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PALICI - THE SICILIAN TWIN BROTHERS AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN MYTH ABOUT DIVINE TWINS

Abstract: The aim of our paper is to distinguish main elements of the Sicilian myth on Palici, which was partially transferred by the Greek and Latin authors. As it is well known, the Palici were the twin brothers, worshipped near Leontinoi in a volcanic area of the island. They demonstrate a number of features which connect them with the Vedic Aśvins, the Greek Dioscuri and the Baltic divine twins. Finally it is suggested that the ancient Sicilians preserved numerous motifs, traits and manifestations, which may be treated as straightforward reflexes of the old Indo-European myth on the divine twins.

The divine twins myth is thoroughly rooted in the beliefs of many nations that were separated from the primary Indo-European society. The divine twin brothers are very well attested in the oldest sources from the Mitanni country, in the sacred hymns of *Veda* and Old Iranian sources (*Avesta*), in the Latvian and Lithuanian folk songs and finally in the well-known ancient Greeks' mythology and in the Roman beliefs. Everywhere there, where the divine twin brothers appear, they preserved their own primitive character, which may be derived in a higher or lower degree from the Indo-European mythological and religious tradition. The myth in question was undoubtedly enriched by the believers through the next centuries, but we can easily notice some common features of the divine twins, which enable us to see the Indo-European source of the myth.

The importance of divine twins among the native gods in the ancient mythologies is beyond doubt. As is the fact that they were given precise competences, qualities and roles to fulfil. The similarities of characters, which occur in the legends about the deeds of the divine

twins, made scholars believe that there are common origins of these mythological plots¹.

Through the literature on the subject is abundant², we will start with putting forward basic analogies occurring in four variants of the myth about the divine twins taking into account the Greek, Indian, Roman and Baltic testimonies as the most abundant ones, which secularly preserved the character of the deities. Donald Ward and Michael Shapiro established the following working list of traits and functions that define Indo-European divine twinning as a whole (Roman numerals being used hereinafter as a shorthand designation of each category)³:

- I. Sons of the Sky God.
- II. Brothers of the Sun Maiden.
- III. Associated with Horses.
- IV. Dual Paternity.
- V. Saviours at Sea.
- VI. Astral Nature.
- VII. Magic Healers.
- VIII. Warriors and Providers of Divine Aid in Battle.
- IX. Divinities of Fertility.
- X. Associated with Swans (or Eagles).
- XI. Divinities of the Dance.
- XII. Closeness to Human Being.
- XIII. Protectors of the Oath.
- XIV. Assisting at Birth.
- XV. Founders of Cities.

¹ The similarities between the Vedic Aśvins and the Greek Dioscures were observed as early as in the second half of the 19th century, see e.g. В. Ф. Миллер, *Асвины-Диоскуры*, Москва 1876; Ch. Renel, *L'Évolution d'un mythe. Aśvins et Dioscures*, Paris 1896. See also S. F. Michalski, "Aśvins and Dioscures", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 14, 1960, fasc. 2, pp. 7–52; D. Dubuisson, "Les enjeux d'une exegese (Le mythe dioscurique indo-européen)", [in:] *Perspectives on Indo-European Language, Culture and Religion. Studies in Honor of Edgar C. Polomé*, vol. 2, Washington 1992, pp. 360–379.

² See S. O'Brien, "Divine Twins", [in:] *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, edited by J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams, London, Chicago 1997, pp. 161–165.

³ Cf. D. Ward, *The Divine Twins: An Indo-European Myth in Germanic Tradition*, Folklor Studies No. 19, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1968, pp. 9–29 (henceforth: *The Divine Twins*); M. Shapiro, "Neglected Evidence for Dioscurism (Divine Twinning) in the Old Slavic Pantheon", *Journal of the Indo-European Studies* 10:1–2, 1982, pp. 137–165, esp. 141 (henceforth: "Neglected Evidence").

We believe that two further features of the Indo-European Divine Twins should be here added, namely:

XVI. Strong Bonds of Brotherhood.

XVII. Individualization of the Twins.

The primary nature of the Indo-European Pair of the divine twins.

Although the testimonies of the myth are quite numerous and significant, they do not allow for a more precise reconstruction of the divine twins myth. However, by comparison of the parallel myths concerning this couple of gods we can find the most important motifs. We are able to distinguish as many as 18 common features:

0. *The divine and twin character* is the most popular motif of the Indo-European myth. The twins are never in antagonistic relation, however there can be some misunderstandings between them (e.g. the tragic final of Remus' disobedience against the Romulus' ban⁴).

I. All the twin pairs occur to be of the divine descent. Most folk traditions assume the divine twins to be *sons of the Indo-European Sky God*. Thus the Vedic Aśvins are the descendants of adored Heaven (*Divó nápātā*) and one of the brothers is called 'son of Sky-God' (*Divó putráḥ* – *RV* I 181, 4)⁵; the Greek twins have the common name of the Dioscuri (Greek Δίσκειροι was created by composing the earlier Διὸς κοῦροι < **Diwós kórwoi*, orig. 'children of Zeus, the Greek Sky-god'); Latvian brothers named *Dieva dēļi* and Lithuanian *Dievo sune-liai* are 'sons of the heavenly god'. Finally Romulus and Remus are believed to be sons of Mars. However, there is a strong evidence that the Italic divine twins are also called the sons of Jupiter (see two inscriptional dedications from Sulmona and Luco, respectively: Paelignian *Ioviois Puclois* dat. sg. 'to the sons of Jupiter', Marsian *Iovies Pucle[s 'id.']*⁶).

⁴ The myth about Remus and Romulus has the least in common with the Indo-European one. It is probably because of Remos whose name was best preserved at the Indians (*Rāmāḥ*) and Romans (*Remus*). The activity of Remus in the Latin legend was transformed to Romulus and Remus became his double. The myth about Romulus was certainly of later origin.

⁵ In the epic mythology, Vivásvat was believed to be the father of the Aśvins (in *RigVeda* once, *RV* X 17, 2), compare V. Machek, "Origin of the Aśvins", *Archiv Orientální* 14, 1943, pp. 413–419, esp. 414, fn. 2; A. A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, Varanasi, Delhi 1971, p. 42.

⁶ Cf. C. Letta, S. D'Amato, *Epigrafia della regione dei Marsi*, Milano 1975, pp. 181–182; R. Wallace, *The Sabellian languages*, Ann Arbor 1984, pp. 62, 77; J. Untermann, *Wörterbuch des Oskisch-Umbrischen*, Heidelberg 2000, pp. 599–600.

It is worth mentioning that there is a similarity not only of the inner form of the names ('sons of heaven' in all cases), but also of the etymology. In these two-piece compounds, preserved in Indian, Greek and Latvian, the name of main god Zeus was remained⁷. This principal god of the Indo-Europeans (called **Dyēus*) was believed to be the father of the divine twins, many other gods⁸, and even people. That is why he had a nickname **pātēr* 'father'. Compare the compound name **Dyēus pātēr* (literally 'Sky-god, the Father'), preserved in many different religious traditions, namely Vedic *Dyáuḥ pitā* in the beliefs of the ancient Indians, Ζεὺς πατήρ in the mythology of the Greeks, *Iūpiter* or *Diespater* (voc.) in the religion of the Romans, *Iuppater* in the Umbrian pantheon and finally Διεπάτωρ at the Epirotes⁹.

II. *The relation to the Sun Maiden* is the next motif in the divine twins' myth¹⁰. The Vedic *Aśvins* are associated with *Sūryā* – the Sun goddess; the Greek *Dioscuri* often occur with their adored sister *Helen*¹¹, they abduct and marry two sisters, *Hilaeira* ('Shining') and *Phoibē* ('Bright one'), who have obvious solar characteristics; the Latvian deities sue for the Sun's daughter's hand; finally, *Rea Silvia* is the mother of the Roman twins, *Remus* and *Romulus*.

III. *The connection of the divine twins with the horses* is noteworthy (this motif appears in every divine twins' myth, except that on *Romulus* and *Remus*). The Indian twins are called *Aśvins*, literally "who possess the horses" or "who are riding the horses" (the Old Indian name *Aśvinau* comes from *áśva-* m. 'a horse'). Their inseparable attribute is a car drawn by horses faster than thoughts. The Vedic

⁷ The Indo-European term **dyēu-*, gen. sg. **diwos* denoted originally 'bright heaven' and later it became the name of adored heaven, i.e. the sky-god, who became the most important in the Indo-European pantheon.

⁸ D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, pp. 10 and 95, fn. 15. Compare the latest literature about the Indo-European god of the bright heaven-Zeus as the father of all family of the gods, for ex. W. Euler, "Gab es eine indogermanische Gotterfamilie?", [in:] *Studien zum indogermanischen Wortschatz*, hrsg. von W. Meid, Innsbruck 1987, pp. 35–56; G. E. Dunkel, "Vater Himmels Gattin", *Die Sprache* 34:1, 1988–1990, pp. 1–26.

⁹ See J. Schindler's essay published by H. Schwabl, *Zeus*, München 1978, pp. 999–1001. For further information, see K. T. Witczak, "Two Bithynian Deities in the Old and New Phrygian Inscriptional Texts", *Folia Orientalia*, vol. 29, 1992–1993, *Studies in Memory of Andrzej Czapkiewicz* (2), p. 267; I. Kaczor, K. T. Witczak, "Linguistic Evidence for the Indo-European Pantheon", [in:] *Collectanea Philologica II in honorem Annae Mariae Komornicka*, edenda curaverunt J. Rybowska et K. T. Witczak, Łódź 1995, p. 265–278, esp. 269–270.

¹⁰ F. Chapoutier, *Des Dioscures au services d'une déesse*, Paris 1935.

¹¹ The name of *Helen* is connected with Indo-European **swel-* 'to be bright', from which also the Indo-European name for 'sun' (IE. **sawēl-*) was created.

brothers are often called the knights or those leading the steeds. Dioscuri are named in the Homeric hymns (XVII, 5; XXXIII, 18): ταχέων ἐπιβήτορες ἵππων 'the riders on the fast horses' (in *Ilias* III, 237 and in *Odyssey* XI, 300, one of them, namely Castor, is called ἵππόδαμος 'taming the horses'). The horse is also an important symbol in the cult of the Latvian twins. In one of the folk songs called *dainas* the divine twins occur as two horses: the first having a silver saddle, the second possessing a golden bridle. In another Latvian song grey horses, left in front of the house of the Sun, are mentioned, whereas one of the twins is suing for the Sun's daughter hand. The Lusitanian (or Hispano-Celtic) divine twins are named 'the sons [riding] on the horse' (Lusit. *Equeunubo* dat. pl. < **Ekwei sūnubhos*¹²).

IV. A universal feature of the folk myths is the belief that multiple birth is the result of *Double or Multiple Paternity*¹³. In the case of the divine twins, the belief of the Indo-European people in dual paternity is no exception. The divine twins are fathered by separate (divine or mortal) individuals and sometimes their genealogy is ambiguous. The Vedic Aśvins, though called generally *Divó nāpatā* ('two sons of Dyaus'), are also said to be the twin sons of a mortal called Vivasvat and of Tvashtar's daughter Saranyū (*RV* X 17.2). In a hymn of *RigVeda* (I 181.4) one of the Aśvins is said to be of divine birth and the other the son of a mortal. The Greek divine twins are born by Lede from two different fathers. Polydeukes is mentioned as the son of Zeus, while Castor is said to be born from Tyndareos, the King of Sparta and the mortal husband of Lede. In the Greek sources they are alternatively named *Dioskouroi* (Gk. Διὸς κοῦροι 'sons of Zeus') or *Tyndaridai* (Gk. Τυνδαρίδαι 'sons of Tyndareos')¹⁴. In the Italic mythology the divine twins are sons of Mars or of Jupiter. The most important consequence of dual paternity is that it gives rise to some differences in the nature, characterization and function of both the twins, though the differences need not be polar.

¹² This interpretation was suggested by Prof. Ignacy Ryszard Danko (University of Łódź) during our personal conversation. For the inscriptional evidence, see F. M. Marco Simón, "Deis Equeunu(bo)", [w:] *Pueblos, Lenguas y Escrituras en la Hispania Prerromana. Actas del VII Coloquio sobre Lenguas y Culturas Prerromanas de la Península Ibérica*, editades por F. Villar, Salamanca 1999, pp. 481–490; J. M. Blázquez Martínez, "Teónimos indígenas de Hispania: Addenda y Corrigenda", *Palaeohispanica* 1, 2001, pp. 63–85, esp. 73.

¹³ See D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, p. 4, 12–14, 20–24.

¹⁴ E. Robbins, "The Divine Twins in Early Greek Poetry", [in:] *Corolla Torontonensis. Studies in Honour of Ronald Morton Smith*, edited by E. Robbins and S. Sandahl, Toronto 1994, pp. 29–45, esp. 30–31.

V. The connection with the sea appears frequently in the preserved myths, as the divine twins are treated as *saviours at Sea*. The Aśvins save people's lives on the sea. The saving of *Bhujuūh*, the son of Tugra, is mentioned in sacred hymns of *RigVeda* as many as 24 times and it is treated as one of the most important achievements of Aśvins. The wonderful exploits, worked on the sea by Dioscuri, are described in the 33th Homeric hymn. The Greek divine twins are the patron deities of the sailors to whom they send favourable winds. They also save the sailors from shipwreck. The example of the connection between Latvian twins with the sea is a ritual boat made out of the apple-tree¹⁵. The Latvian God's sons, called *Dieva dēļi*, are also (like the Dioscuri) rescuers from the ocean, delivering the Sun's daughter or the Sun himself. Finally, Remus and Romulus in their infant age are left in a basket on the river-bank of Tiber.

VI. *The connection with the stars* should be also mentioned. The Aśvins are linked with the Charles's Wain, the always visible constellation in the clear sky. The Greek symbols of Dioscuri are two stars which were present in their activity on the sea¹⁶. Also in the Latvian songs there appears a motif of two fires or rather two lamps lit by the *Dieva dēļi*, who were waiting for the Sun's daughter. In the Latvian folk beliefs the morning star is said to have come to look at the Sun's daughter.

VII. *The healing ability* is a common feature of the Aśvins and Dioscuri. The Aśvins are called in *RigVeda* "the doctors philanthropists", "the divine doctors", "the doctors of all fractures"; they cured the broken leg of the divine mare *Viśpālā*¹⁷, whereas Dioscuri healed

¹⁵ Compare D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, p. 14; В. В. Иванов, "Отражение индоевропейской терминологии близнеца культа в балтийских языках", [in:] *Балтославянский Сборник*, Москва 1972, pp. 193–205, esp. 197 (henceforth: *Отражение*).

¹⁶ See A. B. Cook, *Zeus. A Study in Ancient Religion*, vol. 1, New York 1964 (second edition), pp. 760–775. At the beginning of the twentieth century, probably because of the influence of the school of solar mythology associated with Max Müller's theories, the Indo-European divine twins were explained as representing the Morning and the Evening Stars. See e.g. J. R. Harris, *The Cult of the Heavenly Twins*, Cambridge 1906.

¹⁷ The Hymns of *RigVeda* attest as many as six passages connected with *Viśpālā* (*RV* I 112, 10; 116, 15; 117, 11; 118, 8; 182, 1; X 39, 8). G. Dumézil, "Le curtus equus de la fête de Palès et la mutilation de la jument *Viśpālā*", *Eranos* 54, 1956, pp. 232–245, compared *Viś-pālā* of the Vedic Hymns with the Roman goddess *Pales*. This comparison depends not only on the phonetic similarities, but also on some formal analogies (e.g. the mythical mare *Viśpālā* is lame and her leg is broken, whereas – according to Propertius, *Eleg.* IV 1, 19–20 – a mutilated horse (Lat. *curtus equus*) appears during *Parilia*, the feast of the Roman goddess *Pales*). The French researcher (ibidem, p. 242) suggested that the roles are reversed – *Viśpālā* is a

Phormion, the strategist of Croton. Often a snake as a symbol of the divine curers appears by their side.

VIII. The twin brothers in the Indo-European myths appear as the *Warriors or the Providers of the Divine Aid in Battles*. Though the Aśvins demonstrate generally a peaceful manifestation, they are once associated in fight, even receiving the epithet of Vṛtra-slayers¹⁸. The Greek Dioscuri take part in many fights, e.g. in the expedition of the Argonauts, in the war against Iolkos. Also the famous box-fight between Polydeukes and Amykos, the king of Bebrykes, is noteworthy. The Dioscuri became patrons of the dual kings and of the army at Sparta, where they were held in special honour.

IX. The Indo-European twin gods are treated as DIVINITIES OF FERTILITY. The Vedic Aśvins are also besought to bestow fertility on the bride (*RV* X 184.2). They give a child to the barren woman and make the sterile cow to yield milk (*RV* I 112.3). They give a husband to the old maid (*RV* X 39.3) and bestow a wife upon a man (*RV* I 116.1). In *Atharvaveda* they are said to bring lovers together¹⁹. The Greek materials relating the divine twins to fertility are much less numerous. However, the Dioscuri are presented on reliefs and coins with the horns of plenty and other agricultural symbols. The Latvian Children of God are likewise associated with sowing and tilling²⁰.

X. The divine twins are *sometimes associated with Swans (or Eagles)*. The chariot of the Aśvins is drawn by horses, more commonly by birds (*RV* VI 63.6-7; X 143.5), especially by swans (*RV* IV 15.4) or eagles (*RV* I 118.4; VIII 5.7). The swan appears in the Greek myth. Zeus, taking the shape of swan²¹, visited Lede, the wife of the Spartan king Tyndareos, and as a result two sets of twins appeared – Polydeukes and Castor, Helen and Clytemnestra²². It is also believed that the Dioscuri, as well as their sisters, are born from two swan eggs, laid by their mother.

protégée of Aśvins, whereas the Roman *Pales* is a patroness of cattle and all domesticated animals. Reversing the roles is analogous as in the myth on the she-wolf, which appears as a protégée of Aśvins in the Vedic Hymns. The Roman she-wolf brought up the divine twin brethren – Remus and Romulus.

¹⁸ A. A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, pp. 51.

¹⁹ A. A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, pp. 51.

²⁰ D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, pp. 20.

²¹ The story of the swan is first found in Eurypides, *Helen* 16ff.

²² E. Robbins, "The Divine Twins", pp. 30, distinguishes the divine pair, Helen and Polydeuces, sired by Zeus, and the mortal pair, Clytemnestra and Castor, whose father was Lede's husband Tyndareos.

XI. There is evidence that the Indo-European divine twins are *Divinities of the Dance*²³. Especially the Vedic Aśvins are described as the good dancers. Also the Greek Dioscuri “are engaged in characteristically human activities such as hunting, singing and dancing”²⁴.

XII. The philanthropic character of the twins and their *closeness to Human Beings* can be clearly seen in the myth of the Aśvins and Dioscuri. The former help people in danger: they save Atri from the fire, rescue buried Vandana and pull the injured and tied Rebhu out of the water. Numerous different stories, which describe the miraculous deeds of the Aśvins, are known to us²⁵. The latter divine twins, called σωτήρες (‘the savers’), were considered as the particularly well-disposed deities coming with help to their believers (see the 33th Homeric hymn, line 6). An analogical situation is when Remus and Romulus help their grandfather to regain the throne. According to Sternberg, the divine twins are portrayed as being closest of all deities to man²⁶. The Dioscuri appear as casual guests and participate in the feasts of mortals. They were denied a place on Olympus, though they belonged to the most popular Greek deities. The situation of the Aśvins is exactly the same. In a Vedic hymn the Aśvins are placed in the same sib (OInd. *bandhuḥ*) as man (*RV* VII 72.2). The famous poem *Mahābhārata* (XII, 7590; XII 208) reports that the Aśvins have been Śudras from birth²⁷.

XIII. Both the Indo-Iranian and Graeco-Roman sources furnish evidence of the fact that the divine twins were often addressed as *Witnesses and Protectors of the Oaths and Treaties*. Thus the Indo-Iranian gods called Nasatiya (among other divinities) are called upon to witness the oath of allegiance between Mattiwaza, the king of Mitanni, and Suppiluliumas, the ruler of the Hittites. In the Vedic hymns the Aśvins are invoked in order “to keep in agreement those who are joined by a treaty” (*RV* VIII 35.12)²⁸. Elsewhere the Aśvins are beseeched not to deliver “us to anyone who does keep his treaty”

²³ D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, pp. 24–25.

²⁴ M. Shapiro, “Neglected Evidence”, p. 143.

²⁵ See especially A. A. Macdonell, *The Vedic Mythology*, pp. 51–53. Also S. O’Brien, “Divine Twins”, p. 164, stresses that: “In the Vedas, references to the Twins’ acts of healing and rescuing are numerous and these themes were readily transposed in epic, legend and folklore”.

²⁶ L. J. Sternberg, “Der antike Zwillingsskult im Lichte der Ethnologie”, *Zeitschrift der Ethnologie* 16, 1929, pp. 152–200.

²⁷ Cf. D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, p. 25.

²⁸ See D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, p. 26; M. Shapiro, “Neglected Evidence”, p. 142.

(*RV* I 120.8). The Greek Dioscuri can be connected with the Spartan phrase τὼ σιῶ (liter. 'the two gods'), used as a habitual formula to accompany the swearing of oaths. In the Greek Orthodox Church the saint patron of oath-taking is St. Polyeuctes, in many respects the continuator of Polydeukes.

XIV. According to Ward, one of the characteristic features of the Indo-European dioscuric myth is the fact that the divine twins *are Assisting at Childbirth*²⁹. For instance, certain passages of the Vedic hymns (*RV* V 78.7–9; X 39.7) demonstrate the the Aśvins were appealed to as sources of divine aid for women in childbirth. The twins are almost universally treated as progenitors of mankind. This is why Cicero (*De natura deorum* III 21.53) calls the Dioscuri *tritopatores* (i. e. 'ancestors').

XV. In many myths the twin brothers appear to be the *Founders of Cities*. The most famous story is connected with the foundation of Rome by the Latin twins, Romulus and Remus³⁰. Also the Greek myths mention the Dioscuri as founders of towns named Dioscurias, Dioskurion or the like. According to Stephen of Byzance, the village in Libya called Διοσκούρων Κώμη was founded by the Dioscuri there, where Paris raped their sister Helen.

XVI. *The strong bond of brotherhood* is a significant motif of the divine twins myth. This is very clear in the case of the Vedic and Latvian twins. The first pair usually occurs in dualis as *Nāsatiyā(u)* and *Aśvinā(u)*, the second as *Dieva dēļi*. Dioscuri should be also mentioned here, as Polydeukes (Pollux) mourns his brother's death and refuses to receive immortality offered by Zeus, since Castor has to stay in Hades. The Roman myth shows the twins in close friendship until Remus' sacrilegious act. However, there is a different version of the myth, according to which Romulus did not kill his brother, but they both ruled sharing the authority just like later consuls did³¹.

XVII. *Individualization of the twins* may be also extracted from the preserved fragments of the Indo-European myth. In the late versions of the Old Indic myth the Aśvins have separate names: one is called *Dásraḥ*, the second *Nāsatiyaḥ*. The individualization is more

²⁹ D. Ward, *The Divine Twins*, pp. 27.

³⁰ See e.g. D. Briquel, "Twins and Twins in the Legend of the Founding of Rome", [in:] *Perspectives on Indo-European Language, Culture and Religion. Studies in Honor of Edgar C. Polomé*, vol. 2, Washington 1992, pp. 215–220; A. Meurant, *L'idée de gémellité dans la légende des origines de Rome*, Bruxelles 2000.

³¹ Cf. P. Grimal, *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*, Paris 1951, s.v. *Remus*.

clear at Dioscuri: Castor and Polydeukes (Pollux) bear two different names. One becomes a tamer of horses, the second a famous boxer (πύξ ἀγαθός, cf. *Ilias* III, 237; *Odyssey* XI, 300), one remains immortal, while the other is killed by an enemy. The close similarity can be seen when talking about Remus and Romulus: they bore separate names, the former remained mortal and was killed by his brother, while the latter received a gift of immortality. The motif of death of one of the brothers in Greek and Roman mythology should be considered as derivative occurrence which does not express the primary nature of the twins.

In the light of the mentioned examples and analogies the descent of the divine twins from the Indo-European archetype is quite sure. Apart from the common features that are reminiscent of the primary nature of the twins there are, however, small discrepancies resulting from the different imagination and creative abilities developed during many centuries. After all, the beliefs and the culture of the Indo-European populations were different. These small differences were an inevitable result of independent religious and mythological fantasies of the Indo-European populations who transferred the ancient tales about the divine twins in their own way, gradually changing the natural state of the tales.

Detailed research revealed the main outlines of the myth about the divine twins. Let us see now, how it developed in the beliefs of the Indo-European populations. There are, however, unsolved crucial problems. No answer is given for an important question: “how were the divine twins called in a primitive Indo-European myth?”. In this essay we would like to add the Sicilian version of the myth, which should allow a better analysis of both the origin and character of the Indo-European myth on the divine twins.

The Sicilian tradition on the palici.

The Palici (Greek Παλικοί, Latin *Palīci*) were the divine twins, whose sanctuary was situated near Leontinoi, close to the lake called *Lago di Naftia* or *Lago di Fetia*³², in the area, where different volcanic phenomena occurred. Hot geysers in the shape of domes erupted from the lake and every single drop from the geysers fell into the crater. The strong smell of sulphur was in the air. It is said that even the birds flying over the lake died immediately from the vapour. People who recklessly approached the lake died in three days. The certain truth is

³² The name *Lago dei Palici* is of literary origin.

that the natural poisonous gases still come out of the lake. That is where Palici, the fearful deities, resided. It demonstrates the influence the location of their cult had on the religious reception of the gods.

The Greek version of the legend says that the birth of the Palici is as follows: Thalia, pregnant with Zeus, hid inside the earth as she was afraid of Hera's anger. She gave birth to the twins there. After that the divine brothers came out of the earth through two volcanic sources called *Delloi* (Gk. Δέλλοι)³³. One could say this was their repeated birth, the repeated occurrence from the darkness to the world. It might have been the reason for Zeus to call them *Palici*, those who want 'to come once again' (Gk. πάλιν ἵκειν). Aeschylus mentions this fact in the preserved fragment of *Aetnaeae*³⁴:

A. τί δῆτ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ὄνομα θήσονται βροτοί;

B. σεμνοὺς Παλικοὺς Ζεὺς ἐφίεται καλεῖν.

A. ἦ καὶ Παλικῶν εὐλόγως μένει φάτις;

B. πάλιν γὰρ ἴκουσ' ἐκ σκότου τόδ' εἰς φάος.

The myth about the birth of the Palici is undoubtedly of secondary origin, as it was created in the Greeks' minds to explain the Sicilian name of Palici using the Greek words. Palici watched over the solemn oaths taken near the craters by the Sicilians. If somebody wanted to prove the truth, he wrote it down on the tablet which he later threw into the lake. The emerged tablet meant reliability of the oath, if the tablet sank, it proved the perjury. Somebody wrongly accused of crime had the right to swear his innocence at the shore of the lake. The liars were either sentenced to death or punished by blindness on the strength of gods, the innocents were safe and entitled to demand compensation from the accusers.

All this information was provided by the ancient sources³⁵. One must admit that the information is insufficient, because the Sicilian

³³ Cf. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. By M. Cary, Oxford 1957, p. 538, s.v. *Palici*.

³⁴ Aeschylus, fr. 6 (*Trag. Gr. Frag.* Nauck²) apud Macrob., *Sat.* V.19.24. It is repeated by Servius (in Verg. *Aen.* IX 584): „(...) postea cum de Terra erupissent duo pueri, Palici dicti sunt, quasi iterum venientes. Nam πάλιν ἵκειν est iterum venire”.

³⁵ See K. Ziegler, "Palikoi", *RE* XVIII 3, 1949, pp. 100–123; E. A. Freeman, *The History of Sicily from the Earliest Times*, vol. 1, Oxford 1891, pp. 517–530; E. Ciaceri, *Culti e miti nella storia dell'antica Sicilia*, Catania 1911, pp. 23–37; J. H. Croon, "The Palici. An Autochthonous Cult in Ancient Sicily", *Mnemosyne* 5, 1952 (Series IV), pp. 116–129; P. Grimal, *op. cit.*, p. 271; A. M. Kempniński, *Słownik mitologii ludów indoeuropejskich* [A Dictionary of Mythology of the Indo-European Nations], Poznań 1993, p. 324, s.v. *Palici*; idem, *Encyklopedia mitologii ludów indoeuropejskich* [Encyclopedia of Mythology of the Indo-European Nations], Warszawa,

myth was a matter of minor importance for the ancient writers and mythographers. Basing only on these data, we can presume that the Sicilian myth is a continuation of the Indo-European one. Below we will analyse all the connections and motifs specific for the Indo-European pair of the twins, which are common with Palici. A comparison needs to be made of what is known about the Sicilian Palici with the inventory of traits and functions that define the Indo-European divine dioscurism as a whole.

Palici as divine twin brothers.

A. Palici are inseparable twin brothers living in a harmony. Polemo³⁶ considers them as the deities of autochthonous (Sicilian) descent (αὐτόχθονες). Aeschylus in *Aetnaeae* makes them sons of Zeus and the nymph Thalia, the daughter of Hephaistos³⁷. Polemo's and Aeschylus' versions are precisely preserved by Macrobius³⁸. Servius instead believes the twins to be the sons of Zeus and a nymph Aetna, the daughter of Oceanus, but he also mentions that others refer to Thalia as their mother³⁹. One way or another, Palici are the divine sons of a god of the bright heaven (category I), who is identified with Zeus and Jupiter. It is obvious now that Palici may represent the divine twin brethren of Indo-European origin.

Poznań 2001, p. 333. The valuable essay on the Palici remains still that by L. Bloch, "Palici", [in:] W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Hildesheim 1965 (reprint of the edition from 1884–1902), pp. 1281–1295. Also G. Michaelis's monograph, *Die Paliken. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung altitalischer Kulte*, Dresden 1855, is noteworthy. Recent achievements are discussed by L. Bello, "Ricerche sui Palici", *Kokalos* 6, 1970, pp. 71–97; E. Manni, "Divagazioni sul culto dei Palici", [in:] *Hommages à Robert Schilling*, Paris 1983, pp. 175–185; N. Cusumano, "Ordalia e soteria nella Sicilia antica. I Palici", *Mythos* 2, 1990, pp. 9–186; A. Meurant, *Les Paliques, dieux jumeaux siciliens*, Louvain-la-Neuve 1998; idem, "La gemellité des Paliques. Aspects politiques d'une légende", *Ollodagos* 16:2, 2002, pp. 255–266.

³⁶ Polemo, fr. 83 (*Frag. Hist. Gr.* III 140f. Müller) apud Macrobius, *Sat.* 5, 19.26.

³⁷ Aeschylus, fr. 6 (*Trag. Gr. Fr.* Nauck²) apud Steph. Byz., *Ethn.*, s.v. Παλική.

³⁸ Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.13.17ff.

³⁹ Servius in Verg. *Aen.* 9.584 says: „Sumaethos fluvius est Siciliae (a rege Symatheo dictum) haud longe ab urbe Cariniensi (leg. Catinensi), circa quem sunt Palici die, quorum talis est fabula: Aetnam nympham (vel, ut quidam volunt, Thalam) Iuppiter cum vitiasset et fecisset gravidam, timens Iunonem, secundam alios ipsam puellam, Terrae commendavit, et illic enixa est". That must be the primary version of the myth. Other ancient authors (Silenos of Calacte, Stephen of Byzance, Hesychios of Alexandria) refer to Hephaistos or Adranos as the father of Palici. However, the Palici still spring from Zeus, as Zeus was both Hephaistos' and Adranos' father. As regards the Sicilian hero-god Adranos, see especially L. Morawiecki, "Adranos, una divinità dai molteplici volti", *Kokalos* 41, 1995, pp. 29–50.

B. There are no references in any ancient texts about any relations between Palici and horses (III). The only animal is an eagle (X), into which one of the brothers is transformed⁴⁰. There is not any mention about women except their mother Thalia (II). The double gap must have a rational justification, which is caused by a local (either Sicilian or Italic) development of the divine twins myth. Grottanelli proved that these motifs (horses – divine twins – a woman) are inseparable⁴¹, e.g. in one of the Latvian folk songs we read⁴²:

*Kam tie sirmi zirgi stav
Pie Saulities nama durim?
Dieva dela sirmi zirgi
Saules meitas precenieka*

(“Whose grey horses are standing / in front of the Sun’s house? / These are the grey horses of the God’s Son / who is suing for the Son’s daughter”).

The loss of one motif could result in the loss of the second one. It is worth mentioning that in the Roman myth we find the similar situation: the only woman is Rea Silvia, the mother of twins, and horses do not occur. It seems that the Italic development eliminated these two motifs. As the Siculians were an Italic nation akin to the Latins, one should expect the analogous situations in the Sicilian myth on the Palici and the Latin one on Remus and Romulus.

C. The Palici seem to have, like the Aśvins or Dioscuri, the multiple paternity. The oldest genealogy, expressed by Aeschylus and other writers (e.g. by Polemo, Macrobius, Servius), makes Zeus the father of the Sicilian twins. However, the ancient sources give two different connections. Silenos from Calacte (fr. 7, *Frag. Hist. Gr.* III 101 Müller, apud Steph. Byz., *Ethn.*, s.v. Παλική), therefore the native of Sicilia, considers the Palici as the sons of Hephaistos and Aetna. Hesychios (s.v. Παλικοί) says that their father is Adranos (Ἀδράνων δύο γεννῶνται υἱοὶ Παλικοί). The first genealogy turns to Hephaistos as the god connected with the volcano Aetna, the second to the founder of the nearby city *Adranum* (today *Aderno*). It is highly probable that the genealogy of the Palici is similar to that of the Aśvins or Dioscuri. The Sky-God was a divine father of the Sicilian divine twins, whereas the hero Adranos became their mortal father.

⁴⁰ Servius, *op. cit.*: “alii dicunt Iovem hunc Palicum propter Iunonis iracundiam in aquilam commutasse”.

⁴¹ C. Grottanelli, “Yoked horses, Twins, and the powerful Lady. India, Greece, Ireland and Elsewhere”, *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* 14, 1986, pp. 125–152.

⁴² Compare B. В. Иванов, “Отражение”, p. 199.

D. Varro, who considered Palici as the deities propitious for sailing, certifies their connection with sea (V)⁴³. This information should not be minimalized although the different ancient sources do not testify to this function of Palici. Sicily is an island surrounded by dangerous sea, so this function of the twins would not be surprising. The term *dei nautici* shows the sea connotations of Palici, which seem to be analogous to these of Dioscuri or Aśvins, and it emphasizes the philanthropic aspect (XII) of the activity of the Sicilian twins.

E. There are no actual mentions about the stars (VI) in the sources, but the connections with the sea could suggest them. Stars were navigational signs for the ancient sailors.

F. The curing abilities (VII) are not mentioned in the literary data. However, two volcanic springs called *Delloi* (liter. 'wonder ones') situated near the Palici's sanctuary were believed to be healing. They had some divine element of their own (Palici were identified with these springs) and a good influence on people. Note that the lake of the Palici (called *laghetto di Naftia*) bubbles permanently with naturally occurring carbon dioxide. It is exploited for mineral water today. According to Whitehouse, this lake "may well have attracted cult attention in prehistoric times"⁴⁴.

G. The philanthropic character (XII) of the Sicilian twins appears in many guises. As *dei nautici* they are protectors of the sailors and people travelling by sea (V). Palici are also guarantees and trustees of the oaths (XIII) who control the accordance of the oaths with the ethical norms. Owing to the divine intervention they release the wrongly accused people from suspicions and punishments. Also slaves running away from their masters can hide under Palici's power and the masters do not have the right to demand their return. This practise was important during the anti-Greek Ducetios' slave-rebellion (5th century B.C.) and later during other slave-rebellions on Sicily⁴⁵.

H. It is not impossible that the Palici were treated as divine founders (XV) of the town Palike, which was located near their sanctuary. It is said in the ancient sources that Palike was founded by the Siculians during the Doucetios' rebellion (5th century B.C.).

⁴³ Servius says (op. cit.): "Palicos nauticos deos Varro appellat".

⁴⁴ R. D. Whitehouse, *Underground Religion. Cult and Culture in Prehistoric Italy*, London 1992, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Cf. Л. С. Ильинская, "Куль Паликов и его место в идеологическом обосновании народных движений и рабских восстаний Сицилии", [in:] *X Всесоюзная авторско-читательская конференция „Вестника Древней Истории”*, Москва, 3-5 Июня 1987, pp. 121–122.

However, the archaeological excavations demonstrate clearly that this place was regularly inhabited as early as in the Neolithic times⁴⁶.

I. The Palici are divine twins, who form an inseparable pair having a common name (XVI)⁴⁷. Only twice a single Palicus occurs in the ancient sources (see below).

J. The individualization of the brothers (XVII) is difficult to find in the literary data, although sometimes their lots are separate. Servius writes that Zeus transformed one of Palici to an eagle (X) because of Hera's anger⁴⁸. We do not know what happened to the second. With regard to the fact that the Siculians called the divine pair either Palici or Delloi we may make a conclusion: One of the Sicilian brothers was called Παλικός, the second Δέλλος. In the Old Indian mythology one of the Aśvins is named *Dásrah*, other is called *Násatiyaḥ*⁴⁹. One must remember that in the sacred hymns of *RigVeda* these names often occur in dualis as *Dásrā* (43 times) or *Násatiyā* (79 times)⁵⁰. The epithet of the Aśvins *Dásrā* is differently accented than the adjective *dasráh* 'wonderful', so it is *nomen proprium*. The situation with the Palici is analogous and Δέλλοι (pl.) can be successfully associated with the Vedic *Dásrā* (dual.)⁵¹, which is also a separate name of one of the Aśvins. Therefore, it is possible that there was some individualization of the Palici.

No	The most typical motifs of the myth	Attestation					
		Ind.	Gk.	Blt.	Roman	Sic.	Celt.
0.	The divine twins	+	+	+	+	+	+
1.	Sons of the Sky God	+	+	+	-	+	?
2.	The connection with the Sun Maiden	+	+	+	+?	+?	+?
3.	The connection with horses	+	+	+	-	-	+?
4.	Dual Paternity	+	+	+	+?	+	+
5.	Saviours at sea	+	+	+	-	+	+

⁴⁶ See e.g. L. Bernabò Brea, "Paliké. Giacimento paleolitico e abitato neolitico ed eneo", *Bulletino di Paleoeetnologia Italiana* 167, 1965, pp. 23-46.

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Meurant, "La gémellité des Paliques. Aspects politiques d'une légende", *Ollodagos* 16:2, 2002, pp. 255–266.

⁴⁸ Servius, *op. cit.*: "alii dicunt Iovem hunc Palicum propter Iunonis iracundiam in aquilam commutasse".

⁴⁹ D. Ward, "The Separate Functions of the Indo-European Divine Twins", [in:] J. Puhvel (ed.), *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans. Studies in Indo-European Comparative Mythology*, Berkeley 1970, pp. 193–202, esp. 194.

⁵⁰ This frequency is quoted after Ch. Renel, *L'Évolution*, p. 26, fn. 11.

⁵¹ The Siculian and Vedic names of the divine twin brethren seem to derive from **Désloi* (pl.) and **Déslo* (dual.), respectively.

No	The most typical motifs of the myth	Attestation					
		Ind.	Gk.	Blt.	Roman	Sic.	Celt.
6.	Astral nature	+	+	-	-	-	?
7.	The curing abilities	+	+	-	-	+?	+?
8.	Providers of divine aid in battle	+	+	?	+	+?	?
9.	Divinities of fertility	+	-	+?	-	?	?
10.	Associated with swans or eagles	+	+	?	-	+?	+?
11.	Divinities of the dance	+	-	?	-	?	?
12.	Closeness to human being	+	+	+	+	+	?
13.	Protectors of the oaths	+	+	?	-	+	?
14.	Assisting at birth	+	?	?	-	?	?
15.	Founders of Cities	?	+	?	+	+	?
16.	Strong brotherly bonds	+	+	+	+?	+	+
17.	The individualization	+	+	-	+	+	+?
Numbers of similarities		17	15	8+1?	5+3?	9+4?	4+5?
The range of the attestation (%)		94.4	83.3	50	44.4	72.2	50

This short list of the similarities (0–1, 4–5, 12–13, 15–17, perhaps also 2, 7–8 and 10) and discrepancies (3, 6, perhaps 9, 11 and 14) existing among the cults of the Sicilian Palici, the Vedic Aśvins, the Greek Dioscuri and the Baltic divine twins demonstrates clearly that the Sicilian myth is a continuation of the Indo-European religious tradition. There are more archaic elements in the Sicilian myth on Palici than in the Roman myth about Remus and Romulus.