

Mr. Hand: On Gk. Χείρων, Ved. Rudrá- ‘of healing hand’ and Hitt. *kiššeraš*^DUTU-uš¹

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Abstract: In this paper, I explore the possible inherited Indo-European background of Chiron. This mythological figure is characterized by a number of distinctive features, namely: the ‘healing hand’, the activity ‘hunt’, the component ‘wildness’, and the training of young heroes. In the light of a phraseological comparison, Chiron shares all or some of these components with the Vedic god Rudra, and with the Anatolian ‘Sun-god of the hand’.

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Aufsatz befasst sich mit dem möglichen ererbten indogermanischen Hintergrund des Chiron. Im griechischen Bereich ist diese Figur mit einigen Komponenten assoziiert, nämlich die ‘heilende Hand’, die Tätigkeit ‘Jagd’, die Komponente ‘Wildheit’ und die Erziehung von jungen Helden. Im Lichte des phraseologischen Vergleiches hat Chiron alle oder einige dieser Merkmale mit dem vedischen Gott Rudra und dem anatolischen ‘Sonnengott der Hand’ gemeinsam.

1. The name ‘Chiron’ (Χείρων, Χίρων, Χέρρων, see below, §2), has long been the object of etymological explanations. Ancient scholars and lexicographers gave two main interpretations of the form:

EM p. 810, 33 Χείρων: Ὁ Κένταυρος· ἀπὸ τῆς (i) διὰ τῶν χειρῶν θεραπείας τῆς ἐν ταῖς χειρουργαῖς καὶ ριζοτομίαις· ἰατρὸν γὰρ τοῦτον ἡμῖν ὑπογράφει Ὀρος. [...] (ii) Ἔνθεν καὶ Χείρων, διὰ τὸ ἐν χείροσι καὶ ὄρεινότεροις τόποις διάγειν

‘Chiron (*K^heirōn*): the Centaur: (i) from the medical treatments of the hands (*k^heirōn*), those of surgery and cutting of the roots. For, Oros describes him to us as a physician. [...] (ii) There (is) also Chiron (*K^heirōn*)

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because he lived in rather impervious (lit. worse) (*en k^heírosi*) and mountainous places.

While the folk-etymological proposal (ii) is based on the homophony between Χείρων and χείρων ‘worse, inferior’, the proposal (i) connects Χείρων with ‘hand’ (χείρ), and is by far the most widespread interpretation in classical literary sources (see below, §3a).

In this paper, I am going to focus on the folk-etymology of Chiron as ‘the one having a (healing) hand’ (see above, [i]). First of all, I will argue that the analysis of the passages, which refer to a ‘pre-medical state of things’, confirms that both using one’s hands in the healing practice (the so-called χειρουργία) and the healers’ ‘soothing touch’ may lie at the basis of Chiron’s *Volksetymologie*. Furthermore, the comparison with literary and ritual texts from India and Anatolia will show that the popular etymology of Chiron may itself be based on inherited material. Indeed, Chiron has a set of distinctive characteristics in common with the Vedic god Rudra and the Anatolian ‘Sun- god of the hand’ (*kiššeraš*^DUTU-*uš*), namely:

- a. the [(HEALING) HAND];
- b. the component [WILDNESS];
- c. the association with the activity [HUNT] and with the hunting gear;
- d. the association with [(YOUNG) AGE-GROUPS] or with the continuations of the IE *Männerbund*.

Finally, these remarkable common traits might speak for an inherited state of things in the background of Chiron’s mythological identity.

2. Before focusing on Chiron’s characteristics and most representative achievements, I am going to present a brief dossier concerning his name and its possible etymology. Chiron’s name occurs in literary and documentary sources in a threefold shape:

- Χείρων, noted as <Χείρων> or <Χερων>, is documented in the minority of the Attic vase paintings before 5th century BCE.² In contrast, most of the archaic and classical literary sources preserve Χείρων.³
- Χίρων is found in the majority of the Attic vases of 7th and 6th century BCE (Kretschmer 1894:131–132), on a Corinthian and one

² See the dossier collected by Kretschmer 1919:60, fn. 2, and Threatte 1996:193–194.

³ The form Χίρων in Pindar is based on a correction in Schroeder’s edition.

Etruscan vase (6th and 5th century BCE, respectively, cf. Wachter 2001:263–264), and in one archaic inscription from Thera (IG XII 3.360, 7th–6th century BCE). Nevertheless, Χίρων is less well attested in the available literary sources, such a form having been restored in Pindar’s work, and otherwise only sporadically documented.⁴

- Χέρρων only occurs in one of Alcaeus’s fragments (fr. 42.9 V). The presented distribution of the variants for ‘Chiron’ can be interpreted as follows:

(α) Χείρων is the original form of the name, as supported by Aeolic Χέρρων, which should be considered as authentic (Kretschmer 1919:60). Accordingly, all instances of Χίρων on the Attic and Corinthian vases should be considered as mistakes, i.e. as cases of confusion between /ε:/ and /i:/. However, the Theraic form Χίρων apparently speaks against this hypothesis: no other cases of confusion between /ε:/ and /i:/ are found in Thera in the same age, and Χίρων would thus represent the only exception.⁵

(β) Χίρων is the original form of the name, while Χείρων is a secondary reshaping under the influence of folk-etymologies (see above, [i]). In this case, Χέρρων, occurring in a single literary source, might be explained as a hyperaeolism (Wachter 2001:263–264).

The issue pertaining the original form of the name is strictly related to its possible etymology. In accordance with the presented hypotheses, two possible scenarios can be imagined:

(α) If Χείρων (Homer+) and Χέρρων (Alcaeus) are primary, the name can be understood as based on Gk. χείρ ‘hand’ (cf. Kretschmer 1919:58–62), and, ultimately, on PIE \acute{g}^hes-r- (Schindler 1967:244–249), in the same way as Χείλων / Χίλων⁶ is based on χεῖλος (: Aeol. χέλλος) ‘lip’ etc.

(β) If Χίρων is primary, the form is apparently unexplained,⁷ maybe not

⁴ Eur. fr. 14.13 P, Acus. fr. 16.2 DK.

⁵ Pelliccia 2017:1–16.

⁶ The case of vowel alternance in Χείλων / Χίλων is not comparable to that of Χείρων / Χίρων, as proposed by Hawkins 2012:152–155. While /ε:/ can rise to /i:/ when followed by /i/ or /l/ in the next syllable, cf. χίλιοι reflecting $*\acute{g}^hes-lj-o-$ (Rix 1991:206), this is not the case when the /ε:/ is followed by /r/.

⁷ No parallels support a reconstruction $*\acute{g}^hsr-ó-$ > $*\acute{g}^hsr-ó-h_3n-$, which would yield to Χίρων with vowel-epenthesis and compensatory lengthening. The word χίλιοι ‘thousand’, can probably be explained as a case of vowel assimilation (Rix

even Greek.

Given the lack of crucial evidence in favor of (α) or (β), the issue concerning the original form of the name is unlikely to be solved here. However, by combining the Greek data about Chiron's folk-etymology and the comparative phraseological evidence, we can cast new light on the origin of Chiron's figure and its inherited background.

3. Chiron, who is defined as 'the most righteous among the Centaurs' (δικαιοτάτος Κενταύρων, *Il.* 11.832), is the son of the nymph Philyra and Cronus. He dwells mount Pelion, in Thessaly, where he rears several young heroes to become hunters and healers.⁸

(a) Chiron's first appearances in Greek literary texts emphasize his role as a mentor of good healers, such as Asclepius, and, indirectly, Machaon, Asclepius's son, cf.

Il. 4.218–219

[...] ἐπ' ἄρ' ἦπια φάρμακα εἰδώς

πάσσε, τά οἱ ποτε πατρὶ φίλα φρονέων πόρε Χείρων

"[...] and with sure knowledge (Machaon) spread on it soothing herbs, which once Cheiron had given to his father (: Asclepius) with kindly intent"

In other early instances, some of Chiron's pupils are called 'Physician' by name, cf.

Hes. *Th.* 1000–1001

καὶ ῥ' ἦ γε δμηθεῖσ' ὑπ' Ἰήσωνι ποιμένι λαῶν

Μήδειον τέκε παῖδα, τὸν οὖρεσιν ἔτρεφε

Χείρων

"After she (: Medea) had been overpowered by Jason, the shepherd of the people, she gave birth to a son, Medeus, whom Chiron, Philyra's son, raised upon the mountains"

While Ἰάσων is etymologically related to Gk. ἰάομαι 'to produce warmth,

1991), *contra* Jakob 2018, who proposes χῆλιοι as an example of 'schwa secundum' in a context *CsR- > *C_sR-.

⁸ An overview of Chiron's figure is found in Dawson 1949. For Chiron as the mentor of Achilles, see also Mackie 1997.

to treat’ (cf. Gk. *ιατήρ* ‘physician’)⁹, the personal name (PN) Μήδειος is etymologically related to Lat. *medicus* ‘physician’ and Ved. *vi-mad* ‘to handle an ill person’.¹⁰ As in epics, in Pindar’s work Chiron is often mentioned in connection with Asclepius, the healer *par excellence* (cf. *ἰητήρα νόσων Ἀσκληπιόν* ‘Asclepius, the healer of illnesses’, *HHymn.* 16.1):¹¹ The third *Nemean* ode preserves one of the first attested word plays, in which Χίρων and χεῖρ occur at close distance,¹² cf.

Pi. *N.* 3.53–55

βαθυμῆτα Χίρων τράφε λιθίνῳ
 Ἴάσον’ ἔνδον τέγει, καὶ ἔπειτεν
 Ἀσκλαπιόν, τὸν φαρμάκων δίδαξε
 μαλακόχειρα νόμον

“Deep-minded Chiron raised Jason in his rocky dwelling and then Asclepius, whom he taught the gentle-handed province of medicines”¹³

Significantly, the Pindaric neologism *μαλακόχειρ* ‘gentle-handed’ matches the collocation *χεῖρ – μαλακά* ‘hand – gentle’, describing the physician’s healing hand in the fourth *Pythian* ode, cf.

Pi. *P.* 4.271

χρῆ μαλακὰν χέρα προσβάλλοντα τρώμαν ἔλκεος
 ἀμφοιολεῖν “One must apply a gentle hand to tend a sore wound”

⁹ On the etymology of *ίαομαι* see García Ramón 1986.

¹⁰ Cf. Benveniste 1945:5, who suggests ‘to take the appropriate measures’ as the primary meaning of PIE **med-*.

¹¹ Asclepius is commonly called ‘physician’ in the Gk. epics, cf. *Il.* 4.194, 11.518.

¹² It is likely that one of the first paronymological word plays (*Χείρων – χεῖρ*) is preserved in Hes. fr. 302.17–18 MW καὶ Χείρων ἀγέτω πολέας Κενταύρους, || οἱ θ’ Ἡρακλῆος χεῖρας φύγον “and Chiron shall lead many Centaurs, who escaped Heracles’s hands”.

¹³ See also *Schol. in Pi. P.* 3.12 εὔχεται ἐν ταῖς πτυχαῖς τοῦ Πηλίου διάγειν τὸν Χείρωνα ὑπὲρ τοῦ δύνασθαι τὸν Ἴερωνα θεραπείας τυχεῖν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ “he says that Chiron lives in the valleys of Pelion so that Hieron can obtain a cure through him”. On Chiron in the third *Pythian* ode see Halliwell 2009:178–221.

As already suggested, the association between Χείρων and χεῖρ is based on the image of the most ancient healing practice in Greece. Indeed, physicians heal through their hands, sometimes through their ‘healing touch’, cf.

Sol. fr. 13.60–62 W

τὸν δὲ κακαῖς νούσοισι κυκώμενον ἀργαλείαις τε

ἀψάμενος χειροῖν αἶψα τίθησ’ ὕγιῃ

“Whereas another, in the throes of a terrible and grievous disease, he (: the physician) quickly restores to health with the touch of his hands”

The verb ἅπτω ‘to touch’ also occurs in the opening of Pindar’s fourth *Nemean*: the delight deriving from the poetic celebration acts as a physician in refreshing the winner’s physical shape after his athletic efforts and toils.

Pi. N. 4.1–3

ἄριστος εὐφροσύνα πόνων κεκριμένων

ιατρός· αἱ δὲ σοφαί

Μοισᾶν θύγατρεις ἀοιδαὶ θέλξαν νιν ἀπτόμεναι

“The best healer for toils judged successful is joyous revelry, but songs too, those wise daughters of the Muses, soothe them with their touch”¹⁴

The healing hand is thus associated with healers in general. Since Chiron had great medical skills, his name was synchronically connected with the ‘healing hand’. This association might have been original in a scenario where Χείρων was the primary form of the Pelian Centaur’s name. Alternatively, a secondary association between Χίρων and χεῖρ had a role in reshaping Χίρων into Χείρων / Χέρων *ex Graeco ipso*.

(b) The second characteristic of Chiron’s figure, on which I shall focus in this context, is [WILDNESS]. Because Chiron is a centaur, he is identified as a ‘beast’, Gk. φῆρ, twice in Pindar, cf.

¹⁴ The entire dossier about the poetic art compared with the healing technique in the archaic and classical poetry can be found in Nünlist 1998:124–136.

Pi. *P.* 4.119

φήρ δέ με θεῖος Ἴάσονα κικλήσκων
 προσάυδα “The divine beast called me by
 the name Jason”

Pi. *P.* 3.1–5

Χίρωνά κε Φιλλυρίδαν [...]
 βάσσαισί τ’ ἄρχειν Παλίου φῆρ’
 ἄγρότερον νόον ἔχοντ’ ἀνδρῶν φίλον
 “Chiron, son of Philyra reigned in Pelion’s glades, that wild creature
 who had a mind friendly to men”

In epics, the component ‘wildness’ is emphasized through the epithet ὄρεσκόφος ‘lying on the mountains / having his/her lairs on the mountains’, which applies to all centaurs, cf.

Il. 1.267–268

κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις
 ἐμάχοντο φηρσὶν ὄρεσκόοισι καὶ
 ἐκπάγλως ἀπόλεσσαν
 “Mightiest were they (: Peirithous, Dryas, Caeneus, Exadius, Polyphemus, Theseus), and with the mightiest did they fight, with the centaurs that had their lairs among the mountains, and terribly did they destroy them”

As proposed by Ernst Risch (1974:198) the form ὄρεσκόφος, which corresponds to the later attested ὄρεσκόος (Aesch., Eur.), is a compound reflecting ‘lie (κεῖμαι) on the mountains (ὄρος)’. The second compound member °σκόφος, which displays a long vowel, is probably an artistic poetic form remodeled under the influence of ζῷον ‘animal’ in order to fit into the metrical scheme of the hexa- meter.

(c) A further distinctive characteristic of Chiron is his association with [HUNT] and with elements of the hunting gear, such as ‘arrows’ and ‘hounds’. Arrows and arrow-wounds are recurring elements in Chiron’s life. For instance, the centaur is mentioned in the *Iliad* in connection with arrows’ wounds, cf.

Il. 4.217–219

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ἶδεν ἔλκος ὄθ' ἔμπεσε πικρὸς
 ὀϊστός, αἷμ' ἐκμυζήσας ἐπ' ἄρ' ἦπια
φάρμακα εἰδώς

πάσσε, τὰ οἱ ποτε πατρὶ φίλα φρονέων πόρε Χεῖρων

“But when he (: Machaon) saw the wound where the bitter arrow had entered, he sucked out the blood, and with sure knowledge spread on it soothing herbs, which once Cheiron had given to his father (: Asclepius) with kindly intent”

Moreover, Chiron is killed by an arrow and, according to part of the classical tradition, is then transformed into the constellation of Sagittarius, which is traditionally portrayed as a centaur aiming an arrow at Scorpio, cf.

Diod. Sic. 4.12.8

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Χεῖρωνα τὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ἰατρικῇ θαυμαζόμενον ἀκουσίως
τόξου βολῇ διέφθειρε

“In the same way he (: Heracles) unwillingly killed Chiron too, who was admired for the medical practice, with a shot of his bow”

Luc. 6.393–394

teque, senex Chiron, gelido qui sidere
fulgens inpetis Haemonio maiorem
Scorpion arcu

“And old Chiron, whose star shines in the winter sky and aims his Thessalian bow at the Scorpio”

In the opening of *On Hunting*, Xenophon states that Apollo and Artemis invented the most important hunting equipment, namely chase and hounds, but gave them to Chiron, as reward for his right- teous nature, cf.

Xen. *Cyn.* 1.1.1

τὸ μὲν εὖρημα θεῶν, Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ Ἀρτέμιδος, ἄγραι καὶ κύνες
 ἔδοσαν δὲ καὶ ἐτίμησαν τούτῳ Χεῖρωνα διὰ δικαιοσύνην

“Chase and dogs are the invention of gods, of Apollo and Artemis. They bestowed it to Chiron and honored him therewith for his righteousness”

Attic vase paintings from the classical time provide further proof that Chiron is usually portrayed as a hunter. In Sophilos’s black figure dinos (6th century BCE, British Museum), the centaur carries a tree branch hung with the bounty of the hunt. A similar iconography occurs on one Athenian red figure amphora (6th century BCE, Musée du Louvre), and one Athenian red figure stamnos (5th century BCE, Musée du Louvre).

(d) As already pointed out, Chiron is the mentor of several young heroes, to whom he teaches how to hunt and heal wounds. The ancient sources preserve several catalogues of Chiron’s pupils. For example, Xenophon mentions twenty-one heroes, cf.

Xen. *Cyn.* 1.1.1–3

καὶ ἐγένοντο αὐτῷ μαθηταὶ κυνηγεσίων τε καὶ ἐτέρων καλῶν
Κέφαλος, Ἀσκληπιός, Μειλανίων, Μέστωρ, Ἀμφιάραιος, Πηλεὺς,
Τελαμών, Μελέαγρος, Θησεύς, Ἴππόλυτος, Παλαμήδης, Μενεσθεύς,
Ὀδυσσεύς, Διομήδης, Κάστωρ, Πολυδεύκης, Μαχάων, Ποδαλείριος,
Ἀντίλοχος, Αἰνείας, Ἀχιλλεύς.

“And he had for pupils in hunt and in other noble pursuits—
Cephalus, Asclepius, Meilanion, Mestor, Amphiararus, Peleus,
Telamon, Meleager, Theseus, Hippolytus, Palamedes, Menestheus,
Odysseus, Diomedes, Castor, Polydeuces, Machaon, Podaleirius,
Antilochus, Aeneas, Achilles”

Some of Chiron’s pupils have great healing skills (Asclepius, Machaon, and Podaleirius), others are great hunters, e.g., Hippolytus; others are great warriors, e.g., Peleus, Telamon, Diomedes, and Achilles. Ancient sources make indeed clear that Chiron’s training comprises the use of weapons. For instance, in the *Iliad*, Achilles has with him the spear of ash, which once Peleus was given by Chiron, for ‘the smiting of warriors’, cf.

Il. 16.143–144

Πηλιάδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλῳ πόρε
Χείρων Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς, φόνον ἔμμεναι
ἠρώεσσιν

“The Pelian spear of ash that Cheiron had given to his (: Achilles’s)
dear father from the peak of Pelion to be for the smiting of warriors”

As ἥρως semantically overlaps with ἀνὴρ, the collocation φόνος – ἠρώεσσιν, occurring in the passage, partially matches the one underlying the compounds ἀνδρειφόντης (*Il.* 1.242+), ἀνδροφόνος (*Il.* 2.652+), the Myc. MN *A-no-ḡo-ta* /*Andro-ḡ^u ^hontā-*/ (KN Da 1289.B), and the collocations ἀνδράσι [...] φόνον (*Il.* 3.6), ἄνδρα εἶπεφνες (*Od.* 22.229), which all continue [MAN – to SMITE] in the Homeric diction.¹⁵ In addition, on more than one occasion, Chiron advises his pupils to opt for a wedding following the abduction of the bride. This is the case of Peleus and Thetis, cf.

[Apoll.] 3.168

Χείρωνος οὖν ὑποθεμένου Πηλεῖ συλλαβεῖν καὶ κατασχεῖν αὐτὴν μεταμορφουμένην, ἐπιτηρήσας συναρπάξει
 “At any rate, Chiron warned Peleus to grab her (: Thetis) and hold on while she changed her form; so he watched for his chance and carried her off”

The verb ἀρπάζω is also attested in Pindar’s *Pythian* 9, in which Apollo marries the nymph Cyrene, by carrying her away from Pelion to Lybia, cf.

Pi. *P.* 9.5–6a

ἐκ Παλίου κόλπων ποτὲ Λατοΐδας

ἄρπασ’, ἔνεικέ τε χρυσέω παρθένον ἀγροτέραν || δίφρω [...]

“The son of Leto once seized from the folds of Pelion, and brought the virgin huntress (: Cyrene) in his golden chariot”

The decision of Apollo is somehow conditioned by Chiron, who advises the god to do so (Pi. *P.* 9.29–66). The two examples above show that the Pelian centaur is connected with a form of wedding, which can be defined as ‘gandharvanic’ or ‘rakṣasa’. According to the standard definitions of these wedding practices, first found in the Sanskrit *Code of Manu*, the gandharvanic and the rakṣasa rites both apply to cases in which the union of a man and a woman is not mediated by a third party. Specifically, the gandharvanic rite is a consensual union between a maiden and her lover,¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. Schmitt 1967:123–127.

¹⁶ *Manusmṛ ti* 3.32 *icchayā ’nyonyasaṁ yogah kanyāyāśca varasya ca / gāndharvah sa tu vijñeyo maithunyahkāmāsamḥbhavaḥ* “the voluntary union of a maiden and her lover one must know (to be) the Gandharva rite, which

while the rakṣasa union is the abduction of a reluctant woman, which also involves a fight with her kinsmen and/or breaking into her house.¹⁷ The Greek episode of Peleus and Thetis, who attempts to escape her harasser through metamorphosis resembles the rakṣasa rite, whereas the consensual union of Apollo and Cyrene bears resemblance to the gandharvanic one.

Both abduction rites are typical of the *Männerbund*—the “hunter- warrior society of unmarried and property-less young aristocrats” (McCone 1986)—. Several examples from a variety of IE traditions confirm this assumption. For instance, in the Hittite *Laws*, men who kidnap women in order to marry them, ‘become wolves’, cf.

§37

ták-ku SAL-an ku-iš-ki pít-te-nu-uz-zi [...] ták-ku 2 LÚ^{MES} na-aš-ma
3 LÚ^{MES} ak-kán-zi šar-ni-ik-zi-il NU.GÁL zi-ik-wa UR.BAR.RA ki-
ša-at

“If someone kidnaps a woman [...] and 2 or 3 people are killed, there is no compensation: you have become a wolf”

As underlined by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995:659), the state of things reflected by the Hittite *Laws* is comparable to several IE usages which can be labeled as ‘rakṣasa rites’, cf. Skr. *rākṣaso vidhiḥ* (*Manu Code* 3.24), Lat. *rapere uirgines*, OIr. *lánamus foxail*, Gk. ἀρπαγή τῶν γυναικῶν, Av. *ud-uuādaya-*. The reference to the ‘wolf’ in the Hittite *Laws* matches one of usual designations of the *Männerbund* members in other IE traditions (cf. Sadovski 2013), since the wolf was the totemic animal of the young-warrior society (Burkert 1982:97–108, McCone 1986).

4. In conclusion, the characteristics of Chiron on which I have focused so far can be summarized as follows:

(a) [HEALING HAND]: Chiron’s name was synchronically associated with ‘hand’, Gk. χεῖρ (Pindar+), because of his great expertise in medicine. According to classical sources, physicians heal their patients by touching them with their hands (Gk. ἅπτω, cf. Solon, Pindar).

springs from desire and has sexual intercourse for its purpose”.

¹⁷ *Manusmṛ ti* 3.33 *hatvā chittvā ca bhittvā ca krośantīm rudantīmgr hāt / prasahya kanyāharaṇaṃ rākṣaso vidhirucyate* “the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries out and weeps, after (her kinsmen) have been slain or wounded and (their houses) broken open, is called the Rakṣasa rite”.

(b) [WILDNESS]: Chiron is a ‘wild beast’, Gk. φήρ ‘centaur’ (Pindar), and dwells in the mountains, cf. φήρ ὀρεισκώφος (Homer).

(c) [HUNT]: Chiron is associated with hunting and with the hunting gear in different ways: he teaches his pupils remedies to heal arrow wounds (Homer), but he is also killed by an arrow (Diodorus). After his death, he becomes the Sagittarius (Lucan). Besides, the gods Apollo and Artemis bestow him chase and hounds (Xenophon).

(d) [YOUNG AGE-GROUPS]: Chiron’s pupils are taught medicine (Pindar), hunting (Xenophon), the use of ‘men-smiting’ weapons (φόνον [...] ἥρωεσσιν, Homer). Moreover, Chiron instructs them on how to abduct their brides, in a way which resembles the Indic gandharvanic (Apollo and Cyrene, Pindar) and the rakṣasa (Peleus and Thetis, [Apollodorus]) wedding rites.

5. It is not uncommon to find physicians who have ‘special’ or ‘healing’ hands in other literary traditions, both Indo-European and non-Indo-European. As already anticipated, below I will primarily refer to two cognate traditions, the Vedic and the Anatolian one, which allow us to analyze a certain amount of phraseological cumulative evidence—comparable phraseological tokens which occur all together or in a systematic way—, without necessarily implying that further parallels cannot be found elsewhere.

To begin with, the reference to the ‘healing’ or ‘disease-removing hand’ is commonly attested in the Vedic tradition, as shown by the following examples, cf.

AVP 5.18.7

*ayaṃ me hasto bhagavān ' ayaṃ me
bhagavattaraḥ ayaṃ me viśvabhṛṣṭo ' 'ayaṃ
śivābhimarśanaḥ*

“This is my fortunate hand, this is my more fortunate one, this is my all-healing one, this one is of propitious touch”,¹⁸

AVP 5.18.8

*hastābhyām daśaśākhābhyām ' jihvā vācaḥ purogavī
anāmayitnubhyām śambhubhyām ' tābhyām tvābhi mṛ
śāmasi*

“With two hands of ten branches – the tongue is the forerunner of

¹⁸ = *AVŚ* 4.13.6; *RV*10.60.12.

speech – with those two disease-removing, wealful [hands] do we touch you”¹⁹

(a) In Vedic, the healing hand is a peculiar trait of the god Rudra. This deity, to whom three entire Rigvedic hymns are dedicated (*RV* 1.114, 2.33, 7.46), is “on the one hand [...] fierce and malevolent,²⁰ [...] on the other, he is a healer, who controls the remedies for disease” (Jamison – Brereton 2014:53). Because of his duplicity, Rudra has been compared with the Greek god Apollo,²¹ who can easily harm with his bow (Apollo *Smintheus*), but is also in charge of regenerating men’s health (Apollo *Paian*). Rudra is thus invoked as a god who has to be appeased, but, at the same time, possesses a thousand remedies, cf.

RV 7.46.3cd

sahásram te suvapivāta bheṣajá ' má nas tokéṣu tánayeṣu rīriṣaḥ
 “A thousand are your remedies, o you who are our familiar. Do no harm to our offspring and descendants”

Moreover, Rudra is called ‘the best healer of healers’, cf. *RV* 2.33.4d *bhiṣáktamaṃ tvā bhiṣájāṃ śr̥nōmi* “I hear that you are the best healer of healers”, and several Vedic passages describe his hand as ‘merciful’ and ‘remedy-bringing’, e.g.

RV 1.114.5cd

háste bibhrad bheṣajá vā ryāṇi ' sárma várma chardír asmábhyaṃ yaṃsat “Bearing in his hand desirable healing remedies, he will extend shelter, covering, and protection to us”

RV 2.33.7ab

kūvā syá te rudra m̐ layá kur ' hásto yó ásti bheṣajó jálāṣaḥ
 “Where, o Rudra, is that merciful hand of yours, which is a healing remedy [...]?”

¹⁹ Cf. *AVŚ* 4.13.7; *RV* 10.137.7.

²⁰ Cf. *RV* 7.46.3 *yá te didyúd ávaṣṣ ṣṭā divás pári [...] kṣmayá cárati pári sá v̐naktu naḥ [...] má nas tokéṣu tánayeṣu rīriṣaḥ* “the missile of yours, which, shot downward from heaven, circles around the earth—let it avoid us [...] do no harm to our offspring and descendants”.

²¹ Oberlies 2012:58, 158–159.

(b) The second characteristic that Rudra has in common with Chiron is wildness. In the *Rigveda*, Rudra is compared to a terrible beast, cf.

RV 2.33.11ab

stuhī śrutām gartasādam yūvānam ' mṛ gām nā bhīmām uphatnūm ugrām “Praise the famed youth, sitting upon the high seat, the mighty one, pouncing like a terrifying wild beast”

Actually, it has long been proposed that the original meaning of Ved. *Rudrá-* is ‘wild’, the form belonging etymologically together with Lat. *rudis* ‘coarse, wild’ (Wüst 1955:38–41). In later Sanskrit, not only *rudrá-* becomes synonym of ‘fearful’, but it is also frequently referred to ‘wild’ characters. For example, in the *Mahābhārata* (XIV 63.15), the Kiṃnaras, a group of spirits associated with the Gandharvas, are described as *raudradarśina-* ‘having a Rudraic (i.e., fearful) aspect/ appearance’. As is well known, the Gandharvas have much in common with the Greek Centaurs (Dumézil 1929), although their names should absolutely be kept apart from an etymological point of view. Nevertheless, the description of the Kiṃnaras in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* strikingly resembles that of Greek Centaurs, cf. “Naras have a human body except for an equine rump, and Kiṃnaras have an equine head on a human body” (*VP* 1.5.57).

In several other Sanskrit sources, Rudra is associated with mountains just as Chiron and the Centaurs in Greek. In the *Śatanāmarudriya* “(Litany of the) thousand names of Rudra”—a long hymn in honor of the god found in the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* (*VS*)—, Rudra is called ‘mountain-dweller’, cf.

VS 16.29

nāmo giriśayā ya ca śipiviṣṭā ya ca

“Reverence be to the mountain-dweller and to the bald one!”

The epithet *giriśayā-* can be compared with other Vedic epithets referred to Rudra or to his sons, the Maruts, namely *gircará-* ‘wandering in the mountains’ (Rudra, *VS* 16.22, 29), *girisānta-* ‘dwelling the mountains’ (Rudra, *VS* 16.3), and *giriṣṭhā-* ‘id.’ (Maruts, *RV* 8.94.12). Significantly, *giriśayā-* partially matches Gk. ὄρεσκόπος: the first compound member, *giri-*, is the Vedic word for ‘mountain’, while the second one goes back to PIE **keǵ-*, ‘to lie’, cf. Gk. κεῖμαι ‘id.’

(c) Like Chiron, Rudra is often associated with hunting, arrows and dogs, i.e., the hunting gear. Rudra has a ‘good arrow’ and a ‘good bow’, but his

arrow is also dangerous, because it brings diseases to the god's victims, cf.

ṚV 5.42.11a

tám u ṣṭuhi yáh s_ṛviśúh sudhánvā

“Praise him, who has the good arrow and the good bow”

VS 16.10

víjyaṃ dhánuḥ kapardíno víśalyo vā navāṃ utá

áneśann asya yá śava ābhúr asya niṣaṅgadhiḥ

“Stringless be the bow of the coil-braided one (: Rudra), and arrowless his quiver! May his arrows be futile, and empty his scabbard!”

One passage of the *Atharvaveda Śaunaka* mentions the big-mouthed dogs of Rudra, cf. AVŚ 11.2.30 *rudrásya* [...] / *idám mahá syebhyaḥ śvábhyo akaraṃ námaḥ* “to Rudra's [...] big-mouthed dogs I have paid this homage”. Additionally, in two stanzas of the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, dogs, masters of dogs and hunters, all dear to the god, are praised, cf.

VS 16.28

námaḥ śvábhyaḥ śvápatibhyaś ca vo

námo námo bhavá ya ca rudrá ya ca

“Reverence be to dogs, and to ye masters of dogs be reverence!
Reverence be to Bhava and to Rudra!”

VS 16.27

námaḥ śvaníbhyo mṛ gayúbhyaś ca vo námaḥ

“Reverence be to dog-keepers, and to ye huntsmen be reverence!”

(d) It is common wisdom that some aspects which originally belonged to the IE institution of the *Männerbund* merged in the divine figure of Rudra. As already shown, the god is strongly characterized as aggressive and dangerous. Indeed, he is called ‘man-smiting’, cf.

ṚV 4.3.6d

brávaḥ kád agne rudará ya nṛ ghné

“What will you say, Agni, to man-smiting Rudra?”

The Vedic epithet *ṛhán-* ‘man-smiting’ perfectly matches OAv. *jānāra-* ‘smiting-man’ (Y. 53.8), and the YAv. MN *Jan-nara-*, as well as Gk. ἀνδρειφόντης, ἀνδροφόνος, ἀνδράσι [...] φόνον, ἄνδρας ἔπεφνες, the Myc. MN *A-no-ro-go-ta*, thus, though partially, the collocation φόνον – ἥρώεσσιν (see above, §3d).

Moreover, in the *Rigveda*, Rudra is the father of the Maruts (*ṚV* 2.33.1a), a group of wind and storm gods, commonly portrayed as warriors and, in few textual passages, as young wooers, cf.

ṚV 5.60.4ab

vará ivéd raivatá so híraṇyair ' abhí svadhá bhis tan,ṽàḥ pipísre

“Just like wooers coming from wealth, with golden (ornaments) they (: the Maruts) have emblazoned their bodies through their own powers”

ṚV 10.78.5d

didhiśávo ná rath,ṽàḥ sudá navah

“(The Maruts who are) [...] of good gifts [/drops] like charioteers seeking to acquire (brides)”

6. In conclusion, some of the distinctive traits of the Vedic god Rudra resemble those evidenced for Chiron, namely:

(a) [HEALING HAND]: Rudra has a merciful (*mṛ layá kur hásta-*) or healing hand (*hásto yó ásti bheṣajá-*), while Chiron is, at least synchronically, ‘Mr. Hand’.

(b) [WILDNESS]: Rudra is compared to a fearful beast (*mṛ gám ná bhīmám*), which ‘dwells’ or ‘lives in’ the mountains’ (*giriśayá-*, *giricará-*, *giriśanta-*), whereby *giriśayá-* partially matches ὄρεισκῶος, referred to the centaurs in Homer.

(c) [HUNTING]: Frequent reference is made to Rudra’s gear: he has good arrows (*suviśú-*) and good bow (*sudhánvā-*), while Chiron is associated with ‘arrows’ in several ways. Furthermore, Rudra is associated with hounds (*rudrásya* [...] *śvábhyaḥ*), dog masters and huntsmen (*śvanibhyo mṛ gayúbhyaśca*). Chiron, on his side, is connected with hounds and chase, and trains several heroes in hunt.

(d) [YOUNG AGE-GROUPS]: Rudra is one of the Vedic gods of the *Männerbund*: he is a man-smiting god (*ṛhán-* cf. ἀνδρειφόντης, φόνος [...] ἥρώεσσιν) the father of the Maruts (*pitar marutām*), a group of gods portrayed as warriors and wooers (*vará iva*). Chiron advises his pupils to

abduct their brides.

7. In the Hittite texts, more than one deity is onomastically connected with ‘hand’, Hitt. *keššar-*, gen. *kiššeraš*, cf. Gk. χεῖρ, Ved. *hásta-*. For instance, the *Fragments for the Feast of the Underworld Gods* (CTH 645) mention the Luvoid ‘God of the hand’, Hitt. ^D*Kiššaraššaš*, who represents the deification of a body part, comparable to other ones attested in the same context, namely: *Ḫantaššaš* “God of the forehead”, *Ištamanaššaš* “God of the ear”, *Ištanzaššaš* “God of the soul”, *Šakuwaššaš* “God of the eye” (Laroche 1947:70). All these deities are without a doubt associated with health, but each of them protects and therefore represents a body part. Therefore, the comparison between ^D*Kiššaraššaš* and Χεῖρων is only apparent. The term ‘hand’ (Hitt. *keššar-*, Gk. χεῖρ, IE *ǵ^h*es-ʔ-*) lies at the basis of both names, with the addition of a possessive suffix. However, while the Luvoid suffix *-aššaš* most likely creates genitival possessive-derivatives, i.e., ‘the one of the hand, belonging to the hand’, Gk. *-ων* commonly appears in possessive-derivatives of the type ‘having X’, in this case, ‘the one having a (big/special) hand’.²²

Another Hittite source preserves a more interesting parallel for the figures of Chiron and Rudra, namely: the ‘Sun-god of the hand’, *kiššeraš* ^DUTU-*uš*. The god is invoked in the *Ritual of Allī of Arzawa against Bewitching* (CTH 402) to free a man from a form of bewitching, i.e., to heal him. Although CTH 402 is the only source in which the ‘Sun-god of the hand’ occurs (van Gessel 1998:870), and the hypothesis of an occasional linguistic creation cannot be completely ruled out, it is worth taking a closer look at the images connected with the deity in the Hittite ritual. This reveals striking parallels for Gk. Chiron and Ved. Rudra.

(a) As already suggested, *kiššeraš* ^DUTU-*uš* is a sort of healer, cf.

KBo 12.126 i 21–6

nu ^{MUNUS}ŠU.GI *kiššan memai*

kiššeraš ^DUTU-*uš* *kāša alwanzinieš*

antuḫšeš nu kūn UN-an mān LÚ-iš iyan

ḫarzi

n=at kāša iškišaz karpan ḫarzi

n=e=za EGIR-pa dāu

n=at iškišaz karpan ḫarzi

“La Vieille Femme parle ainsi: – Divinité solaire de la main, voici des ensorceleurs! Si (c’est) un homme (qui) a traité rituellement cette personne, il est en train de porter (tout) cela sur le dos; qu’il les reprenne! Il porte (tout) cela sur le dos” (Mouton 2010)

The reference to the hand as an instrument for healing is found in another Hittite text, CTH 457.1 (*Myth of the Fire Oath*). Here the goddess Kamrušepa recites the following ‘disease-removing’ spell:

KUB 17.8 Rs. iv 7–8

nu=wa ḫaršanaššaš GIG-aš kammarāš

kišaru n=at nepi[ša] paiddu

*IŠTU ŠU=ma=kan GIG=ŠU GE₆-iš KI-anzipaš karapdu*²³

“And let the illness of his head become a mist, and let it ascend to heaven. Let the Dark Earth lift his illness with the hand” (trans. Hoffner 1998)

(b) In another passage of *Ritual of Allī of Arzawa against Bewitching* (CTH 402), the figure of the ‘Sun-god of the hand’ is directly opposed to those of the bewitchers, who are represented as malevolent hunters, cf.

KBo 12.126 i 49–53

[ki]ššeraš^D UTU-uš^{LÚ} UR.GI₇-aš=(š)a LÚ-aš

peran nu=(š)ši^{GIŠ} PAN=ŠU ēšz[i]

[nu=(š)ši^{GIŠ} G]IHÁ=ŠU ēšzi

nu=(š)ši ANA UR.GI₇=ŠU 4 UR.GI₇=ŠU ēšz[i]

“La divinité solaire de la main (est présente) et l’homme chasseur (est) en face (d’elle). Il a son arc. Il a ses [fl]èches. Il a quatre de ses chiens.” (Mouton 2010)

In the passage, the ‘Sun-god of the hand’ has to neutralize the power of the malevolent hunter (Mouton 2012:251), by removing the bewitcher’s weapons. This representation resembles that of the dangerous arrows of the god Rudra on the one side, and the healing craft of Chiron, on the other.

8. To sum up:

²³ I print the text of F. Fuscagni (ed.), hethiter.net/: CTH 457.1 (TRde 05.02.2013).

As shown in the following table, Chiron, Rudra and *kiššeraš*^DUTU-*uš* share a set of common features, which constitute twofold or threefold phraseological partial matches:

	Gk. Χείρων	Ved. Rudrá-	Hitt. <i>kiššeraš</i> ^D UTU- <i>uš</i>
(a) [(HEALING) HAND]	X	X	X
(b) [WILDNESS] • ‘beast’ • ‘mountain- dweller’	X X	X X	
(c) [HUNT] • ‘arrow/bow’ • ‘hounds’	X X	X X	X X
(d) Young age-groups • [MAN- SMITING] • <i>Männerbund</i> (?)	X ?	X X	

- (a) Chiron, Rudra and *kiššeraš*^DUTU-*uš* all possess a special hand (Gk. δίδαξε μαλακόχειρα νόμον, Ved. *m̃ layá kur hásta-*, *hásto yó ásti bhešajá-*, Hitt. *kiššeraš*^DUTU-*uš*). The insistence on the image of the ‘hand’ can be explained as a reflex of the ancient χειρουργία.
- (b) Chiron and Rudra are both connected with the characteristic ‘wildness’. They are called or compared to wild/terrible beasts (Gk. φήρ, Ved. *m̃ gám ná bhīmám*) and dwell the mountains (Gk. ὄρεισκόος, *girišayá-*);
- (c) The three divine and semi-divine characters are all connected with hunting or, at least, with the hunting gear: Chiron is killed by an arrow and is mentioned in connection with the healing of arrow wounds. The ‘Sun-god of the hand’ is opposed to a clay-figure armed with arrows and bow in order to stop the malevolent hunter and, consequently, his evil. In a complementary manner, Rudra, the divine healer in Vedic, can shoot life-threatening arrows. The Vedic god and Chiron are also connected with hounds (Gk. ἄγρια καὶ κύνες, *rudrásya* [...] *śvábhyaḥ*), chase, and hunting in general: Chiron instructs heroes in hunting, Rudra protects hunters and dog-

keepers.

- (d) Only Chiron and Rudra might preserve a connection with the *Männerbund*: Chiron gives a man-smiting object to one of his pupils (Gk. φόνον [...] ἠρώεσσιν), and is connected with the rakṣasa and gandharvanic weddings, typical of the *Männerbund* (Apollo and Cyrene, Pindar; Peleus and Thetis, [Apollodorus]). Rudra is called ‘man-smiting’ (Ved. ṛhán-) and is the father of the Maruts, who are commonly portrayed as a group of young, unmarried warriors.

In conclusion, the figures of ‘the hand’ share significant common components within three cognate languages. The quality and the quantity of the presented phraseological evidence might support the reconstruction of an inherited state of affairs. Such reconstruction may explain the co-occurrence of all these features in three diverse but related traditions. Therefore, the association between Chiron and the ‘hand’ can even go beyond the etymology of his name.

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