 and 94.

[14] Rydberg demonstrates that Night's father Nörvi (Narfi) is identical to Mimir. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 84-85.

[15] Ferdinand Justi, *Der Bundehesh*, 1868. The passage reads: "*hôm*, Haoma 1) the golden, earthly Haoma. 2) the heavenly white Haoma, from which one receives immortality."

[16] Based on the Ludwig translation, cp. footnote **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

[17] Bergaigne notes that because rainwater in *Rigveda* is represented as female (earth), and Soma is represented as male (celestial fire), they are wrongly identified. He explains that Soma is derived from plants which receive their

In Germanic mythology, the same distinctions were made between different types of soma-mead. The mead in Mimir's spring is the holiest, and only under certain circumstances is it offered to certain gods. The mead most often drunk by the gods is the mead out of the spring Byrgir which was taken to the moon and once was in the giant Suttung's power until Odin recaptured it (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, nos. 89-90). The mead that the Einherjar drink is pressed out of the world-tree's leaves and symbolically flows from the goat Heidrun, which grazes in the world-tree's crown. According to the Germanic conception, mead of a wonderful type is also mixed in the morning dew, and nourishing mead in the fructifying showers. To their gods, the Teutons, like the *Rigveda*-Aryans and the Iranians have brought sacrificial mead.[18]

70) Because Soma is the name of the mead of inspiration's owner, the divine sacrificial priest as well as the sacrificed mead itself, he is described both as sacrificer and victim in *Rigveda*. It is possible that this double significance is the seed of the Germanic myth about Mimir's death. Mimir sacrifices himself in his endeavor to reconcile the Aesir and Vanir. In addition to the name *Oðrerir*, his spring bears the name *Són*.

The pseudo-myth concerning the death of Kvasir, created by the Aesir and Vanir as a sign of reconciliation, and his blood's transformation into the mead of inspiration has its basis in the myth about Mimir's death.[19]

71) One of Soma's bynames in *Rigveda* is Manu or Manus. There, he shares this designation with one of the ancient rulers of the Indo-European tribe. In many places where the name appears it is impossible to decide which one is meant. In other places, such as in *Rigveda* V, 29, 7, where it speaks of Manus' three soma pools from which Indra receives a drink, Manus is obviously the same as Soma. Müllenhoff assumes that Manus and Mimir were originally the same name and means "the thinker," from the Indo-European root *man*, "to think." The history of this word's derivation still exhibits an interesting analogy to the myth of Mimir. *Man* in its most original meaning refers to a strong psychic activity, including will, desire, imagination, and

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nourishment from rainwater. Men draw Soma from plants, as plants draw celestial fire (in the form of lightning) from rainwater. Thus the feminine element of rainwater contains the masculine element fire (Agni), necessary to produce Soma. Bergaigne writes: “Soma in fact, and this is how we shall sum up this digression, is none other than *fire in the liquid state*.” (p. 168) As such, it can be mixed with, but remains distinct from, water. This finds support, in part, in *Rigv*. IX, 84, 3: “He, poured forth in a stream flows with the lightning's flash, Soma who gladdens Indra and the Host of Heaven.” It is also reminiscent of Rydberg’s theory of *vafur*-fire, a dark, metallic, ignitable element present in the thundercloud. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 36.

[18] [Rydberg's Footnote]: Jonas Bobbiensis in his biography of St. Columbanus (7th century) tells of a mead-sacrifice that a Swabian once conducted: "Once as he was going through this country, he discovered that the natives were going to make a heathen offering. They had a large cask that they called a *cupa*, and that held about twenty-six measures, filled with beer and set in their midst. On Columban's asking what they intended to do with it, they answered that they were making an offering to their God Wodan (whom others call Mercury).” [Translation from *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Vol. II. No. 7, Edited by Dana C. Munro, University of Pennsylvania Press (1897-1907)].

[19] See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 89. The myth of the god Kvasir is known only from Snorri’s writings. In *Gylfaginning* 50, Kvasir is present when Loki is bound, although he is absent from the Eddaic poem *Lokasenna* and the accompanying prose which recount the same myth. In *Snorri’s Edda*, *Skáldskaparmál* 5 (Faulkes 57), Kvasir is created “by the gods” from the spittle of the Aesir and the Vanir, who all spit into a vat to form a truce after a dispute between them. Kvasir is left to wander the world, where he is slain by two dwarves, who create the mead of poetry from his blood. In *Heimskringla*, *Ynglingasaga*, ch. 4, Kvasir is a third hostage sent by the Vanir to the Aesir, after they receive Hönir and Mimir, in change for Njörd and Frey. The name Kvasir appears in a single skaldic verse, *Vellekla* 1 by Einarr skálaglamm, quoted by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* 10, in which poetry is referred to as “Kvasir’s blood” [*Kvasis dreyra*].

thought. From this comes the Greek *μάντις* (*mantis*), wise man, seer, and *μανία* (*mania*), prophetic and skaldic intoxication or inspiration. From this, in a second way, comes the Sanskrit *manti*, thinking; Greek *μήτις* (*metis*), insight, *μνήμη* (*mneme*), in mind; Latin *mens*, soul. Also from this, in a third way, comes Sanskrit *mâti*, calculation, measure, *mâs*, timekeeper, moon, month, *μήν* (*men*) and *menis*, month. It bears remarking that the myth of the seer King Soma and the soma-mead, which induces skaldic intoxication, became so closely associated with the moon in the Vedic mythology (see below) that the word Soma itself finally became a name for the moon. In Germanic mythology, the mead-myth is also closely associated with the moon (see below), and Mimir's seven sons *Niðjar, Niðja synir*, become representatives for the so-called economical months (See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I no. 94).[20] Finally, the Greek mythic figure Minos also stands in relation to the myth about Soma-Mimir, in name and substance. Minos is an underworld king and judge of the dead[21] and has a servant in Dædalus, the Greek myth's great artist, the builder of the labyrinth,[22] as Soma-Mimir has his artisan in Âyu, and Mimir in Ajo-Völund. That the labyrinth is called *Völundar-hús*[23] is likely a compilation of late date, similarly perhaps that artistic skill is ascribed to both Völund (*Hamðismál* 7)[24] and Dædalus (*πεπλος δαιδαλος*). On the other hand, one must regard as features originating from the Proto-Indo-European era, that Dædalus falls into disfavor and is kept imprisoned by King Minos, then frees himself from captivity by means of a flying device that he

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[20] The economical months are named in *Skáldskaparmál* 78. A strong mythological connection exists among Mimir, his daughter Night, and the phases of the moon. The word *nið* (plural *niðar*) refers to the new moon (or "no moon") and is used in the alliterative phrase *nótt med niðum*, "night and new moons" (*Vafþrúðnismál* 24). In the following verse, *ný ok nið* (full moon and new moon) are said to be shaped by *regin*, the powers. In *Völuspá* 6, *regin öll*, all the powers, give names to *nótt ok niðjum*, "night and her offspring" (i.e. *nótt ok niðum*, according to the Cleasby/Vigfusson dictionary, s.v. *nið*). In *Völuspá* 11, Ný and Niði are personified as dwarves, creations of Mótsognir, whom Rydberg identifies with Mimir. In *Völundarkviða* 7, when Níðuðr (Nidhad) and the Niárar (whom Rydberg identifies with Mimir and his sons) first appear "their shields glinted in the shrunken moon," *skildir bliko þeira/ við enn skarða mána* [Dronke tr., *Poetic Edda*, Vol. II, p. 244].

[21] In Greek mythology, Minos is one of three sons of Zeus and Europa. As king of the island of Crete, he communed with his father Zeus in a sacred cave on the island every nine years. Minos married Pasiphäe, the daughter of the sun-god Helios and Perseis. Their daughters were Ariadne and Phædra. Minos was considered a just ruler, who established a system of laws obtained from his father Zeus, which formed the basis of the legislation of Lykurgos. After his death, he was appointed a judge in the lower world. The three judges of the dead are Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Æakos.

[22] The death of Europa's mortal husband, Asterion, who was the king of Crete, left the succession of the throne in dispute. The king's stepson, Minos claimed the throne. To secure his power, Minos called on his uncle Poseidon, the sea-god, to send him a victim for sacrifice. Thereafter, a shimmering white bull rose from the sea. Instead of sacrificing it as he had pledged, Minos released the magnificent bull into his herd. Offended, Poseidon engendered in Minos' wife an unnatural desire for it. Soon the bull escaped and Minos' wife Pasiphäe followed in hot pursuit. Minos enlisted the help of the artist Dædalus, who not only succeeded in capturing the bull, but also found a means to satisfy the queen's desire, by creating a life-like figure of a cow, inside of which the queen could copulate with the bull. Afterward, she gave birth to the Minotaur, a half-human, half-bovine monster. Minos employed Dædalus to build a labyrinth to hold the creature, and then also imprisoned the artist there as punishment for aiding the queen's infidelity. In time, Dædalus escaped the labyrinth by making wings of wax and feathers for himself and his son Icarus. Icarus however, drowned when, against his father's advice, he flew too close to the sun, the wax on his wings melted, and he plunged into the sea. Dædalus found safety in Sicily under King Kokalos. Minos pursued him there, but was killed when King Kokalos' daughter poured boiling water over him as he bathed. Among Dædalus' many inventions are the plumb-line, the axe, the saw, glue, the mast, and the sail. He was fiercely jealous, and once killed his own nephew, whose skill he feared would surpass his own.

[23] "Völund's house," *Stjórn* 85, *Lilja* 92. [Cleasby/Vigfusson, s.v. *Völundr*].

[24] *Bækr váru þínar inar bláhvítu, ofnar völundum flutu í vers dreyra*; "Thy bed-clothes, blue and white,
woven by cunning hands [*völundum*], swam in thy husband's gore." [Thorpe tr.]

secretly crafts for himself, just as Völund is imprisoned by Mimir and flies from captivity by means of an eagle-guise he secretly makes. The myth about Völund's laming has been transferred in Greek mythology onto another primeval smith, the limping Hephæstus.