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Study and Research Methodology

Starting Your Dissertation (Proposal)

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The working title that I would like to propose for my dissertation would be, “One Hand, One Eye: Kingship, Perfection and the Good Ruler in Ireland and the Indo-European World”. I would also like to entertain the following questions:

1. What were the requirements for a king to be successful in Ireland?
2. Why was physical perfection on the part of the Irish king mandatory?
3. Georges Dumézil postulated that the king with one hand and the king with one eye was a mythological motif found throughout the Indo-European sphere (e.g. Tiwaz/Wodhanaz, Mitra/Varuna, Mucius/Horatius, even Lludd/Llefelys, etc.). This has also been occasionally applied towards Lug and Nuadha, two Irish mythological kings. What evidence is there to prove, or disprove, the idea that they are indeed part of the Indo-European ‘gods of the contract’ type?

The sources I plan to use for this include many primary Irish texts, such as the *Audacht Morainn*, which explains the duties of the king, and of course, the *Cath Maige Tuired* and the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, which tell the story of Nuada and Lug (including the loss of Nuada’s hand and any possible references to Lug having only one eye). Lug’s son was Cu Chulainn, so an investigation of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* will be called for as well to see if there is a ‘one-eyed’ connection to be made there. There also appear to be hints concerning the fitness of a king to

rule in the *Crith Gablach* and in early Irish law. Cormac's Glossary will be studied, and as part of my investigations of the theme of 'one hand, one eye' among other Indo-European cultures I'll be using the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and the *Mabinogion* for the Welsh, the *Rig Veda* for Indic, and the *Prose Edda* for Germanic references.

The secondary sources can be divided into two categories, basically. The first set of sources include those concerning Irish kingship and mythology, paying particular attention to the idea of the 'blemish' (from a deep blush to mutilation) and Irish lore concerning 'physically imperfect' kings, and how this ties in with an unsuccessful reign.

The second set of secondary sources include the theories of Dumézil and arguments both pro and con about them as well as the concepts of kingship as seen in other Indo-European cultures so I can make my own determination. I shall also investigate possible early manifestations of Nuada and Lug in pre-Christian Celtia, such as Nodens and Lugos, and see if any connection can be found to tie them together, or if the evidence is just too sparse for any firm conclusions.

In large part, this dissertation would fall under the 'comparative mythology' classification, but unlike most of the secondary sources I've seen, I'll be approaching this from an Irish standpoint, studying those primary sources first, and only then will I branch out to compare them to other Indo-European cultures.

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