
Character Biography

Aegnor

By Oshun

According to the published *Silmarillion*, Aegnor was the fourth child of Eärwen and Finarfin (1), followed only by his sister Galadriel. Like all of his siblings, Aegnor was born in Valinor during the Years of the Trees, more likely than not in Tirion. His Sindarin name *Aegnor* is not true Sindarin because there is no "adjective corresponding to Quenya *aika* 'fell, terrible, dire', though *aeg* would have been its form if it had occurred" (2). The Quenya name of *Aikanáro* can be translated as "fell fire" or "sharp flame" (3). In earlier texts, Tolkien also used the spelling Egnor (4).

Aikanáro was called by his father *Ambaráto*. The Sindar form of this would have been Amrod; but to distinguish this from Angrod, and also because he preferred it, he used his mother-name (which was however given in Quenya and Telerin form). *Aika-nār-* meant 'fell fire'. It was in part 'prophetic' name; for he was renowned as one of the most valiant of the warriors, greatly feared by the Orks: in wrath of battle the light of his eyes was like flame (5)

In addition to the reputation of the Noldor for their achievements in craft and lore, we also know them as a restless, questing, and highly opinionated people. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first citation relating to Aegnor in the published *Silmarillion* is political in context, i.e., one which explains his relationship among the various factions and sub-factions of the Noldor at the time of the departure of their majority from Tirion in Valinor to return to Middle-earth.

The sons of Finarfin were Finrod the faithful (who was afterwards named Felagund, Lord of Caves), Orodreth, Angrod, and Aegnor; these four were as close in friendship with the sons of Fingolfin as though they were all brothers. (6)

Along with his brother Angrod, the mention of his particular friendship with Fingon is repeated again in the following chapter, ". . . and with Fingon stood as they ever did Angrod and Aegnor, sons of Finarfin. But these held their peace and spoke not against their fathers" (7). This second reference is included as part of the narrative describing the moment in Tirion when the sons of Fëanor swore their father's oath and the remainder of their people each made their own decision about whether to stay in Valinor or follow Fëanor to Middle-earth. Interestingly, however, the earliest references to Aegnor which appear in the less frequently read segments of Tolkien's legendarium place Aegnor much closer to the Fëanorian brothers, Celegorm and Curufin, than to the sons of Fingolfin. Among other sources, *The Later Annals of Valinor* emphasize this connection of Aegnor and some of his brothers to the sons of Fëanor.

Inglor* (who was after surnamed Felagund, Lord of Caves) and the other sons of Finrod* went forward also; for they had aforesaid had great friendship, Inglor with the sons of Fingolfin, and his brothers Orodreth, Angrod and Egnor [Aegnor] with Celegorm and Curufin, sons of Fëanor. (8)

[*Inglor is Finrod Felagund in the published *Silmarillion*; Finrod, in this passage, refers not to Finrod Felagund, but is an early name use for Finarfin.]

Aegnor is further described in *The Later Annals of Valinor* as being a passenger on the ships which crossed the sea at Losgar, carrying only the followers of Fëanor and select few of those closest to them.

Fëanor and his folk seized all the ships and sailed east across the sea, and they took none of the other companies save Orodreth, Angrod, and Egnor, whom Celegorm and Curufin loved. (9)

Tolkien often uses physical descriptions to reinforce personality or character traits of his significant characters. One would naturally assume that Aegnor is blond because "[t]hey [the Noldor] were tall, fair of skin and grey-eyed, though their locks were dark, save in the *golden house of Finrod* [later changed to Finarfin]" (10). Tolkien also informs the reader that Aegnor is a fierce warrior, reinforcing this by noting the effect that his eyes produce upon those who encounter him, i.e., that "in wrath of battle the light of his eyes was like flame, though otherwise he was a generous and noble spirit. But in early youth the fiery light could be observed . . ." (11).

The same reference, nevertheless, simultaneously reinforces the point that Aegnor is a true son of Finarfin by referring to his "generous and noble spirit" (12). This could be seen as reflecting the intention to distinguish him from the fierce pride of the sons of Fëanor or the stubborn willfulness of Fingolfin's sons. Of the offspring of House of Finarfin, it is interestingly enough Galadriel who is specifically described as being "proud, strong, and self willed" (13). However, apparently all of Finarfin's children who left Aman for Middle-earth, even the noble Finrod Felagund, were ambitious and "had dreams of far lands and dominions" (14).

The other detail of Aegnor's physical appearance most often referenced is the one describing the unusual quality of his hair which is described as ". . . notable: golden like his brothers and sister, but strong and stiff, rising upon his head like flames" (15). That is an interesting visual effect—spikes of golden hair standing up around his head might tend to remind one more of a modern punk rocker than a one-quarter Vanyarin, one-quarter Noldorin, one-half Telerin member of the Eldar. One wonders if this description of Aegnor of the wild, spiky hair more appropriately fits the earlier, presumably somewhat rake-hellish, puissant follower of the Fëanorians than the milder and more prudent sons of Finarfin of the later texts.

Angrod and Aegnor rule over Dorthonion, almost due west of Maedhros's outpost of Himring and to the east and north of the larger part of Finrod's realm of Nargothrond (16).

South of Ard-galen the great highland named Dorthonion stretched for sixty leagues from west to east; great pine forests it bore, especially on its northern and western sides. By gentle slopes from the plain it rose to a bleak and lofty land, where lay many tarns at the feet of bare tors whose heads were higher than the peaks of Ered Wethrin; but southward where it looked towards Doriath it fell suddenly in dreadful precipices. From the northern slopes of Dorthonion Angrod and Aegnor, sons of Finarfin, looked out over the fields of Ard-galen, and were the vassals of their brother Finrod, lord of Nargothrond;

their people were few, for the land was barren, and the great highlands behind were deemed to be a bulwark that Morgoth would not lightly seek to cross. (17)

Near the end of the years of peace, during which the Noldorin princes extend their influence throughout the northern part of Beleriand and develop their system of defenses against Morgoth, Fingolfin becomes aware that their siege must necessarily be regarded as only temporary. While the Noldor fortify and form alliances, he believes that Morgoth also makes good use of that period to devise new evils and plot his next attack.

Now Fingolfin, King of the North, and High King of the Noldor, seeing that his people were become numerous and strong, and that the Men allied to them were many and valiant, pondered once more an assault upon Angband. (18)

The plan of Fingolfin is not wholly without wisdom, especially considering that the Noldor do not yet comprehend the potential strength of Morgoth. Or, as Tolkien puts it so heartbreakingly, neither did they "understand that their unaided war upon him was without final hope, whether they hasted or delayed." Most of the princes of the Noldor, however, were focused upon the development of their wide kingdoms spread across that "fair land" (19). And they wished to continue as they were for as long as they might.

Among the chieftains of the Noldor Angrod and Aegnor alone were of like mind with the King; for they dwelt in regions whence Thangorodrim could be descried, and the threat of Morgoth was present to their thought. Thus the designs of Fingolfin came to naught, and the land had peace yet for a while. (20)

Early in the First Age (FA 60 [21]), Morgoth tries to surprise the Noldor by sweeping down into Dorthonion in the Dagor Aglareb (Glorious Battle, named by the Eldar in recognition of it as a clear and swift victory over Morgoth's minions). Morgoth's forces, not anticipating the strength of the newly-arrived Noldor, are easily crushed in the Dagor Aglareb between the forces of Fingolfin from the east and Maedhros from the west. This leads to the uneasy peace usually referred to as the Siege of Angband. After almost 400 years of only occasional outbreaks of violence, contained more often than not by Fingon, the Siege is broken suddenly, without warning, in a maelstrom of fire and flame.

The Dagor Bragollach or Battle of Sudden Flame (FA 455 [22]) ends in the total devastation of the northernmost territories held by the Noldor and their allies (23).

Morgoth's offensive in the Dagor Bragollach includes eruptions of the volcanoes of Thangorodrim, sending out rivers of flame, noxious fumes, and clouds of smoke. Other fires had been caused by Glaurung the Dragon, who survived Fingon's first repulsion of him several years earlier. The grassy plains of Ard-galen are destroyed.

The war goes badly for the sons of Fëanor as well, although not without "great cost to the hosts of Morgoth"(24) at the hands of the Fëanorians. They manage to hold the fortifications of Maedhros at Himring. Fingon and Fingolfin are cut-off, however, unable to come to the aid of the forces of Finrod and his brothers. Finrod narrowly escapes with his own life, rescued by Barahir and his men. The defensive structure of Noldorin outposts facing the north is thus

completely broken apart, loss of lives is accompanied by surrender of vast stretches of the northern lands and the capture of significant numbers of men and elves.

Both Aegnor and Angrod are killed and their lands ruled rendered uninhabitable. Finrod loses a large part of the extensive territory ruled over directly by him or held in fealty to him by his brothers. The deaths of Aegnor and Angrod are the first in the long series of deaths of the pugnacious grandsons of Finwë in Middle-earth. In despair and anger at their losses and the devastation of their lands, Fingolfin rides to his death in his solo challenge against Morgoth. The battles of the "long defeat" (25) that Galadriel speaks of in *The Lord of the Rings* begin with the deaths of her brothers Aegnor and Angrod.

Aegnor and Andreth

The published *Silmarillion* holds no further information relating to Aegnor. However, in the *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth*, a tragic and romantic aspect of Aegnor's life is revealed. In those pages, writers seeking to expand the tale of this son of Finarfin may find ample inspiration.

Finrod the Wise (26) engages in a lengthy theological and philosophical discussion with Andreth, herself considered to be a wise woman among of the mortal House of Bëor. They each share their own opinions relating to the differences and similarities among the Eldar and mortal Men and the possible nature and origins of their final fates. Andreth grows, inexplicably at first, more passionate and agitated at Finrod's conclusions. Eventually, Finrod directly addresses with compassion and sympathy what he knows to be the cause of her disquiet.

'I have not asked for comfort,' said Andreth. 'For what do I need it?'

'For the doom of Men that has touched thee as a woman,' said Finrod. 'Dost thou think that I do not know? Is he not my brother dearly loved? Aegnor: Aikanár, the Sharp-flame, swift and eager. And not long are the years since you first met, and your hands touched in this darkness. Yet then thou wert a maiden, brave and eager, in the morning upon the high hills of Dorthonion.'

'Say on!' said Andreth. 'Say: who art now but a wise-woman, alone, and age that shall not touch him has already set winter's grey in thy hair! But say not *thou* to me, for so he once did!' (27)

Andreth takes particular exception to Finrod's gentle attempts to comfort her, responding with heat and an admirable strength of character before the placid and oh-so-judicious Finrod, with the following heart-wrenching lines:

'Speak of neither to me!' said Andreth. 'I desire neither. I was young and I looked on his flame, and now I am old and lost. He was young and his flame leaped towards me, but he turned away, and he is young still. Do candles pity moths?' (28)

Finrod answers:

'Or moths candles, when the wind blows them out?' said Finrod. 'Adaneth, I tell thee, Aikanár the Sharp-flame loved thee. For thy sake now he will never take the hand of any

bride of his own kindred, but live alone to the end, remembering the morning in the hills of Dorthonion. But too soon in the North-wind his flame will go out! Foresight is given to the Eldar in many things not far off, though seldom of joy, and I say to thee thou shalt live long in the order of your kind, and he will go forth before thee and he will not wish to return.' ([29](#))

The fates of Beren and Lúthien, Tuor and Idril, or Aragorn and Arwen are not to be granted to the one couple in Tolkien's texts in which a male of the Eldar loves a woman of the Edain.

Works Cited

1. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië"; Orodreth who appears as a son of Finarfin in the published *Silmarillion* is one of those endlessly changing characters, at one point a son of Finrod, another his brother, and also identified as the son of Angrod. See *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* to trace part of the history of the various changes of names and identity of Orodreth, this occasionally second eldest son of Finarfin.
2. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
3. Ibid.
4. *The Lost Road and Other Writings, The Later Annals of Valinor*.
5. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
6. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië."
7. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Flight of the Noldor."
8. *The Lost Road and Other Writings, The Later Annals of Valinor*.
9. Ibid.
10. *The Book of Lost Tales I, The Cottage of Lost Play* (note by Christopher Tolkien).
11. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
12. Ibid.
13. *Unfinished Tales, The History of Galadriel and Celeborn and of Amroth King of Lórien*.
14. Ibid.
15. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
16. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Beleriand and Its Realms."
17. Ibid.
18. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin."
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. *The War of the Jewels, The Grey Annals*.
22. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin."
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring*, "The Mirror of Galadriel."
27. See the [Character Biography of Finrod Felagund](#), "Wisdom among The Elves," on this site for a discussion of the concept of the Wise among the Eldar and specifically how this term applies to Aegnor's eldest brother.
28. *Morgoth's Ring, Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth*.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

About the Author

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the [SWG archive](#).