

## A Hypothesis on the Original Meaning of Samson's Hair

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*The article presents the results of a study on the original meaning of Samson's hair, which according to the biblical text was the secret of his superhuman strength. In this narrative Delilah, after discovering that his power resides in his hair, cuts it, leaving him weakened and vulnerable, and then hands him over to the Philistines, who blind and imprison him. Drawing parallels between Delilah's characteristics and those of ancient lunar goddesses like the Caucasian Dali, Diana and Artemis, connections are made between Delilah and the Moon. Likewise, earlier research, delving into the significance of Samson's famous riddle, associates him with fire, metallurgical activities, and even the Sun itself (as indicated by the etymology of his name). This dual association—Delilah with the Moon and Samson with the Sun—is the key to understanding the original meaning of his hair, which is a sophisticated metaphor for the Sun's corona, which shines at the climax of a total solar eclipse, when Earth, Moon and Sun align. This event casts a cold darkness over the Earth, with the Sun appearing weakened and “blinded”, resembling a black disk, surrounded by the corona, unable to provide light and warmth. Furthermore, additional hints, yet to be explored, suggest that other feats attributed to Samson may also symbolize celestial phenomena. It is also plausible that in ancient times the Sun's corona inspired the creation of regal diadems as well as radiate crowns—often adorned with seven rays, probably reminiscent of Samson's seven braids—symbolizing the ruler's identification with the Sun itself.*

**Keywords:** Samson, Delilah, Dali, Diana, Artemis, Sun, Moon, Sun's corona, solar eclipse, radiate crown

In this article we will try to demonstrate that at the origin of the story of Samson's hair, which was cut by Delilah and in which the secret of his strength was contained, there may have been a complex metaphor, inspired by a fascinating astronomical phenomenon that appears during solar eclipses: the Sun's corona.

This interpretation, influenced by the analysis of the Caucasian mythological figure Dali, whose attributes bear resemblance to both Delilah and the Moon-associated deities Artemis and Diana, alongside the etymological link between Samson's name and the Sun, was cultivated through a methodology characterized by a fresh critical scrutiny of not only biblical and classical sources but also diverse literary contexts.

The biblical episode featuring the story of Samson and Delilah is situated within the Book of Judges, where it forms part of a broader narrative surrounding the life and exploits of Samson:

“Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, ‘See if you can lure

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him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver'. So Delilah said to Samson, 'Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued'. Samson answered her, 'If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I'll become as weak as any other man'. Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. With men hidden in the room, she called to him, 'Samson, the Philistines are upon you!' But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered. Then Delilah said to Samson, 'You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied'. He said, 'If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man'. So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, 'Samson, the Philistines are upon you!' But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads. Delilah then said to Samson, 'Until now, you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied'. He replied, 'If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric [on the loom] and tighten it with the pin, I'll become as weak as any other man'. So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric and tightened it with the pin. Again she called to him, 'Samson, the Philistines are upon you!' He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric. Then she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you', when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength'. With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything. 'No razor has ever been used on my head', he said, 'because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man'. When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, 'Come back once more; he has told me everything'. So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him. Then she called, 'Samson, the Philistines are upon you!' He awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the Lord had left him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, 'Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands'. When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, 'Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain'. While they were in high spirits, they shouted, 'Bring out Samson to entertain us'. So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them'. Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, 'O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes'. Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one

and his left hand on the other, Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived"<sup>1</sup>.

From this passage, it becomes evident that Delilah possesses a highly seductive, ambitious, and determined nature, coupled with a lack of benevolence towards her lover. Conversely, Samson appears entirely captivated and dominated by her, going so far as to entrust her with the genuine secret of his strength, despite her prior attempts to betray him to the Philistines by exploiting the confidences—albeit misleading—he had shared with her under her persistent prodding.

In the Caucasian realm, particularly in Georgia, a character bearing significant similarities to Delilah can be identified. This character is found within the folklore and ancient traditions of Georgia, a culture that has preserved its heritage to an exceptional degree, possibly dating back over 3,000 years (Virsaladze 2017, p. 13). In the Svaneti region of Georgia, the Svan people continue to reside, and within their mythology, a prominent figure emerges: the hunting goddess Dali, also known as Daal or Dæl.

Dali, known as “the Lady of the wild animals” (Virsaladze 2017, p. 106), is depicted as a stunning woman adorned with long, braided, golden hair (Davidson, 2002, p. 15), and her complexion is described as luminous, so white that it almost emits light (Tuite 2006, p. 2), as evidenced by one of her epithets: “Radiant” (Rova 2016, p. 522). She is often portrayed unclothed (Tuite, 2006, p. 16), but if garments adorn her, they are consistently white attire (Berman et al. 2011, p. 105).

Dali’s beauty was both mesmerizing and terrifying; it possessed the power to drive men to madness merely by conversing with her. Contrary to traditional gender norms, it was often Dali who selected the hunter and initiated the affair (Tuite 1997, p. 6). Indeed, in many tales, Dali is depicted as taking a hunter as her lover, a circumstance that could bring him benefits but also expose him to significant risks. Out of jealousy or other motivations, Dali was capable of causing harm to her chosen companion, and in extreme cases, even causing his demise (Chaudhri 2002, p. 170).

A crucial aspect of Dali’s persona was her lengthy, golden-hued hair, which “shone like the sun” (Charachidzé 1993, p. 260). In some tales, she employs her exceptionally strong hair to bind hunters who have wronged her or even to strangle a hunter who had stolen one of her hairs to string his hunting bow (Davidson and Chaudhri 1993, p. 159).

Moreover, a recurring motif involves the utilization of Dali's hair as a means to threaten, harm, or even kill her. Many narratives depict hunters who seize her or sever her locks in attempts to subdue and assault her, with some variations suggesting that cutting her hair results in her demise (Chirikba 2015, p. 178). However, such actions fail to deter her from seeking retribution. In a tale featuring Dali's Mingrelian counterpart, Tkashi-Mapa, the goddess reluctantly agrees to wed a hunter after he menaces to shear her hair. Yet, ultimately, she retaliates by annihilating his entire lineage (Virsaladze 2017, p. 231).

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<sup>1</sup>Jdg. 16:4-30.

Indeed, from these observations, Dali's resonance with the Greek goddess Artemis becomes evident (see Figure 1), whom Homer refers to as “πότνια θηρῶν Ἄρτεμις ἀγροτέρη”<sup>2</sup> (“the Lady of animals Artemis the huntress”). Furthermore, both the Iliad and the Odyssey emphatically highlight Artemis's beauty, her proficiency with the bow, and her lethal aspect.

**Figure 1.** *Detail of a Fresco from Pompeii Depicting a Statue of Artemis with the Radiate Crown*



Furthermore, the association of Dali's luminous and radiant appearance with the color white strongly indicates her connection to lunar symbolism, akin to both Artemis—who, as the twin sister of Apollo, the Sun god, embodies lunar attributes—and particularly her Roman counterpart, Diana. Diana's multifaceted nature as both a lunar and hunting deity aligns closely with Dali's typical attributes.

Surprising parallels also emerge between Dali and Dalila, such as their seductive but aggressive and even malevolent attitudes towards their lovers, as well as the significant emphasis placed on hair, even if in Dali's case it is hers, while the biblical story refers to Samson's hair—this is a significant discrepancy, which we will have the opportunity to return to later. It is also interesting to note that Delilah weaves Samson's braids on her loom<sup>3</sup>, as if to indicate the overlap of the two characters. Furthermore, as we have seen, Dali's extraordinary hair can be used to make bows, a not insignificant detail considering that the shape of the crescent Moon resembles a hunter's bow. Notably, the bow is mentioned twice in the Delilah episode and then no longer in the Book of Judges.

Considering the similarity between the names Dali and Delilah within the broader context of their shared characteristics, it seems reasonable to infer that this resemblance is not merely coincidental. When we juxtapose this with Dali's lunar attributes, which align her closely with her classic counterpart Artemis-Diana—

<sup>2</sup>Il. XXI, 470.

<sup>3</sup>Jdg. 16:13.



both associated with hunting and lunar symbolism—we can speculate that Delilah, with her enchanting beauty capable of ensnaring Samson entirely, may have originally possessed a lunar dimension that was later obscured over time.

This proposed association of Delilah with the Moon offers a coherent interpretation of her three unsuccessful attempts to get Samson to reveal the secret of his strength. They align neatly with the three primary phases of the lunar cycle: waxing moon, full moon, and waning moon. Additionally, the recurrence of the number seven, traditionally linked to the days of the lunar phases, in both the first and third attempts reinforces this perspective. Furthermore, the mention of the bow in Delilah's initial attempt, emblematic of the hunter goddesses due to its resemblance to the crescent Moon, further supports this lunar interpretation.

Moreover, the tripartite nature of the Moon as reflected in the biblical story of Delilah could also shed light on the original significance of the Latin adjective “triformis”, meaning “with three aspects”, attributed to Diana: “diva triformis”<sup>4</sup>, “conceived as a threefold unity of the divine huntress, the Moon goddess and the goddess of the nether world” (Alföldi 1960, p. 141). Diana Nemorensis, revered as such since the 6th century BCE, was worshipped as a triple goddess in her sacred grove on the shores of Lake Nemi, 20 km from Rome—a site that Virgil refers to as “Triviae lacus”<sup>5</sup>.

The worship of Diana at Nemi offers another intriguing connection. According to Servius<sup>6</sup>, this cult was established by Orestes, brother of Iphigenia, who fled to Italy with his sister after killing Thoas, the king of the Tauric Chersonese (Crimea), and brought along the image of the Tauric Diana (Frazer 1996, p. 3). Considering that Crimea is situated along the Black Sea coast, in close proximity to the Caucasus region associated with Dali, this geographical connection adds depth to the narrative. Furthermore, the significant role of Artemis in the dramatic events recounted by Euripides in the tragedies “Iphigenia in Aulis” and “Iphigenia in Tauris”<sup>7</sup> underscores the interconnectedness between Artemis, Iphigenia, and the Tauric Diana. These narratives seem to highlight a shared cultural and mythological heritage spanning different regions and civilizations.

Here, however, it is worth underlining that the events of Iphigenia told by Euripides, in particular her sacrifice in Aulis, are absolutely contradictory to what Homer says about her. In fact, according to the *Iliad*, Iphigenia lived peacefully with her family, including her brother Orestes and her sisters Chrysothemis and Laodice, during the Trojan War<sup>8</sup>. This indicates that the story of her sacrifice belongs to a tradition completely foreign to the Homeric world.

It is also noteworthy that during the Renaissance scholars drew comparisons between the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the biblical story of Jephthah, who offers his daughter as a sacrifice to defeat the Ammonites<sup>9</sup>, to the point that “The first

<sup>4</sup>Ov., *Carm.* 3, 22, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Verg., *Aen.* VII, 516.

<sup>6</sup>Servius, on *Aen.* VI, 136.

<sup>7</sup>The eventful story of Iphigenia in Tauris—including her daring escape from the temple of Diana-Artemis together with Orestes and his friend Pylades (who were about to be sacrificed by her on the goddess' altar)—is also told by Ovid (*Ov.*, *Ex P.*, III, 2, 45-96).

<sup>8</sup>Il. IX, 142-145.

<sup>9</sup>Jdg. 11:30-40.

Renaissance biblical drama modeled on Greek tragedy: George Buchanan's *Jephtes sive votum tragoedia* (...) transposes Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* into the story of Jephthah and his daughter" (Shuger 1998, p. 134-135). Furthermore, the story of Jephthah is recounted in the Book of Judges, where the chapters dedicated to Jephthah are precisely those that precede those featuring Samson. Thus it might be appropriate to conduct further investigations to ascertain whether these connections are mere coincidences or indicative of deeper intertextual and cultural influences.

Another significant convergence between the biblical narrative of Samson and the Caucasian myth of Dali further bolsters the coherence of the connections being drawn. This convergence involves Dali's son, conceived when a hunter cut off her braids while she slept, raped her, and thus impregnated her (Berman et al. 2011, p. 84). However, the son who was born following the rape, named Amirani, emerges as a remarkable figure in Georgian epic tradition, bearing striking similarities to Prometheus from classical mythology (Charachidzé 1986).

Much like Prometheus, Amirani defies the gods by giving mankind the knowledge of metalworking. Consequently, he is punished and chained to the Caucasus Mountains, where an eagle devours his liver during the day, only for it to regenerate each night—a parallel to Prometheus's torment in Greek mythology. Interestingly, Amirani's connection to fire has left a lasting impact, extending beyond mythology. Astronomers have paid homage to him by naming an active extraterrestrial volcano on Io, one of Jupiter's moons, after him (Smith 1979).

After noting that Prometheus, with his Caucasian dimension, is never mentioned in the Homeric poems—reflecting the earlier observation regarding the events of Iphigenia in Aulis and Tauris, recounted in the tragedies of Euripides but ignored by Homer—it's worth highlighting the igneous-metallurgical dimension of Amirani. This aspect aligns perfectly with the fact that Svaneti, the homeland of the Svans who handed down to us the myth of Dali, has been exploited as a source of high-quality copper since the Bronze Age (Tuite 2006, p. 2). Moreover, it is noteworthy that Dali and Artemis, her Greek counterpart, are the mother of a character (Amirani) closely linked to fire and the twin sister of the sun god (Apollo) respectively. Considering the connections between each of them and the Roman Diana, in addition to their shared lunar dimension, a complex web of relationships emerges, of which another example is that of Tityos, the Homeric counterpart of Amirani and Prometheus since he shares their torment<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, Tityos shares with Amirani the connection with a rape: Amirani is the result of the rape of Dali-Artemis, and Tityos attempts to rape Leto, Artemis' mother.

Still on Dali's son, his intimate connection with fire is a significant point of convergence with Samson. In a previous article (Vinci and Maiuri 2023), which we will briefly summarize here, we analyzed the biblical hero's relationship with fire and metalworking, beginning with the circumstances surrounding his miraculous birth. Samson's mother, previously barren, received news of his

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<sup>10</sup>Hom., *Od.* XI, 576-581.

impending birth from an angel of the Lord, who subsequently ascended in the flame rising from an altar after a sacrifice<sup>11</sup>. This association with fire intertwines with the metallurgical dimension that unlocks the meaning of Samson's famous riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet"<sup>12</sup>, which refers to a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of a roaring lion that he had killed in Timnah. This ancient riddle, contextualized against recent archaeological findings in the Timna Valley—a region home to ancient copper mines and metallurgical activities (Ben-Yosef 2018)—reveals a metaphorical link to the world of metalworking. The smelting furnace, akin to the "eater" in Samson's riddle, consumes minerals with fire, emitting a noise that recalls the roar of a lion and the buzz of bees swarming around a hive, then copper emerges, whose hue bears a resemblance to wild honey.

Furthermore, in that article we demonstrated that the solution to Samson's riddle finds parallels in myths and stories from various civilizations. For instance, we referenced the tale of the Nemean lion slain by Heracles and the Japanese myth in which Susanoo, brother of the sun goddess, defeats a dragon (as does Amirani) from whose tail he retrieves a sword considered one of the treasures of the Japanese imperial dynasty. Susanoo has been likened to "the Japanese Samson" (de Santillana and von Dechend 2003, p. 205). Additionally, we explored the legend of the sword in the stone from the myth of King Arthur (Vinci and Maiuri 2023a), decodable through a metallurgical metaphor, reflecting the ability of ancient blacksmiths to "extract" swords from iron ore. A compelling example is the sword stuck up to the hilt in a rock at the Montesiepi hermitage in the Metalliferous Hills of Tuscany. This legend is associated with San Galgano, a 12th-century knight after whom the adjacent Abbey is named. During the Middle Ages, this Abbey was a significant center for the production of weapons and tools crafted from iron obtained by smelting pyrite abundant in the region. These examples highlight the igneous-metallurgical dimension of Samson's character, directly connecting him to Dali's son, who, in turn, bears resemblance to the Greek Prometheus.

Perfectly consistent with this framework is the fact that in Samson's name, שמשון, which in Hebrew means "man of the sun" (van der Toorn et al. 1999, p. 404), the Hebrew word for the sun (שמש) is embedded. This even led in the past to the hypothesis that Samson's hair represented the rays of the sun (Mobley 2006, p. 7). Moreover, further confirmation of the intimate relationship between the solar and metallurgical dimensions can be found in the mythology of the Dogon people of Mali. According to their beliefs, the Sun was depicted as a large molten copper vessel (Griaule 1968, p. 25), which suggests the image of a small incandescent sun forming within the crucible at the culmination of the metal fusion process.

After delving into the relationship between the character of Samson with the Sun and fire, paralleled with that of Delilah with the Moon, it is time to draw conclusions. Based on our analysis, it becomes evident that behind the image of Samson being "weakened" by Delilah's cutting of his hair lies an extraordinary metaphor depicting the meeting of the Sun and the Moon during a total solar eclipse. During this event, the sky darkens, a cold darkness envelops the Earth, and

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<sup>11</sup>Jdg. 13:20

<sup>12</sup>Jdg. 14:14.

the Sun appears as a “blinded” black disk, surrounded by the radiant Sun’s corona (Figure 2). The Sun’s corona resembles bright hair, manifesting only at the climax of the eclipse—as if the Moon had detached it from the Sun’s head, which at that moment seems to lose its light and its heat, just like Samson who lost his strength when he was shaved by Delilah.

**Figure 2.** *The Solar Corona Appears as a Glowing Head of Hair at the Height of Total Solar Eclipses*



From this powerful image an arcane feeling of enigmatic beauty and superhuman strength arises, which presumably inspired the metaphor of "Samson's hair", as well as Dali's hair, which, as we have noted, "shined like the sun". Furthermore, at this point the contradiction between the biblical story, which attributes the strength to Samson's hair, and the Caucasian myth, which instead attributes it to Dali's, is easily explained, considering that the uncertainty whether the corona belongs to the Sun or to the Moon lasted until the modern age! In fact, it was only in 1724 that the astronomer Giacomo Filippo Maraldi resolved the doubt, when he managed to demonstrate that the corona that appears during the total eclipse belongs to the Sun.

In summary, during the climax of a total eclipse the Sun appears to be "weakened" (as it ceases to emit light and heat) and "blinded", mirroring Samson's condition when he was captured and blinded by the Philistines after Delilah cut him hair. The term “eclipse” itself derives from the ancient Greek ἔκλειψις, which means “absence, abandonment”. Interestingly, a similar association between blindness and fire appears in Roman mythology, particularly in the tale of Caeculus, the mythical founder of Praeneste and son of Vulcan. In fact, its name means "little blind man" and at the same time its story is closely linked to fire (Bremmer and Horsfall 1987).

Furthermore, another remarkable feat of Samson involves fire: “He went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves”<sup>13</sup>. This strange tale finds a remarkable parallel in a

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<sup>13</sup>Jdg. 15:4-5.



peculiar Roman custom: “When the third day has dawned after the departure of the Hyades, the Circus will keep the horses separated in their starting-stalls. So I must explain the reason why foxes are released bearing blazing torches on their backs”<sup>14</sup>. At first glance, making sense of these bizarre tales of fiery foxes seems impossible. But perhaps the key to the riddle can be found in Finnish folklore, where a mythical fox called *Tulikettu*, meaning “Fire Fox”, is known. This fox’s tail twinkles with fire, lending its name to the Northern Lights, known as *Revontulet*, or “Fox Fires”, in Finnish. According to legend, the Northern Lights are caused by the tail of the Fire Fox (Ojanen and Linnea 2019, p. 44), which throws sparks when it runs and touches the snowy ground, branches, or bushes (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** An Artistic Image of the Mythical Fire Fox



In essence, the fiery foxes in Samson’s tale and the Roman Circus appear to be an extraordinary metaphor for the Northern Lights, one of the most fantastical celestial spectacles. Additionally, the elongated shape of fox tails, particularly those of red foxes, aptly represents the bright plumes of fire exhibited by the Northern Lights—or rather, the Nordic “Fox Fires”.

Interestingly, a passage from the Iliad might also allude to the Northern Lights: “As Zeus spreads a waving halo from out of heaven for mortals, as an omen of war or a chill winter”<sup>15</sup>. The adjective *porphyreos*, meaning “waving, floating”, is well-suited to describe the fluctuations of the Northern Lights. Additionally, the association of these lights with war is apparent in Agamemnon’s cuirass, which depicted “serpents of cyanus facing the neck, three on each side, similar to the “halos” (*irissin*) that the son of Cronus places in a cloud as an omen for mortals”<sup>16</sup>. These “snake-like halos” vividly express the impressive mobility of

<sup>14</sup>Ov. *Fast.* IV, 679-682: “Tertia post Hyadas cum lux erit orta remotas/ carcere partitos Circus habebit equos,/ cur igitur missae vinctis ardentia taedis/ terga ferant volpes causa docenda mihi est”.

<sup>15</sup>ἦ ἴτε πορφυρέην ἴριον θνητοῖσι τανύσση/ Ζεὺς ἐξ οὐρανόθεν τέρας ἔμμεναι ἢ πολέμοιο/ ἢ καὶ χειμῶνος δυσθαπέος (Hom. *Il.* XVII, 547-549).

<sup>16</sup>κῦάνεοι δὲ δράκοντες ὀρωρέχατο προτὶ δειρήν/ τρεῖς ἐκάτερθ’ ἴρισσιν εὐικότας, ἅς τε Κρονίων/ ἐν νέφει στήριξε, τέρας μερόπων ἀνθρώπων (Hom. *Il.* XI, 26-28).

the Northern Lights<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, the term *iris* is also the name of Iris, the messenger of the gods in the Iliad. This suggests that ancient peoples may have interpreted the Northern Lights as omens, possibly viewing them as expressions of divine will, also considering that their glowing apparitions are always different from each other. One might even speculate on a connection between the “waving halo” in the Iliad and the biblical “sign of the covenant” that God placed on the clouds after the Flood<sup>18</sup>.

Returning to Samson, the relationship between his character and some impressive celestial phenomena such as the solar eclipse and the aurora borealis (which is not surprising if we consider that the Sun is in the root of his name) could reflect a *Weltanschauung* that is often found in the mythologies of the ancient world, which can be summarized with the famous phrase, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, “what is below corresponds to what is above”. Here another example is given by the correspondence between the seven Pleiades and the Seven Hills of Rome (Vinci and Maiuri 2017), corroborated by the traditional date of the foundation of Rome, April 21st, which is also directly linked to the Pleiades because that day, the first of the zodiacal month of Taurus, according to the Mesopotamian calendar was dedicated to them (Vinci and Maiuri 2019). One should also consider that there are other ancient cities, such as Jerusalem, Byzantium, Mecca, Armagh, Tehran, Bamberg, Besançon, Moscow, even Macau in China, and so on, whose location on seven hills could be also linked to this idea (Nissan et al. 2019).

All of these elements could also provide a new interpretation of Samson's final exploit, wherein the Philistines, exploiting his weakness after Delilah's cutting of his hair, force him to turn a millstone<sup>19</sup>. However, he ultimately causes their temple to collapse on both his and their heads: “He pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it”<sup>20</sup>. In our view, considering the cosmic dimension of Samson's character, evident in the metaphor of his hair and the symbolism of the foxes, that millstone may symbolize the mythical “mill of the sky”. It represents the celestial vault with its perpetual rotation, visible during the night, which “is an image itself of time that incessantly grinds the eras, completing the measure assigned to them (...) The mill par excellence of the Nordic myth is *Grotti*, who grinds the prosperity and abundance of the god of fertility. After the progressive decadence of the eras the mill of the sky will be swallowed and will disappear into the depths of the celestial ocean, when the old cycle must be replaced by the new one” (Chiesa Isnardi 1996, p. 183). According to *Gróttasongr*, an Old Norse poem, the Grotti mill was operated by two giantesses who, being prisoners of an evil king, ultimately destroyed it through their superhuman strength until “the structure collapsed, and the sturdy stone split in two”<sup>21</sup>. This cataclysmic event, which

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<sup>17</sup>Instead, the usual interpretation of ἵρις as “rainbow” leaves us perplexed, since the rainbow, unlike the Northern Lights, is an absolutely static phenomenon.

<sup>18</sup>Gen. 9:12-16.

<sup>19</sup>Jdg. 16:21.

<sup>20</sup>Jdg. 16:30.

<sup>21</sup>*Gróttasongr*, 88-89.

marked the end of an era, seems to be comparable to Samson's final undertaking.

Interestingly, a millstone, comparable to both the Norse and the biblical one, is also mentioned by Homer. We are referring to the millstone in which the woman works who prophesies to Odysseus the defeat of the suitors<sup>22</sup>.

Returning now to Samson's hair, its identification with the solar corona on the one hand further reinforces the idea that Dalila's three failed attempts to steal the secret of his strength correspond to the waxing, full and waning phases of the Moon, on the other it aligns perfectly with the logic of her fourth, successful attempt, corresponding to the new moon phase, when the moon is invisible (being on the same side of the sun with respect to the Earth). In fact, a total solar eclipse, with the consequent appearance of the corona, can only occur in this phase.

It is also reasonable to assume that the myth of Samson's hair originated in a very ancient era. At the beginning it might have been inspired by the awe and fear evoked by total solar eclipses, which together with the Northern Lights are the most extraordinary celestial phenomenon. However, over the centuries, this myth has probably undergone progressive distortions and corruptions, obscuring its original features to the point of making them almost unrecognizable behind the metaphor in which it has remained hidden until now.

However, as often happens in these cases, when one comes across an unexpected solution, new questions arise from it. Remembering, for example, the fact that Ra, the Egyptian sun god, was considered both a king and the father of Pharaoh, and that in the iconography of ancient Egypt the solar crown, i.e., a disc framed by the horns of a ram or a cow, was worn by divinities such as Horus in his solar aspect, Hathor and Isis, as well as by the pharaohs themselves (Teissier 1996, p. 122), a question that immediately arises concerns the crown that has encircled the heads of kings since time immemorial: does it have its distant origin precisely from the Sun's corona? One might in fact suppose that the sacred aura that has always surrounded the figure of the king could have arisen from his identification with the Sun itself. But let's also think about the tips that characterize the traditional appearance of royal crowns and radiate crowns, as well as the feather headdresses of Native Americans (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** *The Idea of Radiate Crowns, Headdresses and Regal Crowns Indicating the Wearer's Power Might Have Been Inspired by the Sun's Corona*



<sup>22</sup>Hom. *Od.* XX, 105- 121.

The radiate crown indeed holds significant symbolic value, representing the Sun and its radiance. It was prominently worn by Roman emperors in connection with the worship of Sol Invictus. Furthermore, depictions of the radiate crown with seven rays can be found in various ancient artifacts, such as the bust of Helios<sup>23</sup> from the 1st century AD and the statue of Artemis from Pompeii. Even in modern times, this symbolism persists, as evidenced by its presence in the Statue of Liberty<sup>24</sup> in New York.

The presence of seven rays in radiate crowns, including those seen in the artifacts mentioned earlier, could indeed reflect a vestige of a much older tradition, probably reminiscent of the “seven braids”<sup>25</sup> that Delilah severed from Samson when she sheared his hair.

In conclusion, without prejudice to the fact that this fascinating topic will require further in-depth analysis and investigation, there are good reasons to believe that the story of Samson's hair is actually a metaphor behind which hides the last memory of an ancient myth, inspired by the extraordinary spectacle of the Sun's corona in the culminating moment of a total solar eclipse. We arrived at this result after proving the identification of Delilah with the Moon and Samson with the Sun, and then verifying that his hair represents a surprising, bright (we can say so) metaphor of the Sun's corona. In fact, the corona appears at the moment in which the Sun, separated from its “hair” by the interposition of the Moon, finds itself weakened and “blinded”.

Even if with the passage of time this original meaning had been forgotten, on the one hand the permanence of the multiple links of the character of Samson with the sun and fire, and on the other the lunar dimension of Dalila-Dali, allowed us to reconstruct its original astronomical meaning. On the other hand, Samson's celestial dimension seems to be the key to deciphering the meaning of some of his other exploits, that of the foxes with their tails on fire and the final one, in which he sacrifices himself by causing the temple of the Philistines to collapse on his and their heads. However, these are topics, as well as that of the hypothesized origin of royal crowns and radiate crowns from the Sun's corona, which deserve further investigation.

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<sup>23</sup>[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Helios\\_with\\_chlamys\\_Louvre\\_AO7530.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Helios_with_chlamys_Louvre_AO7530.jpg)

<sup>24</sup>The strong resemblance of the Statue of Liberty to the statue of Artemis portrayed in the Pompeii fresco (Figure 2) leads us to suspect that its creator, Auguste Bartholdi, drew inspiration from it.

<sup>25</sup>Jdg. 16:19.



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