

A Hittite text describes the soul’s journey after death¹ and mentions two different paths that the soul may follow:

(cf. aussi Watkins 1995, pp. 284-291)

KUB xliii 60 i 26-36

[/is]tanz-wa-kan uris /ist/anz-wa-kan uris kuel-wa-kan /ist/anz uris

tandukis-wa-kan /ist/anz uris nu kuin /pals/an harzi

uran /pals/an harzi marnuwalan /pals/an harzi

s-an-z-apa /pal/si LÚ.KASKAL-las handāit

suppi ^dUTU-as /ist/anz /siu/nan /ist/anz

dandukisnas kuwat arusan paimi

dāsnatan paimi /hā/p[a mūhhi luli[ya] mūhhi

tenawa-san paim[i l]ē pai[mi...]

tēnawas idālus /pal[?]/s[a] wellawa li[

“The soul is great, the soul is great – ‘whose soul is great?’

– ‘the mortal soul is great’ – ‘which path does it have?’

– ‘it has the great path, it has the path of disappearance’.

The traveler prepared it for the road. It is something sacred, the Sun’s soul, the gods’ soul.

– ‘why should I go astray as a mortal? Shall I go to the *Dāsnata*, shall I fall into the river, shall I fall into the pond? Shall I go to the *Tēnawa*? May I not go (there)! The *Tēnawa* is evil [...] not to the Meadow’.

While the etymology of *tēnawa*- remains more difficult to research², *dāsnata*- can be broken down into two elements: the first one is found in HierLuw. *daskwira*- ‘earth’ < *das*- + *kwira*- ‘field (parcel)’, where *das*- means something like ‘rich in, full of, plenty of’ or ‘dense with’, and may descend from the same *dens- as Lt. *dēnsus* ‘dense’ < *denso- (and perhaps Gr. *dasús* if from *d̥nsú-) – and possibly Ht. *dassus* ‘strong’ if from *dēnsu-. The second one, *-nata*-,

¹ See WATKINS 1995, pp. 284-291, ARCHI 2007.

² Phonetically (and if Proto-Indo-European), it could be derived from an u-stem such as *d^hénu-, coll. *d^hénōu – comp. OHG *tanna* ‘fir tree’ and Ved. *dhānuṣ*- ‘bow’, or *ténu-, G *t̥n̥éus ‘extended, thin’ (Ved. *tanú*-, MP *tanuk*, Gr. *tana(w)ós*, Lt. *tenuis*, OIr. *tanae*, W *tenau*, N *punnr*, OE *þynne* > E *thin*, Lv. *tievs*, OS. *tīnūkū*) or even *d^henw- ‘to flow’ (Ved. *dhānvati*, OPers. *danuvati* cognate with Lt. *fōns*).

immediately calls to mind Ht. *nāta*- ‘reed’ < PIE **nódo*- and its Luwian equivalent *nātatta*-, a variant of the more widespread **nedó*- found in Ved. *naḍá*-, Pers. *ney*, Arm. *net* (with a meaning ‘arrow’) and Lith. and Lv. *nendré* and *niedre*, respectively, < **ne*ⁿ*d*- + -*riyah*-. It is possible that *dāsnata*- shows the same e-grade (**déns*-*nedo*-) since the accent is on *dās*-.

The *dāsnata*- would then be a “place/area with plenty of / rich in reed”, i.e. a ‘reed bed’ or, in one word, a ‘roselière’ in French. Can we find a similar concept in other traditions and mythologies of Indo-European origin?

Two Latvian folk songs tell the story of someone looking for their mother who has “disappeared” – i.e. who is recently deceased – who then arrives at a REED BED where they meet the three Fates:

LD 5036-11

Nodziest manis uguntiņis, pazūd mana māmuliņa.

Māmuliņu meklēdama, ietecēju niedrājā.

Pa niedrāju tecēdama, uzgāj' zelta avotiņu.

Pie tā zelta avotiņa trīs jumpravas mazgājās.

Divas saka: Kur tu iesi? Trešā klātu aicināja.

Kura klātu aicināja, tā iedeva zīdautiņu,

Tā iedeva zīdautiņu, izrakstītu, nemazgātu.

Ai, mīļā jumpraviņa, kur es viņu izmazgāšu?

– Zelta upē lejiņā (...)

“My fire goes out, my mother disappears. While I was looking for Mother, I ran into a *reed bed*. Walking in the *reed bed*, I found a golden spring. Three maidens were bathing by that golden spring. Two of them say: ‘where are you going?’, the third one invited me to come near. The one who invited me gave me a silken handkerchief. She gave me an embroidered, unwashed silken handkerchief. ‘O dear maiden, where shall I wash it?’ – ‘By the golden river in the valley’.”

Not only the REED BED but also the Latvian golden SPRING (*zelta avotiņš*) and golden RIVER (*zelta upe*) parallel respectively the Hittite *luli*- – which can also mean ‘spring’ or ‘source’ – (semantically, in *luliya* mūhhi “shall I fall into the *pond*?”) and *hāpa*- (semantically AND etymologically, in *hāpa* mūhhi “shall I fall into the *river*?”).

The second song is practically identical, except for a few more informations given at the beginning of the song:

LD 4993-1

Apdziest mana uguntiņa, pazūd mana māmuliņa.

Ciemā uguni dabūju, māmuļiņas nedabūju.

Māmuļiņas meklēdama, ietecēju niedrienē (...)

“My fire goes out, my mother disappears. Fire I could get in the village but my mother I could not get. While I was looking for Mother, I ran into a *reed bed*.”

The extinction of the fire is connected to the mother’s disappearance because they both signify the death of something or someone, temporary or not. There is in these songs an implicit connection between the FIRE (uguntiņis/uguntiņa) and the REED BED (niedrājs/niedriene) that we find explicitly expressed in a Manichean Middle-Persian text – with a different word for ‘fire’ but a derivative of the same *nedó- > nay-:

AZ §70³ čīyōn ka ādur yazad andar ō nayestān ōftēd “the same way the *Fire*-god falls into a *reed bed*” (where is *disappears*),

and in Vedic – where the cognate *naḍá-* has been replaced with *vetasá-*⁴ ‘Calamus Rotang, rattan, cane, reed’ but where Ht. *hāpa-* and Lv. *upe* find their cognate again:

VS 17.6ab = ŚB 9.1.2.27b “You, come down onto Earth, into the *cane* (*vetasé*), into the *rivers*; O Agni, you are the *waters’* gall (ágne pittám apām asi)”.

Indeed, Fire and reed are both born from the same element; that’s why the same epithet applies to both: TS 5.3.12.2.6 *apsujó vetasáh* “the rattan cane is *born in the waters*” // RV 8.43.28ab “O Agni, whether you are born in the sky or *born in the waters* (*apsujáh*)”.⁵

Finally, the same *vetasá-* can be described as ‘golden’, be it amid streams or inside the Fire-god:

RV 4.58.5cd = VS 17.93b “I contemplate the streams of ghee; a *golden cane* (*hiranyáyah vetasáh*) stands in their midst”⁶ // VS 13.38b = ŚB 7.5.2.11b *hiranyáyo vetaso mādhye agneh* “the *golden cane* is in the middle of Agni”,

AV 10.7.41 “he who knows the *golden cane* (*vetasám hiranyáyam*) that stands in the flood (*salilē*) is the hidden Prajāpati”.

Going back to Latvian, the place where the Sun spends the night is on a rock⁷, and more precisely at the end of a GOLDEN REED:

³ Ayyāgar ī Zarērān, D. Monchi-Zadeh 1981, Die Geschichte Zarēr’s, Uppsala (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 4).

⁴ The reason for this replacement may be that *vetasá-* was considered more noble than *naḍá-* because the latter was often used in spells where it is crushed and smashed, and is sometimes the “magical equivalent” of the penis: AV 6.138.5 “as women split a reed (naḍám... bhindānti) with a stone to make a cushion, so do I split your genitals (bhinadmi te śépaḥ) on that female’s pubes”, comp. Luw. KUB ix 6+ iii 27ff “may they crush him off like *reeds* (nātatta), and may they smash his *testicles*” and Lv. LD 35732 “the *reed* broke off, and so did the wolf’s penis (nolūza niedre, vilkam pipelite)” – see Calin 2017, p. 181f.

⁵ comp. also Arm. Movsēs Xorenac’i I 31 “*flames* were rising from the *reed* and from the flames a handsome little boy arose”.

⁶ See Norelius 2016, pp. 42f, for further analysis. The “streams of ghee” and the ‘flood’ (*salilá-*) are the Milky Way, i.e. the “heavenly rivers” of the Night Sky.

⁷ *Akmens*, i.e. the Night Sky, see Calin 2017, pp. 189-191.

LD 33788, 33829-1,2,7,8

(...) kur Saulīte nakti gul: (...) *zelta niedres galiņā*,

“where the Sun sleeps at night: at the end of a *golden reed*”,

often preceded by *vidū jūras* “in the middle of the sea”, i.e. the mythical equivalent of the Vedic *salilá-* and “streams of ghee” mentioned above.

Bibliography

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