

Viktor Rydberg's
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Part 1: Indo-European Mythology

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Indra's Birth and Battles with Demons.

97) Like Thor, the caster of the lightning bolt, Indra, also caster of the lightning bolt, is the son of Mother Earth (*Rigv.* IV, 17, 2).¹ And like Thor, Indra has two sets of parents: a divine pair, his actual origin, and a pair who belong to the class of demons, among which he grows into what he becomes.

The following account of the myth of Indra's birth is based on a compilation I have made of all the most important passages in *Rigveda* that might contribute to the restoration of the myth to its epic state. His birth occurred in a time when the powers of evil had gathered strength, attacked Creation, and brought it under their control. In *Rigveda*, this event corresponds to the great war that Ahriman undertakes against Ormazd's creation in *Avesta*, and during which the demons succeed in blending evil into all the world's elements.

The gods were not strong enough to oppose the attack. The sun was stolen by the demons and locked in a prison. The same fate befell the discs of dawn. The order followed by Day and Night was revoked and the light was carried away and hidden in the darkness. Water surrounded the demons in their mountain-homes, where they were guarded by the dragon Vritra. The laws of nature having been fundamentally shaken, the forces of destruction ruled the universe.

The gods were paralyzed and had given up their cause for lost. They did not know that a savior would come when their need was the greatest. The goddess Earth, who was then pregnant with him, did not know it either. She passed his embryo, which she regarded as a stain after the humiliation of the gods, and it was swallowed by the deep-water giantess Kushavâ in whose womb it developed favorably, since "the waters were gracious to the child" (*Rigv.* IV, 18, 8).

Kushavâ's husband was the demon Vyamsa, "who was worse than Vritra himself" (*Rigv.* I, 32; IV, 18, 1).² Indra grew big and strong in his second womb (*Rigv.* X, 148, 2; I, 11, 14)³ and, at his hour of birth, the hero-god was fully grown (*Rigv.* VIII, 82, 5).⁴ He was born to destroy the

¹ This verse does not directly state that Earth is Indra's mother, although others do, directly and indirectly (cp. *Rigv.* III, 49, 1; VIII, 50, 2; and VIII, 88, 6). Heaven and Earth are often mentioned along with Indra, and he is frequently said to be more powerful than they are. Only Indra and Agni are characterized as the sons of "Heaven and Earth" (regarding Agni, see *Rigv.* III, 25, 1; X, 1, 2; X, 2, 7; X, 11, 9; and X, 46, 9), and these two deities, although distinct, are often invoked jointly (*Rigv.* I, 121; I, 108; I, 109; III, 12, etc.).

² Ludwig associates these verses in his commentary. In *Rigv.* I, 32, 5, the German translators Ludwig and Geldner both acknowledge that the demon is named Vyamsa (Vyansa). Ludwig identifies him as Indra's father. Geldner interprets Vyamsa as "a byname of Vritra," while, the English translator Griffith simply substitutes the name Vritra for Vyamsa without note. The second reference obviously was meant to refer to *Rigv.* IV, 18, 12, quoted further in the text, which reads "Who was he then who made thy Mother a widow?" From this, Rydberg draws the conclusion that Indra's birth mother, Kushavâ, is Vyamsa's wife.

³ The second reference should read I, 11, 4.

⁴ This reference should read VIII, 82, 15.

demons (*Rigv.* I, 51, 6), and undoubtedly, while he was still in Kushavâ's womb, the witchcraft-savvy giants had made sure that they did everything in order to stop his coming forth and blocked him with "a hundred copper-fortresses" (*Rigv.* IV, 27).⁵ And when he powerfully broke through these barriers, Vyamsa was prepared to kill him at the very hour of his birth. A conversation arose between Vyamsa and the god child, active in the giantess' womb. Vyamsa demanded that Indra come into the world naturally. Indra refused and broke himself free from his mother's side, laments a hymn. Vyamsa received him with a blow, which broke his jaw, and sought to drive him back down into the deep, where Indra had developed. But Indra grabbed him by the feet, turned him over, and crushed his head with "the eager wedge" that he took in his arms. *Rigv.* IV, 22, 3.⁶ Whether he found this weapon in his mother's womb or took it from Vyamsa is not said. In either case, the weapon had belonged entirely to the giant-world before it came into Indra's hands. The universe trembled, when Indra made his way into the world.⁷ The gods were astonished and at a loss; "they had retired like old men,"⁸ but "the earth-goddess delighted in her glorious son and assisted Indra's lightning-wedge" (*Rigv.* IV, 16, 7).⁹ His giant-mother, whom he had "made a widow," died as a result of the unusual delivery. Indra now hurried to Tvashtar (one of the so-called artisans of nature), from whom he obtained a huge drink of soma by force and then rushed to complete the liberation of the world. He slew the dragon Vritra, liberating the waters, which again burst forth from the mountain stronghold where they had been imprisoned. The sun and the discs of dawn were led out of the prison where they had been held, allowing light to shine all over the world (*Rigv.* X, 139, 4; III, 39, 5; VI, 17, 5; II, 20, 5; I, 100, 8) and world-order was re-established (*Rigv.* VI, 21, 3). For a long time, he had to fight alone, because the gods were gripped by fear. Vishnu was the first to come to his aid.¹⁰ (The largest contribution to this myth is provided by *Rigv.* IV, 18).

The Germanic myth about Thor's childhood has only been preserved in a distorted historicized form; but one finds that, in its essential features, it largely resembles the Vedic form.

The prologue to the *Prose Edda* relates, in its well-known manner, that Thor was fostered in Thrace by a Duke named Loricus. At ten, he inherited his father's weapons. When he was twelve winters old, he had reached his full strength; then he lifted ten bear pelts off the ground at one time, killed Loricus and Loricus' wife, Lóra or Gloria, and thus he acquired Thrace. Thereafter, he traveled far and explored all parts of the world and alone conquered all berserkers and all giants, as well as one of the greatest dragons and many wild animals—

The "Duke's" name, Loricus, is freely formed from his wife's name, Lóra. His actual name is reported in *Skáldskaparmál* 4, which says that Thor was raised by Vingnir and Hlóra. He

⁵ For this to be accurate, Indra would need to be the Eagle or Falcon mentioned in the verse, an identification Rydberg has convincingly argued against in ch. 13. According to Griffith, the verse reads: "As I lay within the womb, I considered all generations of these Gods in order. A hundred *iron* fortresses confined me but forth I flew with rapid speed a Falcon." Ludwig and Griffith identify this bird as a falcon (*Falke*); Geldner identifies it as an eagle (*Adler*), along with Rydberg.

⁶ Although the lightning wedge is described thus here, the action takes place in *Rigv.* IV, 18, 9.

⁷ *Rigv.* IV, 17, 2.

⁸ The source of this is unknown to me, but may be *Rigv.* VIII, 82, 14, which reads: "In their terror, all the Gods shrank from the Dragon's might."

⁹ "Earth, conscious, lent her aid to speed thy thunder" [Griffith tr.]; "The Earth, who was in agreement, supported your club" [Geldner tr.].

¹⁰ Ludwig, Geldner, and Griffith interpret the last half of *Rigv.* IV, 18, 11 similarly. Griffith writes: "Then Indra said, about to slaughter Vritra, O my friend Vishnu, stride full boldly forward." Many of the online versions of Griffith's text, however, have mistranscribed the line to read "Then Indra said, about to slaughter Vritra, O my friend Vritra, stride full boldly forward."

is *fóstri Vingnis ok Hlóru*.¹¹ One learns what type of being this Vingnir is from Thjóðólf's song about Thor's battle with Hrungrnir, in which Vingnir is used as a giant's name.¹² In the list of giants (added to *Skáldskaparmál*), he is likewise included.¹³ In *Vafþrúðnismál* 53, where the old giant predicts that Vidar, after his father's death, shall split the jaws of Fenrir, the name Vingnir stands in the place of the word "wolf" (*vitnir*) in *Codex Regius*.¹⁴ And in the same poem, verse 51, it is said that Thor's sons shall possess Vingnir's hammer after the battle of Ragnarök—doubtlessly referred to as such, because Thor received his first hammer either from Vingnir or in a battle with him.¹⁵ Consequently, there can be no doubt that Thor's so-called foster father Vingnir was a giant.¹⁶

Now let us compare the Vedic myth about Indra's birth and first exploits with the historicized myth in the preface to the *Prose Edda*, the following similarities are clear, despite the latter's disfigurement:

- 1) Although Thor-Indra is of divine birth — son of the earth goddess — his first exploits occur while he is being fostered by a giant-pair, who in *Rigveda* are also called his parents (foster-parents).
- 2) He reaches his full strength earlier than usual.
- 3) He kills his "foster-parents."
- 4) He carries the hammer he obtained from them into his first battle.
- 5) His foster father's sovereign power is passed to him.
- 6) Thereafter, he slays the largest dragon (in *Rigveda*, the dragon Vritra), and fights giants and wild animals the world over.
- 7) He accomplishes these feats alone.

These similarities are sufficient to show the original identity of the myths concerning Indra's and Thor's nativity and childhood exploits.

8) In the myth about Thor and Hymir, Thor must rob Hymir of an enormous kettle that is required for the gods' feast, specifically for the preparation of the soma-mead that Aegir annually invites them to enjoy. In *Rigveda* occurs the word *krivi*, which is used by translators in different

¹¹ "The ward of Vingnir and Hlóru." Scholars are undecided on the meaning. Anthony Faulkes questions whether this is a reference to some myth, then tentatively suggests that Vingnir should be understood as a name of Odin, and *fóstri* understood as "son." [Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál 2: Glossary and Index of Names*, s.v. Vingnir.] Simek agrees, adding: "The name has not been satisfactorily explained, but 'the weapon-shaking-god' would be possible, which would suit Odin as well as Thor." [*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 363].

¹² *Haustlöng* 19/2. Scholars do not agree on the meaning here. Egilsson and North understand Vingnir as a giant-name and read *herju heimpingaðar Vingnis*, "the home-caller of Vingnir's warrior-woman," i.e. Hrungrnir [*Lexicon Poeticum*, s.v. Vingnir; *The Haustlöng of Þjóðólf of Hvinir*, p. 82]. Faulkes adds that "if *herja* means 'attacker', Vingnir could mean Þórr here." [*Skáldskaparmál 2: Glossary and Index of Names*, p. 519].

¹³ In the *Pulur*, Vingnir is listed among the names for giants, for Odin, and for bulls.

¹⁴ See Sophus Bugge's *Semundar Edda hins fróða*, p. 73. According to this reading, the verse can be understood as: "The wolf will swallow *Alaföðr* (Odin), *Viðar* will avenge him"; he will cleave (the wolf's) cold jaws at Vingnir's (Odin's) death" or, with Rydberg, "he will cleave the cold jaws of Vingnir (i.e. the giant, but literally 'Fenrir') at death."

¹⁵ Most scholars who follow this reading interpret Vingnir as Thor. It is considered a Thor-name based on this passage and the inclusion of the name in the list of Thor's descendants in the *Prologue* to *Gylfaginning*. The passage may also be read: "Móði and Magni will have Mjölnir, at the end of Vingnir's battle [*Vignis vígþroti*], i.e. when Thor is dead."

¹⁶ Among scholars today, *Vingnir* is understood as a giant name, an Odin-name, or a Thor-name, depending on the context.

manners, but which overall is used of a thing allowing itself to be interpreted as a vat for the mythic mead's preparation and storage and, in a derived sense, as a "reservoir," or a well (Compare Bergaigne II, 440, 441).¹⁷ In *Vâḷakhilya* 3, 8,¹⁸ it says that with violence Indra seized the *krivis*. In them, he silenced the demon Çushna, "the dehydrator," with death's weapon. Çushna is one of the enemies of Indra mentioned most often in *Rigveda*. He is one of the giant-world's most dangerous beings. He dwells on the other side of Rasâ, the magic river that divides the land of the giants from the rest of Creation. He possesses the *krivis* necessary for the divine feast and he has a herd of cattle that he stole from the heavens, which all interpreters see as symbols of the dîs of the rosy dawn or of the nourishing rain-clouds (*Rigv.* VIII, 85, 17). Consequently, the myth about Çushna strongly reminds us of the Hymir-myth, and one probably has its root in the other. Because there is every reason to believe that the name Hymir is derived from *hûm*, twilight, it is appropriate to designate a thief of the dîs of dawn. The "all-black" bull *Himinhrijótr*, which, according to *Hymiskviða* 18, was found in Hymir's herd, and which Thor kills, was originally a demon in bull-guise who stood guard for the twilight-giant over the cattle stolen from heaven. (On this, see below).

99) The Old Norse stories have united the narrative about Thor's and Tyr's visit to Hymir with the story of an encounter between Thor and the Midgard serpent. Thor is out fishing with Hymir on the Elivogar and hooks the Midgard serpent, then still young and growing in strength. Thor struck it in the head with his hammer, after which the serpent sinks down again into the sea. Compare this with what *Rigveda* says about Indra's battle with the serpent-demon Vritra-Piyâru. *Rigv.* III, 30, 8: "Vritra Piyâru, who still grows in strength, the footless, you beat mightily, O Indra." *Rigv.* I, 32, 8-10¹⁹: "Vritra exceeded the waters; the dragon lay by their feet. In the midst of never still, never resting water currents lay the slain corpse. Indra's enemy sank into far-reaching darkness." *Rigv.* I, 52, 15: "Indra struck Vritra in the head with the many-faceted thunderbolt." *Rigv.* V, 32, 4: "child of the clouds, the strong waxing, existing in the darkness, the thunderer has smote with his thunderbolt"; (v. 6-8) "he who lies there at great length, grown long in sunless darkness, the footless devourer in coiling motion, has Indra struck with powerful weapon in his own home."²⁰ From this passage, one sees that the serpent demon's home is the dark depths of the sea, that he lies there and grows "to great length," and that Indra in some manner got within striking distance and struck him in the head with his lightning bolt, after which the serpent again sank down into the sea with his life's energy drained. In its essential features, it is the myth of Thor's battle with the Midgard serpent; only the boat and the fishing are lacking, and they are probably a Germanic addition, produced because the battle in question took place at sea. The Germanic myth of the serpent demon's final appearance in the battle of Ragnarök is rediscovered in the Iranian saga-cycle and shall be discussed below.

¹⁷ Bergaigne writes: "According to some interpreters, there is the intention to use the word as a proper noun denoting a protégé of the Asvins, but which is perfectly intelligible if we accept it in the sense of either 'a leather bag' or of a 'spring'; the passages where the two uses occur being VIII, 22, 12: "You have caused the spring to swell" and VIII, 20, 24: "You give the spring" (and not 'you render help'. It has been, as a matter of fact, said in the same verse, 'you render help to the sea, *sindhum*'). The use of the word *Krivi* in IX, 9, 6 and V, 44, 4 enables us, moreover, to regard this spring as identical with Soma, or in any case as containing Soma."

¹⁸ The *Vâḷakhilya* are ten apocryphal hymns of *Rigveda*, sometimes placed at the end, but otherwise found in Book 8, verses 49-59.

¹⁹ This is actually half of line 8 and all of line 10.

²⁰ This quote represents the first half of verse 6, and the final half of line 8.

100) *Rigveda* says that a giant named Rauhina dared to enter the gods' heaven alone, but afterwards was cloven with Indra's lightning wedge (*Rigv.* I, 103, 2; II, 12, 12).²¹ This arrogant stunt stands alone in *Rigveda*. For this reason, it is probable that the same Rauhina is referred to in *Rigv.* X, 8, 9, which speaks of a boastful giant, defiant in his strength: "Indra slew the one who possessed great strength. The real ruler slew him who said that he himself was."²² From the immediately preceding verses, it is clear that the boastful one dies on his own territory and that Indra is accompanied on the journey there by two other gods. Rauhina's adventure is reminiscent of Hrungnir's. He came to Asgard and boasted endlessly about his strength until Thor came and silenced him. Thor did not kill him on the spot, but let him proceed from there, after which Hrungnir fell alongside a mud-giant on his own estate in battle with Thor, who was accompanied by Thjalfi (*Skáldskaparmál* 17).

101) Among the giant clan on the other side of Rasâ, spoken of many times in *Rigveda*, is a wolf-clan, the *Panis*, known as thieves of the heavenly cows and as owners of excellent horses and other treasures, which they guard in mountain-caves beneath the earth. They hunt and capture the nourishing rain clouds, the fertilizing storms, and the strength- and health-extending morning dews. The Angiras (elves), King Soma, Agni and, above all others, Indra must therefore undertake the journey over Rasâ, in order to punish these thieves and to free their captives (*Rigv.* X, 108; I, 93, 4; IX, 22, 7; VII, 9, 2; X, 67, 6).²³ "The celestial cows" and their theft by the giants have certainly played a meaningful role in Germanic mythology. The myth of the primeval cow Audhumla, who nourished the Chaos-giant Ymir with her milk, refers to this. The circumstance that the Chaos-giant sucks all of her four udders, illustrates the giant-world's desire for the celestial cow's juices. When Loki retreated from the world of the gods, bore Fenrir and other terrible monsters of the Germanic godsaga, offspring of him and Gymir's wife, he remained "under the earth" eight years, in the interior of a mountain, and occupied himself there by "milking cows" (*átta vetr vartu fyr jörð nedan, kýr mólkandi ok kona ok hefr þú þar börn borit, Lokasenna* 23).²⁴ Consequently, the cows were enclosed in the giants' haunt where Loki then found himself. That these cows were milked by the arch-fiend of the gods and the world and that Loki's activity is connected to and said to occur during the times when he gave birth to Fenrir, the Midgard serpent, and the plague-demon, Leikn, undoubtedly means that the milking he does is an act hostile to the world, and that he and his hideous offspring thereby acquire the nourishing juices that were intended for the good of the world — in other words, that the cows he milked were of the same kind that the *Panis* possessed. The circumstances must have been the same for the cows that are found in Hymir's possession. The name *Himinhjótr* itself, given to the "all-black" bull which belongs to his herd and is slain by Thor in the *Prose Edda* (*Gylfaginning* 48), proves that this bull had the heavens as the scene of its activity — perhaps as a decoy (compare *tálhreinn*)²⁵ to lure the celestial cows from the atmosphere into the interior of the Jötuns' mountain.

²¹ *Rigv.* I, 103, 2: "Maghavan [Indra] with his puissance struck down Ahi, rent Rauhina to death and slaughtered Vyamsa"; *Rigv.* II, 12, 12: "Who, thunder-armed, rent Rauhina in pieces when scaling heaven, He, O ye men, is Indra" [Griffith tr.].

²² Rydberg's translation matches those of Ludwig and Geldner. Griffith's reads: "Lord of the brave, Indra cleft him in pieces who sought to gain much strength and deemed him(self) mighty." [Griffith tr.].

²³ Rydberg is following the evidence of Bergaigne (II, 319) here.

²⁴ "Eight winters were you down below the earth, milking cows and a woman [or 'a milch-cow and a woman'] and there you have borne children." [Might this simply refer to Loki as a nursing mother?].

²⁵ *tálhreinn*, decoy-reindeer, from *Haustlög* 3/2.

According to Tacitus, white cows drew Mother Earth's wagon. Frigg, as previously pointed out, is the fertilized earth, the goddess of the fruit-bearing fields. In *Rigveda*, "cows" is a common synonym for the dises of vegetation. As symbols of such, they are the most appropriate span for Mother Earth's wagon.

The giants of the Germanic myths, like the *Panís*, have remarkable horses, which the gods want. The giant Hrungr on his horse Gullfaxi races with Odin on Sleipnir and is close on his heels as they approach Asgard. After Hrungr's fall, Thor takes Gullfaxi as plunder and gives him to his son Magni (*Prose Edda*, *Skáldskaparmál* 17).

Giant-demons in the shape of horses, such as the Iranian Apaosha, are reported in Germanic mythology as well. The eight-footed Sleipnir is a horse-giant, son of Loki and the horse Svadilfari. The demon Móinn, who like Apaosha attacks the world-tree's roots, appears in horse-form.²⁶ There also may be mythic reasons why the medieval Norse sagas of the euhemeristic kind, which see giants as the first inhabitants of the North, set the names of horses beside the names of giants in their family-registers. *Glaumi* (*Glaumr*, a horse-name, *Prose Edda*, I, 484)²⁷ is made a descendant of *Fornjótr* and brother to *Gylfi*. A *Svaði jötunn* (compare *Svaðilfari*) is made a member of the same family. A *Hrafn* (horse-name) is made a son of *Hæingr* (a Loki-epithet). The giant *Jökull* has a brother with the well-known horse's name, *Grani*. *Hástígi* is a giant's name and a horse's name at the same time. Loki himself appears in the form of a mare. Undoubtedly Germanic mythology, like the Greek, has its horse-giants, who are partially demons that can transform into horses or into monsters which incorporate the horse's form with other shapes — Saxo (Book 6) speaks of a giant that was a *tricorpor bellua*²⁸ — and who are partially demons that bear a consistent shape, more or less like the Greek centaurs. To Tacitus' reporter, the Teutons have related that far away in the inaccessible east — that is to say, in Jötunheim — dwell "Hellusi and Oxiones with human faces, but with the bodies and limbs of animals" (*Germania* 46).²⁹

The name *Oxionæ* (Oxiones) can stand in connection with the giant's name *Oegir* ("the terrifier"; compare the Gothic *agis*, terror) and designate a giant-clan. The name *Helusii* can stand in connection with the Old Germanic *hella*, cliff, hillock, or the Gothic *hallus*, mountain, cliff, designating mountain-inhabitants and thus correspond to the Norse *bergbúi* (*Hymiskviða* 2).³⁰

102) The constituent parts from which the myth about Thor's campaign against the giant Geirröd, such as they are depicted in *Pórsdrápa*, were formed are found again in *Rigveda*'s account of Indra's journey to the demon Ahi and his battle with him. When Thor seeks Geirröd, he does so at the head of a troop of elves, among whom are Egil and his foster son Thjalfi. On the way, they encounter a storm with hail-showers and must wade through a foaming river whose waters are driven by giant-women of Geirröd's family, who stand atop the mountain. Thor's companions are close to drowning, but the powerful Asa-god bears Egil on his shoulders, with

²⁶ In *Lexicon Poeticum*, s. v. *Móinn*, Egilsson confirms that, *Móinn* occurs as a horse-name in the *pular*.

²⁷ This most likely refers to *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* I-III, (1848, 1852, 1880-87), Hafniae. *Glaumur* occurs as a giant name in *Skáldskaparmál* 75, [Faulkes, *Edda*, p. 157] and as the name of Atli Buðlason's horse in *Skáldskaparmál* 58 [Faulkes, *Edda*, pg. 137].

²⁸ "a giant of three bodies" [Elton tr.].

²⁹ For elaboration on this point, see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 35-44.

³⁰ *bergbúi*, cliff-dweller.

Thjalfi and his warriors clasping his belt through the whirling billows.³¹ When they finally reach and penetrate Geirröd's mountain-hall, he casts a glowing iron towards Thor, but Thor returns it so powerfully that it penetrates the giant as well as the mountain-wall behind him. After his death, Geirröd sits, according to Saxo, in one of the underworld caves of punishment with his pierced body, nailed fast to a cliff.³²

Like Geirröd, Ahi is the ruler of a demon clan; the Ahis are named after him (*Rigv.* IX, 88, 4; X, 139, 6).³³ When Indra goes to fight him, he is accompanied by a troop of warriors. In the beginning, Thor is ignorant of Geirröd's residence in Jötunheim and asks Loki for advice on the best way to get there. In the beginning, Indra is also ignorant of the way to Ahi, and his journey to find him is a journey of discovery (Bergaigne II, 207).³⁴ During the campaign, a storm with hail-showers bursts out over Indra and his warriors, but "the hail-clouds that Ahi spread did not help him" (*Rigv.* I, 32, 13). "Ninety-nine" streams cut the path and had to be waded through (*Rigv.* I, 32, 14). Giant-women who had kept the water restrained up until then, "stood under Ahi's protection" (I, 32, 11) and are mentioned in connection with this event, without explanation of what role they played on that occasion, but it says that the caves in which the waters were enclosed were opened (I, 32, 11) when Indra conquered Ahi. On the main points, this agrees with the Norse narrative of the event. However, Indra found a passage for his companions through the ninety-nine streams (X, 104, 8), and two of his friends, whom others wanted to drown in the depths, were rescued by Indra, "the son of strength," and were carried to the other shore in safety (IV, 30, 17; I, 174, 9; VI, 20, 12).³⁵ With his advance "the mountain-dwelling's doors were opened" and "Indra tested the Ahis' strength" (X, 139, 6). Ahi himself threw a lightning bolt at Indra; "but lightning did not, thunder did not avail him" (*Rigv.* I, 32, 13). Ahi is killed. The Iranian myth holds that he spent his second life imprisoned in rock where he shall live until Ragnarök, when he is to get loose again (Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, pp. 107, 126, 154).³⁶

³¹ These details are based in part on Rydberg's faulty reading of *Pórsdrápa* found in *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 114. An excellent translation of this poem can be found at <http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/thorsd00.html>

³² The following passage occurs in Saxo's *Danish History*, Book 8 [Elton tr.]: "Going on through the breach in the crag, they beheld an old man with his body pierced through, sitting not far off, on a lofty seat facing the side of the rock that had been rent away. Moreover, three women, whose bodies were covered with tumors, and who seemed to have lost the strength of their back-bones, filled adjoining seats. Thorkill's companions were very curious; and he, who well knew the reason of the matter, told them that long ago the god Thor had been provoked by the insolence of the giants to drive red-hot irons through the vitals of Geirröd, who strove with him, and that the iron had slid further, torn up the mountain, and battered through its side; while the women had been stricken by the might of his thunderbolts, and had been punished (so he declared) for their attempt on the same deity, by having their bodies broken."

³³ This statement and the examples are taken from Bergaigne, II, 207, which says: "The word Ahi is used, in addition, in the plural to designate a race of demons, IX, 88, 4; X, 139, 6 of whom the best of the Ahis is the first born, I, 32, 3, and. 4." Outside of Bergaigne, the word is commonly translated as "serpent(s)" or "dragon(s)."

³⁴ Bergaigne says: "The son of waters who is designated by the name of Ahi lies 'hidden' in the waters, *Rigv.* II, 11, 5, and nothing more is necessary to explain his demonic character. The victory of Indra consists, not only in the destruction, but sometimes in the discovery, in the conquest of the Ahis as in *Rigv.* IV, 19, 9." Bergaigne himself equates Ahi with Vritra.

³⁵ The "two friends" are named Turvasa and Yadu.

³⁶ Darmesteter identifies the Avestan demon Azi Dahak (Aji) with Ahi, the foe of Indra, in *Rigveda*. He is ultimately conquered and imprisoned in Mount Demâvend, which Darmesteter suggests may be identical to Arezura, the mountain which houses the gates of hell. At the end of time, Azi Dahak breaks free and is conquered by the hero, Kerecaspa. Compare *Dadestan-i Denig* 33, 5; *Vendidad* 3, 7; *Bundehesh* 12, 8; *Bundehesh* 29, 7.

The myth of Indra's campaign against Ahi consequently resembles the myth of Thor's campaign against Geirröd in its main features and every noteworthy detail.

103) Like Ahi, the defeated Çushna also lies in the dark of the depths, imprisoned there with strong bonds by Indra (*Rigv.* I, 56, 3). The concept of a demon who is sent to the places of punishment and imprisoned there, who awaits the end of this world-age, is common to both the Germanic and the Indo-Iranian mythologies.

104) Indra has ultimately pursued a mighty war against the demons in their aspect as powers of winter. The myth concerning this among the *Rigveda*-Aryans has connections with the myth of the fimbul-winter (see below). In Norse mythology, Gymir leads the giant-powers (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I).³⁷ The name *Gýmir* is, as already stated, identical to *hima*, *heims*, *Χιών*, winter weather, snow, and he is the same giant that Saxo speaks of as King Snow, under whose reign the Langobards, compelled by famine, migrated from the North.³⁸ Indra with a host of Angiras stormed and broke down "the seven fortresses that were winter's refuge" (*Rigv.* VI, 26, 3),³⁹ after the giants had made a failed attempt to conquer heaven (*Rigv.* VIII, 14, 14).

105) Although Indra, like Thor, travels in a wagon and "lets his wagon's wheel roll through Space" (*Rigv.* X, 89, 2; X, 49, 7, and many other places), nevertheless, he is in the habit of traveling on foot, like Thor, on his excursions into the giant-world, and it is typically on solid ground that he confronts his opponents. When he encounters rivers and streams on these journeys, he must go through them, and he is described as a terrific wader, like Thor, who places his tremendous strength against the violence of the currents and finds a ford for his friends who accompany him on this adventure (*Rigv.* I, 61, 11; IV, 30, 17 compare Bergaigne II, 357).⁴⁰ In the Norse narrative about Thor crossing the flood, a strange ability comes to him on that occasion: specifically, in a flood surge, he can grow to the degree that the circumstance requires (*Þverrir Þorns barna lætr sér vaxa megin til salþaks*,⁴¹ *Þórsdrápa* 7; *Veiztu, ef þú vex, at þá vex mér ásmegin jafnhátt upp sem himinn*,⁴² *Skáldskaparmál* 26). The same strange ability is ascribed to Indra (*Rigv.* VI, 24, 7; VI, 38, 5; I, 52, 7) and without doubt, it is because of this that he can "place himself with wonderful power against the stream Vibâlî that spreads itself over the

³⁷ Primarily nos. 35, 36, 76, 105.

³⁸ According to Saxo's *History*, Book 8, King Snow ruled in Sweden at the time Aggi and Ebbo [Ajo and Ibor] led the migration caused by famine described by Paul the Deacon in the *History of the Longobards*, chs. 2-3. The identity of King Snow is unclear, although he appears in a number of sources. Since his ancestry and offspring all have names which indicate harsh winter conditions, he is no doubt a *jötunn* who personifies the first fimbul-winter. In *Skáldskaparmál* 33, Snorri identifies *Gýmir* and *Hlér* as alternate names of Aegir, the sea-giant. In *Hversu Noregr Byggðist* and *Orkneyinga Saga*, *Snæs konungs* (King Snow) is the son of *Jökuls* (Glacier) or *Frosti* and the grandson of *Kári* (wind), who is a brother of *Hlér* (identified as Aegir in *Orkneyinga Saga* and *Skáldskaparmál*), while in *Chronicon Lethrense*, Snow is employed as a herdsman by Lee (*Hlér*) of Hléssey. [Carla O'Harris]

³⁹ This reference is erroneous and was likely meant to refer to VI, 20, 10. cp. I, 73, 7; I, 174, 2 and VII, 18, 13.

⁴⁰ Bergaigne writes: "Turvasa and Yadu are protégés of Indra (*Rigv.* I, 54, 6; X, 49, 8; cp. VIII, 45, 27). He appeased the waters for them, (V, 31, 8), and enabled them to cross them (I, 174, 9, = VI, 20, 12) 'although' they did not know how to swim, (IV, 30, 17, cp. II, 15, 5)."

⁴¹ This is based on Rydberg's reading of the first half of verse 7: "The diminisher of Thorn's children [Thor] let his strength grow to heaven's roof." The line actually reads: *Þverrir barna mörnar lét sér megin vaxa til salþaks, nema þyrri snerríblóð svíra Þorns*. A modern translation, which supports Rydberg's conclusion even more clearly, reads: *Þverrir barna mörnar lét sér megin vaxa til salþaks, nema þyrri snerríblóð svíra Þorns*, "the diminisher of Morn's children [Thor] threatened that his power would grow unto the hall's roof [heaven], unless the gushing-blood of Thorn's neck [ocean] would diminish." [Eysteinn Björnsson tr.].

⁴² "Know that if you grow then my Asa-strength will grow up as high as the heavens."

earth," (*Rigv.* IV, 30, 12).⁴³ *Rigveda's* priestly bard gives a liturgical explanation for this power; it is their hymns and prayers and soma-offerings that give Indra his ability to grow (Bergaigne II, 275).⁴⁴ In *Rigv.* I, 52, 7 Indra is likened to a sea, and, in *Rigv.* VII, 6, 35, to an ocean.⁴⁵ The hymns that are sent up to him are likened to streams, which augment this water. These metaphors are doubtlessly gathered from the epic mythology where Indra successfully struggles through swollen streams and grows to the same degree that they do.

106) The powerful Indra needs to fortify himself with much food and drink. Among the gods, he far surpasses all the others in this regard. He also resembles Thor in that when he gets the opportunity he too eats and drinks colossal amounts. If one difference could be pointed out between them here, it is that the Vedic hero-god eats much more than Thor and that the Germanic hero-god drinks much more than Indra. Indra's ordinary entrees consist of buffalo, bulls (one of Thor's favorite dishes), rams, gruel of roasted corn (*karambha*) and pastries. When he has eaten one thousand bulls, he has considerably strengthened himself, assures *Rigveda* VIII, 12, 8. Thor is satisfied with less. At Hymir's he eats two bulls (*Hymiskviða* 15) and at Thrym's when he plays a bride and must restrain his appetite, he eats a bull and eight salmon, as well as all the sweets prepared for the women (*Þrymskviða* 24). In compensation, Thor drinks incomparably more than Indra, at least when he exerts his ability in this area. Indra is the greatest soma-drinker (*Rigv.* I, 8, 7), while the greatest mead-horn in Valhall is placed before Thor (*Prose Edda, Skáldskaparmál* 17). As evidence of Indra's ability to drink, it is said that he once emptied thirty golden bowls of soma in one sitting (*Rigv.* VIII, 66, 4). Thor, however, drank so much at Skrymir-Fjalar's that the sea, in which the other end of his drinking horn was placed, noticeably lowered around its shores.

107) As is well-known, the draught-animals that pull Thor's wagon can be slain and eaten in the evening without that hindering them from rising up in the morning, alive and unscathed, under the power of their master's consecrating hammer, if one merely remembers to lay their bones unbroken on their flayed skin. Moreover, in his draught-animals, Thor has his road food. He ate goat-meat before he began the journey in Jötunheim during which Harbard-Loki met him and delayed him with his magic arts on his way home (*Hárbarðsljóð* 3).⁴⁶

The animals that pull Indra's wagon, the Haris, "the red-brown," have the same quality; before Indra sets out on a journey, he can slaughter and eat them, and they will stand up again alive (*Rigv.* I, 63, 2; Compare Bergaigne II, 256, 257).⁴⁷ When this meal is prepared, the host

⁴³ "Thou, Indra, didst. with magic power resist the overflowing stream who spread her waters o'er the land." [Griffith tr.]

⁴⁴ Bergaigne writes: "As is well-known, Indra is a god who 'is born' and who grows in strength, VI, 38, 5, and this 'growth', which never stops, is at least partially due to the hymns addressed to him, cp. *ibid.* 4. He becomes great by reason of prayer, X, 50, 4, cp. VI, 44, 8. His greatness increases when prayer has been made in his honor, VI, 20, 3. Although he is an 'adult', the hymns can always cause his 'body' to grow, VI, 24, 7, cp. I, 10, 12."

⁴⁵ The reference should correctly read *Rigv.* VIII, 6, 35, apparently mistranscribed from Bergaigne II, 275.

⁴⁶ For details on this journey, see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. II, Part 2, "*Hárbarðsljóð*" pp. 103-130. In this verse, the word *hafra* can be interpreted as *hafri*, "oats," or *hafr*, "he-goat." Most English translations favor "oats," although both are valid. See *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Vol. 2 (1997) pp. 175-176. It is probably an intentional play on words. Indra, too, is said to eat a gruel made of grain (cp. *karambha*).

⁴⁷ Bergaigne writes: "Soma is very frequently represented as a horse. Nothing in fact was simpler than to make him in particular a horse of Indra, since it is 'with the pressed Soma' that Indra is brought 'from afar' to the sacrifice, VII, 33, 2. And, in fact, the author of X, 144, 1, offers Soma to Indra, addressing him thus: 'This Soma, oh immortal one, takes the place of a horse for thee.' ... There cannot be any doubt about the meaning of *Rigv.* VI, 37, 1-3. The Hari which are yoked to bring Indra hither (v. 1) are the same as those which 'are purified in the vat' (v. 2). ... Perhaps the last part of v. 5 has to be understood in the sense that Indra relishes them 'with his cheeks (or with his

with whom he stayed, Kutsa, *Rigveda's* Egil, places lightning in the hand of Indra, who then ventures out to battle against demons.

108) In character and temperament, Thor and Indra are completely like one another: humanitarian, generous, easily roused and quickly calmed again, basically good-natured, finding pleasure in mead and song. From the standpoint of human psychology, it is extremely noteworthy that, in his moral interpretation, this god (Thor-Indra), who in the majority of his adventures is a creation of the Proto-Indo-European era, or in any case, of a time when the Germanic tribes were still closely associated with the Indo-Iranian tribes, unites powerful strength and unconquered heroic courage with kindness and benevolence. Indra is a defender of man, invoked during war and peace, the pious fatherly friend, savior and liberator, the defender and helper of the weak. Thor is the defender of Midgard,⁴⁸ and also the friend of men (*vinr verliða*, *Hymiskviða* 11).⁴⁹ He is the chivalrous hero who even in the midst of his wrath will listen to a mortal enemy's appeal not to slay him weaponless (the *Prose Edda's* narrative about Hrungnir). When, through indiscretion, Thjalfi harms one of Thor's draught-animals — which from a mythological standpoint is a detriment to world-order — Thor flares up in anger, but is calmed by prayers for forgiveness, adopts the transgressor as his foster son, places the boy by his side in his thunder wagon, and raises him to be a hero. To repay good gifts with evil is an abomination he hates (*Hárbarðsljóð* 21). He abhors deception and lies (*Hárbarðsljóð* 37).⁵⁰ In him, the hard toiling thrall has a divine friend who repays his labor with bliss after death (*Hárbarðsljóð* 24). In *Hárbarðsljóð*, *Þrymskviða*, *Hymiskviða*, and other places, he is depicted in a manner that casts a light of unique noble naivety over his powerful personality. His wrath can be disarmed not only by prayer, but also by witty or well-placed words (*Hárbarðsljóð* 45), which ought to be connected with his love of poetry, an art that he himself may have practiced to judge by the double-meaning of his byname *Ásabragr*.⁵¹

109) Odin and Thor were the gods that the Teutons especially invoked before a battle. The *Rigveda*-Aryans at such times called Vâju and Indra, in particular the latter (*Rigv.* VI, 23, 2; IV, 24, 6; VIII 69, 6; VI, 46, 8 and many other places). Indra then fights on Vâju's behalf, so to speak (see above).

110) Thor's oldest weapon is made of stone. The name itself says so, *hamarr*, and this is confirmed by the folk-idea of the lightning bolt as a stone-wedge. Likewise, Indra's oldest weapon was made of stone; it is called the "celestial stone" (*Rigv.* II, 30, 5) and is said to be "four-edged" (*Rigv.* IV, 22, 1, 2). This "four-edged" weapon has its symbol in the swastika, a figure that is rediscovered in the realm of Germanic memory and therefore must have derived from the Proto-Indo-European era.

jaws? *sipra*)' in a word, that he swallows the two Haris which are supposed to carry him. ["Borne onward by the long-maned Steeds who stretch themselves as 'twere for food, The God who wears the helm defends them with his jaws," Griffith tr.].

⁴⁸ In *Völuspá* 57 as *Miðgarðs véurr*. *Véurr* "defender" (from *Vé*, a sacred place), as a name for Thor occurs in *Hymiskviða* 2, 17, and 21. The forms *Véuðr* and *Harðvéurr* are found among Thor-names in the *þular* (*Skáldskaparmál* 75).

⁴⁹ Thor is also called *yta sinnir* "helper of men" (*Þórsdrápa* 9), and *sá er öldum bergr* "he who protects men" (*Hymiskviða* 22), cp. *Veratýr* "god of men," a name for Odin in *Grímnismál* 3. Odin is also called *skatna vinr*, "men's friend," in *Háleygjatal* 3.

⁵⁰ The correct reference is verse 47, in which Thor threatens to punish Harbard for his glibness with a blow from his hammer.

⁵¹ *bragr* can refer to "chief" or "poetry."

111) The name Thor (*Þórr*) means "Thunderer" (compare Anglo-Saxon *þunor*, English *thunder*, Old High German *donar*, Latin *tonitrus*) and is related to Sanskrit *tan*, *tanyati*, to thunder. The name is an ancient epithet that is added to Indra's weapon and certainly was carried by Indra himself. Thor's byname *Einriði*, *Eindriði* (*Prose Edda*, *Skáldskaparmál* 17 in a verse, and *Skáldskaparmál* 75) can only be explained with difficulty by the Old Norse store of words; any attempt that is made, moreover, smacks of folk-etymology and in reference to the epic has led to excessive results. (It should mean "the one who travels alone," while the myths allow him to travel in company and even have Thjalfi and Roskva on his wagon). In this byname, perhaps we have a distorted reverberation of Indra, although the etymological phonetic correspondence is not as great as the phonetic similarity.

One of the designations of Indra's weapon is *vadha* or *vadhar*, to which Delbrück⁵² refers the German *Wetter*, the Old Norse *veðr*. He thinks that when the Indo-European languages divided, only the meaning, thunderbolt, was attached to the root *vadh*. The idea was later expanded to include storm and weather.

30.

Indra's Protégés and Comrades a) Kutsa-Egil.

112) Indra has an oft mentioned friend, Kutsa, who belongs to the class of beings that correspond to the Norse *alfar* (elves), *Rigveda's* Angiras and Ribhus. With his wife, who is the "right-minded housewife" (*Rigv.* IV, 16, 10), and his son, who is his "darling," his "calf" (*Rigv.* X, 105, 11), and with relatives and comrades who are designated as Kutsas, after him (*Rigv.* VII, 25, 5), Kutsa lives in "a house," an estate situated, as its context demonstrates, high up in the North by the river Rasâ, which divides the Vedic Jötunheim from the world ruled by the gods. He has demon-giants as neighbors. He is in constant conflict with Dasyus and Çushnas and is Indra's ally in the war against them. Thus, there can be no doubt that the purpose of his dwelling there is to guard against the attacks of giants. Kutsa's estate is situated so that Indra on his journeys to the land of demons can be taken in by him as his guest (*Rigv.* V, 29, 9; IV, 16, 10; VI, 26, 3). And at least on one occasion, Çushna and the Dasyus had caused Kutsa such distress that Indra had to rush in his thunder wagon to Kutsa's home and to its owner's rescue (*Rigv.* V, 29, 9).

When Indra rests in Kutsa's home, he does so happily. The "youthful," "shining" Kutsa (*Rigv.* I, 63, 33) is his darling (I, 175, 5)⁵³ and provides him copious drink. Most certainly, the drink represents soma-mead because the word that signifies the drink also signifies a sacrificial act (V, 29, 9). The Kutsas, who are bards and warriors simultaneously, raise hymns to Indra, prayers for dominance in feuds with the Dasyus and for "god-sent victory" (VII, 25, 5). Thus, while the evening is passed with song and mead, the host and his divine guest seem so like one another, that "the wise housewife" has difficulty distinguishing them (IV, 16, 10). Kutsa's estate is Indra's night-lodging when he is on his way to the land of the demons. He visits this estate so often and likes it there so much that one of *Rigveda's* bards predicts that he probably will have stayed there, if he is delayed in coming to the offering that mankind prepares for him, (X, 38,

⁵² Berthold Delbrück (1842-1922), professor of Sanskrit and comparative linguistics at the University of Jena, Germany.

⁵³ The references here should read *Rigv.* I, 63, 3 and I, 174, 5, cp. Bergaigne II, 333-338, "Kutsa, Enemy of Çushna."

5).⁵⁴ At dawn, he departs to battle demons, often accompanied by Kutsa and the Kutsas; it is at dawn, in Kutsa's company and for his safety, that Indra attacks and kills Çushna (IV, 16, 12; I, 63, 3; I, 121, 9 and many other places).

As already pointed out, Indra is typically on foot when he harries giants and fights them. Thus it follows that it is in Kutsa's fortress that Indra's draught-animals are unharnessed from the wagon; it is there too that these draught-animals are eaten and where they rise up again (*Rigv.* I, 63, 2, 3; compare Bergaigne II, 256).⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it happens that Indra leaves Kutsa's dwelling in a wagon to drive into battle. When he offers his ward a place in the wagon, Kutsa passes the lightning to him, takes the reins and serves as Indra's driver (V, 29, 9; V, 31, 7, 8; II, 19, 6; VI, 20, 5; V, 31, 9).

In Germanic mythology, Thor, like Indra, has a night's lodging situated between Asgard and the Elivogar. This lodging is the fortress of Egil-Örvandil located by the waters just named (See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology* I, no. 108). Egil-Örvandil has the Elivogar and the coasts of Jötunheim as the scene of action for his exploits during the time when he is the gods' friend, Midgard's defender, and the giants' opponent. Among the gods, Thor primarily is his friend. When Thor proceeds from Asgard to Jötunheim, he drives the first part of the way by wagon, the part that lies between Asgard and the Elivogar. According to *Hymiskviða* this takes one day's journey. When he arrives at Egil's fortress, he is welcomed, eats there, and stays overnight. The horn-proud draught animals are entrusted to Egil's care, or they are eaten as the evening meal and resurrected the next morning (*Hymiskviða* 7, 37, 38; *Prose Edda*, *Gylfaginning* 48). "The wise housewife" beside the Germanic Kutsa is Groa, the dis of vegetation. She is Thor's friend and stays in Asgard with Thor when Egil is out on war-jaunts (*Prose Edda*, *Skáldskaparmál* 17). Egil's fortress, like that of Kutsa, houses a troop of brave warriors led by Thor and his foster son, Thjalfi, who march with them into Jötunheim and battle the giants. (*Pórsdrápa*; see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 114). These journeys are made by Thor on foot, thus he wades through the Elivogar.

113) Of the giants or demons that Kutsa fights, Çusha is the most dangerous. Çushna is "the dehydrator" and in *Rigveda* bears the epithet "crop-hater," "the devourer," "he who causes bad harvests" (*kuyava*).⁵⁶ He is the destroyer of vegetation and crops, and Kutsa, his mortal enemy, is their defender. In Germanic mythology, Egil corresponds to Kutsa. Egil, as I mentioned, is married to *Gróa*, whose name states that she is a dis of vegetation. With certainty, it can be assumed that Egil, like Kutsa, rides in the wagon of the lightning-god, Midgard's defender; admittedly, this is not expressly stated, instead it says that his foster children, Thjalfi and Röskva drive with Thor in the thunder chariot.

114) Kutsa's wife is "right-minded" and "wise," or according to Abel Bergaigne's deeper penetrating translation: "knowledgeable of law." Bergaigne (II, 210-270) has conducted a thorough investigation of the concept of law in *Rigveda*, including the meaning of the words *dháman*, *dharman*, *rita* and *vrata*, with which this concept is expressed there. At the same time, the word designates the laws of nature, the worship service (the offering and the sacred songs), and morality. Knowledgeable in law indicates one who knows nature's powers as well as the hymns, prayers, and offerings that influence them, and one who knows his duty towards the gods and their kind. Thus, in the Vedic hymns, Kutsa's wife is known for this. In the Germanic myth, Groa is not only a tender wife (*Skáldskaparmál* 17) and a loving mother (*Gróugaldur*), but also

⁵⁴ "Release thyself from Kutsa and come hither." [Griffith tr.].

⁵⁵ See above, no. 107.

⁵⁶ As in *Rigv.* IV, 16, 12: "foe of harvests" [Griffith tr.].

an excellent authority on good and luck-bringing galder songs that influence natural phenomena, cure affliction, and attune the heart to kindness and gentleness (*Skáldskaparmál* 17; *Gróugaldur* 5-15). In both *Rigveda* and in the Norse sources, the wives of Egil and Kutsa consequently bear the same characteristic of being "law-knowledgeable."

115) More than once, Kutsa has floated in mortal danger out onto the waters and been rescued from death in the depths partially by Indra (*Rigv.* I, 106, 6), and partially by the noble twin-gods the Asvins (the horse-men, I, 112, 9, 23; X, 40, 6). The same is said in the Norse documents regarding Örvandil-Egil. Thor carries the frost-bitten hero once in his knapsack over the Elivogar (*Skáldskaparmál* 17) and once on his shoulders when magical whirlpools threatened him and his men with ruin (*Pórsdrápa*). And, as Thor in *Pórsdrápa* seeks a ford for Egil's warriors, Indra in *Rigveda* seeks a ford and "calm water" for the heroes, of which at least one is mentioned as being by the side of Kutsa (*Rigv.* V, 31, 8; I, 174, 9; VI, 20, 12; IV, 30, 17; I, 12, 23) and must have been among the inhabitants of his fortress and a member of his war-party.

116) Kutsa wields a weapon of which he is a master or that is so characteristic of him that it is called *kutsya*, after his name (*Rigv.* IV, 16, 12). We are not directly told what type of weapon it is, but one learns it through a comparison of passages. Specifically, when Kutsa mounts Indra's wagon as the driver, he not only has to tend the reins, but also the switch and prod (*Rigv.* IV, 16, 11) with which he urges the Haris (the red-brown draught animals), and thus his position as driver prevents him from using his *kutsya*. Then, Indra uses it in his place (*Rigv.* IV, 16, 12). But Indra in his battles only uses two types of weapons: the lightning-wedge, which he owns and which is his characteristic weapon, and, as an exception, the bow. Indra is mentioned as shooting a bow in *Rigv.* VIII, 66, 11; X, 103, 3; VIII, 82, 1; VIII, 85, 2. The *kutsya* must thus be a bow and Kutsa an archer. As is well-known, Egil-Örvandil is the Germanic myths' famous archer.⁵⁷

117) Kutsa is in the closest connection with two other heroes: Âyu and Atithigva. Âyu, of which I have already spoken above, is one of the Vedic myths' foremost nature-artisans and smiths. He is the most famous of the clever smiths, the Ribhus. (See below). His name, preserved through time, is carried in the form Ajo by the Germanic master-smith Völund, as I demonstrated in the first volume of this work (no. 109). Egil stands in the same connection to Völund as Kutsa stands to Âyu.

118) An enormous change occurs in the fates of Âyu, Kutsa, and Atithigva. They, who previously were the gods', and especially Indra's, trusted friends and enjoyed his favor, become the gods' embittered foes and Indra drives to battle against them. I shall return to this crisis in the Vedic mythology's epic below, while only pointing out here that the same change occurred in the fates of Völund's brothers', Egil and Slagfin. From being the gods' friends, they become the most dangerous foes of the gods and the world. (See the treatise on the Ivaldi Sons in *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 96 ff.).

31.

Indra's Protégés and Comrades b) Pushan-Thjalfi.

119) Before the cultivation of seed and arable land among the Indo-European tribes had risen to such significance that this source of nourishment required representation by a patron of divine birth with the high divine rank that Frey occupies in the Germanic Olympus, the rural work that existed —mainly cattle-tending, the day's primary industry— had its representative not

⁵⁷ *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 107.

in a more imminent divinity, but in a hero. This hero, to use an expression applied to him in *Rigveda*, was "higher than human beings, and fairly like the gods." (VI, 48, 19).⁵⁸ Among the *Rigveda*-Aryans, he became the favorite of Indra and, among the Teutons, of Thor. Under Indra-Thor's protection, he rose in respect. Among the Teutons, he acquired a prominent place in the myths, while among the *Rigveda*-Aryans, he was honored with hymns, although fairly few in *Rigveda*, and a religious ceremony that allowed him divine rank, yet indicated a position lower than other gods. However, he evidently was a favorite character in the imagination of the Indus tribes as well as the Germanic and, among the former, a subject of songs of praise, prayers, and jest at the same time. Because cattle-tending at the time essentially required walking from one grass-rich tract to another, seeking new pastures for the growing herds, and because these wanderings could result in conquest of new territory or the colonization of previously unoccupied plains and the founding of new settlements, the same hero among the Teutons as well as the *Rigveda*-Aryans became the defender of migrants and colonizers and, particularly in Germanic mythology, the model for settlers. In *Rigveda*, he is named Pushan, "the nourisher," "he who acquires the nourishing substance"; among the Teutons, he is named Thjalfi and (in Latinized name forms) Lamicho, Lamissio.

120) According to two different mythic sources, Thjalfi was a foundling adopted into Egil's house. *Göngu-Hrólfs Saga* ch. 2 says that Groa found a boy in a water-hole and raised him with her own son. *The History of the Langobards* ch. 15 says that Agelmund (Egil) had a foster son, Lamicho or Lamissio, whom he had found in a dam and compassionately adopted. The name Lamissio is explained by Paulus Diaconus [Paul the Deacon], who says that the boy received it because he was adopted from out of a dam or a dyke, "which in their (the Langobards') tongue was called *lama*" (compare *lehm*, slimy fluid, Anglo-Saxon *lâm*, Old High German *leim*, clay, muck.). I have previously pointed out (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 108) that the name Thjalfi (*Pjálfi*) refers to a similar concept because it is related to the English *delve*, dike, dam, gathering of waters, mud-hole and *delven* to dig.⁵⁹

Pushan, like Thjalfi, is a foundling. He is found in a *vavri* (*Rigv.* X, 5, 5),⁶⁰ i.e. something that wraps around him. What this is is not stated but it says in another place that he found "a path that goes from the earth to the heavens" and "from the heavens to the earth" (*Rigv.* X, 17, 6). Perhaps it means the way of water, which evaporates and rises into the heavens and comes down to earth again as rain; the Vedic bards liked to use paraphrases of this type. In any case, both were found as children and raised by someone other than their parents.

121) Thjalfi becomes Thor's favorite; Pushan becomes Indra's favorite. One, like the other, accompanies Midgard's defender on his campaigns against the giants. In *Pórsdrápa*, Thjalfi follows his patron on a journey to Geirröð's, where he distinguishes himself for courage and speed. In *Hárbarðsljóð*, he and Thor fight against female berserkers on Hlészey. In the *Prose Edda*, he follows Thor on his journey to "Utgard-Loki" (Fjalar) and fights by his patron's side at Hrungrnir's gard against the muck-giant, while Thor battles Hrungrnir. Pushan is Indra's "friend" and "ally," who accompanies him when he fights the Vritras (*Rigv.* VI, 56, 2) and when he liberates the heavenly waters from the giant-world (VI, 57, 4). Like Indra, he battles *Panís* and recovers the celestial cows that they have stolen. The myths describe him as so lively that,

⁵⁸ Griffith translation: "For thou art high above mankind, in glory equal to the Gods."

⁵⁹ According to J. R. Clark Hall's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, *delf*, the word from which the later "delve" is derived means "digging, excavation; what is dug: trench, quarry, canal."

⁶⁰ Griffith: "He, born of old, in middle air hath halted, and sought and found the covering robe of Pushan."

although he is not a warrior by trade but a shepherd and a migration leader, he too is invoked for help in battle (*Rigv.* VI, 48, 19; VI, 53).

122) During a visit that Loki makes to Egil's gard while Thor's goats are present there, the goats are slaughtered and Loki tricks Thjalfi, who was then a boy, into cracking open one of the leg-bones in order to get at the sweet marrow. The following morning, as Thor leaves the gard driving behind his goat-team, he discovers that one of them is lame. That a similar myth was also found among the *Veda*-Aryans is clear from the sacrificial-formula in *Atharvaveda* IX, 5, which says: "He (who sacrifices a goat) shall not break his bones, he shall not suck out the marrow, he shall take the whole bone and contribute to him piece by piece; because this is his (the goat's) figure and his figure he (the sacrificer) provides to him (the goat) again" (provided that the sacrificer specifically does not break this rule).⁶¹

After Pushan becomes Indra's favorite and his battle-comrade, he drives behind a goat-team, while Indra himself drives behind red-brown horses with peacock-tails. *Rigv.* VI, 55, 4—6: "We will praise Pushan, whose horses are goats, to him, who is his sister's lover. Forth should the courageous goats leap and convey Pushan on the wagon, to him who is the joy of human beings." *Rigv.* X, 26, 8: "You, the unafraid Pushan, friend of all the needy, may goats bring the wagon's cart-pole hither." There is reason to assume that Pushan received his goat-span from Indra, and that the latter received his team of horses with peacock-tails in the myths, before the ancestors of the *Veda*-Aryans came to the Indus valley. That Indra drove goats, before his "Haris" were transformed into horses, seems evident by ceremonies within the sacrifices that are devoted to him, in which the goats are designated as those, "that went before the horses," and led the way before them. Compare *Rigv.* VII, 18, 17, where it is stated that "Indra has conquered the lioness with goats," an expression which, as Bergaigne points out, contains the idea that Indra has conquered the strong with the weak, but which surely would not have been chosen for the purpose, if it did not refer back to a mythic event in which goats played a role in Indra's victory. In addition to this, Indra does not receive his horses until a relatively late time when the Ribhus send them to him (see below). Prior to this, he must have had another team.

123) *Gylfaginning* 44 says that Thjalfi had a sister, Röskva, who, along with her brother, was adopted by Thor as a servant and companion, *ok fylgja þau honom jafnan síðan*.⁶² Pushan has a sister (*Rigv.* VI, 55, 4-5), who occupies a place with him in the myth about Indra.⁶³ A comparison among different places in *Rigveda* (VI, 55, 5; I, 82, 6; X, 102, 2, 5, 8, 9) produces the result that she was intimately associated with Indra, in whose soma-feast, moreover, she took part with her brother and that, in Indra's battles, she rode on his wagon, on those occasions when Pushan held Kutsa's place as wagon-driver.

Thjalfi has a son who is married to a light-dis. In the introduction to the *Gotland Laws*, the son's wife is called White-star.⁶⁴ *Rigveda* IV, 58, 4⁶⁵ says that the gods gave Pushan as a bridegroom to a *sûryâ*, a light-dis.

⁶¹ This occurs in verses 23 and 24 of a goat offering there: "He should not split its bones; he should not suck out its marrow; taking it all together, he should cause it to enter here and there. This and this verily becomes its form; therewith one makes it come together; food, greatness, refreshment it yields to him who gives a goat with five rice-dishes, with the light of sacrificial gifts." [Whitney tr.].

⁶² "and they have attended him ever since." [Faulkes tr.].

⁶³ Cp. Bergaigne II, 427-429.

⁶⁴ "*Huita Stierna*" in Old Gutnish (the dialect of Gotland in texts from the 13th century). Her husband, Thjalfi's son, is named Hafði. They, in turn, have three sons who are the legendary ancestors of the Gotlanders. *The History of the Gotlanders* (*Gutasaga* or *Gutarnas Krönik*) survives in a single manuscript, *Codex Holm. B 64* (c. 1350), housed in the Swedish Royal Library in Stockholm along with the Gotland Laws (*Gutalag*).

124) An older form of the name Röska is Vröska (*vreiðr stóð Vrösku bróðir, Þórdrápa*).⁶⁶ Vröska is related to *röskvask*, to grow up, to mature, with the Gothic *wrisquan*, *ga-wrisqan*, to bring fruit, and with Sanskrit *vriksha*, trees. The name of Thjalfi's sister thus refers to her position in reference to the nature-myth. This sibling pair, who are under the protection of Thor, the defender of Midgard, and often accompany him on his journeys, are the geniuses of pastureland and farmland, representatives of cattle-herding and the cultivation of the earth, and as such older in the Germanic mythology than the siblings Frey and Freyja, who first appeared as divinities of fertility and fecundity in a later period of development, when farming came to greater importance (see further). If I do not heed the fear of symbolic interpretations, because their correctness when not immediately evident proves nothing and therefore only exceptionally fall into the realm of science, I would want to see symbols of the farmer in the myth of Thjalfi's birth in an irrigation trench or earthen dike and in his battle with the mud-giant⁶⁷ — perhaps even in his assignment to carry Thor's knapsack, which a giant, hostile-to-vegetation, tied so tightly that Thor, the friend of vegetation, vainly attempted to open. I leave aside the possible symbolism in these myths, as well as the idea association between the names *Þjálfi* and *Delven*, to dig, which settlers referred to as the genius of farmers. In the epic mythology, Thjalfi is foremost a colonist, a leader of throngs of Germanic migrants who seek new dwelling places; he battles sorcerous giant-beings, who remain on the northern islands after the fimbul-winter and want to stop men from taking possession of them. Thjalfi is a discoverer of new lands who sails around islands (*Kormak* 19, 3; *Prose Edda* I, 496)⁶⁸ and makes them habitable for settlers. It is from this standpoint one should view his battle on Hlésey with the furious berserker-women and his colonization of Gotland, which prior to this was ruled by sorcery, which made the island remain above water at night, but sink in the morning. Thjalfi fixed the island by carrying fire around it; he populated it and became the progenitor of a host of migrants from the North, who spread themselves over the southern lands (leading to the Gothic race). According to the *History of the Langobards* ch. 15, Thjalfi-Lamissio, one of the leaders of the Langobardian migration from the North, takes part in this victory, fighting and swimming in rivers against the bravest "amazons," who with other "amazons" want to stop the migrants in their path. (Compare *Hárbarðsljóð* 37's expression *brúðir bersekja*, "berserker-women").⁶⁹ After his foster father Agelmund's (Egil's) death, he becomes the Langobards' first king. It is a point worthy of noting

⁶⁵ This reference should correctly read: *Rígv.* VI, 58, 4.

⁶⁶ The following half-stanza by Eilífr, the author of *Þórdrápa*, appears in *Skáldskaparmál* 11: *Reiðr stóð Röska bróðir, / vá gagn faðir Magna; / Skelfr-a Þórs ne Þjálf-a / þróttar steinn við ótta*. Except for the tense of the verb, lines 3-4 are identical to *Þórdrápa* 10:7-8, thus it has been suggested that these lines originally formed a refrain to the poem. The rules of alliteration require the archaic forms *vreiðr* and *Vrösku*. The line in question reads "Vröska's brother (*Þjálf*) stood angry." [Eysteinn Björnsson tr.].

⁶⁷ [Rydberg's Footnote]: To judge by his name *Mökkur-kálf*, cloud-calf, he was originally a young-bull of the same type as those so often mentioned in *Rigveda*, where the rain-giving clouds are likened to bulls and cows, whose function to fertilize the earth is so often compared with the same process of nature that occurs with *Mökkur-kálf*, when the sight of Thor grips him with fear [i.e. 'wetting' his pants].

⁶⁸ *Kormak's Saga*, chapter 19, verse 3 (56), lines 3-4 read: *Allt gjálfr eyja þjálf út líðr í stað víðis*. In earlier translations the word *þjálf* was taken as a proper name, such as in the translation of W. G. Collingwood and J. Stefansson (1901), "But all the din of the isles that the Delver [Thjalfi] heaves in foam In the draught of the undertow glides out to the sea-gods' home," while modern translations, such as that of Rory McTurk (1997), do not: "to the waters domain glides the din of the sea that encircles islands." *Prose Edda* I, 496 likely refers to the *þular* that accompany Snorri's *Edda*. No modern editions take this as a reference to Thjalfi.

⁶⁹ With an analogy to the expression *Hlés brúðir* (Hlé's brides) in *Heiðreks saga* 10, John McKinnell identifies the "berserker brides" with "stormy waves." *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend*, 2005 (p. 110).

that Germanic mythology allows Thjalfi, the hero of farmers and settlers, to be raised by Egil, the hero of hunters, in the company of Thor.

Pushan, like Thjalfi, is the companion and protector of Indo-European tribes and clans when they venture forth to find new dwellings. *Rigv.* I, 42: "Pushan removes obstacles and dangers on our way! Fight successfully before us! The evil, misfortune-bringing wolf, the harm-loving greedy highwaymen, drive them away from our road! We claim the favor that you showed our fathers. Show us the path to easily win riches, you the god with the golden pick! Defend us against ambush and persecution. Provide us passable paths. Lead us to lush pastures. Do not allow the heat to slow our steps too quickly! Help us and provide us rich, powerful food for our bodies! We do not ridicule Pushan; we celebrate him with hymns and request kind deeds of the miracle-worker." Thus runs one of the songs that the Aryan tribes on their migrations devoted to this hero. He is the "lord of migrants"; he confers "cattle, horses, and gear" on them, of which he sends his finest. He shows migrants the home where they shall dwell and says: "This is it" (*Rigv.* VI, 54, 2). He knows all of earth's fields; "He shall convey us on the least dangerous ways. Knowledgeable of paths, he shall go attentively before us," (*Rigv.* X, 17, 5). And when the migrants become settled again, and crops grow on their farmland, it is he who gives it its power and essence, he "the friend of foodstuff" (X, 26, 3, 7), who works barley-fields himself with oxen (I, 23, 15). He "weaves the sheep's clothing and makes their coats shine,"⁷⁰ guards the cattle and defends the horses, so that none of them goes astray or falls down into mountain crevices. — And at the same time, he is a brave warrior who proves his never yielding courage by Indra's side.

The Germanic tribes have conceptualized Thjalfi-Lamissio similarly. On their migrations, he walked before them unvexed, fighting danger along the way. It is on the basis of an ancient inherited story that the *Prose Edda* says that Thjalfi was the fastest of all runners (*allra manna fóthvatastr*), that *Þórsdrápa* allows him to wade through the whirling currents with an undismayed heart, and that the *History of the Langobards* lets him fight with giantesses in a river which blocks the way for migrant bands.

Pushan's weapon is the cattle prod (*āstra*) with which one drives oxen, or a pick or an axe. The weapon is a tool of the farmer and the settler at the same time. The offering that one devoted to him was *karambha*, a gruel, whose essential ingredient consisted of barleycorn and, in later times, sesame seed. For this reason, Pushan is called "the gruel-eater." The Vedic Aryans must have regarded themselves as on sufficiently familiar footing with him to joke at his expense — when they did not believe themselves to be in need of his immediate help. The *karambha*, however, was ennobled, because Indra also enjoyed it with the offering of the Soma-drink. "Because Indra is Pushan's best friend, we have prepared a *karambha* for him (Indra)." (*Rigv.* III, 52, 1; VIII, 91, 2).⁷¹

125) Thjalfi "fixes" Gotland with the carrying of fire. This was a practice also current among the Indo-European Indus-tribes. According to the Brahmanic story of the *Veda*-Aryans' migration toward the east, translated by Albrecht Weber (*Indische Streifen* pp. 11-12), they purified the land they had taken possession of by carrying friction-fire around it. It states there

⁷⁰ *Rigv.* X, 26, 6.

⁷¹ In the first verse, sacrificial grain cake is mentioned in 6 of its 7 verses as an offering to Pushan and his friend Indra. The second reference, a short invocation of Agni, is erroneous. The correct reference is likely VIII, 31, 2. Sacrificial cakes appear in many places in *Rigveda*, and are also found in Scandinavia as Yule cakes, which are baked in the shape of a boar. On the significance of sacrificial cakes, see George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* ch. 48, no. 9 "The Corn Spirit as a Pig (Boar or Sow)" and Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, ch. 38, "Blessing the Cornfield, Plough-cake."

(v. 15): "This land was formerly unsettled and was entirely buoyant (had an unstable foundation) before it was burnt (sanctified) by Agni Vaiçvânara."⁷² Iceland's settlers took the ancient custom along with them.⁷³

⁷² *dies (Land) war (vormals) etwas sehr unwohnbar, etwas sehr flüchtig (unsicheren Bodens?), weil es nicht von dem Agni Vaiçvânara genossen (geheiligt) war. Indische Streifen*, p. 12.

⁷³ As in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, ch. 4: *Eftir það fór Þórólfur eldi um landnám sitt*, "Then Thorolf carried fire around his land-claim."; *Landnámabók*, ch. 60: *En meðan Sæmundur fór eldi um landnám sitt*, "While Saemund was carrying fire around his land claim", ch. 90: *það land fór Jörundur eldi og lagði til hofs*, "Jorund carried fire around it," (a common translation of the phrase is "to fare with fire around").