

The Homeric compound Ὑπερίων and the sun in the Indo-European culture

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This paper aims at reconstructing the semantic meaning of Homeric Ὑπερίων, the epithet of the sun, whose etymology is still not clear. After presenting the modern interpretations, which describe it as an adjective in the comparative form derived from the adverbial particle ὑπέρ ‘up, above’, the ancient grammarians’ hypothesis on Ὑπερίων as a compound is tested, taking into consideration the textual analysis of those discourse contexts in which the terms for *sun* are used in archaic Greek and Vedic Sanskrit in a comparative perspective. In particular, the co-occurrence with the motion verb *go*, i.e. εἶμι and *i* from the same IE root **h₁ey-*, in the Homeric poems and in the Rigveda respectively, might shed light on the existence of an inherited Indo-European representation of the sun.

1. Two hypotheses on the etymology of Ὑπερίων

Ὑπερίων is found in the Homeric poems (8×) as epithet of ἥλιος ‘sun’, but also as the name of the sun. Precisely, it is found in the Iliad (2×) once as epithet, once as proper name, whereas in the Odyssey it is normally an epithet (5×), and only once a proper name. In addition, the sun is once called Ὑπεριονίδης ‘Hyperion’s son’ (*Od.* 12.176), and the same patronymic is found in some post-Homeric authors, from the Homeric Hymns (1×) to Hesiod (*Theog.* 374), to Mimnermus (*Fragm.* 12,11) to Aeschylus (*Fragm.* 103, 3), where the sun is represented as the son of Hyperion.

As far as I know, the etymology of Homeric Ὑπερίων has been rarely discussed by historical linguists. One of the first attempts traces

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back to the end of the nineteenth century, when Hermann Usener (1896, p. 19) hypothesized that ὑπερίων was the comparative form of the superlative adjective ὑπατος ‘highest’, both corresponding to respectively Lat. *superior*, *summus*. Thus, as ὑπατος was the epithet of Zeus, ὑπερίων would have been the epithet of the sun, although such a hierarchical representation is never explicitly found in the Iliad or the Odyssey. Roughly the same hypothesis was proposed by Schwyzer (1939, p. 536), who considered -ίων as the old comparative suffix found in adjectives like ἀμείνων ‘better’, κρείσσων ‘stronger’, μείζων ‘greater’, etc., although he admitted that the absence of an accusative form in -ω (namely, *Υπερίω) speaks against such an etymology.¹ It is curious that the term Ὑπερίων does not even appear in the most well-known etymological dictionaries of the Greek language (see for example Frisk, 1960, Chantraine, 1968, Beekes, 2010). Interestingly, the modern interpretations do not find a counterpart in ancient grammarians, who propose a different etymology. In fact, in Hesychius’ Lexicon (409, 1) ὑπερίων is explained as referred to the sun ‘that goes above us’ (*<ὑπερίον[τ]α> ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἰόντα ὁ ἥλιος). In other words, it is interpreted as a compound made of the particle ὑπέρ ‘up, above’ followed by the present participle ἰών <εἶμι ‘go’.² The same etymology is found in Iamblichus, *Theol. Ar.* 58, where ὑπερίων however refers to the Pythagoric name for number 9 (Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1940, p. 1865). At first glance, the second hypothesis poses some problems. Firstly, Ὑπερίων as a compound would show an irregular inflectional pattern, as can be seen in the genitive case Ὑπερίονος instead of the expected *Ὑπερίοντος. Secondly, the position of the accent would not conform to εἶμι participles compounded with similar particles, like παριών, ἀνιών, κατιών, etc. Yet, although nominal compounds made of εἶμι as both first and second constituent are extremely rare in Homer, the latter etymology is plausible not only from semantic, but also from morphological and phonological perspectives. Besides the fact that Greek participles in -οντ- can combine only with prepositions in compounding (Risch, 1974, p. 211), the irregular inflection

¹ It is worth noting that the Homeric poems show both adjectives ὑπέρτερος ‘higher’ (8×) and ὑπέρτατος ‘uppermost’ (3×), made of the adverbial particle ὑπέρ followed by, respectively, the comparative and superlative suffixes -τερος and -τατος. These adjectives however never refer to the sun.

² Here the term particle refers to those multifunctional elements that could be used in Ancient Greek as adverbs, prepositions, preverbs according to the context (see, among others, Schwyzer, 1950, p. 419).

might be considered the result of a process of reanalysis. In particular, as the Homeric poems show, the adjective *ὑπερίων began to be used and thus reanalyzed as a name (see *Il.* 19.398 and *Od.* 1.24), following the same inflectional pattern of proper names such as, for example, Ἀγαμέμνων, -ονος (Λακεδαιμόνων, Λυκόφρων, Δολοπίων, Ἀμφιτρύων, etc). As regards phonology, the apparently irregular position of the accent might be explained by referring to the so-called Vendryès' "law of appellatives" valid for Greek and Sanskrit. Specifically, a minimal pair must have been initially formed: *ὑπερίων (A): Ὑπερίων (N), where the accent was retracted in the noun in order to signal the passage to a different lexical category (from qualifier to appellative, in Vendryès' formulation; see Lazzeroni, 2015).

Now, as none of these alternative etymologies can be actually ruled out, morphological and phonological analysis alone do not allow us to decide which hypothesis is the most plausible, nor turns out to be sufficient a semantic test based on Greek textual analysis only. For this reason, in the next sections I will consider the textual analysis on the basis of a comparative perspective, by investigating the terms for *sun* in Homeric Greek and in Vedic. In particular, I will show that the co-occurrence of these terms with specific motion verbs might shed light on the existence of an inherited Indo-European representation of the sun.³

2. Homeric representations of Sun Hyperion: co-occurrence with motion verbs

In the Homeric poems Ἥλιος, the 'sun-god', is mostly represented as an entity in motion, marking the different times of the day in which the described events occur. This motion representation also finds its counterpart in archeological evidence, as ancient Greek paintings portray the sun rising from the sea while he drives his chariot in the sky (see the Blakas red-figured vase of the 5th century B.C. conserved at the British Museum). In both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the contexts of use of the term Ἥλιος, which the epithet

³ Reference works for Vedic and Homeric Greek include respectively Macdonell (1910), Graßmann (1996), Lubotsky (1997), Mayrhofer (1989), on the one hand, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG, 2000), Schwyzler (1939, 1950) on the other. Critical editions are Aufrecht (1968) for the *Rigveda*, Mazon (1957-61) and Monro, Allen (1978) for the Homeric poems. Reference translations are respectively Geldner (1951) and Jamison, Brereton (2014); Murray (1946a, b). Reference works for the IE roots are Pokorny (1959) and Rix (2001).

Ὑπερίων refers to, often entail a motion verb that characterizes the event. The different positions or movements of the sun during the day are indeed the only perceptually salient entities that permit to situate the scene in time. More in detail, when the sun firstly moves up out of the ocean the verb used is ἀνέιμι ‘go upwards (from bottom to top)’ (1).

- (1) ἡῶθεν γὰρ νεῦμαι ἅμ’ ἡελίῳ ἀνιόντι (Il. 18.136)
 from-morn for go.back-PRES.1SG together sun-DAT.SG go.up-PRTC.DAT.SG
 “For early in the morning together with the rising sun I return [...]”

Here Thetis is speaking to her son, Achilles, promising she will bring him a new armour early in the morning (ἡῶθεν). The formulaic expression ἡελίῳ ἀνιόντι ‘(with the) rising sun’ (6×) is made of the present participle of the motion verb εἶμι ‘go’ compounded with the adverbial particle ἀνά ‘up, upwards, from bottom to up’, expressing an inchoative (telic) meaning. As has been remarked, Homeric ἀνά indeed expresses «an upward movement... conceptualized as the sudden popping up of a trajector, coming out of a landmark» (Luraghi, 2003, p. 192).

This representation of the sun is conventional in ancient Greek, to the extent that it is even used to express the cardinal orientation in space, as can be seen for example in (2).

- (2) Αἰθίοπας, τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαίαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν,
 Ethiopian-ACC.PL who-NOM.PL in-two divide-PERF.MID.3PL extreme-NOM.PL man-GEN.PL
 οἱ μὲν δυσσομένου Ὑπερίονος, οἱ δ’ ἀνιόντος,
 he-NOM.PL PART sink-PRTC.GEN.SG Hyperion-GEN.SG he-NOM.PL PART go.up-PRTC.GEN.SG
 “Ethiopians, who are divided in two, the farthestmost of men,
 those where Hyperion sinks, those where Hyperion rises” (Od. 1, 24)

In (2) the Ethiopians are conceived as the farthestmost men living in the known world, in the extreme geographical regions located respectively in the west, namely ‘where the sun Hyperion goes into (the sea)’, and in the east, namely ‘where the sun Hyperion rises’. The motion verb εἶμι ‘go’ describes the motion of the sun also in passages like (3).

- (3) ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γὰρ ἴδμεν ὅπη ζόφος οὐδ’ ὅπη ἠώς,
 oh friend-VOC.PL NEG PART know-PF.1PL where darkness-NOM.SG NEG where dawn-NOM.SG
 οὐδ’ ὅπη ἡέλιος φαεσίμβροτος εἶσ’ ὑπὸ γαῖαν
 NEG where sun-NOM.SG shining.on.mortals-NOM.SG go-PRES.3SG under earth-ACC.SG
 οὐδ’ ὅπη ἀννείται (Od. 10.190-192)
 NEG where go.up-PRES.3SG

“Oh my friends, for we do not know where the darkness is or where the dawn,
neither where the sun shining on mortals goes under the earth,
nor where he rises”

Here Odysseus is talking to his comrades, after they had arrived to Circe’s island. This latter is a place unknown to them, so they still have to learn where they are, i.e. their ‘geographic coordinates’, by observing the exact point where the sun goes down, beneath the earth, or where he rises. Interestingly enough, the expression εἶμι ὑπὸ (γαῖαν) ‘go beneath (the earth)’ is precisely the complementary opposite of εἶμι ὑπέρ ‘go above (the earth) (in the sky)’, which seems to be implied in the epithet Ὑπερίων.⁴ Accordingly, the Erebus, the realm of death and darkness beneath the earth, is depicted as a place where ‘the sun of the sky’ has perished (4).

- (4) **ἰεμένων** Ἔρεβόςδε ὑπὸ ζόφον· **ἥελιος** δὲ
hasten-PTCP.GEN.PL Erebus.to under nether.darkness-ACC.SG sun-NOM.SG PART
οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωλε, κακῇ δ’ ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλὺς
sky-GEN.SG perish.utterly-PF.3SG evil-NOM.SG PART run.upon-PF.3SG mist-NOM.SG
“[the court full of ghosts] who hasten to Erebus beneath the nether darkness; the sun
of the sky has utterly perished, an evil mist ran over (all)” (*Od.* 20.356-357)

The expression ἥελιος οὐρανοῦ points out the existence of a clear distinction between the sun that goes beneath the earth, as seen in (3), and the sun that goes above the earth, i.e. ‘the sun of the sky’. As will be seen in the next section, a very similar distinction is also found in the Rigveda.

The specific position of the sun in the sky at midday is illustrated in (5).

- (5) ἦμος δ’ Ἡέλιος μέσον οὐρανὸν ἀμφιβέβηκει, (*Il.* 8.68)
when NEG sun-NOM.SG middle-ACC.SG sky-ACC.SG reach-PF.3SG
“when the Sun has reached the middle of the sky,”

The motion expression μέσον οὐρανὸν ἀμφιβέβηκει in (5) situates the described event in a specific time of the day, i.e. at midday. Here ἀμφιβαίνω ‘surround’ is a compounded form of the telic verb βαίνω ‘step; go; come’, which shows an etymological correspondence with the telic verb used in the Rigveda to express the same time of the day (see section 3).

⁴ On the complementary opposition between Homeric ὑπέρ and ὑπὸ see more recently Zanchi (2016, p. 24) and references therein.

A very interesting passage is (6), where the compounded verb *ὑπέρ-σχέθω† ‘hold, to be above’ describes the position of the sun high in the sky.

- (6) εὔτε γὰρ ἡέλιος φαέθων ὑπερέσχεθε γαίης,
 when PART sun-NOM.SG shine-PTCP.NOM.SG above.hold-AOR.3SG earth-GEN.SG
 “for when the shining sun was (i.e. held the position) above the earth,”
 (*Il.* 11.735)

The old epic form ὑπερσχέθω† (ὑπερέχω) ‘hold above; to be above’ is made of the preposition ὑπέρ ‘above’ compounded with the intransitive and atelic verb ἔχω.⁵ This verb here depicts a static image of the bright sun holding his position in the sky above the earth (γαίης).⁶ Indeed, Homeric ὑπέρ never denotes a contact between the Figure (ἡέλιος) and the Ground (γαίης), nor does it imply the existence of a specific trajectory (Luraghi, 2003, p. 214). Now, such a representation reminds us that evoked by the epithet Ὑπερίων, where another atelic verb, εἶμι ‘go’, would describe the motion of the sun that goes along the sky without focusing on a specific point or trajectory, but only meaning that this motion takes place above (ὑπέρ) and not beneath (ὑπὸ) the earth. Instead, other verbs and particles are selected to describe more specific positions of the sun in the sky, such as the sunrise or the sunset, as seen in (1) and (2).⁷

Although the sun-god is usually represented as a moving entity, there are also a few passages that describe his characteristics, like in (7).

⁵ On the classification of verbal IE roots as telic or atelic, including the root which ἔχω traces back to, see Bartolotta (2016, p. 29).

⁶ It is worth noting that the same verb (ὑπερέσχε) is similarly used in *Od.* 13.93, where ὑπέρ is not a preposition governing the genitive γαίης ‘earth’, but behave as a preverb with the adverbial meaning ‘above’. It cannot be excluded that a space meaning like that explicitly expressed by the genitive γαίης ‘earth’ in *Il.* 11.735 (6) was however originally implied.

⁷ Other motion verbs used to describe the sun rising and setting are respectively ἀνορούς ‘start up’ (*Od.* 3.1), ἀνανέομαι ‘mount up’ (*Od.* 10.192) on the one hand, and (κατα)δύω ‘go down’ (cfr. ἐς ἡέλιον καταδύντα in *Il.* 1.601), ἐμπίπτω ‘fall upon (the Ocean)’ (*Il.* 8.485), ἦλθον (ἐπὶ κνέφας) ‘(he) went (to the darkness)’ (cfr. *Il.* 1.475) on the other hand. On the complementary opposition between Ancient Greek ἀνά ‘upwards’ and κατά ‘downwards’ see Luraghi (2003, p. 188). The early afternoon is furthermore referred to with μετανίσσομαι (βουλυτὸν) ‘turn to the time for unyoking oxen’ (*Il.* 16.779).

- (7) Ἡέλιός θ', ὅς πάντ' ἐφορᾷς καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις,
 sun-NOM and who-NOM.SG all-N.PL watch.over-PRES.2SG and all-N.PL hear-PRES.2SG
 “and you, Sun, who watch over all things and hear all things,” (Il. 3.277)

It is from his privileged position above in the sky that the sun-god is able to observe all the things human beings do on earth. As will be seen in the next section (3), these characteristics turn out to be the same in the Rigveda. Let us now compare the Homeric representation of sun Hyperion with the Vedic corresponding entity, namely the sun-god *Sūrya*.

3. Vedic representations of *Sūrya*: co-occurrence with motion verbs

In the Rigveda a lot of images describe the continuous movement of the sun-god across the sky. Similarly to what has been seen for Homeric Greek (7), in Vedic he is also represented as looking «down upon the actions of human beings» while transiting the sky, and observing «whether they conform to the ritual and social principles governed by [...] deities» (Jamison, Brereton, 2014, p. 36), to the extent that he is called ‘the eye’ of deities such as Mitra, Varuṇa, and Agni.

It is striking that, although an epithet equivalent to Homeric Greek Ὑπερίων cannot be found in Vedic, the most frequent motion expression related to the movements of the sun has recourse to the verb *i*, which like εἶμι derives from the atelic Indo-European root **h₁ey-* ‘go’, plus the adverbial particle *ud* ‘up, upward, away’, which also show an etymological connection with Gr. ὑπέρ (Schwyzer, 1950, p. 539; Dunkel, 2014, p. 834). As a result, Vedic *Sūrya* is represented as ‘going or moving up’, i.e. above in the sky, as shown in (8).

- (8) **út** sūryo jyótiṣā devá **eti** (RV. 4.13.1d)
 up sun-NOM.SG light-INS.SG heavenly-NOM.SG go-PRES.3SG
 “The heavenly Sun goes up with his light”

The expression *ud eti* ‘goes up’ in (8) finds its counterpart in the compounded noun *úditi* (*sūryasya*), which, according to the most well-known dictionaries (see Monier-Williams, 2003, p. 186, Graßmann, 1996, p. 253), entails the opposing meanings ‘ascending, rising (of the sun); going away or down, setting (of the sun)’. The apparent contrast between the two meanings ‘rising’ and ‘setting’ is due to the fact that ‘going up’ actually refers to the continuous movement of the sun up

in the sky and above the earth, thus including but being not limited to rising, setting, as well as each sunlit part of the sky in the daytime. *Sūrya* is indeed represented in the Rigveda now as a wheel himself, now as driving his chariot pulled by horses, which ever rolls around heaven and earth each single day (RV. 1.115.3d). There is in fact a clear distinction between heaven and earth during the journey of the sun (cfr. RV. 3.44.3c: *dyām... pr̥thivīm... yāyor antār bāriś carat* “heaven...earth...between which the golden one [=sun] wanders”). As a consequence, similarly to what has been seen in Homeric Greek (3), a basic distinction is also made between the sun *tāmasi kṣiyāntam* “dwelling in darkness” (RV. 3.39.5d), i.e., the sun that goes beneath the earth during the night and is invisible to human beings, and the sun that moves in the luminous realm above the earth, being visible to all (*viśvadarśato* in RV. 1.50.4a-b). The passage in (9) illustrates this alternating movement between night and day.

- (9) *prācīnam anyād ānu vartate rājah-,* (RV. 10.37.3c-d)
 forward other-NOM.SG after turn-PRES.3SG dusky.realm-ACC.N.SG
úd anyéna jyótiṣā yāsi sūrya
 upward other-INS.SG light-INS.SG go-PRES.2SG sun-VOC.SG
 “The one (wheel) rolls forward along the dusky realm,
 with the other one, the light, you move upward, o Sun”

The hypothesis according to which *úd eti* would refer to the movement of the sun across the sky and above the earth would fit the meaning of Greek Ὑπερίων, being supported not only by morphological considerations related to the atelic aspectual meaning of both motion verbs εἶμι and ἵ, but also by the textual analysis. Let us first consider the following passage (10).

- (10) *prātār devīm áditim jōhavīmi,* (RV. 5.69.3a-c)
 early goddess-ACC.SG Aditi-ACC.SG call-INT.1SG
madhyāṃdina úditā sūryasya
 midday-LOC.SG going.up-LOC.SG sun-GEN.SG
rāyé mitrāvaruṇā sarvātātā-,
 wealth-DAT.SG Mitra.Varuna-VOC.SG full-DAT.SG
 “I call Aditi again and again early in the morning,
 at midday, at the going-up of the Sun
 for the full wealth, Mitra and Varuna”

The passage in (10) shows the sequence of different times during the day, namely *prātār* ‘early (in the morning)’, *madhyāṃdina* ‘midday’, *úditā sūryasya* ‘going up of the sun’. As it is, this order, which is the same found in RV. 5.76.3a-c, would result obscure if *úditā sūryasya* were translated as

‘rising (of the sun)’ (see Jamison, Brereton, 2014, p. 751). Rather, it would result comprehensible if we interpreted *úditā sūryasya* as the movement of the sun in the high part of the world, i.e. in the sky, which, of course, entails the sunrise, but also the sunset (see the passage in (23)).⁸

Whenever the more specific or punctual moment of rising is emphasized, the motion verb used is indeed telic, i.e. *gā* ‘come’ in (11).

- (11) *ápāvṛṭa* *vrajínīr* *út svār* *gād*,
 unclose-AOR.MID.3SG located.in.pen-ACC.PL up sun-N.SG come-INJ.AOR.3SG
ví *dūro* *mānuṣīr* *devā* *āvaḥ*
 away door-ACC.PL human-ACC.PL god-NOM.SG open-AOR.3SG
 “[...] (the poet) unclosed the (cows) kept in the pen, the sun came up,
 the god opened the doors belonging to human beings”
 (RV. 5.45.1c-d)

The event in (11) is punctual or telic, since it describes the exact moment when the sun comes out together with the doors opening (unclosing the cows for human beings). For this reason, the verb used is not the atelic *i* ‘go’, but the corresponding telic motion verb *gā* ‘go; come’. Similarly, when the sun reaches a specific goal during his passage, the motion verb is telic, as shown in (12).

- (12) *jagāma* *sūro* *ādhvano* *vímadhyam*, (RV. 10.179.2b)
 go/come-PF.3SG sun-NOM.SG road-GEN.SG middle-ACC.SG
 “the Sun has reached the middle of its road”

The passage in (12) reminds us the Homeric Greek verse in (5), where the verb used is the (compounded) perfect of the telic verb βαίνω ‘go; come’, which etymologically corresponds to *gam* (from which the perfect *jagāma* derives).

Differently, when the sun moves up in the sky without reaching or positioning himself at a precise place, the verb used is atelic, as illustrated for instance in (13).

- (13) *úd vām* *cákṣur* *varuṇa* *suprātīkaṃ*, (RV. 7.61.1a-b)
 up you-GEN.DU eye-NOM.N.SG Varuna-VOC.SG beautiful-NOM.N.SG
deváyor *eī* *sūryas* *tatanvān*
 god-GEN.DU go-PRES.3SG sun-NOM.SG extend-PF.PTCP.NOM.SG
 “The beautiful eye of you two, o Varuna, goes up,
 the Sun of you two gods who has extended himself”

⁸ Graßmann (1996, p. 253) interprets *úditā sūryasya* in this passage as the ‘sun-set’, by considering the particle *úd* as meaning ‘out’.

The passage in (13) focuses on the movement of the sun, here represented as an eye that moves high in the sky, as the perfect participle *tatanvān* ‘who has (already) extended himself’ allows us to hypothesize. The idea of the continuous movement of the sun is also corroborated by *i* ‘go’ being replaced by almost exclusively atelic verbs, when occurring both with and without the particle *ud* ‘up’ in the Rigveda. Namely, these verbs are *car* ‘move’ (14)-(15), *dhāv* ‘run’ (16), *pat* ‘fly’, *yā* ‘go’ (17), *vṛt* ‘roll’ (see RV. 1.164.11b; 14c).

- (14) *yāt* *sūryāmāsū* *mithā* **uccārātaḥ** (=ud+cārātaḥ)
 as.long.as sun.moon-NOM.DU alternately up.move-PRES.SUBJ.3DU
 “[...] as long as the Sun and the Moon will move up alternately”
 (RV. 10.68.10d)

The passage in (14) mentions the alternation of the sun and the moon in the sky, but nothing in the context tells us that this motion specifically refers to the sunrise. Being atelic, the verb *car* ‘move’ expresses a continuous movement that takes place ‘up’, i.e. in the visible part of the world. In fact, Sun and Moon (*sūryāmāsā*) are usually described as inhabitants of the sky, moving (*cārantā*) in alternation (15).

- (15) *sūryāmāsā* **vicārantā** (=vī+cārantā) *divikṣītā*, (RV. 10.92.12c)
 sun.moon-NOM.DU away.move-PTCP.DU in.the.sky.dweller-NOM.3DU
 “the Sun and the Moon, the heaven dwellers moving separately”

What is important is indeed this alternation, to the extent that the sun and the waters are considered the two world-halves (*ródasī*) in RV. 1.10.8. Thus, when the sun (also called ‘the golden swing in heaven’ in RV. 7.87.5c-d) is up, i.e. above the earth, the moon is down in the waters (beneath the earth), and vice versa (16). In RV. 10.72.7c-d it is in fact the sun that is hidden in the sea during the night.

- (16) *candrāmā* *apsv* *āntār ā*, (RV. 1.105.1a-b)
 moon-NOM.SG water-LOC.PL between here
suparṇō **dhāvate** *divī*
 large.bird-NOM.SG run-PRES.3SG sky-LOC.SG
 “the Moon is here in the waters,
 the Sun (large bird) runs in the sky”

Notice that in (16) the movement of the sun in the sky, which is often compared to an eagle or a falcon (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 45), is again referred to with an atelic motion verb, i.e. *dhāv* ‘run’. Similarly, it can also be referred to with the atelic verb *pat* ‘fly’, as in RV. 1.152.5b. The emphasis on a continuous movement of the sun in the sky seems

to be supported by the co-occurrence with another atelic motion verb, namely *yā* ‘go, travel’ (17).

- (17) *sahásram* *ṛkvā* *pathíbhir* *vacovíd*, (RV. 9.91.3c-d)
 thousand-N.SG singer-NOM.SG path-INS.PL speech.knowing-NOM.SG
adhvasmábhiḥ sūro *āpvaṃ* *ví* *yāti*
 stainless-INS.PL sun-NOM.SG fine.space-ACC.SG through go; travel-PRES.3SG
 “the singer who knows speech, the Sun goes through
 the fine space by a thousand stainless paths”

The example in (17) describes the sun as moving through the space by numerous paths. As can be seen in those passages where the sun is said to face in many directions (e.g. RV. 9.75.1c-d), or wander like an exile (RV. 8.29.8a-b), the emphasis is placed on the manner of motion rather than on the goal of the movement, as signaled by the atelic verb *yā*. Similar considerations are valid for the passage in (18), where the atelic motion is expressed by *i* ‘go’.

- (18) *ví* *dyām* *eṣi* *rājas* *prthú-*, (RV. 1.50.7a-c)
 through sky-ACC.SG go-PRES.2SG airspace-ACC.N.SG wide-ACC.N.SG
āhā *mímāno* *aktúbhiḥ*
 day-ACC.PL measure-PTCP.NOM.SG night-INS.PL
páśyañ *jānmāni* *sūrya*
 look-PTCP.NOM.SG creature-ACC.PL sun-VOC.SG
 “you go across the sky, the wide airspace,
 measuring the days with the nights
 looking at the creatures, o Sun”

The expression *úd eti* ‘goes up, above (in the sky)’ seems to refer to an atelic and non specifically directed motion, unless the context gives us specific information about the goal or the source of the movement. Let us consider the passages in (19) and (20).

- (19) *eṣá* *syá* *mitrāvaruṇā* *nṛcákṣāḥ-*,
 this.here-NOM.SG that-NOM.SG Mitra.Varuna-VOC.SG men.looking-NOM.SG
ubhé *úd eti* *sūryo* *abhí jmán*
 both-ACC.DU up go-PRES.3SG sun-NOM.SG over earth-LOC.SG
viśvasya *sthātúr* *jágataś* *ca gopāḥ-*,
 all-GEN.N.SG standing-GEN.SG going-GEN.SG and herdsmen-NOM.SG
 “O Mitra and Varuna, this here that looks at men,
 the Sun, goes up over both on the earth
 the herdsmen of all the standing and the moving things” (RV. 7.60.2a-c)

Here, nothing in the context allows us to decide if the movement of the sun is rising or ascending from the earth. Rather, the sentence in

(19) seems to make a general statement on the typical representation of the sun as the shepherd who observes from above (*úd*) both living and nonliving things on earth, similarly to what seen in (7) for Homeric Greek. Differently, the context in (20) points at a specific source of the movement, expressed with the ablative case.

- (20) *ábodhy* *agnír* *jmá* ***úd eti*** *sūryo*,
wake-AOR.PASS.3SG Agni-NOM.SG earth-ABL.SG up go-PRES.3SG sun-NOM.SG
“*Agni woke up, the Sun goes up from earth*”
(RV. 1.157.1a)

Here the movement of the sun origins from the earth (*jmá*) and, as the following verse lets us know, *Sūrya* follows the ‘gleaming dawn’, which has already risen (1.157.1b). The ascending movement is clearly expressed in (21), where the sun reaches the higher sky.

- (21) ***udyánn*** *adyá* *mitramaha-* (RV. 1.50.11a-b)
up.go-PTCP.NOM.SG today Mitra.might-VOC.SG
āróhann *úttarām* *dívam*
on.ascend-PTCP.NOM.SG higher-ACC.SG sky-ACC.SG
“*as you go up today, o Mitra’s might,*
as you ascend on the higher sky...”

The passage illustrated in (21) is devoted to the Sun (see 1.50.11c), who is said to ‘go up’ and then ‘ascend’ the sky. In the first case (*úd yā*) no reference is made to the source or to the goal of the motion event, whereas in the second (*ā rub*) the goal of the motion event is expressed by the goal accusative *úttarām dívam* ‘higher sky’. Based on what has been previously said, one might thus legitimately observe that *udyánn* does not specifically refer to the sun rising, but, more generally, to the motion of the sun above in the sky during the day (which also includes the sunrise). Differently, *āróhann úttarām dívam* specifies the directed ascending motion to the higher part of the sky, which might eventually be related to a specific time of the day, similarly to what has been seen for both Homeric Greek (5) and Vedic (10). When the expression *úd yā* ‘go up’ refers to a particular moment of the movement of the sun in the sky, this can be made clear by the context, as can be seen for example in (22).

- (22) *mūrdhā* *bhuvó* *bhavati* *náktam* *agnís*,
head-NOM.SG earth-GEN.SG become-PRES.3SG night-ACC.SG Agni-NOM.SG
tātaḥ *sūryo* *jāyate* ***prātár*** ***udyán***
thence sun-NOM.SG be.born-PRES.3SG early. up.go-PTCP.NOM.SG
“*Agni becomes the head of the earth by night,*
thence the Sun is born, going up early in the morning”
(RV. 10.88.6a-b)

Not only the adverb *prātár*, but also the verb *jā* ‘be born’ allows us to locate the motion event early in the morning, as the reference to the birth of the sun suggests. Here the sun is represented as going above in the sky by day, as opposed to the god Agni living on the earth by night. In the absence of further context-dependent information, the movement of the sun is simply located in the sky above us, and not necessarily limited to the sunrise, as seen in (8) and in (23) below.

- (23) *yásya te viśvā bhúvanāni ketúnā* (RV. 10.37.9a-d)
 who-GEN.SG you-DAT all-N.PL creature-N.PL light-INS.SG
prá cérate ní ca viśante aktúbhiḥ
 towards move-PF.MID.3PL down and rest-PRES.MID.3PL night-INS.PL
anāgāstvéna harikeśa sūrya-
 blamelessness-INS.SG golden-haired-VOC.SG sun-VOC.SG
-āhnāhnā no vāsyasā-vasyasód ihi
 day.day-ACC.PL us-DAT better.better-INS.up go-IMP.2SG
 “to you, at whose light all creatures
 move forward and rest down with nights,
 with blamelessness, o golden-haired Sun,
 day after day go up for us with ever better (blamelessness)”

The passage in (23) is taken from a hymn devoted to *Sūrya*, whose light regulates the life of all creatures, their activities during the day, but also their rest during the night. The poet is invoking the sun, asking him to go above in the sky day after day in order to regulate all the creatures’ activities, from the sunrise to the sunset. For this reason, the imperative *úd ihi* ‘go up, above’ do not seem to specifically refer to the sunrise, but to the whole course of the sun in the sky.

Now, let us consider the other etymology mentioned at the beginning of this article. The hypothesis concerning Gr. Ὑπερίων ‘higher’ as the comparative form of ὕψιστος ‘highest’ does not find its counterpart in the Rigveda, where the sun-god is not represented as a deity that is located ‘higher’ relative to the ‘highest’ deities. Consider the verses in (24) below.

- (24) *úd vayām támasas pári,* (RV. 1.50.10a-d)
 up we-NOM darkness-ABL.SG around
jyótiḥ pásyanta úttaram
 light-N.SG look-PTCP.NOM.PL higher-ACC.SG
devām devatrā sūryam,
 god-ACC.SG among.gods sun-ACC.SG
áganma jyótir uttamám
 come-AOR.1PL light-N.SG highest-ACC.SG
 “looking from the darkness
 to the higher light
 we came up to the Sun, god among the gods,
 the highest light”

The sun is here referred to with the expression *uttamám jyótir* ‘the highest light’, which is made of the superlative (not comparative) form derived from the adverbial particle *úd* ‘up’. Thus, the hypothesis of a comparative adjective ‘higher’ referred to the sun does not find support in the Rigveda.

4. Conclusions

After analyzing the representation of the sun in both Homeric Greek and Vedic we are now in a better position to test the plausibility of the two etymologies presented in the first section. Besides the morphological and phonological evidence preliminarily observed, some considerations are now in order also from a syntactic-semantic and textual perspective. Firstly, the very frequent co-occurrence of both terms ἥλιος and *Sūrya* with motion verbs allows us to realize that the sun is mainly represented as a moving entity in Homeric Greek and Vedic Sanskrit respectively. In the Rigveda the sun is even represented as a wheel that is always in motion (9). This would support the etymology of Ὑπερίων as a compound made of the present participle of the motion verb εἶμι ‘go’, instead of Ὑπερίων as a comparative form derived from the adverbial particle ὑπέρ. Secondly, the textual analysis shows both syntactic and semantic correspondence between Homeric Ὑπερίων ‘that moves above (in the sky)’ and the Vedic expression *úd eti* ‘moves above (in the sky)’, which are specifically referred to the sun. In particular, the first constituents Gr. ὑπέρ and Ved. *úd* ‘up; above’ refer to the sun that goes up in the sky above (the earth) as opposed to the sun that goes beneath (the earth). In fact, the alternation between day and night that is conceived as the result of an uninterrupted motion of the sun above and under the earth is a representation common to both languages. Of course, there are also some differences in the names given to the different positions of the sun. More in detail, while the term for ‘midday’ is the same in both the Homeric poems (μέσον οὐρανὸν ‘middle sky’ in (5)) and the Rigveda (*madhyāṃdina* < *madhya* ‘middle’ and *dina* ‘sky; day’ in (10)), the terms used to express the sunrise and the sunset show more variety. Specifically, in Homeric Greek εἶμι ‘go’ is compounded with the particle ἀνά ‘up, from bottom to top’ to form the verb ἄνειμι, which is used to name the sunrise (1)-(2). The latter can also be referred to with other motion verbs or nouns compounded with the same particle ἀνά, namely ἀνορούω ‘start up’, ἀνανέομαι ‘mount up’, ἀντολαί < ἀνατολή ‘rising’. The sunset is mainly referred

to with (κατα)δύω ‘go down’, but sometimes also with ἐμπίπτω ‘fall upon (the Ocean)’, ἦλθον (ἐπὶ κνέφας) ‘(he) went (to the darkness)’. Differently, Vedic generally uses the expression *úd eti* to express all the movements of the sun across the sky and above the earth, thus including the sunrise and the sunset (22). It is in fact the context that eventually makes clear the specific moment the described event refers to, as seen for the adverb *prātár* ‘early in the morning’ in (21). Otherwise, the hymns of the Rigveda mostly describe the motion of the sun as continuous and non-specifically directed, or facing many directions (16). For this reason, the motion verbs used are always atelic (mostly *i* ‘go’, but also *car* ‘move’, *dhāv* ‘run’, *pat* ‘fly’, *yā* ‘go’, *vṛt* ‘roll’), except for those few cases in which a specific position of the sun is reached. In such cases, the telic verbs *gā* ‘go; come’ (11), *ruh* ‘ascend’ (21), or *gam* ‘step; go; come’ (23) are used.

To sum up, the comparison between Homeric Greek and Vedic texts allows us to hypothesize the existence of an inherited Indo-European representation of the sun-god, which would find its counterpart in the interpretation of Ὑπερίων as a compound. On the other hand, there are no data from Rigveda reporting evidence in favour of the alternative etymology also taken into account.

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