

The Hunters **(Indo-European Proto-myths: The Storm God, The Good King, The Mighty Hunter)¹**

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The comparative material for the ruler – warrior function, the second function within Dumézil’s tripartite canon, is rich in theistic, social, and military comparands. My effort to extend this work to hunting, a natural pastime of royalty and of warriors, has led to a new hypothesis regarding hunting bands of horseless warriors. These seem to have originally been non-Indo-European groups that have been brought into the Indo-European fold by a process of Indo-European chieftains conferring rank upon them (see also Anthony 2007: 118-19). The *Fianna Eireann* (Fianna of Ireland) of Finn mac Cumhaill (or Umhaill) are the most detailed example of this symbiosis and incorporation. This hypothesis receives independent support from the long-recognized geographical variation in the sense of Indo-European **aryones*, ‘Aryans’.

Prelude

Consideration of the Nart sagas from the Caucasus (Dumézil 1930; 1978; Colarusso 2002; May, Salbiev, and Colarusso forthcoming) has offered abundant material on the Storm God, the spiritual paradigm for the warrior ethic. The material is sufficient to have led me to reconstruct the proto-myth of his early life (Colarusso 2006, b; 2007). This effort has extended the pioneering work of Ivanov and Toporov (1970),² and complements Nick Allen’s work (2007) on the Storm God’s later career, as well as John Shaw’s (2006) examination.

The material is also rich in social details and terminology. I have put forward a modification of the social functions, with an archaic prototype for Dumézil’s tripartite vision that depicts

¹This study is based upon a talk delivered at the conference, “The Deep History of Stories,” Edinburgh, 28-30 August 2007, the first meeting of the International Association for Comparative Mythology.

²I am indebted to George Thompson for providing me with a copy of this article.

a highly structured early Indo-European social order mediated through ritual hostility (2006, a). This moiety model, in which all functions can bear arms when circumstances demand it, is bolstered by the work of Speidel (2004) and by passages in the *Shāh-nāma* (Levy 1967: 9 – 10, 25) wherein Jamshid establishes four classes, and later Faridun disbands the armed workers who have joined his *Nēysari*, warriors, “That soldiers and workmen should both win merit in one and the same way is not right; ... Now depart to your [workers’] tasks with song.” Along with regular warriors they have helped to defeat the wicked dragon king, *Zahhāk*.

A moral inversion (Puhvel 1987: 94 – 116) of this hierarchical society and its ritual hostility can be seen in the Arthurian cycle, and in the early Norse saga, *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* (Byock 1998). Graham Anderson (2004; Anderson and Smyth 2007) has presented ample evidence that this moral inversion is extremely old, much older than the oldest Arthurian sources, and may indeed reach back to Anatolian Indo-European traditions if not to those of Indo-European itself.

The Mighty Hunter and His Band

My original hypothesis was that the Indio-European second function arose from hunting bands, specifically from an early moiety that specialized in hunting. This seemed a reasonable guess given the royal hunts of Iran, England, etc. I set out to show that a later, attested diversion was in fact a founding activity. To my consternation and surprise I could find little comparative evidence for this hypothesis. Nothing rose above the level of folk motif (Thompson 1932-7, vol. 6, 405-6).

Only one source offered the richness of detail that is essential to the comparative effort (Colarusso 1998), and this was drawn from the Irish mythological corpus of Finn and the *Fíanna*. My first alternate hypothesis was that the canonical Indo-European hunter is Ireland’s Finn (older, Find, modern, Fionn) mac Cumhaill (modern, Mac Cool) and his *Fíanna Éireann*, assuming the usual conservatism of Irish material. The “Fenian Cycle,” (*Fíannaidheacht*) as noted by MacKillop (2005: 219-242), is a living, accreting body of lore, which contains a wide range of themes that are not relevant to comparative efforts. With this corpus one is touching history since the *Fíanna* (sg. *fían*) actually existed. MacKillop (2005: 220-1; 1998:

196-7) compares them to the Gaulish *gaesatae* ‘spearmen’, (see also Kershaw 2000: 108, f.n. 5) with a social role like that of the *samurai* of Japan. While the Gaulish *gaesatae* are close, I shall show that the social role of the *Fíanna* is more complex than that of the *samurai*.

The folkloric material in the Fenian Cycle is often at odds with patterns characteristic of the older, usually termed “mythic,” material. Perhaps most conspicuously, women are frequently killed in the Cycle, whereas this is quite rare in the myths. Once the folkloric overlay has been removed, however, the Fenian Cycle still exhibits old features. First, it is clear that there were several *Fíanna*, each pegged to a region. The plural is normally used because each region had three wings or warbands of *Fían*, each of these consisting of one hundred men (Persse 1998: 196, 217). It is also clear that these *Fíanna* were parallel structures to the normal social order of ancient Ireland. They have their own leaders and villages, situated in the forests apart from the towns of the Irish. Moreover, Finn’s men prefer to fight with spears. Swords are absent, save for one, Mac an Lúin wielded by Finn (MacKillop 1998: 205), while bows and arrows are rare. They fight on foot. Horses appear only in some of the folkloric passages where members of the *Fíanna* also appear as evanescent and magical giants or spirits (Persse 1998: 403-404). The absence of horses is clear, for example, in the account where Oisín, Finn’s son, meets Niamh Chinn Oir. When she asks him to join her, he climbs up onto her horse’s back (*op. cit.* p. 402).

Etymologies

Nevertheless, the etymology of their designation is clearly Indo-European. Kershaw (*op. cit.*, p. 110) suggests a source Proto-Celtic * *wēd-no-*, with the Celtic naming suffix */-no-*, based on the Indo-European root **weydho-*, **woydho-*, reflected in Old Irish *fíad*, Welsh *gwydd* ‘wild game’, Old Irish *fíadach* ‘hunt, game’, Old Icelandic *véjðr*, Old English *wād* both ‘hunt’. Her chief motivation for the Proto-Celtic form is the single */n/* found in the singular, *fían* (instead of **fíann*), and the plural variant *fíana*, which points to a proto cluster **-dn-* with a preceding long vowel (Lewis and Pedersen 1961: 37).

Alternatively, one might see here a reflex of the productive root **wen-* ‘to win, gain, hunt for; strive; lust after; suffer; place of hunting, forest’: *fían* ≤ **wēn-*/ **wén-*, English *win*, Old High

German *ge-winnan* ‘to gain by labor’, Gothic *ga-winnan* ‘to suffer’ (Hoad 1996: 542), Latin *vēnārī* ‘to hunt’, Sanskrit *vanōti* ‘he hunts’, *vanām* ‘forest’. The plural *fianna* is more likely a direct reflex of the derived dehnstufe form **wēn-ā-to*, as in Latin *vēnātus* ‘hunting’ (with long second syllable extended to the infinitive), *vēnātor* ‘hunter’. A slightly different stem, **wen-E-do-*, seems to lie behind Germanic forms, as in Proto-Germanic **Weneda*, ‘Wends’ (a Slavic people), Old High German *Winid*, making them the Celtic Wends, ‘foresters, hunters,’ (Watkins 2000: 98)

The root has a wide semantic range, extending to concepts of desire and lust, winning and gaining, raging and suffering. Such a semantic spectrum suggests either great antiquity or the conflation of original homonyms. The varied history of the original exhibits different derivations. The second syllable of the proto-form behind the plural would seem to have a laryngeal origin (Mallory and Adams, 2006: 341, where the form is cited as *wenh_x-*), with the Italic and Celtic data showing **wen-A-t-* and the Germanic **wen-E-t-*. The singular may have had its source in a distinct root, as in Kershaw’s analysis, with subsequent conflation within Gaelic.

This form, *Fían(na)*, is not to be confused with the *Féni*, the “true Irish” of the old laws, whose name is likely based on the Indo-European for ‘wagon’ or ‘chariot’, **wegh_x-*, as with Welsh *gwain*, Old Britanno-Latin *co-uinnus* ‘war chariot’, Old Norse *vagn*, Latin *vēhō* ‘I carry, go’, Greek *ókhos* ‘wagon’, Sanskrit *vāhāmi* ‘I carry, go’. (Lewis and Pedersen 1961: 11).

Parallels

Careful comparison with other traditions, however, leads to solid parallels between the Fenian Cycle and other Indo-European corpora, attesting to the antiquity of the core of the Cycle. In the following Irish, Nart, Iranian, and Norse material is used. Irish (*Fíanna*) material has been taken from MacKillop (1998; 2005), or Persse, Isabella Augusta, Lady Gregory (1998). The Nart material is from Colarusso (2002), and focuses on tales of She (‘hunter’) *Batinuquo*, or *Bardinuquo* (whence **Bartinuquo*, the citation form I use). The Iranian material is taken from Levy (1967: 35-46), focusing on the Sistani epic of *Zal*. The Norse is from two sagas found in Pálsson and Edwards (1985: 25-137, 228-57). The one that exhibits the most parallels is “Arrow Odd” (*Örvar-Odds saga*; cf., Old Norse *oddi* ‘point, angle,’ Hoad 1996: 320). This is a late Christianized saga that

nevertheless contains some remarkable details that show some semblance to features in the Fenian Cycle. The other is “Egil and Asmund,” which is a short saga containing numerous archaisms.

The Nart material here is not Indo-European, though it has much that is of Iranian origin (see the Ossetian material in May, Salbiev, and Colarusso). It is important to understand that a tale is not part of a rigid system, like a grammar. Tales spread, as Anderson’s work amply demonstrates. When we delve into prehistoric myth we are reconstructing the traditions of a culture and not merely of one language group. As West (2007: 23-4) notes, we cannot know if our reconstructed material was solely of Indo-European provenance. West views this as a failing or limitation; I see it as a widening of horizons. Henceforth, when ‘Indo-European’ is used for a non-linguistic term, the reader should assume the broader cultural sense.

What follows is an inventory of comparands or cognate themes, along with comments.

(1) Murder of father

a. Irish

Demne máel (‘D. of (the) prince’), the original name of Finn, was born after the murder of his father, Cumhal, head of clan Baíscne; The murderer was Goll mac Morna of the rival clan of Morna

b. Nart

She *Bartinuquo is born to save his father from assassination. Pataraz (doublet or successor to She *Bartinuquo) is born to avenge his father. His role toward his father is an inversion of that of She *Bartinuquo.

The Storm god also commits paricide (Colarusso 2007).

(2) Fosterage, abandonment

a. Irish

His mother, Muirenn Muncháem, fosters young Demne Máel out.

- b. Nart
She *Bartinuquo is of indeterminate kin status when he emerges from his underground house (grave mound). Pataraz is abducted in a moral inversion of fosterage.
- c. Norse
Arrow Odd is both abandoned and fostered.
- d. Iran
Dastān ('trickery') is cast out by his father and adopted by the Simorg ('*si-* bird'). This is a wild and fortuitous fosterage. Dastān is later known as Zāl -zar (a Saka doublet?), derived from Indo-European **ger-* 'old', because Zāl is born with white hair.

It would seem that the theme of fosterage may be linked to that of patricide in one of two ways. Both of these themes, common across the Indo-European realm, might reflect alienation from the biological father or ignorance of his identity, followed by a fatal encounter. One must not overlook another possibility, however, that may be retained in the Nart material. The hero may be fatherless, either through the murder of his father, committed by hostile Narts in the case of Pataraz, or through a strange preternatural lack of kinship links, which are subject to choice on the part of a potential father, Warzameg, as is the case with She *Bartinuquo.

The original status of the hunter may be this "anomic" kinship of She *Bartinuquo, which was subsequently reinterpreted as orphan status when Pataraz replaced the earlier hunter figure. Later still this figure's kinship anomaly may have become the common folk theme of patricide, and even later still, a morally more acceptable interpretation may have utilized fosterage, which was practiced by the Indo-Europeans. (My speculation here may be viewed as analogous to internal reconstruction within historical linguistics.)

(3) Vanquishing jealous youths

- a. Irish
Demne Máel vanquishes a gang of jealous youths who try to drown him.
- b. Nart
She *Bartinuquo vanquishes treacherous Narts, often depicted as youths.
- c. Iran

Zāl overcomes the jealousies and misgivings of his father and of his father's court.

This theme of a gang of jealous youths might be seen as a common theme in which a foster child is taunted by his peers, as, for example, with young Oedipus, but the extreme hostility presented by the Nart warband toward any and all heroes suggests a dim memory of a ritual hostility lying at the heart of Indo-European warrior society (Colarusso 2006).

(4) Whiteness

a. Irish

Demne Máel tastes the oil of a roasting "Salmon of Knowledge." Finnéces (Finn the Seer) says that Demne Máel is the white haired one prophesied to have the magic knowledge of the fish. He renames him 'Find,' later Finn (from proto-Celtic **windo-* 'white').

b. Norse

Arrow Odd has an episode as Barkman, clad in birch bark. Hence he is white for at least part of the saga.

c. Iran

Zāl has white hair, whence his Saka doublet name Zāl-zar, Zāl-old.

Of course, whiteness can be read as a geriatric emblem, as is the case with Firdowsi's Zāl, but it is also clearly linked within Indo-European with figures like Germanic **Wōðanaz*, (Norse *Odin*, Old English *Wodan*), and Indic *Shiva*, where the color is part of a complex of not only of age, but of a host of supernatural features as well.

(5) Magical knowledge, prophesy

a. Irish

Finn acquires *fios* 'second sight' (MacKillop 2005: 225)

b. Nart

Pataraz is "best" of the Narts, always knowing what to do. Sosruquo, "most evil" of the Narts, has prophetic visions.

c. Norse

Arrow Odd is the object of a prophesy that he will live to be 300. Second sight is crucial to the outset and end of the saga, but it does not accrue to the hero.

This feature is linked with whiteness or paleness in Germanic: Norse Odin (Proto-Germanic **Wōðanaz*) has prophetic powers. One can imagine the use of whiteness as a symbol for the resurrected dead, with these revived figures living in a sense outside time and being able to see all time, hence having prophetic powers.

Such an interpretation sounds too modern to be plausible (one can recall the ghost of Jacob Marley prophesying to Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*), but the fit with the old patterns is good. Perhaps this is an extremely ancient retention that has persisted across much of the Indo-European world.

The complex of features linking Finn to Odin extends to a spear that never misses (MacKillop 2005: 226).

(6) Spear

a. Irish

Finn wields a spear that never misses its target.

b. Nart

She **Bartinuquo* carries a spear that reveals his identity as a true hero. He can thrust it into the ground so that only he can pull it back out (Colarusso 2002: 74, 79, n. 23).

c. Norse

Odin carries Gungnir, a spear that never misses its target.

While magical weapons are a wide spread folk motif, finding this one with the other two Odinnic features suggests that the spear of the white-haired, prophetic leader is part of an inherited complex.

(7) Social elevation

a. Irish

Finn saves Tara (Tomhuirne) from evil Aillén mac Midgna. He is rewarded by the *ard rí*, High King, by being elevated to *rigfhéinnid*, king (rex) of (all) the Fíanna, a position hitherto held by Goll mac Morna.

Goll mac Morna, hitherto Finn's enemy and the murderer of his father, accedes to this and forswears enmity.

b. Nart

She *Bartinuquo is declared biggest of the Narts. Pataraz is declared best of the Narts, sometimes after a competition.

c. Norse

Arrow Odd becomes king of France or Antioch, by marrying Silkisif, foster daughter of King Harek. (Pálsson and Edwards, 1985: 116).

d. Iran

Zāl ascends the throne.

Irish society had both a *rí* for each district and an *ard rí* ('high king' or 'rex'). The *Fíanna* parallel this with a *rí* of their own in the form of Finn, whose status is bestowed by the civilian *ard rí*, and whose judgment none may question.

This constitutes a detailed example of a social process by which Indo-European bands might have expanded (see the citation of Anthony in the Introduction). This matter will be addressed in more detail below.

(8) Eschatological battle

a. Irish

The *Fíanna* battle the King of the World, who has an invading force. "And the armies of the World and the *Fíanna* of Ireland were fallen side by side there, and there were none left to stand, but [two survivors who soon die as well]" (Persse 1998: 202-237, esp. p. 233)

b. Nart

Pataraz dooms all the Narts, though no eschatological battle is preserved.

c. Norse:

Ragnarök is the archetype of the Indo-European doomsday battle, but hitherto has lacked a convincing cognate. Arrow Odd loses all his crews repeatedly and has an invincible nemesis, the semi-demonic Ogmund.

The Norse seems to be a case where a doomsday theme is scattered throughout a saga to suit the needs of the bard. The Irish battle is not motif Z12, tale type 2300, "endless battle," as

in MacKillop (2005: 222), but rather a true cognate of Norse Ragnarök, with the demise of all.

Scholars of comparative Indo-European mythology have long sought a cognate for the doomsday battle of Norse Ragnarök (*ragna-rök* power-reckoning, “the Reckoning of the Powers”), with varying degrees of success. The Battle of the White Strand, *Cath Fionntrágha*, in the *Fíanna* corpus is a clear cognate with numerous parallels. That it has not been noted before is due to the difficulty of working with this material.

(9) Stature

a. Irish

Finn, Cailte, and others, are sometimes depicted as giants, though often in a folkloric setting (Persse 1998: 402-404).

b. Nart

She *Bartinuquo and Pataraz are both gigantic.

c. Norse:

Arrow Odd was 12 ells tall (Pálsson and Edwards 1985: 137)

Largeness is a common attribute of heroes, but in all three cases the figures are gigantic, bordering on the impossible. As Warzameg says when he sees She *Bartinuquo, “Could a Nart ever be this big?” (Colarusso 2002: 75).

(10) Theriomorphic kin

a. Irish

Finn has a wife, Sadb, who was changed into a deer by a jealous rival. Sadb is derived from the root for ‘sweet, pleasing’ (Lewis and Pedersen 1961: 18, §4), as with Gaulish *Suadu-(genus)*, Latin *suāvis* ‘pleasant’, Greek *hēdús* ‘sweet’, Old English *swēte id.*, Proto-Indo-European **sweA-d-* (Watkins 2000: 87). Finn also has two, sometimes three, hounds: Bran ‘raven’, Sceolong ‘grey dog’, the third being Lomair (MacKillop 1998: 46), these being his nephews, children of Finn’s sister or aunt, Uirne or Tuirne.

b. Nart

She *Bartinuquo is inseparable from his hound (and eagle), with whom he is raised in the gravemound of resurrection. In fact they are emblematic of him. Otherwise, no theriomorphic figures exist in this corpus.

c. Norse

Inside the gravemound of one, Aran, is his hound (and hawk) (“Egil and Asmund,” Pálsson and Edwards, 1985: 238).

(11) Deer children

a. Irish

Finn has a son, Oisín, and a grandson, Oscar, (both deer names, “cervonyms,” derived from Indo-European **uk^(w)sēn* ‘ox, bull’ (Mallory and Adams, 2006: 135))

b. Nart

Pataraz is called the bull or buffalo (Circassian *dombay*).

c. Indic:

Indra is the bull, or *mahiśa* ‘great one’.

The Irish seems to represent an older form of this theme wherein the animals emblematic of the hunter, including the deer in Irish, are literal kin.

The Indic material may reflect the older pattern, since the cervonyms in Irish are derived from the Indo-European for ‘ox.’

(12) Eagle

a. Irish

Finn lacks a hunting eagle, but has a man, Labran, who changes into an eagle to help (Persse 1998: 227)

b. Nart

She *Bartinuquo has an eagle, which is inseparable from him. It is born or formed along with him in the gravemound.

c. Norse

Freya has an eagle suit, which she loans to Odin. Aran of “Egils and Asmund” has a hawk placed with him in his gravemound.

d. Iran

Zāl has his faithful Simorg, who has given him a magical feather for aid.

e. Indic

Indra is assisted by an eagle, who has lost a feather when it flies down from a mountain fortress to bring soma

In Norse and the Nart corpora the deer is absent, but an eagle is included. One should note that in Bricriu's Feast (Fled Bricrenn) a hero is seen galloping toward Connacht, and is identified by the hound running beside him and the eagle flying above him. This scene occurs in the Nart sagas as well (Colarusso 2002: 73). I would conclude, therefore, that the original menagerie consisted of the hunting beasts, hound and eagle, along with the hunted, the deer or the (wild) ox. They are at odds with one another, Sadb being in danger of Finn's cynomorphic nephews. Only between Finn and his cervonym child and grandchild (11, a), do we find co-existence, and even here generational strife is frequent.

(13) Demonic bird

a. Irish

In the war between Sidhe Fionnachaidh and Ibrec of Ess Ruadh there is a bird with an iron beak and a flaming tail (Persse 1998: 259)

b. Nart

Sosruquo is spied upon by a demonic bird of beautiful colors (Colarusso 2002: 392)

c. Norse

Atop Yggdrasil, the World Tree, sits an eagle, who trades insults, through the mediation of a squirrel, Ratatosk (rat-tusk), with Nidhogg (lower hewer) a serpent of Niflheim, which gnaws on the dead.

d. Indic

The divine bird, king of the birds, Garuda, is radiant, dwells in heaven, and serves Vishnu as a vehicle. It defeats and eats serpents.

e. Russian

The Fire Bird bears links to Garuda.

James R. Russell, of Harvard, related these latter two, as well as elucidated Iranian and Armenian comparands (2005). What is clear from his investigation is that this divine and radiant eagle

is powerful and dangerous. It is also the paradigm for the lost magical feather: Indra hits it once with his *vajra*, loosening a single feather. The Irish and Nart corpora have preserved the dangerous aspects of this bird. The Norse preserves it in a neutral, amoral form. The Indo-Iranian, Russian, and Armenian have preserved a wide complex of features, but generally present this avian in a more benevolent form.

The hunting eagle of §12 would seem to be a derived form of this divine bird. The first steps of a transition from heavenly eagle to hunting hawk can be seen in Norse Freya's eagle suit, which when loaned out to Odin or Loki can assist in a variety of exploits. The trickster, Loki, in an effort to retrieve Idun from the giant, Thjalfi, simply transforms himself into a hawk, completing the shift in avian species. The eagle suit is likely to be a vestigial, sartorial version of an earlier, helping, fully formed female eagle, analogous to the eagle in the *Rig Veda*, which brings *soma* from a mountain fortress and which brings *madhu* 'mead' to Indra in the heat of battle. The Sistani heritage within Firdowsi's epic has preserved a protective, maternal role for a form of this bird, reinforcing the Norse femininity of the eagle

(14) Hunting

a. Irish

Finn leads the Fíanna Éireann, who hunt. Candidates for membership must also pass grueling trials.

b. Nart

Curiously, despite his epithet of 'She,' Circassian /š'vé/ 'hunt,' no Nart saga survives in which She *Bartinuquo actually hunts, although hunting sagas are attested.

c. Norse

Arrow Odd leads many bands, but while at the court of King Herraud he is especially linked to two hunter brothers, Ottara and Ingjold, (Pálsson and Edwards, 1985: 92-116). While there Arrow Odd wins a hunting contest, among other trials.

Hunting for the Fíanna is what they do when they are not fighting among themselves or defending Ireland and the Irish proper, the Féni (Persse 1998: 238-291). They have wives and families, live in houses, and even tend some livestock, but they are defined, as their name indicates, by their hunting. This

suggests an economic symbiosis between them and the conventional social structures of Ireland headed by the kings, of which more below.

(15) Mountain home

a. Irish

Finn and his band have Mount Almu (Almhain) as their base.

b. Iran

Zāl is taken to Mount Alborz by the Simorg,

Alborz apparently contains the Indo-European root **bh(e)rgʰ-* ‘high, highland.’ *Almu* might perhaps be a doublet with *Albu* ‘British Isle, Scotland’, Latin *Albion*. Both *Almu* and *Albu* may be western versions of the pre-Indo-European word **alp-*, **alb-* ‘mountain’, found in in *alp*, *Albania*, Caucasian *Alwania*.

(16) Leader’s Double

a. Irish

Finn has a follower, *Cailte mac Róinán*, who acts as a doublet, performing many of the feats of the Cycle.

b. Nart

She **Bartinuquo* is incorporated into the cycle of *Pataraz* (Colarusso 2002: 65, commentary; Miller 2007).

c. Iranian

The name *Zāl-zar* is a doublet, and might reflect an old pair, rather than merely a dialect variation of the reflex for Indo-European **ger-* ‘old’.

The name *Cailte* may reflect Middle Irish *caill* ‘grove, wood’ (Lewis and Pedersen 1961: 7, §12), < **kél-*, **kl-* ‘to cover, conceal’, hence ‘The Hidden One’, as with OE *hol(h)*, English *hole*, *hollow* as in a small sunken grove or wooded valley (Watkins, 2000: 38), or perhaps a variant of the root seen in Gaulish *Su-cellos* ‘Good-strike(r)’.³

The replacement of She **Bartinuquo* with *Pataraz* would seem to be a relatively late, folkloric succession within the Caucasian corpora. The nameless mother of She **Bartinuquo* gives him in fosterage to *Setenaya*, the mother of *Pataraz*. The doublet in the Irish cycle is contemporaneous. It may reflect the amalgamation of two cycles, one of Finn, the other of

³I am indebted to John Shaw of Edinburgh for help with these etymologies.

Cailte, or it may preserve an old *dvandva* pattern between the two figures, one being white and visible, the other obscure and hidden.

A Profile of the *Fíanna*

Our comparative effort has established the antiquity of the core of the Cycle. We can now distil the historical profile of the *Fíanna* beyond the mythic ones just outlined in the preceding section.

First, there seem to have been a number of *Fíanna* or *Fíanna* triads each of which co-existed with settled communities. These latter had their own warriors.

Second, each had a leader who was himself subordinated to a supreme king (*rigfhéinnid*), emblematically white.

Third, this *rigfhéinnid* was appointed by the *ard rí*, thus exhibiting a social structure that was both parallel and subordinated to the civil Indo-European structure of Ireland.

Fourth, the *rigfhéinnid* had a queen, just as his men had wives. This sets the *Fíán* apart from the juvenile warband the *koryos* (Old Irish *cuire*) as posited by Kershaw (2000: 110-132). A *fíán* was not a *cuire*, otherwise one would expect interchange of the terms at some points in the corpus.

Fifth, and as a further distinction between the *Fíán* and the juvenile warband, these men were “paid,” Finn being known for his fairness in this.

Sixth, members were skilled in mind and body, as determined by trials.

Seventh, they lived in the woods (Kershaw 2000: 109-113), perhaps atop a hill, but seem to have had houses. Thus, within the structure of their woodland society these men were not liminal, as the Kershavian warband members were.

Eighth, as their name implies in its archaic ambiguity, they hunted and fought when called upon to defend Ireland. These functions would have been the basis for their symbiosis with civil society.

Ninth, they also fought among themselves and joined in local quarrels, though this is of no comparative value since such small-scale rivalry is commonplace in warrior and hunting cultures.

Tenth, they cherished their hounds, as the other Irish did their war dogs.

Finally, they had neither horses nor chariots, but fought on foot with spears. “Fionn is always portrayed on foot, never in

a chariot like Cúchulainn. He is not assigned a favorite horse” (MacKillop, 2005: 227). This lack of horse distinguishes them and their leader from the wild hunt of Odin, the Maruts of Indra, or the royal hunts of Ancient Persia.

The comparanda presented in (1-16) suggest a Proto-Indo-European antiquity and close association with familiar Proto-Indo-European material. It is only (6), Finn’s elevation to dominant kingship of all the *Fíanna* taken together with the near total lack of horses (compensated for by the famed swiftness and stamina of some of the heroes as runners) that hints at a non-Indo-European origin. Before discussing this issue head-on I shall take up the issue of their hounds and of Indo-European dogs.

Dogs and Wolves

The theriomorphic nephews of Finn were hunting dogs, which is still the sense behind the English *hound*, the reflex of IE **k^y(u)wōn* (Mallory and Adams, 2006: 135). Note the hint of theriomorphism in Hittite *kuwan* ‘dog-man’ (*ibid.*, 138). As “wild” people they chose “domestic” totems, dogs, albeit the *Fíanna* would only be “wild” from the perspective of the civil society. Clearly the hound was crucial to their hunting function. There is no mention of wolves (*ibid.*), so common in Norse, Roman, and Greek lore, especially in personal names. The wolf does not appear even as the natural rival of the human hunter. Because such bands served double duty as warriors they were the source of the appellation *Dog* as a warrior name (*ibid.*, 173-179). Perhaps the ferocious war dogs of Irish lore even originated with them as well. I would suggest that these hunters set the original patterns for the origin of the ‘dogs, pups, etc.’, the youthful Indo-European *koryos*, established as an important component of Indo-European theriomorphism.

By contrast “Domestic” people, the regular Irish and by extension the “regular” Indo-Europeans, chose “wild” totems, wolves, bears, etc. (Colarusso 2006: 50, table 5). The puzzling polarization between dog totems and the other Indo-European wolf totems can be explained in terms of an old Indo-European polarization between the *wened(o)-es* (or, following the lead of Latin forms, *wēnātós*), the “(forest) warriors,” and the regular Indo-European bands of adult, *téutā*, and juvenile, *koryos* warriors., the latter also dwelling in the forest (Kershaw, 2000: 109-113).

The term ‘dog’ as a warrior’ appellation continues, probably from East Slavic, into Altaic, as with Dog Kalin Tsar of Russian *bylini* (Bailey and Ivanova, 1998: 49-68), and Mongolic, *noghai* ‘dog’, now a Turkic speaking group.

Who Were They?

Our careful consideration of the *Fíanna* has led us to a function that is clearly closely tied in with Indo-European society, as well as language, but which exhibits both one profound deviation therefrom, lack of horses, and one polarization, dog totems as opposed to wolf ones. We must now ask ourselves directly: who were the *Fíanna* of Ireland, and by extension, such groups as the *Wends* of the ancient Slavic world and the Venetī of Ancient Italy. They are of Indo-European speech when attested, but they may have had non-Indo-European origins, as I shall argue below.

The simplest hypothesis is that they were older, conservative, pre-horse Proto-Indo-Europeans. Two features militate against this, however. First, it is hard to imagine how such a group could have reached Ireland, or some zone in western Europe that served as a point of emigration for them and the Irish, without horses or, more precisely, without having assimilated horse culture on the way. Second, they fall outside the social structure delineated in Colarusso 2006: 27-54. Insofar as my earlier work is correct, the *Fíanna* fall outside the three Indo-European social functions. They would be, by default, Nick Allen’s (1987, 1996) fourth function (not Rees and Rees’s, 1961, third function).

Dean Miller (personal communication) has suggested a second hypothesis: They are pre-, non-Indo-Europeans that have entered into a complementary and beneficial relationship with an Indo-European host. As Anthony has argued (2007: 118-19) the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have had a mechanism for incorporating non-Indo-European neighbors into a greater Proto-Indo-European society. In the Fenian Cycle we have a preserved instance of this incorporation. As “contractual” outsiders they were an example of Allen’s fourth function, which is subject to dual valuation as both good (+) and bad (-). In most of the lore they are good, but they are depicted as rivals to the *ard rí* in some instances, thus exhibiting their duality.

Miller’s hypothesis may be extended in one detail. The **Wenedes* or **Wēnātós*, (I shall use the second form), as termed by the Indo-Europeans, were the non-Indo-Europeans

encountered when expanding Indo-European hordes began to penetrate forest zones. As Miller and Anthony argue, these forest hunters became institutionalized components of a greater Indo-European society. These **Wēnātós* could have supplied pelts, wood, herbs, and warriors, in exchange for meat, dairy products, and military “back-up.” Crucially, they may well have served as a standard for later peripheral groups that were of actual Indo-European origin, such as youth warbands. It is moreover conceivable that fosterage between nobles of the encroaching Indo-European horde and these **Wēnātós* was also used to enforce the political and social arrangement between the two peoples. This may well have led to linguistic effects, namely the intrusion into Indo-European branches of non-Indo-European material distinctive to each, and reflecting the lexicon of the **Wēnātós* group.

All of these arguments have the ring of plausibility, but not conviction. If we assume that the extended Miller hypothesis or model is true, however, then we can explain a well-known skewing in the meaning of the word **aryones*, ‘Aryans’, probably the closest term to a self-appellation that the Indo-Europeans possessed. In Europe and Anatolia reflexes of this term refer to nobles. In the Indo-Iranian realm of the steppes, however, the term is an ethnonym (Fortson, 2004: 187; Mallory and Adams, 2006: 266).

This geographically linked skewing of sense provides effectively an independent line of evidence that offers strong support for this model:

Western, including Anatolian, Indo-European bands encountered non-Indo-European groups that often dwelt, or took refuge, in or near the extensive forests of Europe and old Anatolia. These Indo-European bands could have interacted with these non-Indo-European peoples by means of what we might term the “*Fíanna* covenant.” In the western reaches of the Indo-European realm, where the forests were directly in the path of expansion, the European **Aryones* remained, therefore, nobles or overlords by the terms of this covenant. Hence the European semantic development of that root retained precisely that range of sense.

By contrast the steppe Indo-European bands rarely had such opportunities to deal peacefully with non-Indo-European peoples simply because of the restriction of forests to a boreal zone that was more or less inimical to animal husbandry as the Indo-Europeans knew it. Contact with inhabitants of this boreal

forest occurred, as the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian loans into Uralic and Altaic attest, but this marginal contact would have been overshadowed by head-on encounters with inhabitants of the steppes. The Indo-Iranians, the preeminent Indo-European steppe peoples, would therefore have treated non-Indo-European peoples as distinct ‘others’ or even as enemies. With similar economies, no symbiosis was readily available between the Indo-Iranians and other steppe peoples, and hence no covenant could be put in place to mitigate competition or hostility. Therefore, it was among the Indo-Iranians that the term **Aryones*, perhaps originally merely ‘people’ (Colarusso 1997: 141, §67), came to be an ethnic self-designation, with non-Indo-Europeans falling into an explicit category of **n-Aryones*, ‘an-Arya’ (as an adjective), “the non-Aryans.”

Accordingly the archaeological record should show peaceful Indo-European expansion into most of Europe (Anthony, 2007: 340-370), but more hostile expansion into the steppes (*ibid.*, pp. 371ff). The extended Miller hypothesis explains the peculiar features of the Fíanna, the expansion of the Indo-Europeans and their assimilation of non-Indo-Europeans, both socially and linguistically, while it also offers a simple explanation for a long standing lexical puzzle. It also suggests explanations for archaeological patterns. Its utility is high as is its likelihood of being true.

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