

# OTHER HANDS

*The International Journal for Middle-earth Gaming*

Issue 12—January 1996

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## EDITORIAL: BECAUSE WE CAN

**I**naugurating as it does the third year of our publication's existence, I am proud to announce that with this issue *Other Hands* is now available on-line as part of the Vast website (vastus.com). We have high hopes that this will greatly increase the size of our subscription base, and that it will advance our vision of a global community of Middle-earth gamers. We are still committed, however, to producing *OH* "the old-fashioned way" — as a high quality, hard copy, gaming fanzine.

Let us cut to the chase. Since our last (double) issue we have reestablished an exchange with *Estel*, the journal of the Sociedad Tolkien Española, and (as our bibliography addendum makes clear) many articles from *OH* have been translated into other languages and are being discussed within Tolkien societies in Europe. Not only that, but several articles, essays, and reviews devoted to Middle-earth gaming are beginning to appear in journals like *Estel*, *Terra di Mezzo*, and elsewhere. Let us hope that this trend will continue.

In addition to the return of Fredrik Ekman's highly informative "Digital Hands," I've decided to establish two new regular columns for *OH*. The first of these I have dubbed "A Taste of Things to Come," whose function will be to showcase a particular *MERP* author's work on a current module project. Wesley Frank inaugurates this series with a prospectus of *Near Harad*, the module that will create an interlocking "land bridge" at the intersection of the *Southern Gondor-Umbar-Khand* bloc of new realm modules (undoubtedly the most collaborative effort to date in the history of the *MERP* series).

The second new column getting its send-off in this issue is "Arda Lore," a place for ideas-in-progress on any Middle-earth topic. The concept is that each contributor poses a question or issue of interest, and then attempts to draw the broad outline of an answer. So, for example, we have in this issue's column questions such as "What ever happened to the Blue Wizards?" "Whom did the Free Peoples believe the Necromancer to be?" "Was Harondor ever forested?" and so on. Since "Arda Lore" does not require a

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SUBMISSION  
DEADLINE  
for next issue

March 1, 1996

definitive solution to any topic, I hope it will encourage more folks who would otherwise not have enough time to contribute to *OH*.

On to the main pieces for this issue. Luke Potter has given us a richly detailed portrait of the Balchoth and their invasion of the West (much of which I hope to incorporate into the *Northern Gondor* module).

On-line *MERPlisters* Mark Thorne and Jason Mulligan have joined forces to create elaborated *MERP/Rolemaster* character development templates for the three cultures described in ICE's 1st edition *Far Harad* module. This will certainly

be of great practical value to any GM running a campaign in southern Middle-earth.

Bernie Roessler returns this issue with yet another in-depth piece — this time a new rule idea for managing NPC combat behavior. Keep up the good work!

As promised, I am continuing my interview series on "The Making of *MERP*." In this issue I converse with master cartographer Pete Fenlon on what he does best. I think everyone will find his remarks of great interest. Next issue we'll see whether we can land an interview with Jessica Ney-Grimm, the *MERP* series editor and art director.

As always, we round the menu off with some reviews of recent *MERP* releases: *Dol Guldur*, *Angmar*, and *Mirkwood*.

For next issue, I will be submitting a voluminous piece on the Kin-strife campaign I have been running, complete with synopses and character stats. In addition to the interview and the regular features already mentioned, I also hope to coerce Jason Beresford into giving us "A Taste of Things to Come" for his revision of the *Umbar* module. There is also a good chance that someone from the *MERPlist* will be submitting an article on a Númenórean campaign set in eastern Middle-earth. See you all in April!

Chris Seeman  
January 31, 1996

## BIBLIOGRAPHY ADDENDUM

*Reglas Opcionales para M.E.R.P.: Magia y Habilidades Secundarias* (Comisión de Rol de la S.T.E.) [20 page pamphlet containing variant magic and secondary skill rules for *MERP*; inquiries should be directed to: Francisco Soliva Garcia, C/ Dos de Abril 19, 1a, 46006 Valencia, Spain]

José Luis Goñi "Acerca de los semi-elfos" *Estel* 8: 7-13 [makes reference to ICE and to Jorge Quiñonez's article in *OH* 2]

Eduardo Martínez Santamaría "Chris Tubb: su peso en mithril" *Estel* 8: 17—21 [discusses the Mithril miniature series]

Pablo Ginés "La Religión en el Reino de Gondor" *Estel* 8: 39-42 [discusses the religion of Gondor with reference to Chris Seeman's article in *OH* 2]

Paco Solvia García "Guía de pintura para miniaturas de Mithril (parte 1)" *Estel* 9: 49-54 [guide to painting the Mithril miniatures—the Fellowship and the Gondorian army]

Jorge Quiñonez "No hay elfos en la Cuarta Edad?" *Estel* 10: 6-10 [translated from *OH* 2]

Sergi Ibarra "Middle-earth PBM" *Estel* 10: 27-29 [information on the play-by-mail game]

Jose Miguel Otero "Sobre Gandalf y La Religión en Gondor" *Estel* 11: 9-15 [response to Pablo Ginés' article in *Estel* 8]

Paco Solvia García "Guía de pintura para miniaturas de Mithril (parte 2)" *Estel* 11: 19-25 [guide to painting the Mithril miniatures — Orcs, Trolls, and Half-orcs]

Luis Goñi "No, no hay Eldar en la Cuarta Edad" *Estel* 11: 34—42 [response to Jorge Quiñonez' article from *OH* 2, reprinted in *Estel* 10]

Jorge Quiñonez "Niente Elfi nella Quarta Era?!" *Terra di Mezzo* 2: 22-23 [translated from *OH* 2]

Chris Pheby "La corruzione nella Terra di Mezzo: un esame all'uso e le conseguenze del potere" *Terra di Mezzo* 2: 56—58 [translated from *OH* 1]

Mieuel Navarro Mañez "Critica del Juego de Mesa "The Hobbit" *Estel* 12: 9 [review of ICE's new *Hobbit* boardgame]

Pablo J. Ginés Rodriguez "Cuando ICE tomó cartas" *Estel* 12: 10-11 [review of *METW*]

Pablo de la Torre Plaza "Los colores de Arda" *Estel* 12: 34—41 [ideas for painting Middle-earth miniatures]

Luis Goñi "Acerca del Poder y de la Magia" *Estel* 12:42—48 [discussion of magic and power in Middle-earth; makes reference to article in *OH* 4]

## OTHER HANDS ERRATA

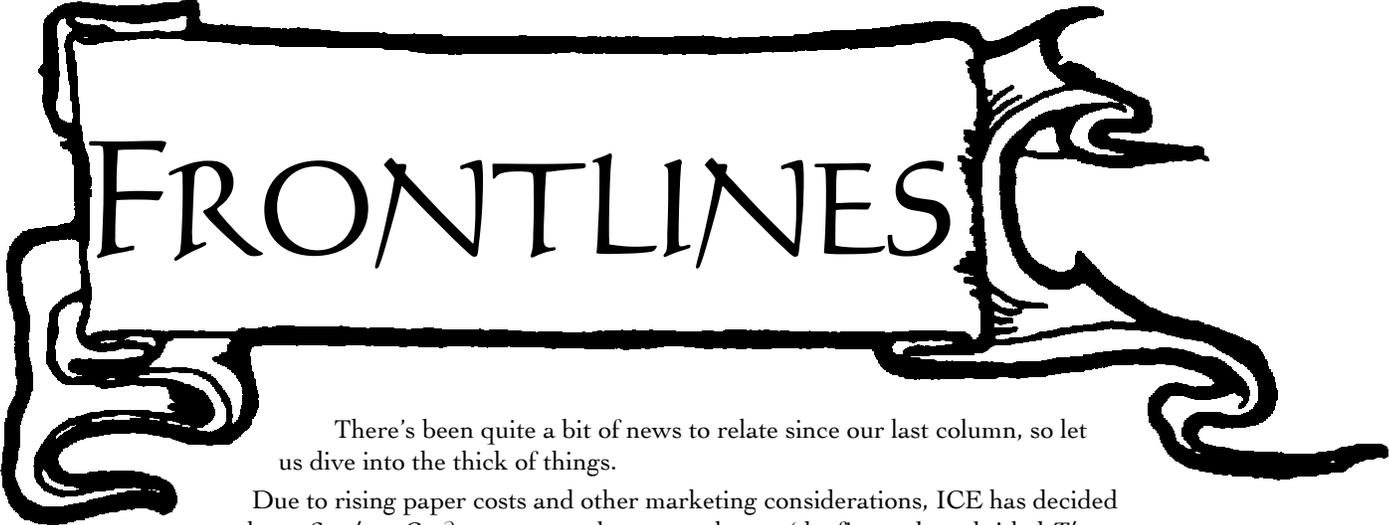
*OH* 9: p. 14 [last column, second paragraph] 250 (not 200) years should appear as the typical lifespan for Dwarves.

*OH* 10: p. 9 "the above material would meet the heating and COOKING (not "cooling") requirements for a year..."

## FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing community: Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Role Playing). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA—1 issue \$3/4 issues \$12; outside the USA—surface 1 issue \$3.50/4 issues \$18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948, USA. No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any form (preferably legible), but are easiest to edit when received on a floppy disk. Word for Windows is the editing software currently in use, so if there is any question as to the readability of your disk, please save your document in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submitted materials remain the copyright of the author unless we are otherwise informed. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 (USA). Please write me or call it you encounter any difficulties, my phone number is (415) 892—9066. Please note also that I may be reached over Internet: chris1224@aol.com



# FRONTLINES

There's been quite a bit of news to relate since our last column, so let us dive into the thick of things.

Due to rising paper costs and other marketing considerations, ICE has decided to release *Southern Gondor* as not one but two volumes (the first to be subtitled *The People*, the second, *The Land*—each about 200 pages in length). The first volume has already gone into production, and my rough guess is that it will be in the stores within a month's time. The second volume will be released approximately one month after the first. A re-issue of *Arnor* based on the same principle of division is currently being planned. Among the virtues of this publication strategy are: 1) more reasonably priced products and 2) more space for detailing the various realms of Middle-earth. Modules of under 200 pages, however, will probably still be released as single volume works. Another happy consequence of this turn of events for *Southern Gondor* is that ICE can now afford to commission a full-scale color map (1" = 20 miles) of Harondor for the second volume, along with improved versions of all the other previously published maps covering Gondor south of the White Mountains.

A contract for the *NearHarad* module will have reached Wesley Frank's doorstep by the time you are reading this, and Wes hopes to have a manuscript ready for publication by this August. Meanwhile, Jason Beresford, having done more than his duty for *Southern Gondor*, has at last found time to return to his own *Umbar* project in earnest. At the moment, the triumvirate of *Umbar*, *NearHarad*, and *Khand* authors are continuing their collaboration in order to work towards a consistent chronology for the highly interconnected histories of their respective regions. A similar coordination of efforts has begun between myself and Pete Fenlon, who will soon be preparing the *Robirrim and other Northmen* peoples book. I have sent him a prospectus of issues raised by that module's predecessor (*Riders of Rohan*) for my own *Northern Gondor* work. Together, Pete, Wes, Jason, Jesse Dallin, and myself all hope to bring inter-module consistency to an unprecedented height for the entire span of territory from Rhovanion to Umbar.

*Other Hands* subscriber Jason Vester has responded to Jessica Ney-Grimm's search for new *MERP* authors. He has sent in a proposal to ICE for a *Nazgul* sourcebook, based on Pete Fenlon's bios in *Lords of Middle-earth II*, which will more fully detail the history, realms, and powers of the Nine Ringwraiths. This promises to be an exceedingly fruitful endeavor.

As for future projects, Jessica has informed me that an *Athelas and Other Herbs* sourcebook is being planned. Also, Pete Fenlon has made some overtures to myself and Patrick Wynne regarding the possibility of expanding the linguistic sections of the existing *Middle-earth Campaign Guide* book. This would be a particularly exciting development, since (as some of you may know) Pat has access to a significant corpus of unpublished material by Tolkien pertaining to the languages of Middle-earth, which he has been preparing for eventual publication with Chris Gilson and other Tolkienian linguists of lofty repute.

That's all for now. I hope someone will send us a review of *Southern Gondor: The People* for our April issue. Until then...

Reporter: Chris Seeman

# COMMUNICATIONS

## **Nancy Martoch:**

Enjoyed the latest *Other Hands*. A few comments: Since you mention ICE products so often, it would be nice to include their address. Prices too. I particularly enjoyed the interview with Laurie Battle and Fredrik Ekman's column. Keep it up! On page 20 of "The High Cost of Living," reference is made to a "chatelaine." He must be very gay, as chatelaine is feminine. Perhaps you want chatelain, or the English version castellan ("the keeper of a castle").

Regarding "The Streets of Minas Tirith" (good article), it's probably true that the Dúnedain built up the walls to defend against Sauron. But people have a tendency to overbuild in reaction to past disasters ("By golly, this one's going to last!") and the destruction of Númenor would still be fresh in their memory. You should see some of the stuff that went up after the LA earthquake (my bookshelves, for instance)! An excavation in Greece revealed the ruins of a city, evidence of a tremendous flood, rebuilding, and a truly tremendous and awesome dam upstream. You figure.

Regarding "The Power of Spells in Middle-earth," Wesley Frank states in his "Invisibility" entry that etherealness (created by wearing the One Ring) causes a "general blurring of the senses" (p. 14). Actually, scent and hearing were enhanced; only vision was blurred.

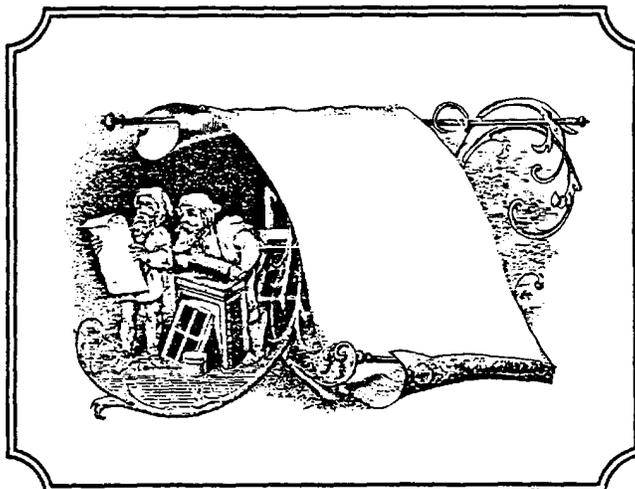
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## **Sarah Storch:**

It occurs to me that population figures for Medieval cities are probably based on quite low buildings, rarely more than three stories, whereas the architects of Minas Tirith would have had no difficulty with seven or eight-story buildings. This doubles your living space, so you don't need to double the area covered by

the city to allow a population of 50K. Also, it was built as a fort, so you've probably got a high proportion of the population living in barracks, which are not normally renown for luxury and spaciousness.

On a more general point, to what extent do *OH* readers think we should rely on Tolkien's pictures? My own feeling is that rough drafts such as the Minas Tirith



drawings should be used on a level -with, say, *The Book of Lost Tales II*, and only finished paintings as "canonical." To accuse the Professor of "vertical exaggeration," on the other hand, smacks of text criticism....

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before my first *MERP* session, I was overjoyed when I discovered that, despite Tolkien's death, his world was continuing to grow and develop. To me this is the most important and fascinating part of playing and collecting *MERP*. It is as though we, the gamers, are creating and living the history of a real world.

I agree with Brian Carlton when he expressed his desire to see nontraditional settings developed, primarily those to the East and south. These areas are wrapped in a mysterious fog of untold and unwritten possibilities. The histories, lives, and cultures of as yet unknown peoples are waiting to be brought forth, and only we — the game players and creators — can do it. It has always been a fanciful dream of mine to see all of Middle-earth (as imagined in Pete Fenlons map) detailed and brought to life.

After reading *Other Hands*, I realize that there are probably many other people out there who wish to see this "dream" realized. Hopefully some of these people might try their hand at authoring a *MERP* module, or an article for *Other Hands*.

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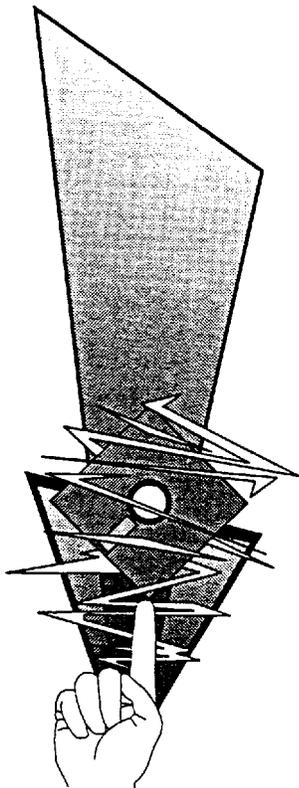
## **SamDaish**

Just a quick note that I thought you might want to pass on to the readers of *OH*. The *Arcane Companion* contains a reprint of certain pages of the Rolemaster Standard Rules, where there were mistakes or a clarity problem. They also contain a fairly major rule change concerning certain types of skills, and have included a Transcend Armor skill. (Yay!)

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# DIGITAL HANDS: News from the front

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As those of you who read *Other Hands* 10/11 will remember, this is a new regular column about computer games set in Tolkien's world. This second article will be about what is going on today. Before we start, allow me to mention that the list of Tolkien computer games that I described in the first article has been adapted into a set of WWW pages. If you have Internet access, try connecting to <http://www.lysator.liu.se/tolkien-games/> to view them. There you can find further information about all the games mentioned in this article and many others.

At first glance, not much seems to happen with regard to Tolkien computer games these days. The Tolkien Estate's current computer games licensee is Beam Software, who in turn have licensed Interplay. Interplay-released *The Lord of the Rings, Vol I*, based on *The Fellowship of the Ring*, in 1990. It then took another year for *The Lord of the Rings, Vol II: The Two Towers* to appear and, since then, all computer gaming Tolkien fans have been awaiting the third part.

According to unofficial sources at Interplay, the game developers first wanted to do a RPG, then decided on a wargame and finally ended up making Warcraft, a game in the *Dungeons & Dragons* "Forgotten Realms" series. Currently, both projects have been put on ice. Why have we yet not seen the third part? We can only speculate, but perhaps the first two games did not do as well as expected.

Still, a few things have happened after 1991. In 1993 *The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I* was re-released for MS-DOS computers as a CD-ROM game, enhanced with animation from Ralph Bakshi's animated movie, and in 1994

they released a completely reworked version of the game for Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

Quite apart from Interplay and official licenses, many games are developed by the Internet community. For those who like wargames, there is a Middle-earth module for the recently released version 7 of the very popular game *Xconq*. Another wargame where players can develop their own scenarios is *Warlords II*. Middle-earth seems to be a very popular choice for such scenarios, and there are currently at least four available on the Internet. One RPG constantly under development (though not exclusively based on Tolkien) is *The Pits of Angband*.

Yet perhaps the most interesting games today for Tolkien computer gamers are the MUDs. "What is a MUD?" I hear some of you ask. Well, I described text adventures in the first installment of "Digital Hands." A MUD is simply a text adventure for several players. In one such, you may choose to go on quests to rescue fair maidens or find treasure, you can hack-and-slash all the monsters that usually inhabit the MUD, you can role-play a character or you can become a creator and further expand the MUD yourself. Especially this last possibility is what makes the MUD environment so unique. Since the players themselves program the game, MUDs tend to be extremely large and extremely diverse. Unfortunately, this also means considerable diversity in terms of quality.

Three examples of popular Tolkien MUDs are *The Two Towers* (not yet officially open), *MUME* and *Elendor*. I will not here describe them in detail, nor will I try to mention the countless other MUDs that are more or less based on Tolkien's world. That will

have to wait for future articles, but I will say that all three are good in their own ways, and each deserves a try by the Tolkien gamer.

Finally, I would like to mention one rather unusual game. It is actually a contest to promote Middle-earth: The

Wizards (previewed in *Other Hands* 10/11). It is played on the World Wide Web and the user must find the answers to a series of riddles. The player could originally win decks of cards, but now it can only be played for fun.

In conclusion, even though there are no new official releases to be expected within the near future, there are many interesting games to play and to write about. Do you know about others? Do not hesitate to contact me through the address above.

## Computer games mentioned in the text

*Elendor*, MUSH, telnet to elendor.sbs.nau.edu 1892

*The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I*, available for MS-DOS (disk, \$12.95; CD-ROM, \$29.35) and Super NES (\$59.35), and *The Lord of the Rings, Vol II: The Two Towers*, available for MS-DOS (\$29.95). Call 1-800-INTERPLAY to order.

*Middle-earth: The Riddles*, available on the Internet at <http://iquest.com/~tstevens/saratosa/riddle.htm>

MUME, Diku MUD, telnet to 128.178.77.5 4242 for a list of available servers.

*The Pits of Angband*, Freeware, available for all popular machines and operating systems from <ftp://ftp.cis.ksu.edu/pub/Games/Angband/>

*The Two Towers*, LP MUD, telnet to empires.stanford.edu 9999

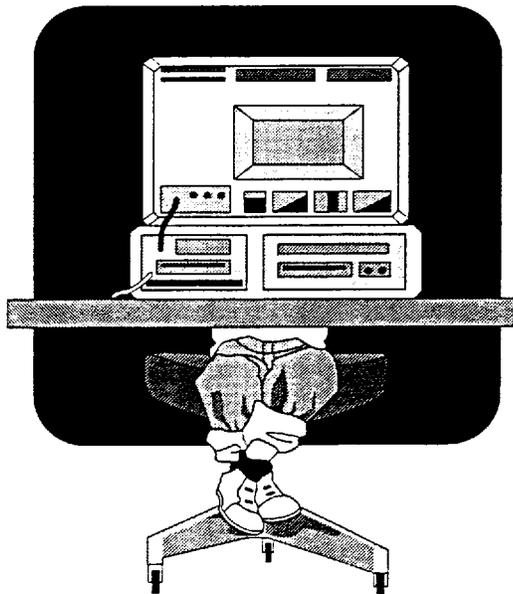
*Warlords II*, available for MS-DOS and Macintosh (\$49.95). Call 1-904-469-8880 to order.

*Warlords II* scenarios available from <http://www.cs.uiowa.edu/~shikore/Warlords2/scenarios/>

*Xconq*, Freeware, available for UNIX and Macintosh from <ftp://ftp.uu.net/pub/games/xconq/>

## Digital Hands errata for last issue

1. *De3D* was released in 1974, and Gygax made it in cooperation with Dave Arneson.
2. *Rogue* was NOT the first RPG (I thought the year looked a bit late). The first one was probably *Akalabeth*, released in 1979.





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**I** presented Jessica Ney-Grimm with the outline for the *Near Harad* module some five years ago, along with my proposals for *Arnor* and *Shire*. While I thought that *Near Harad*, being farther from the heartland of *The Lord of the Rings*, would be less risky as an introductory project, ICE had different needs, and the two northern modules came first. The situation in west-central Endor has changed somewhat -with time. Other writers have taken up the cause: *The Kin-strife* and *Southern Gondor*, both dealing with this part of Middle-earth, have been completed, and *Umbar* and *Khand* are well under way; *Northern Gondor* and *Mordor* will soon take shape. *Near Harad*, rather than being an isolated project, is now somewhere near the center of a grand strategy. Merging the old outline with the new ideas has taken a bit of negotiation, but it should prove well worth the effort.

The *Near Harad* outline was written

well after Pete Fenlon drew up the Nazgûl histories, but I realized at the time that many additions and some changes would be necessary to provide a more realistic view of Gondorian knowledge and interests in the northern Haradwaith, as well as to create an entertaining story. The most obvious problem was that the northern Haradrim, while a frequent threat to Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings* timelines, were not mentioned in the available ICE background material, save for (I think) the single reference to “Merchant Princes” in the *Ûvatha* entry.

To flesh out the module and fill up the territory, I sketched out a far-flung, civilized nation, with cities, kingdoms, and a long history of tragic interaction with imperial Gondor. The “Outhame,” the exotic frontier population of Gondor, added some color, and various Maiar and other supernatural creatures added magic. The most significant change needed in the *Lords of Middle-earth II* mate-

rial was in the Third Age history of the Nazgûl Adûnaphel. Since, in the open world I was creating, she would have been an obvious target for the Gondorian army, her Third Age “kingdom” went underground, becoming a source of conspiracy and terror. Lesser changes included a rationalization of *Ûvatha* of Khand’s story — there were contradictions even in the published version of *LoMe II* — but that was to be left for the first draft.

After progressing this far, I went to work on my other two projects. Much happened in the intervening time, and the Haruze (the Northern or Near Haradrim) pretty much vanished from everyone’s thinking. Most of the writers involved in the new-generation of modules focused on Gondor, then on the Variags and Umbar, because they were the people Mr. Fenlon and ICE had written about, and that was where interest was concentrated. By the time the *Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer* came out, Harondor and Near Harad were flat, desolate, and empty. The writers of the *NWVG*, as far as I have learned, sketched their entry solely on the basis of Mr. Fenlon’s lack of reference to the region and two of Tolkien’s notes stating that the country was “desert” and “contested.” When Chris Seeman, Jason Beresford, Anders Blixt, and company put the *Southern Gondor* module together, they followed this lead and all the references to this part of Middle-earth assumed that little happened in Near Harad and the only relevant players — in politics, trade, and adventure — were Gondor, Umbar, and Khand.

When I got permission this fall to do the *Near Harad* module, my assumption - was that it would be on the original terms and something like the original outline. My e-mail contacts with the other writers showed me how drastically things had changed. The barrenness of northern Harad as it was described in *SG* left me with little or nothing to tell stories about, so the primary writers of *SG* and *Umbar* agreed to several months of frantic re-writing and editing to make room for the Haruze (the Northern Haradrim) and their world. We have added several ranges of hills, a lot of water and cities, and

some 4-5 millions of population to the relevant parts of *SG*. Chris Seeman, as editor, has altered a number of references from “Khand and Harad” to “Harad and Khand,” to reflect the primary importance of the local Haruze power over the more distant Variags. Jason Beresford, the writer of *Umbar*, and Jesse Dallin, currently working on *Khand*, agreed to a division of labor and interests along our respective frontiers.

The design for the *Near Harad* module is intend to serve several purposes:

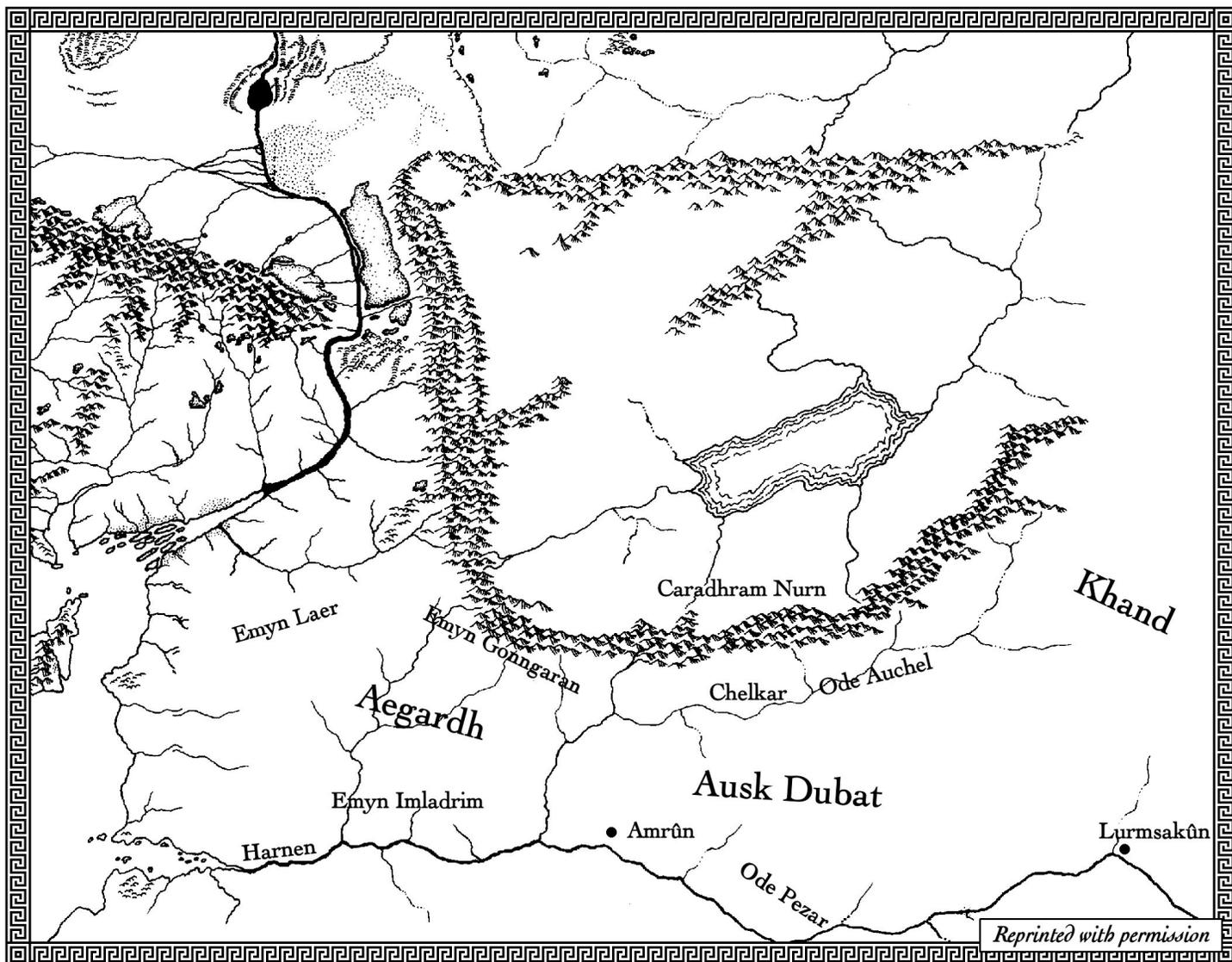
- It should provide, for the gamemaster and players, a sophisticated, alien civilization only a day’s ride or so away from the familiar, safe lands of Gondor.
- In addition to an interesting and unique country to wander about in, the module also must include a variety of story links to the primary campaign area (Gondor/Arnor/Mirkwood) and more to regions covered in other modules, such as *Khand*, *Umbar*, and *Far Harad*.

- The lands of Harad should offer many layers of history to serve as seed for adventures, including allies, encounters, sites, and evils dating back to ancient Númenor, and beyond to the Maiar who wandered before the rising of the sun.
- To serve as a proper game book, it should provide mobility for a variety of player character races. That is, because it lies surrounded by other gaming areas, there should be some means of travel during some time in history for Dwarves, Hobbits, Elves, and several varieties of Men.
- The players should have at least the possibility of contact with characters from Tolkien’s writings. None of the well-known characters are native to Harad, but Saruman, Aragorn, Faramir, and Éowyn all traveled here. Other, lesser characters, kings of Gondor, princes of Rohan, and some of the better-known Elves, had cause to travel to Harad. I have even sorted

out a (less-plausible) storyline involving Thorin Oakenshield and Bilbo’s mother, the remarkable Belladonna Took.

My outline for *Near Harad* hopefully will advance all of these goals. If it works, it should lead players out of Gondor to Khand and Umbar, increasing interest in all the other modules, and possibly generating interest in the presently unpublished realms of Farther Harad and the Chey and Chy lands as well. The geography of *Near Harad*, as it has been worked out, runs something like this:

The Harnen has its source in the Caradhram Nurn (the eastern extension of the Ephel Dúath), just about a hundred miles east of the Caradhram’s junction with the main north/south spine of the range. Fifty miles downstream, at the site of Lugarlûr, the old royal seat of the Second Age Kingdom of Árd (Adûnaphel the Nazgûl), it is joined by the Ode Auchel, the river that collects the drainage from the rest of the Caradhram and the southwestern corner of the Plateau of Khand. At Amrûn, a hundred miles farther



downriver, the Harnen turns westward and is joined by the Ode Pezar (Noz Peka), doubling in size and flowing directly westward to the sea.

All the lands from the sea, up the Harnen and Ode Pezar to the Chey plains beyond the peaks of the Ered Harmal, inland for a thousand miles, are known to Dúnadan traders and (in T.A. 1640) open to travel by all races. The basin of the Harnen below Lugalrûr makes up, in the Second Age, the Númenórean province of Harnendor. North and west of the Harnen are the lands known in the Third Age as Harondor or the Harmaka. South of the Harnen and Ode Pezar lay dry hills and the major deserts of northern Harad.

The Haruze lands along the Ode Auchel are called Chelkar, those along the lower Ode Pezar are known as Pezarsan. Between them lay the dry hills of the Eryn Gonngaran (the Ausk Dubat,) in the west, and the Bursk Merag, in the east, bordering on Khand. East of Pezarsan, past a series of rapids some three to four hundred miles from Amrûn, is Lurmsakûn. This is a rough basin that collects waters from the Plateau of Khand and the southwestern face of the Ered Harmal, just south of the “elbow” shown on ICE’s continental map of Endor.

Beyond Lurmsakûn to the northeast is Khand proper, to the east the elbow of the Ered Harmal. To the southeast lie the valleys of the Rysis and other smaller rivers, all of which drain into the deserts of Harad and disappear into the legendary Mirror of Fire. Hidden in the mountains along the upper Rysis is Valarith, a strange little domain of my own design, the home of Shepherd Giants, Great Hawks, and stray Dúnadan and Elvish refugees. Caravans crossing the mountains enter the Chey prairies. Those jumping the Rysis southeast to other valleys eventually reach the Chy lands and the Bay of Ormal on the great southern ocean.

All of these lands are troubled by harsh climates and blessed by grand scenery. The boundary of Khand, on my sketches, is a grand escarpment that runs, on the continental map, from the point of the elbow of the Ered Harmal dead northwest to the Caradhram Nurn. Above the escarpment the elevation is about 3000' in

lower Khand, 4000' in Upper (northern) Khand, high enough to produce a dry grassland for the Variags. Below the escarpment, at 1000' — 1500', Chelkar and Lurmsakun are desert areas inhabited by Haruze irrigators.

My placement of Sturlurtsa Khand — the capital of Ûvatha’s Variag empire and, in the Second Age, the largest city in central Endor — puts it on the southern end of the plateau, on the headwaters of the Noz Peka and in the foothills of the Ered Hannal. This makes it hard to reach with a Haruze/Dúnadan army from the west, and allows it to dominate all routes over the mountains at the elbow and the trails northward into the Gap of Khand. There would also be well-watered valleys here to support the half-million or so peasants/serfs/slaves needed to support Uvatha’s capital.

In the later Second Age, at the height of Ûvatha’s power, Lurmsakûn was a Variag province and Pezarsan served as a buffer region between the Variags and the Númenórean colony of Harnendor. Chelkar was the larger part of the Kingdom of Ard and served a similar role between Harnendor and Mordor. The Rath Khand, the Númenórean road from Umbar, took its name from Ûvatha’s empire, then in absolute control of west central Endor. Before and after this period of stability, the rule of eastern lands changed from dynasty to dynasty. The largest city in Lurmsakûn is named the “City of Heroes” because so many of its leaders (and others) get slaughtered in the periodic Variag conquests, while more become martyrs driving them out a generation or a century later. During the time of Gondorian hegemony in Near Harad, Lurmsakûn is generally independent, as Ûvatha is loath to challenge the might of the Dúnedain until Adûnaphel has destroyed their prestige in Harad through subversion and terrorism. She manages this about the time of the First Wainrider War, and the cycle of dynastic squabbles begins again in earnest.

The situation on the Gondor-Umbar frontier, focusing on the coast around the mouth of the Harnen, is part of Jason Beresford’s sphere in his Umbar module and I need not get into it here. However, the history and

geography of Lurmsakûn is intended to meet the requirements given above Near Harad, while allowing Jesse Dallin a free hand in creating the bloody entertainments of Variag politics. All of the writers involved get an interesting multi-racial mix of enemies on their borders. I can also hope for an interesting mix of geography and stories in Near Harad. Collectors will note that the *NWMG* map includes the two big rivers I mentioned (Ode Auchel and Ode Pezar) but no other terrain south of Gondor. The arrangement of the names is a little unusual (tributaries longer than primary branch, for instance,) primarily because Tolkien, in his original maps, put the Harnen in without sorting out the drainage pattern in western Endor beforehand. Like the inhabitants of Near Harad, it was originally intended only as a element of his greater central story.

The authors have permission from ICE to add in physical features as needed (within limits), as long as it aids storytelling and doesn’t violate the Tolkien canon. The escarpment of Khand and the Ausk Dubat derive from this loophole. I would hope to add some canyons, dead-end rivers, salt lakes, and interesting crags and potholes to go with them. We also, of course, can add creatures and inhabitants as needed. In this cluttered land, we can meet wayward nomads, cynical city dwellers, knights in white armor, evil cultists, religious warriors and fanatics, giant birds and scorpions, dark sorcery, the Will of Eru, Spirits of the Air and Spirits of Fire.

Harad and its neighboring lands, while more crowded than before, has room for all of this.



# THE BALCLOTH

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*In the year 2510 of the Third Age, Gondor and its allies together confronted and overcame a great peril from the East. Spurred on by Sauron himself, great numbers of Easterlings gathered on the Talath Harroch in southern Rhovanion with the intention of overrunning Gondor and seizing its lands for their own. Following much the same path as their Wainrider predecessors, this new wave of Easterlings first persecuted Gondor's Northman allies along the East Bight of Mirkwood and later assaulted Calenardhion itself. It was only through the timely arrival of the Éothéod cavalry that disaster was averted and Gondor saved. In gratitude for their valor, Cirion the Steward granted the fields of Calenardhion to the horse-lords, and thus was born the Riddermark.*

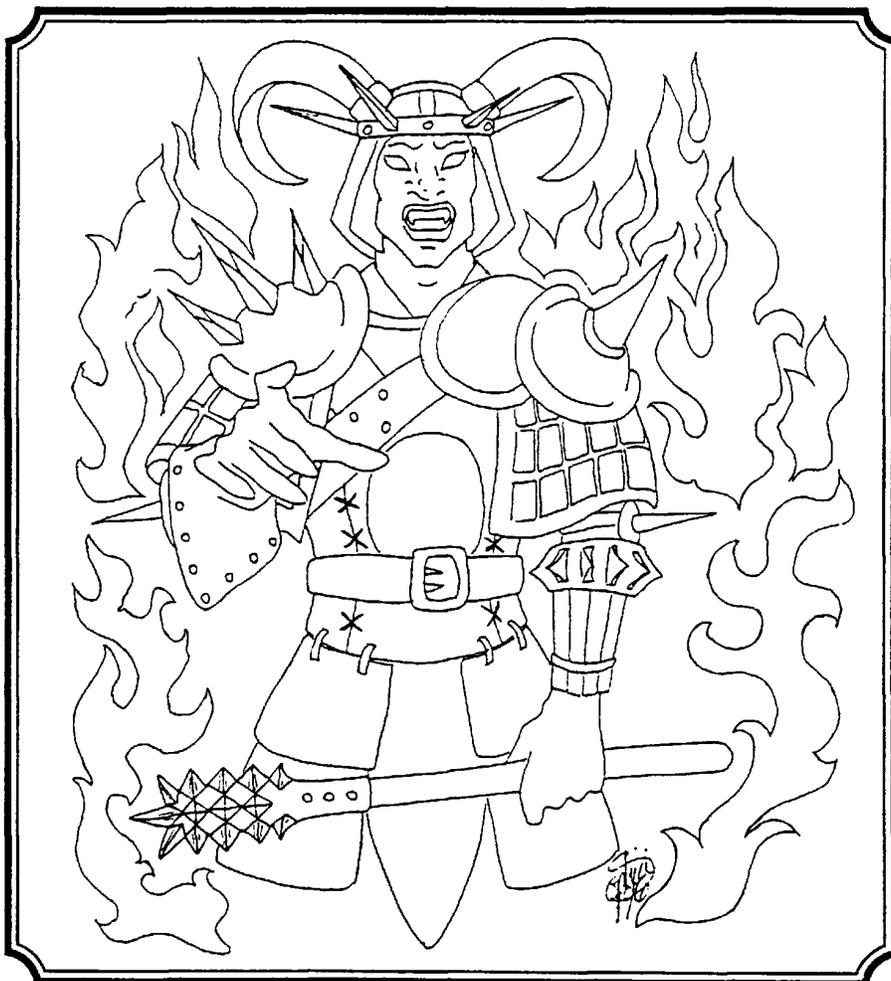
*These events are described in Appendix A of The Return of the King. A similar (though not identical) account can be found in "Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan" which is part of Unfinished Tales. Unfortunately, these are the only two primary sources I have been able to locate in my construction of a campaign setting for my players. The two accounts are very simple and sometimes contradictory. Undaunted, I used a little common sense, a little creative license, and all the help I could find in past and current ICE publications to recreate the military campaign itself as well as the events preceding and resulting from it. I hope that the information that follows will help other gamemasters open a new period of Middle-earth's history for their players.*

## THE HISTORY OF THE BALCHOTH

**T**his tale begins in T.A. 2063, when Gandalf went to Dol Guldur in an attempt to discover the true identity of the Necromancer. Because he wanted his strength to be greater before declaring himself, Sauron abandoned Dol Guldur and withdrew into the East. Since the Battle of the Camp, in which the Wainriders were utterly defeated, there had been no great stirring in Rhûn, and it was at least partly for the purpose of finding new allies that Sauron fled in that direction. Far beyond the Sea of Rhûn, the Dark Lord came upon a plain-dwelling,

tribal people that named themselves the Pults. Revealing himself to them in a time of great peril as Maladûm, their traditional god of war, Sauron personally delivered them from their peril, cementing his position among them.

Until his return to Dol Guldur in 2460, Sauron repeatedly sojourned with the Pults amid his other journeys in the East, gradually centralizing political authority in the hands of a king (the Bôm), enhancing the prestige of Sauron's own cult there (the Sarshen Meltek, or "Crimson Order"), and increasing the size and power of the Pultic military. By 2203, this once-tribal culture had brought



under its authority many of the weakened wain-tribes to the west of it. In 2300, the Pults had grown from their original twenty-three tribes into an Easterling empire of over sixty tribes, many of which were wain-tribes that had once belonged to the Wainrider Confederacy.

It was around 2300 that Sauron, having returned from a foray into the Far East, found the state of his new empire not to his liking. Many of the Pultic conquests had occurred more than a century before; and Sauron perceived that as long as these tribes enjoyed economic success in their homeland, they would never move west in significant numbers and, thus, would never come to challenge the Dúnedain of Gondor. Sauron then began a great sorcery that changed the wind and precipitation patterns of the plains, causing the gradual onset of a terrible drought. Keeping his presence a secret, he observed the Pults, determining what next to do.

As the years passed and the climate steadily worsened, many began to say that Arud, their ancient goddess of agriculture, and Pael, god of the hunt, had become angry with the tribes' singular devotion to Maladûm. The counsels of ancient and long discredited shamans of Pael and Arud were sought by the Bôm. Being angered by this unlooked-for reaction to the drought, Sauron began a series of visitations upon the people.

Thus, in 2341 began the years of the Prophecies of Maladûm. Sauron appeared to individuals both within and outside his cult, breaking their minds with his terrible presence. The prophecies he handed down to those he visited told of an ancient and glorious kingdom of stone, where vast and fertile fields were left untilled and yet guarded jealously against others. These fields were the gifts of Arud and Pael to their new peoples, for they had deserted forever the Pultic tribes. Maladûm, however, had not deserted them; and if they properly dedicated themselves to him, he would grant them victory on the field of battle and thus deliver to them the lands they coveted.

In later prophecies, Sauron (in the guise of Maladûm) also said that he had a gift for the Men of Middle-earth. This was the very gift that Sauron had

always used to snare the hearts of Men—that of unending life. He said that the people of Gondor once enjoyed this gift, but had lost it when they shunned Maladûm. He foretold that the Pultic empire would one day destroy the overproud men of Gondor and would thus claim the gift of Maladûm, taking their rightful place as lords of Men. Sauron also devised a script for their language and taught it to his cultists; and they, in turn, delivered it to the tribes as the first gift of their dark god. Later, Sauron would add his requirements of dark ritual and sacrifice to the cult's literature. As the words of Sauron took root in the hearts of the people, the drought peaked and the tribes began to look west.

In 2370, the Bôm launched a new age of fire and war, renewing his campaigns against those wain-tribes that remained unconquered. In 2392, the Pultic armies reached the eastern shore of the Inland Sea of Rhûn. There they fought a thirty-year war with the Logath tribes. When peace was brokered between these two peoples in 2426, the Pultic armies turned south to the lands of Khand and Nûrad. The first war with Khand lasted from 2441 to 2445, and ended with an uneasy peace between the two nations. This was also the period when Pultic scouts first reached the plains of the Talath Harroch.

When war once again broke out with Khand in 2450, the empire found itself stretched too thin and suffering grievous losses. The northern frontier with the Logath was deserted, the western armies pulled back, and the people moved to the plains south of the Inland Sea. Khand could withstand the full strength of the Pults for only one season of war, before it was forced to sue for peace in 2457.

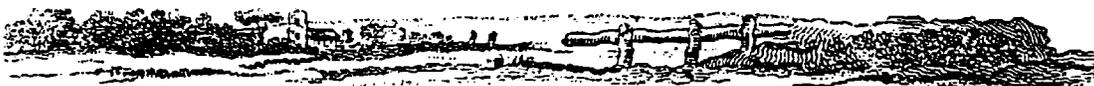
The second peace with Khand was an earnest one, and relations with that nation gradually normalized. In later years, the Pults would welcome mercenary cavalry units into their ranks, thus in some manner renewing the ancient pact between the Wainrider kingdom and Khand. After the second war with Khand, the strength of the Pultic armies was low. The Bôm then called a halt to the advance of his armies until 2468.

During this decade, the Pultic military received renewed strength from Variag, Logath, and Sagath recruits. In the Pultic empire, many young Easterling men saw the promise of glory that their grandfathers had once seen in the Wainriders. In the blood of these people an ancient enmity for the Men of the West stirred again. The prophecies of the Sarshen Meltek, the lies of Sauron, rang true in their ears.

In 2469, the principally Sagath town of Kravod (formerly Gondorian Thorontir) welcomed the armies of the East, and thus began the long rule of the Pultic empire on the Talath Harroch. By 2473, the westernmost Pultic army had reached the Anduin, and was advancing north towards the Gladden Fields. The main populace of the empire had migrated to the Talath Harroch, and Kravod became its new capital. A newly crowned Bôm ruled the combined Easterling peoples from an old Gondorian watchtower in the hills east of Kravod. The priests of the Sarshen Meltek walked among the people and were both feared and profoundly respected. Word of this new Easterling threat spread through the Gramuz Northman settlements from the East Bight all the way to Esgaroth and Dale. The Northmen named this new force from the East the Balchoth or "Terrible Host" (a word half common speech and half Sindarin in origin).

## THE MEN OF THE WEST

The Wainrider Wars of T.A. 1851-1899 and 1940-1944 had left many lasting imprints on Gondor and Wilderland. The losses among Gondor's Northern Army were serious enough to have a long-term impact on the overall strength of the South-kingdom in its coming trials. Because the numbers in the Northern Army were only sufficient for a full garrison at Angrenost, Tir Anduin and Tir Limlaith (the hill-forts that the Undeeps) had to be unmanned. The forces available to the Ruling Stewards had been insufficient in 2475 to stop a host of black Goblins of Mordor from smashing Osgiliath,



while southern Gondor was in constant fear of attacks from the Corsairs of Umbar and their Haradrim allies, and could rarely spare any strength for military efforts outside its own regions.

On the plains of Rhovanion, the oppressive rule of the Wainrider kingdom drove the large majority of Northmen either into the Grey Mountains or Mirkwood. Only the hardest refugees survived to settle again in the upper vales of the Anduin with the remainder of the Éothraim tribes to form a new nation, the Éothéod. Here they lived in relative seclusion from even their old allies, gradually adapting to the pressures of their new environment.

“Those Northmen that persevered through the harsh rule of the Wainriders revolted and helped to defeat the Easterlings. The towns that were left along the East Bight in the wake of the Wainrider defeat were of mixed Northman (Gramuz) and Easterling (primarily Sagath) population. These people had no formal communications with the realm of Gondor, though merchants undoubtedly continued to trade.

The Talath Harroch between the forest, the Inland Sea, and the Ash Mountains was a grave and constant worry to the Ruling Stewards of Gondor. As long as there was no buffer population on the plains, the fields of Calenardhon would be open to attack from that direction. Certainly the Stewards meant to strengthen their army in that quarter, but constant threats from other directions kept them from doing so.

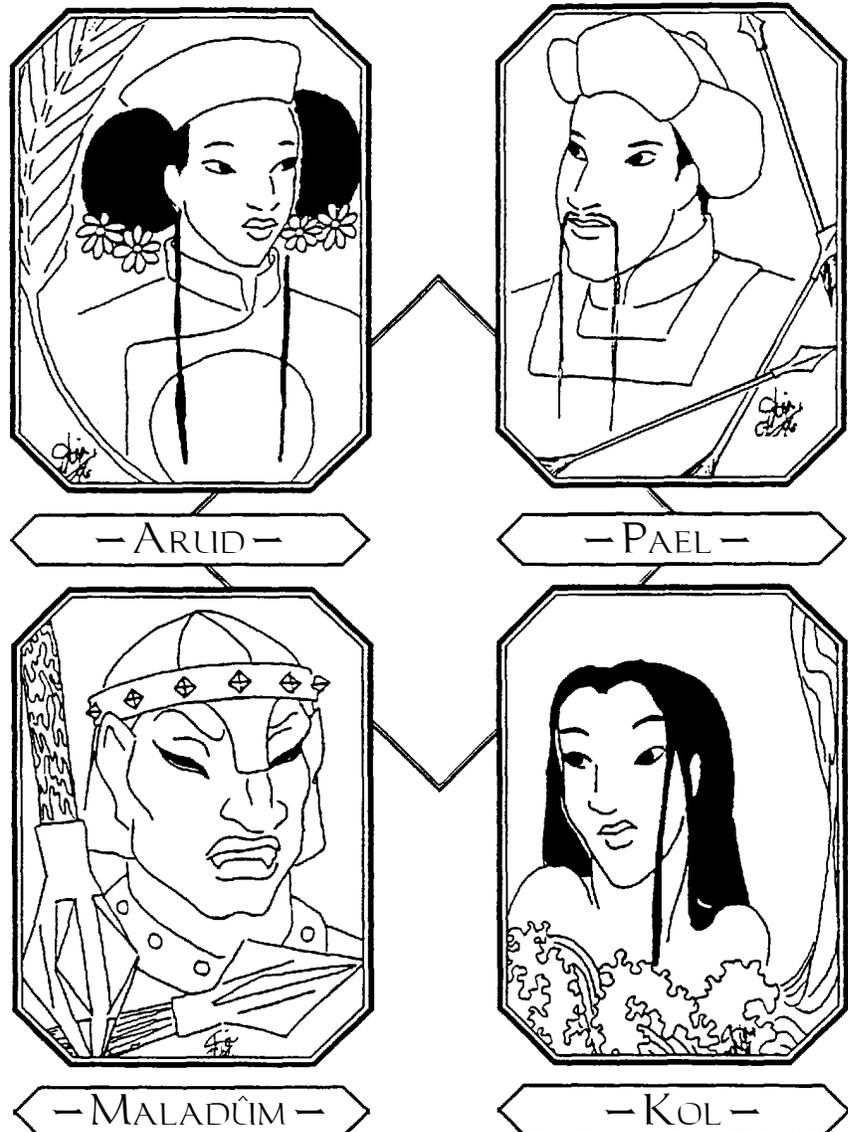
This was the strategic situation Gondor faced when Boromir the Steward died in 2489, his life shortened by the lingering effects of a Morgul-knife wound received fourteen years before. Upon succeeding him, Cirion immediately sent spies and scouts into Wilderland to validate rumors he had heard regarding a new people from the East. He also sent skeleton garrisons to reopen the old hill forts of the Anduin and to guard the Undeeps. It was only through these small, cautionary steps that Gondor’s peril was realized and the certain disaster of a surprise invasion of the Calenardhon prevented.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BALCHOTH

In their eastern homeland, the Pultic nation comprised twenty-three large and closely related tribes. Of these, the Pultai was the largest and most influential. The empire was led by a council consisting of two patriarchs from each tribe, with a senior representative (the Bôm) presiding as head of state. The religious pantheon of the Pults consisted of four major deities: Arud, Pael, Maladûm, and Kol—the lords of agriculture, hunting, war, and the River Kol (Talathrant) respectively. Each tribe had a shaman devoted to the deities that were considered most important to them. Arud and Kol were goddesses—the former married to Pael, the latter perpetually opposed to Maladûm.

The first additions to the empire had little impact on its organization. These were small tribes along the west bank of the Kol. It was at this time that Sauron first appeared as Maladûm and led the tribes to victory. Given their enemy’s devotion to (and dependence on) Kol, these first wars (later called the Wars of Formation) had profound ramifications on the cosmology of the conquered people. The river-tribes were integrated as lesser subjects, and Kol fell out of favor among the original tribes. Maladûm, who had personally led the armies in battle, was suddenly chief deity of the empire and personal patron of the Bôm.

As wain-tribes were either converted or conquered through the policies of the Bôm and the blessing of Maladûm, the nation was taken by an expansionist and martial fervor such





MONK

that none of the tribal patriarchs dared challenge the Bôm on any issue. The emerging Pultic empire would be ruled by a monarch with explicit divine sanction. This authority structure would last until the Pultic defeat on Parth Celebrant in 2510.

After the years of visitation and prophecy (T.A. 2341-2345), the cult of Maladûm was established as the one true religion of the empire. In 2344, the division of the cult into three houses was established. The first and smallest house was that of the monks. These were scholars and recorders of the prophecies, decrees, and laws of Maladûm.

The second house was that of the healers. These were certainly not the quality of Gondor's healers, being probably closer to those of the Goblins. Their methods emphasized quick healing, and were little concerned with pain or scarring. They were surgeons and herbalists, and their services were intended only for the politically or socially important, members of the cult itself, and other military personnel.

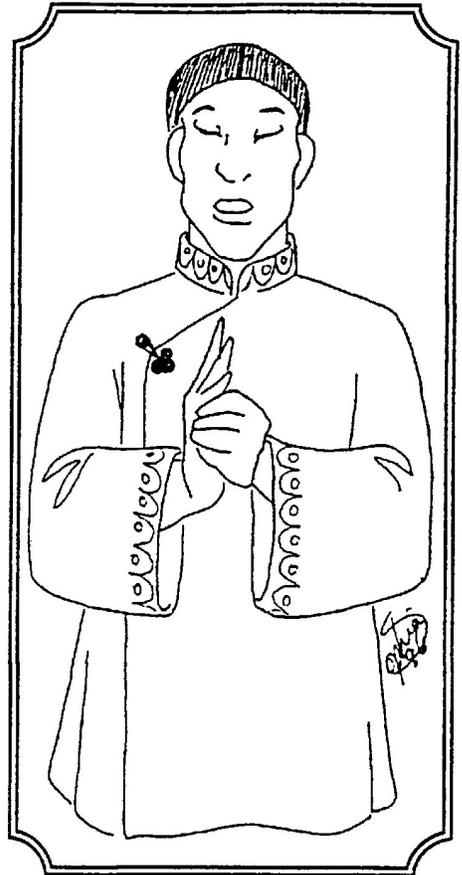
The last house was that of the priests



HEALER

—givers of the dark benedictions of Maladûm, seekers of blasphemy, and oftentimes wielders of black magic channeled directly from Sauron. Day to day internal decisions were made by a single High Priest, who was elected from among the ranks of the third house. All of his efforts were directed towards the basic needs and objectives of the cult. The highest ranking cult official was the Primate. Decisions on cult theology and other sensitive issues were made by the Primate exclusively. He could always be found advising the Bôm on the will of Maladûm, who kept the Primate in his closest councils, desiring to carry out the will of his dark god in all things. The Primate was appointed by the Bôm, and was always of pure Pultic descent.

The Pultic military fluctuated between one and five armies during the history of the empire.<sup>1</sup> The original army was called the Keshak (Pu. "Great Fire"), and was commanded by the Bôm himself. This was the army to which Sauron first appeared, and at one time it numbered in the tens of

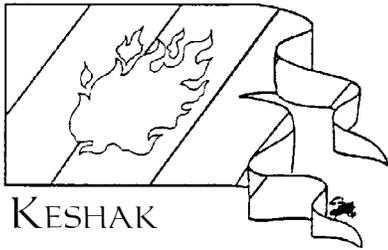


PRIEST

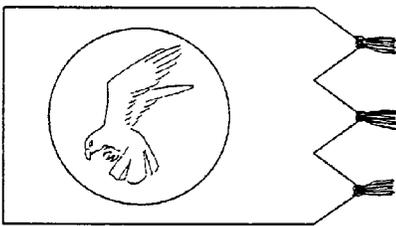
thousands. During the Wars of Formation, the Darmin Belen (Pu. "Army of the Falcon") was formed of partisans and trainees. After the conquest of the river-tribes, the Naidan Belen (Pu. "Army of the Serpent") was founded and sent west to conquer the wain-tribes. In the formation of these two armies the Keshak was greatly reduced in numbers, many of their soldiers becoming officers in the new armies.

During the initial campaigns of the Wain-tribe Wars, a fourth army was created, the Tolig Belen (Pu. "Army of the Ox"). This was made primarily of wain-tribe recruits, and the remainder of the young officers of the Keshak. Thereafter the Keshak was no longer considered an army, but instead a personal guard unit for the Bôm, committed to battle only at the discretion of the Bôm and never sustaining a defeat until Parth Celebrant. Service in the Keshak was a reward for long years of service and valor, and was seen by young officers as a period of formal training in the doctrine of Maladûm and a fast track to a Belen command position.

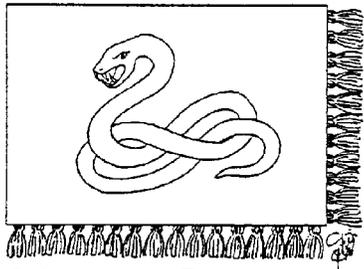
Each Belen was composed of two or three tomens of 10,000 men, excluding commanders. (The Tolig Belen once had four tomens during the height of wain-tribe recruitment.) Each tomen was subdivided into ten manghins of 1,000 men each. The manghins were further subdivided into five scout and five war jigons. A war jigon had six light irbins and four heavy irbins, each consisting of ten men and a commander. A scout jigon had four scout irbins, four light irbins, and two heavy irbins, each also comprised often men and a commander.



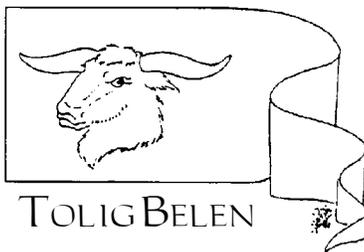
KESHAK



DARMIN BELEN



NAIDAN BELEN



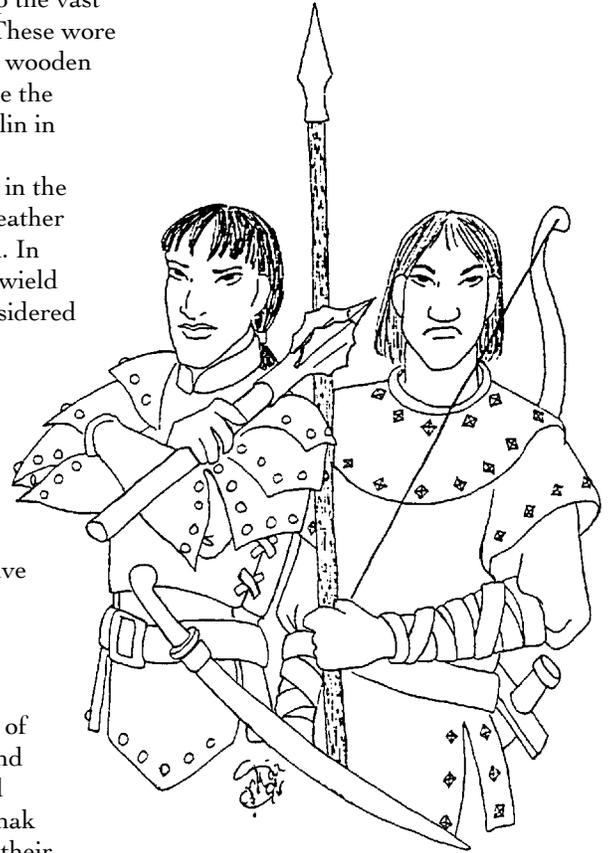
TOLIG BELEN

The Pultic armies were always poorly armed and armored. Initiates served in the scout irbins, and were trained only in saber and composite bow use. They carried no shields and wore no armor in battle. More seasoned warriors served in the light irbins, which made up the vast majority of the Pultic troops. These wore a jerkin of soft leather, carried wooden shields, and were trained to use the battle spear and throwing javelin in addition to saber and bow. Distinguished veterans fought in the heavy irbins, and were given leather helmets to distinguish their rank. In addition, they were trained to wield the battle mace, a weapon considered sacred by the Pults.

Officers carried large black shields that bore in red the device of their unit as well as the insignia of their rank. Competent manghin commanders were selected for the guard unit of their respective armies, from which they could hope for a promotion to the Keshak. The guardsmen wore black rigid leather armor with silver studs. Their maces were of higher quality than the rank and file, with a pommel of polished obsidian. Members of the Keshak earned bright red shields, and their maces had pommels inset with garnet. The dress of tomen and Belen commanders was more individually determined, but all bore a shield with their rank upon it, as well as their choice of the best weapons of the Bom's army.

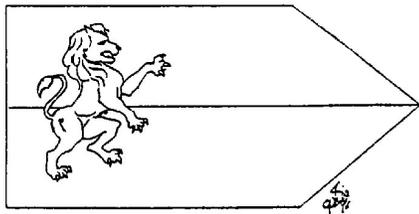
What the Pultic armies lacked in weapons and armor they made up for in organization and sheer numbers. The older units were well drilled in large unit maneuvers and inter-unit support. They brought discipline to the battlefield, and that in itself was enough to defeat many of the wain-tribes they faced on the eastern plains. They were also exclusively infantry. Being mobile, their culture depended on horse, cattle, and oxen as draft animals. They could not afford to lose large numbers of animals on the battlefield. This fighting style may have saved Gondor in the end, for many a potential Sagath, Logath and Variag

recruit was discouraged by the thought of fighting on foot. The only instance in which the Bôm authorized the use of cavalry on the battlefield was in 2510, when 2,000 Variag mercenaries were deployed.



## THE YEARS PRIOR TO THE INVASION OF CALENARDHON

As has been already told, the formal occupation of the Talath Harroch began in 2473, with the occupation of Kravod by the Bôm and the main body of the Pults. The Darmin Belen and the Keshak then became the Kravod garrison, and the Army of the Serpent was sent west to occupy the Vale of Anduin, both in the Wold and north all the way to the Gladden Fields. The Army of the Ox took position north of Kravod, and sent scouts into the Northman and Sagath settlements along the East Bight of the forest. The Bôm was content to rest here for ten years, concentrating on further recruitment of the Sagath population of the plains. In 2483, he



formed the Leptek Belen (Pu. "Army of the Great Cat") from units that had been added to the various armies as the popularity of Pultic rule increased. A year later, under advice from the leader of the Tolig Belen, units of that army began moving north into the lands of the Northmen. Once again, the move was made in the interest of attracting further allies, but this time met with less fervor and more hostility.

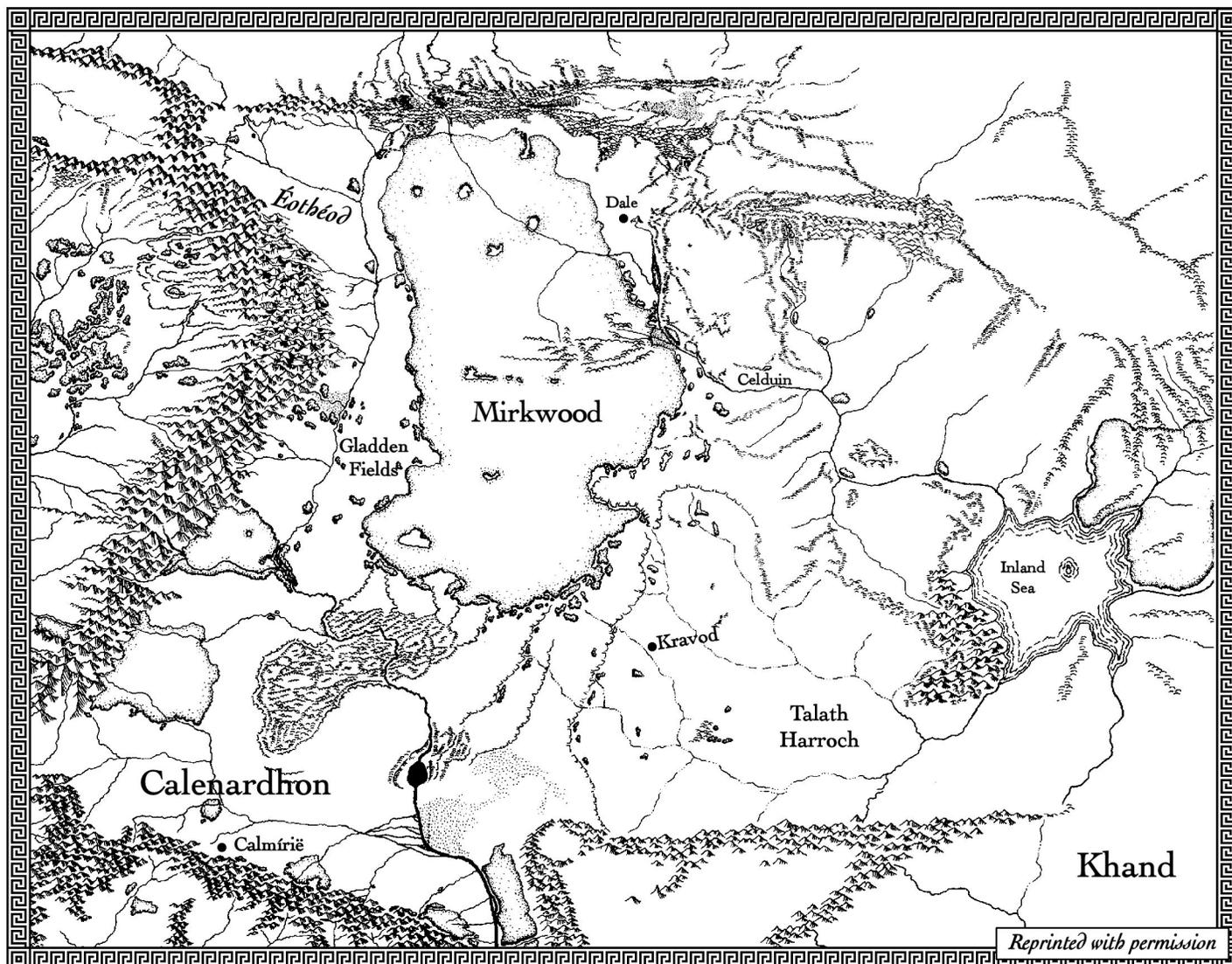
The towns along the East Bight were inhabited principally by people that traced their heritage to the

fiothraim tribes of old and the hardy Northmen of Esgaroth and Dale, people that honored their ancient tradition of friendship with Gondor. These were also a people whose grandfathers had endured long years of oppressive Easterling rule under the Wainriders. They were not well disposed to the call to arms issued by this new wave of eastern invaders, and many spoke of armed resistance against them. Within this population, however, was a minority of Sagath descent whose ancestors, after the fall of the Wainriders, had come back to settle among the Northmen. To these, the prospect of renewed Easterling rule promised redress for the prejudiced policies of Northman town rulers.

What was intended to be a slow and peaceful occupation of northern lands soon spiraled into an armed invasion. The old rifts between townfolk re-opened. Northman rebels

organized in the hills, or in towns not yet taken by the invaders, while townsmen of Easterling descent welcomed the Pultic army, and many young males joined them. With each season of war, another town was occupied, and those Northmen with a mind to fight soon found themselves pressed against the Celduin and the eastern eaves of the forest. In 2492, the leader of the Tolig Belen abandoned the notion of recruiting among the Northmen, and began an offensive designed to annihilate the rebels and secure the north frontier against any future attacks on the rear of columns, which were then forming for an invasion across the Anduin.

By 2495, the Northman rebels had been broken and driven out of their lands. The Tolig Belen continued the recruitment and training of the Easterling population until in 2505, when their numbers were judged sufficient between the East Bight and



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the Talath Harroch to organize a fifth army, the Kelten Belen (Pu. "Army of the Horse"). This new army then traveled south -with the Tolig Belen for the general mustering of the armies. In the north the Tolig Belen was replaced by units from the Army of the Great Cat, which would stay behind on the Talath Harroch and serve as a rearguard for the empire.

In 2507, the Army of the Serpent, having thoroughly scouted the eastern Wold and both banks of the Anduin, made large lumber camps along the southern edge of the forest. For the next two years they would build great barges upon which the whole of the Pultic armies would cross in secret and come upon the fortresses of Gondor without warning. The invasion of Calenardhon had been set for the spring of 2510, and all was now ready.

## THE MACHINATIONS OF SAURON

All plans of the Necromancer had seemingly come to fruition in 2510. His new Easterling allies were poised along the Anduin to strike a great blow against the South-kingdom. His servants were once again occupying the citadels of Mor-dor in strength. The last King of Gondor had been slain by the Lord of the Nazgûl, who had captured Minas Ithil. The once proud city of Osgiliath lay in ruin, and Gondor's greatest captain, Boromir the Steward, had been himself wounded by Morgul-blade and his life shortened. Now, at a time when they would face their greatest test, the Gondorians were ruled by a young and inexperienced steward. This was seemingly Sauron's master blow, yet some lingering doubt still troubled the Dark Lord.

Whether he still judged his own personal might insufficient to face the White Council or he foresaw the events of 2510, none can tell; but something prevented Sauron from committing his assembled strength against Gondor. The Orcs of the Red Eye were conspicuously absent from the invading forces of Calenhardhon. Whatever his reasons, Sauron thought this a bad time to openly declare himself, and sought to disguise the part he had played in the invasion. Instead, he involved Durin's Bane, the Balrog of Moria.

The Balrog was a mighty spirit of flame, among the active servants of Morgroth second in might only to Sauron himself. Much of Sauron's former power, however, had been diminished by the loss of his Ring, and the Balrog must have sensed this. It is probable that from his throne in Moria, Durin's Bane judged himself to be the chief servant of Darkness in the world, and sought some way to assert his dominance. What Sauron may have lacked in personal strength, however, he more than made up for in subtlety of mind. He perceived the thought of the Balrog, and used this to his own design.

The Balrog had gathered a great host of Orcs and Trolls to himself in the years since his awakening. The majority of these Orcs had migrated from the northern reaches of the Misty Mountains, where they had once served the Witch-king in his wars against Arnor. A few among these still served the Dark Lord as spies among the Moria host. Thus, Sauron was able to plant the rumor of the coming invasion of Calenardhon in such a way as to seem a piece of intelligence gathered abroad by the Balrog's own spies. Further, the idea was planted that by sending an army to aid these invaders, the Balrog might share in the plunder of Gondor and assume his place as chief enemy of the Free Peoples. In this way, Sauron strengthened the invaders, causing further harm to Gondor, while concealing his actions from the Wise.

## THE STRENGTH OF GONDOR AND ITS ALLIES

When vigilance along the Anduin was renewed and its forts reopened, it soon became apparent that a large population of Easterlings had occupied the plains just to the east. These new Easterlings either remained some distance off or were careful not to show

themselves, for the garrisons of the hill-forts learned little from within their own walls. It soon became apparent that spies would have to be sent east for the situation to be made any clearer. In 2490, scouts were first sent onto the Talath Harroch to discover the intentions of these new arrivals. Little, however, was learned, since few returned. It was not until the spring of 2493, when the first refugees from Northman rebel bands made their way through peril to the Undeeps, that Gondor received some hint of the intentions of this new people, whom the fugitives named "Balchoth." At the time, this was only a warning of the presence of large armies and gathering strength.

News of the persecution of the Northmen reached Cirion, and though grieved at this maltreatment of valued allies in the north, strength could not be spared to intervene. In 2496, he did begin a general strengthening of the garrisons of Angrenost and the fortress-towns of Calenardhon with troops mustered at Calmîrië, but could do little else. It was not until the winter of 2509, when spies returned from the east with a translation of the prophecies of Maladûm, that Cirion truly realized



the intentions of the Balchoth and the immediacy of Gondor's peril. He then issued a general call to arms throughout the realm and took counsel with his generals.

Throughout the winter months of 2509 and continuing into the new year, preparations were made and troops gathered. Slowly, companies began trickling into Minas Tirith from the southern fiefs. Even Cirion agreed, however, that a large portion of their strength would have to be held in reserve in case of some attack from Umbar. Though early in the season, there had already been probing attacks on the southern coasts. As more solid intelligence began to arrive on Easterling numbers in Rhovanion, Cirion realized that the available strength of Gondor would probably be insufficient to protect Calenardhon.

It was in the early days of Gwaeron (March) that Cirion resolved to seek aid from Gondor's ancient allies in the

north, the Éothéod. Cirion knew that the Vales of the Anduin were patrolled by the scouts of the eastern enemy, so he sent six pairs of messengers. Each rider was a valiant warrior and had committed to memory the steward's message to Eorl, the young Altheagn of the Horse-lords. The first pair rode on the 10th day of the month, and another pair set out each day thereafter for five days. On the same day that the last pair rode (the 16th of Gwaeron), the Southern Army of Gondor, led by Cirion himself, left Minas Tirith for Calmírië, where it would meet the gathered Northern Army.

The various companies of the Northern Army had marched four days prior and, on the 17th, met the main of the garrison of Angrenost at Dunlostir. Strengthened by a large company of conscripts from the surrounding countryside, the combined army marched for Calmírië. On the 25th they reached that town, and again their strength was augmented

by a large company of conscripts. There they waited, and were joined by Cirion's Southern Army at midday of Tuilérë, the quarter-year festival day. On the 1st day of Gwirth, the combined strength of Gondor marched for the Brown Lands. There they planned to hold the line of the Anduin against invasion.

On the very same day that the Northern Army reached Calmírië, the lone survivor of the twelve messengers of Cirion reached Eorl's capital of Framsburg. He was Borondir Udalraph, one of the first pair to be sent on the journey, and had ridden hard for fifteen days. The story of his conversation with Eorl, and the subsequent mustering and journey of the éoherë, has been told elsewhere in full and will not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the éoherë rode, fully 7,000 strong, on the 6th day of Gwirth, for the North Undeeps.



## THE BATTLES OF THE WOLD

The assembled might of the Pultic armies was vast. Between the Armies of the Falcon, Ox, Horse and Serpent, the Bôm had ten tomens of full strength (100,000 troops). The Army of the Great Cat (two tomens) would serve in a rear guard capacity, and would cross the river with the Pults once the conquest was complete. Scouts of the Naidan Belen had long since mapped out much of the western Wold, and the Pultic battle plan was drawn up.

On the 4th of Gwirth, the forces of the Bôm crossed the Anduin in two places. The main host, comprising all but one tomen of the Naidan Belen, crossed thirty miles north of the southern boundary of the Wold, where a rough path left the western shore and wound its way through the hills going west. It followed this path for a day and a half, after which it took a sharp bend southwards. Here the Bôm made camp, waiting for word of the movements of his enemies. The other tomen of the Naidan Belen crossed roughly forty miles further north, just north of a sharp westward turn in the river. From here they picked their way through the hills along a well-scouted course winding northwest, with the intention of coming upon Tir Limlaith from behind.

On the 8th of Gwirth, mounted scouts arrived at the camp, having sighted the approaching columns of Gondor two days earlier. The Bôm then sent the second tomen of the Naidan Belen on a great looping march to the south and then west. This army was then to turn north, and cut the enemy off from an organized escape. On the 10th, the armies of the Bôm were drawn up in order and advanced west to meet the enemy.

It was also on the 8th that the columns of Gondor entered the Wold from the west, making a straight line for Tir Limlaith. Not having received any warning of the enemy's crossing, they marched under the assumption that the Easterlings were still on the east side of the river. Cirion's mounted scouts had reached the fort two days earlier and had since returned to the column, reporting no sign of the Balchoth.

On the 11th, the northern tomen of



*“Cirion  
realized  
that his  
army had  
fallen into  
a trap...”*



the Naidan Belen fell upon Tir Limlaith, completely sealing its garrison within its walls. A three-day assault on the fort began, which culminated in its burning and the complete destruction of the men trapped within. Word of the fort's demise didn't reach Cirion until it was too late.

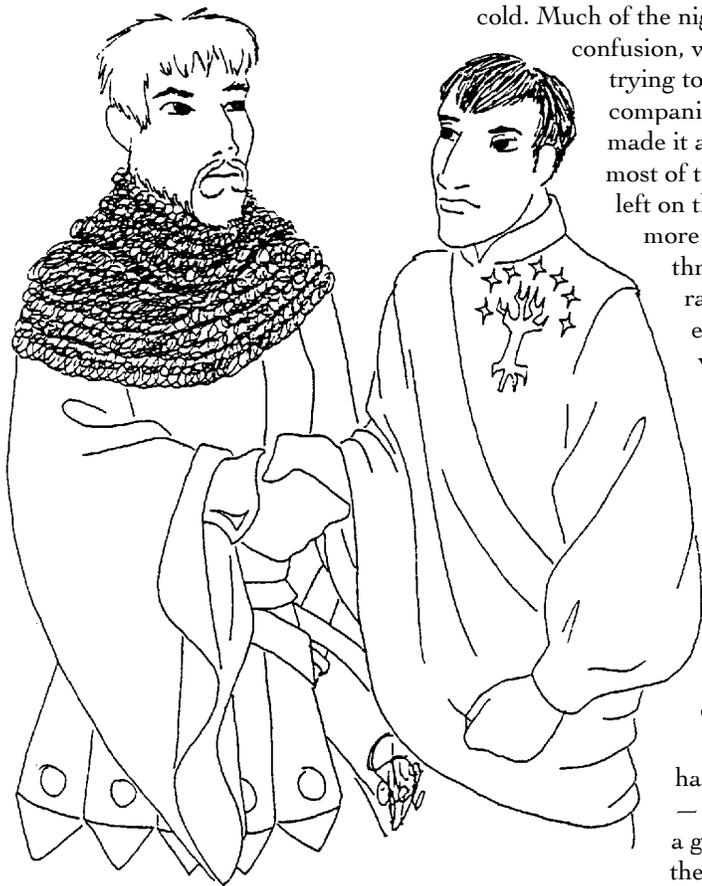
In the early hours of the 13th, the army of Gondor crossed the lowest shoulder in a ridge of hills to find the valley beyond filled with the armies of their enemy. Drawing up in a dirnaith or assault wedge, they drove into the forwardmost ranks of the Darmin Belen, but were halted by the Darmin guards. Here the battle reached a standstill until the green troops of the Kelten Belen charged into the fray, reinforced from behind by arriving veterans of the Tolig Belen. Demoralized by the sheer numbers of their enemy, the Calenardhon conscripts broke, and Cirion ordered a slow withdrawal back over the ridge to land more favorable to the defensive battle he realized he would have to fight.

It was in the midst of Cirion's withdrawal over the ridge that the southern tomen of the Naidan Belen fell upon his forces from the south and west. At this point Cirion realized that his army had fallen into a trap carefully laid by his enemies. For though small, this new southwestern force would slow down his withdrawal enough to prevent separation from his enemies in the valley. Resolving to break out of this trap and find a battlefield more advantageous to his men, he committed his own guards, strengthened by a company of mounted knights from Belfalas, against the extended right wing of his enemies. Punching through and rolling back the enemy's line, they turned east and held the flank, while the main body of troops began a retreat to the north.

The day was now growing late, and Cirion drove his columns hard through the hills. Throughout the afternoon and evening the main host of Gondor picked their way north, while Cirion and his guards fought in the rear, holding the enemy back. At nightfall the enemy broke off their pursuit, but Cirion still drove his troops north, and climbed up through a final canyon and onto the floodplain of the Limlaith river. There, just on

the northern edge of the Wold, they halted. On the horizon to the east, a dull glow told them of the burning at Tir Limlaith.

Early on the morning of the 14th, scouts were sent east to gather news of Tir Limlaith. As they approached the charred ruins, however, they sighted the northern tomen of the Naidan Belen forming up and marching west. The scouts returned to Cirion and gave their news. Seeing an opportunity to catch a portion of his enemy separated from support, Cirion ordered an eastward march, and battle was joined. Anger and the desire for revenge was hot in the blood of the Dúnedain, and they smashed the single Balchoth tomen, but not before the armies that had defeated them the day before had gained the southern edge of the plain, advancing in good order.



Thus, at mid-day of the 14th, a second battle of the Wold was fought in sight of the North Undeeps. Though they fought valiantly through the day, by afternoon it was clear that the Balchoth armies enjoyed a greater advantage in numbers than was originally thought, and the men of Gondor began to give ground. By late afternoon, Cirion's men had their backs to the southern bank of the Limlaith, and were utterly cut off from escape in any other direction. So once again, the most veteran companies of the army held the shore while the rest fled over the river. Many men were lost in the crossing and many more in holding the shore, but in the end, Cirion and much of his guard unit crossed during the night and reorganized on Parth Celebrant.

## PARTH CELEBRANT

The 15th of Gwirth dawned grey and cold. Much of the night had passed in confusion, with Cirion's men

trying to find their companies. Though they had made it across the Limlaith, most of their gear they had left on the further bank or, more commonly, had thrown into the river, rather than let the enemy have it. Such was the state of Cirion's men: tired, cold, hungry, demoralized,

and now more poorly equipped than the enemy that pursued them. And still they were hopelessly outnumbered.

By first light, most had found their units — and just in time; for a great fog rose out of the river in the early hours of the morning,

further confusing things. In these first hours of dull light, the Balrog's Orc-host found the men of Gondor. Their attack was met with much confusion, and many men died looking for their weapons. The Easterlings were using the fog's cover

to cross the river and forming up again when sounds of the battle reached them. Confused in the fog and thinking that part of his own force had joined in battle with the enemy, the Bôm ordered the units that were already across the river to attack while the others crossed. Thus the Balchoth arrived on the battlefield piecemeal and confused.

It was also in these first hours of light that the éoherë broke its camp and covered the last few miles to the North Undeeps. Seeing the charred ruins of Tir Limlaith on the opposite bank, the Éothéod hastened across the ford and onto the western bank of the river. There they met a few men of Gondor who had somehow floundered in the night's crossing and ended up getting washed by the river down to the Anduin where they had reached the western bank. From these men they learned tidings of all that had happened in the Wold, and also of the disposition of the enemy and how best to come behind it.

They turned north immediately and crossed the Limlaith near its confluence with the Anduin. Once across, they used the river fog to conceal their advance until they came to the battlefield. Engaged from the first by the Orc-host, the Dúnedain had not been able to contest the enemy's crossing of the Limlaith. The Orc-host had slowly driven them east toward the Vale of Anduin. Now joined by units of the Balchoth from the south, the Orcs were hemming them in and — as Cirion realized — ensuring the ultimate doom of his army. And this was the turning point of the battle.

The day being now hours old, the sun burned through the fog and suddenly shone bright on the battlefield. The Orcs cringed and shielded their eyes, and their chieftains began to think of withdrawing until evening, when they could return and finish off -whatever enemies the Easterlings might not defeat. The Bôm, however, was enheartened by the change of weather and directed his Keshak to help put in order the Kelten Belen which had just crossed the river. They were in the midst of reforming the lines of the green Kelten Belen troops when the first charge of the Éothéod took them by complete surprise.

In the initial charge of the northern cavalry, what little of the Kelten Belen that had survived the Wold was wholly broken and driven from the field. Casting away their weapons, they were the first to run back into the Limlaith, making easy targets for Eorl's horse-archers. The Keshak, which were scattered here and there, trying to put the Kelten Belen's ranks in order, were unable to properly defend the Bom, and the eohere drove straight through its ranks to the Bom's standard. There the Bôm was ridden down and pierced by the lance of Eorl, throwing the Keshak into complete disarray.

Eorl and his men continued through the rear ranks of the Balchoth and onto the battlefield that the Ores, Dunedain, Darmin, and Tolig Belens were fighting upon. Being in the rear of the committed Balchoth armies, the soldiers of the Tolig Belen heard the battle cry of the eohere and turned to meet their charge. But seeing the tall horse-lords with their long lances, the Ore-captains ordered their companies to break off the attack and retreat from the field. The Dunedain were rallied by this sudden change of fortune and forgot their weariness, charging into the ranks of the Darmin Belen and crushing its guard—the very unit that had turned them back in the Wold.

The Balchoth units now began to rout in mass. Word of the Bom's death spread through their ranks, further demoralizing them. The eohere pursued them to the river, where archers shot the fleeing enemies as they swam. The Horse-lords and what remained of the knights of Belfalas pursued the Ores across the plains until the afternoon turned to evening. There, upon the Parth Celebrant in the evening of the 15th of Gwrnth, Eorl and Cirion met, and their friendship was begun.

## WHAT FOLLOWED

A very thorough account of what followed between Eorl and Cirion is given in *Unfinished Tales*. They took great oaths upon hallowed ground, and both peoples were greatly strengthened. This was the end of the Balchoth, but certainly not the end of the Pultic tribes or even their warriors.

Many of the Easterlings that fought at Parth Celebrant made it across the Limlaith and took refuge in the Wold. There they were led by commanders and great warriors who had also escaped, and were joined by more than half a tomen from the . Naidan Belen which had not advanced over the Limlaith. Instead of further challenging the Dunedain and their newfound allies, the Pults and their allies made their way back to their camps and later their rafts, eventually returning to the Talath Harroch, where waited the Leptek Belen and the tribefolk.

After the failure of its prophecies, the Cult of Maladûm fell into disfavor with most of the populace. The monks, being the keepers and chief promoters of the prophecies, were seen by many as the root of the people's problems. Many died at the hands of cruel mobs wanting revenge for their lost husbands, sons, and fathers. JVlost of the priests found themselves outcasts among their people and were eventually drawn to Dol Guldur, where they entered the service of their master. The healers, being farthest removed from the cult's teachings and possessing the most practical skills, continued to find a use for their talents among the general populace.

Having heard tidings of the victory at Parth Celebrant, many Northman rebels made their way back to old homes and families along the East Bight. Thereafter there was a great friendship between these men and the men of Dale and Esgaroth. Easterling and Northman gradually relearned the art of coexistence on the plains.

Along the East Bight and elsewhere in Rhovanion, life returned to normal; but the Talath Harroch had been changed forever. Many of the tribes of the former Pultic empire melted back into the East. This was especially true of the western wain-tribes, whose lands had not been devastated by drought. For the original

Pultic tribes, as well as for those which originated in lands further east, there could be no return. These people stayed in the drear hills around Kravod. The land here was poor, however, and they were ever casting an envious eye toward the rich fields of Calenardhon.

It was not until many years after Parth Celebrant that these tribes began to make raids into the lands of the Ridennark. Crossing the Anduin by the Wold, they would come infiltrate the plains and raid the fortified towns and homesteads of Rohan, burning and looting as they went. It was in a reprisal foray into the Wold against these very Easterlings that Eorl was slain.

The Balchoth invasion might be seen as an brief episode in the history of Middle-earth ending in 2510 at Parth Celebrant. The Pultic migrations into the lands south of Mirkwood, however, constitute an important and long-term change in the cultural geography of Wilderland.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The basic organization of the Balchoth armies was given in ICE's *Riders of Rohan* adventure setting. I have used and expanded upon that material.
2. Full accounts are given in *Unfinished Tales* and ICE's *Riders of Rohan*.

# THE BOZISHNAROD: USING THE CULTURES OF FAR HARAD IN MERP

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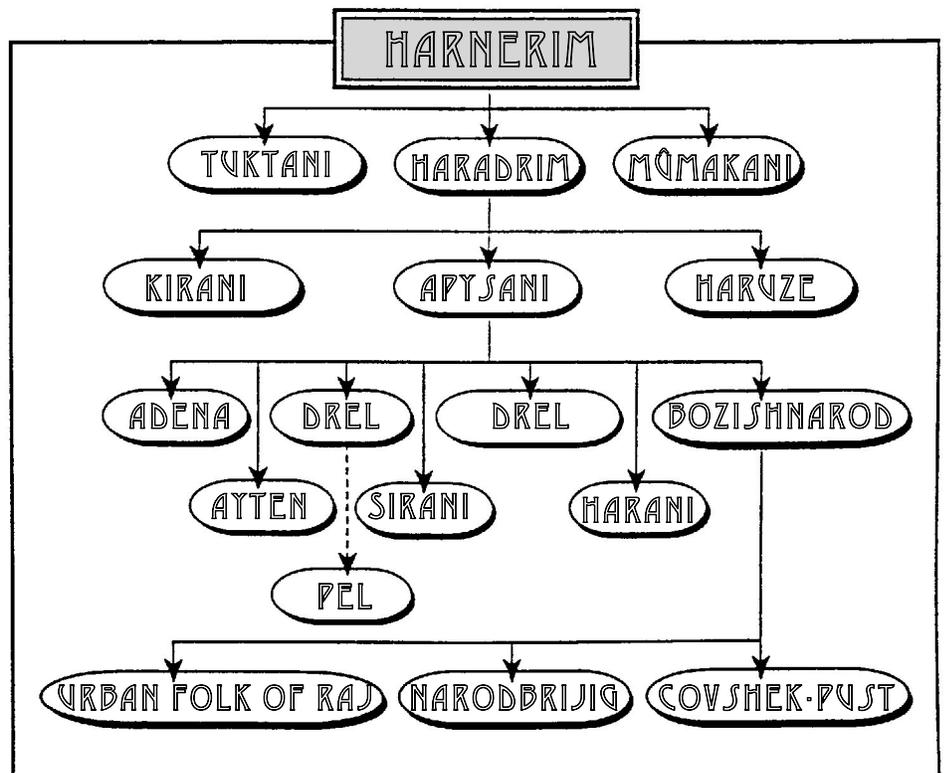
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The land of the Bozisha-Miraz (Apy. "Dowry of the Goddess"), known as Far Harad to the sages of Northwestern Middle-earth, lies south of Umbar, beginning somewhere amongst the endless miles of the Dune Sea. While much of the land is indeed desert wasteland, in the center of the nation is an area of relative fertility called the Raj (Apy. "Paradise") due to its position at the mouth of the great Bay of Tulwang. The people of this land call themselves the Bbzishnarod (Apy. "People of the Goddess") and are as culturally diverse as they are physically similar. They are an amazingly stable people as well; they live in much the same way that

their ancestors have for centuries. Only in the cities do the influences of other places become apparent. The Bozishnarod are considered by many outsiders to be both heartless and cruel, but this is not so. They are actually a pious and honorable people in their own peculiar ways. The religion they follow, the worship of the goddess Ladnoqa, unites all the Bozishnarod together. The populations of the Raj can be split into three quite different cultures: the urban populations, the outlying Hillmen, and the desert nomads.

[For more information, read ICE's *Far Harad: The Scorched Land*. Most of the following information was drawn from the above source and from the

## CULTURES OF THE BOZISHNAROD



Haradrim listing in the MERP rule-book (Second ed.) published by ICE.]

The Bozishnarod (sing. Bozishnorad) are an Apysan people who migrated across the Ered Harmal very early in the Second Age. The above diagram shows how they are related to their northern and southern neighbors. When they crossed the mountains they settled in the Raj, the only fertile region of the Bozisha-Miraz. The Raj is the cultural and agricultural center of the whole region and is located at the mouth of the Rijesha, the river that empties into the Bay of Tulwang.

## LANGUAGES

As the Bozishnarod are an Apysan people, their native language is Apysaic (abbreviated as "Apy."). However, it is distinguished from the Apysaic spoken by their Apysaic cousins to the south; the Bozishnarod's language has enveloped much Haruze influence over the centuries and is now more properly referred to as Northern or New Apysaic. Among those people living to the north of the Raj, the Haruze influence becomes more pronounced, creating a mixed language which is spoken by most of the northern desert nomads who still reside within the bounds of the Bozisha-Miraz.

As the Adûnaic-speaking Númenóreans interacted with the local Apysan peoples of the coast-lands, a common speech known as Ansith (analogous to the Westron tongue of Gondor and Arnor) gradually came into being. It has become the common trade language of Far Harad and all of the coastal lands between Umbar and the Yellow Mountains.

The other main languages spoken by the Bozishnarod are Varadja from Khand, Nûradja from the Nûrniags (an Easterling tribe), and Tazinain from Greater Harad to the southeast. All of them are in use as inland trading languages. They are also the primary language of a few isolated settlements where groups of Variags, Nûrniags, Sirani, or Ayten have established their own communities within the Bozisha-Miraz.

Lastly, some of the Southern or Old Apysaic dialects have come into use along the coasts as trade ties are

strengthened with the lands to the south such as Tulwang, Hyarn, Mirëdor, and Drel.

## COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Although fragmented culturally in many respects, most Bozishnarod share the same common physical characteristics. These are summarized below.

**Build:** In general, the people of Far Harad are tall and wiry with sharp, angular features. Men average 190 lbs., and women average 145 lbs.

**Coloring:** Medium to dark brown skin is the norm; eye color is either dark brown or black. Their hair is black and can either be straight or curly.

**Endurance:** The Bozishnarod are used to harsh climates and stifling weather. They are not unfamiliar with the desert and its ways; they are able to travel long distances in hot climes without much water and still maintain their endurance level. Naturally, the city dwellers would be less apt at desert travel than the indigenous nomads.

**Height:** Males average 5'11". Females average 5'5".

**Lifespan:** The harsh climate of Bozisha-Miraz takes its toll on the region's inhabitants, the average lifespan is about 45–65.

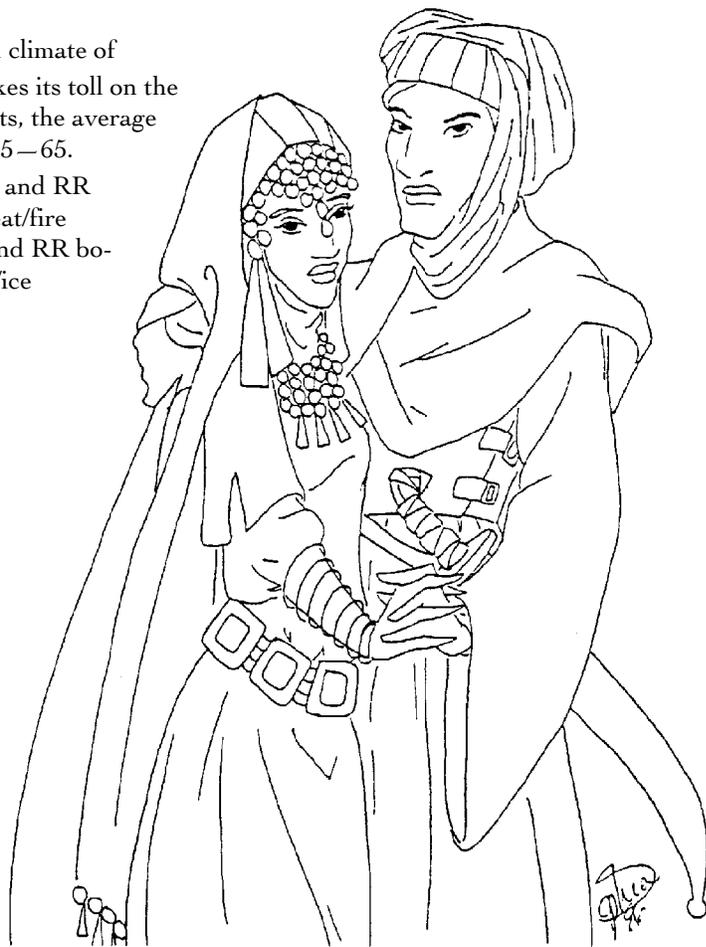
**Resistance:** +10 DB and RR bonuses versus heat/fire attacks; -10 DB and RR bonuses versus cold/ice attacks.

## URBAN FOLK

The more civilized people of Far Harad live in the area's few cities. However, despite the wide distances which separate these urban centers, there is still a significant amount of cultural similarity among them. Within the cities themselves, there also exists a noticeable cultural shift between the wealthy and poor classes of the population.

Many of Far Harad's city dwellers are of mixed blood, containing elements of blood from the old Númenórean colonists, their lighter-skinned neighbors in North Harad, and especially the Mûmakan to the south. The information below can apply to the inhabitants of the cities of Bozisha-Dar, Bûr Esmer, and Tresti.

The notable exception is the city-state of Tul Póac on the Ogladalo Vatra (Apy. "Mirror of Fire"); its inhabitants are a mix of the urban and Covshek-pust cultures. They also



worship Tulimi, the Master of Fate and Prophecy, rather than the goddess Ladnoca.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTER

**Special Abilities:** The lifeblood of Far Harad's cities is commerce. +10 bonus to Appraisal and any activity-involving trade.

## CULTURE

**Clothing and Decoration:** The people of Far Harad dress practically for their location; comfortable, loose garments of light cloth is common garb. One's wealth is usually worn in the fashion of gold rings, Bracelets, and necklaces. Reds and golds are more popular colors, although white and black are the most common during everyday life. Headdresses of some kind are also quite common among both men and women. Only the richest can afford true jewelry such as gems.

**Fears & Inabilities:** None.

**Lifestyle:** Although often outwardly cold to outsiders, amongst their own the Bozishnarod love laughter, partying, and games both of the mind and of the body. Warcraft is taught at an early age. The skills of commerce and trade are also taught, as commerce is the basis of urban life in Far Harad. The "poor" classes comprise the work force and the merchant class, while the wealthy attend to their own affairs of business and government. Amongst all the classes, Family ties are extremely important.

**Marriage Pattern:** Not strictly monogamous, as the possession or more than one wife is acceptable but terribly expensive. They follow a patrilineal kinship pattern (line traced through the male).

**Religion:** All Bozishnarod share a common religion, that of the worship of the goddess Ladnoca. This religion serves to bind all the people in a land which would otherwise be fragmented culturally. The epic poem from which this religion is derived is the *Kat Polazaj* (Apy. "Story of the Land"). It embodies the moral and judicial code that all the people (generally) strive to live by.

## OTHER FACTORS

**Demeanor:** Cheerful, fiery, realistic, calculating, shrewd, fatalistic, and even pious. They possess a peculiar sense of honor and morality strongly tied to their religious doctrines.

**Language:** Starting Languages: The Bozishnarod speak Apysaic as their native tongue (Rank 5) and the Haruze

of their northern neighbors (Rank 3). Most know Ansith, an Apysaic/Westron dialect commonly used throughout the land for trade (Rank 4). Skill Development: Through commerce and trade, they have great opportunity for learning the languages of foreign lands. The languages of Varadja (Rank 3), Logathig (Rank 2), Tazinain (Rank 3; Rank 5 for those living in Tul Pdac) and Adûnaic (Rank 4) are not uncommon in the bustling markets of Far Harad's cities.

**Prejudices:** The Bozishnarod view all outsiders with some degree of suspicion and mistrust, calling them poganin (Apy. "pagans"). They are especially mistrustful of Dwarves, Elves, and anyone else who appears and acts significantly different from themselves.

**Restrictions on Professions:** None.

## OUTFITTING OPTIONS

**Weapons:** Scimitar (favored weapon), dagger, composite bow, sword, and spear, and javelin. RM options: Blow gun, longsword, falchion, darts.

**Armor:** Soft Leather and loose chain are common.

**Clothing:** Cotton clothing of all types abound, although some silk is available to the more wealthy. Loose clothing is the most practical for the environment; loose tunics and pants are the norm. Tassles and some embroidery is also not uncommon. Gold bracelets, leather boots or sandals, and light cotton head-wraps finish up the usual attire.

**Money:** Money is usually found in the form of goods and personal ornamentation, such as jewelry and gold. Desert amber or gold bracelets or necklaces worth an equivalent of two gold pieces.

## BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Normal, 5 background options.

**Special Abilities:** All available.

**Special Items:** All available. Usually with fanciful engravings but without gems, etc. Finely-made weapons and armor is not uncommon. Their locale allows them to come into contact with many of the more exotic trading wares of Middle-earth.

**Extra Money:** Exotic goods or coinage worth 2-200 gp.

**Hobbies:** Primary Skills: M/M in no armor and chain; 1-H edged, missile, and pole-arm weapons skills; riding, tracking, and stalk/hiding skills; perception; and body development. Secondary Skills: Acrobatics, appraisal, boat-handling, gambling, and trickery. Artistic Skills: Singing, storytelling, cooking. Athletic Skills: Jumping, sprinting, tumbling. Craft Skills:

Weapon smithing, gold smithing, fletching, boatmaking. Influence Skills: Leadership, conning, bribery, trading, public-speaking. Lore Skills: Animal and plant lores, local geography, local history, other geographies, warcraft and tactics.

**Stat Increases:** Any stat may be increased.

**Extra Languages:** Under special circumstances, a Bozishnarod may come to learn Avarin (Rank 3), or any of the many varied Apysaic dialects of the nations to the south (i.e. Tulwang, Hyarn, Chennecatt, Isra, Mirëdor, etc.) such as Sederi (Rank 3).

## NARODBRIJIG

(Apy. "Hill People")

Living in the hills of the Bozisha-Miraz, the Narodbrijig (sing. Narodbrijig) live their lives -without the hustle and bustle of their urban neighbors. They make their homes in the Brij-Mijesec (Apy. "Hills of the Moon") and in the scattered small towns and villages of the region. There are three main divisions of the Narodbrijig: the traditional farmers/goatherders, the folk living in the towns and villages of the Bozisha-Miraz, and the influential warrior/bandit clans. The following information applies to the native inhabitants of the Brij-Mijesec and the towns and villages of the area.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTER

**Special Abilities:** Due to their southern latitude, their eyes are accustomed to bright light. They also receive a +20 bonus to Animal Handling or any related activity.

## CULTURE

**Clothing & Decoration:** Practical clothing is a must for the Narodbrijig; cotton is the most common fabric. Whites, blacks, and tans are used most of the time, although they prefer more vivid attire for special occasions. Such activities as weddings, religious ceremonies, and clan celebrations bring out the more favored colors of red, purple, blue, and especially the respective clan colors.

**Fears & Inabilities:** None.

**Lifestyle:** Despite the widely varying lifestyles among the Narodbrijig, there are some characteristics shared by all. An affinity for sports and any other physical activities, a love for celebrations and parties, a deep sense of religious piety, and a strong devotion to one's work and clan are but a few. The majority of them herd goats for a living, especially around the city of Tresti; the number of goats a

man owns is often a good indicator of his wealth and power. Those living in the towns and villages usually support themselves through either personal farms or shops. Among the warrior and bandit clans, warfare is a common way of life, both against traveling caravans and amongst themselves.

**Marriage Pattern:** Some clans allow polygamy, while other do not. The line is traced through the male. All of the Bozishnarod live in a very male-dominated society.

**Religion:** The Narodbrijig follow the same religious practices that the urban folk do. However, in general the Narodbrijig follow a slightly more pious lifestyle. Even the bandit clans lead a pious life in their own peculiar way.

### OTHER FACTORS

**Demeanor:** Stoic, practical, determined, rugged, and aggressive.

**Language:** Starting Languages: Their native tongue is Apysaic (Rank 5),

and they also know a good deal of Haruze (Rank 3). Ansith is in common use among the townsfolk (Rank 3) but much less so among the farmers and goatherders (Rank 2). Skill Development: It is possible for a Narodbrijig to come to know Varadja (Rank 2) or some of the Southern Apysaic dialects (Rank 2).

**Prejudice:** They are naturally mistrustful of all foreigners except those who have come to trade. They are especially mistrustful of Dwarves and Elves.

**Restrictions on Professions:** None.

### OUTFITTING OPTIONS

**Weapons:** Sword, dagger, scimitar, short bow, javelin, and spear. RM Options: Long Sword, Falchion, halberd.

**Armor:** None.

**Clothing:** Long sleeves and pants are the norm. Tunics of cotton with leather boots and cotton headwraps are the most common attire, although more festive clothing is favored for celebrations and similar events. For these, silks of red, blue, gold, and purple are used. Embroideries are common on all clothing.

**Money:** Jewelry (bracelets, necklaces, etc.) or desert amber worth 20 silver coins.

### BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Normal, six background options.

**Special Abilities:** All available.

**Special Items:** All available. +5 or +10 weapons are common among the more privileged members of society.

**Extra Money:** Gold or silver jewelry or actual coinage worth 2-200gp.

**Hobbies:** Primary Skills: M/M with no armor, 1-h edged and pole-arm weapon skills, ride, climb, stalk/hide, tracking, perception, and body development.

Secondary Skills: Animal Handling, Appraisal, Cookery, Foraging, and Sky Watching.

Artistic Skills: storytelling, singing, and dancing. Athletic Skills: sprinting,

tumbling, jumping. Craft Skills: woodworking, blacksmithing, fletching, carving, influence Skills: Public Speaking, trading, trickery, leadership. Lore Skills: Local geography and history, clan history, animal lore (primarily goats), and weather lore.

**Stat Increases:** Any stat may be increased.

**Extra Languages:** In addition to the tongues listed above, a Narodbrijig might learn Tazinain (Rank 3) or Logathig (Rank 3) through the trade.

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## COVSHEK-PUST

(Apy. "Men of the Waste")

The Covshek-pust (sing. Covsheki) are a reclusive lot, living in the arid deserts to the north of the Bozisha-Miraz and on the fringes of the Ogladalo Vatra (Apy. "Mirror of Fire"). They are nomadic, moving where the water will let them. Of all the Bozishnarod, these are the true desert dwellers, and theirs is a hard life.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTER

**Special Abilities:** Their eyes are naturally accustomed to very bright light and will not be affected by light displays which would blind ordinary people. Also, they are very familiar with the desert and its ways and can usually find water when needed; they are excellent trackers. +5 bonus to Foraging and Tracking attempts; +15 when in the desert.

### CULTURE

**Clothing S: Decoration:** The Covshek-pust have little access nor desire to wear anything but the most basic and practical of clothing. Only for the most special of occasions do they wear fancy and colorful attire. All parts of the body are covered unless indoors. The most striking aspect to their attire are the headwraps; the Covsheki use them as means of identification. Not only do different colors distinguish clans and individuals but so do the way in which they are wrapped. The Covshek-pust do not wear much personal decoration save for the occasional necklace of desert amber.

**Fears & Inabilities:** For these people, severely cold weather would effectively incapacitate them.

**Lifestyle:** During the day, their time is spent traveling the area, either looking for desert amber with which to trade for goods or tending small flocks of goats where there is enough water and vegetation to support them. They sometimes act as guides



across the vast expanses of the desert. They are able to make virtually everything they need. Each clan supports itself with the essential arts and crafts necessary for their lifestyle, and a small few make a living producing and trading glass. They are also not unfamiliar with the ways of war. At night, the clans gather together to discuss the day, events, and to celebrate another day of life. Although outsiders would perhaps consider them extremely boring and unblessed, the Covshek-pust do not mind their lot in life. They take a rather fatalistic view of the world and do not complain or gripe over their own condition. This outlook shows in their unique culture.

**Marriage Pattern:** Monogamous. While not outlawed in any way, tradition has kept polygamy to a minimum as well as the fact that almost nobody could afford a second bride price. The line is traced through the male.

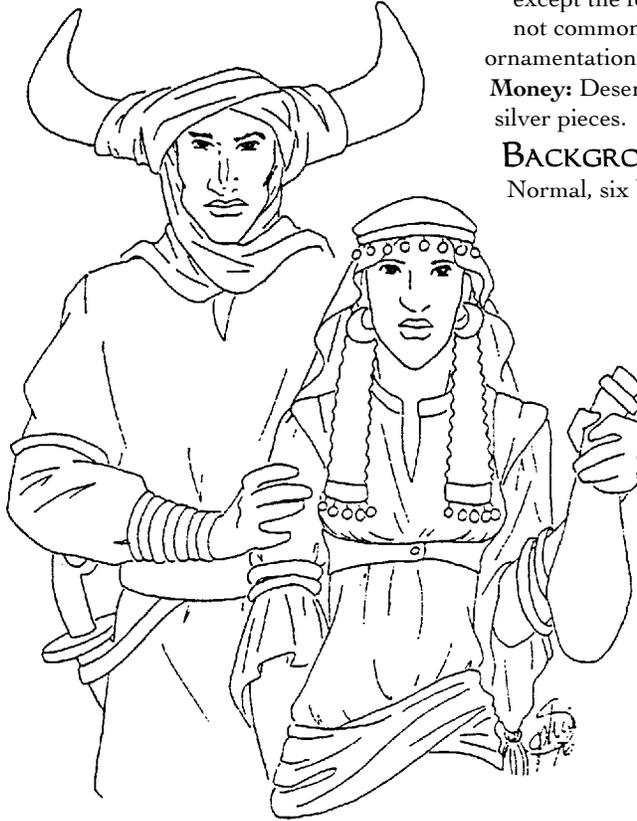
**Religion:** Of all the Bozishnarod, the Covshek-pust are perhaps the most outwardly pious. They follow the same religious practices that the urban folk do, with the addition of a pilgrimage to Tresti, the holy city of the goddess Ladnoca, every 10 years.

## OTHER FACTORS

**Demeanor:** Fatalistic, calm, shy, dedicated, pious, practical, hardworking.

**Language:** Starting Languages: Although somewhat isolated, the Covshek-pust know their native tongue Apysaic (Rank 5) and the Haruze spoken by their northern neighbors (Rank 5). Skill Development: It is quite possible and often likely for traders or travelers to learn the Tazinain of Greater Harad (Rank 3), Varadja (Rank 3), and Ansith (Rank 2).

**Prejudices:** Covshek-pust are immediately wary of all strangers, as they are both unfamiliar and potential trouble-makers. Traders are usually welcome, although common adventurers are usually not.



Dwarves and elves as well as Dunedain or Black Niimenoreans would garner the most mistrust due to their substantially different appearance.

**Restrictions on Professions:** In general, there are no Covshek-pust mages.

## OUTFITTING OPTIONS

**Weapons:** Scimitar, broadsword, dagger.

Spear, Short bow. RM Options: Cutlass, falchion, darts (throwing), blow gun.

**Armor:** None.

**Clothing:** tunic or shirt with white, tan, or black pants. Cuffs at the wrists or ankles

are common. Leather boots or sandals are worn to protect the feet. The headwrapping signifies clan and position within the clan as well as profession. Almost all the clothing is made of cotton except the footwear. Embroideries are not common, and personal ornamentation is also sparse.

**Money:** Desert Amber or gems worth 20 silver pieces.

## BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Normal, six background options.

**Special Abilities:** All available.

**Special Items:** All available. Magic items will be very rare.

**Extra Money:** Gold, desert amber, or jewelry worth 1-200 gp.

**Hobbies:** Primary Skills: M/M in no armor, 1-handed and thrown weapon skills, track, stalk/hide, body development, perception. Secondary Skills: Animal Handling, Cookery, Foraging, Signaling, Sky-Watching. Artistic Skills: Storytelling, dance. Athletic Skills: Sprinting, jumping. Craft Skills:

Fletching, glass-blowing, pottery, sand sculpture. Influence Skills: Public speaking, leadership. Lore Skills: Local geography, clan history, religious history, desert lore, local road lore.

**Stat Increases:** Any stat may be increased.

**Extra languages:** In addition to the tongues listed above, a Covsheki might learn an Avarin tongue (Rank 2) or Nuradja (Rank 3).

# SAMPLE MERP C H A R A C T E R

NAME: Tejic Palutz Race: F.H. Urban Folk  
 PROFESSION: Scout HT / WT: 5'7" / 160 lbs.  
 HAIR / EYES : Black / Brown GENDER / AGE: Male / 16  
 DEMEANOR: Fiery PERSONALITY: Suspicious  
 MOTIVATION: Destroy ALIGNMENT: Neutral  
 SPECIAL: Scar above right eye

## SPELL LISTS % CHANCE

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]

## LANGUAGES RANK

- 1) Apysaic \_\_\_\_\_ 5
- 2) Haruze \_\_\_\_\_ 4
- 3) Ansith \_\_\_\_\_ 5
- 4) Nûradja \_\_\_\_\_ 3
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]



STATS (Abbr.)	Value	Normal Bonus	Race Bonus	Total Bonus
Strength (ST)	79	+5	+5	+10
Agility (AG)	99	+20	—	+20
Constitution (CO)	80	+5	—	+5
Intelligence (IG)	68	—	—	—
Intuition (IT)	72	—	—	—
Presence (PR)	59	—	—	—
Appearance (AP)	65	—	—	—

**Current Level:** 1  
**Experience Points:** 10,000  
**Realm:** Channeling  
**Power Points:** 0

	Stat	Items	Special	Total Bonus
Defensive Bonus (DB)	AG +20			+20 DB
Essence RR	IG			+0 RR
Channeling RR	IT			+0 RR
Poison RR	CO +5			+5 RR
Disease RR	CO +5			+5 RR

### Encumbrance Penalty

+0: 0-15 lbs.	-10: 16-25lbs.	-15: 26-35 lbs.	-20: 36-45 lbs.
-30: 46-60 lbs.	-35: 61-80 lbs.	-40: 81-100 lbs.	-60: 101-120 lbs.

## BOZISHNAROD ADOLESCENT TABLE (MERP)

Skill	A	B	C
<b>MOVEMENT AND MANEUVER</b>			
No Armor	1	1	1
Soft Leather	1	2	2
Rigid Leather	0	0	0
Chain	1	0	0
<b>WEAPON SKILLS</b>			
1-H-Edged	2	1	1
1-H-Concussion	0	1	0
2-Handed	0	0	0
Thrown	1	1	1
Missile	1	1	1
Pole-Arms	1	1	1
<b>GENERAL SKILLS</b>			
Climb	0	2	0
Ride	3	2	1
Swim	0	0	0
<b>SUBTERFUGE SKILLS</b>			
Ambush	1	1	3
Stalk/Hide	1	1	3
Pick Locks	0	0	0
Disarm Traps	0	0	0
<b>MAGICAL SKILLS</b>			
Reading Runes	0	0	0
Use Items	0	0	0
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
Body Development	2	2	2
Perception	1	1	2

### % CHANCE TO GET A SPELL

List	3	2	2
Additional Lng. Rank	3	4	2
Background Points	5	5	6

\* NOTE: A – Urban Folk;

B – Narodbrijig; C – Covshek-pust

# Tejic Palutz

## BACKGROUND:

"My name is Tejic Palutz. I was born eighteen long summers ago in the port city of Bozisha-Dar. As a young boy I was taught to fish, swim, and sail, I was also taught how to be a silk merchant like my father. I have no memories of my mother. Father always told me that she had gone away on a long journey when I was young and never returned. Nonetheless, life was good for me and my father and sisters until I was fifteen years old. Then tragedy struck.

"One day when I came home early from our shop I overheard a strange-sounding man arguing loudly with my father. Suddenly my

father screamed out in agony. As I ran into the room, I saw the strange man sheathing his bloodstained scimitar over as he stood above my father's now-lifeless corpse. For the rest of my life, I will remember most vividly that man's face and the shield he bore—a black dragon on a red field. He tried to kill me too, but I barely managed to evade him and run into the streets. I knew the shop was not safe, so I ran to the poor district to hide. I still do not know what became of my sisters.

"Living in the poor district ever since, I have learned the ways of the streets. I have had to steal and kill to survive, yet survive I must. For one day I will exact my revenge on that hated man with the red shield who so suddenly ruined my life. His face still burns hot in my memory. I have recently decided to

venture outside the poor district to try to find out the significance of the shield symbol—precious information that will set me one pace closer to finding that man."

## EQUIPMENT:

Total Weight: 22.1 lbs.  
 Without sack: 11.1 lbs.  
 2 Daggers (2 lbs.)  
 Scimitar (4 lbs.)  
 Sling (0.5 lbs.)  
 Clothes and personal effects (includes boots, cloak and weapon belt)  
 Belt pouch (w/money -30 sp) (1.1 lbs.)  
 Lockpick Kit (+5 to Pick Locks and Disarm Traps) (0.5 lbs.) Pouch (with 12 stones in it) (3 lbs.)  
 Sack (holds 50 lbs) (2 lbs)  
 Waterskin (1 lb)  
 25' rope (3 lb)  
 Bedroll (5 lb)

SKILL RANKS	RANK	BONUS	STAT	PROF	ITEM	SPEC	SPEC	TOTAL BONUS
<b>M &amp; M</b>								
No Armor	2 (2)	+10	AG +20	—	—	—	+0	+30 MM
Soft Leather	1 (3)	+5	AG +20	—	—	—	-15	+10 MM
Rigid Leather	0 (5)	-25	AG +20	—	—	—	-30	-35 MM
Chain	1 (7)	+5	ST +10	—	—	—	-45	-30 MM
Plate	0 (9)	-25	ST +10	—	—	—	-60	-75 MM
<b>Weapon Skill</b>								
1-H-Edged	3	+15	ST +10	+1	—	—	—	+26 OB
1-H-Concussion	0	-25	ST +10	+1	—	—	—	-14 OB
2-Handed	0	-25	ST +10	+1	—	—	—	-14 OB
Thrown	2	+10	AG +20	+1	—	—	—	+31 OB
Missile	2	+10	AG +20	+1	—	—	—	+31 OB
Pole-arms	1	+5	ST +10	+1	—	—	—	+16 OB
<b>General</b>								
Climb	1	+5	AG +20	+1	—	—	—	+26 MM
Ride	3	+15	IT +0	+1	—	—	—	+16 MM
Swim	3	+15	AG +20	+1	—	—	—	+36 MM
Track	1	+5	IG +0	+1	—	—	—	+6 MM
<b>Subterfuge</b>								
Ambush	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	+1 SP
Stalk/Hide	2	+10	PR +0	+2	—	—	—	+12 MM
Pick Lock	2	+10	IG +0	+2	+5	—	—	+17 SM
Disarm Trap	0	-25	IT +0	+2	+5	—	—	-18 SM
<b>Magical</b>								
Read Runes	0	-25	IG +0	—	—	—	—	-25 SM
Use Item	0	-25	IT +0	—	—	—	—	-25 SM
Directed Spells	0	-25	AG +20	—	—	—	—	-5 OB
<b>Miscellaneous</b>								
Perception	2	+10	IT +0	+3	—	—	—	+13 SM
Body Development	3	+21	CO +5	—	—	—	+5	+31 SP
Base Spells OB	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+0 OB
<b>Secondary Skills</b>								
Boat Handling	5	+25	IT +0	+1	—	—	—	+26 MM
Foraging	5	+25	IT +0	+1	—	—	—	+26 MM

# Rolemaster Standard System Statistics

**Character:** Tejic Palutz

**Hits:** 48 Melee OB: 45 Missile OB: 45  
AT(DB): 1 (27).

**RMSS Profession:** Thief.

**RMSS Stats:** Ag 99, Co 80, Me 70, Re 60, SD 70, Em 68, In 72, Pr 59, Qu 99, St 79.

**RMSS Skill Categories:** Armor - Light 24, Armor - Medium 19, Athletic - Brawn 18, Athletic - Endurance 18, Athletic - Gymnastics 34, Awareness - Searching 16, Communications 3, Lore - General 8, Outdoor - Animal 15, Subterfuge -Mechanics 27, Subterfuge - Stealth 30, Technical/Trade - General 6, Urban 7, Weapon - 1-H Edged 33, Weapon -Missile 36, Weapon - Pole Arms 29, Weapon - Thrown.

**RMSS Skills:** Acrobatics 40, Alertness 19, Boat Pilot 18, Body Development 48, Chain 22, Dagger (Thrown) 40, Foraging 18, Hiding 52, Observation 16, 'Own' Culture Lore 17, 'Own' Region Lore 17, Pick Locks 38, Pick Pockets 36, Riding 24, Scimitar 45, Sling 45, Soft Leather 27, Staff 30, Stalking 42, Trading 17, Trickery 36.

**Languages:** Apysaic (S8/W6), Haruze (S6/W6), Ansith (S6/W5), Nuradja (S4/W4).

**RM Spells:** None.

**Appearance:** 50.

**Tejic's Principal Items:** Cloak, +10 to hiding.

**Tejic's Lesser Items:** 2 Daggers, Scimitar, Sling, Clothes and personal effects (includes boots, cloak and weapon belt), Beltpouch (w/money - 30 sp), Lockpick Kit (+5 to Pick Locks and Disarm Traps), Pouch (with 12 stones in it), Sack (holds 50 lbs), Waterskin, 25' rope, Bedroll

## RMSS

### CONVERSION NOTES

#### URBAN FOLK

##### PHYSICAL CHARACTER

**Special Abilities:** The lifeblood of Far Harad's cities is commerce. +10 bonus to Appraisal and Trading skill rolls.

##### OTHER FACTORS

**Starting Languages:** Apysaic (S8AV6), Haruze (S5/W4), Ansith (S7/W5); Allowed Adolescent Development: Varadja (S5/W5), Nûradja (S4/W3), Tazinain (S6/W4; S8/W7 in Tûl Pôac), Adûnaic (S6/W6).

**Special Skills:** Everyman: Trading, Appraisal, Trading Lore; Restricted: None.

**Standard Hobby Skills:** Chain, any 1-H Edged, Missile or Pole-Arm Weapon Skills; Riding; Tracking; Stalking; Hiding;

Observation; Body Development; Acrobatics; Appraisal; Boat Pilot; Rowing; Gambling; Trickery; Singing; Tale-Telling; Cooking; Metalcrafts; Fletching; Shipwright; Leadership; Bribery; Trading; Public-Speaking; Fauna Lore; Flora Lore; Region Lore; Warfare and Tactics [Lore - Technical]

##### BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Common Men get six background options; Mixed Men get five background options.

**Extra Languages:** Avarin (S5/W4) or southern Apysaic dialects (S6/W5).

**Talents:** All available.

## NARODBRIJIG

### PHYSICAL CHARACTER

**Special Abilities:** They also receive

a +20 bonus to Animal Handling, Animal Healing, Animal Mastery, Herding skills.

##### OTHER FACTORS

**Starting Languages:** Apysaic (S8/W6), Haruze (S6/W5), Ansith (S4/W4). Allowed Adolescent Development: Varadja (S6/W4), southern Apysaic dialects (S5/W4).

**Special Skills:** Everyman: Herding; Animal Handling; Tale-Telling; Restricted: none.

**Hobby Skills:** Any 1-H Edged or Polearm Weapon skills; Riding; Climbing; Stalking; Hiding; Observation; Body Development; Animal Handling; Appraisal; Cooking; Foraging; Star-Gazing; Tale-Telling; Singing; Dancing; Sprinting; Tumbling; any Wood-Crafts Skills; Fletching; Public Speaking; Trading; Trickery; Leadership; Region Lore (local area); Clan History [Lore - General]; Fauna Lore

##### BACKGROUND OPTIONS

They get six background options.

**Extra Languages:** In addition to those listed above: Tazinain (S6/W5) and Nûradja (S5/W4).

**Talents:** All available.

## COVSHEK-PUST

### OTHER FACTORS

**Starting Languages:** Apysaic (S8/W6), Haruze (S8/W6); Allowed Adolescent Development: Tazinain (S6/W5), Varadja (S6/W5) Ansith (S4/W2).

## BOZISHNAROD ADOLESCENT TABLE (RMSS)

Category/Skill	A	B	C	Races/Cultures
Armor - Light	11	12	12	1
Soft Leather	11	12	12	1
Rigid Leather	11	12	12	1
Armor - Medium	11	12	12	10   10
Chain	11	12	12	10   10
Athletic - Brawn	11	11	11	1
Athletic - Endurance	11	11	11	1
Swimming	11	10	10	10
Athletic - Gymnastics	11	11	11	1
Climbing	11	10	12	10
Awareness - Perception	11	10	10	10
Alertness	12	12	12	1
Awareness - Searching	11	11	11	1
Body Development	12	12	12	1
Communications	11	11	11	1
Language	18	16	14	1
Lore - General	13	13	13	1
"Own" Region Lore	13	13	13	1
"Own" Culture Lore	13	13	13	1
Outdoor - Animal	13	12	11	1
Riding	13	21	11	1
Outdoor - Environmental	10	12	12	1
Power Awareness	11	10	10	10
Science/Analytical - Basic	10	10	10	1
Spells - Own Realm Open (1)	10	10	10	1
Subterfuge - Stealth	10	10	10	1
Stalking	10	10	10	1
Hiding	10	10	10	1
Tech/Trade - General	11	11	11	1
Urban Skills	13	10	10	1
Wp - 1-H Concussion	10	11	10	1
1 Weapon	10	11	10	1
Wp 1-H- Edged	12	11	11	1
1 Weapon	12	11	11	1
Wp - 2 Handed	10	10	10	1
1 Weapon	10	10	10	1
Wp - Missile	11	11	11	1
1 Weapon	11	11	11	1
Wp - Pole Arms	11	11	11	1
1 Weapon	11	11	11	1
Wp - Thrown	11	11	11	1
1 Weapon	11	11	11	1
Hobby ranks	12	12	12	1
BG Options	15	15	16	1

\* NOTE: A - City Folk; B - Narodbrijig; C - Covshek-pust

**Hobby Skills:** any 1-H Edged or Thrown Weapon skills, Tracking, Stalking, Hiding, Body Development, Observation, Animal Handling, Cooking, Foraging, Signaling, Star-Gazing, Tale-Telling, Dancing, Sprinting, Jumping, Fletching, Glass Blower, Sand Sculptor [Crafts], Region Lore, History (Religion).

##### BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Covshek-pust get six background options.

**Extra Languages:** In addition to those listed above: Avarin (S6/W5), Nuradja (S6/W4).

**Talents:** All available.

# AGGRESSIVENESS AND MORALE FOR NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Bernie Roessler  
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Tulare, CA 93274, USA

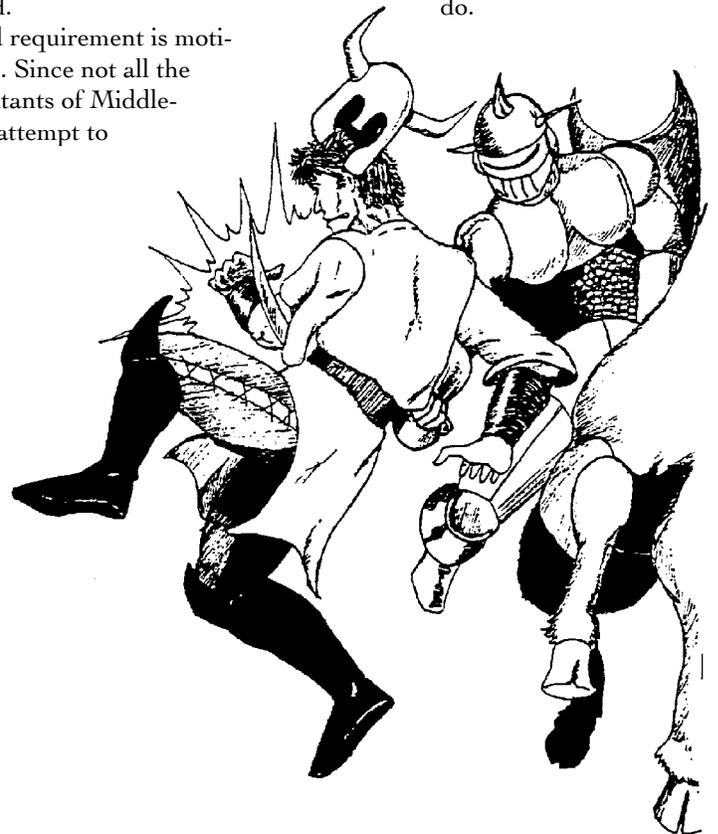
**M**ortal combat is a common (some may feel too common) occurrence in most role-playing games. Conflict almost always takes place between the player characters and a group of non-player characters (NPCs), usually controlled by the gamemaster. For combat to occur, three requirements must be met. First, both sides must have the means to engage in combat. (If only one of the participating sides had such means, it would not be combat but murder.) Fortunately, most characters that travel outside of civilized areas are wise enough to go well-armed, so this requirement is usually easily satisfied.

The second requirement is motivation. Since not all the inhabitants of Middle-earth attempt to

slaughter one another on sight, it must be determined whether one or both sides has sufficient provocation to resort to combat. Of course for the player character side, the decision is made by players themselves. However, if the players are attempting to have any sort of a believable game, they will make their decision in much the same way the gamemaster ought to do for the non-player side. Both the players and the gamemaster should attempt to "get into the role" of the characters they control and establish realistic motives for their actions, not only in deciding whether they should enter combat, but in all that they do.

There was a horn-blast and a rash, of feet, and orcs one after another leaped into the chamber. How many there were the Company could not count. The affray was sharp, but the orcs were dismayed by the fierceness of the defence. Legolas shot two through the throat. Gimli hewed the legs from under another that had sprung up on Balin's tomb. Boromir and Aragorn slew many. When thirteen had fallen the rest fled shrieking, leaving the defenders unharmed, except for Sam who had a scratch along the scalp. A quick duck had saved him; and he had felled his orc: a sturdy thrust with his Barrow-blade. A fire was smouldering in his brown eyes that would have made Ted Sandyman step backwards, if he had seen it.

— LotR I: 339



(Personally, no aspect of role-playing is more frustrating than when a player in your group acts in such a manner as to get everyone into as much trouble as possible.)

What exactly a “realistic motivation” may be, however, will vary greatly, depending on circumstances. In the case of Orcs, for example, one may be inclined to believe that they indeed are a group that would attempt to slaughter everyone else on sight and for the sheer pleasure of it. On closer examination, however, it seems that Orcs are more inclined to take others prisoner if at all feasible. Orcs will fight alongside human allies if ordered to do so by a strong leader. They will just as quickly turn on each other if the motivation were a great enough prize (such as a mithril coat).

Similarly, one may view Elves as a highly cultured, peace-loving people. Yet, even in Aman, the Noldor found the motivation to attack the Teleri in order to acquire their ships. (I wonder how the Fellowship would have fared on the borders of Lórien had they not been expected.)

Motivation of a group of NPCs will also be greatly influenced by the actions and speech of the players. Shrewd play can make a friend of an enemy, while a social blunder may invite immediate attack. Since motivation is dependent on so many variables, I will turn to the third—and, I believe, most neglected—requirement, which I call aggressiveness.

Aggressiveness is, by my definition, the likelihood of a motivated group of characters to actually take that final step and initiate combat, rather than to seek a means of avoiding it. Self-preservation is a common instinct to all thinking creatures. Since the outcome of combat is very often quite final, I believe that, realistically, even motivated NPCs will not attack unless an aggressiveness threshold has been crossed.

Aggressiveness in this context is not the same as belligerence or blood lust, which I would categorize as being more a part of motivation. Nor is aggressiveness synonymous with courage, though courage may certainly influence it. For example (as I will argue), neither Hobbits nor Drughu are very aggressive. I doubt, however, that many would say that they are not courageous. Gollum too, by my definition, would not be considered aggressive, though he certainly was a nasty little fellow and quite courageous as well, I feel, in his own way.



Aggressiveness, I believe, is actually dependent for the most part on a “style” of combat behavior, which is learned and varies according to the cultural background from which a character originates. Some cultures glorify the attack, and at least pay homage to the idea that death in combat is unimportant, as long as one dies bravely. For other cultures, it is the end result that matters, and the best victory is that in which one’s own side has taken little loss.

Aggressiveness is greatly influenced by leadership and peer pressure. I believe that, even with a great amount of motivation, it is the desire to belong to the group, to aid one’s comrades, and not to disgrace oneself, that actually brings an individual into the kill-or-be-killed insanity that is the reality of combat. In my opinion, this would be true not only for

Middle-earth combatants, but for all times and places.

Other factors which influence aggressiveness are spiritual in nature, such as belief of reward in an afterlife or in the righteousness of a cause; emotional factors, such as a state of frenzy or hatred of an enemy; and also (often overlooked in historical accounts) the level of intoxication.

I would like now to examine the morale of combatant non-player characters. Morale in this context is a measure of the depth of a character’s aggressiveness. In other words, morale is the willingness of the

NPCs to remain in combat after suffering a setback.

Morale, then, could just as easily be called “discipline” by this definition. If circumstances began to turn against them, NPCs—almost regardless of type—would be very

unlikely to continue fighting until all were either slain or incapacitated. Self-preservation would soon have a group of beaten NPCs looking for the most expedient method of escape from the fray. Again, I believe the cultural background of a group heavily influences their morale and determines just when they will consider themselves “beaten” and decide that discretion is, after all, the better part of valor.

The following notes and rule suggestions offer guidelines to gamemasters for determining when certain non-player character types will fight, and when they will begin to break. Of course, since we all have different interpretations of how the various peoples in Middle-earth may react, gamemasters are free to engage in that other major creative aspect of role-playing and modify the rules to reflect their particular taste. Perhaps a similar set of rules has already appeared in one of the later *Rolemaster Companion*; but, if so, I am not aware of it.

## COMBAT STYLES

As I began analyzing the behavior in combat of the members of the various cultures found in Middle-earth, I noticed that they could be divided into four basic categories or "styles." I have called these the **Zealot**, the **Barbarian**, the **Mercenary**, and the **Irregular** style. The following is a general description of each.

### ZEALOTS

The Zealot fighting style is one which is not only aggressive but has high morale as well. Zealot cultures feel they have a special mission to perform. Quite often they may believe that they have been chosen by a higher power for this mission. Although a Zealot culture may greatly espouse peace as a virtue, they will resort to arms with little hesitation and great determination if they feel the need has arisen. Zealots also have the comfort that they are serving a noble cause; and if they are killed battling their enemies, they often believe that they will be rewarded in an afterlife. For these reasons, although in Middle-earth the Zealot cultures are the most civilized, they are also among the most aggressive.

Zealot cultures are often relatively small in population by comparison with neighboring peoples and/or have suffered tragic misfortune in the past. This

history of shared persecution makes for a close bond between Zealot fighters. They will attempt heroic attacks to save comrades, and will almost never leave their wounded behind. In addition, the higher level of civilization of many Zealot cultures tends to give their fighters a more professional view of combat. Many will have training in standing armies, with the tight discipline and command structure inherent in such groups. Even if this is not the case, simply living in a higher civilization requires familiarity with and a recognition of an organized division of labor. A certain discipline is also required among members of such cultures if they are to be successful. All these factors give the Zealot cultures of Middle-earth the highest morale in combat, and make their members the least likely to break and flee in a fight.

### BARBARIANS

The Barbarian style of combat is also highly aggressive. The initial onslaught of Barbarian-style fighters will be fierce and often accompanied by a great deal of screaming. This is intended to both embolden the Barbarians and to frighten their enemies. In fact, the initial charge of Barbarian-style fighters, whether on horseback or (more commonly in Middle-earth) on foot, can be quite terrifying, and will often cause panic among poorly disciplined combatants.

The weakness of Barbarian-style fight-

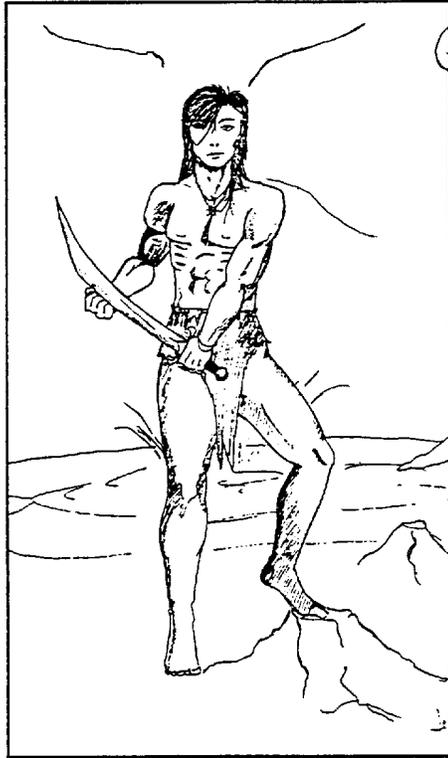
ers lies in their overdependence on this initial assault. If it fails, they have already spent a great deal of their physical and emotional energy. Other setbacks, such as the loss of a popular leader or the sudden appearance of an enemy in an unexpected place, will also unsettle Barbarian fighters more than others. The fury of the Barbarians is therefore quite fragile. One of the primary reasons for this is that Barbarian cultures are usually more loosely structured in terms of authority and leadership. Members of Barbarian cultures are often individualistic, and may follow a leader only as long as he is successful. For these reasons, Barbarian fighters will tend to break in combat more easily than others.

### MERCENARIES

The Mercenary style of combat is less aggressive in attack than that of either Zealots or Barbarians. This is not because Mercenaries are cowardly. They simply have a more pragmatic view of combat, and feel they are best serving their cause if they refrain from attack unless they have an advantage. In fact, Mercenary-style fighters tend to have better discipline, and are less likely to break after a setback, than Barbarian fighters. This is largely due to the fact that Mercenaries usually come from cultures which have a higher degree of



civilization than Barbarians (or at least have more contact with a civilized culture), with the inherent advantages this gives to a fighter's discipline. I also want to emphasize that although I have named this style of combat the "Mercenary," by no means is it limited only to true mercenaries. Many Mercenary-style fighters are quite dedicated to whatever motivation brings them to combat.



## IRREGULARS

The Irregular style of combat is even less aggressive than that of the Mercenary. On the other hand, Irregulars are often as disciplined as Zealots. Irregulars are the guerrilla or partisan fighters of Middle-earth (though I refrain from calling them that, because of the modern historical images those names bring to mind). Irregulars will definitely seek to avoid combat unless it is on their own terms. The reason for this is that Irregulars are often from cultures which have certain disadvantages in combat. These disadvantages may be in weaponry, or in small physical or population size by comparison with their neighbors.

Irregulars, like the Zealots, often share a history of persecution. This fact, along with their small numbers, makes them a close knit and disciplined bunch. But while less likely to break in combat, Ir-

regulars often choose to disengage — not out of fear, but to lead their pursuers into an ambush. Irregulars seek to win, not by face-to-face battle, but by wearing down and forcing their enemies to realize that the cost of victory would be more than its worth.

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## AGGRESSIVENESS AND MORALE BY RACE AND CULTURE

The following is a series of short (and, admittedly, incomplete) descriptions of the combat characteristics of the various cultures found in northwestern Middle-earth. I have presented the cultures in a more or less "Dúnadan-centric" order. The commentary is based on both Tolkien's writings and ICE's work, though I have made my own interpolations. Much more could be written on each of the cultures, and I certainly do not mean for this to be the last word on the matter.

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## I. MEN

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### Númenóreans

The Men of Númenor (the Dúnedain) colonized Middle-earth, spreading their culture and world-view to the indigenous peoples they interacted with. However, as time drew on, an ideological rift came to divide the Númenóreans into two parties: the Faithful and the King's Men. Although a minority in Númenor, the Faithful later became the dominant group in northwestern Middle-earth, whereas the influence of the King's Men was more predominant along the coastlands to the East and South.

### Faithful

The Faithful (the Elendili) include not only those possessed of Dúnadan blood but also those influenced by their culture. They are the most civilized of Men. They are also archetypal **Zealots**, especially when fighting the servants of Darkness. Like all Númenóreans, the Faithful view themselves as a chosen race among Men, and feel that they are carrying out the will of the Valar in their pursuits. Quite often they are actually correct in this.

Although individuals from other human cultures may equal them in individ-

ual fighting prowess, the Faithful Dúnedain make the best soldiers. Disciplined and professional, the Faithful have both great aggressiveness and morale (though one of their favorite tactics is to exhaust an enemy that tries to hack through their superb armor and shields, before moving in for the kill).

### King's Men

Contemptuously referred to by the Faithful as "Black Númenóreans" and "renegades," the King's Men nevertheless believe themselves to embody the authentic legacy of Númenor. Unlike the Faithful, however, the King's Men are warlike by choice. Their fighting nature tends to have more in common with their Southron neighbors than with their ancestors, yet they retain their forefathers' fear of Death, and will attack only if they feel they have a distinct advantage. Still, they are a disciplined bunch, and will remain in combat after other servants of the Enemy have fled (though this is perhaps due to their tendency to wear heavier armor and ride heavier horses than the Haradrim.). I would characterize the King's Men as having a **Mercenary** style of combat.

### Corsairs of Umbar

Although originally a haven of the King's Men, Umbar was conquered by the kings of Gondor, and remained under the control of the Faithful for much of the Third Age. In T.A. 1448, however, Umbar became a lordship independent of Gondorian power, having long been a stronghold for the confederate rebels of the Kin-strife. In T.A. 1540, seaborne raiding of Gondor's coastlands received open support from Umbar's ruling Council of Captains, and for this reason the rebels became known as corsairs. They were, however, the conservative faction among the Faithful, and so should be reckoned as **Zealots** up until their defeat in T.A. 1810, after which Umbar returned to Gondorian control.

Many of the confederates continued to cling to their ancient ideals while in exile from Umbar, but in T.A. 1940 their leaders made an alliance with the Cult of Melkor to recapture the haven. This event marked how far the Corsairs had



degenerated from their Faithful origins, and thereafter they continued to decline until they were indistinguishable in their outlook from the King's Men. During this later period, then, they may be treated as **Mercenary** in their combat style.

## NORTHMEN

### Horse-lords

The Rohirrim, Éothéod, and Éothraim all represent different incarnations of the same horse-riding culture. These Northmen could be considered **Barbarians** in their early history, but slowly the influence of the Dúnedain changed their society into a more highly civilized one, and they became true **Zealots**. While on horseback, the Rohirrim are almost fearless in the attack; on foot, they are a little more hesitant; in both cases, they are more likely to break than the Dúnedain. On the other hand, the Rohirrim seem to have a degree of fatalism, in that (if they feel they have no other choice) they will launch seemingly suicidal attacks that most Dúnedain would never attempt.

### Beijabar

Complete **Zealots**, no other Men are as ready to attack as the Beijabar when motivated. Like the Númenóreans, the Beijabar feel they have a special relationship with the Valar, which is manifested by the skin-changing abilities of their



chieftains. Beijabar will fight their enemies no matter what the odds, and tend to remain in battle until victory is theirs. The one possible exception to this would be if their chieftain were killed. The Beijabar belief system and small population make them quite suspicious of strangers. Probably the best defense against Beijabar is not to give them any motivation for attack.

### Woodmen

Although they are the zealous Beijabar's closest relatives among Men, the Woodmen have an **Irregular** style of combat. There are two primary reasons for this. The first reason is their closer proximity to Dol Guldur. The second reason is the extremely close terrain found in Mirkwood, which best lends itself to Irregular-style tactics. After an ambush, only a Wood-elf could possibly catch a Woodman in his native environment.

### Lake and Dalesmen

I really am not sure how to classify these urban Northmen. They are related to the Éothraim and must originally have been Barbarians. Their early urbanisation would have soon changed this and made them at least Mercenaries. Bard and his descendants are clearly Zealots, however. Probably a **Mercenary** style for most inhabitants, with a Zealot elite, is the best fit.

### Rivermen of Eriador

These trappers and traders of Eriador are too few in number to fight like Barbarians or Zealots and too stubborn to be Irregulars, so by default I will classify them as **Mercenaries**.

### Daen Peoples

Daen society never did become quite civilized, and as such the Daen have always had a **Barbarian** style of combat, albeit more temperate than the Easterlings. In addition, the Daen peoples were never naturally xenophobic (as many other Barbarians tend to be). Most Daen fighters require a personal reason to attack, and are just as content to raid a neighboring Daen clan (with which they may be feuding) as anyone else. While the Daen suffer the same weakness as most Barbarians in lacking discipline, in defense of their homes they are second to none, and the Gondorians were wise enough to leave them alone for most of their history, and many Daen were conquered by cultural absorption rather than military action. The Rohirrim made a mistake by not following this policy and so making for themselves a persistent enemy. This may have changed after Théoden's merciful treatment at Helm's Deep, but that would have been the task of future generations.

### Hillmen of Rhudaur

Caught as they are between the Dúnedain and the forces of Angmar, these Daen-folk have been forced to adopt an **Irregular** style of combat.

### Dorwinrim

The Dorwinrini I will classify as Mercenaries. This is not because of anything Tolkien wrote about them, but is based rather on their description in the ICE modules as traders and travelers. I feel a Mercenary style would best fit such a culture.

### Drughu

The Drughu are an extremely reclusive people and are seldom encountered by other folk. They are, of course, the ultimate **Irregular-style** fighters. Drughu will almost always shrink away deeper into the woods rather than engage an enemy, using traps and snares to do much of their work. Their superb skills in liv-

ing off the land enable them to abandon their villages with little hesitation (were an enemy lucky enough to find these dwellings in the first place). The Drughu usually strike only when they can ensure the complete annihilation of their foes with poison darts and arrows. The Drughu are quite successful in employing these tactics which are meant to instill terror in their enemies.

### **Beffraen**

The primitive Beffraen of the Eryn Vorn, because of their small numbers and environment, have naturally adopted an **Irregular** style of combat.

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### **Haradrim**

Although the peoples collectively referred to by the Dúnedain as the Haradrim actually consist of many different nationalities, they share much in common, including a **Mercenary** style of combat. The poor natural resources of much of their homelands encourage raiding as a way of life for many. Combat for the Haradrim is viewed, then, as a practical means for gaming material resources.

While the Haradrim have certainly been enemies of Gondor, at times they have also been its allies. Of course, the history of the Haradwaith is also full of infighting among its various peoples. This history, along with the tendency for the Haradrim not to risk their lives unnecessarily and their emphasis on material gain, has led some to regard them as untrustworthy. Those who know them personally, however, have found the Haradrim to be courageous and honorable warriors.

The wide expanses of the Haradwaith have led to a strong cavalry tradition among the Haradrim. Their horses are light and fast, and second in quality only to those of the Rohirrim (and, of course, those of the Elves). Missile weapons (especially bows) are highly favored by the Haradrim. What better weapon for the practical warrior than that which allows one to strike at an enemy at a distance without endangering one-self?

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### **Easterlings**

Like “Haradrim,” the term “Easterling” refers collectively to several cultures found to the east of Gondors

sphere of influence. Although there are important cultural differences between the various Easterling cultures, in terms of combat style they are all **Barbarians**, as one would expect. Easterlings are even more ready to initiate combat than the Daen, primarily because the “glory” of combat receives greater value among Easterling cultures, but also due to less experience with the consequences of engaging in combat with the Dúnedain.

Unlike nomadic incursions in (real-world) European history, Easterling attacks against the Westlands of Middle-earth were caused not only by population or military pressure from people even farther to the east, but also from the machinations of Sauron’s servants. Most Easterlings would probably prefer fighting other Easterlings in their homelands. Because of this, the elimination of an Easterling war-leader is enough to send them scurrying back in the direction they came.

### **Variags**

As one would expect from the location of their homeland (between the Easterling and Southron homelands), Variags fall somewhere between a **Mercenary** and **Barbarian** style of combat. Those who know the Variags are aware that their slightly greater hesitation to launch an attack than other Easterlings is certainly not due to any lack of bloodthirstiness.

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### **Lossoth.**

The Lossoth are probably **Irregulars**, due to their small population size. (Also, why bother fighting to defeat your enemies when the weather will probably kill them for you?)

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### **Bandits**

Regardless of culture, bandits engage in combat for one purpose—loot! Hence (not surprisingly) they have a **Mercenary** style of combat. Getting killed in the process of striving for even the greatest treasure does a bandit little good; therefore, bandits are quite selective in whom they attack and, unless desperate, will only go after what they perceive to be an easy target.

### **Hobbits**

Hobbits are **Irregular-style** combatants who, due to their small size and high agility, prefer missile weapons. Although reluctant to offer open battle, Hobbits are surprisingly resilient once riled, and refuse to be intimidated by larger opponents.

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## **II. ELVES**

### **Noldor**

The Noldor consider themselves the most dedicated foes of Morgoth and his servants and, like their human allies, the Dunedain, are **Zealots**, and will show little hesitation to attack once they have decided that combat is necessary. Some may say that holding up in their havens for centuries does not seem very zealous. This, however, is a human point of view. It is also made with reference to strategic action, whereas this article is concerned with tactical behavior. The apparent inactivity of the Noldor has, however, led some men to consider all Elves unwarrior-like. This is based on ignorance, for those Noldor and other Elves who choose to become warriors exhibit the same expertise in that field that is shown in all their work. The Noldor are the proudest of the Elves, and have clear memories of their grievances with the servants of Darkness going back to the First Age. They are the first to fight among the Quendi, and the last to break due to morale.

### **Sindar**

The Sindar (or Grey-elves) also make fine warriors, but are more difficult to classify with respect to combat style. For the most part, they seem to exhibit an Irregular style, and are content to remain on the defensive. At other times, they have marched to open battle and fought in a Zealot style. In the First Age, many Sindar fought under Noldo lords. I think it would be safest to classify the Sindar as having an Irregular style unless a strategic decision has been made by a leader to go to open battle, at which time they will fight like Zealots.

### **Avari**

Most Avari (and, by definition, the Silvan-elves of Rhovanion) are found in woods, and this alone is enough to make me classify them as having an



Irregular style. Just

like Sindar, However, there are times when they will march to open battle and fight like **Zealots**. They certainly did so at the Battle of Five Armies.

### III. DWARVES

The Khazad are true **Zealots**, and are always ready to attack. No race has a higher morale than the Dwarves, who will stand and fight when all others have fled, as shown



in the Battle of Unnumbered Tears. Superbly armed and armored, Dwarves usually have little reason to retreat anyway.

### UMLI

If you use UmlI in your game, you are free to run them as you choose, since they were not invented by Tolkien. Their small

numbers would tend to make them **Irregulars**. If their Dwarven blood has any influence, however, they must certainly have **Zealot** tendencies.

### IV. ORCS

Common Orcs have a **Barbarian** style of combat. Their initial assault will be fierce and loud, but if things turn against them, they enjoy being killed no more than any other race and will break. Often the only thing driving common Orcs to attack is the compulsion of a leader whom they fear even more than their enemy. Uruk-hai are more **Zealot-like**, but their morale is still not as great as the Zealots found among the Free Peoples. All Orcs are essentially slaves, and a slave can never have the dedication or morale of a person who is free.

### V. TROLLS

Trolls fight like true **Zealots**, and that may seem to belie the last sentence I wrote concerning Orcs. In actuality, however, Trolls are of a different kind than all the other races described (including Orcs). They have no real "morale" because they have no real free will. In combat, a Troll is simply a killing machine, and will fight until either victorious or dead.

## AGGRESSIVENESS AND MORALE TABLES

The Aggressiveness and Morale tables are based on standard *MERP* rules and should be familiar to most players. In order to decide whether a group of NPCs will initiate attack, determine their Aggressiveness Rating, based on their race/culture and other modifiers. One roll should be made for the entire group. Once engaged in combat, separate rolls are made for each individual, this time using the Morale Rating. A Morale roll should be made whenever one or more of the following events occur: 1) the individual receives a critical hit that causes additional damage; 2) the leader receives a critical hit that causes additional damage (Roll for each member of the group observing the hit. If the leader runs away, subtract 50 from Morale rolls.); 3) 20% of the group becomes unable to continue fighting (i.e., roll at 20%, 40%, 60%, etc.).

## RACIAL/CULTURAL MODIFIERS\*

Race/Culture	Aggressiveness	Morale
<b>NÚMENÓREANS</b>		
Faithful	+40	+50
King's Men	+10	+20
Corsairs of Umbar**	+40	+50
<b>NORTHMEN</b>		
Horse-lords †	+40 (+20 on foot)	+30
Beijabar	+50	+40
Woodmen	-10	+20
Lake/Dalemen	+10	+20
Rivermen	—	+10
<b>DAEN</b>		
Dorwinrim	—	—
Hillmen	-10	+10
<b>DRUGHU</b>		
Beffraen	-20	+20
<b>HARADRIM</b>		
<b>EASTERLINGS</b>		
Variags	+20	—
<b>LOSSOTH</b>		
<b>BANDITS</b>		
<b>HOBBITS</b>		
<b>ELVES</b>		
Noldor	+40	+50
Sindar	+10	+50
Avari	—	+30
<b>DWARVES</b>		
UmlI	—	+30
<b>ORCS</b>		
Uruk-hai	+60	+20
<b>TROLLS</b>		
	+70	+70

\* Naturally, each culture will have exceptions to these ratings, such as elite guards and raw levies.

\*\* These ratings apply only to the first period of Corsair history (T.A. 14/5-1810\*). With the resumption of Corsair activity following the loss of Umbar in T.A. 1940, King's Men ratings should be substituted.

† These ratings apply, only after T.A. 2510 (the founding of Rohan). Earlier Éothéod and Éothraim morale ratings should be downgraded to reflect the more

### NPC PANIC TABLE

Roll*	Outcome
100	Throws weapon at opponent and turns to run.
96-99	Attempts to surrender.**
80-95	Runs off alone and is unable to regroup with others.
41-79	Runs off but is able to regroup.
15-40	Throws weapon and shield to the ground and runs off. Unavailable for later use.
05-14	Incapacitated with fear. (Treat as though stunned.)†
02-04	Drops weapon but remains in place, frozen with fear.†
01	Throws self to the ground and grovels for mercy.†

\* Roll separately for each individual NPC.

\*\* Re-roll if NPC is an Orc or a Troll.

† Re-roll if NPC is a Troll.

### AGGRESSIVENESS AND MORALE CHART

Roll*	Outcome
176+	Absolute Success: Charge! NPCs put 100% of melee into attack.
111-175	Success: NPCs attack, putting 65% of melee into attack.
91-100	Near Success: NPCs fire or throw any ready missile weapons. Roll again in two rounds with a +10 bonus for every missile that hits. If already engaged in combat, NPCs put 50% of melee bonus into attack.
76-90	Partial Success: NPCs hold their ground, but do not initiate attack. If already engaged in combat, NPCs put 75% of melee bonus into defense.
05-75	Failure: NPCs begin a slow, organized withdrawal from the enemy. If already engaged in combat, no withdrawal takes place, but NPCs put 100% of melee bonus into defense and will not pursue if enemy breaks contact.
-25-04	Absolute Failure: NPCs begin immediate retreat. If already engaged in combat, they attempt to break away to safer ground nearby.
-26 >	Blunder: NPCs are routed. Roll on Panic Table.

\* If NPCs are attacked, rather than initiating combat, use this chart to determine their actions, but subtract an additional 30 from the roll.

### SPECIAL RULES

1. Groups with an Irregular combat style are immune to Blunder when making an initial Aggressiveness (not Morale) roll.
2. If a Zealot leader becomes incapacitated, another NPC automatically takes his place. A Morale check must still be made for the first leader's loss.
3. No NPC will be the lone individual to run from a fight; hence, If only one NPC rolls a Blunder or Absolute Failure, reduce the outcome to a simple Failure.

### MODIFIERS

± Presence bonus of leader (-5 to +35)\*  
 +10 if NPCs outnumber enemy  
 +20 if NPCs outnumber enemy > 1.5 to 1\*\*  
 +40 if NPCs outnumber enemy > 2 to 1  
 +60 if NPCs outnumber enemy > 3 to 1  
 +80 if NPCs outnumber enemy > 4 to 1  
 -30 if NPCs are outnumbered by enemy  
 -60 if NPCs are outnumbered by enemy > 1.5 to 1  
 -100 if NPCs are outnumbered by enemy > 2 to 1  
 +20 if the majority of NPCs have shields while only 25% or less of the enemy have them as well.  
 ±10 for each level of armor above/below that worn by the enemy†

\* A leader must be visible to NPCs in order for them to receive this bonus

\*\* The ratios are based on the number of individuals capable of engaging in combat, and are adjusted as casualties are taken or as individuals run away.

† Groups with mixed armor levels should be averaged: no armor = 1, soft leather = 2, rigid leather = 3, chain = 4, plate = 5 (E.g., if NPCs wear chainmail while the enemy are all in soft leather. add 20 to the NPC ratio)

# MAPPING MIDDLE-EARTH: AN INTERVIEW WITH PETE FENLON

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*This is the second installment of the series of interviews I will be conducting with those individuals at ICE and elsewhere who have played an important part in the development of the MERP line. In this issue you will be eavesdropping on a conversation I had with Pete Fenlon, former MERP editor and the skilled hand behind those beautiful color maps we have all come to know and love. On numerous occasions, Tolkien underlined the centrality of maps to the evolution of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien himself insisted that the experience of fantasy was, in its pure form, an aural rather than a visual affair; this notwithstanding, I think it would not be going too far to say that, as an “auxiliary” medium, maps have performed an invaluable role in bringing Tolkien’s world to life for millions of readers (and role-players) the world over. One of the most enduring strengths of ICE’s treatment of Middle-earth (I believe) has been its awareness of and attention to this all-important dimension of Tolkien’s sub-creation.*

**Chris:** Do you have any previous background or experience in cartography and map-making that contributed to your work for the *MERP* stuff?

**Pete:** Well, in terms of formal cartographic training, no; in the sense that a geological survey guy might have cartographic training, I have studied it quite a bit as a hobby and pastime, and in that context have been drawing maps since I was about five. I have been a map collector as well, and for as long as I can remember. Also, I have used maps of every kind and ilk in the context of traveling in the wilderness (which I have spent a great deal of time in) — using geological survey and topo maps and that sort of thing, and traveling around the world, which is one of my other hobbies. In either case, I have had ad hoc classes in graphic arts of this sort (that is to say, in the drafting of maps) and a little work with regard to different map theories (bent earth versus flat earth), but nothing of the sort that a true cartographer would have in the modern sense.

**Chris:** One of the first things that came out of the *MERP* series was the Endor continent map. What sort of considerations went into deciding the shape of Middle-earth, outside of what we know from Tolkien own maps?

**Pete:** I had access to a photocopy of a sketch map from a guy from Oxford that later appeared in *The Shaping of Middle-earth*; that was a pretty important thing to have. Using it as a rough outline, taking into account and weighing the similarities versus the differences with our own world, I started to work on my own rough outline. I think I went through about three of them before I was able to reconcile the rough shape with what I understood to be the migration and weather patterns, extrapolated distances, and the like. So, reconciling all three of those, I came up with the published in-

terpretation, which is based on a reasonably good grounding in geology, weather, and the like. I am a generalist in the strongest sense of the word. These things are highly interrelated; and, in a sense, I tried to apply all that knowledge as best as I could. Then I had to twist it a little bit, given the fact that I was trying to apply it to a globe instead of a flat earth map. As a result, that gave it a little bit different shape—a little “perverted,” if you will—because I was using real distances.

**Chris:** Did you also play a role in determining the linguistic bases or real-world analogies that were going to be used for the different place-names that appeared in the east and the south of that map?

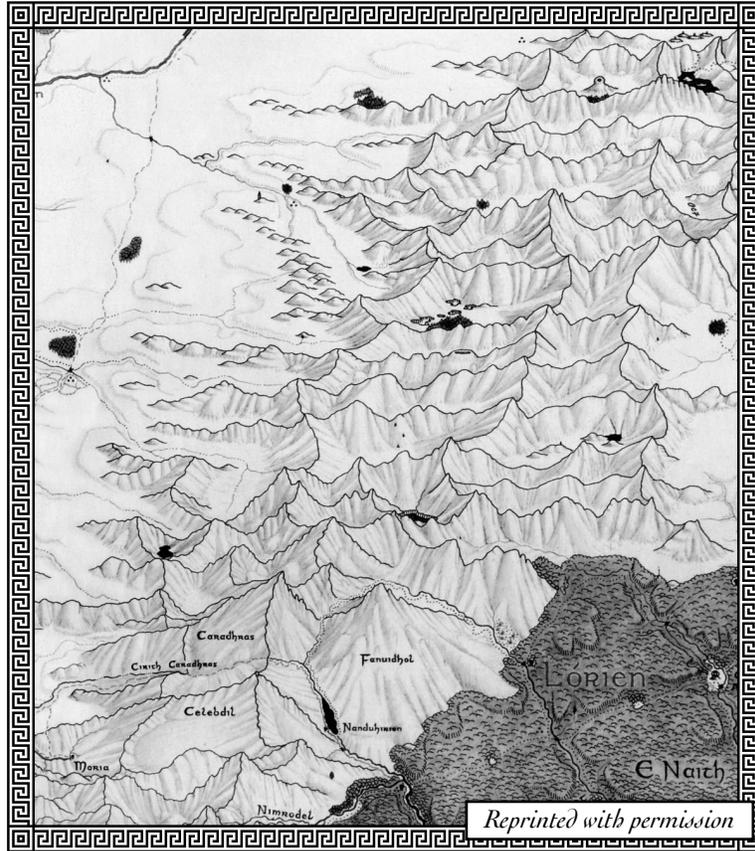
**Pete:** Yes. I have to confess that was really a matter of simply taking what limited knowledge we have of these regions, and applying it in a broad stroke theme. The only issue I was dealing with there was that of Mannish (or “Hildo”) versus Elvish groups, assuming that the place-names in most areas would have some sort of Hildo origin, and the names in the old Elvish areas might still reflect some connection with the Quendi. Then my main goal was to create names that were evocative, wild, and dissimilar from the sorts of names that you might find in common fantasy. I think Tolkien was quite good at blending the original fantasy—the original creation—with historic creation (and quite a bit better at it than the run of the mill fantasy guy), and that really was my principal concern. I did not want a bunch of “yellow” guys running around in the east by the name of “Chung,” and a bunch of guys running around in the south by the name of “Bantu,” so the names were a big factor. I did go back and play around with some dictionaries: Indo-European and others. (I collect dictionaries—everything from Hawaiian to Basque — and, as

Tolkien was, I'm a big fan of language, although I am not the linguist or philologist that he was.) There is some word-play in the map names, and some names reflect ecosystems and places which might be analogous to our world, but which don't on the face of it resemble anything that you might commonly come across in our history.

**Chris:** Let's move now from the big map to the more detailed ones you've done for the individual modules at the 1" = 20 miles scale. What led you to present the maps the way you did—in a way that evokes the visual character of the places they represent; rather than, say, a topographical style?

**Pete:** Obviously the scale is a tough call in and of itself. I have found in my years of running Middle-earth games (since 1975) that small, quarter inch hexes—and I use transparent hex grids sometimes superimposed on these things—work real well as far as running a campaign. Twenty miles is also a pretty common increment in terms of daily travel times for people. (This is to say, people who have horses or wagons.) So it just seemed like a natural sort of mileage thing. As far as the rendering style of the map, it really evolved over time, but was originally essentially a style that I drew from Tolkien's own maps. (That is to say, a "twisted view" style, which was used in our own world by cartographers to depict fanciful places and real places going way way back. It's a pretty commonplace style, although I obviously have my own little twist on it.) I have adapted it over the years but, generally speaking, I was trying to create a flavor that is somewhat true to the large maps of Christopher Tolkien, and that would be usable by a role-playing group.

**Chris:** I think the detail and the visual



sense one gets from your maps has been very useful, especially in the module work I myself have been doing.

**Pete:** Tolkien was very much an advocate of good maps, and maps say a whole lot. Frankly, for somebody who is thinking about another world and who is actually trying to visualize it, one has to have some basic idea of the landscape—some feel, some flavor, is simply indispensable. I might note also that the map style of the eastern map-makers—particularly the late colonial map-makers through the Civil War map-makers—evolved the sort of style that I have adapted into my maps, with the idea of depicting ridgelines and canyons in a certain way (having lived amid Civil War and Revolutionary war battle field areas, and having collected the maps pertaining to them). They are pretty flavorful, and give you a good compromise between a topo map (which has to be read in a certain way) and a photograph.

**Chris:** You've also mapped some of the areas outside of northwestern Middle-earth for modules like *Greater Harad*, *Shadow in the South*, and *The Court of Ardor*. In fact, there was a recent on-line

discussion on the *MERP* list about the map for *Ardor*.

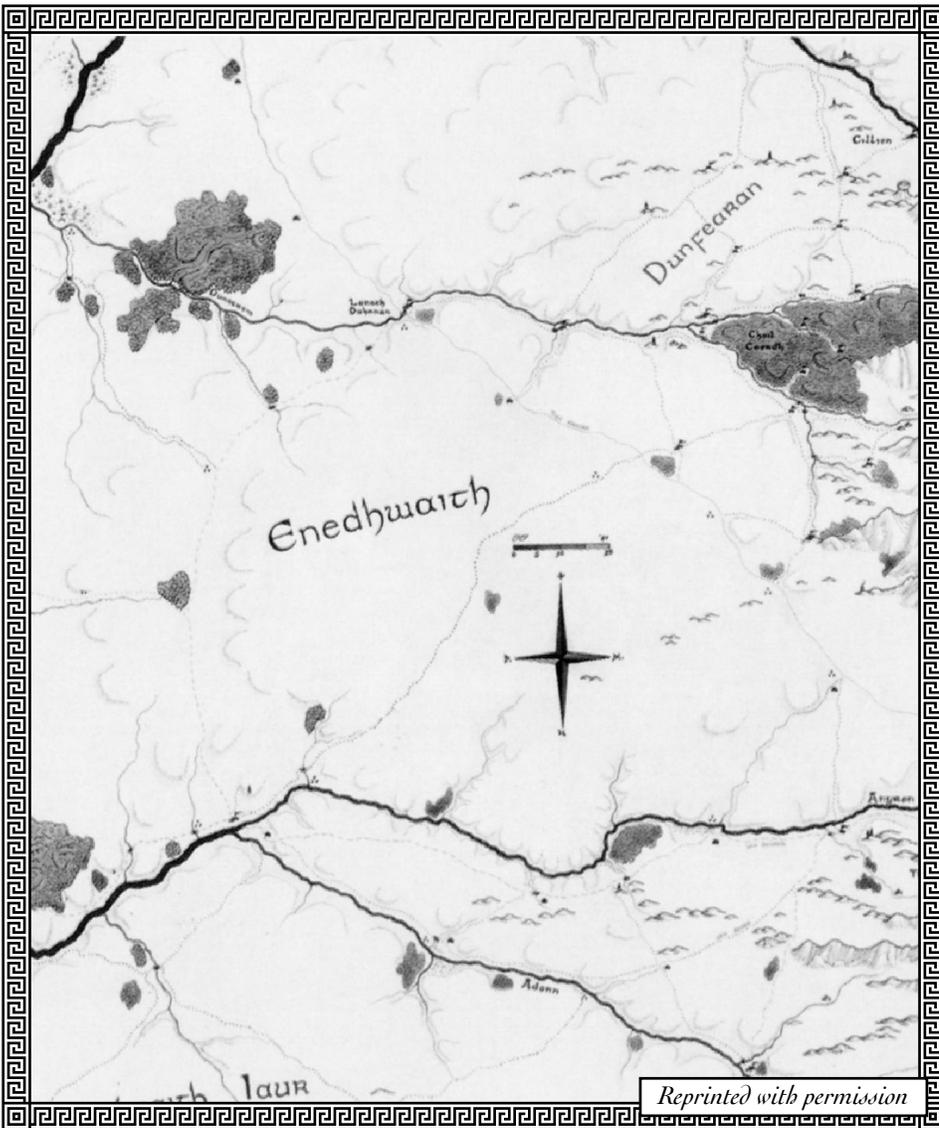
**Pete:** Which was a renegade module.

**Chris:** I was uncertain as to its status, but I remember that John Curtis from ICE was saying that there were some objections to it from Tolkien Enterprises, because it was not one of the areas that Tolkien himself had described. I was wondering whether that objection came from or included the actual mapping of the area.

**Pete:** The objection wasn't really from Tolkien Enterprises at all. John wasn't really here then. All the objection to *Ardor* really came from me, because I was the original Middle-earth editor. *Ardor* was done during a period

of my absence by one of our older designer-founders, a guy who ran an Elvish campaign in that area. This was Terry Amthor, and his module had a very different sense of Tolkien and, in that respect, created a fairly impactful piece. It's a pretty heavy piece of work and pretty controversial internally. In that sense, *Ardor* was an experiment that I would not repeat. I addressed a part of it in *Shadow in the South*. I'm a big advocate of rationalization as an art form, because, to a large degree, I have a Zen or Taoist sense of things. Things just happen. Sometimes the best things come out of these controversies (or mysteries, or dilemmas) and, in reconciling and dealing with them, you discover and sometimes create things that are actually better in many respects than something designed out of new or whole cloth. In either case, *Ardor* was a rather bizarre piece, and very different than most of the other things in the line.

**Chris:** But as far as Tolkien Enterprises is concerned, there aren't any restrictions about actually mapping the east and the south?



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and changes I would make in it now. I would try and keep it as consistent as I could. The different areas outside of northwestern Middle-earth are areas we would like to explore sometime in the future, but they would need to be done very carefully and, as noted before, in the proper context. We like to think of ourselves as adept explorers with regard to role-playing themes, and mapping them. It is something we haven't done yet, because we really have to have the right maps and the right program, and lay it out very carefully.

**Chris:** I get a sense from talking with Jessica Ney-Grimm about potential *MERP* projects that there is an imperative to "finish up" with northwestern Middle-earth before proceeding on to the other parts of Endor not described by Tolkien.

**Pete:** I don't think we can effectively tackle the unknown places without really having a lot more experience with the known places. I am pretty-confident in my secondary creative ability; but the point is that there is still much to be explored in the northwest. We still have to learn a few more tricks and get a better grip on things before we move on to the rest of the continent. It is our hope that by the time that we do reach that point, we will employ a much broader team of people, a fairly strong team of folks who come from a variety of Tolkien-related interest groups, to put together a comprehensive program.

**Chris:** Were the maps that have already been drawn for northwestern Middle-earth conceived with any particular date in mind? In other words, were they written to correspond to the T.A. 1640s, or to some other period?

**Pete:** They were drawn to correspond with the very late Third Age (about the time of the War of the Ring); however, it is not quite so simple. You will note that, had they been drawn for the 1640s, many of the sites that are ruins on these maps would actually be inhabited. That is your first clue that they are drawn toward the later Third Age. In addition, some of the town symbols, which indicate that towns were still occupied—at least in part—during the War of the Ring, don't necessarily reflect the size of the town at that

**Pete:** We have never incurred any restrictions. The main point with these maps—and this is the main point I want to make to any reader—is that they are not Tolkien's maps, nor do they represent Tolkien's interpretation of specific places; these are our interpretations on a broad canvas (and a view that sometimes may not be altogether perfect from another vantage point of how these places might be). In that sense, the only thing we can do is speculate. To have anybody take it to heart as Tolkien's own would be tragic. I would not advocate that, and we try to be clear in each of our pieces about this. I think that everyone we have ever dealt with knows that. The bigger issue is: 1) do we make that point clear, and 2) how do we go about doing what we do? Because if we are to describe Middle-earth, we have to do it reasonably well and (to my mind) with a pretty consistent scheme that doesn't conflict -with Tolkien. Of

course, that's a gray area in and of itself; because if one uses sound cartographic and anthropological methods, then one is probably going to create something that is pretty good and consistent; and beyond that, that is all one can do.

**Chris:** You have put together an (unpublished) gazetteer for all the names that you have come up with for the continent map. Are there any plans at present to publish it?

**Pete:** If it is to be published at some point, this gazetteer will probably appear along with a revised map of the continent. I am not sure what our immediate plans are in that area.

**Chris:** By "revised," do you mean you would be redrawing it?

**Pete:** I would re-render it. It is a thirteen-year old map, and there are a few tweaks

time. Tharbad and a lot of the towns in Cardolan would be a case in point. Town sites there really reflect Cardolan when it was better populated so that, while the physical site is there, the people may not be. To take another case, the tower at Amon Sûl is depicted as a ruin because it really was a ruin for a while back; whereas some of the places that fell into decay -were depopulated or whatever are depicted as towns. Roads are there; but we know that at the time of the War of the Ring a lot of these were in disrepair, as were the great hedge walls of Cardolan and Eregion.

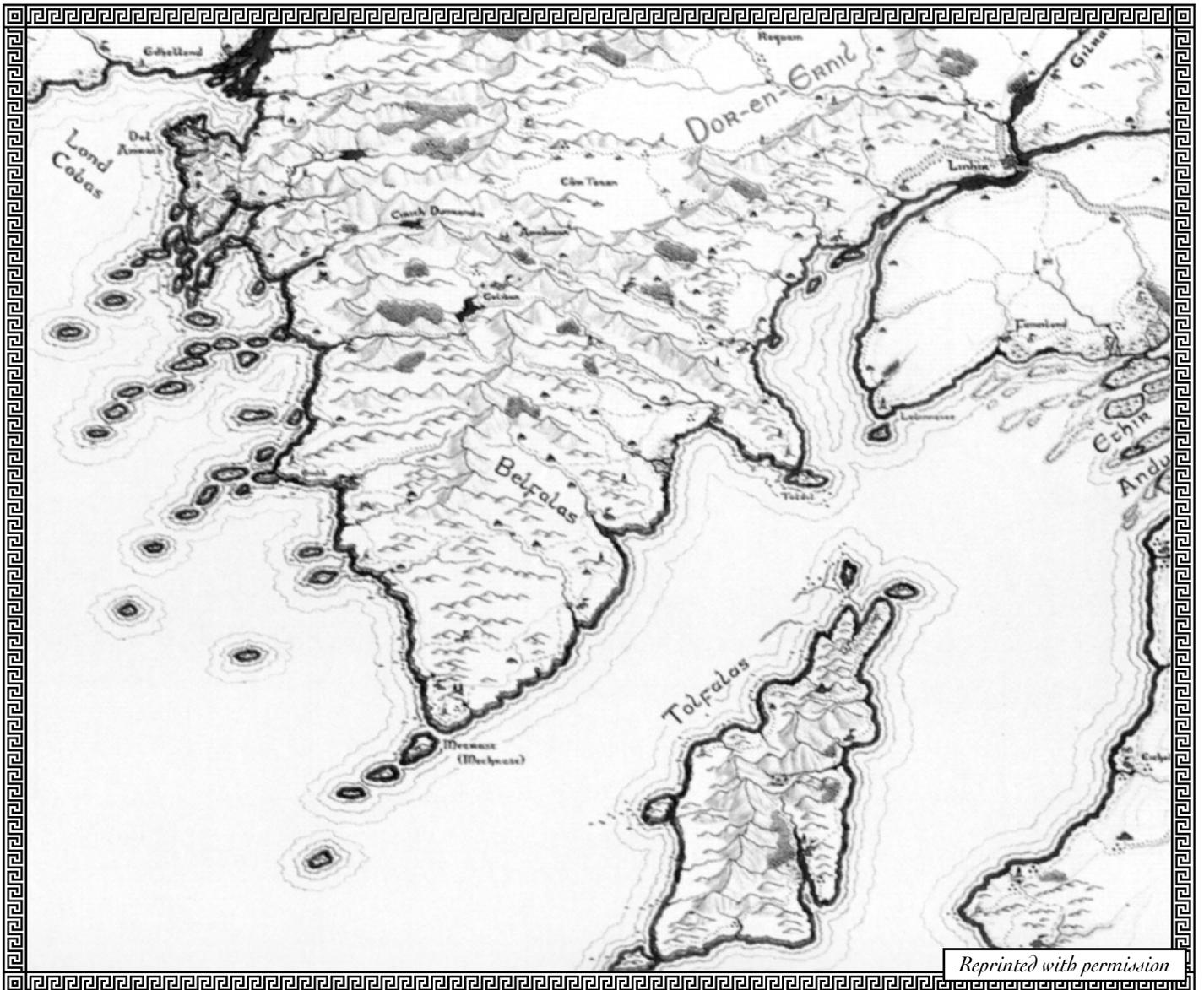
**Chris:** In order to account for the forms of many of the place-names that appear on the maps covered by the Southern

Gondor gazetteer, one of the first things Patrick Wynne and I had to postulate was the date and occasion for which those maps were produced. Given the “late” time frame of some of the sites (like Henneth Annûn) and the temporal scope adopted by our gazetteer entries (which cover all the way up through the reign of Aragorn), we decided that the maps had been drawn up and compiled by the Cartographers’ Guild of Minas Tirith in honor of the seventy-fifth anniversary of King Eldaron’s ascension to the throne. Pat, then, assumed the persona of Findegil, the King’s Writer, in order to provide a linguistic commentary on names whose forms appeared to have been “cor-

rupted” with the waning of knowledge of the Elven tongues over the centuries. This exercise had the unexpected effect of making the maps themselves seem all the more “real” and part of the history which they depicted.

**Pete:** Which is good. Any good history — even any fanciful history — must deal with sources, as Tolkien did. I did a history major and an anthro major both, and got appropriate degrees at UVA here. I remember that at least the first third of one’s history paper dealt with the sources.

**Chris:** Thank you very much for your time. ✦



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# ARDA LORE

Lately I have been coming across short essays or notes devoted to the interpretation of various topics of Tolkien's world, and thought it might be refreshing to publish some of these in OH—to stimulate and provoke further discussion, I hope. So I decided to invent this new column for people who want to get their thoughts on a particular question out there for others to contemplate and respond to. Of course, this is one of the general goals for ALL of the articles in this journal; but not everyone has the time or inclination to flesh out an idea into a full-blown essay.

Hence, "Arda Lore" will be devoted exclusively to "work-in-progress." Its purpose is to raise perennial issues and pose interesting questions—not necessarily to resolve them. Submissions to this column should be short and sweet, but at the same time sufficiently documented (where relevant; e.g., with page citations from Tolkien's writings) for others to engage and respond to the question addressed.

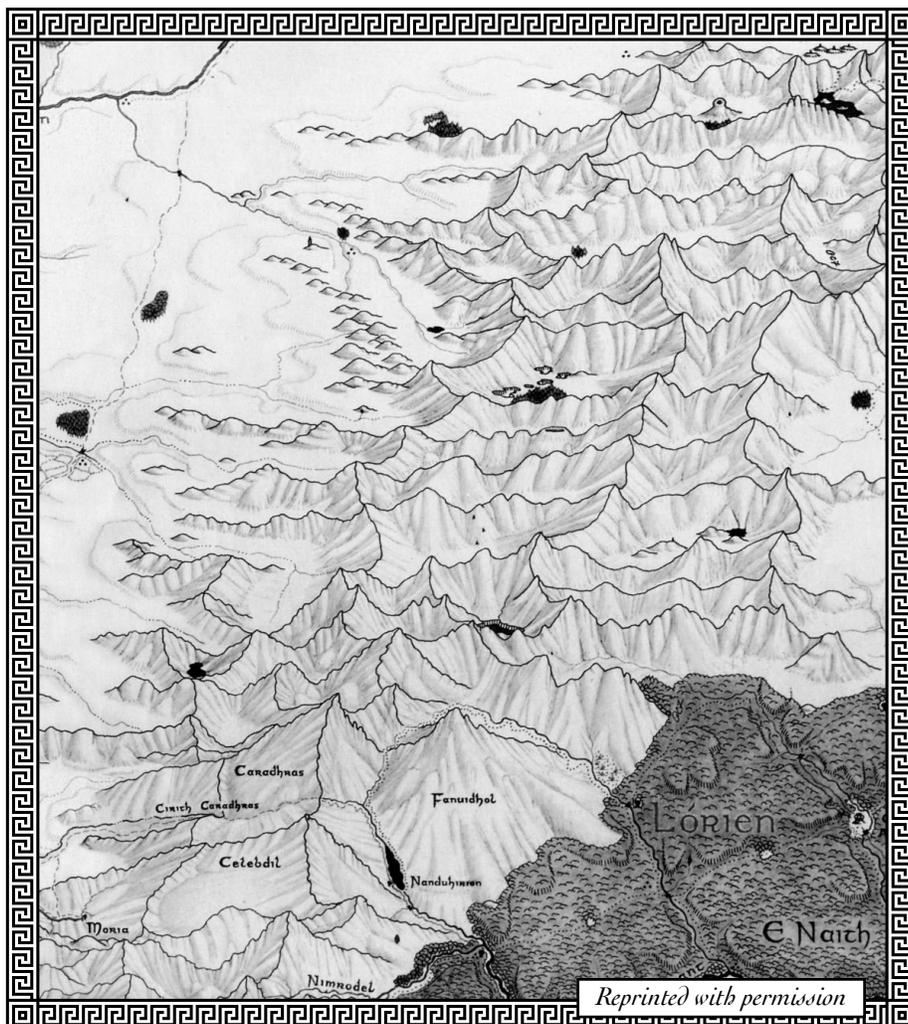
## CHRIS SEEMAN: WHAT DOES "CARN DÛM" MEAN?

I've recently acquired the *Angmar* module, and have been unconvinced at the explanation given by its authors as to the meaning of the place-name Carn Dûm (the Witch-king's stronghold). In the module, it is suggested that the name is a yoking together of *caran* (S. "red") with *dûm* (Kzd. "mansion, fortress"), and that the Dwarves were responsible for it.

Two points militate against this interpretation: 1) Dwarves, like any other speaking people in Tolkien's world, certainly had their own word for "red," and didn't need to borrow it from the Elves. Had they wanted to render "Red For-

ress" into Sindarin, they could have easily done so (*Carnost* or *Ost Garan*); 2) the authors of the *Angmar* module were presumably thinking of the analogy of *Khazad-dûm*; yet, if Tolkien had intended such an analogy, why did he not hyphenate the name to make it clear that he was doing so (i.e., *Carn-dûm*)?

An alternative solution might run as follows: The *Goldogrin* dictionary supplies the form *tum* for "valley" (Cf. Sindarin *Tumladen*). Is it possible that, as the second element in a name, *tum* underwent a consonantal change to *dûm*, such that *Carn Tum* > *Carn Dûm*? If so, then *Carn Dûm* would not mean "Red Fortress," but instead "Red Valley." The change in meaning would, of course, have sig-



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There are three important viewpoints involved in looking at the ground cover problem in this region. The first is J.R.R. Tolkien's, the second is Peter Fenlon's (ICE's primary map-artist), and the third is the readers of our modules.

Tolkien (like, I suspect, his cartographer-son) was a great lover of trees; he even wrote poems about them, and regretted that the wooded countryside of his youth was being "shabbily destroyed" by the development of its wooded landscape. He marked few woodlands on his maps; primarily, I believe, because it was of little interest to him outside of the specific areas he was discussing, but partly because it was not a custom in the kind of map he was using as a model.

Certainly neither J.R.R. Tolkien or his son Christopher try to show all the physical details of the countryside on their maps. Indeed, big chunks of Middle-earth are blank spaces, because cluttering them up would simply have made the maps unreadable. A glance at the *Atlas of Fantasy*, or almost any nineteenth century map of England, or a map of World War I France (where Tolkien served) shows the kind of symbolism favored by Tolkien's contemporaries.

General ground cover tends to be left off political maps of western Europe; significant woodlots, groves, and forest preserves are included, because they have political or military significance. The reader of the time would know that these carefully marked forests are not the only woodlands in the area; they are just the interesting ones.

When Mr. Fenlon drew up his maps, he had to generate more information (for role-playing purposes), use more color (for aesthetic reasons), and at the same time keep the maps readable and reminiscent of Tolkien's illustrations. In my writings I have assumed that, in order to accomplish all of this, he accepted Tolkien's old conventions, marking only significant or symbolic woodlands, and was not attempting to convince us that the entire area of his maps was bereft of trees and undergrowth.

Consequently, both of my modules (*Arnor* and *The Shire*) include a mix of ground cover in the lands of northwestern Middle-earth. In our own world, aside from semi-arid steppes, arid de-

serts, and rocky barrens, all temperate dry land is naturally forested. Keeping it unforested requires significant effort on the part of local populations. In northern Minnesota, where I was brought up, ungrazed grassland turns into brush thicket within a year or so after abandonment; it returns to dense, second-growth forest in a generation. This is in a country on the edge of the Great Plains, one that gets only twenty inches of rain in a year. Most of northwestern Middle-earth is positioned, relative to the sea, to get much more consistent rainfall than this.

A corollary of this situation occurs in hill and mountain country all through our temperate zones. The slopes of the hills are rarely plowed and generally gain more moisture from the ground and air than surrounding flat land, so they support trees even when the low country is farm or prairie. Tolkien, who was familiar with the Alps, certainly knew that the lower slopes of his mountain ranges would support extensive woodlands. I expect that he didn't show them because his map-making and artistic conventions did not require it. Ground cover was not what he was drawing.

The question, in the case of the Eryn Annûn and the Eryn Laer, is whether these hills support woodlands and, if so, do they do so in such a way that Mr. Fenlon would have to map them as forested. I would say yes to the first question and no to the second. The descriptions in Tolkien of Lebennin and Ithilien suggest a lush country, as well watered as any in southern Europe, but most often cleared for cultivation. Laergaladrîn would be only marginally drier, but somewhere in Harondor there would have to be a "tree-line" where naturally forested lands fade out into steppes.

I chose to mark that boundary with the Eryn Laer and the Eryn Annûn. Like the coastal mountains of Anatolia, Iberia, and northern California, they are wooded on their seaward side, and also in their valleys and high knobs, but grassy on their landward side. The woods here would not be as dense as lands further north, but they would be continuous if not cleared for farmland. The locals, as long as their society was healthy, would cultivate them as a precious resource.

Given that trees are present, should they be mentioned? I would give that

answer as an unqualified yes, because of the literal way these modules are read. I am generally careful to give a clear description of my landscapes because, in my experience, most people lack the geographical background to fill in the blanks themselves. If trees, hills, and ravines are present and not clearly indicated somewhere, most gamemasters or players assume a playing field as featureless as the map they are staring at.

If anyone thinks I am giving an overly lush view of the hill country, then by all means we can alter the description from "forested" to "lightly forested" or "wooded." However, there are barren hills aplenty in farther Harondor, where the desert begins, and no need for any more here on the borders of Gondor.

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## TOMMY MARTIN: WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE BLUE WIZARDS?

The East is a part of Middle-earth that is not written about too much. All we know about it is that there are East-erlings of different tribes, and that it is mostly an evil land. In fact, ICE put out a map in the *Middle-earth Campaign Guide* that divided this land into realms of the Nine Riders. It is helpful for GM's who want to give their characters a different atmosphere to adventure in. The first thing that should be taken into consideration is that the East is not a kind place.

The Istari are emissaries of the Valar that were sent to Middle-earth to balance things out, since Sauron was stirring again. Two of these newcomers were sent to the East and the South. Their names were Alatar and Pallando, and which one went where is not known. The only thing we have about them is that they were chosen by the Vala Oromë the Horseman. It seems most likely that these two became servants of Sauron.

A quote that backs this belief up is Tolkien's words on the two Blue Wizards: "I really do not know anything clearly about the other two, since they do not concern the history of the northwest. I think they went as emissaries to distant regions, East

and South, far out of Númenórean range: missionaries to ‘enemy-occupied’ lands, as it were. What success they had I do not know; but I fear that they failed, as Saruman did, though doubtless in different ways; and I suspect they were founders or beginners of secret cults and ‘magic’ traditions that outlasted the fall of Sauron (Letters: ?).”

Now, their failure could be interpreted many ways. Maybe they blundered as Radagast did; they didn’t do what they were sent to do. Instead of taking an interest in the speaking people and their politics, he chose to settle in Rhosgobel and tend to the Olvar and Kelvar. So, the Blue Wizards could have found it more intriguing to rule over people instead of helping them.

Elsewhere, Tolkien says, “Away in the (to these tales) uncharted East...are the countries and realms of wild or evil men, alike only in their hatred of the West, derived from their master Sauron...(Letters: 157).” As this passage states, there are evil men in the East who have the Dark Lord as their master. Tolkien also pointed out that the East in general is subject to Sauron; Tolkien didn’t name specific places or people. No, the East in general is Sauronic in its beliefs (as in the United States, which is generally Christian in its philosophy—there are other religions that aren’t Christian, but they’re not the majority.)

If Alatar and Pallando had made cults that were against Sauron, I think they would have made a considerable impact in the East; yet Tolkien never says there was such opposition. I take it that their cults were in league with Sauron, and only added to the influence he had over these barbarians. Two Maiar would no doubt be a thorn in his side if they were against him. The Easterlings would have been divided among themselves and would have some sort of civil-war, but there is no account of such an occurrence.

If a cult is defined as devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., then the Blue Wizards’ cults could have been focused upon themselves, the Valar, or Sauron. Most likely, it was Sauron, and it would have been excessively flattering for him. If they would have revered the Valar, Sauron would have most likely have done

away with them on the spot, which would possibly have led to civil war among the Easterlings. But, then again, there is no hint in Tolkien of such a thing.

A centering of worship upon themselves would also lead to the same fate, since this would make Sauron their opponent. No, they had to foster Sauronic cults. “The ‘wizards’ were not exempt, indeed being incarnate were more likely to stray, or err. Gandalf alone fully passes the tests, on a moral plane anyway... (Letters: 202).” Gandalf was the only Istar that did what he was supposed to. Saruman, Radagast, Alatar, and Pallando failed. Note that the quote says “on the moral plane,” which implies relating to, serving, or teaching in accordance “with the principles of right and wrong.” Gandalf succeeded conscientiously, but the others (with the exception of Radagast) bungled in this regard; in other words, they went to the evil side.

Saruman, of course, turned corrupt and didn’t turn back. It is not said whether the two Blue Wizards eventually saw that they were going down the wrong path and turned onto the right one. But there is proof that these two failed like Saruman and became baneful. If this is the case, then that would make the East and the South even more hazardous.

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## CHRIS SEEMAN: WHO IS THE NECROMANCER?

For the greater part of the Third Age, Sauron’s existence was hidden under the alias of “the Necromancer of Dol Guldur.” The Wise surmised that this mysterious figure might have been one of the Nazgûl, but apparently they didn’t let on about their suspicions to anybody else, since the kings of Gondor and Arnor were incapable of perceiving any unified threat to themselves until c. T.A. 1940, and it was not until the Nine Ringwraiths actually manifested themselves in the invasion of Minas Ithil in 2000 that the Dúnedain figured out that the “Witchking” was one of them.

One of the questions that has been vexing me lately is: When rumor came to the Gondorian kings that

some guy called the Necromancer was their next-door neighbor in Rhovanion, how did they react? What was their perception of this personage, and how did their perception affect their frontier policy in that direction? Part of the answer to this question would depend on what the word “Necromancer” connoted to them, and that is what I want to give some thought to here.

Before considering the question, let’s recall that while Tolkien may have used Necromancer in the generic, non-technical sense of an evil sorcerer (Hobbit: 121), he may also (if only after the fact) have returned to the name and given it some more specific meaning (as he did with the Istari, emphasizing the etymological connection between “wizard” and “wise”). Let us assume then, for the moment, that it is legitimate to look for a more exact sense for Necromancer. We are aided in this by the fact that Tolkien did not invent the word, and so he presumably used it (rather than some other term for sorcerer) to give Sauron’s alias a distinctive shade.

The English form we are familiar with is cognate with Greek *nekromanteia*, one who practices *nekromanteia*. (*nekros* “dead” + *manteia* “divination, oracular utterance”). *Manteia* is a generic term for all kinds of prophetic and oracular arts (which were as common and accepted in Antiquity as television and news reports are for us today), so the qualifier *nekro-* indicates a more specific kind of activity: divination by means of communication with the spirits of the dead.

Without even considering the social context in which *nekromanteia* usually occurs, we can infer from the bare meaning of the word that it could only have originated with the Northmen of Rhovanion (and, more specifically, with the Woodmen, who would have been the first to have become aware of and suffer from Sauron’s presence). Beliefs about communication with the deceased was not part of the worldview of Elves, Dwarves, or the Dúnedain. (I grant the exception of the Paths of the Dead, but at the moment we are speaking in terms of universal assumptions, rather than anomalies.)

This accords well with what is known about the (real-world) setting of necromancy; namely, that it occurs most often in the context of ancestor worship in societies dominated by kinship. The Woodmen fit the bill rather nicely. Given Tolkien's assumption that the Northmen of Rhovanion were related to the Edain that made it into Beleriand during the First Age, it may be interesting to note that when Túrin appears to the folk of Brethil after slaying Glaurung (and having been thought dead), they think that he was the unquiet spirit of Túrin, not yet departed from the world. By contrast, the later Dúnedain assumed (following the teachings of the Elves and Valar), that mortals departed the world irrevocably, unless constrained by inconceivably powerful magic (like the covenant stone of Erech, enhanced by the binding power of Isildur's oath).

So, if we assume that the Woodmen professed a belief that their dead ancestors could be communicated with, how is it that they would have attributed such powers to the strange new evil presence in Dol Guldur? Perhaps we could imagine that Amon Lanc (the hill that became known as Dol Guldur after Sauron built his tower there) was originally a burial site for the 1st Age ancestors of the Woodmen. Sauron's occupation of the site prevented them from communing any longer with their ancestors' spirits; and, having no other explanation for why this evil had driven them out, the Woodmen assumed that he too (though for more wicked purposes) had chosen that site in order to communicate with (and probably dominate) the dead.

Once he became aware of the Woodmen's reaction, Sauron could then exploit it as a means of threatening them to do his bidding (or, more realistically, not to oppose his will in the Greenwood). Playing upon their religious beliefs, Sauron was in effect "holding their ancestors hostage." (As a footnote, another feature of Amon Lanc—as described in the *MERP* modules—that might strengthen this scenario is the fact that it is a volcano, a "gateway to the underworld" and the land of the dead in the minds of the Woodmen.)

## RESPONSE BY ANDERS BLIXT.

Every Dúnadan "knows" that Sauron and the Úlairi perished a long time ago, so the Necromancer must obviously be something new and different—maybe some mysterious evil creature from the roots of Arda, creeping up to the surface through the Amon Lanc's dead chimney (cf. Gandalf telling of the horrors of the depths below Moria and the legends of Shelob).

## STEFFEN SOLOMON: AND WHAT ABOUT THE WITCH-KING?

I am running my *MERP* campaign a few years before the Second Northern War of T.A. 1409. The players have several ideas as to who the "Necromancer" is—a powerful sorcerer from a distant land, a twisted Elf from the East, a lesser Maia (akin to Sauron, but much less powerful), or one of the Nazgûl (under the assumption of the diminishing legacy of Morgoth). Having placed myself in the shoes of the Wise (so to speak), all of these possibilities exist, but I imagine that, with information from spies and eye-witnesses, the "powerful foreign wizard" and "evil Elf" hypotheses would be discarded for the following reasons:

**1** By T.A. 1640, the Witch-king has lasted close to 400 years. It would be considered by the Wise highly unlikely that a living man could, even with magic, extend his life that long.

**2** Spies and eyewitnesses would report the powerful aura of dread, fear, and despair encountered by those who see or live near the Witch-king. The Wise would come to see this as a sign that the individual was a supernatural being, since no Elf-Lord ever had that kind of an aura.

**3** Spies and eye-witnesses would give the extent of the Witch-king's empire— from Angmar to the far lands of the Sagath and Asdriag Easterlings; yet Angmar would be observed to be dependent on food and manpower imports. After four centuries, it becomes apparent to the Wise that Angmar's only true purpose is the destruction of the Dúnedain and Elves of Eriador.

(While Angmar has not engaged in wars with Lindon, it has raided it a few

times and, after 1375 it is said, Rivendell was besieged—most convenient for the attack in 1409.) So, the Witch-king has, most likely, some personal enmity with the Dúnedain and the Elves. The conclusion is that he must be one that experienced defeat at their hands, during the wars of either the Second Age or the First.

Of such defeated beings, the Elven-lords would know several lesser Maiar who had once served Morgoth or Sauron. Also, it is not made clear in Tolkien's account of the War of the Last Alliance that its survivors actually witnessed the passing of the Nazgûl into the shadows. I imagine that several Elven-lords (Elrond included) might have suspect that the wraiths managed to wander the world in hiding for several centuries, just as Sauron did in the early Second Age.

If we assume that the Wise and the Dúnadan kings knew that the Witch-king was a Nazgûl—even the chief Nazgûl—what would they do? In the Arnor module, it is suggested that the King of Arthedain adopted a defensive military stance, waiting out the war of attrition in the hopes that Providence would give a clue to the Witch-king's defeat via the stars or the visions of the seers. Certainly no army could march deep into Angmar and besiege Carn Dûm with any real hope of capturing and slaying the Witch-king. Perhaps, if he could be lured out into open combat on the fields of Arthedain.

Now, regarding the Necromancer, the Wise may have made several interesting observations. First, the Necromancer had not created a political empire with the goal of destroying any Mannish or Elven realm. Instead, the foul influence of the Necromancer spread through Mirkwood slowly, like a cancer. As a matter of (gaming) fact, the Wise could compare it to the effect that Blogath the Blood-wight had on the Yfelwyd in ICE's *Dark Mage of Rhudaur*, making the place a creepy den for foul creatures to breed.

Second, I believe Sauron would take every precaution that his actions occur through a third party. (E.g., the assassinations of wizards and other

practitioners of magic would be carried out by a Gondorian cult or by Southron merchants who were in no way connected with Dol Guldur.)

Third, eyewitnesses would have described the master of Dol Guldur (Khamûl the Easterling) as an armored man with a fearful aura. These reports would sound similar to those of the Witch-king — perhaps another Nazgûl?

Fourth, I imagine that if Dol Guldur lent any manpower or material assistance to Angmar at any time, it would have been conducted under the pretense that the Witch-king was demanding tribute (e.g., by showing up publicly with a show of force). This would confuse the Wise as to the power hierarchy.

Finally, after T.A. 1981, when the Balrog of Moria is released by the Dwarves, the Wise would consider the possibility that a similar being could have been released by the Dwarves of Amon Lanc. Also, it is only after 1981 that Galadriel comes to Lothlórien and slowly begins to wrestle in spirit with Sauron; possibly his attempts to hide his spirit caused enough “static” before Galadriel began to recognize it’s identity.

Whew! That was long winded! But I hope these ideas can provide a perspective of what the Wise know and do not know. I would agree, however, with the criticism that in several ICE modules Sauron’s identity is considered public knowledge. Personally, I treat the Wise as only having the suspicion that Sauron MIGHT be present in the physical world after 2000, when several Nazgûl conquer Minas Ithil and then do nothing but hold it for several centuries — an important clue that there might be a Master Planner above the Witch-king (who was one of the four to occupy Minas Ithil).

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## RESPONSE BY WESLEY FRANK:

Steffen has covered most of the arguments I considered when writing the sections of Arnor that deal with the Witch-king. Let us say that the Wise, in the time of Angmar’s power, had made a pretty good guess as to the Witch-king’s identity, but couldn’t prove it beyond a “shadow” of a doubt, unless someone bagged him.

After all, while he was certainly a wraith, he could well have been an impersonator.

In the case of the Necromancer, I would emphasize that no serious military threat was ever mounted from Dol Guldur until the forces of the Free Peoples were too weakened to attack the place. Sauron had resources collected there that he could not afford to lose. It also seems to me that he cast enchantments that took years of concentration and effort.

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## RESPONSE BY CHRIS SEEMAN:

One thing that occurred to me in reading through the Angmar module was the prominence and visibility of Black Númenóreans among the ranks of the Witch-king’s generals (i.e., the commanders most likely to be encountered in the field by the Dúnedain), as well as the Iron Sorcerer (the principal mediator between the Witch-king and his subjects). Finally, were Mûrazôr himself to wear his battle-helm in open war (as in T.A. 1409), it would probably not be too difficult for the loremasters of Arthedain to identify it as none other than Tar-Ciryatan’s karma (at least, according to Mûrazôr’s bio in the module).

This proliferation of Black Númenórean adversaries might have led the Dúnedain of Arnor to interpret their hatred in terms of a desire to avenge themselves for their ancient defeat in the War of the Last Alliance. This perception would then be reinforced by the presence of other old “Sauronic” allies among the Black Númenórean-led Angmarim, like Orcs and Easterlings. The Dúnedain may have assumed that these ancient enemies had survived among the Númenórean colonies of the far eastern or southern coasts of Middle-earth.

Beyond this assumption, it seems to me that Dúnedain interpretations of Angmar’s motives would be governed in a large part by the ideology of Angmarean religion (which, as I argued in my review of the module, would most certainly NOT have focused openly on the Necromancer of Dol Guldur — that would have been a dead giveaway that some “international conspiracy” was at work, and would have drawn far too

much attention to the ever secretive Sauron). As far as I am aware, Tolkien never stated that the Black Númenóreans “worshipped” Sauron as distinct from Melkor — they certainly SERVED him as military allies (Sil: 293), but this was in continuity with their original connection to him via the Cult of Melkor (or whatever permutation of the cult that may have survived into the Third Age).

Somewhere in his *Letters* (I haven’t got the page reference off-hand), Tolkien states that, upon his return from the Downfall of Númenor, Sauron claimed to be Melkor *redivivus*, and was worshipped as such — recall how Sauron defied the lightning sent by Manwe to destroy the Temple of Melkor “and in that hour men called him a god and did all that he would (Sil: 277).” It seems most likely to me, then, that the deity allegedly worshipped by the Witch-king and his minions was none other than Melkor (or, rather, Sauron-qua-Melkor, in whatever form(s) that worship might have assumed in a mid-Third Age context).

In the course of establishing his dominion, Mûrazôr and the Iron Sorcerer might have united their many allies and servants under a “messianic” theology, in which the destruction of the realms of Melkor’s most hated foes was a necessary precondition for ushering in the return of their deity in power, the fulfillment of the cult’s promises of immortality, and the like. Again, given the high visibility of the religious component of the Angmarean war machine (as described in the module), it would not be difficult for the spies and scouts of Arthedain to piece together a pretty clear picture of their enemy (at least, so far as Mûrazôr WANTED them to see it): Sauron’s ancient servants have reunited under some powerful Black Númenórean league from out of the distant East and South, inspired by a revived Cult of Melkor that preaches the “cleansing” of their former master’s principal enemies — the Eldar and the Elendili — as a step towards the hoped-for return of their god. As for the Witch-king himself, who knows? Perhaps a living man aided by some great sorcerous power or an undead wraith.

One further comment. Steffen's idea about Dol Guldur "paying tribute" to Angmar is brilliant! This is EXACTLY how Sauron would want the world to perceive it! However, given the already "high profile" of Angmar on the global scene (and Sauron's own imperative to stay hidden), I would tend to think he would want to avoid ANY evidence of contact between Dol Guldur and the North — especially since all of Angmar's basic needs were already being adequately met by trade and tribute from the East. Perhaps the "tribute" deception could be ready for use as a ruse, should any of their covert connections ever in fact be discovered.

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## RESPONSE BY STEFFEN SOLOMON:

Thanks for thinking through on the Cult of Melkor. I was always uncomfortable with there being an active cult of Sauron, who would easily reckon that if the Wise and Kings heard his name brought up too often, they might sooner guess his return. However, I do imagine that he gained some power from some religious rituals, and that the symbol of the Red Eye acted as a rough "channel" to him. The Eye would not tip off his enemies because it was a quality of Sauron's appearance only after his return in the Third Age.

Now, I've given a little thought as to the reaction of the lords of Gondor to the presence of Angmar and Dol Guldur. Sadly, Angmar would be mostly seen as Amor's problem, and Chris makes a very good point that Sauron would avoid making visible the connection between Angmar and Dol Guldur. If the kings of Gondor saw that there was a direct connection—even a tributary one—they would believe that Angmar had now come to their borders. This would trigger a powerful military response (and Sauron still feared them).

Now the lords of Gondor, through spies and conversing with Arnor, would initially suspect that Angmar was behind the westward advances of the Sagath and Asdriag peoples. However, as has been noted in the Riders of Rohan module and elsewhere, the Sagath and Asdriags were moving due to pressure from the people of Khand and Núrad (Guided by

the hand of Úvatha the Horseman, I believe). So Gondor would attribute their aggression to "natural" causes — migrations and ambitions.

Gondor's southern neighbors would also be a cause for concern. Despite the taking of Umbar in the T.A. 900's, there would be continual raids and opposition from the tribesmen of the Haradwaith. Such raids would exist even without the eventual influence of Adûnaphel the Quiet. And, naturally, after the Kin-strife (which needed none of Sauron's influence to start), Gondor was preoccupied with this bitter enemy for centuries.

So, in conclusion, Gondor would likely view Dol Guldur as a strain upon its eastern roads/borders, but not as a direct invasionary threat. And Sauron would keep it that way. Occasional Orkish raids from Mirkwood would generate counter-raids by Gondor into Mirkwood, but Sauron would make certain never to antagonize the Gondorians too much nor to appear as a real threat.

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## RESPONSE BY CHRIS SEEMAN:

My thought exactly. Gondor never extended its power into Mirkwood; and, as long as Sauron did not expand outward from the eaves of the forest, there would be little friction. Gondor was concerned primarily with the Vale of Anduin as an economic corridor (as evidenced by Romendacil's building of the Argonath); in Gondorian eyes, southern Greenwood was originally "Elven territory"—hence, not to be messed with (like Lórien across the valley).

A brief caveat regarding Umbar and the Haradrim. Haradrim hostility between T.A. 1448 and 1940 was largely a function of the Haruze alliance with confederate Umbar, which (prior to 1940) was devoid of Black Númenórean influence. (Remember that the confederates of the Kin-strife were the "ultra-conservatives" among the Faithful in Gondor.) It's only with the final loss of Umbar in 1940 to "Sauron's minions" (the Haruze and the hitherto exiled Cult of Melkor) that the haven might have become a significant source of support for Angmar. Jason Beresford (the Umbar author) and I are currently debating the possibility

that an Umbar-Angmar alignment during the final period of 1940-1975 might have been the key event provoking Gondorian/Arthedainian perception of "a single power and will" hostile to the Faithful survivors of Númenor.

## RESPONSE BY STEFFEN SOLOMON:

My note on how the Witch-king would appear to the Wise (that is, to the Elven-lords and Wizards) would not necessarily apply to Dúnadan perceptions. Individuals such as Elrond and Galadriel could see from experience that such longevity for humans was probably impossible. But remember, the tip off is the aura of fear that the Witch-king generated.

Also, the perceptions of the Dúnedain was colored by their desires and lack of personal experience in history. (Such beings as Nazgûl were legendary characters to them, whereas Elrond had probably met a few in Mordor.) I suspect that the Dúnedain would entertain the idea of Black Númenórean wizards discovering the key to immortality, because many of the Dúnedain themselves secretly desired this.

The estrangement between Elves and Men made it difficult for the Wise to truly get across their perceptions and guesses as to what was going on. The kings of Arthedain may have conversed with the Istari and Elrond, but may not have been wholly convinced of their arguments. (Note that Ponce de Leon got many of his men to follow him in the search for the Fountain of Youth in the wilderness of Florida, when he was actually looking for gold. What glitters more than gold? The promise of immortality!)

## CHRIS PHEBY: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MAGIC IN MIDDLE-EARTH?

In his article of *Other Hands* 10/11: 11-12, Dirk Brandherm suggested that we classify magic as "petty" spells (which require little effort to cast) or as words of command (which were symptomatic of spells of power). He also put forward some mechanisms for using these systems. His article failed to mention how rarely such powerful magics are practiced outside of the ministry of the Istari and Maiar. For the majority of Middle-earth's inhabitants, access to

such knowledge and power is not even dreamed of. Indeed, where the practice of magic is known and accepted, cultural circumstances usually render the label of “magic” inappropriate (as in the example of the Elves of Lórien).

Magic in *Middle-earth Role Playing* faces a more complex stumbling block: that the majority of magic practiced (particularly in the Third Age) is characterized by a wide divide between cause and effect. Thus, Galadriel can use her mirror to see distant things (and perhaps influence them), as can Saruman with his palantír. The Elves can make enchanted cloaks, whose virtue of concealment need not be drawn upon immediately and not necessarily by their makers. The Dwarves can store magic in great artifacts, confident that their power will be used in a very different environment from their manufacture. The Great Rings are the epitome of magics imbued in objects intended for use after their manufacture.

From the viewpoint of a reader of Tolkien, this concept seems to make sense. To most of Middle-earth’s inhabitants, magic is but a fairy-tale and cannot be practiced in public (a consideration that applies as much to the forces of evil as good—Sauron can be such a brooding distant figure, and Saruman likewise must rely upon an army rather than spells to further his tyrannical aims). This inaccessibility of magic helps to account for the proliferation of artifacts in Middle-earth; it also imbues the world with a sense of real, believable magic, and provides a clear physical law which magic must follow. It explains how, away from observation in their pits and dungeons, the lords of the world can work their power and exploit the labors of the past. Sauron is strongly tied to Mordor, since there he has already labored mightily in forging the foundations of his power. Similarly, the Elves are tied to their havens, in which reside the best part of their magics from the past.

Thus, when Gandalf sought to open the door of Moria through songs and simple incantations, he was merely seeking to unlock through his knowledge magic that was already present. A Word of Command, as Dirk identified it, would perhaps involve the use of a magician’s own energy. A focus (such as a staff in this case)

would serve to prevent some of the fallout resultant from such an expenditure of power. In effect, Gandalf had prepared his staff for a variety of uses—its creation, and hence the root of the words power, lie in the past, artificially separating cause and effect. Such foci are inefficient, and the toll of such magics remains terrible. (Gandalf rarely resorts to them.) In *The Hobbit*, when accosted by the wargs, Gandalf did not simply throw fireballs at the wolves; instead, he threw flaming pine-cones—once again, distinguishing cause and effect (the cause: the lighting of the pine-cones, the effect: a fireball).

This principle does not correspond to the style of magic-use implied by *MERP*. If PCs must plot out their magics in advance—and most role-playing campaigns will last years at most, rarely decades—how are they to usefully apply them in a game? Is there any value in choosing to play a mage, when the skills of a ranger seem far more practical?

There are variety of solutions which preserve the sense that the world in which we adventure is a real world. As I have suggested, the setting of Middle-earth does not allow for the use of one’s own power directly; but, channeled through foci, artifacts, prayers, and through the unlocking of secrets of the ancients, magic can play a part. With this thought in mind, magic becomes more a test of a character’s knowledge and intuition than a question of magic, (e.g., Does he know the language and can he discover the word that unlocks the gate of Moria?) Words of Command and direct spells of power still play a part, but their use should be restricted. Great power is too corrupting, and should not needlessly be abused.

I have published two articles in *Other Hands* which reflect my views on this topic. My article in OH 1 examined the corrupting nature of magic, while that in OH 6/7 addressed the inevitable decline in magical power during the lifespan of its user. Generally, these two rule options would apply to Words of Command; although lesser magic might lead to limited corruption. Words of Command are prized and highly secret—it is thought that the Dwarven tongue Khuzdul holds many—and to discover a

Word of Command could become the focus of an entire quest. Most characters in Middle-earth live out their lives in blissful ignorance of the existence of such words, and even of the most petty magics. Magic shouldn’t be taken for granted in a Middle-earth game, but earned, treasured, and quested after.

# PRODUCT

# REVIEWS

David Woolpy

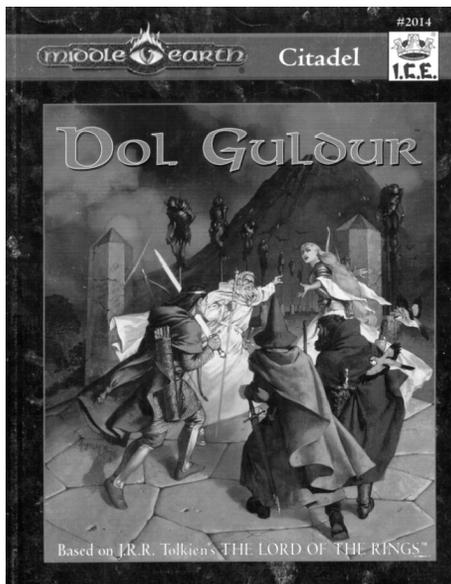
## *Dol Guldur*

(*Citadel of Middle-earth* #2014)

Charlottesville, Virginia

Iron Crown Enterprises, 1995

[224 pages; \$25.00]



Every villain needs a lair, and every lair should reflect the magnitude and wickedness of its villain. Sauron is the biggest and baddest villain in Middle-earth; a citadel module that sets out to do justice to that fact has assumed no trivial task. With *Dol Guldur*, the first original release in ICE's "Citadels of Middle-earth" series, author David Woolpy succeeds admirably in plumbing the vast, unknown depths of what served as Sauron's inner sanctum for the greater part of the Third Age. Although based in part on conceptions and floorplans that originally appeared in ICE's 1983 release *Southern Mirkwood, Haunt of the Necromancer*, Woolpy has gone far beyond the initial design to render a fortress befitting the grandeur and power of the Lord of the Rings, even in the weakness

of his slow recovery from the shadows. *Dol Guldur* is an achievement to be emulated.

A seventy-one page orgy of floor-plans and site descriptions occupies the center of this tome, covering sixteen distinct levels of the Necromancer's hidden fastness as well as the subsidiary fortifications of the Nan Lanc which guard the approaches to the Hill of Dark Sorcery. But *Dol Guldur* offers much more than a mere cataloging of chambers and passages; it provides an extensive pre-history of the site, when Dwarves delved the roots of the dead volcano for precious ores. Woolpy also presents an elaborate account of Sauron's chief minions who command the hierarchy of *Dol Guldur*, and details the internecine strife (sometimes counterproductive to the Necromancer's designs) that plagues their ranks. On top of this, the module includes a three part adventure (set in T.A. 1640) for use as a vehicle to draw player characters into *Dol Guldur*'s intrigues, and a lengthy narrative of Gandalf the Grey's two famous forays into the dark stronghold (in T.A. 2063 and 2850 respectively), which ultimately led the wizard to the climactic revelation of the Age: SAURON LIVES!

In a lucid preface to his overview of the site, Woolpy writes: "The history of *Dol Guldur* is to a large degree the history of Sauron in the Third Age (23);" and part of the great value of this module is that it provides the reader with a masterful interpretation of Sauron's evolving strategy over the course of his two thousand-year exile from Mordor — a much needed synthesis that has been absent from or addressed only in a rudimentary fashion by the existing

corpus of *MERP* modules. Woolpy's execution of this goal is without a doubt the most sensitive and consistent treatment to date of the all-important issue of Sauron's anonymity prior to Gandalf's discovery of his true identity in 2850, an imperative which finds expression not only in the history of *Dol Guldur*, but in its very design, and even its iconography. To be sure, there are a few unresolved matters (which I will address shortly); but they do not seriously detract from the author's positive accomplishment.

As far as the nuts and bolts of the actual fortress description go, the logistics of *Dol Guldur* are quite sound. Meticulous attention is given not only to the layout of the place, but also to the methods by which essential preconditions for light, heat, water, and waste removal are met — no small task for a citadel that garrisons thousands of the Dark Lord's minions over a vertical stretch of more than seven thousand feet (from the lookout posts near the summit of Amon Lanc to the boiling sulfuric pools of the "Fifth Stratum"). We are also given a highly intricate account of the internal chain of command by which *Dol Guldur*'s hosts are ordered, with the names of all ranks given in Black Speech and/or Orkish (as they ought to be for a module that purports to adopt the viewpoint of the subjects it describes). This is the ultimate "insider's guide" to the villain's secret base.

A final feature which I want to single out for special praise is the section entitled "Gandalf's Tales" (mentioned above), which comprises a twenty-one page story of Gandalf's uninvited

visits to the Necromancer's stronghold. Apart from their intrinsic entertainment value, these two episodes serve an important integrative function for the module as a whole. In the author's own words: "They reflect the dangers facing anyone bold enough to embark on the secret penetration of the Necromancer's daunting lair (137)." As a reader, I found Woolpy's high-paced prose to be extremely helpful for envisioning how Dol Guldur's defenses might operate in an actual game. (It was also a great way to reinforce my mental picture of the vastly complex layout of the fortress, after having experienced overload from a forced march through the seventy-odd pages of floorplans and room descriptions.) Despite the length of "Gandalf's Tales," I found it to be (in its own way) a highly effective way of communicating ideas to a GM desiring to run an infiltration scenario.

Now, what would I like to have seen more of? First of all, given the amount of Black Speech that gets bandied around in this module, a Black Speech dictionary (modeled after the Orkish dictionary in the Angmar module) would have been a nice touch. The setting, of course, is ideal: prior to Sauron's reoccupation of Mordor, Third Age Dol Guldur was the living "heartland" of that secret language, used only by the Dark Lord's most trusted servants.

Secondly, I would like to have seen more "bird's eye" views of the exterior of Dol Guldur (of the centerfold sort that appeared in all of the 1st edition *MERP* citadel modules—very handy for orienting the players to the spatial relationships involved in complex fortifications).

Thirdly, I would like to have heard more about Sauron's own conception or intention regarding the alias he chose to adopt in order to fool everybody including the majority of his own servants). Just who WAS this "Necromancer" supposed to be, if not the Lord of the Rings? This (it seems to me) must have been a central key to Sauron's successful two thousand-year concealment. And it is not at all a moot question, since Woolpy (like the authors of the *Angmar* module) posits religion as Sauron's principal tool for guiding and controlling people's perceptions of him. In this regard, it is well to remember that

not all the inhabitants of Dol Guldur were servile Orcs or superstitious "Lesser Men;" Black Númenóreans, whose historical connection to Sauron had always been via the Cult of Melkor, occupy central leadership positions in the hierarchy of the Necromancer's hold.

This lacuna leads me to criticisms which I have voiced elsewhere (See my review of *Angmar* below.) concerning the depiction of Sauronic religion as a motivational force for the Dark Lord's minions during the Third Age. In taking issue with the author's treatment, however, I want to emphasize that (unlike the authors of *Angmar* and other *MERP* modules) Woolpy stands practically alone in sustaining (within the framework of his own assumptions) complete consistency in his conception of Sauron.

My own view is that, in a fantasy universe, religion (like magic) should "work." The problem with *Dol Guldur* is that it postulates that the worship of the Necromancer — the Burlaugash (B.S. "Dark Sorcerer") in the lingo of the natives — is the main ideological "glue" that holds the military hierarchy of Dol Guldur together, without defining what that deity is, what he promises to his worshippers, and how he makes good those promises -with genuine, "Spell Law" efficacy. The basic premise of religion is that power is bestowed upon the worshipper directly from his or her deity ("Channeling," in *MERP/Rolemaster* mechanics); and yet the officiants of the Necromancer's cult (like the "priests" of Angmar) are not priests at all, but sorcerers (33). If this is the case, then there is no cult of the Necromancer. It's all a sham to delude the weak-minded.

By contrast, the "good guys" have cults that do actually work. For instance, as Tolkien points out in his *Letters*, the kings of Gondor function as divinely sanctioned priests for their people: they have the power to bless and curse, to damn or to heal. Or take the Elven veneration of Elbereth, the utterance of whose name does real damage to evil creatures. Of course, Sauron is not Ilúvatar, nor even one of the Valar; but he is a powerful Maia, and if he expects to keep his more intelligent allies on his (or "Melkor's") side, he had better be able to demonstrate (under whatever alias) that he possesses tangible power that his worshippers can

channel. *Dol Guldur* would have been an ideal occasion to explore this aspect of Sauron's presence during the Third Age.

In fact, in *Dol Guldur* Woolpy does provide some food for thought on this question — through his detailed description of the religious iconography and the visual representation that accompanies the many shrines and temples that pervade the Necromancer's citadel. Woolpy himself devotes quite a bit of thought to these, as he makes use of them as the critical turning points in "Gandalf's Tales," which led the wizard to his awful realization of the Necromancer's true identity. The first of these indicators is fairly straightforward (a representation of the lidless eye); but the second, more determinative sign appears to my mind more problematic, and in fact nicely illustrates my overall criticism. This is a statue of Ar-Pharazôn which bears an inscription reading: "Great Betrayer of the Edain (112)." In "Gandalf's Tales," Woolpy has the wizard react in the following way: "To Gandalf, who knew well that Sauron's beguilement of Ar-Pharazôn led to the Downfall of Númenor, the statue told much. One thought then dominated the Wizard's mind: who but Sauron would display such a grotesque mockery (153)?"

I don't follow this logic. The Faithful Dúnedain-in-Exile also viewed Ar-Pharazôn as their betrayer, as is evidenced from *The Akallabêth* (supposedly written, by Elendil). Conversely, the only Númenóreans that DIDN'T view Ar-Pharazôn as the Great Betrayer would have been those that continued to serve Sauron after the Downfall. To them, Ar-Pharazôn was their greatest hero, a man who had helped to establish the Cult of Melkor, and who suffered "martyrdom" for it at the hands of the Valar. If Sauron hoped to retain the allegiance of such men (much less command their religious devotion), he would hardly have allowed such a statue to be set up in the foyer of the main temple of Dol Guldur.

This leads me to my final criticism regarding the problem of sustaining the religious loyalty of Sauron's chief servants; namely, the presence of the Mouth of Sauron as one of the main "overlords" in Dol Guldur in the T.A.

1640s setting. To begin with, Tolkien clearly states that this Black Númenórean did not enter Sauron's service until T.A. 2951 (RotK; 164; the year the Dark Tower "first rose again;" cf. RotK: 370). Putting that issue aside for a moment, Woolpy's dating of the Mouth's involvement in Dol Guldur to T.A. 1035 raises the central problem of the religious expectations of all Númenóreans that worshipped Melkor: the promise of deathlessness. This goal was the entire *raison d'être* for Númenórean allegiance to Sauron in the first place; and, paradoxically, it was the one thing that Sauron could not in truth grant.

If indeed the Mouth of Sauron entered the service of Sauron several centuries prior to the time when Tolkien says he did, then an explanation for his longevity must be provided. The explanation Woolpy gives (following that outlined in the Gorgoroth module)—that, as a mortal sorcerer, the Mouth was in fact able to prolong his life by his own sorcerous arts—is unacceptable within the underlying assumption of Tolkien's mythology. Mortals must die, otherwise they can no longer exist as "living men," but become undead (e.g., the Nazgûl, the Oathbreakers).

For myself, I would much prefer that this glaring contradiction with Tolkien's published writing be excised from the

record in future *MERP* modules; this, however, is impractical, given the central (and, indeed, fascinating) role the Mouth plays in Dol Guldur. Therefore, following Pete Fenlon's "rationalization" method (cf. this issue, pp. 38), let us attempt to account for the presence of the Mouth of Sauron in 1640. The easiest and most satisfactory solution that occurs to me would be to reconceptualize the Mouth as an office rather than a single individual. In this respect, the "amnesia" of the Mouth towards his own individuality works to our advantage. The other argument in favor of this is that the emissarial function which the Mouth serves is something Sauron would have had need of even before the *Gorgoroth/Dol Guldur* candidate had been born; this makes it all the more likely that others had acted in the same capacity at other periods of Sauron's Second and Third Age dominion.

The other alternative (less satisfactory as far as Tolkien's writing is concerned, but more in keeping with Woolpy's portrayal) would be to give the Mouth a Ring of Power. Now, on a few occasions in *Dol Guldur*, the author draws upon this ploy to immortalize a select few among Sauron's servants. Unfortunately, this too openly contradicts Tolkien. In the opening discussion of the Rings of Power in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Gandalf singles out mortal longevity as THE

principal power that differentiates "the Great Rings" (i.e., the Nine, the Seven, the Three, the One) from the many other "Lesser Rings" that had been forged (56). Woolpy wants the Lesser Rings to extend natural longevity, which is the one thing they most certainly cannot do. However, Woolpy also narrates at least one episode in which Sauron recovers one of the Seven Dwarf Rings during his sojourn at Dol Guldur. So why not give the Mouth et al. recaptured Dwarven Rings? As I said, this is a less-than-ideal solution, because that would make the Mouth a Wraith by the time of the War of the Ring, which is exactly what Tolkien says he was not (*op. cit.*).

Whatever logical flaws may exist in *Dol Guldur*, it remains a massive achievement. If nothing else, it is the best possible warm-up one could ask for for tackling the ultimate evil citadel we are all eagerly awaiting: Barad-dûr!

**Reviewer: Chris Seeman**



"No, no, no... we asked to see the Mouth of Sauron!"

PRODUCT  
REVIEW

Graham StapleKurst  
and Heike Kubasch

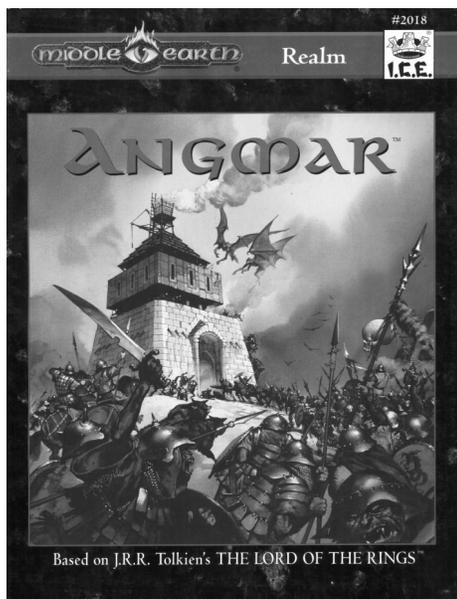
*Angmar*

(*Realm of Middle-earth* #2018)

Charlottesville, Virginia

Iron Crown Enterprises, 1995

[160 pages + pull-out color  
map; \$25.00]



I enter the game store and walk immediately to the ICE section. My eyes flick to the *MERP* shelf for a cursory glance, fully expecting to see the same old stuff: the 2nd edition hardback, *Creatures* and a left-over *Lake-Town*. Then my eyes widen: three copies at *Angmar*. I had forgotten that a revision was coming out. Quickly I snatch it up and flip through. The cover is handsome, the text looks familiar. Then I see it, printed right across the Angulion's breastplate: illo #21. A clumsy and inexcusable production gaff, and the first sign that all is not -well in the Witch-king's lands. Nonetheless, I buy it. It is my only purchase for the day.

I have many problems with *Angmar*, which I'll get into later, but first a little bit about the contents. *Angmar* is a fine treatment of the region. In common ICE fashion, it begins with a bit about the land

and the people that live there, then moves on to politics, war, and settings such as strongholds, towns and Orc-holds. Only ten characters have full descriptions: the Witch-king and his most powerful lieutenants. A couple of new character types are detailed: Angmarean Military Priests and *MERP* Orc characters. Other small articles are dropped in at the end: a few adventure seeds, some herblore summaries, languages, etc.

Some innovative work has been done in this book; I particularly liked the "Awful Fragment" of the lamp Illuin, corrupted into a weapon of evil by the Witch-king. The maps of Carn Dûm, both inside the book and in the pull-out, are handsome and clear. Most of the work is solidly written, showing the same laborious work that we have come to expect from the upper echelon *MERP* products. *Angmar* is not as excellent as, say *Gorgoroth* or *The Kin-strife*, but it is a fine product and will serve gamemasters of any fantasy RPG well.

All right, the honeymoon's over. Let's talk about the editing.

For those of us familiar with the first version of *Angmar*, titled *Empire of the Witch-king*, it would not be out of line to have high hopes for this revision. *Empire* was an excellent book, and expectations are that a revision will be at least as good or better than the original. Alas, I have many minor editorial quibbles about this most recent treatment of Mûrazôr's realm.

As mentioned, the cover is sharp. Angus McBride is one of the best Tolkien illustrators I have ever seen, and the new *MERP* trade dress is powerful in its red and black glory. The book will look good on the shelf. Which was, I suppose, the point.

Inside the cover the euphoria drifts away. There are—and this is my major complaint with the book—no new text sections at all. No new characters, no new adventure seeds or complete scenarios, no new histories or locales. No new nothing. However, many minor things have been altered.

For example, several of the Witch-king's generals, the Mornarturi, have been renamed. Apparently the editors felt that names like "Dancu," "Cykur," and "Durkarian" were not suitably "Middle-

Earthy." The same names have been replaced with "Dairkan," "Sakalurë" and "Driuecared." I'm no linguist, so if the new names are more accurate to Black Númenóreans, Umbareans and Northmen, who am I to argue? The old names can still be found in the character descriptions, explained away as Orkish corruptions of the generals' true names.

But other changes do not have even this much justification. The Witch-king has had his magic lists circumsised, reducing his highest level spells from 60th to 30th. (I know, at that power level, what's the difference? And no one is going to survive a direct confrontation with the Witch-king anyway.) But why the change? It certainly wasn't for reasons of his sanitary health. Mystifying.

Several of the "corrections" have, in fact, been bungled as badly as "illo #21." All of the magic-using characters have had their *Rolemaster* spell lists defined precisely in the new *RM* mold — a nice help, so far so good. But when the authors wrote the new lists they forgot to delete the old ones, which can still be found buried in the *MERP* spell lists! In many cases, such as the Witch-king's stats, these multiple *RM* lists are contradictory; and what are *RM* spell lists doing in the *MERP* section anyway, when *MERP* players are supposed to be using a simpler system and shouldn't have to be familiar with *RM* terms? I thought this is exactly what the revised format was supposed to fix!

Other contradictions abound; I won't tire you with more. Well, okay, I'll bring up one more that really irks me because I do a lot of wargaming in my campaign. The number of soldiers assigned to each of the Momarturi is detailed in their character descriptions, but in the "Warcraft" section new numbers are given for each of these commands, and they're all different. Argh.

One final note. Readers of *Other Hands* may recall that in Issue #3 Anders Blixt identified much of the *Empire of the Witch-king's* Orkish dictionary as cribbed directly from Icelandic, Danish, German and Swedish. While it is perfectly reasonable for Middle-earth languages to be based on real languages, the use of Scandinavian tongues for the rude and guttural speech of Orkish is a slander most foul, and without much

basis. Apparently, the authors of Angmar either don't read *OH*, or else decided not to meddle, because the Scandinavian Orkish remains.

Oh, what could have been done here! What missed opportunity! Why couldn't the Mornarturi have gotten real character descriptions with history and plot hooks, instead of one paragraph reprints? Why not some new adventures for people who know the Angmar of old? One new stronghold or Orc-lair and I would have felt like I'd bought something new.

Angmar is a worthwhile product; a thorough treatment with powerful (if underdeveloped) antagonists, details on Mûrazôr's army and tactics, interesting adventure seeds like the Zaughtharakash, and beautiful maps of Carn Dûm. In short, everything good in it was already there in the original edition, and if you already have that book I do NOT recommend buying this new one. If you don't have *Empire of the Witch-king*, and can't buy it in one of ICE's fire sales, then I suppose you might have to get the new one, but that's an expensive shame at \$25.

Oh well, it has satisfactory art I suppose, and the *Lord of the Rings Adventure Game* stats might be useful to someone, somewhere.

**Reviewer: Jason Vester**



## Angmar:

### A Second Review

The long-awaited revision of ICE's highly successful *Empire of the Review Witch-king* (1989) has finally arrived. This reissue features fine new artwork and some new text, but much of it is identical in content to its predecessor. Jason Vester has already evaluated the similarities and differences between these two editions; by contrast, my review will deal with the overall cogency and success of the module as a unified work. This is easy for me, since I have never actually read through *Empire* (though I retain a fairly acute memory of its ancestor, the 1982 *Angmar: Land of the Witch-king* release, and will have cause to comment on some persistent discontinuities between the two works which have — regrettably — not been overcome by the present release).

Even though it has been at least a decade since I read the original module, it is crystal clear to me which parts of the current *Angmar* are survivals and which are innovations. The difference in quality and perspective could not be greater. The 1982 module was a dungeon crawl, pure and simple. This is baldly epitomized by the "Suggestions for Adventures" section (retained from the original), which assumes that the only reason for running a role-playing game in Angmar is so that the PCs can sneak into enemy fortresses, murder their inhabitants, and collect their treasure.

The new material adopts quite a different set of assumptions. It focuses upon the inhabitants of Angmar themselves, depicts how they live out their lives, and profiles the religious convictions and rituals that motivate them. It even contains rules for the creation of Orcs and Angmarean priests as player characters. It bestows individuality and personality to the hitherto nameless and faceless hordes of the Witch-king — both Men and Orcs alike.

The chief crime of *Angmar '95* is that it doesn't go far enough. It leaves unchanged or undeveloped too many of the flaws of its inferior ancestor, often to

its own undoing. The result is an uneven and, at times, disjointed product. What is most frustrating to me is that the vast majority of these shortcomings could have been remedied by a minimum of effort. It is a missed opportunity that can only be mourned, since it appears unlikely that we shall ever see yet another edition of this important module.

But let us examine first the module's strengths. To begin with, as I have said, Angmar is a true "Realm" module in that it describes the region through the eyes of its own people. In their account of Angmar's Rhunnish peasants, for example, Staplehurst and Kubasch write: "The climate of Angmar does not encourage a friendly or generous temperament. The growing season is short, and the winters long. Most individuals never travel farther than nearby villages, even in the summer months—a circumscribed life that makes the villagers insular and suspicious of strangers. The war against the Dúnedain has reinforced this provincial attitude—for reasons unclear to the Witch-king's subjects, the Dúnedain and Elves seem determined to destroy their home in Angmar. Although they come originally from diverse cultures, insular village life has narrowed their outlook (20)."

Having established a set of circumstances conducive to the militant stance of the Angmarim, the authors go on to tackle an even more critical issue; namely, how was the Witch-king able to sustain such attitudes uninterrupted over the course of six centuries? A glance through the module's table of contents witnesses to the centrality of religion to this equation. It is no accident in this regard that the "Power and Politics" chapter begins with a discussion of the religion of Angmar and its organization. Rather blatantly modeled after the monastic hierarchy of medieval Tibet, Staplehurst and Kubasch have given concrete substance to the Cult of Sauron, which has received such superficial treatment in previous *MERP* modules.

The Witch-king governs his realm through a priestly figure known as the Iron Sorcerer, a sort of "understudy" to the Nazgûl, who mediates between him and his subjects. This sorcerer-priest stands at the head of a bureaucracy manned by priests who have been trained for their offices in

Litash, the great monastery-town nestled against the heights of the Misty Mountains in the desolate fastness of the Nan Angmar. The college of priests functions not only as the bureaucracy of the Witch-king's domain, parallel to its military chain of command, but also sends its emissaries far into the East, where they seek to win new recruits for the worship of the Dark Lord and his centuries' long war against the Dúnedain. In short, Staplehurst and Kubasch have engaged the first and foremost task of any *MERP* author: to seize upon a theme or motif from Tolkien (in this case, the notion of Sauronic emissaries) and to give it concrete meaning and historical depth by elaborating on it.

The bold step taken by our authors is an important one, but its execution is not without flaws. For starters, it is highly questionable to my mind that the adherents of the cult would go so far as to identify their deity with the Necromancer of Dol Guldur (29) — how can Sauron possibly keep his identity secret if it is being openly proclaimed on the lips of thousands of worshippers?!? Equally incredible is the suggestion that, on special occasions, the Witch-king would publicly manifest himself as Sauron (30). Remember that it —wasn't until circa T.A. 1940 that the Dúnedain even began to contemplate that "some single power and will was directing the assault from many quarters upon the survivors of Númenor (LotR III: 329)," and it took another THOUSAND years (T.A. 2850) before they would realize that this power was Sauron. If the chronology of Tolkien's drama is to be even REMOTELY believable, we can't have the Witch-king announcing his master's return to his subjects as a contemporary event — it would only invite the suspicion of Sauron's ancient enemies.

This leads me to my second criticism of Staplehurst and Kubasch's portrayal of the cult; namely, their hesitance to decide whether the cult is "genuine" or whether it is a cunning priestly sham. In other words, does the cult really DO anything for those who participate in it, or is it all just propaganda to dupe the credulous and the weak-minded? (This is a good test case for the degree to which a module adopts the viewpoint of the people it is describing.)

Certainly the cult serves to celebrate and reward the military services rendered to the Dark Lord, but I'm speaking here specifically of magical power. For instance, the priests of the cult are trained in various domains of magic (116), but we are not told whether this power actually comes from the deity they worship, or whether such attribution is mere Machiavellian pretense. This is, of course, a debatable issue, and any attempt to answer it must deal with Tolkien's remarks on the subject of Sauronic magic in *Morgoth's Ring*; the problem with the Angmar module is that it can't make its mind up on this point — and it is no laughing matter, if we are to believe that this cult managed to command the loyalty of thousands for more than half a millennium.

There are two other very cool ideas the authors have come up with, one more successful than the other; both are intended to account for distinctive aspects of Angmar as described by Tolkien. The first is the Witch-king's ability to control the weather. In keeping with the epic character of this power, Staplehurst and Kubasch have adduced an equally epic explanation. They posit that a fragment of the primal lamp, Illuin, was bled by the cataclysm of its downfall in the mountains of Angmar, and that the immeasurable energies contained within this fragment were manipulated by the Witch-king to alter the climate of Eriador, so that it would be more difficult for the Dúnedain to inhabit.

The second neat concept is that the Witch-king's stronghold of Carn Dûm was built upon the ancient foundations of Angband, the fortress of the original Dark Lord (thus following the Tolkienian theme of degenerative recurrence — history repeats itself, but on an ever-diminishing scale). This, however, cannot be the case, since (according to even conservative estimates) Carn Dûm stood at least seven hundred miles east of Angband's location (and Angband, in any case, sank into the sea with the rest of Beleriand). More troubling than this, though, is the fact that, whatever the validity of this idea, **NOTHING IS MADE OF IT ANYWHERE IN THE MODULE!** ("Oh, by the way, we happen to be standing on the ruins of Angband, the

mightiest and most awe-inspiring citadel of Middle-earth. And now, if you'll follow us this way, we'll have a look at Er-Mûrazôr's new pit trap...") And on top of that, everywhere else in the module we are given a contradictory foundation story for Carn Dûm (based on the original 1982 release), claiming that it was in origin a Dwarf-hold (61). What is a reader to think of this inconsistency? Didn't someone bother to proofread the module before sending it off to press?

Angmar contains many fine descriptions and layouts for the villages, towns, and fortresses of the Witch-king's domain. Unfortunately, the innards of Carn Dûm, the capital, seem unworthy of the undead horror they supposedly house. Carn Dûm is essentially a four-level dungeon, filled with traps, magic items, and gold pieces. (Indiana Jones would feel right at home.) Its design (at least on paper) does not evoke for me the presence of Sauron's greatest and most terrible servant. On top of that, it manifests a certain illogic of design and residence. There is a subterranean lake that lies directly above one level (apparently without leaking), and the denizens of the level require the use of a rowboat to make it to the next level — what a damn inconvenience, especially if a lot of people or things need to get moved in between the two levels! And then, of course, there are the Witch-king's "astrologers" — what does he need astrologers for?!? To predict the weather that he controls anyway? To read his fortune? And why keep your star-gazers locked up in a windowless labyrinth? Maybe I'm missing something here.

And now we move from the good and the bad to the ugly. (Yes, it gets worse!) Let's take the "History" section, which does not give us the basic background information on the Witch-king's domain and his wars until a THIRD of the way into the module (52). For me, that was a long time to wait for a SINGLE page of history (most of whose contents are a summary of Appendix A from LotR in any case). We get a reiteration of this same brief history in the Witch-king's biography, a seven-page epic tale (lifted word-for-word from *LoMe II*) of which SIX pages had absolutely nothing to do with Angmar.

The practical uselessness of this misplaced treatise is compounded by other internal deficiencies. The author of the text mistakenly states that the palantír of Osgiliath was lost in the waters of Anduin as a result of the Nazgûl's raid of that city in T.A. 2475. (That misses the mark by just over a thousand years.) It gives us a physical description of Er-Mûrazôr prior to his metamorphosis into a Nazgûl—not much use as a description of him as the Witch-king, is it? Finally, the biography continually refers to him as the Witch-king before and after his tour of duty in Angmar, and is equally careless about referring to him as the Lord of Morgul. “Witch-king” was not a personal designation, but an alias that Mûrazôr hid under only while he ruled Angmar; at any other time, it is as inappropriate to refer to him by that title as it would be to call Sauron “Annatar” during the War of the Ring. The same goes for Morgul. This Sindarin (Dúnadan) name only got attached to him as a result of his capture of Minas Ithil in T.A. 2002. One need only browse through Richard Blackwelder's Tolkien Thesaurus to see that Tolkien was careful to make these distinctions.

These all may be quibbling details, but the fact remains that seven pages were wasted that could have been used to provide richer and fuller bios for the Witch-king's underdescribed generals. Rogrog, the Troll-warlord of all Angmar, does not even appear in the biography section, despite the fact that the authors elsewhere assert his importance to the Angmarean military.

And then we come to the names. I find it surprising that the Witch-king and his military staff—many of whom are Adûnaic-speaking Black Númenóreans—should so stoop beneath their dignity as to use hated Elvish terminology in describing their own organization (e.g., Mornarturi, Angûlion, Mor-sereg) —whatever became of the Black Speech? To the authors' credit, they have attempted to utilize a real Adûnaic dictionary to come up -with real Adûnaic names for the Witch-king's generals. Unfortunately, the old forms have not been jettisoned; instead, they are said to represent the half-hearted attempt of the Orcs to pronounce their true names. I remain

unconvinced: anyone who can say “Dancu” can probably just as easily say “Dairkan.” Finally, the authors insist on referring to the Daen Lintis portion of the Angmarim as Dunlendings, even though the word “Dunlending” is Rohirric, a language that did not come into being until nearly six centuries after Angmar was annihilated.

But the greatest incongruity of all is the claim that the Iron Sorcerer was a millennia-old mortal who managed to stay alive merely by virtue his own magical powers. Well, if you don't need a Ring of Power to live forever, why bother sacrificing your life to become a wraith! ?!

A few final miscellany. It is said that the Estaravi, the Northmen subject to the Witch-king on the remote eastern side of the Misty Mountains, “believe Darkness to possess greater power than Light and have developed a strong antipathy to the Calaquendi (18).” Now, when was the last time YOU saw any of the Calaquendi visiting the Gundalok plateau? If the Estaravi are as parochial as the Rhunnish peasants mentioned earlier, I hardly think they knew who the Calaquendi were —to most Men, an Elf is an Elf; they've all got pointy ears as far as your typical Northman is concerned.

Ulrac, the Witch-king's Asdriag general, wields a Japanese katana rather than your everyday Easterling scimitar.

The Quenya word “Roquen” is said to be Sindarin (81).

The Half-ore Ulduin has no Orkish blood in him at all (according to his bio); instead, he's a “Half-dog.” Go figure.

I don't want to get lost in Angmar's faults, because in spite of them I have enjoyed the overall picture it gives of the Witch-king's realm. As a *MERP* author, however, I am particularly sensitive to the weaknesses or errors that the second edition modules have failed to eliminate because they are now set in stone for a long time to come, and other authors must now-live with them as best they can.

**Reviewer: Chris Seeman**



PRODUCT  
REVIEW

## Mirkwood

(*Realm of Middle-earth* #2019)

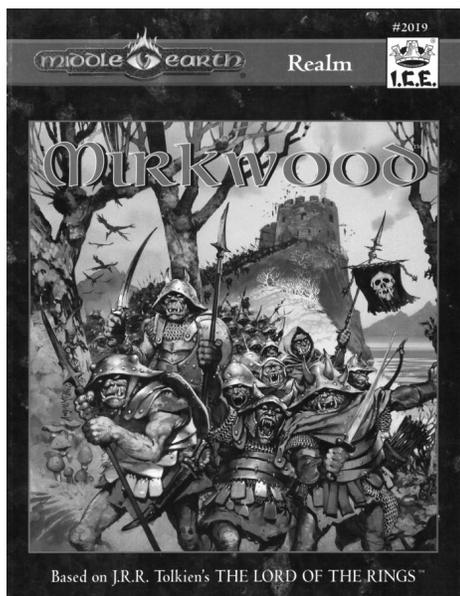
Charlottesville, Virginia

Iron Crown Enterprises, 1995

[160 pages

+ 2 pull-out color maps;

\$25.00]



Like the new *Angmar* module, *Mirkwood* represents a “third generation” product, revised and updated to conform to 2nd edition *MERP* game mechanics. The “ur-text” (or, rather, texts) upon which the current module is based were released in 1983 under the titles of *Northern Mirkwood*, *The Wood Elves’ Realm* and *Southern Mirkwood*, *Haunt of the Necromancer*. Later on, these modules were joined into a single revision/expansion: *Mirkwood, The Wilds of Rhovanion*. That module, like its predecessors, is now out of print, superseded by the current realm module.

As a straightforward reprint of the old *Mirkwood* module, there is little to be said about the new *Mirkwood*; when considered as a realm module in the company of *Arnor*, *The Shire*, and *Angmar*, however, I fear that the new *Mirkwood* is doomed to be superseded and replaced. The reason for this is simple: in a mere hundred and sixty pages, *Mirkwood* sets out to describe,

not one, but many realms — and realms that cover a vast and varied geographic expanse. Even were *Mirkwood* to rival the *Arnor* module in size, it would inevitably fail to measure up to the high standards set by its peers for the Realms of Middle-earth series. Between Thranduil’s realm, the Necromancer’s domain, the Dwarves of the Iron Hills, the Northmen of the plains, the nomadic Easterlings, the secluded Woodmen, the mystical Beijabar, and the mercantile Lake-men, there exists no single thread with which to weave this tapestry with the same elegance that binds *Arnor*, *The Shire*, and *Angmar*. The result is a much thinner treatment which in the end is less than satisfying.

In passing this kind of judgment, however, I do not want to suggest that the republication of *Mirkwood* is a mistake; on the contrary, the amount of time and labor it will take for the new generation of *MERP* writers to adequately flesh out the many realms, citadels, and peoples of Rhovanion in all their richness and diversity (a task already set in motion with the *Lake-town* and *Dol Guldur* modules) demands that some kind of overview be made available during the interim. *Mirkwood* of necessity fulfills that role.

Nevertheless, considered even as a surrogate, *Mirkwood* is a seriously flawed product. Many of its faults are intrinsic to the original works on which it is based; others, however, are manifestly attributable to their most recent revision. In this sense, my frustration with the new *Mirkwood* resonates a great deal with my criticisms of the new *Angmar*. The principal weaknesses of *Mirkwood* are fourfold: 1) internal contradiction, 2) incongruence of temporal setting, 3) organizational inconsistency, and 4) conflict with the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. As with *Angmar*, I believe that these blunders could have been avoided had just a little more attention been paid to them.

One example of internal contradiction is the treatment of Cor Angálaladh, which is alternately identified throughout the module as a site of Elven origin (Oropher’s first dwelling place in Mirkwood) or as an ancient Northman funeral ground. (In the *Dol Guldur* module, it is identified as the burial field of the Waildung princes.) It is unlikely that a Mannish group would dare to

make use of an Elven refuge as an ancestral burial site, and it is equally illogical that a Northman site would be given a Sindarin name. Yet no effort has been made to reconcile this with the view adopted in *Dol Guldur*. At the very least, some remark about two divergent traditions concerning the site might have been given to acknowledge the inconsistency. As it is, the reader is left wondering which parts of the module to trust and which to discount. While Cor Angálaladh is a fairly minor discrepancy, it is indicative of a lack of authorial and/or editorial attention to consistency that becomes visible elsewhere in the module.

Far more consequential for the overall shape of *Mirkwood* is the authors’ scarcely concealed yearning for a late Third Age (rather than a 1640) setting. Were we to envision the Third Age as an epic drama conducted in several movements, we would soon discover that the *Mirkwood* authors want everything to happen in Act I, leaving little or no innovations to take place after 1640. Their Rhovanion is the land that Bilbo and the Dwarves traversed in *The Hobbit* — Thranduil has already abandoned the Mountains of Mirkwood (which, according to the *Dol Guldur* chronology, “were not within the Necromancer’s shadow until T.A. 2770); the town of Dale has been in existence from time immemorial (in spite of the fact that Tolkien set its founding SUBSEQUENT to the emergence of the Dwarven kingdom of Erebor in T.A. 1999); Galadriel resides in Lórien when Sauron enters Dol Guldur (contrary to the account given in *Unfinished Tales*, upon which ICE’s Lórien module was based, that she did not return there until T.A. 1981).

The desire to have a module that is applicable to both late and mid-Third Age contexts achieves neither purpose; instead, the one setting detracts from the other and vice versa. For example, *Mirkwood* provides a layout of Dwarven Erebor, and yet neglects to include even the barest sketch of the mysterious caverns of that mountain as they would have existed for adventurers in 1640. Similarly, the claim that Dale existed prior to the neighboring Dwarven realm disrupts Tolkien’s underlying conception of the site — that it was a center of com-

merce made possible by its symbiotic relationship to the King under the Mountain (Hob: 28). Prior to the establishment of Erebor, the site of Dale was far from any major artery of trade (being eclipsed by Esgaroth).

So, by ignoring Tolkien's published writings, the authors have created an illogically placed settlement. They attempt to explain this away by asserting that the Lonely Mountain had religious significance for the Northmen (59) — fair enough, but this claim does not mesh with the character of the town as portrayed in the module; instead, Dale is presented as a simple pit-stop for treasure hunters on their way to the Grey Mountains (61). Moreover, if Erebor were sacred to the Dale-folk, why would they permit Dwarves to claim it as their own?

The pattern of dismissing what Tolkien has written, only to generate a contradictory scenario that undermines the logic of the primary sources, is repeated in the authors' treatment of the Gondorian presence in southeastern Rhovanion. The module's Tale of Years dates the acquisition of Gondor's eastern territories to T.A. 379-389. According to Tolkien, this event took place more than a century and a half later (RotK: 324). Why this change? Is Tolkien's chronology not good enough? Alterations of this sort are maddening — less because they are made than because they are made without any justification and without any apparent purpose in mind. (Neither the date nor the event are ever referred to again in the module.)

More serious difficulties arise when the authors set out to describe the boundaries of Dor Rhúnen itself. In Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings* (our primary source for the history of the Third Age), Tolkien writes: "The kings [of Gondor]... gave [the Northmen] wide lands beyond Anduin south of Greenwood the Great, to be a defence against the men of the East. For in the past the attacks of the Easterlings had come mostly over the plain between the Inland Sea and the Ash Mountains (326)." In complete contradiction to this, the Mirkwood authors have placed the Northmen to the EAST (rather than the south) of the forest, leaving the defense of the strategic invasion corridor to Gondorian-occupied and ruled Dor Rhúnen (51). How can the Northmen

possibly function as a buffer against the Easterlings if their realm lies nowhere near the invasion corridor?!?!?!? The entire military history of southern Rhovanion would be changed!

It is perhaps worth pointing out that the political map appearing in Mirkwood nullifies not only Tolkien's conception, but also that of the *Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer*, which attempted to correct this error by pulling back the borders of Dor Rhúnen so that the Northmen could occupy the Inland Sea-Ash Mountain corridor like they were supposed to (144). Which is to be the "canonical" version, we may well wonder?

I want to move on now to the organizational aspects of the module. Three sections in particular evince imperfect attempts to harmonize different stages of revision/expansion: the people descriptions, the site descriptions, and the individual NPC bios. As for the profiles of the various cultures to be found in Rhovanion, the Mirkwood module employs two overlapping modes of presentation: straight narrative texts and more rigidly organized, shaded boxes of information — some peoples get shaded boxes, others do not. (Why?) Where both formats are employed, a good amount of unnecessary repetition results, rendering the section less efficient as a quick reference tool for the GM.

Content-wise, there are also some notable omissions. For instance, we are given a great deal of information about the various Easterlings "who have migrated into Rhovanion from Rhûn, yet no description whatsoever is provided for the Dorwinions (who are supposedly so crucial for the economic life of the region). This is unfortunate, seeing that a beautiful description of the folk of Dorwinion has been given in the River Running module (which will probably never be reprinted), which could have easily been imported into the Mirkwood module.

Detailed site descriptions of Laketown, Thranduil's halls, and Dol Guldur are conspicuously absent from the module (no doubt because these places have since been made the subjects of citadel modules). Still, it would have been nice to have had even a simple overview map or layout, given the importance of these sites. Their absence unbalances the module, which consequently gives more attention to minor or secondary sites like Dale. Not all sites that are singled out for description include numbered layouts. Dale, however, contains numbers but no descriptions corresponding to them. (If you're not going to describe sites by numbered locations, then don't put numbers in to confuse the reader.)

The biographies of the important individuals of Rhovanion (past, present, and future to 1640) suffer from the same unevenness as the culture descriptions, only more so. Many bios are given, but not all (and, in particular, not many of those for the 1640 NPCs) are accompanied by full *MERP* and *RM* stats. We are given complete stats for Beorn from *The Hobbit*, but none for his 1640 counterpart Beoraborn; for Gimli and Dáin Ironfoot, but not for Azaghal and Fulla, the Dwarf-lords of the Iron Hills at the time when the module is supposedly set. (Indeed, these two get no bios whatsoever.)

As in the *Angmar* module, a lengthy Nazgûl biography has been imported from *Lords of Middle-earth II* for Khamûl, the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, none of which has any bearing upon his role in Rhovanion at large — and, since Khamûl spends most of his time beneath the cinder cone of Amon Lanc, the full description he gets serves little purpose for this module. By contrast, no bios are given for the Mouth of Sauron or the Grimbûrz (i.e., those minions of the Necromancer most likely to be encountered in Rhovanion beyond the gates of Dol Guldur).

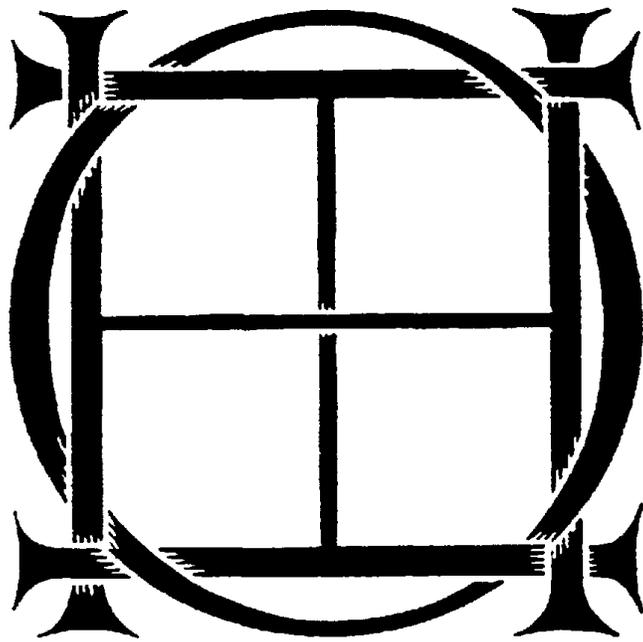
A final incongruence of the *Mirkwood* module lies in its handling of linguistic matters. The authors of *Mirkwood* are to be praised for their very thorough development of indigenous Northman names. In stark contrast to this, they display little knowledge of Tolkien's own invented languages. One need look no farther than ICE's own Elvish dictionary in

the *Middle-earth Campaign Guide* to realize that the authors treat page after page of Quenya words as though they were Sindarin (especially 46). They even suggest that Vagaig, the name given for the Gondorian governor of Dor Rhúnen, is Sindarin for “Sharp Sword;” according to the . Elvish dictionary in the *Campaign Guide*, however, this would be rendered into Sindarin as Maegvegil.

Taken individually, these and other errors may not seem all that heinous; taken together, they demonstrate that the authors of *Mirkwood* have not done their homework. When measured up to ICE’s standards, *Mirkwood* is found neither to have been “based on extensive research” nor to have been “developed so that no conflict exists with any of the other primary publications (4).” But, for the moment, it’s all we have.

When all is said and done, *Mirkwood* remains the antiquated work of 1983. It is to be hoped that the more positive trend begun by *Dol Guldur* and *Lake-town* will be carried forward by other new works devoted to this region.

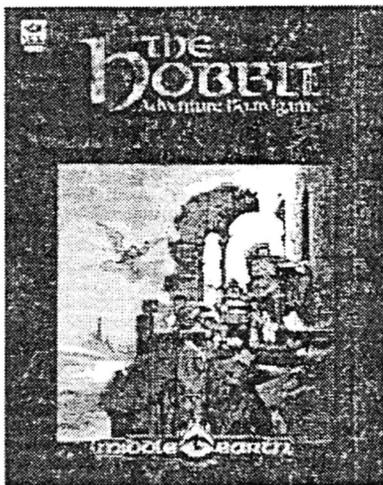
**Reviewer: Chris Seeman**



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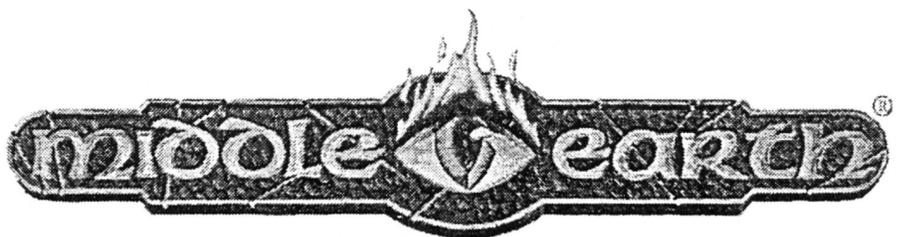
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Source: John. W. Curtis III — Rolemaster Series Editor, Freelance Director; Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.

R: appears on the rare sheet

U: appears once on the uncommon sheet

CB1: appears once on the booster-only common sheet

CB2: appears twice on the booster-only common sheet

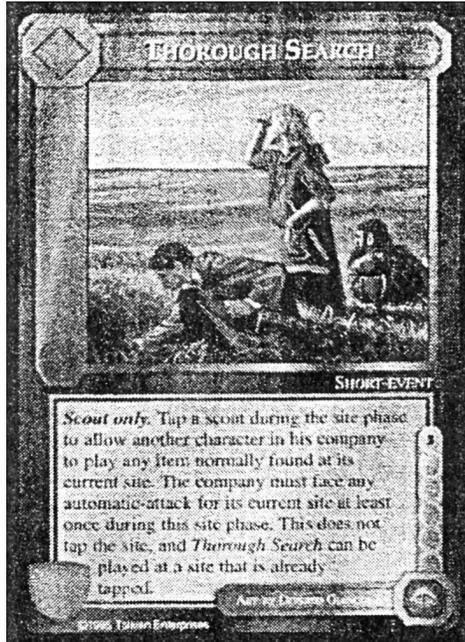
CA1: appears once on the general common sheet

CA2: appears twice on the general common sheet

F#: appears in # different fixed sets

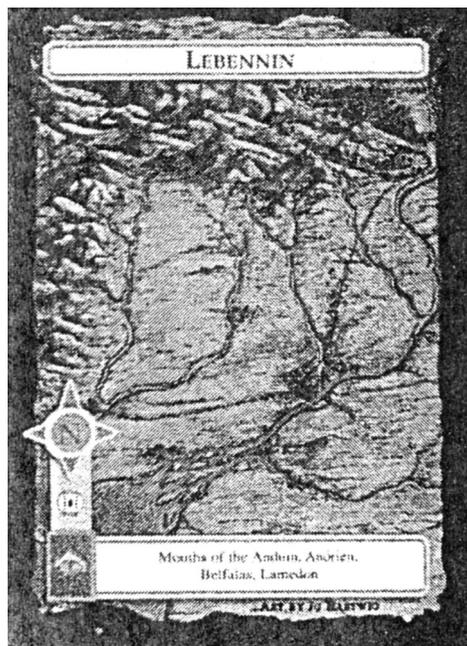
“Bert” (Burat) Hazard ..... U	Arouse Minions Hazard..... CA2	Bifur Character..... CB
“Tom” (Tuma) Hazard ..... U	Arthedain Region .....CB2	Bilbo Character .....R
“William” (Wuluag) Hazard ..... U	Arwen Character..... R	Bill the Pony Resource..... U
A Chance Meeting Resource.....CB	Ash Mountains Resource.....CB	Block Resource .....CA
A Friend or Three Resource .....CB2	Assassin Hazard ..... R	Blue Mountain Dwarf-hold Site.....CB
Abductor Hazard .....CA	Athelas Resource..... U	Blue Mountain Dwarves Resource..... U
Adrazar Character .....F1	Awaken Denizens Hazard ..... CA2	Bofur Character.....CB
Adûnaphel Hazard..... R	Awaken Minions Hazard..... CA2	Bombur Character ..... U
Agburanar Hazard ..... R	Awaken the Earth’s Fire Hazard ..... U	Book of Mazarbul Resource..... U
Akhôrahil Hazard ..... R	Bag End Site.....F2	Boromir II Character..... F2
Alatar Character .....F2	Balin Character..... U	Bree Site.....F1
Align Palantír Resource ..... U	Balrog of Moria Hazard ..... R	Bridge Resource ..... U
Ambusher Hazard .....CA	Bandit Lair Site .....F3	Brigands Hazard.....CA2
Amon Hen Site.....CA	Bane of the Ithil-stone Hazard..... R	Brown Lands Region .....CB
Anborn Character..... U	Barad-dûr Site ..... R	Call of Home Hazard .....CA2
Andrast Region .....CB	Bard Bowman Character .....F2	Call of the Sea Hazard ..... U
Andrast Coast Region .....CB	Barliman Butterbur Character ..... U	Cameth Brin Site..... CB
Anduin River Resource.....CB2	Barrow-downs Site.....F1	Cardolan Region .....CB2
Anduin Vales Region.....CB2	Barrow-wight Hazard..... U	Carn Dûm Site.....R
Andúril Resource ..... R	Bay of Belfalas Region .....CB	Cave-drake Hazard.....CA2
Anfalas Region .....CB2	Beautiful Gold Ring Resource ..... CA2	Caves of Ulund Site ..... U
Angmar Region .....CB	Belfalas Region .....CB	Celeborn Character.....F1
Annalena Character .....F2	Beorn Character.....F1	Choking Shadows Hazard .....CA
Anórien Region .....CB2	Beorn’s House Site.....F1	Círdan Character .....R
Aragorn II Character .....F1	Beomings Resource.....F1	Cirith Ungol Site .....R
Arinmir Character ..... U	Beregond Character.....F1	Clear Skies Resource .....R
Army of the Dead Resource..... R	Beretar Character ..... U	Clouds Hazard.....R
Arouse Denizens Hazard .....CA2	Bergil Character ..... U	Concealment Resource..... CA

Corpse-candle Hazard.....	CA
Corsairs of Umbar Hazard.....	U
Cracks of Doom Resource.....	U
Crebain Hazard.....	CA
Daelomin Hazard.....	R
Dagger of Westnesse Resource.....	CA2
Dagorlad Region.....	CB
Dáin II Character.....	R
Damrod Character.....	U
Dancing Spire Site.....	U
Dark Quarrels Resource.....	CA2
Dead Marshes Site.....	U
Denethor II Character.....	R
Despair of the Heart Hazard.....	CA
Dimrill Dale Site.....	U
Dodge Resource.....	CA
Dol Amroth Site.....	CB
Dol Guldur Site.....	R
Doors of Night Hazard.....	F5
Dori Character.....	U
Dorwinion Region.....	CB
Dragon's Desolation Hazard.....	U
Dreams of Lore Resource.....	CA2
Drowning Seas Hazard.....	U
Drúadan Forest Site.....	CB
Dunharrow Site.....	R
Dunland Region.....	CB
Dunlendings Resource.....	F1
Dunnish Clan-hold Site.....	F1
Durin's Axe Resource.....	U
Dwalin Character.....	CB
Dwar of Waw Hazard.....	R
Dw. Ring of Barin's Tribe Resource.....	R
Dw. Ring of Bavor's Tribe Resource.....	R
Dw. Ring of Dniin's Tribe Resource.....	R
Dw. Ring of Durin's Tribe Resource.....	R
Dw. Ring of Dwalin's Tribe Resource.....	R
Dw. Ring of Thelor's Tribe Resource.....	U



Dw. Ring of Thrar's Tribe Resource.....	U
Eagle-mounts Resource.....	R
Eagles' Eyrie Site.....	CB
Earth of Galadriel's Orchard Resource..	U
Easterling Camp Site.....	R
Easterlings Resource.....	R
Edhellond Site.....	CB
Edoras Site.....	F1
Elf-song Resource.....	R
Elf-stone Resource.....	CB2
Elladan Character.....	F1
Elrohir Character.....	F1
Elrond Character.....	R
Elven Cloak Resource.....	CA2
Elven Shores Region.....	CB
Elves of Lindon Resource.....	R
Enedhwaith Region.....	CB
Ent-draughts Resource.....	U
Ents of Fangorn Resource.....	F1
Éomer Character.....	U
Éowyn Character.....	U
Eriadoran Coast Region.....	CB
Erkenbrand Character.....	F1
Escape Resource.....	CA
Ettenmoors Site.....	CA
Eye of Sauron Hazard.....	R
Fair Gold Ring Resource.....	CA2
Fair Sailing Resource.....	R
Fair Travels in Border-lands Resource	CA
Fair Travels in Dark-domains Resource..	R
Fair Travels in Free-domains Resource..	R
Fair Travels in Shadow-lands Resource	CA
Fair Travels in Wilderness Resource...	CA
Fangorn Region.....	CB
Far-sight Resource.....	CA
Faramir Character.....	F1
Favor of the Valar Resource.....	R
Fell Beast Hazard.....	R

Fell Turtle Hazard.....	R
Fell Winter Hazard.....	CA
Fellowship Resource.....	CA2
Fili Character.....	U
Fog Resource.....	U
Ford Resource.....	CA
Forlong Character.....	CB
Forchel Region.....	CB
Foul Fumes Hazard.....	CA
Frodo Character.....	R
Galadriel Character.....	R
Galva Character.....	R
Gamling the Old Character.....	U
Gandalf Character.....	F2
Gap of Isen Region.....	CB2
Gates of Morning Resource.....	F5
Ghân-buri-Ghân Character.....	U
Ghosts Hazard.....	CA
Ghouls Hazard.....	CA
Giant Hazard.....	CA2
Giant Spiders Hazard.....	CA2
Gildor Inglorion Character.....	F1
Gimli Character.....	F1
Gladden Fields Site.....	CA
Glamdring Resource.....	U
Glittering Caves Site.....	U
Glóin Character.....	U
Gloom Hazard.....	CA
Glorfindel II Character.....	F1
Goblin-gate Site.....	F2



Goldberry Resource.....	U
Gollum Resource.....	U
Gollum's Fate Resource.....	R
Gorgoroth Region.....	CB
Great Ship Resource.....	R
Great-road Resource.....	CA
Great-shield of Rohan Resource.....	U

Greed Hazard.....	CA	Lost at Sea Hazard.....	R	Mount Doom Site.....	U
Grey Havens Site.....	CB	Lost in Border-lands Hazard.....	CA	Mount Gram Site.....	F2
Grey Mountain Narrows Region.....	CB	Lost in Dark-domains Hazard.....	R	Mount Gundabad Site.....	U
Gundabad Region.....	CB	Lost in Free-domains Hazard.....	CA	Mountains of Shadow Resource.....	CB
Gwaihir Resource.....	R	Lost in Shadow-lands Hazard.....	CA	Mouth of Sauron Hazard.....	R
Halbarad Character.....	U	Lost in the Wilderness Hazard.....	CA	Mouths of the Anduin Region.....	CB
Haldalam Character.....	R	Lucky Search Resource.....	R	Mumak (Oliphant) Hazard.....	R
Haldir Character.....	U	Lucky Strike Resource.....	CA	Muster Resource.....	CA
Half-trolls of Far Harad Hazard.....	CA	Lure of Creation Hazard.....	U	Muster Disperses Hazard.....	CA
Halfling Stealth Resource.....	CB2	Lure of Expedience Hazard.....	CA	Narsil Resource.....	U
Halfling Strength Resource.....	CB2	Lure of Nature Hazard.....	CA2		
Háma Character.....	CB	Lure of Power Hazard.....	R		
Harondor Region.....	CB	Lure of the Senses Hazard.....	CA		
Hauberk of Bright Mail Resource.....	CA	Mablung Character.....	U		
Healing Herbs Resource.....	CA2	Magic Ring of Courage Resource.....	U		
Heart of Mirkwood Region.....	CB	Magic Ring of Lore Resource.....	U		
Henneth Annún Site.....	F1	Magic Ring of Nature Resource.....	U		
Hiding Resource.....	R	Magic Ring of Stealth Resource.....	U		
High Pass Region.....	CB2	Magic Ring of Words Resource.....	U		
Hillmen Resource.....	U	Men of Anfalas Resource.....	U		
Himring Site.....	U	Men of Anórien Resource.....	F1		
Hoarmûrath of Dír Hazard.....	R	Men of Dorwinion Resource.....	IT		
Hobbits Resource.....	R	Men of Lamedon Resource.....	U		
Hollin Region".....	CB2	Men of Lebennin Resource.....	U		
Horn of Anor Resource.....	CB	Men of Northern Rhovanion Resource.....	U		
Horse Plains Region.....	CB	Merry Character.....	U		
Horses Resource.....	CA	Minas Morgul Site.....	R		
Huorn Hazard.....	CA	Minas Tirith Site.....	F2		
Imlad Morgul Region.....	CB	Minions Stir Hazard.....	U		
Imrahil Character.....	U	Mirror of Galadriel Resource.....	U		
Indûr Dawndead Hazard.....	R	Miruvor Resource.....	CA		
Irerock Site.....	U	Misty Mountains Resource.....	CB2		
Iron Hill Dwarf-hold Site.....	F1	Moon Resource.....	U		
Iron Hill Dwarves Resource.....	F1	Morannon Resource.....	R		
Iron Hills Region.....	CB	Morgul Night Hazard.....	R		
Isengard Site.....	F2	Morgul-horse Hazard.....	R		
Isles of the Dead that live Site.....	R	Morgul-knife Hazard.....	R		
Ithilien Region.....	CB	Moria Site.....	F3		
Khamûl the Easterling Hazard.....	R				
Khand Region.....	CB				
Kíli Character.....	F2				
Kindling of the Spirit Resource.....	CA				
Knights of Dol Amroth Resource.....	U				
Lake-town Site.....	CB				
Lamedon Region.....	CB				
Lapse of Will Resource.....	U				
Leaflock Resource.....	U				
Lebennin Region.....	CB2				
Legolas Character.....	U				
Lesser Ring Resource.....	U				
Leucaruth Hazard.....	R				
Lindon Region.....	CB2				
Lond Galen Site.....	CB				
Long Winter Hazard.....	CA				
Lordly Presence Resource.....	CB2				
Lórien Site.....	CB				
Lossadan Cairn Site.....	CA				
Lossadan Camp Site.....	CB				
Lossoth Resource.....	U				



Narya Resource.....	R
Nenya Resource.....	R
New Friendship Resource.....	CB
New Moon Hazard.....	U
Night Hazard.....	CA
Nori Character.....	CB
Northern Rhovanion Region.....	CB2
Numeriadon Region.....	CB
Nurn Region.....	CB
Óin Character.....	U
Old Forest Site.....	CA
Old Friendship Resource.....	CB
Old Man Willow Hazard.....	U
Old Púkel Gap Region.....	CB
Old Púkel-land Region.....	CB
Old Road Resource.....	CB2
Olog-hai (Trolls) Hazard.....	U
Orc-guard Hazard.....	CA
Orc-lieutenant Hazard.....	U
Ore-patrol Hazard.....	CA2
Ore-raiders Hazard.....	CA2
Orc-warband Hazard.....	CA
Ore-warriors Hazard.....	CA2
Ore-watch Hazard.....	CA
Orcrist Resource.....	U
Ori Character.....	CB
Orophin Character.....	CB

