



OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role - Playing Magazine for JRR Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

OTHER MINDS Magazine, Issue 14 March 2014 (updated August

Publisher

Other Minds Volunteers

Co-Editors

Thomas Morwinsky
Hawke Robinson

Assistant Editors

Neville Percy
Chris Seeman

Artwork

Onur Bakar
Daniel Bayarri Martinez
Pablo Bayarri Martinez
Matej Cadil
Andres Canals
Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska
Jenny Dolfen
Anke Eißmann
Olanda Fong-Surdenas
John Howe
Pierre Joubert
KardisArt
Olga Kukhtenkova
Stefan Meisl
TurnerMohan
Thomas Morwinsky
Ted Nasmith
Abe Papakhian
Jan Pospisil
Tara Rueping
Tim Söhrich
Danik Yaeoslav Tomyň
Tuuliky
Daniel Vacaflares
Hank Wolf

Layout & Design

Thomas Morwinsky

Production Staff

Thomas Morwinsky



Unless otherwise noted, every contribution in this magazine is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license (CC BY NC SA). The exact license of a given contribution can be found at the beginning of each contribution.

The Riders of Rohan (cropped) © by Ted Nasmith, used with permission

Submissions

You can submit your contributions by sending them via email to

submissions@omzine.org

Please send as plain text for all text contributions. For artwork and maps, please send the files as .PNG or .JPEG/JPG (please no TIFF or GIF) at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and no greater than 600 dpi. If your file is too large to send by email (more than a couple of MB), then you can create an account on the Other Minds website

<http://othermindsmagazine.com>

and upload your contribution there. Then send us an email notifying us of your submission on the website.

Licensing

We chose to use a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license as our default licensing template. If the author does not specify otherwise, every contribution is licensed under said Creative Commons license.

It can be accessed here:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>

Disclaimers

Neither the Editors nor Other Minds Magazine hold themselves responsible for the opinions expressed by the writers of articles or letters in this magazine. The opinions expressed in the articles, columns, advertisements, forums, essays and opinions sections are those of the writers/advertisers and not those of Other Minds Magazine or its staff. The contents of this magazine are the personal opinions of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of the publisher or editors. To the extent permitted by law, we do not accept any responsibility for any statement in the material contained in this publication. While every effort has been made to correct errors in essay articles before they appear, this magazine may include certain inaccuracies, errors, or omissions. Other Minds Magazine makes no representations as to the suitability, reliability, availability, timeliness, and accuracy of the information in this magazine for any purpose.

Other Minds Magazine is an unofficial fan-based publication (both online and sometimes in print) created for those who love to role play in J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth (and beyond) using any game system they wish. This magazine provides original scholarly articles of interest to Tolkien enthusiasts whether they are role playing gamers or not. There is no affiliation between the creators of this publication and any current or previous owners of the Tolkien copyrights, including but not limited to Sophisticated Games, Cubicle 7, Decipher, Mithril Miniatures, The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Tolkien Enterprises, the Tolkien Estate, New Line Cinema, or any other Tolkien license holders. This publication is 100% free and Other Minds Magazine does not accept any kind of financial reimbursement in any way. Online issues are available in PDF format at

<http://www.othermindsmagazine.com>

Advertisements

Any company or producer of products related to role-playing in Middle-earth are invited to submit advertisements free of any charges within the pages of this magazine.

Please contact

advertising@omzine.org

if you have any questions or advertisements you'd like to submit.

Fair Use

The copyrighted images on pages 15, 20, 21 and 134 are copyrighted by their respective owners. It is believed that the use of this image, in the not-for-profit scholarly online fanzine Other Minds, qualifies as fair use under copyright law in the United States of America. (<http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>).

CONTENTS



Editorial	4
by Thomas Morwinsky	
The Road Goes Ever On	6
by Thomas Morwinsky	
Inside Information	11
by Thomas Morwinsky	
Mounted Combat in The One Ring	14
by Paul Kirk	
Introduction to The Lord of the Rings tabletop	18
by Olaf “Falenthal” Anguera	
The Waters of Awakening and the Sleep of Yavanna	22
by Daniel Vacaflares	
Adventures in Cuiyiénen: The Awakening of the Elves	38
by Daniel Vacaflares	
Hope and Shadow	57
by Thomas Morwinsky	
Role-playing on the Dark Side	62
by Severin, Isildur’s Heir	
A Hope Unforeseen - Men from Drúwaith Iaur (part1)	81
by Daniel Bayarri Martinez	
Marhathiuda - The Horsefolk of Northern Rhovanion	119
by Paul Kirk	
Demographics of Rhovanion in the Third Age	131
by Thomas Morwinsky	

EDITORIAL: IT'S A LONG WAY...

Other Minds has been overdue for a really long time. Originally we planned to have this Issue out by the end of October 2012—and here we are in May 2013. Well, things often end up much different than originally planned and this is not an exception. It was especially the piece about the population of Rhovanion in the Third Age that caused massive delays. We are happy that it turned out good in the end and will prove useful for you as well—being the main reason for the long delay.

This Issue of *Other Minds* is also the first one with a new layout. Susana Barriga volunteered to provide her technical expertise in layouting to improve the overall look and feel of the magazine. Many thanks to her for lending a very helpful and skilful hand for *Other Minds Magazine*.

Please also have a look at our regular columns about the latest news concerning Middle-earth gaming, since a lot has happened since our last Issue. The most important of these is that *The Hall of Fire* webzine is closing its doors. Check out the *The Road Goes Ever On* section for more information on this.

The amount of content in *Other Minds 14* reflects the long gap between this and the last issue, giving you a lot to feast upon. What makes me really happy is the amount of material submitted by novice authors (at least as far as submissions to *Other Minds* are concerned). This is a good sign for the future.

Our first contribution, *Mounted Combat in The One Ring*, from first-time author Paul Kirk deals with rules for horseback combat in *The One Ring* (TOR), a topic that has not seen extensive coverage in the core rules of that game. We would like to hear your opinions on this (and all other contributions) to improve communication between authors and the readership.

Miniatures are a very popular and useful feature for roleplaying in Middle-earth. This applies both to miniatures as props for a classic roleplaying game as well as to them being central parts in tabletop wargaming. The miniatures and rules of the currently licensed game(s) are produced by Games Workshop and the contribution *Introduction to Lord of the Rings Tabletop* from *Other Minds* first-timer Tim Söhrich giving you a good overview of the mechanisms of this enjoyable game.

Veteran contributor Vaco gives us another glimpse of his vision for the earlier ages of Arda. *Adventures in Cuiviénen* cover the early years of the Elves, shortly before Oromë finds the Quendi in their original home.

This will hopefully (and likely as I may say) be followed by further instalments on the subject.

Next comes a second TOR-related contribution by myself. *Hope and Shadow* covers the handling of 'Hope' and 'Shadow', two central scores of TOR, beyond the default settings provided in the Core Rulebook. Hopefully this will spawn further discussions and ideas for enhancing the Middle-earth experience in roleplaying games using TOR.

Closely related to the theme of Shadow and Evil is the next contribution by Severin, Isildur's Heir (veteran of *Agazlam* in OM11). He remains true to his interests, but not with a regional focus like in *Agazlam* but a thematic one: His piece titled *Role-playing on the Dark Side* deals with the challenges and opportunities presented by playing characters of at least questionable morals (i.e. like unscrupulous mercenaries) – or even outright evil character types and races like orcs. This is great food for thought beyond simple stereotypes of good and bad.

The next in line is *A Hope Unforeseen – Men of Drúwaith Iaur*, authored by Daniel Bayarri Martínez – another first-timer. It is an adventure set during the War of the Ring and it fits cleverly and seamlessly into the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* without being a carbon copy of it. In this Issue you find the first two parts of the whole adventure, while OM15 will bring the final instalment.

The penultimate submission is *Marhathiuda—The Horsefolk of Northern Rhovanion*. It deals with an original Northmen culture north of the Celduin and east of the Bardings. The article details all aspects of these people, including TOR data for creating characters from this folk.

The final piece of this Issue is *Population and Urbanization of Rhovanion*, which covers the supposed demographic development of Wilderland throughout ten important periods of the Third Age. It ties in closely with the last contribution (in fact its author spawned some important ideas) and therefore it had to be included, causing the aforementioned delays.

Enjoy this Issue of *Other Minds* and see you all in OM15.

Addendum: OM14 has seen some updates and clarifications, thus what you see now is v1.1 of that Issue. Enjoy and see you (hopefully) soon in OM18!

For the *Other Minds* team
Thomas Morwinsky
March 2014 & August 2017



"Then Ilúvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.'"

- Ainulindalë (The Music of the Ainur)

The Silmarillion

by J.R.R. Tolkien

Listen to music by the many musicians around the world
inspired by the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Middle-earth Radio make available four different Internet radio streams dedicated to the audio and music inspired by the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

You can tune in 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from anywhere in the world where you have an Internet connection, with your favorite streaming media player.

And when you hear a piece of music you like, be sure to support the musicians by purchasing their music (if applicable).

See the lengthy list of inspired music at the Tolkien Music website: www.tolkien-music.com

Tune in today and listen at:

www.middle-earthradio.com

THE ROAD GOES EVER ON

Certainly it reminds me [Frodo] very much of Bilbo in the last years, before he went away. He used often to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary. "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to..."

—The Lord of the Rings. Book I (A Shortcut to Mushrooms)

There are many paths on the internet waiting to take you somewhere for Tolkien gaming. The vast reaches of the worldwide community harbour numerous roads and paths—some dangerous and some not—but it also has many havens of lore and respite where the weary traveller or loremaster seeking knowledge may find what he is looking for. In order to aid people on their journeys, this column of Other Minds (not exactly new, but with a new name) which will be a regular feature from now on offers a quick overview and pointer to potentially interesting Tolkien roleplaying-related websites.

For each site we give you a short description of its primary purpose and content to give you an overview for better judging how it might meet your needs.

The following list does not claim to be exhaustive or representative. In fact, I believe it is only a beginning. All the content of these pages is the responsibility of their owners. They are organised according to their primary gaming focus (e.g. TOR, MERP or whatever else) and, within each category, in alphabetical order.

This listing is intended to be “living”, i.e. constantly evolving and updating. So, if you know any other sites that present information of value for Tolkien gamers, do contact us at feedback@otherminds magazine.com so we can include it here for others to enjoy as well.

The following abbreviations are used:

TOR—The One Ring by Cubicle 7 and Sophisticated Gams. The current licensed game from 2011 onwards.

LotRRPG—The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game by Decipher. The licensee from 2002 to 2007.

MERP—Middle-earth Roleplaying by Iron Crown Enterprises. The licensee from 1982 to 1999.

TOR

Common skills and cultural baseline: some light analysis on the distribution of skills within cultures from the first TOR core book: <http://thechamberofmazarbuldnd.blogspot.com/2012/02/common-skills-cultural-baseline.html>

El Anillo Unico: A spanish fan-site dedicated to The One Ring by Cubicle 7 (see below for their presence). <http://elanillounico.tumblr.com/>

UPDATED Facebook TOR group: This has grown considerably and has now (April 2015) 433 members. <http://www.facebook.com/groups/222560297824158/>

NEW Glorelendil's online resources: Designed for maximum usability with the PDF's of the TOR supplements as well as an excellent online calculating tools.
<http://nameless-castle-5228.herokuapp.com/>
<http://thawing-shore-2005.herokuapp.com/>
<http://lit-oasis-7482.herokuapp.com/>

The One Ring – Adventures over the Edge of the Wild (TOR): Cubicle 7 published this latest instalment of games (after MERP and LotRRPG) with The Hobbit- and The Lord of the Rings license from Middle earth Enterprises in August 2011 (PDF version). They have a great and very active forum as well, where you can find a lot of support and tips around the game. A new forum isd active since May 2013, which

addresses some technical issues with the old forum (see Issue 13 for the link). the latter has become a read-only archive.

Publisher site for TOR:

<http://www.cubicle7.co.uk/our-games/the-one-ring/>

Forum:

<http://forums.cubicle7.co.uk/viewforum.php?f=7>

NEW

Resources:

<http://forums.cubicle7.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=9&sid=966c8d10995ba3df2b3876cea1ade15d>

NEW

Rich H's resources:

<http://forums.cubicle7.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=62>

RPGnet: Another review of TOR can be found here.

<http://www.rpg.net/reviews/archive/15/15457.phtml>

LotRRPG

NEW

Darkshire: Some useful resources. <http://www.darkshire.net/jhkim/rpg/lordoftherings/>

Facebook LotRRPG sites: First an interest page. Not much to see, but you can "like" it. The second one is a closed group about actual gaming.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Roleplaying-Game/135039343195996>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/jmezlotrrpg/>

UPDATED

Hall of Fire: This was an excellent resource if you were looking for game-oriented material for Decipher's Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game (LotRRPG). By now the site has gone offline and it is unlikely it'll get available again. Likewise, the fanzine itself has also ceased publishing. The last Issue was Nr. 86 from April 2013. If someone of you know whether there is something new, let us know and we'll spread the word further.

<http://www.halloffire.org>

MERP

I.C.E. product listing: Contains a listing of MERP products for reference.

<http://www.icewebring.com/ice-products>

Facebook MERP groups: Strangely, there are two groups/sites dedicated to MERP here. Middle earth Roleplaying (MERP) is a simple page without much information.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Middle-Earth-Role-Playing-MERP/30841799801>

The second one, Middle-earth Roleplaying, has at least a bit of more info (though still quite little).

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Middle-earth-Role-Playing/108714242486460>

Lindëfirion: A campaign log and resources for a mid-Third age campaign set in the Northwest. Made with great love for detail. The artwork, especially of the maps, is awesome.

<http://www.lindëfirion.net>

Sub-page "Project Pelargir": <http://wiki.lindëfirion.net/ProjectPelargir>

Loren Rosson's Blog "The Busybody": A relatively new blog with reviews ("retrospectives") of a selection of old and long out-of-print MERP modules. The relevant section is named "Middle-earth Retrospectives" and can be found on the left side of the links section (you have to scroll down a bit). <http://lorenrosson.blogspot.com>

UPDATED

MERP printing edition reference: A great reference for all the editorial changes and different printings of MERP 1st edition. If you are interested in the various editions of MERP 1st ed., this one is for you! Seems to be offline now. <http://homepage.mac.com/guyf/MERP/PrintingEditionReference.html>

MERP Wikia: A Wiki-based collection of articles detailing the MERP canon and expanding it. There is some info on other sources like the LotRRPG (depending on subject), but the focus is the published MERP canon and its expansion by fans. Highly valuable for everyone focussing on the MERP canon. http://merp.wikia.com/wiki/Middle-earth_Role_Playing_Wiki

SYSTEM-NEUTRAL OR MIXED

Fan-sourcebooks: This Yahoo group (formerly fan-modules) was founded in 2001 after the demise of Other Hands. Here you can find a great variety of fan-made material for a lot of topics. Game system and canon focus is MERP, though not exclusively. <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules>

Facebook Other Minds group: We are happy to greet new fans, so don't hesitate to swing by and become a member! <http://www.facebook.com/groups/othermindsmagazine>

NEW

Gondica: Blog of former MERP author Anders Blixt with some of his Middle-earth stuff on it. <https://gondica.wordpress.com/>

NEW

Iron Crown Enterprises: Publishers of HARP (the system used by Olaf Anguera's contribution). Visit their website. The logo is downloaded through Wikipedia under Fair Use: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:High_Adventure_Role_Playing_\(logo\).png#/media/File:High_Adventure_Role_Playing_\(logo\).png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:High_Adventure_Role_Playing_(logo).png#/media/File:High_Adventure_Role_Playing_(logo).png)
<http://ironcrown.com/>

UPDATED

MERP.com: The site devoted to roleplaying in Middle-earth (not exclusively ICE's MERP as the title may suggest). It contains a vast vault of useful information and gaming material. <http://www.merp.com>

Tower Hills, The: A webpage centered upon (Hårn and) Middle-earth. http://www.towerhills.me/middle_earth/

TOLKIEN STUFF IN GENERAL

Ardalambion: One of the best sites dealing with Tolkien's languages. You may need to get used to the colour scheme, though. <http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/>

Compañía, La: A spanish site with a forum and dedicated to Tolkien in general (including books, movies and RPG's). Looks quite good, though due to my lack in spanish skills I can't say much about it. <http://www.lacompania.net>

Deutsche Tolkienengesellschaft (German Tolkien Society): Similar to the Tolkien Society (see below), this site is about the furtherance of Tolkien scholarship and analysis in general. <http://www.tolkienengesellschaft.de/>

The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship: A Special Interest Group of the Mythopoetic Society, this (and its journals) is the place for you if you're looking for information and lore about Tolkien's invented languages. <http://www.elvish.org/>

The Encyclopedia of Arda: A good encyclopedic website about Tolkien's world. <http://www.glyphweb.com/arda>

Gernot Katzer's History of Middle-earth site (German): A good site describing the essentials of the History of Middle-earth series. <http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/home.html>

Grey Havens, The: One of the oldest reference sites on the web that is still in business. <http://tolkien.cro.net/>

Hiswelókë: A great resource for linguistic question from Tolkien's invented languages. Contains also extensive wordlists. Highly recommended!
<http://www.jrvf.com/hisweloke/sindar/online/english.html>

Tolkienforum (German): A good forum covering all aspects of Tolkien lore and fandom.

<http://www.tolkienforum.de>

Tolkien Forum, The (English): A good English forum on many aspects of Tolkien

<http://www.thetolkienforum.com/>

Tolkien Gateway: A good wiki site with an encyclopedia on many topics Tolkien and Middle-earth

http://tolkiengateway.net/wiki/Main_Page

Tolkien Society: The site for everyone interested in the more scholarly and academic treatment of all things Tolkien. <http://www.tolkiensociety.org/>

Wikipedia Portal "Middle-earth": Even Wikipedia has a whole section dedicated to Tolkien and his myth.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Middle-earth>

ARTWORK

Antti Autio: See his fascinating artwork at <http://aautio.deviantart.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE Onur Bakarov: We are indebted for your kind permission to use his work. You can find more of his art on <http://bakarov.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Daniel & Pablo Bayarri Martinez: Authors and illustrators for *A Hope Unforseen*. See deatils there.

IN THIS ISSUE Matej Cadil (neral85): Found on deviantart at <http://neral85.deviantart.com>

IN THIS ISSUE Andres Canals: Another really good artist. Find him at <http://www.bluewave.fsnet.co.uk/>

IN THIS ISSUE Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska (Kasiopeia): Another very skilled artist who allowed us to use several of her stunning works. <http://kasiopea.art.pl/>

IN THIS ISSUE Jenny Dolfen (Goldseven): A great german artist who focuses on the Eldar of the First Age. Her watercolour images are fantastic. You can also buy prints in several versions and sizes as well as originals. <http://www.goldseven.de>

Nacho Fernandez Castro (NachoCastro): This is his first appearance in Other Minds. Thank you very much for your kind permission to use your work!

<http://nachocastro.deviantart.com/>

Dead01: If you're into exploring the darker side of Middle-earth, this one is for you! See it at

<http://dead01.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Anke Eißmann: She must be counted aong the greatest Tolkien illustrators. Check her art out at <http://www.anke.edoras-art.de>

IN THIS ISSUE Olanda Fang-Surdenas (Wynahiros): You may find her work on <http://wynahiros.deviantart.com>

Wouter Florusse (woutart): Another very talented artist who was so kind to grant permission for the use of his work within Other Minds! Check out his page on:

<http://woutart.deviantart.com/>

Daniel Govar: A great artist whose website can be found at <http://danielgovar.com>.

John Hodgson: The primary artist and artistic director for The One Ring. It's no wonder that the game is so well received (beside the good rules) if you look at his art:

<http://jonhodgson.deviantart.com/gallery/>

IN THIS ISSUE John Howe: The second of the great Tolkien artists that allowed the use of his artwork within our pages. Check out his great index. <http://www.john-howe.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Pierre Joubert: A well-known illustrator of youths' books. See his official page (in french) at <http://www.pierre-joubert.org/>

IN THIS ISSUE KardisArt. A talented polish artist. Find his work under <http://kardisart.deviantart.com>

Liga Klavina (liga-marta): Check out her awesome art at <http://liga-marta.deviantart.com/>

Elena Kukanova: Very fine Middle-earth art. Check it out!

<http://ekukanova.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Olga Kukhtenkova: You can find her work on the Tolkien Gateway:
<http://fan.theonering.net/~rolozo/cgi-bin/rolozo.cgi/collection/kukhtenkova>

Alan Lee: Beside John Howe and Ted Nasmith the third of the famous Tolkien artists. You can find him online at <https://www.facebook.com/alan.lee.5496>

Angus McBride: The unforgotten illustrator of so many MERP and history books. No specific website available. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angus_McBride

IN THIS ISSUE Stefan Meisl: You can find his artwork at the following addresses:
<https://www.artstation.com/artist/meisl> or
<http://digital-fantasy.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Turner Mohan: One of our new artists at OM. Find out more at <http://www.mohan-art.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE Ted Nasmith: The official site of renowned Tolkien artist Ted Nasmith, who was so kind in allowing us to use so much of his artwork within Other Minds. For more information, see <http://www.tednasmith.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Abe Papakhian: Another great tip for deviantart. See <http://abepapakhian.deviantart.com>.

Pegasusandco: very well worth a look. <http://pegasusandco.deviantart.com/>

Daniel Pilla: Great stuff. See it at <http://danpilla.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Jan Pospisil (merlkir): One of our "old" artists, whose images we have used already in past issues. Check him out at <http://merlkir.deviantart.com>

IN THIS ISSUE Rolozo: Among the oldest artwork-related sites around
<http://fan.theonering.net/~rolozo/cgi-bin/rolozo.cgi/news>

Shyangell: Visit her very enjoyable art at <http://shyangell.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE Tara Rueping: Find her great work on <http://www.trueping.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE Danik Tomy: Another great artist that can be found at deviantart. His section is at <http://danikyaroslavtomy.deviantart.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE Tuuliky: As a regular OM reader, you will know her great work already. It may be found at <http://tuuliky.deviantart.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE Hank Wolf: A popular german illustrator. Unfortunately there is no webpage of him or his art.

OTHER STUFF THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING FOR ROLEPLAYING IN MIDDLE-EARTH

Facebook "Fans of Mithril Miniatures" group: Lots of photos of painted minis plus some awesome dioramas.
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/107518272188/>

Frothers Unite miniature forum: It is related to miniatures for sure! See also the article of *Middle-earth in miniature* in this Issue.
[http://deartonyblair.blogspot.com.es/\(it+is+about+miniatures,+I+swear\)](http://deartonyblair.blogspot.com.es/(it+is+about+miniatures,+I+swear)).

Games Workshop: If you are interested in miniatures made according to the movie design, then the Games Workshop miniature line (for skirmish-level tabletop wargaming) is for you.
<http://www.games-workshop.com>

Many Mithril Pages: A site run by fans of Mithril Miniatures (see next entry). Here you can find extensive information and fan support for both current and out-of-stock minis.
<http://mmp.fairylands.eu/index.php>

Mithril Miniatures: This company has been producing Middle-earth figurines since 1988; thus being one of the oldest still in continuous business. They now have a general line (though much diminished in volume compared to earlier times) and an exclusive fellowship one which anyone can buy too, but the Fellowship members may vote on the next figures to be made. They also have a board which is mostly miniatures-centered but some general Middle-earth related information can be found as well.
<http://www.mithril.ie>. Forum: <http://mithrilfigures.proboards19.com/index.cgi>

INSIDE INFORMATION

NEW RATING SYSTEM

As announced in Other Minds, Issue 13, we introduce a new system for categorizing our submissions. First, there is a descriptive term for the general nature of the contribution. Here we differentiate the following categories:

- Adventures
- Background stuff
- Rule ideas
- Tolkien scholarship
- Reviews

The second part is an assessment due to the closeness and fidelity to the Tolkien sources used (or available) in the specific piece. Here a “golden” background for the category stands for a very strict interpretation of the sources—or rich source material that was available and used. “Silver” is an intermediate category, while “Bronze” shows a less close vision—or that there was not much original material to build the idea upon. Therefore, the color is explicitly not a judgement about the quality of the contribution, but a measure of the amount of Tolkien content within it.

As an example, here are the gold, silver and bronze versions of the “adventure” category. The reviews have no colour attached to them - they stay plain white.



Please contact us if you have any suggestions that might further improve the system—or any other comment you deem fitting at feedback@othermindsmagazine.org.

In addition, for directly gaming-related stuff we provide logos of the system(s) for which game data is provided in the contribution. The logos used are:



for stuff using ICE's Middle-earth Roleplaying .



for stuff using Decipher's Lord of the Ring Roleplaying Game.



for stuff using C7's The One Ring.



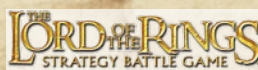
for stuff using ICE's High Adventure Roleplaying (HARP).



for stuff using ICE's Rolemaster (all editions).



for stuff using no specific game system but descriptions adaptable to any game system.



for stuff using Games Workshop's Lord of the Ring Strategy Battle Game.

Other systems (and logos) will be added as needed and appropriate.

NEW ARTISTS

We are always happy to introduce artwork from new artists in Other Minds. Here we introduce them (in alphabetical order).

Onur Bakar is an artist found deviantart. Check out his work at <http://bakarov.deviantart.com/>.

Next one is Matej Cadil, whose images you can find at deviantart under his alias of neral85 (<http://neral85.deviantart.com>).

Andres Canals follows next with his inspiring art.

Anke Eißmann is to be counted among the great Tolkien illustrators. Due to this, we are all the more pleased we got permission from her to use her artwork in Other Minds. Check out her website at <http://www.anke.edoras-art.de> for more on her artwork.

Other Minds and hands
The next artist who was so kind to give us permission to use his artwork in Other Minds is Daniel Govar, whose great work can be found on <http://danielgovar.com>. Please drive by, it is worth it.

The next artist is neither “new” in the narrower sense nor is he traditionally linked to Middle-earth or Tolkien artwork. Nonetheless, many of his paintings are well fitted to represent situations and people of Middle-earth. The man I am talking about is Pierre Joubert (1910-2002), a french painter and illustrator who created lots of pictures during his long life. He illustrated many historical books and adventure stories for youths, often in context with the Scouting movement. For long years he also illustrated the Bob Morane adventure book series. In context with Middle-earth, his works for the french publisher Hachette are extremely valuable. Hachette published a series of illustrated history books for youths and Pierre Joubert did the artwork for a number of them. This series has also been translated into other languages (e.g. into german by the publisher Tessloff). The following books for which he made the illustrations are especially useful:

- Au temps des royaumes barbares (Patrick Périn et Pierre Forni), Hachette, 1982 [dealing with the migrations era of ca. 4th to 9th century AD]
- Aux temps des Vikings (Louis-René Nougier), Hachette, 1982 [dealing with the Viking era of AD 793 to 1066]
- Les temps préhistoriques (Louis-René Nougier), Hachette, 1979 [dealing with prehistoric men up to neolithic/iron age era]
- Clovis (Gaston Duchet-Suchaux), Hachette, 1980 [dealing with the first frankish king Clovis I]

You can learn more about him at the official site of the organization taking care of his legacy (<http://www.pierre-joubert.org/>). We are indebted to them for allowing us to use Mr. Joubert's artwork within the pages of *Other Minds*.

We are also indebted to Stefan Meisl for using his artwork. Check him out at <https://www.artstation.com/artist/meisl> or <http://digital-fantasy.deviantart.com/>

Turner Mohan's outstanding artwork can be found under <http://www.mohan-art.com>.

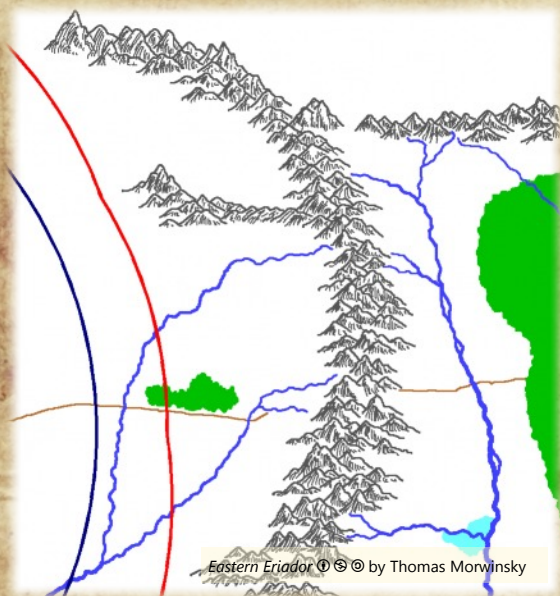
Next comes Olanda Fong-Surdenas (wynahiros), who was so kind to give permission for her artwork too. Check her out on deviantart: <http://wynahiros.deviantart.com>.

Abe Papakhian (<http://abepapakhian.deviantart.com>) gave us his Ok to use his artwork as well. Many thanks!

Danik Tomyň, our final “newbie” in terms of artwork was so kind to give us his OK for including his artwork within our pages. Check him out at <http://danikyaroslavtomyň.deviantart.com>.

ADDENDUM

In Population and Urbanization in Eriador from Other Minds, Issue 13, I discussed two options for the limit of human settlement in Eriador. It hinged on the “100 leagues from the Shire” quote found in The Lord of the Rings. The final solution was the “conservative” one, where this was measured from the approximate center of the Shire and ended shortly before the Last Bridge and the course of the Hoarwell (Mitheithel). The next image is a cropped version of this map with the blue line denoting the “100 leagues” measured from the approximate center of the Shire.




A discussion thread on the Cubicle 7 forum alerted me to another hint that strongly supports this view. It relates to TOR’s subtitle—the “Edge of the Wild”. Looking at the map found in The Hobbit or in J.R.R. Tolkien – The Artist (which I did not think of at the writing of the article). This has a clear line labelled as The Edge of the Wild (see the image above). It is only a small step in seeing the “Edge of the Wild” as the border for the “no mannish settlements 100 leagues from the Shire”. Thus we still have a few settled islands in this border area like Noddfa Rhaglaw and Dor-en-Egladil (and the secretive Dúnedain in Arcirbann unknown to the Middle-earth mapper). Eastward beyond that is the Wild (i.e. eastern Eriador and Rhovanion)—at least from an Eriadorian perspective.

MOUNTED COMBAT IN THE ONE RING

The Rules

by Paul Kirk (paulkirk187@gmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

rule idea



When I first mooted my thoughts on mounted combat for The One Ring (TOR) on their forum, I was using a series of minuses on the combat complications table from the Loremaster's Book to adjudicate on individual cases. This was met by a slightly puzzled response from a fellow poster who asked me why I was bothering to put together rules that did nothing for characters except to make things more difficult.

I replied that it was my belief that the advantages that many RPG's granted to characters simply because they were mounted did not reflect the reality of the situation, and that unless a character was trained in mounted combat, he really had no business being on a horse when the fighting started.

However, I felt unsatisfied with the way things were turning out and felt that the (seemingly) never ending variables were not in the spirit of TOR, with its more abstract approach.

I noted how servants of the enemy used Hate to power their Shadow Abilities and knew that I had discovered the answer to my needs...

The rules I have devised for mounted combat in TOR are short and simple. They are a companion piece to The Horsefolk of Wilderland and there are several cross-references to ideas discussed in that article.

Unless a character is trained in mounted combat, he or she is actually at a major disadvantage if on horseback when combat commences. It seems reasonable that almost all characters have the potential to be trained in mounted combat. However, it is also reasonable to assume that certain cultures will be better at this than others.

These rules assume that the untrained character is far too pre-occupied with controlling his steed to be able to make effective attacks against his foe. Simply put, an untrained rider cannot make attacks from horseback.

Likewise, an untrained rider is also prevented from making an effective defence. The character counts as being in Open stance and may not add their Wits score, or bonuses from shields to their Parry rating, which will therefore typically be 0.

The ability to use other common skills whilst mounted is left to the Loremaster's discretion.

Any character possessing the Mastery: Mounted Warrior, Mastery: Mounted Bowman or the Cultural Blessing: Horse Master may attack and defend as normal as these characters are classed as being trained in mounted combat (Mastery: Mounted Warrior and Mastery: Mounted Bowman are described later in this article; Horse Master is described in the accompanying article on the Horsefolk of Wilderland).

Untrained riders have two options open to them.

1. They can attempt to use the Escape Combat option at TN8 (The horse, unless a charger, is likely to attempt to escape the source of the danger and will carry the rider off with it).
1. They can spend points of Hope. A single point of Hope permits a character to attack and defend normally (with their Parry rating) for a single combat round while mounted.

Being mounted does have the advantage that foes on foot find it harder to strike a blow against the rider.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

When attacking a mounted opponent, a character on foot must roll the Feat Die twice and take the lesser of the two results (unless they possess the Shadow Ability: Great Size).

At the Loremaster's discretion, there may be times when a mounted character risks being unhorsed. Examples of when this might be appropriate are when his steed is spooked by a successful ambush or if the attacking foes are natural predators that attack horses.

In this event the character must succeed at an Athletics test, set at TN14, or fall from his mount. The following list shows the consequences (not all apply to each given situation of course).

- The damage taken in the fall depends on the result of the Feat Die that was rolled during the Athletics test.

- 'Numbers 1-10' indicate the amount of endurance points lost. The character may rise to his feet immediately, but is classed as being in Open stance for the remainder of this combat round. He may not make any attacks until the following round.
- An 'Eye' rune indicates an awkward fall resulting in a Wound (no Protection Test allowed). The character staggers to his feet and counts as being in Forward stance for the remainder of the round. He may not make an attack until the following round.
- Dwarf characters must succeed at the Athletics test with a TN18, due to an aversion to mounted combat (or more broadly, their lack of rapport with animals in general).
- Hobbit characters must roll a TN18 if mounted on any steed larger than a pony.
- A character with the Horseman background trait may invoke it to achieve an automatic success on the Athletics test (This background trait is described in the accompanying Horsefolk article).

As a final note, although 'chargers' (see the article on the Horsefolk) are the only horses that will not hesitate to enter the fray, other horses can be 'convinced' to do so by a trained rider succeeding in an Athletics task at TN14 or if the mount in question is a 'Trusty Steed' (see Horsefolk article).

VIRTUES

Mastery: Armoured Rider

A character with this Mastery has learned how to let his mount share the burden of his wargear. The encumbrance of his wargear may be reduced by 3 points when the character fights from horseback.

Mastery: Mounted Bowman

A character with this Mastery can use a bow equally proficiently when mounted as when afoot. He has learned to guide his mount using his knees (Longbows may never be used from horseback).

Mastery: Mounted Warrior

This Mastery allows a character to fight from horseback equally well as when afoot.

Additionally, when facing unmounted opponents, the mounted character receives an automatic Combat Advantage die (as well as those rolled for normally). The opponents, if able to attack the character, must roll the Feat die twice and take the lesser

result (unless they possess the Shadow Ability: Great Size).

This represents the tactical advantages gained by a trained cavalryman over foes on foot.

Shadow Abilities

Barded Steed

Among the Horsemen of the east, there are those who enter battle on mounts that are armoured to protect them against the attacks of their enemies. A foe with this ability may add his Attribute level to all Protection rolls by spending a point of Hate.

Mounted Skirmisher

An enemy with this ability can spend a point of Hate to stay at opening volley range for a single combat round. He may attack normally with a missile weapon and may not be engaged in melee combat that round.

Saddle Born

A foe with this ability can attack and defend himself normally while mounted. He may spend a point of Hate to add an additional number?, equal to his attribute level, to his Athletics roll to avoid being unhorsed if successfully ambushed.

Steppe Rider

A common tactic among the mounted raiders of Rhûn is to hang down the flanks of their mounts to avail of the extra protection they offer.

An enemy with this ability can spend a point of Hate to add his attribute level to the TN of his Parry against 'missile' attacks.

Wolf Rider

It requires a hatred verging on madness to ride into battle on the back of a huge slaving mass of fur, fangs and foul temper. There are, however, some goblins who hate the free folk with enough venom to do so.

The Wargs of Wilderland are wild wolves and will not permit themselves to be ridden. Instead goblin riders use trained wolves whom they bred or captured at an early age for riding. Here, even the occasional Wilderland Warg may be found that has been trained for this purpose from an early age on. The truly terrifying wargs, whose bodies disappear after being slain, will never allow themselves to be ridden.

If the rider spends a point of Hate, it can fight normally for the current combat round. Otherwise, it is too busy trying not to fall off.

The Warg suffers few negative effects from having a rider. It does not care whether the Goblin falls off or not but cannot use its Great Leap Shadow Ability while carrying a rider.



Comrade © by Onur Bakar, used with permission

EÄ THE WORLD THAT IS

“Iluvatar called to them, and said:

‘I know the desire of your minds that what ye have seen should verily be,
not only in your thought, but even as ye yourselves are, and yet other.

Therefore I say:

‘Eä! Let these things Be!

And I will send forth into the Void, the Flame Imperishable,
and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be;
and those of you that will may go down into it.’

And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flames,
and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Iluvatar had made a new thing:

Eä, the World that Is.”

—J.R.R. Tolkien, The Silmarillion, *Amulindalë* (The Music of the Ainur).

The Eä RPG system is dedicated to role playing gaming in J.R.R. Tolkien's universe.

Eä d20 is currently well along in it's development with the “Races & Cultures” tome nearing completion. Eä d20 is the adaptation of the Open D20 (D&D 3.5) role-playing gaming system modified to more accurately fit the “feel” of Tolkien's Middle-earth.

Tomes of lore include:





- Races & Cultures (near completion)
- Magic in Middle-earth (core mechanics complete, conversion charts in progress)
- Destinies & Lore (Classes, Skills, Feats, etc. - in early stages)
- Creatures & Monsters (Ancalagon through Zigurim) (planned)
- Valar & Maiar (Includes Vala, Maia, Istari, Lords and Characters of Renown) (planned)

Ardä in the First Age
from the building of Thangorodrim
until the War of Wrath

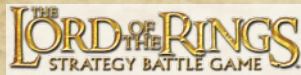
THE LORD OF THE RINGS STRATEGY BATTLE GAME

by Tim Söhrich (tim.soehrich@googlemail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license:    

rule idea



When I first mooted my thoughts on mounted combat for The One Ring (TOR) on their forum, I was using a series of minuses on the combat complications table from the Loremaster's Book to adjudicate on individual cases. This was met by a slightly puzzled response from a fellow poster who asked me why I was bothering to put together rules that did nothing for characters except to make things more difficult.

For those of you who would like to get more information right away, I can recommend the following web pages:

<http://www.thelastalliance.com/index.php>

and for German players

<http://www.hdr-tabletop.de>

GENERAL ISSUES

The tabletop game The Lord of the Rings Strategy Battle Game is a tabletop strategy game set in middle-earth.

It is played with 32mm large miniatures, which are set on a round base of 28mm diameter.

The game is played on a square field, which is usually 48x48 inch (122x122cm) big. Dependent on the situation this square may be decorated with landscape models (hills, trees, etc.). The scenery's design is up to the players and can be supplemented with self made models, which provides for a personal note and a unique atmosphere.

This effect is enhanced due to the fact, that some units simply look better in their specific terrain (i.e. elves in thick forests or Gondorians in ruins of Osgiliath) than on plain green grassland.

A player can move his miniatures on the game field at will up to a certain range per move. Further possible actions include attacks (melee and ranged) or casting of spells.

Whether a missile attack or a blade's stroke hits or even kills is determined by throwing the dice, so that not only tactics but also luck is a prerequisite for winning the game (see below).

After publishing of The Lord of the Rings strategic tabletop game in 2001 by Games Workshop (GW) in the DeAgostini (Da) magazines the assortment of miniatures has been extended considerably. So that nowadays a player can choose his troops from over 1000 different miniatures from over 20 fractions.

Unfortunately it must be stated that the different peoples are not equally "strong". Of course every people has its advantages or disadvantages but they are not always balanced. Some armies therefore became preferential. The High Elves for example are nowadays only seldom played, because they bear too many disadvantages while being costly at the same time. Moria and Mordor on the other hand belong to the most favorable peoples, due to their favourable cost-benefit ratio.

PROFILES AND GAMING SEQUENCE

Every figure has its own profile, which displays how well it fights. These profiles show every warrior's basic characteristics. In addition to this heroes have special hero profiles, while cavalry and certain warriors have additional special rules (a Nazgûl for example can drain an opponent's courage). The following profile of Círdan is not an official Games Workshop profile, but has been developed by a group of players, who redid all official profiles.

Círdan, Lord of Lindon; 95 points

F(ight)	S(trong)	D(efence)	A(attacks)	W(ounds)	C(ourage)	M(ight)	W(ill)	FT(Fate)
5/3+	4	5	1	2	6	2	5	2

Equipment: armor, Elven blade, Narya

Special rules: Lineage of the Firstborn; woodland creature (see rulesbook)

Narya: because of Narya's power, one of the three elven rings, Círdan is allowed to repeat failed fate rolls.

Military Advisor: Círdan's role was not so much fighting itself, but rather military counseling. He knew more about the enemy's weaknesses than anybody else. For this reason he can spend one will-power point at the beginning of a round; having done this every allied warrior (Dwarves excluded) within 6 inches (14,5cm) of his figure receive a bonus of +1 against specific enemy creatures. For those who successfully initiate melee an additional +1 is granted to their defensive roll.

Magical powers

- Aura of command: Required roll 2+
- Cast Blinding Light: Required roll 2+

Círdan's profile is well suited to demonstrate the versatility of each single figure. Each miniature incorporates the five standard characteristics: Fight, Strong, Defense, Attacks, Wound and Courage.

Fight displays how dexterous a model is in melee. Humans have an average Fight value of three, while most Elves have five and heroes naturally have far higher values than the normal warriors from their race. The value behind the slash indicates from which number upward a model hits an opponent in ranged combat. This value is superfluous for Círdan however, since he doesn't have a ranged weapon.

Strong shows how strong a warrior is; three represents a normal value for human-sized miniatures. Defense indicates the level of armour and the comparison of the attacker's Strong-value and the defender's Defense-value enables the deduction of

the minimum roll for a successful wounding of the defender.

Attacks represents the number of six-sided dice allowed for a given miniature during melee; normal warriors have one (1A), while strong heroes may have up to three (3A).

Wounds indicates how often the figure may be wounded before it dies. Most warriors die with their first wounding while heroes can stand multiple injuries.

Courage displays how courageous a figure is; a value of three is normal for humans (3C), while Elves have five (5C) and orcs only have two (2C).

In contrast to warriors heroes have three additional profile characteristics: Might, Will and Fate. With these they can influence gameplay by changing results of dice rolls, may cast spells or withstand wounding.

In addition to this Círdan possesses special abilities and can cast two different spells.

But since Círdan doesn't fight any better than a standard Elven warrior, he should better be deployed to support his allies through his special characteristics or with spells. So every player needs to decide for his individual army constellation whether he wants to employ a passive hero, such as Círdan, or an offensive one, such as Glorfindel.

Game Mechanics

In the following the basic game mechanisms are explained during a melee situation: both opponents roll with as many six-sided dice (D6) as are indicated by their Attacks number (the numbers are not added up, but simply increase the chance of one high dice roll). If several attackers stand against one opponent, the dice are thrown for each attacker according to their Attacks value. The highest result wins the fight. If the opposing parties are tied the attacker with the highest Fight value wins. When several warriors fight against one opponent they all apply the highest Fight value within their ranks. The winner now rolls again with as many D6 as his Attacks number. Whether he delivers a wound or not depends not on the result of the dice rolls alone, but also on the comparison of the attackers Strong value and the defenders Defense number: the higher the attacker's first roll is in comparison to the defender's corresponding roll, the lower the second roll may be. And the higher the defender's initial roll was in comparison to the attacker's corresponding roll, the lower is the chance that the attacker strikes a wound on his opponent with his second roll.

Tough opponents can usually only be overcome by weaker attackers, when they roll the lucky number "6". In that case one die is rolled again and the new roll is added to the primary roll.

Available troops and army design

Every miniature's game effectiveness is designated by a number; the higher the number, the stronger the figure. A standard fighter usually has a value of 5-10, elites and cavalry have 10-20, minor heroes and officers have 40-60 and mighty heroes have a value of 100 or more.

In the beginning the game was designed for skirmishes between small numbers of troops (e.g. the Nazgûl against the Hobbits and Aragorn on Weathertop), but nowadays the tournament standard lies between 450 and 800 points, which corresponds to 40-60 models per army.

The game was conceived mainly for events at the end of

the Third Age, which is why all the well and less well known characters from The Lord of the Rings have been incorporated. For events before this time period only few possibilities are given, because except for the soldiers of Arnor under Arvedui and Malbeth and the warriors of the Last Alliance under Elendil, Isildur and Gil-galad no other characters are available for the game.

The assembly of his army is left to the player himself. The only major rule is to consent to the limit for points, bows and miniatures. In addition to this there are certain rules as to which figures may or may not be collocated with other miniatures. Although these rules are meant to prevent the worst possible combinations, still thematically very unfitting scenarios can occur, such as Éomer together with figures from the Oathbreakers.

Such unfitting constellations are mostly prohibited at tournaments though, so that only proper armies are displayed.

The design of the miniatures corresponds to the characters from Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings movies, with figures from characters not shown in the movies being designed in similar style, which does contradict Tolkien in some cases however.

Now I have "talked" long enough about the miniatures and the game, without actually showing any of them. So, in order for you to get a feeling about these miniatures I now present two of them (painted by myself) on a typical game board (built by myself): Frodo Baggins and a Nazgûl set in the hills of the Shire.



Frodo Baggins hunted by a Nazgûl, figures and scenery © by Tim Sohrich

Frodo's fighting abilities equal those of a normal warrior from Minas Tirith, unfortunately however Frodo costs twelve times compared to such a warrior. On the other hand Frodo is a hero, very brave, can withstand several injuries and has a good chance of successfully fending off magic attacks. But due to the high costs and the fact that for Frodo even a simple Orc would be a worthy opponent the Hobbit is almost never incorporated into an army. Frodo, as well as Merry and Pippin are only played in re-enacted scenes from the books, such as the attack at Weathertop. This circumstance might be good however, since Frodo didn't participate in any larger battle.

In contrast to this, the Nazgûl are probably the most common heroes on the evil side. Some players

incorporate even several of them into their armies. Nazgûl have an average amount of Might and Fate points. More important, and that is why they are commonly seen in dark armies, are the Nazgûl's magical skills. Although they can only fight as well as any standard Elven fighter, they are able to set even the most superior heroes hors de combat through their magical powers. So the Nazgûl literally are the perfect anti-heroes.

And so I come to the end of my introduction to The Lord of the Rings tabletop strategy game. I hope I succeeded in giving you a good, albeit general impression and would like to announce that I am upcoming with a more detailed essay on The Lord of the Rings Tabletop Strategy Game in the temporal setting of the fall of Arnor.




A Nazgûl searching for the Hobbits; miniatures and scenery © by Tim Söhrich

THE WATERS OF AWAKENING AND THE SLEEP OF YAVANNA

by Daniel Vacaflores (vacofly@hotmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

**middle-earth
scholarship**

This article gives you a very good and well-researched overview of Cuiviénen and all matters surrounding the place of awakening of the Firstborn. It serves as a great (and quite unusual) campaign setting if you're interested in an elven-centered (and truly epic) campaign.

It is intended as the groundwork for the following min-campaign right after this essay. That way the GM can familiarise himself with the setting and peculiarities before starting the game.

If you want to master a campaign in Cuiviénen set around the time of the Awakening of the Elves and the years thereafter, it is necessary to take into account some fundamental facts. This includes the physical description of Cuiviénen as a geographic background, life under the sole light of stars, the existence of plants and animals during Yavanna's Sleep, creatures, the Quendi and the first elvish society. Most of all, it is of paramount importance to consider the bibliographic (re)sources written by Tolkien. I will tackle these themes in a series of two articles.

This analysis is intended as a campaign guide for these kind of adventures. This series of articles is deeply interwoven with the gaming modules of "Chronicles of Cuiviénen", published together in this Issue of Other Minds.

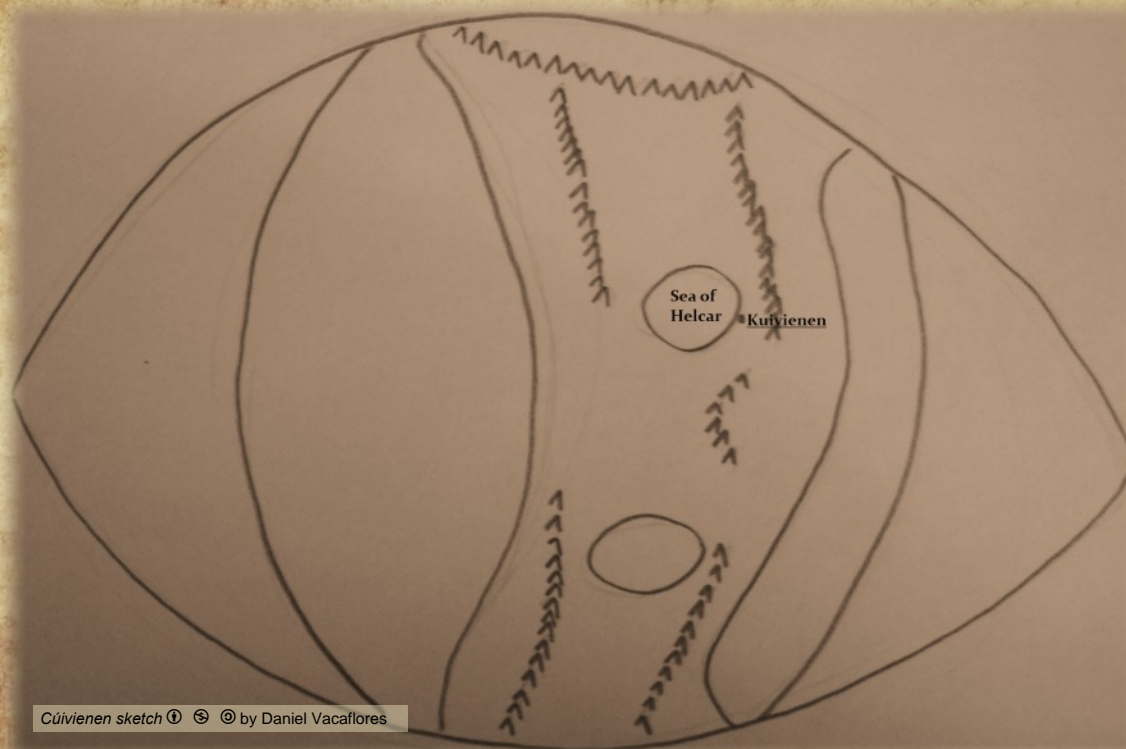
First I am going to analyze all things related to Cuiviénen, the place of the Awakening of the Elves and the central place for a campaign set at this time.

WHERE LAY CUIVIÉNEN?

For many of the Tolkien fans their knowledge of the Elder Days begins and ends with The Silmarillion. I remember how for me "Cuiviénen" was a mythic place lost in the mists of time somewhere in the far east of Middle-earth. The following quote is the main and most elaborate description of the location of Cuiviénen:

In the changes of the world the shapes of lands and of seas have been broken and remade; rivers have not kept their courses, neither have mountains remained steadfast; and to Cuiviénen there is no returning. But it is said among the Elves that it lay far off in the east of Middle-earth, and northward, and it was a bay in the Inland Sea of Helcar; and that sea stood where aforetime the roots of the mountain of Illuin had been before Melkor overthrew it. Many waters flowed down thither from heights in the east...

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor



Cuiviénen sketch ① © by Daniel Vacaflores

Despite the poetic beauty, this text offers little usable information concerning the even approximate location of the place of the Awakening of the Elves on a map. Luckily Tolkien left us a series of map sketches, published in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* (HoMe; book 4 in the series) that shed some light on this point. The image above shows a simplified version based on those maps.

In this sketch we see clearly the location of Cuiviénen, and all its geographic features correspond with the passage from *The Silmarillion* quoted above. The following excerpt (from the *Ambarkanta*, the accompanying description of the shape of the world in the same book) situates Cuiviénen (still spelled with a leading ‘K’ in this early version) in the same place, in comparison to Hildorién’s location.

Kuiviénen [sic!] where Oromë found the Elves is to the North [of Hildorién] beside the waters of Helkar.

—*The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Ambarkanta*

So far so good. So long as we have access to *The Shaping of Middle-earth* there shouldn’t be any problem locating Cuiviénen, but for the following quote:

...the elder children of Ilúvatar awoke in the midmost of the World...

—*The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Earliest Annals of Valinor*

Anybody who knows himself with the HoMe series knows that we face multiple layers of development in the myths of Middle-earth, many times contradictory in themselves and only rarely definitive! I want to use this place to make a brief reflection about the nature of research concerning the Elder Days.

First we have to remember that the—seeming—certainty that *The Silmarillion* conveys largely is an editorial product of J.R.R. Tolkien’s son Christopher, and therefore not as absolute as is commonly thought. There are successive layers of development of the legends of the First Age and before, beginning from a very primitive but rich myth cycle about an imagined mythic past of the English Isles, which Tolkien wrote before he was 30 years old! In this primitive narration [cf. “The Book of Lost Tales” I & II, HoMe 1 & 2 respectively] basic elements of the later *Silmarillion* are already clearly recognizable, but it was many times revised, compressed and expanded again, which gives successive layers of narrative development [cf. “The Lays of Beleriand” and “The Shaping of Middle-earth”, HoMe 3 & 4], until we come to the (uncompleted) layer of *The Silmarillion* [cf. “The Lost Road and Other Writings”, HoMe 5]. The *Silmarillion* is a compressed version of the story of the Elder Days, which Christopher Tolkien put together from multiple “layers”, based on the “*Silmarillion*” development up to the 1950’s. But to make things more complicated again, we have still another layer of development [cf. “Morgoth’s Ring” and “The War of the Jewels”, HoMe 10 & 11]

1 Hardly surprising, since the HoMe is designed to make the various developmental process in creating the stories clear and traceable.

from the later days of J.R.R. Tolkien (i.e. after The Lord of the Rings) that fundamentally alters the structure of The Silmarillion as we know it, but that he never developed far enough into a “nearly complete” version.

All these different layers have extraordinary tales that any Tolkien fan should read (like The Fall of Gondolin in the HoMe 2, the Ambarkanta in HoMe 4, the Lhammas in HoMe 5, Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth and general Myths Transformed in HoMe 10, The Wanderings of Húrin in HoMe 11, and many, many others). These books are also full of these extra “layers” on the same theme that many find extremely difficult to read, but that are of special interest for Middle-earth scholars.

The point is that one must have in mind this complex evolution before allowing oneself to declare some piece of data as absolute.¹ It is not only that some ideas changed with time or contradict themselves, but that some pieces of information exist only in the first layers. So we (always) have to decide what is relevant or “correct” and what is not. I would allow myself to say that many such interpretations stay a matter of personal taste or the importance of approximately objective parameters (like the “version number” of a given story), and how exactly one imagines Middle-earth.

The other side to the same problem is that having multiple versions of the same “history” one must choose one as “official”. I think there are two basic postures in this matter: those who take The Silmarillion version (due to its “official” status), and those who see Morgoth’s Ring and The War of the Jewels as bearing more weight (due to their later writing). But I could say that it would also be possible (and interesting!) to take The Book of Lost Tales as the primary guideline. Again, I think it stays a matter of personal taste, those ideas that fascinate our hearts. And, again, no complete interpretation is possible in any of these without referring to the other layers, since the incompleteness of any and all of them. If you want to know my personal view: I prefer The Silmarillion version as a base and expanded to include all other Tolkien material.

I prefer to see this body of differing texts as different sources of knowledge that the players have in the game, in Middle-earth, as works of differing scholarly traditions in-game. As such the Loremaster can let the players wade through conflicting information and let their characters find answers for themselves.

I see this multitude of material as a treasure to unearth, and not as something deterrent. It is not

necessary to have advanced knowledge on Tolkien’s works to play in Middle-earth, and this multitude gives a Loremaster ideas and material to explore some of these details in his games and give depth to his campaign. As tolkiendili (lovers of the work of Tolkien) we assume the role of scholars of Middle-earth for roleplaying games, and I hope that such unearthed lore helps you in your Middle-earth gaming experience.

Coming back to the original question about the location of Cuiviénen in the midmost of the world, for the time being I think it is safe to see it as an anomaly without further meaning. Christopher Tolkien’s interpretation on this point is as follows:

The Elves are said to have awoken ‘in the midmost of the World’; in S and Q Cuiviénen is ‘in the East’, ‘far in the East’, as in The Silmarillion. But I doubt that this is significant, in view of the placing of Kuiviénen on the Ambarkanta map IV (see insert), which could be referred to either as ‘in the East’ or as ‘in the midmost of the World’

—*The Shaping of Middle-earth. The Earliest Annals of Valinor*
[commentary]

WHAT IS CUIVIÉNEN?

Now we come to the concrete point of Cuiviénen as a background setting for a campaign around the awakening of the Elves. In the companion adventure to this article (The Awakening of the Elves) there is a map of how I imagine Cuiviénen. Let’s go into some detail.

What do we know about Cuiviénen? In The Silmarillion and The Book of Lost Tales there are some relevant quotes that I deem worth reproducing, including the first one of the last heading.

But it is said among the Elves that it lay far off in the east of Middle-earth, and northward, and it was a bay in the Inland Sea of Helcar; and that sea stood where aforetime the roots of the mountain of Illuin had been before Melkor overthrew it. Many waters flowed down thither from heights in the east..

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*

¹ If this is possible at all; depending on the premises.

*In Cuiviénen sweet ran the waters under
unclouded stars, and wide lands about, where a
free people might walk. There they lie still and
await us who in our folly forsook them.*

—*The Silmarillion.
Of the Flight of the Noldor*

*There he finds a place deep in a vale
surrounded by pine-clad slopes; its floor is a
pool of wide water and its roof the twilight set
with Varda's stars. There had Oromë heard the
awaking of the Eldar, and all songs name that
place Koivië-néni or the Waters of Awakening.*

*Now all the slopes of that valley and the
bare margin of the lake, even the rugged fringes
of the hills beyond, are filled with a concourse
of folk who gaze in wonder at the stars, and
some sing already with voices that are very
beautiful.*

—*The Book of Lost Tales I. The Coming
of the Elves and the Making of Kôr*

*...but the most were those who left not
Palisor at all, a long time they dwelt in the
pine-woods of Palisor, or sat in silence gazing at
the mirrored stars in the pale still Waters of
Awakening.*

[...]

*Now the places about Koivië-néni the Waters
of Awakening are rugged and full of mighty
rocks, and the stream that feeds that water falls
therein down a deep cleft.... a pale and slender
thread, but the issue of the dark lake was
beneath the earth into many endless caverns
falling ever more deeply into the bosom of the
world. There was the dwelling of Tû the wizard,
and fathomless hollow are those places, but their
doors have long been sealed and none know now
the entry.*

— *The Book of Lost Tales I. Gilfanon's
Tale: The Travail of the Noldoli and
the Coming of Mankind*

I think these quotes to be extremely vivid images
which let us have a clear idea of Cuiviénen by the
time of the awakening of the Elves. Let's put it all
together with the questions that arise:

1. Cuiviénen (or Koivië-néni) are literally the
"Waters of Awakening".

- I find it confusing whether this reference is
exclusively for the "water" or if it includes
the "valley" surrounding it. It may seem a
little matter, but my experience shows me
that sometimes it is important to be able to
define the PC's "home". When they say:
"we run back to Cuiviénen", do they mean
the valley where they dwell? Or actually
the water itself? I myself prefer the valley
interpretation, so that Cuiviénen is equiva-
lent with "home".

2. "Lake" Cuiviénen is a bay in the inland sea of
Helcar.

- I think the "lake" appellation makes refer-
ence to the apparently separated nature of
it, even if there actually is an open connec-
tion between it and the Sea of Helcar. It
could be just an optical image by the hills
that "close" the lake from the Helcar Sea.
The reference of the underground caverns
could be either a reference to Cuiviénen
itself (but then I ask myself why it should
be called a "bay") or to the Helcar Sea, fara-
way. Anyway some underground caverns
should at least partially lay in Cuiviénen, to
form the dwelling of Tû the Wizard.

- One could imagine the "bay" as spacious
and with many sandy beaches (like in the
painting from Ted Nasmith), but also as a
fjord or a Scottish "Loch". This fits to the
description of Cuiviénen as surrounded by
hills and with sheer cliffs, and could explain
the "lake" feeling. I myself like the idea of
the fjord.

- The sketch on the following page shows my
view of the Cuiviénen:

3. There are many waters that flow into Cuiv-
iénen from the heights to the east. There is one
long and deep waterfall, in the likeness of a
stair. This waterfall falls steeply through a deep
ravine.

- The many waters that flow into Cuiviénen
could all come separately to the lake, but I
think there is enough material to suppose
that they meet before, forming the main
watercourse for the stair-like waterfall.

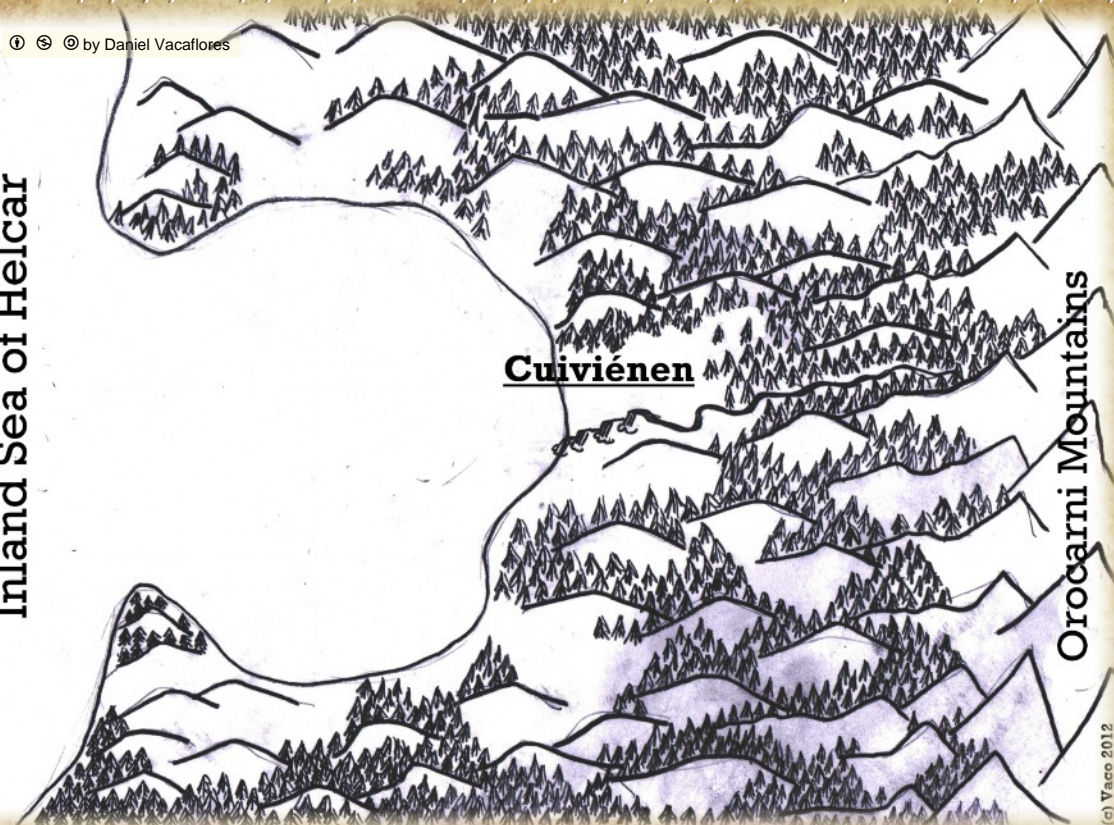
4. The hills that surround Cuiviénen are steep and
full with mighty rocks.

5. These hills are covered with pine-woods.

- The Loremaster should determine how
complete the forest cover of Cuiviénen is.
Pine-woods are dense and dark, and as such

© by Daniel Vacaflares

Inland Sea of Helcar



(c) Vaco 2012

I like to think that there should also be plenty of open places to look into the stars or out over the lake. Grasses and ferns would cover the grounds of Cuiviénen outside the pine-woods.

THE WORLD AROUND CUIVIÉNEN

In a campaign set around the time of the Awakening of the Elves, the characters are almost predestined to explore the world around Cuiviénen. I also presume that they would not go very far from this place (let alone reach the four corners of the world), so the relevant territory for such a campaign is the

quite limited region around Cuiviénen in the north-east corner of Middle-earth.

The world lies in a heavy dusk, illuminated only by starlight. The Quendi awake under the stars and they see in starlight as we do in daylight. But dark storm clouds come down from Utumno time and again, and the world turns dark then, even to the eyes of the Elves. Then the only lights are those of the storm's thunderbolts and the eruptions of far off Volcanoes.

*...there is a deep twilight upon the world,
for the Gods have gathered so much of that light
that had before flowed about the airs. Seldom
now falls the shimmering rain as it was used,
and there reigns a gloom lit with pale streaks or
shot with red where Melko spouts to heaven from
a fire-torn hill.*

—The Book of Lost Tales I.
The Chaining of Melko

There are still many active volcanoes as leftovers from the time when Melkor struggled with the Valar for supremacy over Arda in the deeps of time. But these fiery mountains are far away from Cuiviénen. The characters can see some of them far off over the horizon, but they'd have to go far indeed to come in

their vicinity. In fact some of these volcanoes could be a good target for the characters to travel to if the Loremaster wishes so.

Besides there are always shadows, especially under the pine canopies. These are not worse than normal daytime shadows for us. But there are always black shadows that no elven sight can pierce, as a stain in the fabric of reality. Some of them are small, like the shadow of a fern or a tree, or big as to cover a whole forest or the shadow of a mountain.

The Sea of Helcar is depicted in the map from The Shaping of Middle-earth, where its location and size is evident. The origin of this great inland sea lies in the ruin of the northern Lamp of the Valar. There are two versions of the myth of the Two Lamps: that of the *Silmarillion* and another (older one) from *The Ambarkanta*.

...the Inland Sea of Helcar; and that sea stood where aforetime the roots of the mountain of Illuin had been before Melkor overthrew it. Many waters flowed down thither from heights in the east...

— *The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*

I take the *Silmarillion* version as the valid one (see above for this). But I include the version from the *Ambarkanta* here for scholarly reasons, and because it includes a visual description of its nature, as follow.

Aulë at the prayer of Yavanna wrought two mighty lamps for the lighting of the Middle-earth which he had built amid the encircling seas. Then Varda filled the lamps and Manwë hallowed them, and the Valar set them upon high pillars, more lofty far than are any mountains of the later days. One lamp they raised near to the north of Middle-earth, and it was named Illuin; and the other was raised in the south, and it was named Ormal [...] [Melkor] assailed the lights of Illuin and Ormal, and cast down their pillars and broke their lamps. In the overthrow of the mighty pillars lands were broken and seas arose in tumult; and when the lamps were spilled destroying flame was poured over the Earth.

— *The Silmarillion. Of the Beginning of Days*

And he set up these great pillars north and south of the Earth's middle yet nearer to it than the chasm; and the Gods placed lamps upon them and the Earth had light for a while.

But the pillars were made with deceit, being wrought of ice; and they melted, and the lamps fell in ruin, and their light was spilled. But the melting of the ice made two small inland seas, north and south of the middle of the Earth, and there was a northern land and a middle land and a southern land. [...] the Sea of Helkar (which was the northern lamp) became an inland sea or great lake...

— *The Shaping of Middle-earth. The Ambarkanta*

The version of the *Ambarkanta* includes icy waters pouring into the Helcar Sea, black waters and vapors that lay over them. So, I use the following explanation for a reconciliation of the two:

... 'great floods of water poured from [the Lamps] into the Shadowy Seas'. And 'so great was their thaw that whereas those seas were at first of no great size but clear and warm, now were they black and wide and vapours lay upon them and deep shades, for the great cold rivers that poured into them' (I.70). [...] Helcar remained the name of the Inland Sea 'where aforetime the roots of the mountain of Illuin [the northern Lamp] had been (The Silmarillion p. 49)...

— *The Shaping of Middle-earth. The Ambarkanta [commentary]*

The Icy Waters come from Utumno and the Iron Mountains in the North. They flow into the Helcar Sea creating everlasting mists. The mists are further increased by broken pieces of the North Lamp that lay in the water bottom, increasing the heat of the deep waters. So there is a permanent play of ice and warm waters that create a deep mist, mainly over the northern half. This creates also drifting warm water currents over the shores of the Helcar Sea.

But there is also an important factor of sickness and corruption that pour forth from Utumno (mainly through the icy rivers, but also through other veins). This creates bogs and black waters, poisonous vapors that are home to monsters and corrupted beasts. These Lands of Shadows should not cover all the shores, but a great part of the

other things and hands other things and hands other things and hands
northern shore. In a long campaign the characters could even see how this taint grows over time and the minor spirits (Maiar) succumb one after another to the Shadow of Melkor.

The Orocarni (Red Mountains) are one of these four ranges, right to the east of Cuiviénen. The characters can always see them from Cuiviénen, extend-

...the thrusting aside of the land caused also mountains to appear in four ranges, two in the Northland, and two in the Southland; and those in the North were the Blue Mountains in the West side, and the Red Mountains in the East side; and in the South were the Grey Mountains and the Yellow. But Melko fortified the North and built there the Northern Towers, which are also called the Iron Mountains, and they look southward. And in the middle land there were the Mountains of the Wind, for a wind blew strongly there coming from the East before the Sun...

**—The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Ambarkanta**

ing south- and northwards as far as one can see. In fact the characters can reach their foothills without problems (time and exact distances are of no matter in this age), and it is reasonable to say that they belong to Cuiviénen's vicinity.

In the mountains there are many secret places to discover, and many rivers to follow to their roots. But to cross over the mountains is a feat few Quendi should be able to achieve. Over the top of the mountains they should be able to discern the Great Eastern Sea on the horizon.

And far to the north lies always Utumno, the dark fortress of Melkor. The Quendi characters will probably never see it, but its dark presence should always be looming just beyond the horizon and out of sight. Here originates all the suffering of the World, as the characters should sooner or later learn. From Utumno come all the dark storms, the shadows, the hunter and the corruption. Utumno lies there, as an eternal antagonist to any story in Cuiviénen. Even though Utumno is soon to marr the spring of the Quendi, their first days are full of joy and wonder, a small glimpse of what might have been possible, had Melkor not rebelled and tried to become a master.

YAVANNA'S SLEEP: LIFE FORMS UNDER THE STARS

It is not a mere poetic image that the Quendi awake in a world that seems to sleep. It is a magic sleep that Yavanna put on all plants and animals to protect them from the shadow of Morgoth and preserve their life for the coming of the next great lights (the Moon and the Sun). This mythic sleep is described in many of Tolkien's works.

It is also of note that this magic sleep is not absolute, and the Quendi in their wanderings begin to wake the creatures in their path. So they find rabbits and deer and boars that share their world. But this stays a local phenomenon not applicable to the whole Middle-earth.

Here follow five quotes that all touch this theme, and the information that can be taken from each one.

...all Middle-earth lay in a twilight under the stars. While the Lamps had shone, growth began there which now was checked, because all was again dark. But already the oldest living things had arisen: in the seas the great weeds, and on earth the shadow of great trees; and in the valleys of the night-clad hills there were dark creatures old and strong. To those lands and forests the Valar seldom came, save only Yavanna and Oromë; and Yavanna would walk there in the shadows, grieving because the growth and promise of the Spring of Arda was stayed. And she set a sleep upon many things that had arisen in the Spring, so that they should not age, but should wait for a time of awakening that yet should be.

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor

These "oldest living things" can very well be interpreted as:

1. In the seas:
 - Great weeds.
2. On the earth:
 - Great trees.
 - Dark creatures old and strong.

The creation of many other things might be gleaned from another—very vivid—part speaking of Palúrien’s efforts:

Alone in that age long gloaming she [Palúrien] sang songs of the utmost enchantment, and of such deep magic were they that they floated about the rocky places and their echoes lingered for years of time in hill and empty plain, and all the good magics of all later days are whispers of the memories of her echoing song.

Then things began to grow there, fungus and strange growths heaved in damp places and lichens and mosses crept stealthily across the rocks and ate their faces, and they crumbled and made dust, and the creeping plants died in the dust, and there was mould, and ferns and warted plants grew in it silently, and strange creatures thrust their heads from crannies and crept over the stones. But Yavanna wept, for this was not the fair vigour that she had thought of [...] and thereupon Oromë came to her leaping in the dusk, [...].

Then Oromë and Palúrien put forth all their might, and Oromë blew great blasts upon his horn as though he would awake the grey rocks to life and lustihead. Behold, at these blasts the great forest reared and moaned about the hills, and all the trees of dark leaf came to being, and the world was shaggy with a growth of pines and odorous with resinous trees, and firs and cedars hung their blue and olive draperies about the slopes, and yews began the centuries of their growth.

—*The Book of Lost Tales I.
The Chaining of Melko*

This may then be summraized as follows:

1. Yavanna planted seeds over all of Middle-earth.
2. The magic of Yavanna’s song and Oromë’s horn live in the echoes of Middle-earth.
3. Plants come into being: Fungus,¹ strange plants, lichens, mosses, creeping plants, mold, ferns, warted plants. Great forests, trees of dark leaf, pines, resinous trees, firs, cedars, yews.
4. Creatures exist: Strange creeping creatures in the fissures.

5. It was not the full vigor that Yavanna wished (and that would come afterwards).
6. Yavanna walks and Oromë hunts in the faraway lands of Middle-earth.

The next one is found in the same chapter:

‘the seeds that Yavanna had sown began swiftly to sprout and to burgeon, and there arose a multitude of growing things great and small, mosses and grasses and great ferns, and trees whose tops were crowned with cloud’, and that ‘beasts came forth and dwelt in the grassy plains, or in the rivers and the lakes, or walked in the shadows of the woods’. This was the Spring of Arda; but after the coming of Melkor and the delving of Utumno ‘green things fell sick and rotted, and rivers were choked with weeds and slime, and fens were made, rank and poisonous, the breeding place of flies; and forests grew dark and perilous, the haunts of fear; and beasts became monsters of horn and ivory and dyed the earth with blood’. Then came the fall of the Lamps, and ‘thus ended the Spring of Arda’ (p. 37). After the building of Valinor and the arising of the Two Trees ‘Middle-earth lay in a twilight beneath the stars’ (p. 39), and Yavanna and Oromë alone of the Valar returned there at times: ‘Yavanna would walk there in the shadows, grieving because the growth and promise of the Spring of Arda was stayed. And she set a sleep upon many things that had arisen in the Spring, so that they should not age, but should wait for a time of awakening that yet should be’ (p. 47). ‘But already the oldest living things had arisen: in the seas the great weeds, and on earth the shadow of great trees; and in the valleys of the night-clad hills there were dark creatures old and strong.’

—*The Book of Lost Tales I.
The Chaining of Melko [commentary]*

This quote can be seen as a conclusion to the one mentioned before. It stresses the corruption of Melkor in Middle-earth and the monsters and dark creatures that he conceived.

1. Creatures: flies, beasts, monsters of horn and ivory.
2. Plants: they became sick and rotten; dark and dangerous forests.
3. Rivers: choked with weeds and slime, rank and poisonous fens.
4. Fear, violent death.

¹ Not a real plant of course, but close enough for these purposes.

The Outer Lands are in darkness. The growth of things was checked when Morgoth quenched the lamps. There are forests of darkness, of yew and fir and ivy. There Oromë sometimes hunts, but in the North Morgoth and his demonic broods (Balrogs) and the Orcs (Goblins, also called Glamhoth or people of hate) hold sway.

*—The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Earliest ‘Silmarillion’*

So, here we find:

- 1) Forests of darkness, of yew and fir and ivy.
- Oromë hunts in the woods of Middle-earth.
- In the north is the Reign of Melkor: demonic broods (Balrogs) and Orcs(!).

In all this time, since Morgoth overthrew the lamps, the Outer Lands east of the Mountains of Valinor were without light. While the lamps had shown growth began therein, which now was checked because of the darkness. But the oldest of all things already grew upon the world: the great weeds of the sea, and on the earth the dark shade of yew and fir and ivy, and small things faint and silent at their feet [and in their thickets dark creatures, old and strong]. In such forests did Oromë sometimes hunt...

*—The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Quenta*

Again, we find some familiar things:

- “...the oldest of all things already grew upon the world”.
 - In the sea: great weeds.
 - On the earth: yew, fir, ivy, small things faint and silent, thickets.
 - Creatures: small things faint and silent, dark creatures old and strong.
- Oromë sometimes hunt in those forests.

Finally, the last passage says (continued on next column):

Palúrien goes once more out over the Earth, and the forests multiply and spread, and often is Oromë’s horn heard behind her in the dimness: now do nightshade and bryony begin to creep about the brakes, and holly and ilex are seen upon the earth. Even the faces of the cliffs are grown with ivies and trailing plants for the calm of the winds and the quietude of the sea, and all the caverns and the shores are festooned with weeds, and great sea-growths come to life swaying gently when Ossë moves the waters. [...] Bats and owls whom Vefantur set free from Mandos swooped about the sky, and nightingales sent by Lórien from Valinor trilled beside still waters. Far away a nightjar croaked, and in dark places snakes that slipped from Utumna when Melko was bound moved noiselessly about; a frog croaked upon a bare pool’s border. [...] Ulmo desired not that the waters of the inner seas be longer unpeopled, but came forth seeking Palúrien, and she gave him spells, and the seas began to gleam with fish or strange creatures crawled at bottom; yet the shellfish and the oysters no-one of Valar or of Elves knows whence they are, for already they gaped in the silent waters or ever Melko plunged therein from on high, and pearls there were before the Eldar thought or dreamed of any gem.

*—The Book of Lost Tales I.
The Chaining of Melko*

So, the summary for this would be:

- Plants: forests, nightshade, bryony, holly, ilex, ivies, trailing plants, weeds.
- Animals: bats, owls, nightingales, nightjar, snakes, frogs.
- Seas: weeds, sea-growth. Fish, strange creatures, shellfish, oysters. Pearls.

If we put all this together we get quite a complete picture of the plants, creatures and monsters that the characters may encounter in Middle-earth under the Sleep of Yavanna (and the Shadow of Melkor of course):

- Small plants:** fungi, strange plants, lichens, mosses, ferns, ivy, climbing plants, small things faint and silent, nightshade, bryony, trailing plants, weeds (and surely many types of grasses).
- In the seas:** great weeds, sea-growth. Fish, strange creatures, shellfish, oysters, Pearls.

3. **Great trees:** trees of dark leaf, resin trees, pines, firs, cedars, yews, holly, ilex.
4. **Creatures:** strange creeping creatures in the fissures, flies, small things faint and silent, bats, owls, nightingales, nightjar, snakes, frogs.
5. **Monsters:** dark creatures old and strong, strange creeping creatures in the fissures, monsters of horn and ivory, demons, Balrogs.

To this compilation one should add the shadows of Melkor (depicted in the accompanying adventure), the Dark Hunter, the Fell Beasts (the flying steeds of the Nazgûl from The Lord of the Rings), the great wyrms that would later be developed into dragons. In addition, we have Wargs, Werewolves and Vampires. To this also are to be added all the demons and corrupted Maia spirits in the following of Melkor, the independent evil of the old dark entities (which Ungoliant mated in Nan Dungortheb afterwards) and the free and good Maia spirits that preferred to stay in the Middle-earth under the stars.

The spiders are a special case, since they could be said to be the “daughters of Ungoliant”, and of which the greatest is supposed to be spawned in the darkness of Nan Dungortheb after the death of the Two Trees in Valinor, just before and after the coming of the Sun and the Moon. One could speculate about the lesser and common ones, if they come from Ungoliant, and if they existed before the episode of Valinor. The Loremaster should decide whether he deems such pre-existing spawn of Ungoliant fitting or not.

Giants are among those creatures that could be present at this time, but then they should have no language, and most surely still slumber as part of the mountains, to be awoken by curious Elves. For a visual depiction, the Stone Giants from the first The Hobbit movie might provide ideas, even if not of such a massive size.

On the other hand the whole of creation is almost fully wrought, and all kinds of creatures must exist somewhere, shielded by the Sleep of Yavanna and awaiting the coming of the Sun (or of the Elves).

Finally there are such magic effects that just are, and that the Loremaster should keep in mind.

- Yavanna’s Sleep: all of creation “sleeps” under the stars. Vegetative growth continues, but at a very slow pace; flowers do not blossom until the rising of the Sun. For animals it works as a long winter sleep; the only things that can wake them is the curiosity of the Elves or the disturbance of Melkor and its taint.
- The Seeds of Yavanna: life is in a latent state, it waits for the time when it will sprout in all its glory. Then it will literally explode, covering even the most broken places.
- The Echoes of Yavanna and Oromë: besides the early magic paths (see my magic system in Issues 10 and 13 of Other Minds for more information on this) of the Quendi (Varda, Ulmo and Irmo), the paths of magic from Yavanna and Oromë are those that are easier to learn without the teachings of a master. If the characters try hard, they can hear the echoes of Yavanna in the trees, and the horn of Oromë far off in the hills.
- Spirits: it is ordained that the Quendi never meet Yavanna and Oromë before the predestined time, but they both roam the lands of Middle-earth. Besides there are many uncounted minor spirits all over Middle-earth: in the rivers, the mountains, the winds. The characters do not even need to notice them, but they are there.
- Corrupted life: in many places the rivers flow foul, poison is in the air, life is corrupted and darkness reigns. It is the Shadow of Melkor. This leads directly to the next point.



Melkor Descending © by Stefan Meisl, used with permission

MARRING OF ARDA (THE SHADOW OF MORGOOTH)

One element holds a key role in Tolkien writings. This is the Shadow of Melkor that taints the whole creation. This taint permeates the very essence of reality and is known to the loremasters of the Free People as the Marring of Arda. The following two passages illustrate this struggle and marring very well:

And though the Valar knew naught of it as yet, nonetheless the evil of Melkor and the blight of his hatred flowed out thence, and the Spring of Arda was marred. Green things fell sick and rotted, and rivers were choked with weeds and slime, and fens were made, rank and poisonous, the breeding place of flies; and forests grew dark and perilous, the haunts of fear; and beasts became monsters of horn and ivory and dyed the earth with blood.

—The Silmarillion.
Of the Beginning of Days

...they [the Valar] built lands and Melkor destroyed them; valleys they delled and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down; seas they hollowed and Melkor spilled them; and naught might have peace or come to lasting growth, for as surely as the Valar began a labour so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it. And yet their labour was not all in vain; and though nowhere and in no work was their will and purpose wholly fulfilled, and all things were in hue and shape other than the Valar had at first intended, slowly nonetheless the Earth was fashioned and made firm. And thus was the habitation of the Children of Ilúvatar established at the last in Deeps of Time and amidst the innumerable stars.

—The Silmarillion.
Ainulindalë

About the primal violence of Melkor:

Melko who long time had delled in fear because of the wrath of the Valar at his treacherous dealing with their lamps burst forth now into a great violence, for he had thought the world abandoned by the Gods to him and his. Beneath the very floors of Ossë he caused the Earth to quake and split and his lower fires to mingle with the sea. Vaporous storms and a great roaring of uncontrolled sea-motions burst upon the world, and the forests groaned and snapped. The sea leapt upon the land and tore it, and wide regions sank beneath its rage or were hewn into scattered islets, and the coast was dug into-caverns. The mountains rocked and their hearts melted, and stone poured like liquid fire down their ashen sides and flowed even to the sea, and the noise of the great battles of the fiery beaches came roaring even through the Mountains of Valinor and drowned the singing of the Gods.

—The Book of Lost Tales I.
The Chaining of Melko

But what kind of corruption came into the world? The last quotes give a good view of it, but one should know the nature of Melkor to understand it (continued next page):

Great might was given to him [Melkor] by Ilúvatar, and he was coëval with Manwë. In the powers and knowledge of all the other Valar he had part, but he turned them to evil purposes, and squandered his strength in violence and tyranny. For he coveted Arda and all that was in it, desiring the kingship of Manwë and dominion over the realms of his peers.

From splendour he fell through arrogance to contempt for all things save himself, a spirit wasteful and pitiless. Understanding he turned to subtlety in perverting to his own will all that he would use, until he became a liar without shame. He began with the desire of Light, but when he could not possess it for himself alone, he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness. And darkness he used most in his evil works upon Arda, and filled it with fear for all living things.

—*The Silmarillion. Valaquenta*

The shadow of Melkor mostly is violent and majestic, but it can also appear subtle and ever present. The shadow of Melkor creates monsters of horn and hate, fires and storms sweep over Middle-earth, and darkness and vapors cover his realm. But fear and corruption are also present, lies and delusions.

So we have the following effects of the shadow of Melkor and the marring of Arda:

- **Monsters:** of horn and ivory, winged beasts, wyrms, demons. Almost every kind of natural creature can be transformed by the shadow of Melkor. The Loremaster can design any kind of monster he deems reasonable.
- **Dangerous plants:** many plants under the shadow of Melkor end up poisonous (to eat, to touch, to breath) and/or with damaging thorns. Such plants are a passive danger, and tend to make players aware of their natural surroundings. Huorns are a special case, and walk the line between normal plant life and monsters.
- **Hostile surroundings:** in some places the very earth seems to be malicious to the characters. Slippery footing, grabbing branches, thick brambles, blocked paths, falling stones, impassable marshes, inconvenient chasms, buzzing flies... all of them should offer increased difficulties to skills, and fumbles should cause physical damage.

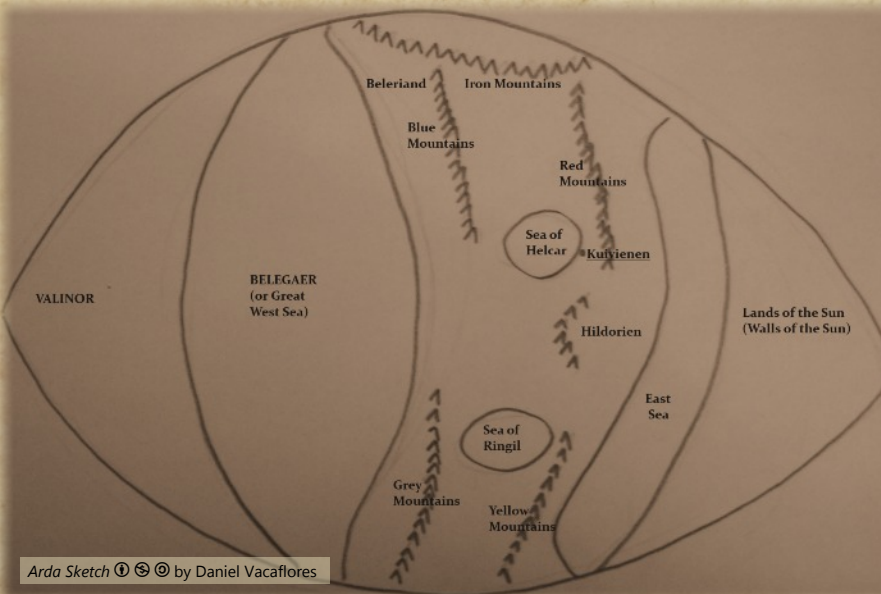
- **Scenic violence:** lightning storms, hail, choking vapors and volcanic eruptions are all majestic and full of danger to the characters. They are rare enough (and not present at all in Cuiviénen) to be exceptional, but they can always appear unforeseen and endanger the player characters.
- **Corruption:** poisonous rivers, rotting trees, sickness... all that is part of the shadow of Melkor. Even if the characters do not realize this, these are in fact all manifestations of the spiritual corruption of the spirits of the earth, and a very “outward” war of Melkor for dominion over the very nature of Middle earth. To follow this narrative path can lead to very interesting but outlandish adventures. In this stage corruption of the characters should be a mere side effect.
- **Fear and darkness:** these at least should be eternal themes in the twilight life of Cuiviénen. Menacing shadows that look out of every tree, fear of the darkness: all of it should build up to a permanent feeling of menace and an unseen but perceivable threat.
- **Falseness:** Melkor is able to put lies and fears in the hearts of the Quendi through spies and shapechangers. These creatures are perfect to be used if the Loremaster wants to play the social interactions of the players. It should be a great achievement to actually discover one of these spies and its falsehoods in the game.

Evil has many faces, and it is up to the Loremaster to design new forms of how the Shadow of Melkor manifests itself in his story.

As a side note one should remark that not all of Middle-earth is under the darkness of Melkor. His distant shadow falls over all parts, but the stronger deeper shadows with perceivable results like the ones mentioned above, are concentrated in the northern parts. Accordingly, most of Middle-earth is still “free”, as Oromë and Yavanna work to undo the damage. There are a few holy places, of which in this kind of campaign only Cuiviénen is of special note, on which the Shadow of Melkor cannot overcome the designs of Eru Ilúvatar, the Almighty. That means that Cuiviénen stays a safe place for the Quendi, where no darkness can come. Any concrete intrusion in it should always be a special case as part of the greater story.

ABOUT THE BROKEN SYMMETRY OF THE WORLD

In the The Shaping of Middle-earth (HoMe 5) there are two maps that depict the form of Middle-earth in the Elder Days (in the following image I present simplified versions).



This map can be used as the geographical background for any kind of adventures in the time of the Awakening of the Elves, and is a great resource for this kind of campaigns. But I want to point to some

The extremely close symmetry of the Eastern and Western lands as displayed on map IV is striking; the chief departure from symmetry being the difference in shape of the great Seas, and this was due to the eastward thrusting or 'crowding' of Middle-earth — 'so that it was bended' — at the time of the making of Valinor and the raising of its protective mountain chain. This more than titanic crushing of the new-made world was the origin of the great mountain ranges of Middle-earth, the Blue, the Red, the Yellow and the Grey.

—*The Shaping of Middle-earth.*
The Ambarkanta [commentary]

difficulties in it.

In theory this map reflects the order of the world at the time of the Awakening of the Firstborn, after the fall of the Two Great Lamps and the creation of Valinor. The world is still "symmetric", with a curvature of Middle-earth to the east. There are the two great inland seas, six great mountain ranges (the Blue, the Red, the Yellow, the Grey, the Iron

Mountains and the Mountains of the Wind), Utumno/Angband and Hildorien.

The first thing that comes into view is the artificially-looking symmetry of Middle-earth, clearly a design of the Valar. As already told above the Valar made the world and the permanent disturbances of Melkor in all their works. Although Melkor changed all the designs of the Valar, it is told how Melkor did escape from the fury of Tulkas and the Valar were finally able to finish their design and then rest from their labors. They made for themselves a home in an island in the middle of Middle-earth, built the Two Lamps (northwards and southwards) and the first Spring of Arda came into being. So we can assume that in that time Middle-earth was symmetric. The map in

question gives us a good image of how the world was in that time.

But then Melkor came back from the Outer Dark and overthrew the Lamps.

In the overthrow of the mighty pillars lands were broken and seas arose in tumult; and when the lamps were spilled destroying flame was poured out over the Earth. And the shape of Arda and the symmetry of its waters and its lands was marred in that time, so that the first designs of the Valar were never after restored.

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Beginning of Days*

So, this is the first cataclysm of Middle-earth and a moment of such vast destruction that "the symmetry of its waters and its lands was marred". The map in question depicts the world (and Middle-earth) at the time of the Awakening of the Elves. Here we come to the first problem with the map, since (in my opinion) it stays definitively symmetric in its basic design.

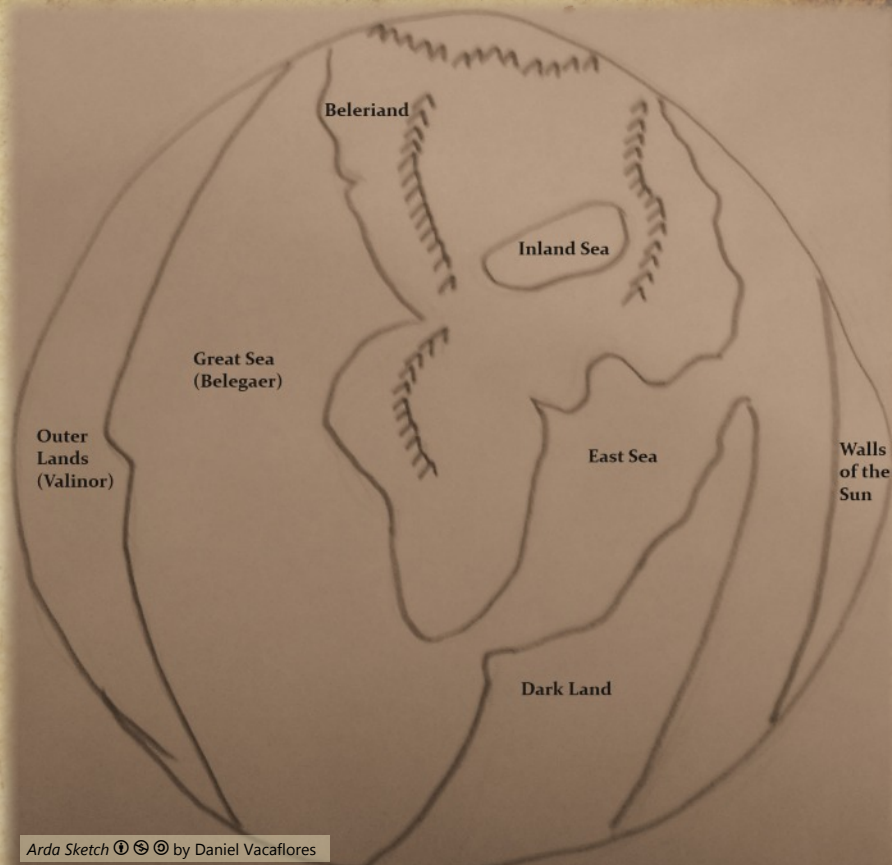
It is worth it to say that the map predates this development in the mythology of Middle-earth. So, even if it should take into account the basic concepts and is to be considered the only authorized image of

Middle-earth at this time, it is not wholly compatible with the words of The Silmarillion.

As I already said it stays a matter of choice by the Loremaster. I myself use the late information as guide and extrapolate it on the map. I choose to consider the map as an inaccurate depiction of Middle-earth by a late cartographer, using correct—but probably incomplete—information (from the Valar and traded by the Elves?) but failing to condense all this into an accurate map.

In the cataclysm following the destruction of the Two Lamps Ilmaren, the isle of the Valar, is destroyed and the Valar retreat to Aman in the West. They try to salvage what is to be saved from their original design, but their main objective is to build (and fortify) their new home in the West. As part of this fortification they pushed Middle-earth eastward, bending it so that the sea to Valinor was now great, as a defense from Melkor. This bending of Middle-earth can be clearly seen in the map to the right.

The next great cataclysm came just after the Awakening of the Elves, in the great war against Utumno that followed, to protect the Quendi from the evil of Melkor.



Arda Sketch ① ② ③ by Daniel Vacaflores

But the symmetry of the ancient Earth was changed and broken in the first Battle of the Gods, when Valinor went out against Utumno, which was Melko's stronghold, and Melko was chained. Then the sea of Helkar (which was the northern lamp) became an inland sea or great lake, but the sea of Ringil (which was the southern lamp) became a great sea flowing north-eastward and joining by straits both the Western and Eastern Seas.

—The Shaping of Middle-earth.
The Ambarkanta

Note how in this quote it is called “the first Battle of the Gods”. The first war of the Powers at the Creation didn’t come into the mythology yet.

It would seem that the vast cataclysm following the destruction of the Two Lamps did not yet achieve the magnitude described in *The Silmarillion*, limited to the eastward-bending of Middle-earth and the creation of the two great Inner Seas, even if in the corresponding quote *The Book of Lost Tales* speaks about great destruction along the coasts of Middle-earth, and how great extensions of land were broken, sunken and/or parted in numerous islands.

Long and grievous was the siege of Utumno, and many battles were fought before its gates of which naught but the rumour is known to the Elves. In that time the shape of Middle-earth was changed, and the Great Sea that sundered it from Aman grew wide and deep; and it broke in upon the coasts and made a deep gulf to the southward...

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor

The Inland Sea of Ringil disappeared after the war of Utumno, engulfed by the sea and straits uniting the Western and Eastern Seas, and separating Middle-earth from the Dark Lands in the south. The great southward gulf (as seen in Map V) is also said to be created in this second cataclysm. But then: how can we imagine the form of the land between the destruction of the Two Lamps and the War of Utumno, at the time of the Awakening of the Elves? I think it best to visualize it as a middle point between Map IV and Map V. Note that this is not a complete geographic treatise of the Elder Days; a deeper analysis and the making of elaborate cartographic maps is still a work to do, maybe by specialists like the Mapping Arda crew (see *Other Minds*, Issues 1 and 2 for more on this).

THE PROBLEM OF THE SUN AND THE MOON

As will be apparent from my accompanying adventure, I prefer the starlight world from the Silmarillion tradition. But anybody who did read Morgoth's Ring (HoMe 10) and The War of the Jewels (HoMe 11) knows that there is an alternative version where the Sun and the Moon are already there at this time, altering the mythological background of the Elder Days.

A good summary of this version is the following:

The fundamental difference between C and C lies in this, that in C* the Sun is already present from the beginning of Arda (see the italicised passages in §24 on p. 40), and the origin of the Moon, similarly 'de-mythologised' by removal from all association with the Two Trees, is placed in the context of the tumults of Arda's making. It seems strange indeed that my father was prepared to conceive of the Moon - the Moon, that cherishes the memory of the Elves (V.118, 240) - as a dead and blasted survival of the hatred of Melkor, however beautiful its light. In consequence, the old legend of the Lamps was also abandoned...*

—*Morgoth's Ring. Ainulindalë – commentary on version C**

For anybody who wants to use this version for his adventures at the time of the Awakening of the Elves, he must take into account such questions as solar light, clouds and the location of Utumno.

[Note 6] 'The glooms and the clouds dimming the sun and the stars': an explicit reference, it seems, to some form of the changed astronomical myth adumbrated in Text II of the section 'Myths Transformed' in Morgoth's Ring. In that text my father raised the question 'how can the Eldar be called the "Star-folk"? if the Sun is 'coeval with the Earth' (X.375); and proposed a complex story (X.377-8) in which the darkening of the world by Melkor, who brought up vast glooms to shut out all vision of the heavens, is a chief element.

—*The War of the Jewels. Quendi and Eldar*

- At this time Middle-earth is covered by "vast glooms".
- These glooms hide the sky.

- This cloud cover is so thick as to dim the light of the sun.

It was still night and clouds were in the sky. But before dawn a wind came, and roused the elf-men, and they woke and were amazed at the stars; for all the clouds were blown away and the stars were bright from east to west. And for a long time the eighteen new Quendi took no heed of the others, but looked at the lights of Menel.

—*The War of the Jewels. Quendi and Eldar (Appendix)*

- The Quendi awoke under starlight.
- The heavens were free of glooms at this time.

So we can assume that the thick glooms (clouds and volcano ashes) that covered Middle-earth at the time were broken by the winds of Manwë and the Magic of Varda (here I talk about the essence of these Valar as independent of their Will, since the Valar at this time knew nothing of the awakening of the Elves).

Something that the Loremaster should ask himself is how he imagines daylight in this time: is it full sunlight? Or is it a deep gloom scarcely brighter than under the light of the stars?

In the first case we could assume that the cloud covering changes over the flow of days (so as it does in our real world), in a permanent fight between the wills of Manwë and Melkor, so that the sun and the stars are sometimes visible, but other times are hidden behind a dark mass of clouds and ashes.

In the second case we should assume that the glooms of Melkor cover the whole Middle-earth, with no way to see the face of the Sun. In such a scenario it is the magic of Varda and the sanctity of the waking place of the Elves that makes that each night the heavens over Cuiviënen become free of clouds, with bright starlight coming through. In such a scenario it is just a matter of time that the spies of Melkor find the waking place of the Elves.

About the Moon (continued next page):

Other things and hands other things and hands other things and hands other things and hands

But this [annihilating the Earth] Melkor could not do, for the Earth may not be wholly destroyed against its fate; nevertheless Melkor took a portion of it, and seized it for his own, and reft it away; and he made it a little earth of his own, and it wheeled round about in the sky, following the greater earth wheresoever it went, so that Melkor could observe thence all that happened below, and could send forth his malice and trouble the seas and shake the lands. And still there is rumour among the Eldar of the war in which the Valar assaulted the stronghold of Melkor, and cast him out, and removed it further from the Earth, and it remains in the sky, Ithil whom Men call the Moon. There is both blinding heat and cold intolerable, as might be looked for in any work of Melkor, but now at least it is clean, yet utterly barren; and nought liveth there, nor ever hath, nor shall. And herein is revealed again the words of Ilúvatar; for Ithil has become a mirror to the greater Earth, catching the light of the Sun, when she is invisible; and because of malice silver has been made of gold, and moonlight of sunlight, and Earth in its anguish and loss has been greatly enriched.

—*Morgoth's Ring. Ainulindalë*
(*Ainulindalë C**)

This is a profound parting from the earlier mythology, edited together into The Silmarillion. First, it is so that at that time all evil came from the Moon (not from the North), and this Moon soared

lower than it does today. Since Melkor “could observe thence all that happened below”, I think it logic to place it under the cloud cover, coming into it if Melkor willed it so. So it could always be seen, except when Melkor wished it not. It is also possible (is it?) once the awakening place of the Elves was discovered that Melkor placed the Moon over Cuiviénen so as to have a better look at it. In such a case it would be useful to ask if the Moon could hover or if it must be in perpetual movement.

In this quote the Moon seems to be the main stronghold of Melkor. Did it become the new Utumno? Or had Utumno survived as a secondary fortress of Melkor in the North? This can have a profound impact in any campaign from the moment the characters begin to explore the wide world. And it will also have profound consequences in any attempt to rescue their fellow Quendi from the dungeons of Utumno, or if they want to send an embassy to the Lord of the Night. And it will have a great impact on the way the War of Utumno is to be fought, when the time is ripe for it. So I think this is not an idle question for those Loremasters who choose to follow the tradition of *Morgoth's Ring*.

FURTHER THEMES

In the next article I will explore the social life of the Quendi, including technology, ways of life, friends and enemies. I will try to have by then game data as support for running a campaign in Cuiviénen. I will include also a reflection on the problem of the generations of the Elves and the identity of the three Fathers and that of the Dark Hunter.

THE CHRONICLES OF CUIVIÉNEN I: “THE AWAKENING OF THE ELVES”


by Daniel Vacaflores (vacofly@hotmail.com)

(adaptation to MERP by Christian Limbach
Christian.Limbach@h-brs.de)

(adaptation to MEAG 4.5 by Brian Gross
imposteraz@earthlink.net)

(adaptation to BASH by Michael Taylor
michaeltaylor1329@hotmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

adventure



This is the follow-up, actual adventure for the Cuiviénen setting. Vaco has provided us with a really unusual but nonetheless creative and fascinating setting, far away from the usual campaigns set in the Third Age (or occasionally 1st, 2nd or 4th Age). Here you can participate in the very beginning of the Elves - a truly unique setting and idea indeed!

INTRODUCTION

The Chronicles of Cuiviénen is a mini-campaign for *Chronicles of Middle-earth*, presented at the role-playing convention “Mittel erde Con” in Weisskirchen-Rodgau (Germany), from September 17 and 18 2011. This adventure is designed to be played by 1 to 7 players with or without experience, in a single session of approximately 5 hours, with the possibility of continuing with a second part the next day. As a supplement to this first adventure, sheets (a character sheet and the revised basic rules) are supplied that allow to play without problems the simplified version of *Chronicles of Middle-earth*, adapted to this scenario.

This is the first part of a campaign about the Awakening of the Elves, back in the First Ages of the Stars when Melkor still ruled Middle-earth and before the Secondborn awoke. The second part will appear in the next issue of *Other Minds*. Its themes are the shadows of Melkor, the call of the Valar and the estrangement between Eldar and Avari. To give you some guidance before its publication, a section “future adventures”, is included.

This campaign is also closely related to “Adventures in Cuiviénen”, a series of two articles with topics relevant to play adventures in this period to be published in this and next Issue of *Other Minds*.

In this adventure there are several text boxes with quotes from Tolkien. These boxes are intended as background information to the setting, and the Loremaster should read them at the right time, marked at the end of these boxes. The extent of these quotes is intended to be short, so as not to hinder the flow of play.

Volunteer Conversions

I am glad to announce that this is a multi-system adventure. I developed it using my own home made system for Middle-earth, but a great group of volunteers made its conversion to other popular game systems to be played by a broader range of Middle-earth fans. The stats and abilities listed in regular text refer to this system, while boxes translate them into the other systems as listed below.

All this extra material will be posted in this side textboxes in the relevant places, and in the Appendixes for the general conversions.

There are conversions for three systems: MERP, MEAG and BASH. I greatly regret that no stats for the current official licensee The One Ring (TOR) are provided: there was just no one with good knowledge of its mechanics available for this kind of joint project. I hope next time there is something to offer to the TOR-community, and let this be a call for TOR-volunteers in this multi-system engagements.

All that said, I want to heartily thank Christian Limbach (MERP conversion), Brian Gross (MEAG conversion) and Michael Tylor (BASH conversion) for their great work.

BACKGROUND

Mandos spoke, and he said: 'In this age the Children of Ilúvatar shall come indeed, but they come not yet. Moreover it is doom that the Firstborn shall come in the darkness, and shall look first upon the stars. Great light shall be for their waning. To Varda ever shall they call at need.'

Then Varda went forth from the council, and she looked out from the height of Taniquetil, and beheld the darkness of Middle-earth beneath the innumerable stars, faint and far. Then she began a great labour, greatest of all the works of the Valar since their coming into Arda. She took the silver dew from the vats of Telperion, and therewith she made new stars and brighter against the coming of the Firstborn[.]

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*
[To be read after character creation]

MERP and BASH are commercial roleplaying games. Publication of MERP was discontinued in 1999 and can nowadays only be found second hand plus fan-material on fan websites. BASH can be found in its official homepage:

www.bashrpg.com/Fantasy.html

MEAG is a free fan-made system to be found in the internet:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ambarquenta/home/the-offical-games/meag>

The world lies in *The Sleep of Yavanna*, a magical state where all plants and animal life “sleep”, waiting for the appearance of the new lights. The world is illuminated by starlight alone.

The Valar have long ago removed themselves westward to Valinor in the continent of Aman. Of the great Valar only Yavanna and Oromë go to Middle-earth. Middle-earth is under the shadow of Melkor and his servants and creatures.

It is in this context that the Elves awake, the precise date unknown to the Valar, and discover the wonders of Middle-earth. It is here that this adventure begins.

Theme: *The awakening of the Elves by Lake Cuiviénen.*

Main goal: *To survive the Shadows of Morgoth.*

Secondary goals: *To explore Cuiviénen. Get to know the Ents. To try out their own skills.*

Schematic Guide

In an environment with limited time I have found that this adventure can be played consistently in 5 hours, including the character creation process. This includes a sequence of actions without wasting time on minor details, but with some ease in the actions of the PCs.

Should there be no time pressure (as on a Con) the Loremaster may develop sub-plots at ease, carried away by the imagination of the PCs. In this case you should plan for two or three sessions of play to complete the adventure.

In the latter case, the Loremaster should pay particular attention to repetition and having additional material at hand to be able to handle thematic variations not included in this core adventure.

The following table gives an overview of the approximate time I spent for the various parts.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PCs INTO THE ADVENTURE

The PCs are Quendi of the first generation. They “wake up”, and none of their skills are developed, so they do not get Advancement Points (AP) during character creation. They only get their characteristics, weaknesses and derived attributes. In the full version they also get 5 Development Point (DP) to use in advantages and disadvantages; it is advisable to use these DP to individualize your character and give it that “special touch”.¹

In the simplified version it is not necessary to choose the tribe of awakening (*Minyar*, *Tatya* or *Nelyar*). The full version will offer guidance on this matter. In the simplified version this effect can be achieved by defining to which of the three Elven princes (*Imin*, *Tata*, *Enel*) they feel closer. In any case it is important that if the PCs can choose their tribe in the process of character creation, that there is the possibility of not joining any, and to wait with its decision until the next chapter. If the *Minyar*, *Tatya* and *Nelyar* are used, one of their intrinsic characteristics are their patrons of birth: *Minyar* (*Vanyar*) → *Varda*; *Tatya* (*Noldor*) → *Aulë*; *Nelyar* (*Teleri*) → *Ulmo*. All *Minyar* share the *binding fate* to leave for *Valinor* when the time comes.

The biological age of the elves at the awakening is not precisely defined, with a variable and subjective appearance that varies with the spiritual nature of each. In practice this means that each player can choose the age of his character. Apply the changes by age included in the appendices.

Heroic Option: If some players show interest in playing any of the “great” elven princes, the Loremaster might consider such as an option. The cast of characters to be considered include: *Ingwë*, *Indis*, *Finwë*, *Míriel*, *Mahtan*, *Rúmil*, *Elwë*, *Olwë*, *Círdan* and *Lenwë* (see further down for a complete listing and a brief description of each). I recommend using this option only with very experienced players that are aware of the following limitations:

Protected by fate: These characters are protected by fate. In case of “dying” in the game they shall survive but will pass to be NPCs played by the Loremaster.

Binding fate: These characters have a role in the history of Middle-earth, and in some cases they will be required to take a predetermined course of action (such as leaving for *Valinor* following the invitation of the *Valar*). Perhaps in the future this means that they must withdraw from the daily events of Mid-

Introduction

MERP & MEAG: Loremaster → Gamemaster.

MERP: 1) For purposes of game play treat the characters as level 1, although they are effectively still level 0 (i.e. stuck in adolescent development).

MEAG: 1) ...they do not get a Specialization or Maneuver Marks during character creation. They only get their Stats, Character Traits and base Skill Bonuses. All first generation Elves are given the Second Sight trait by fiat and it is recommended that most characters be Mages (since weapons and armor have not been developed yet).

If the *Minyar*, *Tatya* and *Nelyar* are used, one of their intrinsic characteristics is their patron of birth, and this leads to the tradition of Magic they learn: *Minyar* (*Vanyar*) → *Varda* (*Seer*); *Tatya* (*Noldor*) → *Aulë* (*Sorcerer*); *Nelyar* (*Teleri*) → *Ulmo* (*Healer*).

BASH: 1) Players can be created using the system in *BASH: Fantasy* (F32) or by using 20 points (see B2-8). Players may decide that they want to keep a certain number of points (maximum of 5) ‘unspent’ and decide to use them later in play.

dle-earth, ending their career as PCs. This also means that if the Loremaster believes that the actions of the PCs do not correspond with the personality of the character, that he has the authority to remove them from the game and play them as NPCs.

Players have great freedom in playing these characters. But they must not forget that they are exalted figures and the style of play should reflect the characters as described by Tolkien. Should their characters ever become NPCs then they must create new characters from the second or subsequent generations, according to the situation within the story.

This alternative offers a great opportunity to enhance the social aspect of the adventure. While in the simplified game there are moments of social interaction, with the heroic option this aspect will become much more important. If the Loremaster has enough time it is advisable to explore this possibility.

Task	Approx. Time
Character creation	20 min
Background (reading)	5 min
Scene One: "The Awakening"	
Single act	20 min
Scene Two: "Shadows in the Forest"	
First act	10 min
Second act	10 min
Third act	30 min
Interlude	10 min
Scene Three: "The Dark Hunter"	
First act	15 min]
Second act	30 min
Third act	20 min
Fourth act	30 min
Interlude	15 min
Epilogue (scene)	10 min
Scene Four: "Steps of Fate"	
First act	45 min
Interlude	10 min
Second act	10 min
Third act	15 min
Fourth act	10 min]
Finish	

SCENE ONE: "The Awakening"

FIRST ACT: "The Awakening"

It is told that even as Varda ended her labours, and they were long, when first Menelmacar strode up the sky and the blue fire of Helliun flickered in the mists above the borders of the world, in that hour the Children of the Earth awoke, the Firstborn of Ilúvatar. By the starlit mere of Cuiviénen, Water of Awakening, they rose from the sleep of Ilúvatar; and while they dwelt yet silent by Cuiviénen their eyes beheld first of all things the stars of heaven. Therefore they have ever loved the starlight, and have revered Varda Elentári above all the Valar.

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*

The PCs open their eyes and the first things they see are the stars, and they hear the waves on the shore of Lake Cuiviénen. The Firstborn just awoke in the world.

Everything is new, and it seems like a dream. The world waits under the *Sleep of Yavanna*. And somehow time does not mean anything to the Elves. The prevailing feeling is one of wonder. The elven ability to perceive both the material and the spirit world only gives an ethereal logic to the whole.

The Elves are more than one hundred (144 if the PCs take the time to count). Among its princes are *Ingwë* (Minyar), *Finwë* (Tatyar) and *Elwë, Olwë, Lenwë* and *Círdan* (Nelyar) among others (see the accompanying article in *Other Minds*, Issue 15). Later *Denethor* (Nelyar) and *Mahtan* (Tatyar) appear. The next generations are still slow in coming. The PCs belong to the first generation.

The Elves find they have the gift of speech. They form a community from the start, quickly developing their social skills.

In this first scene it is necessary to describe the "ethereal" nature of the world in the wake of the Elves' awakening, under the stars of Varda Elentári. It is also important to locate the PCs in this context and define their activities and preferences.

Long they dwelt in their first home by the water under stars, and they walked the Earth in wonder; and they began to make speech and to give names to all things that they perceived. Themselves they named the Quendi, signifying those that speak with voices; for as yet they had met no other living things that spoke or sang.

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*

To define their activities and preferences the Loremaster should ask the players to describe their activities after their "awakening" and even make a list of their preferences. This serves two purposes: to describe the world and to assign advancements. The PCs get six free advancements to distribute over the skills they prioritized (if the complete list of skills is used instead, then double that number).

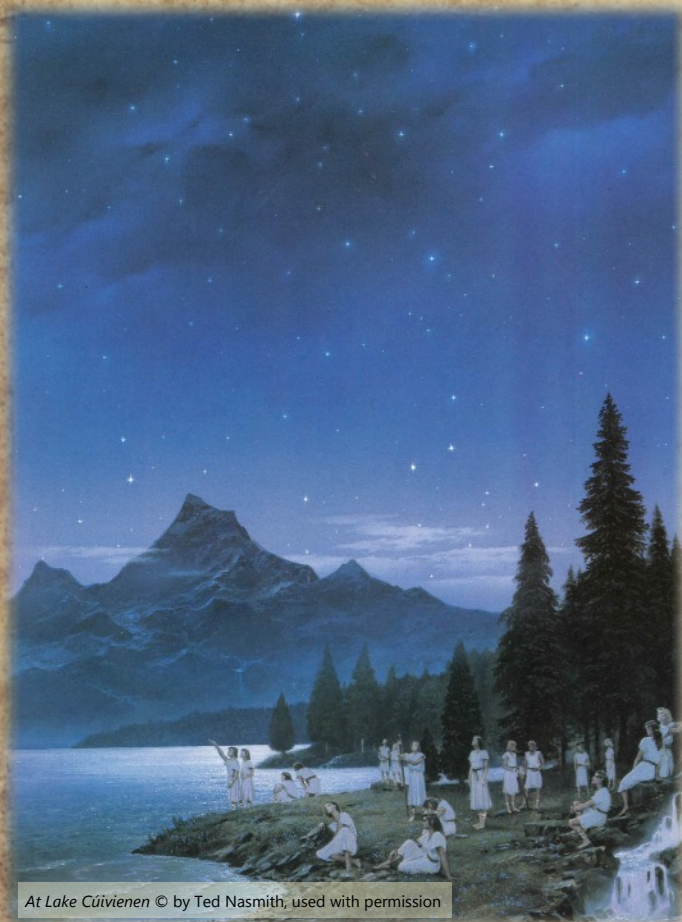
This is not all though. The Loremaster should take this approach to describe factors relevant to the story such as the location of the forest, the waterfall or the name of the other elves. And to determine the interests and shared experiences of the group. Especially the latter is important.

Note that this first scene covers a long and indefinite period of time. It is the Awakening of the Elves under the eternal starlight and without any way of measuring time. It is entirely possible that if the characters choose to have a relationship they may

"The Awakening"

MERP: Advancements ♦
Areas of skill development and/or Development Points.

MEAG: The PCs now get their full 12 Maneuver Marks with which to buy Maneuvers on their Skill list.



At Lake Cuiviénen © by Ted Nasmith, used with permission

choose to have a child before the end of this scene. So it does not really matter if finally there is the impression of only a few days or even several years.

Elven NPCs: Here are some elven NPCs to use if the social interaction allows it. These are only brief personality guides; for a more detailed game data, refer to the upcoming article in *Other Minds*, Issue 15.

Important note: All the generational associations of Quendi are speculative, since Tolkien gives us no positive evidence of the ancient names characters (e.g. Finwë, Elwë etc.) belonging to a specific generation. Especially the equation of the original three elven leaders Imin, Tata and Enel with the named characters Ingwë, Finwë and Elwë is debatable, but this is a scholarly debate rather than an adventure. It would be a topic worth discussing in a scholarly essay on the subject.



Varda © by Olga Kukhtenkova, used with permission

Ingwë (Imin): The leader of the *minyar* elves and the first elf to “awake”. Actually his original name (“Imin”) means “the first one”. Ingwë is a later name. His people (the *minyar*) will become the Vanyar. Imin is a regal and charismatic leader, with great skill for arts, and completely devoted to “the Lady of the Stars” (Varda).

Indis: A female *minyar* elf of the first generation. She wakes as a really young child and it takes time until she comes to age.

Finwë (Tata): The leader of the *tatyar* elves. His original name means “the second one”. His people will become the Noldor. Finwë is a lover of knowledge and a great crafter. He is completely curious about the world in all its facets. He himself is a wise and patient leader, but the lord of a very emotional and impatient people.

Míriel Serindë (Tatië): A female *tatyar* elf of the first generation, partner of Tata. She wakes as a young lady, and it will take a long time before she and Tata bear a child. She loves weaving.

Rúmil: A *tatyar* elf of the first generation. He loves knowledge and will become the archetype of loremasters afterwards.

Mahtan: A first generation *tatyar* elf. He is a great friend of Tata. He loves the earth and things made with his own hands. He knows much and loves to teach those skills to other talented elves.

Elwë (Enel) and his brother Olwë: The conjunct leaders of the *nelyar* elves, they love the sound of water. Enel is a charismatic leader with great empathy to his people, even if haughty over certain things. Afterwards they both will be torn between the love for Middle-earth and the promises of Valinor.

Círdan: A very wise *nelya* elf of the first generation, he has a very special connection to water and the realm of Ulmo. He stays always near the waters of Cuiviénen, where he bathes, swims and learns the secrets of floating things. He is foresighted and can look far into the future. He has no love for war, but can act with determination if the lives of others are at stake.

Lenwë: A first generation *nelya*. He loves Middle-earth deeply, and afterwards will follow the call of the Valar for love to his lords. But in the end his love of Middle-earth (and loath for Valinor) will win. He loves water and trees with the same passion.

Saeros: A *nelya* of the second generation, he is a sardonic and egocentric youngster.

Daeron: A *nelya* of the second generation. An intelligent youngster, he loves music. He tends to stay with his own people.

Eöl: A very smart *nelya* of the second generation. He loves hidden knowledge but keeps it for himself. He is related to Elwë and Olwë. He is a very sarcastic youngster who does not care what others think of him.

SCENE TWO: "SHADOWS IN THE FOREST"

A technical note: This and the following scenes and acts have numbers in superscript and a parenthesis; e.g. ¹⁾. This is not a foot- or endnote as one can easily guess, but a reference to the corresponding number in the box on the same side. This references to the precise game mechanics of the various systems covered here.

FIRST ACT: "The Scream"

At the next opportunity that all the PCs go to the forest (for any reason; the Loremaster may need to offer one) on the way to their destination the PCs must make *perception* rolls¹⁾ until they perceive strange shadows in the forest.

No matter how good the rolls, their perceptions are always fleeting and not precise. It is more like an uncomfortable feeling than something tangible.

At the same time the PCs can make appropriate rolls to achieve their initial objective. If the PCs decide to abandon their journey and escape, then the events will occur immediately.

Then they hear clearly a scream of terror that is lost in the distance. The PCs are allowed a *perception* roll¹⁾ to determine the direction of the scream, which is no more than a few hundred meters away.

The PCs must decide their course of action: to help and/or investigate (continue with the Second Act) or to escape (go directly to the Third Act).

Second Act: "The Disappearance"

This event will be played only if the PCs decide to investigate the source of the scream.

With a normal *perception* roll¹⁾ they can identify the direction and approximate location of the scream. This is in a nearby ravine, about 200 or 300 meters away, with a small stream and a forest of pines especially thick and dark.

The PCs can use *stealth*²⁾ or any other precautions when approaching. Some of the approaches can be problematical and require skill rolls. But in general their closing in will not be contested.

When approaching, those who achieve a hard (-5) *perception* roll³⁾ feel (rather than see) a great shadow that flies over them and soars away, momentarily covering the stars.

In the ravine there is nobody in sight. A normal *track* roll (20+)⁴⁾ finds traces of an elf walking alone in the woods. A complicated *track* roll (22+)⁵⁾ will follow the tracks until they suddenly stop, take a step back and fall; there are no traces that go away (the elf froze in terror before "disappearing"). And finally a difficult *track* roll (25+)⁶⁾ finds a few barely visible traces of horseshoes. The PCs do not know what a horse is, so the Loremaster should describe the footprint without mentioning the words "horse" or "horseshoe". A *perception* (sensitivity) roll⁷⁾ should give the PCs the feeling that this ravine has become a place of terror.

And then, suddenly, they "feel" that they are surrounded by shadows.

"The Disappearance"

MERP:

- 1) a medium *perception* roll (+0)
- 2) *stalk/hide*
- 3) *perception* roll (-25)
- 4) medium *track* roll (+0)
- 5) hard *track* roll (-10)
- 6) *track* roll (-25)
- 7) *perception* (intuition) roll

MEAG:

- 1) medium *perception* roll (DL 8)
- 2) *stealth*
- 3) hard *perception* roll (DL 9)
- 4) medium *tracking* roll (DL 7)
- 5) hard *tracking* roll (DL 9)
- 6) very hard *tracking* roll (DL 11)
- 7) medium *perception* roll (DL 8)

BASH:

- 1) normal (10) *Vision* (Mind) roll
- 2) *Stealth/Prowling* (Agility) skill (F20)
- 3) tough (20) *Outdoor/Tracking* (Mind) skill (F21) roll
- 4) normal (10) *Outdoor/Tracking* roll
- 5) complicated (15) *Outdoor/Tracking* roll
- 6) difficult (25) *Outdoor/Tracking* roll
- 7) normal (10) *Mind* roll.

"The Shadows"

MERP:

- 1) ...reduced by the bonus for (IG + PR)/2, the damage is applied to the intelligence and presence points (IG and PR)...
- 2) M&M or athletics (running) rolls,
- 3) maneuver difficulty,
- 4) This maneuver difficulty is -10 to -30, according to the tension and the progress the PCs achieve,
- 5) Damage Reduction of 50% (ignore stun and bleeding results),
- 6) light magic: light law; -20 to resistance rolls of shadows and they take double damage.

MEAG:

- 1) Fear attacks are resolved like Ghostspear spell attacks (ranged spell that does direct damage). RSA is applied for the Shadows, reduced by the Defense of the victim, and modified by the Additional Damage of the attack (based on Magical Bonus). The damage is applied to the Endurance points of the character
- 2) "Move at a Run" combat actions
- 3) target number
- 4) This should be about 10 rounds (or 20, according to the tension and the progress the PCs achieve) without tripping
- 5) 'Armor' DB +2
- 6) Ghostspear (Varda/Seer). This spell ignores the 'Armor' DB of the Shadows.

BASH:

- 1) Treat as Fear Attack (Immobilization 1 {1}, Linked {2} to Continual Damage 1 {1}, Range 10 squares {2}, Mind used instead of Brawn to resist {1}, Damage to Energy Points {1}, Gains Villain Dice, 9pts). Once a victim is hit and fails a Normal (10) Mind test it will be paralyzed with terror. After losing all their Energy Points (EP) they will receive a Villain Dice (BU73)
- 2) extended Athletics/Running (Agility) roll (each panel, see Extended Checks, BU34), 3) target number, 4) this target number is 50, 5) Ghost Form (3 pts) Bio-Manipulation Power (F15).

Third Act: "The Shadows"

...by after-knowledge the wise declare that Melkor, ever watchful, was first aware of the awakening of the Quendi, and sent shadows and evil spirits to spy upon them and waylay them. [...] the most ancient songs of the Elves, of which echoes are remembered still in the West, tell of the shadow-shapes that walked the hills above Cuiviénen, or would pass suddenly over the stars...

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor

The PCs are surrounded by shadows, and feel how the fear begins to crawl up their backs, as something solid caught up in their throat. The PCs are subject to one fear attack per round. Fear attacks are resolved as any other type of attack: OB is applied for the Shadows, reduced by the Spiritual Defense of the victim, and modified by the Damage Factor (DF) of the attack. The damage is applied to the Spirit Points (SP) of the character, with the consequences outlined in the description of the Shadows¹).

The PCs can escape or face the Shadows. To escape the PCs must make an extended athletics (running) roll²) (each round). To keep the tension the players should not know the target number; but they should know there is a success number³) to escape out of the forest and to reach Cuiviénen and the safety of their brethren. This target number is 50 (or 100, according to the tension and the progress the PCs achieve)⁴). Once the PCs are out of the forest they are safe, and realize that there are no more any "shadows" around.



Of course the PCs may opt for a heroic stance, and can choose to face the Shadows instead of escaping. In this first encounter there are two Shadows, a number that can be increased to a maximum of one shadow per character if the situation warrants.

Physical attacks have little effect on Shadows since they are "insubstantial", receiving a Damage Reduction of 2 (DR 2)⁵). But the use of magic is effective, especially the holy light (Varda). According to the PCs skill in using it, it could function as an attack that ignores the DR of the Shadows⁶). If the PCs surpass the HPs of the Shadows, they will be undone as shreds in the wind; but they have not died, and the PCs fear that they will return.

Remember that the Quendi do not know weapons yet, and the PCs may not possess one (hunting is done by running, chasing down the animal and seizing it with their own hands, for example). But that doesn't mean that the PCs can't improvise. They can use their feet, hands, a stick or a rock/stone as weapons.

Even if the PCs can withstand the attacks from the Shadows and defeat some of them, they will continue to receive fear attacks each round. After losing all their Spirit Points (SP) they will end up immobilized by terror and will receive a Corruption Point (CP). It is assumed that the PCs must escape from the shadows and not vice versa (and this should be encouraged), though the Loremaster should recognize partial successes, like defeating some Shadows. But even then they will feel followed on their way home.

In the various game tests the PCs adopted a heroic stance and managed to disastrously overcome the Shadows. But they got many open rolls, while the Shadows' attacks were minor. Perhaps this encounter has a special karma, but the Loremaster should not count on it and be aware that the PCs may suffer severe wounds or even casualties.

Shadows of Melkor (2): Initiative +8; MV 10m/r; Defense +1; Spiritual defense +4; DR 2; HP 10; without physical attacks; Fear attack +15; DF x1 → paralysis with 0 SP; *Special attacks* Combined area attack (all shadows attack as if they were one, this attack affects all PCs), Synergy (+2 to attack for each extra shadow over the first, to a maximum of +25 from six Shadows onward); *Vulnerabilities* holy light (Varda, DF x1); *Resistances* physical attacks (included in the statistics).

Once a victim reaches 0 SP, it receives 1 CP and will be paralyzed with terror. In the next round it will be enveloped by its own shadow. And after three rounds this shadow becomes a "Winged Shadow" enhanced by the spiritual energy of the victim. With a successful *perception* roll the other PCs can see the victim as a fetus, trapped in the "belly" of the Winged Shadow. Until the last moment the other PCs can try to save him, but in the sixth round it will disappear in the dark sky.

For this campaign in the beginning of time, a mythic era, the Storyteller should allow really flashy magic use (so long as they do not become impossibilities — *únati*).

During game testing really interesting uses of the different paradigms of magic came about. And some were definitively unsubstle.

Epilogue to the Scene

It is assumed that no PC will become a casualty in this scene. But it is also important that they do not be "immortal" (i.e. still being subject to a forceful death). And if one of them loses all its SPs and cannot be freed by his comrades, then he will "disappear", just one more of the elves lost in the deep dungeons of Melkor. The player must create a new PC of the 2nd generation. This will give the desired feeling that now and then "people disappear".

The PCs receive one Development Point (DP) as a reward for surviving this encounter. In this simplified system DPs are used to improve one Path of Magic in one point.

This encounter can be repeated several times if necessary, so long as it is still interesting. The Loremaster should increase the number of Shadows and set them in different situations. But each time the PCs will also be more prepared and experienced. This encounter is the only one in the simplified version.

MERP:

Shadows of Melkor (2):

Level 5, Speed = moderately fast; DB = 15; HP 50; without physical attacks; Fear attack +60 leads to paralysis when IG and PR fall to 0; *Vulnerabilities*: light magic (-20 to RRs; take double damage); *Resistances* physical attacks (only 50% of damage and they ignore stun and bleeding results). Once a victims IG and PR reaches 0, it receives 1 CP and will be paralyzed with terror...

MEAG:

Shadows of Melkor (2): Initiative +3; Movement +1; Defense +3; DR +2 (vs. physical attacks); Endurance 40; Fear (as Ghostspear) attack (RSA) +4; Magical Bonus of +3. *Perception* (DL 7) roll to see the victim trapped in the "belly" of the Winged Shadow.

BASH:

Shadows of Melkor (2): See Appendix E.

Epilogue to the Scene

MERP:

DP ♦ Skill Development Point (DP).

MEAG:

The PCs receive 100 XP as a reward for surviving this encounter. In the MEAG system, 100 XPs can be used to learn two new spells, two new skill maneuvers (or one of each) or add a +1 bonus to a whole Skill Group.

BASH:

One Experience Point (XP). In this simplified system XPs are used to improve Magic Powers (F12).

INTERLUDE: "SAFE"

The characters will be safe in the moment they come out of the forest. But they will have trouble explaining to the other Quendi what happened. For most of them it is clear that the PCs are really scared and therefore something serious must have happened. But it will be hard to imagine "shadows" that prey on elves. After all they still do not know evil as such.

But it soon becomes clear that some elves have become lost—forever. Rumors begin to grow, and they begin to speak of the "Shadows" and later others may even report of a "Dark Hunter and his horse". And every time more elves disappear. Everyone is afraid to go alone into the forest.

If the Loremaster wishes he can increase the tension of this interlude and detail out the incredulity, sarcasm and fear of the other Quendi. Saeros for example (the character who taunts Túrin in *The Silmarillion*) is fine for impersonating a sarcastic youngster who makes fun of the PCs and their story. And do not forget the effect of the spies and doppelgangers sent by Melkor to confuse the elves.

***Note on the language:** It could be said that Elves know nothing of "horses" or "riders" and so should not have words to name them. But they quickly develop their language, and those words come into being when they need to name the black rider and his horse.*

SCENE THREE: "THE DARK HUNTER"

The PCs probably have no desire to venture again into the forest, away from the safety of Cuiviénen. It may be a long time ago (several years) and the PCs (and their children) may have grown up, and the PCs may have improved their skills. The Loremaster will define whether this development is applied or if the sequence of events is temporally closely connected.

However for the next scene it is important that the PC's venture into the forest again. To do this simply ask about their intentions for future activities. Should the PC's be cautious and avoid venturing alone in the woods you can use the following trick of the "spy" of Melkor [First Act].

FIRST ACT [OPTIONAL]: "TO THE RESCUE OF INGWE"

The PC's are together, and are sought out by a friend (Loremaster choice how close), completely shaken with fear. He tells them that *Ingwë* (or another character near to the PC's) has gone insane and decided to go alone into the hills to show that he is not afraid of the Shadows or the Black Rider. But the messenger tells them he is mad and the shadows are going to get him. And the PC's must find him before the Hunter does!

With that the PC's should jump and run after their friend. But the Loremaster should know that *Ingwë* never would be so crazy and that he is quite safe. The messenger has seen an illusion or a doppelganger to lure them into the forest. Cautious PC's might first investigate for *Ingë* and thus find out he has not left at all. In this case, he might have departed and the people tell them that "he has gone away on an errand" or something similar. Then, by coincidence, this fits with the timing for the "crazy" *Ingwë* and the PC's even with some investigation are led to believe that he is really in trouble.

Once the PC's start the chase the action will take place as described in the second act. But the Loremaster should take into account the following observations, because the PC's will not "forget" that they are actually trying to save "*Ingwë*".

"To the rescue of Ingwë"

MERP:

- 1) -25 track rolls
- 2) medium perception (+0) rolls
- 3) M&M or athletic skills (running) rolls.

MEAG:

- 1) hard Tracking rolls (DL 9)
- 2) very easy Perception rolls (DL 6)
- 3) "Move at a Run" rolls.

BASH:

- 1) difficult (25) Outdoor / Tracking (Mind) skill (F21) rolls
- 2) normal (10) Vision (Mind) rolls
- 3) Athletics / Running (Agility) skill (F20) rolls.

If they take the time to make difficult *outdoor skills* (track) rolls (-5)¹⁾, they will find no trace. But with normal *perception* rolls²⁾ they will always see “Ingwë” in the distance. With additional *perception* rolls the PC’s will perceive a group of “Shadows” stealthily following “Ingwë”. This “hunt” should last only a few “rolls”, but long enough to penetrate deep into the forest. A number of *athletics* (running) rolls³⁾ are in order. The Dark Hunter will join this “persecution” as described in the next act.

If the PC’s are not fast enough the Shadows will surround “Ingwë” in the end, who begins to fight for his life. This lasts until the PC’s get involved themselves and get a free round of attack. There are four Shadows attacking “Ingwë”.

But the next round “Ingwë” will transform himself into a Shadow, and will attack the PCs with a hideous laughter. Meanwhile the Dark Hunter approaches from the rear. In this second round the PC’s only have to fight the four original Shadow plus the “Ingwë” Shadow, but it is clear that the next round they will be confronted by the Dark Hunter.

Second Act: “Forest Hunt”

The PC’s are in the forest. A simple *perception* roll¹⁾ gives them the feeling that someone, or something, is on their trail. A difficult *perception* roll (-5)²⁾ allows them to see the Black Rider on his horse in the distance.

So it came to pass [...] that if any of the Elves strayed far abroad, alone or few together, they would often vanish, and never return; and the Quendi said that the Hunter had caught them, and they were afraid. And indeed the most ancient songs of the Elves, of which echoes are remembered still in the West, tell of [...] the dark Rider upon his wild horse that pursued those that wandered to take them and devour them.

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*

It should be clear to the PC’s that fighting is not best option. If necessary, the Loremaster should give out hints at tips to convince the PC’s of this. So begins a game of cat and mouse. The PC’s must make opposed *stealth* rolls against the Hunter’s *perception*³⁾. Soon they will realize that it is better to sacrifice SP’s with their *light-footed* talent⁴⁾ to avoid leaving footprints, as the hunter begins to *track* them.

In this event the Loremaster should be generous with the bonuses for the actions of the PC’s. Allow *fool’s luck* rolls⁵⁾ to put a stream or other barrier between the Hunter and the PCs. And allow *athletics* (running or stunt) rolls so that they can escape at the last moment.

The Hunter is a formidable foe and not particularly susceptible to light magic. He is interested in capturing the PC’s, so he will not use his spear, his bow or his horse’s hooves, but only his net (or a bola if, for example, the PC’s climb the trees to escape).

The PC’s will escape the Hunter only if they are able to mislead him and flee. If they are unable to elude him, then they must finally face the Hunter.

The Dark Hunter (1): Initiative +12; MV 12m/r (utilizes the MV of his horse); Defense +5; Féa +10; DR 0; HP 50 (to retreat); Attacks black spear +20 (DF x1/2, fumble 1), Bow +10 (DF x1/5, fumble 1), Net +15 (DF 1HP +entangle, fumble 1-2), Bola +10 (DF x1/10 +entangle, fumble 1-2); Black magic +10; Noteworthy skills ride +15, perception +15, track +15.

A victim of a successful entangle attack will be caught in the net or bola. In his next action he may try to free himself with an athletics (escape artist) roll, having to

“The Dark Hunter”

MEAG: The Dark Hunter (1): Initiative +5; Move +5 (uses the Move of his horse); Defense 5; Magic Bonus +5; Endurance 200 (then retreats); Attacks: Black Spear (Melee OB +8), Bow (Missile OB +8), Net (Melee OB +5, entangle only), Bola (Missile OB +5, entangle only); Noteworthy skills: Riding +8, Perception +8, Tracking +6.

For a victim of an entangle attack to free himself: a Subterfuge or Strength roll, having to achieve a success equal to the attack roll that caught him. To escape once tied to the rump of the horse: he must make two successful Subterfuge or Strength rolls in a row. Other PCs can try to cut the net with an edged weapon (Def 5, End 5).

BASH: The Dark Hunter (1): See Appendix E.

“Forest Hunt”

MERP:

- 1) easy perception roll (+20)
- 2) perception roll (-25)
- 3) opposed stalk/hide rolls
- 4) Light-footed: non-MERP optional special elven movement skill → on stone = +0; dirt = -10; mud/sand = -20; snow = -30 to -50
- 5) Fool’s luck rolls → 50/50, 6) athletics skills (running or tumble)

MEAG:

- 1) easy Perception roll (DL 7)
- 2) hard Perception roll (DL 9)
- 3) contested Stealth against Perception
- 4) ...to sacrifice Mana on Grace and/or Speed spells
- 5) Luck rolls
- 6) Jumping/Swimming/Climbing/
- 7) Trickery rolls

BASH:

- 1) simple (5) Mind roll
- 2) difficult (25) Vision (Mind) roll
- 3) contested Stealth/Hiding (Agility) skill (F20) rolls against the Tracking/Outdoor (Mind) skill (F20) rolls of the Hunter
- 4) ...to sacrifice EPs with their Soft Step/Light-Footed Power
- 5) Hero Points or Dumb Luck rolls
- 6) Athletics/Running or Acrobatics rolls.

achieve a success equal to the attack roll that caught him. In the next round the net will close and the character will be drawn behind the horse. In the third round the Dark Hunter will raise him up on the net and hang him on the rump of his horse; to escape he must exceed an athletics (escape artist) roll with double successes. Other PCs can try to cut the net with an edged weapon (Def +5, HP 10). Whoever wants to try to cut the net is exposed to a hoof attack of the black horse. The prisoner himself can try to cut the net, but will need a small edged weapon; larger weapons cannot be used inside the net. He might also try a feat of strength roll to break the net with their hands, but should exceed +10 successes in one go or +20 in an extended roll.

Black Horse (1): Initiative uses that of the Dark Hunter; MV 12m/r; Defense +5; Féa +0 (the Dark Hunter can protect his horse with his own willpower, if he realizes that it is necessary); DR 0; HP 50; Attacks hoof +8 (DF x1, fumble 1), bite +5 (DF x1/3, fumble 1).

The fight should be conducted in the normal way, including the five Shadows of the first act (if that is the hook used). The next Act will begin after the capture of the first PC.

Third Act: "Battle of Titans"

They found that they were looking at a most extraordinary face. It belonged to a large Man-like, almost Troll-like, figure, at least fourteen foot high, very sturdy, with a tall head, and hardly any neck. Whether it was clad in stuff like green and grey bark, or whether that was its hide, was difficult to say. At any rate the arms, at a short distance from the trunk, were not wrinkled, but covered with a brown smooth skin. The large feet had seven toes each. The lower part of the long face was covered with a sweeping grey beard, bushy, almost twiggy at the roots, thin and mossy at the ends. But at the moment the hobbits noted little but the eyes. These deep eyes were now surveying them, slow and solemn, but very penetrating. They were brown, shot with a green light.

—The Lord of the Rings. Treebeard

Black Horse

MERP: Level 5 Speed = fast; DB +15; HP 250; Attacks: hoof +40 (fumble range 1), bite +25 (fumble range 1).

MEAG: Initiative uses that of the Dark Hunter; Move +5; Defense 5; Endurance 200; use Magical Bonus of Rider vs. spells; Attacks: hoof (Melee OB +4), bite (Melee +2).

BASH: See Appendix E.

The Dark Hunter

MERP: The Dark Hunter (1): Level 20 Speed = Horse's speed (utilizes the M&M bonus of his horse); DB +40; HP 250 (to retreat); Attacks: black spear +100 (fumble range 1), Bow +50 (fumble range 1), Net +75 (fumble range 1-2), Bola +50 (fumble 1-2); directed spells +50 and base spell OB +10 (knows all evil cleric base lists to 20th level); Noteworthy skills ride +75, perception +75, track +75.

To cut the net with an edged weapon: DB 25, HP 50. Strength roll (stat value not bonus) to break the net: -50.

[Continues]

[To be read at any moment the characters have the time to look at Treebeard]

From the third round of combat onward, especially if one or more PC's are caught by the Dark Hunter, the Loremaster can introduce Treebeard (Fangorn) at any time as a vigorous tree standing in the middle of the fight, who decides to intervene on behalf of the PC's. The only reason to delay the appearance of Treebeard is to give the PC's a chance of their own heroic victory. In the—admittedly unlikely—case of the PC's winning on their own, Treebeard will not intervene, staying still and watching until the PC's realize his presence by noticing a tree with eyes!

This encounter will be brief, maximum three rounds in duration, but capable of displaying both Treebeard and the Hunter in all their fury.

The PC's will only see a tree, and how from one moment to another a large branch with all its leaves "falls" on the Shadows and/or the Black Rider. Splat! All that remains of the Shadows is a cloud of dust. The Black Rider instead will defend himself with everything and try to destroy Treebeard.

Both will attack with everything at their disposal. Both are protected by fate, and none will die in this encounter. But presumably the Hunter at some point will be unhorsed. Then he will let out a whisper of hate and flee from the scene, leaving Treebeard and the PC's alone.

Treebeard (1): Initiative +0; MV 1 or 5m/r; Defense +0; Féa +10; DR 2; HP 300 (protected by fate); Attacks fist +20 (DF x2, fumble 1); Vulnerabilities fire (ignores DR); White magic +20 (Yavanna).

FOURTH ACT: "Treebeard"

Often afterwards Pippin tried to describe his first impression of them.

'One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present: like sun shimmering on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake. I don't know, but it felt as if something that grew in the ground — asleep, as you might say, or just feeling itself as something between roof-tip and leaf-tip, between deep earth and sky had suddenly waked up, and was considering you with the same slow care that it had given to its own inside affairs for endless years.'

—The Lord of the Rings. Treebeard

[To be read after the characters had the opportunity to talk to Treebeard]

Suddenly the fight is over and the PC's realize a couple of black eyes wide and deep as a well that look at them from the trunk of the tree. It watches them and says nothing. A simple social skills (empathy) roll¹⁾ is enough to assure the PC's that its intentions are not evil, but show curiosity and kindness.

In this encounter it is extremely important that the Loremaster stresses the silence of Treebeard in his play, while expressing his sincere curiosity. This should be achieved with non-verbal reactions to the approaches of the PC's.

Treebeard has "just" awoken in the world, amid the *Sleep of Yavanna*. He has spent these entire "years" silent, listening to the wind in the pines, the sound of roots and worms in the earth, and watching the stars.

Should a PC be injured or knocked unconscious in the previous fight, he will lift him carefully and with rhythmic strides take him to a nearby water spring. There he will immerse him until he wakes up and takes a deep breath. His wounds are not completely healed, but the worst marks from the Shadows have disappeared (d6 HP and d20 SP recovery)²⁾. This water spring is a kind of primordial "Ent draught".

One of the fundamental experiences that the PC's should make with Treebeard (and the other Ents) is to trying to talk to him. Eventually, this will lead them (as Elves) to teach language to him (and the Ents in general). Depending on the actions of the PC's it is possible that they do hear the first words from his wooden mouth, as he begins to discover his abilities.

Who calls you hobbits, though? That does not sound elvish to me. Elves made all the old words: they began it. [...] Elves began it, of course, waking trees up and teaching them to speak and learning their tree-talk. They always wished to talk to everything, the old Elves did. I have slow care that it had given to its own inside affairs for endless years.'

—The Lord of the Rings. Treebeard

The remainder of their "visit" will proceed without any news. Treebeard flatly refuses to accompany the PC's into Cuiviénen for their protection. For some reason he knows that this is not his fate.

The PC's can stay with Treebeard so long as they want, hence the next interlude and epilogue can be played directly afterwards, or extended temporally.

At the end of this scene the PC's receive one DP in the paradigm of "plants, earth, fertility and animals" (Yavanna)³⁾.

"Treebeard"

MERP: [ignore data from Fangorn module]:

Level 20, Speed =medium; DB +25; HP 1500 (protected by fate); Attack: fist +100 (fumble range 1); Vulnerabilities fire (RRs -10 take 1.5x damage); knows all open channeling, animist and ranger lists to 20th level directed spell OB +100, base spell OB +20.

MEAG: Initiative +0; Move -2; Defense 3; DB +3; Endurance 900 (protected by fate); Attacks: fist (Melee OB +10, AD +5); Vulnerabilities: fire (ignores DB); Magic Bonus +5 (Yavanna/Alchemy); Knows all herbs and potions.

BASH: Treebeard (1): See Appendix E.

Interlude: "Tree Shepherds"

"Tree Shepherds"

MERP:

- 1) perception rolls or detection spells from the Animist and Ranger lists
- 2) Skill Development Points for social skills
- 3) Listen to the voice of plants: non-MERP optional special elven language skill.

MEAG:

- 1) ...though the PCs may perceive them on their own
- 2) the time scale for the learning of languages
- 3) learning the language of the Ents, and learning to "listen" to the voice of plants (possibly with a XP in the paradigm of Yavanna / Alchemy)

BASH:

- 1) The rewards should involve advances in Social Science skills, learning the language of the Ents, and learning to listen to the voice of plants (possibly with an XP in the paradigm of Yavanna)

At the Loremaster's discretion, the following events may be played directly after the Scene Two. It is designed as a longer process parallel to the rest of the adventure proper.

1. Treebeard is curious about the world. Out of affection for the PC's he may remain a while in one place. But his wandering nature will eventually set him off to seek new horizons. This means that to maintain contact the PC's (and other Quendi NPCs, such as *Lenwë*) must travel ever increasing distances and discover new paths. But because of their fate the center of action of the PC's should never leave Cuiviénen as the time of separation among the Quendi has not yet come. In this first chapter Treebeard will not wander too far from Cuiviénen. But in a long campaign this is the perfect opportunity to introduce new adventures to the PCs.
2. At some point the PC's will meet other Ents. Treebeard will normally be the one to show them, though the PC's might be able to perceive them with rolls in the magic of plants (Yavanna)¹⁾. Some are still asleep, while others have already awakened. The activity of this dispersed society should also provide many adventure opportunities.
3. At this time also appear the first Huorns. Their malice is part of their nature because of the taint of Melkor. At first they are all awake due to the eagerness of the Quendi and Ents to awaken more Ents. The Huorns are dangerous in the absence of other Ents, and even then they can take them by surprise. [Future Adventures: "The Ents' Saga"]
4. Language learning. The Quendi are those who teach speech to the Ents. But the Ents soon develop their own language. It's a long but eventually successful process, with no specific rules. The Loremaster can use the time scale for the learning of languages²⁾, and some rolls in social skills would be in order. The rewards should involve advances in social skills, learning the language of the Ents, and learning to listen to the voice of plants (possibly with a DP in the paradigm of Yavanna)³⁾. This should be a gradual process, parallel to the central plot.

Treebeard will always be an ally of the PC's (if they do not do something to earn his enmity), and next to him they can travel safer in the woods. But Treebeard is not everywhere, and the shadow of Melkor slowly spreads further.

"Treebeard"

MERP:

- 1) +25 Intuition roll (stat value, not bonus)
- 2) d6 HP recovery per round
- 3) PCs learn one of Treebeard's spell lists.

MEAG:

- 1) easy Perception roll (DL 7)
- 2) 4D6 Endurance recovery
- 3) the PCs receive 100 XP, in the paradigm of Combat, Healing or Alchemy.

BASH:

- 1) Simple (5) Mind roll (or use Empathy (1 pt) Power (SF22))
- 2) Healing 1: x1DM
- 3) one XP in the paradigm of "plants, earth, fertility and animals" (Yavanna).

Epilogue (to the Scene): "Farewell to Treebeard"

Treebeard is seeking to protect his own people. He must seek Yavanna ("the Earth Mother") to learn how to counteract the corruption of Melkor. He has to care for his own people. "And you should take care of yourselves and seek the security of Cuiviénen." [Future Adventures: "The Ents' Saga"]

SCENE FOUR: "Steps of Fate"

And on a time it chanced that Oromë rode eastward in his hunting, and he turned north by the shores of Helcar and passed under the shadows of the Orocarni, the Mountains of the East. Then on a sudden Nahar set up a great neighing, and stood still. And Oromë wondered and sat silent, and it seemed to him that in the quiet of the land under the stars he heard afar off many voices singing.

—*The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves
and the Captivity of Melkor*

[To be read after the coming of Oromë]

FIRST ACT: "A Shadow over Cuiviénen"

So far Cuiviénen is a haven that no shadow dares to penetrate its protection. But that is going to change.

After the departure of Treebeard the Quendi have lost all contact with the outside world. No one dares to go further out into the forest. Of those who did leave Cuiviénen none have returned (at least those are the rumors, the PC's cannot know if these rumors are real or lies from the spies of Melkor). Now all disappearances are attributed to the "Hunter". Cuiviénen is currently the only safe place.

The PC's are in Cuiviénen. It is up to them if they are together or each one on his own. The PC's should make a *fools' luck* roll¹⁾. Those who fail will be in the middle of the following attack, while those who pass the roll will be found far from the point of attack. Everyone is entitled a *perception* roll²⁾. For those directly involved it is to avoid being surprised (see below). Those who are far away can try to understand the situation: they will see a disturbance and maybe hear some shouting; if they exceed a complicated roll (22+)³⁾ they will see a black shadow from which the other Quendi run away; and passing a hard roll (25+)⁴⁾ they recognize that the Black Rider is hunting elves—in Cuiviénen! If they fail the *perception* roll, the commotion will be evident in the second round, and the elven eyes of the PC's allow them to make a normal *perception* roll⁵⁾ each round to perceive the details.

In the first combat round the Black Rider will leap like a shadowy out of the forest surrounding Cuiviénen. If the PC's are directly involved and succeeded in their *perception* roll²⁾ they will have a free action before the Black Rider reaches them. Those who fail this roll will be surprised.

To attack, the Black Hunter will use a net fastened to his black horse with a rope. To determine who receives the attack make a *fools' luck* roll⁶⁾. If all pass this roll then it will be another elf who is attacked (it will be an automatic success if an NPC is the victim). If all directly involved PC's fail the *fools' luck* roll, then there will be no other NPC's nearby and they are the only available victims.

After a successful attack the net will close, and the victim will be dragged behind the horse (an extra attack with DF x1/3)⁷⁾. In the next round the Black Rider will

"A Shadow over Cuiviénen"

MERP:

- 1) *fools' luck* roll
- 2) *medium perception* roll (+0)
- 3) *hard perception* roll (-10)
- 4) *very hard perception* roll (-25)
- 5) *medium perception* roll (+0)
- 6) a *fools' luck* roll (50/50)
- 7) an *extra net* attack
- 8) *medium athletic skill (running)* or *B&M* roll (+0)

MEAG:

- 1) The PCs should make a basic 2D6 roll. Those who roll under 7 will be in the middle of the following attack; while those who roll 7 or over will be far from the point of attack
- 2) *perception* roll (DL 7)
- 3) *hard perception* roll (DL 9)
- 4) *very hard perception* roll (DL 11)
- 5) *easy perception* roll (DL 6)
- 6) randomly determine who receives the attack
- 7) an *extra Melee* attack at OB +3
- 8) with 5 "Moving at a Run" roll successes they take 5 rounds to arrive — double this if there are any failures

BASH:

- 1) *Normal* (10) *Mind* rolls
- 2) *Mind (Vision)* roll
- 3) *complicated* (15) *Mind* roll
- 4) *tough* (20) *Mind* roll
- 5) *normal* (10) *Mind (Vision)* roll
- 6) *normal* (10) *Agility* roll
- 7) an *extra* attack that does x1DM Stun
- 8) *normal* (10) *Athletics/Running (Agility)* Extended Check roll with a goal of 20

suspend it and bind it to the rump of his horse. In theory capturing each victim will take two rounds of combat, for a total of six rounds for three prisoners before disappearing in the forest on the seventh round.

The PC's far away succeed in their perception rolls, they will perceive the attack in the distance and may come to the aid of their friends. With an *athletics* (running) roll with +20 successes they take one round to arrive⁸); the successes are cumulative.

The PC's can attempt to escape like all the other NPC's. As long as they are being chased however their chances of escape are minimal. But if the Black Rider goes after another victim (*fools luck* rolls) and the PC's can evade attacks, they are more likely to escape (+2 to *fools luck* per round). The Quendi have a running speed equal to their MV plus their *athletics* (running) roll with a DF x1 in meters. The MV of the Black Rider is 12, plus his *ride* roll with a DF x2.

One of the Elven Princes (Ingwë, Finwë, Elwë, Olwë) [as appropriate for the Loremaster] will intervene in the fight, trying to save the PC's. He uses the same rules as the PC's (described above) to see how quickly he comes into the fray. The Prince will be protected by fate and will not receive any attack, and cannot be captured by the Black Hunter. This Elven Lord will try to release a PC or drive away the Black Rider, according to the situation.

[The companion article provides stats for these four Elven Princes. The Loremaster can make develop his own stats however with a heroism modification of x5]

The Black Rider will withdraw after he has three prisoners secured and/or the PC's succeed in overcoming him.

The atmosphere at the end of the adventure depends on this encounter. Normally a a mood of despair and helplessness against the Dark Hunter will spread; but it can be very different if the PC's suddenly achieve victory over the Black Rider (which should be unlikely though).

Interlude: "The Oread"

Note: *This is to be played only if there is sufficient time.*

After this attack and most likely with three additional abductees (see above), the Quendi of Cuiviënen are on the verge of panic. They will meet on the shore in small groups, until someone begins to speak, and then another and another.

The elves are scared and need to express their fears and frustrations. This is a good time to introduce negative and sarcastic characters, such as *Eöl* or *Saeros*. There will be also spies of Melkor among the Quendi (*úmaiar* in the form of elves), which will spread lies and despair.

On the other hand there are the four future lords of the Eldar, who will try to calm their Quendi brothers and try to find a solution to the problem, rather than let panic overcome them.

But that is not an easy task, due to the general feeling of defeat, inspired by the spies of Melkor and enhanced by the more negative-minded of the elves.

The PC's can make extensive use of their social skills in this great assembly of the Quendi. They may influence the general opinion and avoid wrong conclusions.

A possible positive solution (proposed by the Princes) is the formation of a (small) group of elves willing to face the Black Rider and protect their brothers. Something like a first elven "militia" or "military". The princes, the PC's and a few followers would be the basis of this group. All others prefer to run and hide from the threat of danger.

"The Hunter"

MERP:

- 1) more perception rolls and/or the use of spells from the list Nature's Lore and Essence Perceptions
- 2) Songs of hope and protection: a mixture of spells from the list of Protections, giving the PCs bonuses on their DBs and Rrs
- 3) light magic
- 4) one Skill Development Point

MEAG:

- 1) a song of hope and protection, a mixture of Seer and Healing magic (Varda and Ulmo), giving the PCs a +5 bonus to Defense
- 2) i.e. Ghostspear spell
- 3) 100 XP.

BASH:

- 1) Hearing (Mind) rolls and/or the use of the magic of Varda
- 2) Songs of hope and protection: +5 bonus to Defense (Light College, Boost +3: Agility only for Defense {3}, Medium Burst: 5x5 sq. {2} [Must Sing] EC4, 4pts)
- 3) light magic
- 4) one XP

Third Act: "The Hunter"

And then (precisely *how long* afterwards the PC's do not know in this nightmare with no awakening) the most perceptive Quendi hear, with a *perception* roll, a horse neighing in the distance. Any attempt to hear more details (more *perception* rolls and/or the use of magic of Varda¹⁾) only confirms this: they hear the hooves of a horse, the ground shakes in its path, and it comes straight to the last refuge of Quendi.

An additional *perception* roll will show that the shadows accumulate in the forest, in the opposite direction of the approaching rider, as to catch the Quendi in a trap, deadly and final. [The Narrator must note who made the best *perception*: the dark shadows are not growing, but are the secondary effects of an incoming light, subtly and barely noticeable.]

The PCs should be given the feeling that they have to prepare for their last stand. Behind them the rest of the Quendi will hide, embracing each other and sobbing. The most desperate will flee in panic to the hills, disappearing from this story. [Fourth Act: "Lost in the nets of Melkor"]

The people of *Elwë* and *Olwë* will sing a song of hope and protection, a mixture of holy and song magic (Varda and Ulmo), giving the PC's a +5 bonus to *Defense*²⁾. [Their voices will be those that Oromë hears in the distance]

And then, clearly and unmistakably, the PC's hear the stomping of a horse that comes over the hills and down among the pines to Cuiviënen.

The PC's will see the shadow of a rider on horseback who comes out of the woods. They have an entire round to attack, escape or do whatever they want before he reacts. [Oromë → DB: +15; DR 1; Resistances: +10; HP *not relevant*]

Behind them the PC's hear the songs of the Teleri and desperate cries of elves who think their end is near.

But after a first round of unsuccessful attacks (especially if they use the immaculate light of Varda³⁾) the PC's will notice that the rider neither dark and threatening but radiates a bright light from his face.

...many of the Quendi were filled with dread at his coming; and this was the doing of Melkor [...] Thus it was that when Nahar neighed and Oromë indeed came among them, some of the Quendi hid themselves, and some fled and were lost. But those who had courage, and stayed, perceived swiftly that the Great Rider was no shape out of darkness; for the light of Aman was in his face, and all the noblest of the Elves were drawn towards it.

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor

It is likely that after reading this quote half the players will be relieved with joy and shouting: "We're saved!" This will really depend on the reactions of the PC's, because in the end only those who dare to face the unknown will encounter Oromë. For all those who hide themselves, will see nothing. Even worse, those who run and flee into the forest will be lost in the nets of Melkor, and for them this is the end of the *Chronicles of Cuiviënen*. [Optional encounter: "Lost in the Dark Nets of Melkor"]

The meeting with Oromë concludes the first chapter in the "Chronicles of Cuiviënen". The players and the Loremaster can explore all the possibilities of the arrival of Oromë: play his welcome among the Elves and build the possible personal contacts with the PC's. But that can be developed freely, without need of game data. The Loremaster should follow the impulses of his players.

The PCs receive one DP⁴⁾ as a reward for daring to confront Oromë.

FOURTH ACT [optional]: "Lost in the Dark Nets of Melkor"

But of those unhappy ones who were ensnared by Melkor little is known of a certainty. For who of the living has descended into the pits of Utumno, or has explored the darkness of the counsels of Melkor? Yet this is held true by the wise of Eressëa, that all those of the Quendi who came into the hands of Melkor, ere Utumno was broken, were put there in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves, of whom they were afterwards the bitterest foes.

—The Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor

Most of the Quendi who flee from Oromë into the forests will be lost in the dark nets of Melkor. It is assumed that they ran away deep into the forest, unless the PC's state clearly another course of action. While it is not to be assumed that the PC's will separate, they must state specifically that they stay together. Otherwise each PC will be alone, just like all Quendi who fled before Oromë.

The first things they realize when they stop are the silence in the air and the shadows that envelop everything. And then they will be attacked by Shadows of Melkor, three for each player.

Shadows of Melkor (3 per PC): Initiative +8; MV 10m/r; Defense +1; Féa +4; DR 2; HP 10; without physical attacks; Fear attack +15; DF x1 → paralysis with 0 SP; Special attacks Combined area attack (all shadows attack as if they were one, this attack affects all PCs), Synergy (+2 to attack for each extra shadow over the first, to a maximum of +25 from six Shadows onward); Vulnerabilities holy light (Varda, DF x1); Resistances physical attacks (included in the statistics).

Once a victim reaches 0 SP, it receives 1 CP and will be paralyzed with terror. In the next round it will be enveloped by its own shadow. And after three rounds it becomes a "Winged Shadow" enhanced by the spiritual energy of the victim. With a successful roll of perception the other PCs can see the victim as a fetus, trapped in the "belly" of the Winged Shadow. Until the last moment the other PCs can try to save him, but in the sixth round (1 +1 +3 = 5 rounds) it will disappear in the dark sky.

The only possibility of receiving help from Oromë and the other Quendi is to specifically state that they remain on the edge of the forest.

All those who lose this fight will be dragged to the dungeons of Utumno and be lost forever.

The ones who survive will realize that they are lost in the world of shadows, a distorted reflection of the material world. They will not find the way back and be lost, unable to return to their own world.

They will never see Oromë and for them the *Chronicles of Cuiviénen* will be finished. But they may continue in the *Avari Chronicles*.

Shadows of Melkor (3 per PC)

MERP: Level 5, Speed = moderately fast; DB = 15; HP 50; without physical attacks; Fear attack +60 leads to paralysis when IG and PR fall to 0; Vulnerabilities: light magic (-20 to RRs; take double damage); Resistances physical attacks (only 50% of damage and they ignore stun and bleeding results).

Once a victims IG and PR reaches 0...

MEAG: Initiative +3; Movement +1; Defense +3; DR +2 (vs. physical attacks); Endurance 40; Fear (as Ghostspear) attack (RSA) +4; Magical Bonus of +3.

Once a victim reaches 0 Endurance... [...] ...Perception (DL 7) roll...

BASH: See Appendix E.



Yavanna © by Olga Kukhtenkova
used with permission

FUTURE ADVENTURES

In the simplified version *The Sundering* follows *The Awakening of the Elves*. In the extended version there are at least two intermediate adventures: *The Friends of Oromë* is the hunting of the creatures and monsters with the taint of Melkor, and includes a first encounter with Tom Bombadil (*Ben-adar Iarwain*) and *Thû the Wizard*. *The War of the Powers* includes the return of the Ents and the protective fence around Cuiviënen.

During this adventure there are glimpses of other side quests: *The Ents' saga*, *Ambassadors to Utumno* and *Lost in the world of shadows*, which can be further developed.


Although you can play great campaigns in this era, I think it is best that this Chronicle be fast and definite, the beginning of the longer history of Valinor and Beleriand.

HOPE AND SHADOW

SUGGESTIONS FOR EVERYDAY USE IN 'THE ONE RING'

by Thomas Morwinsky (tolwen@gmx.de)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

rule idea



As soon as a game is published, people start adapting its rules to their needs - regardless of the quality and reach of the original ruleset. Naturally, so system can satisfy every need (or even should to try in my opinion), leaving this customisation to the individual LM or fan-house rules.

The suggestions presented here fall into this category, expanding the scope of a central mechanic of the The One Ring ruleset.

INTRODUCTION

Hope and Shadow are central attributes for Cubicle 7's game *The One Ring*. They govern the character's ability to succeed where he otherwise would fail (e.g. spending hope after assessing the regular result of a roll) and his moral standing concerning corruption, temptation and the ability to resist the dangers of the Shadow.

These are excellent mechanics for the upright and morally immaculate Player Heroes (PH), who are tempted by the Enemy in its many facets. It becomes more problematic with more "normal" characters (e.g. the average population) or morally ambiguous characters. Examples for the latter are criminals or unscrupulous mercenaries, that are sure to exist as well beside the more black-and-white orientated characters for which the mechanics as presented are made.

I am aware that the approach here turns somewhat away from the path of the heroes as described in the main narrative of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. This is always a thin line to walk if one uses a literary work as the backdrop for roleplaying games: The respective books have a very special tone to them and following this creates a strong bond to the book(s). It narrows the focus though, as in the case of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. These are books written from the perspective of heroes that pass the ultimate test against the most powerful agent of evil for millennia. The world in which they act and live is much greater and shaded though (even if the clichés hold a central aspect). Tolkien himself mentions this several times—both in his *Letters* as well as in other texts like the Appendices of the *The Lord of the Rings*.

Greg Stafford wrote an insightful description of the dilemma created by literary backgrounds for roleplaying games, called *Genre and Generic – Why There are No Magicians in Pendragon*.¹ This highlights very well the problem: On the one hand you can stick very close to the text of the book as *The One Ring* does, but then you have to give up those parts of Tolkien's Middle-earth that are less black and white than the main narrative shows. On the other hand you may broaden your scope and include these other aspects of Middle-earth as well, but then it

¹ <http://www.gspendragon.com/genreandgeneric.html>

will get more blurred, and the lines of good and evil are not always as easy as they are—often—in the main narrative.

This differentiated view—here concerning the servants of Sauron—is well shown by Sam:

It was Sam's first view of a battle of Men against Men, and he did not like it much. He was glad that he could not see the dead face. He wondered what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace [...]

—*The Lord of the Rings. Of Herbs and stewed Rabbit*

Following the regular tone of the books it would be normal to assume that someone in Sauron's service is evil and therefore he was rightly killed and the Free Peoples should be proud of their “good” deed—period. Sam has a more differentiated view on the matter and thinks about the motives the man might have had beyond a simple black-and-white scheme. Since Tolkien named Sam as the main hero in his view,¹ this view shown by Sam could be telling of Tolkien's view himself on the matter.



HOPE AND SHADOW FOR EVERYONE?

Looking at the rules as written, it is not clear whether every person in Middle-earth (e.g. all Men, Elves and Dwarves) are entitled to a dedicated Hope/Shadow score, or whether this is a special characteristic for the PH who receive a preferential treatment over other people of their race and cul-

ture. In my opinion this latter interpretation is acceptable if the PH are viewed as ‘heroes’ who have special abilities not available to other people (and even their relatives).

From the perspective of the world's inner logic this is quite unsatisfactory though. What makes the PH (who have *Hope*) different from their neighbours, fathers, mothers, siblings and uncles who are Loremaster (LM) characters? It's only the artificial distinction of the former being PH and the others not. It seems quite arbitrary to make such a blatant distinction and base the possession or non-possession of a central game attribute on it. I do not doubt that PH should—and are—superior to others of their race and stand out as exceptional, but only by the extent of their abilities and not by an exclusive characteristic, which is otherwise central to the functioning of people compared to the Shadow.

In addition, differences are made between races with respect to *Hope*, thus showing their affinity towards the Shadow or their “higher” status as Free People.

ORDINARY PEOPLE AND IMPORTANT LM CHARACTERS

In principle ordinary people (e.g. the bulk of a culture's people) should have the same set of attributes like the PH. Due to the number of these people, it would only be necessary for a small minority to detail out such special attributes like *Hope* and *Shadow* (e.g. when it's important for the adventure) and otherwise leave it out for simplicity's sake (but basically everyone has it).

Since the PH are supposed to represent an especially gifted part of their people, they should have a higher *Hope* score than their Loremaster character (LM character) counterparts. The following table gives suggestions for these scores among the people covered in the TOR core set.

Culture	Hope	
	general population	Player Heroes*
Bardings	4 + Heart	8 + Heart
Beornings	4 + Heart	8 + Heart
Dwarves	3 + Heart	6 + Heart
Elves	4 + Heart	8 + Heart
Hobbits	6 + Heart	12 + Heart
Woodmen	5 + Heart	10 + Heart
* or exceptional/important Loremaster characters		

1 Letters, #131 (late 1951)

This also offers the LM the possibility to develop especially important LM characters that get the full “hero” complement of *Hope* due to their special status. All members of the Fellowship of the Ring or Thorin & Co might fit into this latter category. The LM must decide which of his characters are important and heroic enough to warrant this status with regard to *Hope*.

Shadow Gain

The rules as laid out in the *Adventurer’s and Loremaster Book* stress the possibility of corruption when certain pivotal evil and traumatic events happen. Besides normal tragic events like the death of a close relative, evil and/or cruel acts like thievery, assault, murder or lying may earn you *Shadow Points*. For normal people these rules are sufficient, since they lead a life similar to the characters, though on a less adventurous and exciting scale. Their tasks are less challenging (need less *Hope* expenditure), but the dangers are also less prevalent, balancing things out.

The following table from the *Loremaster Book*, p. 57 shows these events:

SOURCES OF ANGUISH	EXAMPLE	SHADOW GAIN
Natural but unexpected tragic event, or very grievous occurrence	Serious or mortal accident, death in the family, natural catastrophe	The hero gains 1 Shadow point only if he fails the Corruption test AND gets an “Eye” result. (0-1)
Gruesome killing, dreadful experience, Orc-work (senseless destruction), display of the power of the Enemy	Awakening in a haunted tomb, discover a traitor among friends, discovering villagers savagely mutilated, seeing the mustering of a Shadow army	1 Shadow point (1)
Harrowing experience, physical and spiritual torment, Sorcery	Slavery, torture, the Black Breath, haunted by a Wight, seeing the Eye	2 Shadow points (2)
Experience directly the power of the Enemy	Interrogated by the Eye, captured by the Nazgûl	Gain 1 Shadow point regardless of the outcome of the Corruption test. Then, gain two additional points if the test is failed. (1-3)

It becomes tricky when you leave the Black & White scheme assumed by *The One Ring*. For chivalrous and noble heroes, these mechanics work perfect, but less so for other, more “normal” people.

Therefore an excursion on the origin of *Shadow* is in order here.

This term describes the taint on character’s spirit, an influence of the *mordo*, e.g. the evil that permeates all of Middle-earth, and of whom Sauron is but an agent. Thus, ultimately, every evil deed has its root in this taint upon the very matter of Arda that cannot be healed, but only partially redressed. Along this line, it is understandable to give out *Shadow* for evil deeds as found in the *Loremaster Book*, p.58.

When you apply these rules strictly, the game world is no longer able to function in a believable

way. For example, a simple thief or cutthroat would either be a major servant of the Enemy or dead from his wretched existence within months—without any further intervention by the Enemy itself.

Another result of the *mordo* or *Shadow* upon Middle-earth is the existence of “normal” crime, meaning the tendency or phenomenon of people willing to do harm to others for their personal benefit. The point is though, that these people in most cases do not have anything to do or in common with the Enemy, they just commit crimes to either lead a life in material luxury gained through their misdeeds—or to simply persist by existing from day to day (or something in-between these extremes). “Good criminals” like Robin Hood-style characters are equally not really covered by the regular rules.

If you apply the normal *Shadow* rules on such “normal” criminals, either everyone of them would be a major servant of the Shadow within a few months at most (quite ridiculous in my opinion) or be mentally totally deformed by *Shadow* points and the resulting *Degeneration*.



POSSIBLE SOLUTION

A way out of this would be to modify the *Hope* and *Shadow* rules slightly. A criminal character—or anyone of dubious morals—(regardless of whether he is a PH or a LM character) gets an appropriate remark at his calling (e.g. “Thief”). Subsequently he does not get any *Shadow* points for misdeeds of up to “his” Misdeed level as shown in the table below, which is slightly modified from the version found in the *Loremaster Book*, p. 58.

Misdeed level	Action	Shadow gain
0	Accidental misdeed	none
1	Violent threats	1 point
2	Lying purposefully, subtly manipulate the will of others	1 point
3	Cowardice, theft and plunder	2 points
4	Unprovoked aggression, abusing own authority to influence or dominate	3 points
5	Breaking an oath, treachery	4 points
6	Torment and torture, murder	5 points

For example, someone labelled as a “Thief” would earn no *Shadow* points for violent threats, purposeful lying, subtle manipulation of others, cowardice, theft and plunder. Only for misdeeds above his current “criminal level” would he earn *Shadow* points. Of course he might “advance” in his criminal career from a simple tavern bully, to a thief and finally to a professional assassin who hires his services for money.

There is of course a downside to becoming a criminal (besides being caught by the authorities or rival criminals). His continued criminal acts increasingly deaden his feeling and sense of *Hope* that permeates the truly “Free” Peoples.

For a normal character, recovering spent *Hope* is hard enough, but for the professional criminal, it is even harder. He regains *Hope* at an even lesser pace. Use the “Misdeed level” from the table above as the multiplier for the necessary time or chances to recover *Hope*. For example, a professional Thief would need three times as long to regain his spent *Hope* compared to normal PH. Normally, a character may recover spent *Hope* with the consent of all other players/characters at the end of the session by tapping into the Fellowship Pool. The example character would also need thrice the normal amount to regain *Hope* from the Fellowship Pool (e.g. using up three Fellowship Pool points to regenerate one point of *Hope*).

The reduction of *Shadow Points* can be handled similarly: Opportunities to reduce these points that arise during the game are less effective for these characters. The “Misdeed level” can be used as a guideline how much *Shadow* reduction is affected (e.g. only one-third as effective for a “thief” than for normal people. Of course this must not be seen as an absolute rule (i.e. GM discretion and judgment for a specific situation should always have the final say to which degree the “Misdeed Level” has an influence on these things).



In Pain and Regret © by Jenny Dolfen, used with permission

The same rules can be applied to otherwise very “human” characters like the unscrupulous mercenary who does not care who employs him as long as the pay comes regularly and he is not cheated or mistreated by his client.

CONSEQUENCES

Applying the additions above, allows the LM to both create LM characters with—in principle—the same abilities as PH, as well as represent criminal or unscrupulous or mercenary character types. Coupled with the *Hope/Shadow* modification for LM characters who have inferior *Hope* scores to start with (see above), it becomes clear that these character types must be even more picky with spending *Hope*: They have less to start with and regain it much slower.

In the end, these morally doubtful characters (even if they do not serve the Enemy or have heard

of him) have to rely much more on their regular abilities for succeeding in their skills than PH who are assumed to have higher morals. In my opinion this is a minimally invasive but very effective way to integrate such elements of society into the basic rules without re-designing a central part of the mechanics.

FALLEN HEROES

Once a PH has finally succumbed to the *Shadow*, he is normally taken out of play (*Loremaster Book*, p.63/64). It is suggested that the LM decides what happens to him/her and gives examples that they often finally die from misery due to their fallen status.

In Middle-earth, another option which is in my opinion much more important than simply dying due to a wretched existence is the possibility of him (or her) joining the ranks of the Enemy. In this context it does not matter whether he joins Sauron's fold in earnest or tries to become a master himself (e.g. as Saruman did). In my opinion such a "Fall from Grace" by joining the fold of the Enemy is even the **most likely and regular one** and the "dying due to a wretched existence" being rather seldom in special cases.



Kinslayer © by Jenny Dolfen, used with permission

The question is though, what to do with such fallen heroes? They may be furthermore used as major antagonists in the game, having fully-fleshed out game stats as well as a rich background to build

further adventures on. In addition, their experience with their former comrades make them the best antagonists ever: the Enemy that knows them better than their own mothers! You only have to take into account what happens with their—remaining—*Hope* after they switch sides. Evil creatures have a *Hate* rating to judge their ability to withstand the PH power or use special abilities. The latter works somewhat similar to *Hope* for PH. The *Loremaster Book* from the core set lists only "really" evil creatures like orcs, trolls, giant spiders or werewolves as enemies. Thus, by now there is no official ruling how powerful evil mannish LM characters should be handled with respect to special abilities and *Hope/Shadow* or *Hate* points. To handle this, the newly "converted" PH receives his current score of *Shadow* points (i.e. the value he possesses when he finally succumbed to Evil) as *Hate* points to use instead of *Hope* as before. This score is lowered as per the normal rules. Recovery of these points is something not touched yet by the official rules, although for creatures like orcs (i.e. fodder) this shouldn't really be necessary. For human adversaries—and especially those meant to appear ever again as recurring villains—it is central though.

Just as a PH recovers *Hope* in situations appropriate to their race and culture, so too should *Hate* regenerate if the bad guys have the ability to rest, feast on their misdeeds and regain their strength. The rate of recovery should reflect the one for *Hope* too and the LM should handle it accordingly.

FLEXIBILITY


Beyond any special and additional rulings suggested here, the LM should keep in mind that even though many rulings in *The One Ring* seem at first glance to be apodictic and absolute, the points raised in this discussion show that more flexibility and judgement of the situation is in order.

Especially in context with *Hope*, *Shadow* and *Hate*, the LM must judge the situation and the morals behind actions. By doing this, the scope broadens up and many issues that seemed big either evaporate or lessen in weight. For example, Player Heroes that act like *Robin Hood* character types (stealing from the rich, giving the poor and fighting an unjust regime) may get *Shadow* for obviously "evil" deeds (stealing, killing etc.). But if you look at their motives and the handling of the situation (e.g. avoiding unnecessary bloodshed), giving out *Shadow* here should be rare.

ROLE-PLAYING ON THE DARK SIDE

by Severin, a.k.a Isildur's Heir (isildurserbe@gmx.net)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

When I first mooted my thoughts on mounted combat for The One Ring (TOR) on their forum, I was using a series of minuses on the combat complications table from the Loremaster's Book to adjudicate on individual cases. This was met by a slightly puzzled response from a fellow poster who asked me why I was bothering to put together rules that did nothing for characters except to make things more difficult.

A WORD OF WARNING

A person who engages with evil, who tries to understand it – in short: a person who assumes the role of evil, that person will change. He might lose his naive view of good or come to interpret stories in a different way, and will forever lose his old, cozy view of the world with its clear distinction between good and evil. He will be unable to return to his old ways ever again. He might fare like a hobbit who leaves the Shire to get caught up in affairs of greater powers and, once back from his journey, finds himself unable to find peace and serenity ever again. Thus the reader is warned that the game of evil is not suitable for everybody, because it might contain inconvenient truths and requires an open mind.

To put it simply: if you don't want to change, stop reading now!

But the curiosity is there, isn't it? Because evil ever beckons and seduces, and it will bring you to read on, to ensnare you before you know it and to send you on a journey to the dark side.



Sauron the Deceiver © by Danik Yaeoslav Tomyn, used with permission

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

This article mainly focuses on game-play with a group of evil characters (or at least unscrupulous mercenaries who don't care about their employer). I will here address **extreme** cases and discuss their possible solutions in detail. It may occur to the reader that role-playing on the dark side mainly consists of such extreme situations and is in general very problematic. However playtesting has shown that such problematic situations seldom arise and that gaming with an evil group can be a lot of fun when flavored with a bit of sarcasm and irony. On the other hand most players are not familiar with dark side gaming. Quite often no experience is present and the available RPG material also tends to lack information on this topic.

I therefore want to give the interested player tips, point out possible problems and show solutions. In a lot of game worlds and systems everything is tuned to good heroes. This is especially true for Middle-earth and its existing role-playing games. In particular, the *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* from Decipher and *The One Ring: Over the Edge of the Wild* from Cubicle 7 focus explicitly on playing good and noble hero-type characters. MERP remained somewhat neutral in this case but also assumed the "Good Guys" as standard. For this reason it is high time to describe basic experiences as well as extreme cases.

THE BEGINNING

Over countless game sessions I heard lots of variants of the following statement: "If we were evil, we wouldn't have this problem now. We could just... kill the guy, grab the booty, run away, lie, move on, etc, etc." So I started thinking and asked myself a lot of questions, some of which I want to answer in this article. The question that stood at the beginning was the following:

Why not play an evil group for once?

An evil group is not subjected to a lot of the moral constraints which good groups must consider. Players can finally follow their dark thoughts, solely playing for their personal benefit; free and unrestrained relishing in obnoxious behaviour.

These are reasons that could appeal especially to young and inexperienced players as long as one introduces a lot of black humor as well.

But there are more reasons why playing a villain can be attractive. Certain settings and places become available that would be unreachable for good parties.

And finally there is the possibility, which comprises the kernel and main reason for role-playing in the first place: the playing and experiencing of a new role, especially roles which one could not or would not wish to assume in real life. In the best case completely new perspectives of known sites and stories could be obtained and old certainties might be called into question, because players adapt to the villains' life and comprehend their motivations.

THE CHARM OF EVIL AND A SHORT DETOUR INTO THE WORLD OF CINEMA

On this issue many philosophic and other texts exist with too many topics to be considered in detail here. In my experience it seems that in popular media culture bigger and more important roles are increasingly often assigned to the villain instead of the hero. Naturally the villain serves as a mirror and proof for the greatness of the hero's deeds. For several reasons villains, or *the evil*, are necessary for classic narrative to work. Evil fascinates through its otherness and incompatibility with standard norms and conventions.

This can be demonstrated by the following thought experiment. Try to name the same amount of "good" heroes with similarly impressive or fascinating characters as the following villains within one minute:

Darth Vader, Hannibal Lecter, The Joker, Dracula, Sauron, Captain Hook, The Terminator, Goldfinger.

Usually you will come up with the "good counterpart" of the villain. He has an equally important role as the "good guy". Often the villain is even the main figure and makes more of a lasting impression on the viewer because his actions are unexpected and deviate from what we feel is normal. So, there are reasons why actors often wish for evil roles, earn fame and prominence, and impress themselves on the public's mind by portraying a villain.

The villain has gained enormously in impact. Just recently new milestones have been set in the art of acting by the playing of roles such as the Joker by Heath Ledger in *Batman* and the SS-Inspector by Christoph Waltz in *Inglourious Basterds*. In my opinion there have been no equally charismatic movie heroes within the last two to three years. Often the heroes even incorporate a few "dark" character traits to become more interesting, such as

in the latest James Bond or Batman movies (i.e. *The Dark Knight*).

Why is this excursion into the world of movies necessary? Well, role models from the movies influence the style of role-playing, and acting and role-playing are closely related. If actors are at their best when portraying a villain, and if villains fascinate the audience, this should in theory also work for role-playing.

THE WORLD IN A MIRROR AND THE philosophy of evil

What is different?

Nothing and everything! Is the game with an evil group really so much different? During a playtesting session one player said: *"Hey, this is the same as with the good guys just with opposite algebraic signs"*. He was correct in many aspects. The adventure, game mechanic and way of playing can often be incorporated with negative algebraic signs.

Countless adventures and stories can be played which progress just like classical "good" adventures. Find the treasure, kill the boss, get an eagle's egg, steal some horses from the Rohirrim, spy on Gondor, try to determine the whereabouts of Gandalf or even "find Baggins, Shire": these are adventures which function exactly the same way as for "good" groups. Even the way of thinking of classic villains - the Orcs—is not so much different from that of the good guys, as the following quote proves.

"You should try being up here with Shelob for company" said Shagrat.

"I'd like to try somewhere where there's none of 'em. But the war's on now, and when that's over things may be easier." "It's going well, they say."

"They would." grunted Gorbag. *"We'll see. But anyway, if it does go well, there should be a lot more room. What d'you say? - if we get a chance, you and me'll slip off and set up somewhere on our own with a few trusty lads, somewhere where there's good loot nice and handy, and no big bosses."*

"Ah!" said Shagrat. *"Like old times."*

—The Lord of the Rings.
The Choices of Master Samwise



The Fighting Uruk-hai © by Jan Pospisil, used with permission

The naivety of good heroes

Dissenting voices will state that Orcs kill sympathetic hobbits and would not even stop from killing children. Personally I can see no decisive difference in whether Orcs kill all inhabitants of a hobbit hole or a classic "good" group smokes out an Orc cave. "Yes, but the Orcs will also kill children", the critics will say. That's right and as a game master I would not provide a stage for such actions. But has anybody ever asked himself or herself why one never encounters children or pregnant females in Orc caves in the usual adventures? Logically they should be found there. But nobody who plays a good hero wants to be involved in such issues while smoking out an Orc cave. Such issues are especially avoided in games set in Middle-earth, because they could lead to questioning the postulated "moral superiority" of the "Free Peoples", if slaughtering crying Orc babies becomes necessary in order to fulfill a mission. How would our shining heroes decide to act when a totally frightened pregnant Orc female (or a male for that matter) cries for mercy? The classic good character is depicted in a very naive way when such problems are blanked out. This can happen in the same way for evil adventures (see below for more information) or the inclusion of such problematic issues can be (seldom) used as a shocking effect.

Justification is everything!

"To me?" said Saruman. *"Nay, pray do not smile at me! I prefer your frowns. And as for the Lady here, I do not trust her: she always hated me, and schemed for your part. I do not doubt that she has brought you this way to have the pleasure of gloating over my poverty. Had I been warned of your pursuit, I would have denied you the pleasure."*

—The Lord of the Rings. Many Partings
(Saruman's view of events)

*Always the poor Uruks to put slips right, and
small thanks.*

**—The Lord of the Rings. The Stairs of
Cirith Ungol (Gorbag speaking)**

This is the most difficult aspect of your journey to the dark side. If the players want to identify themselves with their role and play the villain in a plausible way, they must understand the motivation of evil characters. This requires a lot of imagination and a good Gamemaster (GM) who supports his players. Before the first game session begins, players and GM should think on what things look like from the evil point of view. For example, try to understand the point of view of Sauron, an Orc or a Dunnish bandit. Would you describe yourself as “evil”? Would you think your actions to be wrong? Definitely not! You would think you were in the right! One task for the GM and players is therefore to think about why their cause is just in their own point of view. The GM’s role in this is decisive. He can ease the players through their role-changing by describing the general framework, certain occurrences and observations from evil’s point of view. It is very important that a player can justify his evil actions within the context of his role. The following examples elucidate why this is important:

- Hansel and Gretel gruesomely kill the witch by throwing her into the oven and burning her alive.
- Beorn stakes the heads and skins of his enemies (Orcs and Wargs) on poles and places them around his property (as trophies?) after “forcibly” questioning them.
- A dwarf and an elf participate in a “sporting” competition on who kills the most Orcs and while doing so achieve quite high numbers.

Why don’t we have any moral problems with these three situations? Because they are justified within the frame of the story. I could turn the stories around and have the witch throw Hansel and Gretel in the oven or have the Orcs count Elven heads and immediately our consciences would start bothering us. Why is that so? Because to us it seems wrong, cruel and inexplicable. When good characters commit such deeds they can always justify them. But the villains can do exactly that as well!

It depends solely on the point of view and who tells the story; change the point of view and you immediately change everything. This is why the GM must ensure that even the most gruesome deeds remain justifiable from an evil point of view. Oppression, relentless pursuit by men and elves and

even their false gods (from a morgothic point of view; the correct term would “The Powers” of course) themselves can provide general justification of evil deeds. But players and GMs should also be able to come up with explanations for special cases. For such occasions a GM must be well prepared. As an example I provide the following text, which I sent to my players before our first playtesting session in order to get them into the right mood and make them think about the fact that their point of view might change in the future:

*Elven witches, wander-beards, tall men and little
midgets with hairy feet are your mortal enemies!
By what right did they become privileged? By what
right do they call themselves the crown of creation?
They call themselves free, but what they do is run after
their pathetic ideals,
which were assigned to them by weak, lying gods!
They stand for disorder, chaos!
We were the first!
Darkness came before light!
Nobody shall contest our claim to shape the real
destiny of the world
against the mad chaos of the so-called free spirits!
We have always been the underdogs, the disenfranchised,
the oppressed,
always discriminated against by the gods and destiny.
But there will be a time when the tide will turn!
Our righteous scorn will unleash a storm which will be
heard even on the shores of the distant West.
Then we will claim our freedom, our justice and our
will, and nobody will be able to refuse us.
Not even those liars calling themselves lords of the
light, who have betrayed us.
Revenge will drive us, scorn will spur us.
Our cry means retaliation and freedom from the yoke of
destiny!
This is how we will find our determination.*

*Words from the eternal Sauron, ruler of the world and
living god,
Hail to Sauron and hail to his will!*

It is important that everyone acquaints themselves with the evil point of view. Also, at this point I could write pages and pages about the tragedy of evil, which is doomed to always succumb to the good (at least with such authors as Tolkien). A famous German author once had the devil describing himself as being “Part of that power which still / Produceth good, whilst ever scheming ill”.

This sentence displays a fundamental truth about evil, which can be adapted for role-playing.

¹ J.W. Goethe: *The Tragedy of Faust*, Part 1



And this insight should be woven into the underlying atmosphere of most adventures, to ensure that, no matter how hard they try or what advantages they have, and no matter how good their plans are, in the end all victories amount to nothing, because in the long run good will somehow win, maybe even just because of the intervention of the the Valar or even the One. This will probably frustrate the players, but this effect is desirable, because it is exactly what evil characters feel like in Middle-earth.

Their efforts may temporary be successful—and “temporary” here might be even counted in centuries if you think about Angmar’s long and successful war against Arnor or Sauron’s schemes to bring down Gondor for more than a millenium bit by bit. Over the course of these campaigns, individual evil protagonists may well experience a total—or almost total—success of their schemes, while the overall masterplan behind it fails at the decisive moment—perhaps decades or centuries later.

Even a defeat in a battle might be a strategic gain if you think of Angmar’s defeated campaigns in the 14th and 15th century, since even the victor Arthedain was weakened and Angmar itself survived to to fight another day.

Depending on your campaign, the evil guys may live to see the success of their plans (which are all but part of the overall one that will fail later) or see them fail in the end (the small plans or if they live in those times where the “big schemes” mentioned above finally falter).

PREJUDICES, REAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

How can gaming fun possibly arise through evil deeds?

That depends on what is meant by “evil deeds”...

Most will now think of marauding bands of Orcs, with burning, plundering and lots of hack and slay. This type of role-playing also exists for good groups, but it wears out quite quickly. If the players are only in it for the action, fighting and treasure, there won’t be a problem. But this would only display a very limited range of evil.

The evil which doesn’t need simple atrocities, the sly kind of evil and the evil behind a beautiful facade is the one that makes playing a villain attractive.

Isn’t it far more appealing to construct an intrigue that completely destroys the heir’s reputation instead of stabbing him some misty night? Isn’t it a whole lot more fun to steer a foe into cooperation through fear, instead of simply beheading him? Simple, brutal evil is strongly limited and inhibits interesting role-playing. The deceitful, divisive and shrewd evil provides the more exciting alternative.

How evil should the game be?

The answer to this question is all-important! There are unlimited shades between light and darkness. Should it be a group that operates within the gray area and might rob a wealthy merchant once in a while? Should it be a band of relatively neutral outlaws that only commits questionable deeds for survival? Or should it be a group of individuals with souls so black that they would even make Sauron shiver? Is the band dependent on an evil overlord and aiming to gain his favor, or is it comprised of freelancers who act on their own account?

Or would you go for the supreme discipline of all—a group of good heroes that gradually become evil?

All theses questions have considerable influence on the outcome of an adventure. Groups that operate only a little way into the gray area pose no problem for a standard game. The more evil the group is, however, the more difficulties will arise, but the more interesting the game will also become. Therefore this essay will deal with the extreme case of an abysmally evil group. The solutions provided

here are tuned to this extreme, but should also be adaptable to groups of petty criminals.

The style of play

The underlying style of play is a critical factor. Depending on your taste, stories can be told with a lot of sarcasm or irony, possibly in the same way as splatter or horror movies are presented, which can be quite funny due to their exaggerated style. This is one possible way to increase gaming fun. However a dark and threatening atmosphere could also be fitting, in which the players conceive plots and then whisper to each other: "Man, we're really mean..."

The three most common errors

There are some misconceptions about the evil guys, from which the following are the most obvious:

- Villains constantly kill each other
- Villains can't cooperate
- Villains can't make independent decisions

If these were really true, evil would have a problem. The truth is that one main advantage of evil armies is their organization—especially in Middle-earth—with a strict leadership, complete subordination and no tendencies for extensive discussion inhibiting decisiveness. For some reason Orc players are of the prevalent opinion that one can stab another Orc in his sleep for any kind of minor personal advantage, such as stealing his purse, without getting punished. Another common prejudice is that within evil groups everybody just follows his own goals, making any kind of cooperation impossible, while at the same time watching and waiting for another group member's mistake that can be exploited. With such basic beliefs ordinary role playing becomes impossible. Nevertheless there is some truth in these misapprehensions, which is why I want to exchange them with the following three theses:

- Villains are not stupid
- Villains often **MUST** work together under pressure
- Evildoers have the ultimate freedom to act immorally

These theses have been deliberately expressed provocatively and require some explanation:

Villains are not stupid

To be evil doesn't mean one is completely stupid. Only a strong Orc with a "good" reputation is free to kill another Orc without permission from his superiors. And other villains also know what happens when they commit equally "smart" crimes—one morning they will wake up with a knife in their back themselves.

Villains **MUST** work together

"You won't be a captain long when They hear about all these goings-on. I've fought for the Tower against those stinking Morgul-rats, but a nice mess you two precious captains have made of things, fighting over the swag."

"That's enough from you," snarled Shagrat. "I had my orders. It was Gorbag started it, trying to pinch that pretty shirt."

"Well, you put his back up, being so high and mighty."

—*The Lord of the Rings.
The Stairs of Cirith Ungol*

Villains usually act in a manner comparable to "good" heroes. They cooperate to reach a common goal. If this is not a personal goal it is the leader's or a client's goal, much the same as for good groups.



In Mordor © by John Howe, used with permission

Of course there can be disagreements and fighting but, in contrast with the good guys, such issues are settled fast even if only by a stronger, so to say more "persuasive" fist. When in *The Lord Of The Rings* the Orcs flee over the plains of Rohan a conflict arises between the factions of Moria, Isengard and

Mordor. That conflict is ruthlessly resolved, after which the group stays together to all of their advantage. If it hadn't been Orcs but Dwarves, Men and Elves, they would probably have split up.

Villains are often forced to work together, either because of particular circumstances or by an overlord's order. If dissent arises that threatens the mission's success it is often settled quickly and brutally. Therefore all villains know what will happen to them if they endangered a mission for selfish motives...

It's true that with bad guys there is a far higher chance that they go for each other but this usually only happens for good reasons. In *The Lord Of The Rings* several very strong motivations were necessary before the Orcs started killing each other. During the incident of Merry and Pippin's abduction the killing was ordered by the leader because their group was in a dire situation and needed to stay together: they were far behind the enemy's lines and had been running for their lives for days without proper food.

During another scene a fight was depicted in Cirith Ungol. There, however, the mithril shirt with its enormous value, and probably also the proximity of the Ring, catalyzed the fighting. So we can see that Orcs don't kill each other out on a simple whim, but only if a critical cause is given. Nevertheless there is some truth in the aforementioned prejudices. If evil is to be played in the same manner as it is depicted in *The Lord Of The Rings* then internal strife, struggles for power and intrigue must be part of it. But still a villain would only consider working against the group with good reason.



First Wave © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

A little bit of scuffling is tolerated but murder is not. (At least it usually isn't tolerated by the boss.) Generally a considerable personal advantage—a good reason, so to speak—should exist before a villain lets himself be carried away by such deeds.

During one of our playtest sessions a little Moria Orc suddenly stabbed a big Úruk without warning. The reason for this was that the group was starving and the Úruk had been severely injured during a previous fight, becoming a burden to the rest of them. During the following feast in the middle of a snowy Mirkwood their spirits ran high. Now if this isn't proof for the efficiency and freedom of will within evil groups...

Villains possess the ultimate freedom

In this context I want to refer to the section “The Beginning” at the start of this article. One major reason to engage with role-playing on the evil side at all is the coherent freedom to do things good heroes can only dream of.

Why help the old woman collecting firewood? Why not give her a kick instead, since she doesn't seem to know whom she is talking to!

Your client doesn't want to pay the full price? Well, that can be solved with the help of a sharp blade to his throat!

The snobby upstart whom you have to protect is arrogant and constantly gets into trouble? Time to explain to him over a cup of tea in detail how he WILL change his behavior!

Your boss covers himself with glory while you handle the dirty work? A little rumor whispered into the right ear or a drop of poison in his chalice... Problem solved!

The reader may continue this list at his pleasure. So as a villain one has more possibilities to choose from, as it may seem on first sight.

Command Structures

In contrast with “the good”, evil is often far better organized (to put it positively). After all this praising the freedom of evil, the issue must be broached that almost all villains of Middle-earth are organized in some way, mostly in armies, clans or cults. So it is not possible to compare an Orc warrior—at least as far as freedom is concerned—with a ranger or a hobbit. The comparison with a Gondorian soldier would be better.

It would be possible to design villains that don't belong to an organizational structure. But it is however more interesting to do the opposite and get caught in the same catch-22 situation that 99% of all villains are usually in. A Middle-earth villain always has a boss, which does not necessarily need to be a hindrance. And this leads us to the next section.

The overlord and the problem with leaders

"There are many evil and unfriendly things in the world that have little love for those that go on two legs, and yet are not in league with Sauron, but have purposes of their own. Some have been in this world longer than he."

—*The Lord of the Rings.
The Ring goes South*



Sam tames the Fell Beast © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

Among the available examples of classic villains there are no completely freely acting characters, maybe with the exception of the evil overlord himself. To exaggerate, one could say that as a villain one always has to dance to the overlord's tune. This is especially true for low-rank characters such as Orcs.

It is therefore true that most villains, i.e. from *The Lord of the Rings*, are bound in rigid command structures, which is why they are less free in their actions than citizens of the West. Basically the good guys are also often hampered in their personal freedom. They also take orders from a chief or military leader or other, so that the game with villains doesn't differ too much from playing with good groups in this point. But it is rather unlikely that an Orc, a Troll and a black mage meet in a pub by accident and decide to spend the upcoming period together.

Therefore one must consider the strong bond to command structures for evil groups and the corresponding decrease in personal freedom.

There are of course a lot of exotic possibilities in which an evil group is not strongly hitched to a leader like Sauron, the Balrog of Moria or an Orc king. However the role-playing game should reflect the known world and therefore the "standard" Middle-earth case. And in Middle-earth 99% of all evil beings, especially Orcs, Trolls, Easterlings and so on are dependent on evil leaders. In few cases the "direct superior" is a Nazgûl or Sauron personally. But in most cases they will be nameless priests, officers or governors (e.g. the Mouth of Sauron), who command the evil group directly or indirectly.

It remains in the players' hands whether they prefer an exotic evil group independent of such structures or whether they want to portray the known situation by giving their evil group a corresponding background. Both can be appealing, but for the player it can be advantageous to be able to draw on a superior leader, who provides the group with assignments, rewards and if necessary punishment.

In order to distinguish subordinate from superior leaders I will call the latter "overlords" from now on. The overlord is not necessarily the highest leader (Sauron or the Witch-king) but rather the highest local villain, who is too occupied or important to keep an eye on the group constantly or to travel with them. But he is important enough to determine the group's weal and woe. The group's relationship to this overlord can be very variable. The characters can love him, hate him, ascend in hierarchy with his help, try to evade his punishment or try to take his position through violence or intrigue. The local leader is distinguished from the overlord in that he is closer to the group or even part of it and executes or oversees the overlord's will regarding this group. So the leader is the group's immediate superior, while the overlord is the distant superior villain that is feared, pleased or emulated.

Leaders within the group

It is possible that the leader might be a player's character, because he was designated leader by the overlord. The players should choose the leader prior to the game together, but it would be judicious to choose the most experienced player for this position. How the leadership is exerted is left to the player and his gaming style, however...

Another possibility would be to let the players compete for the group's leadership. This however can only commence with the overlord's approval. This leads to the nice side effect that everybody aims to surpass his fellow group members in achievement, intrigue and treason to appear in a better light



Dol Guldur by Tara Rueping, used with permission

than his competitors. Naturally the mission's goals must not be jeopardized through this competition or the overlord is liable to reprimand the entire group.

Leaders outside of the group

A different approach is to command the group with a villain who is not one of the players, an NPC. But he should not accompany the characters too often to prevent them from becoming puppets of the GM. How strict and narrow the leadership is depends on the game master. But this NPC should only define the mission's cornerstones and stand aside otherwise. And of course it is his role to reward or punish the group depending on a mission's outcome. A reward could for example include the placement of one member above the others...

Subordinates, servants and slaves

"I came across," said the evil voice. "A winged Nazgûl awaits us northward on the east-bank."

"Maybe, maybe! Then you'll fly off with your prisoners, and get all the pay and praise in Lugbûrz, and leave us to foot it as best we can through the Horse-country."

—*The Lord of the Rings. The Uruk-hai*

Where there are chiefs there must be Indians! So if an evil group is played and a leader exists, the other players have to get used to the fact that one of them can and will give orders to the others. It is often part of the evil role to be on the receiving end of commands. However, this does not mean that the subordinates must be the leader's puppets.

Playing the underling can also mean that life is a whole lot easier than that of the commander. The normal group member can point out that he is only following orders, while errors and failure are attributed to the leader. In a lot of cases the subordinate might (at least outwardly) be loyal to his commander because he shares his point of view or hopes for advantages. Additionally a loyal underling has

more privileges and freedom than one who is serving only reluctantly. It is a major motivation for villains to please their superiors!

In order for the game not to become boring, the game master should ensure that the underlings often have the opportunity to stray from their orders for their personal benefit, the group's benefit or for the leader's disadvantage. As an example an underling might have received the order to stand guard during the day. While on guard he gets the chance to capture a Hobbit spy, but this will not be possible if he wakes his group. Will the underling chance his luck or will he stay true to his orders and wake his group?

GAME MECHANISMS AND SPECIFICS

Resolve this before the game

Generally only experienced gamers should play evil characters, because it requires a lot of diligence and empathy for such a role and sometimes even submission to other players. And an experienced group is required mainly for the reason that common expectations and boundaries must be determined before the first game session. Evil gaming means playing with fire. Certain actions or scenes, or the gaming style of one villain, can easily tilt the atmosphere of a role-playing evening, if other players find them distasteful. Therefore GMs must interview their players about their expectations and personal ethical boundaries before the first game session, to ensure that they are not violated. Another reason why experienced players are advantageous is that they are required to immediately announce when their personal boundaries are reached.

This sounds all very serious but it prevents unwanted negative moods of the players. In my experience one can't be too sure even with old friends whether a certain situation might hit a nerve

or not. And there is only one solution to prevent this: Discuss it! Therefore the GM should ask the following questions:

- Where are your ethical boundaries? Do you have any taboos?
- Where is the ethical boundary of the GM?
- Should any special rules or game techniques be applied? (See below for more on this.)
- How should we react when an evil role requires a certain action, but the player does not want to conduct it?
- Should there be a leader of the group and if yes: who?



COMPOSITION OF AN EVIL GROUP

An evil group should be composed of extraordinary characters with different skills just as any classic good group. With good groups it is very unlikely that four farmers or king's knights would take off together and adventure. Such is also the case with villains, where it would be unlikely that four Orcs simply decide to band together and explore the world. Depending on the type of adventures to be played the evil group should be appropriately designed to explain the following points:

- Why is the group allowed to operate outside the usual command structure?
- Why do the group members have different origins?
- What caused the members to band together?
- What will keep the group together in the future!?!?
- What is the greater goal?

Actually the above-mentioned questions apply to good groups as well. Only within role-playing it is a standard cliché that an Elf, a Dwarf and a Hobbit simply meet up and start adventuring without any major reason. While doing so they also ignore their usual social surroundings and loyalties without any problems. While solidarity never poses a problem with good heroes this is a major issue with villains, due to their higher potential for conflict and obstinacy. It is therefore very important to find plausible answers to the questions above.

EXAMPLES FOR EVIL GROUPS

Evil groups could consist of chosen individuals who were sent on a mission together because their overlord saw some potential in them. Or a group could form coincidentally from individuals with a common goal, after they realize that cooperation despite any differences offers a major advantage. As a further option future group members could be caught together in a critical situation (i.e. prisoners of the west), which they need to escape. Or they might have sworn an oath which forces them to cooperate. Here are some examples for possible groups, which fit to the above-mentioned questions.

"There he joined himself to a band of such houseless and desperate men as could be found in those evil days lurking in the wild; and their hands were turned against all who came in their path, Elves and Men and Orcs."

—*The Silmarillion. Of Túrin Turambar*



Outcasts and outlaws

This type of group consists of outcasts who simply want to survive. To this end they accept every possible means. They could bear grudges against their old leaders, clans or peoples, which drive them into the service of a villain. Or maybe one thing leads to another and small offenses in the beginning grow into a fateful spiral down into the abyss of evil.

On Probation - the penal battalion

This group bears a moral taint from the outset. In the past they have failed individually or as a group, their loyalty has been doubted, or maybe they have been unjustly blackened. Now they are on probation and try to redeem themselves through great deeds, all the while seeking revenge. In the meantime every individual seeks allies to achieve their greater goal. Or alternatively this group has been compiled by the overlord and now receives a very tricky or even suicidal mission to prove itself.

Royal heir of evil

This group consists of the offspring of important members of an evil organization. To prove their value, they were grouped together by the overlord. It is also possible that they have met on purpose to rise faster within the ranks of their organization. Maybe the overlord wants to see which of them is capable of surpassing the other members to prove himself worthy for a higher position (or which of them poses a greater threat to himself).

Scapegoat

The scapegoats are a group of losers—they simply don't know it yet. They seemingly receive an important quest and feel flattered. In truth their mission is destined to fail, because their overlord is only using them to distract his enemies from his real goals. They could possibly look through both sides of the game or might even surprisingly prove so capable that they mustn't be sacrificed so readily any more...

Special unit

A group of selected villains, who have either met by themselves, offer their services, or have been compiled into a group from the overlord's best subjects. This is the perfect mirror image of the classical good group.

Unification of evil

This group doesn't belong to any evil organization. The members have come together through a specific event, maybe during a brawl or other bad crime. During this incident they recognized their mutual compatibility and now proceed together with their dark activities. At the moment they do not plan to contact any "organized evil" but work on their own account. But they will soon arouse the interest of other villains...

Renegades

Renegades oppose the established order. They either live in the West and despise the local conditions or they belong to an evil organization and regard the leader as incompetent or straying from the true path. They have come together to change this situation. The overlord might become enraged, interested or amused by their activities...

The pact

The members of this group have come together to attain power, influence or wealth. They have come together in spite of any discrepancies in race or class and formed a pact to reach their goal together!

The end justifies the means

"As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means."

—The Lord of the Rings.
The Council of Elrond



Maeðros alone stood aside
© by Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska, used with permission

This group comprises formerly good characters. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions; their methods have become increasingly drastic and everybody who doesn't share their beliefs have become their enemies. Now this group has become far more evil than the ill they once fought.

EVIL CHARACTERS (ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR ROLE-PLAYING)

Besides the advantages and possibilities, there are also a lot of problems and specialties for gaming with evil characters. Specific classical villains are difficult to play in a cooperative role-playing game – not only in Middle-earth. Among them are the following archetypes:

- Almighty overlord
- Tragic scoundrel
- Villain's submissive servant (often a sarcastic sidekick to the villain)
- Cannon fodder in the form of countless Orcs or other lowly followers
- Lone psycho or traitor
- Stupid band of brutes and cutthroats, usually with one leader
- Soulless monster (Alien, or the great white shark, etc.)
- Evil villain whom everybody talks about but nobody ever sees (Sauron)

The above-mentioned types of villains are often used in stories or the media. Most of them are not or only barely suitable for classic role-playing with groups of freely thinking individuals aiming for a common goal, that should be reached in a cooperative manner. The above-mentioned villains allow no such free cooperation, because they are either too stupid, mere followers or absolute loners. Some of them could function within a group for a short period of time (probably for a single mission lasting no longer than a few months) but ultimately the "centrifugal forces" of such a character will definitely destroy any kind of cooperation.

Examples for playable bad archetypes

If one decides to play a villain one probably doesn't want to play a lowly thug, but a real villain. And the background for such a villain is very important. A basic requirement for all adventurers is the existence of a special cause for which they leave their home. This is especially true for villains.

A low-level Orc will leave his clan only under very special conditions. Good explanations why a villain could leave his usual organization to join one of the above-mentioned groups are the following:

- Special talent or ability
- Unusual origin

- Luck or coincidence, that led to solving a bigger problem for an overlord
- Long and dependable service within the organization

Also it has proven to be practical for villains not to start as cannon fodder but with a background of success within the ranks of evil. It is thereby possible to circumvent the necessity to play the villain's rise with solo adventures until he gains a certain reputation that allows him a special status or to receive missions outside the organization. However, if one definitely wants to start out with novice characters without any decisive background story it is necessary to come up with something special to explain the adventuring life outside of the usual surroundings.

An example...

A little Orc caught a spy of the west by pure luck. Since his officer was totally drunk at that moment he delivered the spy to the friendly Nazgûl next door. The Nazgûl got interested in the Orc and assigned him to a special unit of bounty hunters.

SOME PLAYABLE VARIANTS OF EVIL CHARACTERS

The lonely Orc

His clan was destroyed or he was expelled. Now he searches for a new lord and seeks to join a group. Or he might have done something that was very helpful to his overlord but not appreciated by the clan. He might have killed his officer because he deems it necessary to deliver a mithril chain armor to the Dark Tower all by himself.



Misty Mountain Orc © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

The submissive servant / the "sidekick"

"Get up, you idiot!" he shouted to the other beggar, who had sat down on the ground; and he struck him with his staff. "Turn about! If these fine folk are going our way, then we will take another. Get on, or I'll give you no crust for your supper!"

The beggar turned and slouched past whimpering: "Poor old Grima! Poor old Grima! Always beaten and cursed. How I hate him! I wish I could leave him!"

—*The Lord of the Rings. Many Partings*



This is a servant of an evil overlord. What he lacks in power and skill he tries to balance out with submissiveness and slyness. Grima Wormtongue is a good example for a submissive tragic character. The connection with Saruman is best described as a love-hate relationship, in which the servant is completely dependent on his master.

Also possible would be a clumsy but very lucky fellow, so to say the ironic sidekick to the evil overlord. This role becomes very gratifying (and funny) when the leader/overlord is part of the group and a second player plays the sleazy and canting servant.

The upstart

He wants to draw his leader's attention through his actions and demonstration of his capabilities, in order to rise within the hierarchy. Alternatively he could come to clash with his superior after a while, after which both of them must reach an arrangement. This background often fits black mages and priests very well.

The aggrieved murderer / the traitor

He originally comes from a classical "good" race; he might be a Man of Rohan, a Dwarf or even an Elf. He has been accused unjustly for a crime, may have committed it unintentionally, or even on purpose. So now he has switched, by accident or not, to the bad side and seeks revenge!

The scout and spy

He has always been the eyes and ears of his master or clan. He knows the wilderness or lives a double life in a western city. And now he has received high orders to go on a mission together with others.

The one who played with fire

It is perilous to study too deeply the arts of the Enemy, for good or for ill. But such falls and betrayals, alas, have happened before.

—*The Lord of the Rings.
The Council of Elrond*

This character is often a lore-master, wizard or priest. In the pursuit of knowledge and power he has searched too far and has been drawn to the dark side, or caught the attention of evil that has now drawn him in with promises or threats.

The bodyguard / mercenary

Usually he is a standard warrior, an Easterling, Orc, Variag or Orc with big muscles but little brain. He has been hired for example to protect the group's leader. Or he might be smarter than anyone thinks and was ordered to be the eyes and ears of an evil overlord.

The unintentional villain

He accidentally became indebted to evil through some event and cannot go back any more. Maybe he drifts over to darkness more and more but he might also be able to gain freedom again with one smart coup.

Sleepers and spies

... lead a normal life in Minas Tirith, Edoras, Bree and so on. They all have in common, that some dark secret remains on them from their past. They once committed a crime, were hired by evil or were caught in its net in some other way. Now the day has

come and a messenger delivered the password that claims a favor. Shortly after that, a group of strangers meets in a dark alley where the messenger whispers to them: "Bring the king's daughter to our master..."

One example for someone with such a "dark secret" could be the slit-eyed Southlander in Bree (probably one of Saruman's human looking Half orcs).

The psycho

... knows no true master and serves evil only because it allows him to live out his sick ideas within safe surroundings. He usually is highly intelligent, possibly educated and seems outwardly calm and sociable. He knows that without the support he gains from his service to his overlord he would not stand a chance. Therefore he painstakingly makes sure not to meet bad ends with his master.

TIPS FOR GAME MASTERS AND PLAYERS

Possible GM tools for a game with an evil group

Gaming with evil groups requires an alert and well-prepared game master. He must "scout" the adventure's terrain to know possibly delicate situations or sometimes to create such situations on purpose and to identify how they should be tackled within the adventure.

Murder, robbery and in some cases torture, usually do not pose any problems to players as long as the victim is an evildoer. In that case we are not talking about murder but "justice", not robbery but "returning of property", etc. So the GM could circumvent most tricky situations by keeping the adventure inside the evil organization (in that case it always hits the right guy...). It becomes both exciting and problematic, however, as soon as the villains start doing what they are known for: going against the defenseless and innocent.

How can one deal with this?

As a minimum of preparation some strategies should be developed for how to handle extreme cases.

With the following tricky but realistic example I want to explain the GM's options and game mechanisms to handle and solve awkward situations in such a way that the players enjoy the game while feeling the frisson of evil like the excited shivers caused by a good horror movie...

A group of Orcs have secretly infiltrated an estate. Suddenly the troop enters the bedroom of the lord's children. This is a good opportunity so one Orc starts drawing his rusty knife slowly...

Thrifty usage of shocking effects / leave logical back doors

Situations such as the above must be prepared in detail to serve as a shocker to the players (unless a player has defined such situations as a personal taboo). But there are other occasions in which the evil role demands actions that eliminate gaming fun due to moral and ethical issues. Therefore drastic scenes should only be used sparsely for effect and only after precise planning. And the players should always be able to choose a less drastic alternative that remains realistic. So the game master should design such situations with a "safe" backdoor. There now follow some tools for the game master that don't change a given scene but include logical back doors for the players:

Sure, this would be a good opportunity and your cruel souls hunger for blood but...

- The slightest scream would wake the entire estate.
- This is not your mission. You're supposed to kill the squire.
- The squire must be intimidated but mustn't become the mortal enemy of your lord.

Do you dare to slaughter them anyway?



In the land of Mordor © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

Provide justification

In our example the oldest son could awaken and try to sound an alarm or attack our villains with a knife. He could possibly strike a surprise hit, which forces the players' characters to act. Or maybe the overlord explicitly ordered them to leave nobody alive?

Language, language, language!

Role-playing works to a great extent with language. With language tools a world is created and the players' point of view can be molded. The GM's choice of words, can change points of view and their corresponding actions. In the same way as the GM describes an Orc cave as a stinking and forbidding hole, he can also depict a Gondorian estate as an alien and threatening place. While Orcs seem ugly to Men, Men themselves and especially Elves may seem ugly and creepy to Orcs. Single words can make a huge difference here.

"Elven witches" is an example where an entirely new picture is drawn through the use of a single word. Orcs find Elves and Men of the west repellent just as vice versa! For our example one only needs to exchange "children" with "brood" or "manlings", if the group consists solely of non-Men, and immediately the picture of poor, defenseless and innocent children disappears and is replaced by a monstrous, even hostile one which fits the evil point of view far better.

SOME WORDS ABOUT POSSIBLE GAME MECHANICS

Malice, cunning, subservience, cruelty...

In addition to standard attributes such as strength and dexterity, evil ones like conceitedness, cunning, cruelty, dutifulness (towards the overlord), selfishness and so on should be given to the characters. With the help of these attributes it can be determined whether a character tends to acts cruelly or cleverly in a given situation. They additionally serve as a game master tool to identify whether players may be provided with different solutions to certain situations.

Since there is a system to reward good deeds with experience points there must also be a corresponding system for evil actions. Here the GM is free to decide. He could for example reward the most brutal, cunning psychotic player after each game session. The GM should decide together with the players which actions or which way to play the villain should be promoted through rewards.

The rewarding itself could take place after the game in the form of experience points or within the game through a special reward given by the overlord. So the GM can reward or punish actions depending on the chosen rules. Examples are:

"You butchered the squire's brood. You are truly evil and are therefore awarded one additional point in 'Cruelty'..."

"You saved the brood because the slightest scream would have endangered the mission. You have withstood your blood-lust and therefore receive one point in 'Subservience'..."

"You decided to frighten the little manlings and most and for all the estate's lord, so that he will from now on obey your lord's directions. Your idea to place the drawn knife next to the oldest son's pillow proved to be truly cunning. You are awarded one point in 'Cunning'..."

To soothe a bad conscience

A player usually won't be too keen on killing children, defenseless old people or the sick, burn houses, to torture and so on. While the evil characters are without decency and morality the players are not. How can this conflict be solved? How can one "wash" the players without "getting them wet"?

One has to take away their bad conscience! Several ways exist to ensure this. With attributes such as "Cruelty", "Lust to kill", "Cunning" etc. the GM can simply make a test. It decides how a character acts in a critical situation and whether there will be blood or not. In that case chance has taken responsibility from the players and they needn't think on this any more. The group which I ran had decided on more house rules, which proved very helpful:

The decision for light or darkness

Every player was given a game card as a prop, which showed the lidless eye on the black side and a picture of Galadriel on the white side. When a critical situation is encountered in which a player wants to storm ahead the GM can call for a decision on whether the overall situation will come out evil or good. This is a "metagame" mechanism and it is a player's, not a character's, statement on his opinion!



The ballot rules can be announced individually for each case. Either a majority decision is called for, or the drawn cards “decide” whether the situation takes a good or bad turn. Let’s have a look at one example before I describe the advantages of this system:

You come to the bedroom of the lord’s brood. This is a good opportunity and the beating of your dark hearts quickens...

I call for a ballot towards good or evil. If only one card with the lidless eye is shown this scene will come to a bad end.”

The players show their cards under the table only visible to the GM. If all cards show the white side he continues:

“But in the darkness no breathing can be heard so the room is obviously empty.”

If only one player shows the lidless eye the GM will continue:

“The brood’s destiny is sealed. The estate lord’s dynasty will fail. You slowly draw your knives...”

The way in which this can continue is described in the following sections. But first of all back to the ballot system: the players can easily communicate their general wish about the outcome of the situation without words. It requires no further efforts or big discussions with the other players. The advantage of a secret ballot, where only the GM knows who voted bad or good, is that nobody needs to justify his decision. The “white” players don’t need to feel guilty about what is going to happen and the “black” player(s) consent(s) anyway.

If the GM also should not see the players’ decisions, they can place their cards under a cloth on the table. The GM then shuffles the cards under the cloth before examining the vote together with the players.

In my experience there is always at least one player who plays the black card. In some cases where the players’ majority outwardly showed antipathy or even abhorrence to a certain situation, all the cards under the cloth still showed the black side...

At this point I could indulge in excursions on topics such as “the allure of evil”, “the desire to watch an accident’s scene closely” or “two-way social control”. However, it’s a fact that with secret votes, where no social pressure exists, even in situations where the black card was unlikely to show up it was played anyway. This seems almost philosophical, but suddenly the game with evil becomes something real, dark and unexpected. The players look at

each other and can see a bit of that glimmer of evil in their counterparts’ eyes... and exactly that effect is desired!



Omission of tasteless issues / exclusion of opportunities

This solution provides the advantage that no “unattractive” actions take place. However, this is also somewhat unrealistic and actually not the aim of this game that revolves around committing evil. Evil actions are not necessarily equated to atrocities. For our example this means that the situation above doesn’t arise at all, because the lord has no children.

Have someone else perform the atrocities

This tool serves best when a very dark story needs to be told, or a certain point is essential for the adventure. Hereby non-player characters or destiny itself undertake the evil deed so that the players’ characters aren’t the actual perpetrators of it, but still have to carry the responsibility in the end. For instance an escaping victim might fall to their death or be hit by an arrow and so on. The following example is truly evil:

“In the end you enter the brood’s room. The door is barred and you have to force it. But there is nothing left for you to do. The nanny decided to take her destiny and that of her wards into her own hands.”

Cut and aperture

If an especially gruesome scene comes up in a movie the director often uses a cut so that the actual deed is not seen. Sometimes the viewer doesn’t even get to see the result such as the corpse of a murder victim; instead other characters only talk about it as what they saw. The same also works for

role-playing. This is a very powerful stylistic device. Often it even increases a scene's creepiness, because the scene is only heard of so that the players must envision it in their own minds. And one's own imagination is often far stronger than the best description...

The GM portrays the above-mentioned situation and one player announces that he wants solve to the situation typically for Orcs. Then the GM decides to use a cut and might continue as follows: "You continue sneaking along the estate's dark hallways, while behind you trickle of blood runs out of the room from under the door..." and / or after smoking out the manor: "As you remove to the dark forest you can hear the long and sorrowful screaming of a woman who must have managed to hide from you and has now found your victims..."

Lead up to atrocities and then omit them

This game master technique should be reserved for especially tasteless situations, which are absolutely necessary for the villain's role and behavior. This tool is also helpful to introduce very dark situations to the players without the necessity to actually play them. For this the GM depicts a scene which would delight a villain, only to mitigate the situation in the very last moment of highest tension.

"You stand in the bedroom of the lord's brood. In the half-dark you can make out movement under the sleeping manling's blanket.

"After satisfying your blood lust you want to gloat over the result. You draw back the covers, a drop of blood lands on your cheek, which you lick away instinctively with your long tongue. Before you, in an expanding pool of his own blood, lies the body of a dog..."

Okay, but now let's leave these extreme cases behind us and move on to more exciting things, such as the stories and new viewpoints which are possible from the other side of gaming.

BASIC IDEAS FOR ADVENTURES

Again here the possibilities are not much different from basic adventures with good characters. Therefore suffice it to say that anything from investigations for the Dark Tower into tax evasion, to the murder of a king in Minas Tirith is potentially possible. However, where the world ends for good characters (at the gates of Mordor) it only begins for villains.

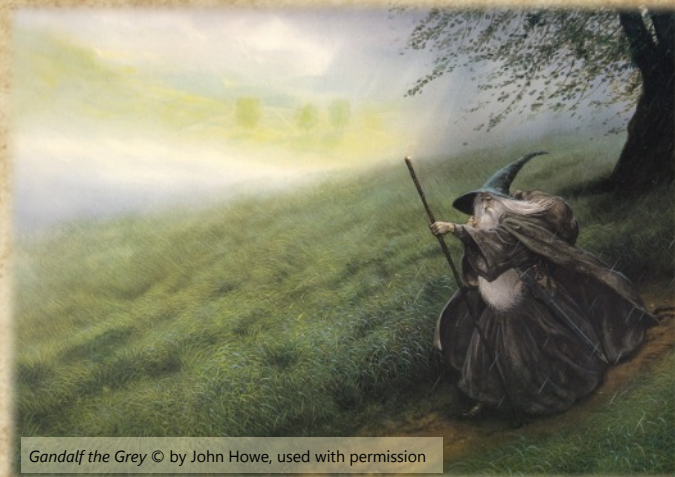
The simple journey of a small group of Orcs from Mordor into the Shire can turn into an extensive campaign. Maybe one must check on a so-called Sharkey during the hectic times of the War of the Ring? Maybe the Great Eye has changed its mind about setting free Gollum and wants him recaptured. Or maybe an investigation needs to be conducted into the whereabouts of a rebel group in Ithilien that continues to sabotage Sauron's troops? Or do the villains simply band together to get rid of their little loved leader, a so-called Grishnákh?

Endless possibilities with limitless combinations...

If you don't come up with any ideas, however, simply reread the ready-to-run MERP adventures or anything from other publishers. While doing so simply ask yourself how this story would look like from a villain's perspective or how evil would have told it!

An example:

In the adventure *Brigands of Mirkwood* a dark wizard rules a small city of scoundrels and thieves. The heroes are supposed to end the wizard's reign for Gandalf.



Gandalf the Grey © by John Howe, used with permission

How would this story look from the wizard's perspective? He may have requested a group of agents to protect him. Or the player characters might be petty criminals and highwaymen from the city who have watched the heroes and now want to sell the information to the wizard, that someone has asked odd questions about him. As an alternative the characters could belong to the tyrannical wizard's entourage, might have learned about the upcoming danger, conspired to overthrow their lord and therefore omit this important information in front of the wizard. Or the characters might be emissaries from Dol Guldur who want to behead the renegade wizard?

So the basic concept is very simple: take a normal adventure and look at it from the perspective of an evil group. If the adventure is a typical monster-chase (Orcs, Barrow-wights, etc.) an evil group's mission might be to force them into their overlord's ranks by force, bribery or magic. A wonderful adventure could also be constructed around a message sent from Sauron to Shelob, Smaug or other characters. This would lead to nice questions:

"Well now, who will enter Shelob's cave first?"

"What if Shelob mistakes me for the fidgeting guest present?"

"Will the boss be happy when I stab one of Shelob's eyes out in self defense?"

"Is the Watcher in the Water able to communicate with us at all?"

"Will the Wight be affected by the spell that the Nazgûl taught me?"

Can this be fun at all for a longer period of time?

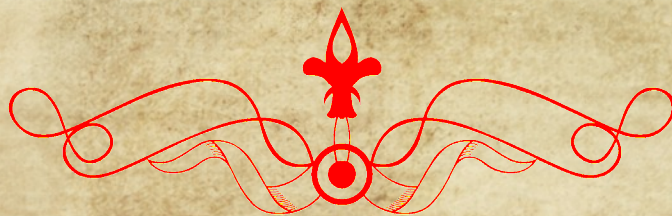
As with all things that have been overdone, role-playing on the side of evil can't be fulfilling in the long run. But it is an exciting alternative that you should try. For experienced players in particular, this change of perspective will be very insightful. Another interesting effect comes up when, after an excursion the evil side, a classic good adventure is played again. The players are not likely to slaughter scores of Orcs anymore. One player said in such a situation:

"Poor bastards!"

And chased an Orc away with a kick of his boot...



The Dispossessed © by Jenny Dolfen, used with permission



THE TOLKIEN EMAIL LIST

The eldest of the lists

This Tolkien discussion group has existed since the
First Age before the world was made round.....

Join and contribute

Our list has existed since the early 1990s with many
members who have been here for years beyond count....

Now we have moved to Google and have become a
private Google Group.

To request to subscribe to this group, please visit
the following page:

http://groups.google.com/group/tolkien_list/subscribe

or contact rossiele@yahoo.com

(Elena Rossi, ½ Listowner)



A HOPE UNFORESEEN

MEN FROM DRÚWAITH JAUR, PART I

By Daniel Bayarri Martínez

(danibayarri@yahoo.com)


with additional thoughts by Thomas Morwinsky

(tolwen@gmx.de)

translation by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa

(arthadan@gmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

This contribution was born out of the last Issue of Other Minds. The latter's contribution about demography in Rhovanion throughout the Third Age lacked a list of settlements for each period. What you now have before you is the result of this recognition.

FOREWORD

This small campaign was written with the goal of compatibility with the dates and events described in The Lord of the Rings.

The plot as outlined follows a pre-determined path. The GM however is strongly advised not to take this as set in stone and lead his group slavishly through the story (e.g. the notorious “railroading” of some adventures). He should be well-acquainted with the plot and react flexible to divergent developments. Therefore, he should read the adventure carefully to get a good overview of the important events and places. If he is familiar with the abilities and plans of the major characters, he should be able to improvise fitting alternatives to the provided plot and/or lead the players back on the path without giving them the feeling of being pushed along by the adventure script. It is imperative that the players see that their choices make a difference. Nothing ruins a good game more than an adventure which give the players the feeling of being scripted along a pre-determined path, regardless of what they do or decide.

This small campaign lives off the right timing, so it is the GM's job to both keep an eye on the timetable and still not to give the characters the mentioned bad feeling. The reward for this difficult task is an exciting campaign, that subtly but strongly weaves the player characters into the greater tale as told in The Lord of the Rings.

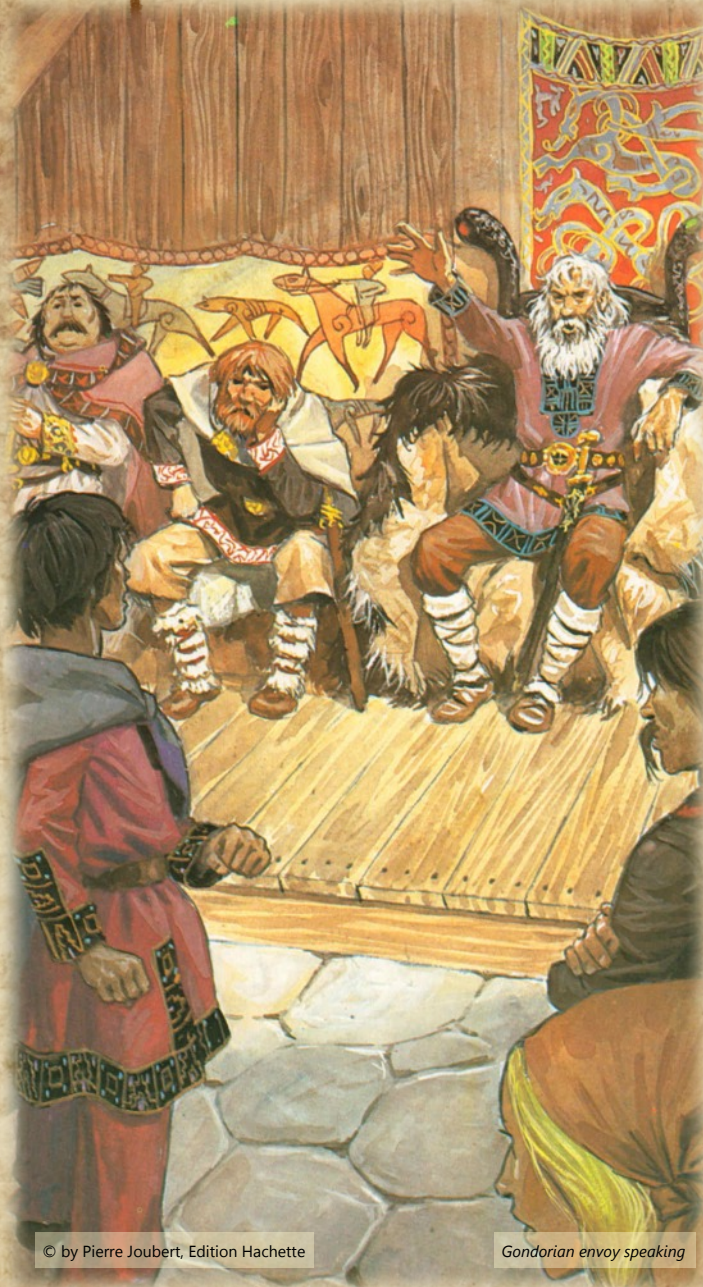
The plot as suggested also contains many instances where something needs to be found, discerned etc. The text does not any game mechanic suggestions, but the context gives you a good idea of the level of difficulty necessary to pass these tests/skill rolls.

The outline of the adventure leads the characters through lands with varying degrees of settlement. While the lands between their homes (Saralainn) and Westmarch are mostly devoid of settlement, Westmarch and even more so Rohan contain a numerous population. The adventure describes only spotlights (i.e. where important things happen). The GM is well-advised to keep in mind that the path of the characters leads mostly through inhabited lands, and this should also be experienced by the characters. The descriptions of the lands traversed in this adven-

ture cannot be and do not claim to be an exhaustive and representative description of the population or settlements to be encountered there. Thus the GM should further flesh out his descriptions of these regions to match them with a peopled land. In addition, at the end of the adventure you will find a list of suggested readings and sources which may be helpful in further detailing the scenery, according to the needs of the individual campaign.

PRELUDE

Foreseeing the great war that would come soon, Denethor II, Ruling Steward of Gondor resolved to assemble as much warriors under his banner as possible for the coming storm. He counted on Rohan and the southern fiefs of Gondor, but his thoughts also went beyond these borders.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Gondorian envoy speaking

The South was wholly in Sauron's fold, and from there—as well as from the East—only enemies would come to Gondor. In the North lived a few scattered and hidden remnants of the Dúnedain of Arnor and their power and realm was long gone. The Anduin Vales might provide some warriors, but the road thereto was long and perilous. He had sent his older son Boromir to Imladris to receive council in context with the impending war. The northern realms in Rhovanion were far away and beleaguered themselves by enemies. The wild men of Dunland had been Gondor's enemies since ancient times, and so his thoughts turned to other, smaller communities of free men from whom help might come.

The Steward knew of the independent lordships between the Mouths of Gwathló and Angren, and even though they were for the most part “barbarous fishermen”, they were not counted among Gondor's enemies. It was to them that he sent a few envoys that spoke of the peril of the realm, the generosity of its lord and the honour and riches that might be won in his service.

THE STORY

On February 16th of TA 3019, the Fellowship of the Ring leaves Lórien while other events unfold that may in the end prove important as well, supplementing the great deeds as told in *The Lord of the Rings*.

A group of men (and women) from the town of Clothrad in the lordship of Saralainn (see *Other Minds, Issue 13* for more on this realm and town) at the Mouth of the Isen (S. Angren), right between Enedwaith and Druwaith Iaur are on their way to the White City to join the armies of the Free People in the final battle against the Darkness. Two weeks have passed since they left their home and their plan is to take the Great Road at the Gap of Rohan and follow it all the way to the east. The mountain trails through the White Mountains are blocked by snow, the Sea is not possible due to the still dangerous weather and therefore they see the road through Rohan as the quickest possible way to reach Minas Tirith.

It is a rainy and cold afternoon in the westernmost corner of Westmarch.

The Characters

The Characters are men from Clothrad in Saralainn along the estuary of the Isen river, north of Druwaith Iaur. They are mainly (though not exclusively so) of lower class origin; peasants, shepherds, craftsmen, fishermen and the like who have volunteered to travel to Minas Tirith and answer Denethor's call to all worthy men to join him in the defense of the White City against Mordor.

The players are free to create any character they wish as long as they follow these basic criteria. The following types are examples to illustrate the different possible backgrounds they may have.

In terms of ethnic outlook, they would be counted as Dunlanders, which can be a hindrance in Rohan. In addition, their native language will be a dunnish dialect, so they might be recognized by this as well. Skill in Westron is essential for the adventure, while knowledge of Rohirric will be extremely helpful to build trust in Rohan.

Noble: Youngest son of one of the local ruling lords. Professional warriors from these remote regions lack the comforts and equipment of their counterparts in richer regions. The revenues in these relatively "barbarous" lands are in no way comparable to those of Belfalas or Lebennin's nobles. Therefore their equipment is rather primitive by the latter's standards. This young lord is still a teenager and has volunteered himself to lead the party on their way to Minas Tirith.

Fergnia (Du. "Man at arms") with a number of possible backgrounds:

- This professional warrior was commissioned by the local lord to take care of his impetuous son.
- He might also be a veteran guard of the local lord who has served for over twenty years fighting bandits, raiders and even a small raiding Orc warband once.
- The fifth son of a local peasant who joined the local garrison two years ago. This newbie

guardsman of the outpost garrison was given basic military training but lacks real combat experience.

- Middle aged carpenter (Smith/ Tanner/ Potter/ etc...) with a lot of militia experience who has just lost his wife and son to a deadly disease and decided to sell everything he had and volunteered to join the party on its way to Minas Tirith as a way to forget his grief and find an honorable warrior's death.
- The fourth son of a goat shepherd who has served for the last five months in the local militia. During that time he has become a close friend of the young noble and the two of them have decided to volunteer in this adventure.
- Petty criminal. He has been given the opportunity to commute his most recent sentence if he joined the party. He considers the expedition as a great opportunity to expand his "market".
- Third son of a fabric merchant, his grandfather served in the Gondorian army many years ago and his father has pressed him to join the party as he thinks army life will finally make a man out of him.

Scribe: Taught by the local wise man, and now eager to see the big city with its famous lore.

Maiden: This young lady worked as a maiden in the manor of the lord of the region. The landlord is too old to join the party himself and has no sons either, so he has offered the maiden instead. She is supposed to keep the party well fed and healthy during the trip to Minas Tirith.

Characters may be equipped with any basic items. It is recommended for *fergnia* to use standard local equipment such as spear, shield and a short sword. The quality is inferior compared to Gondorian equipment, but functional. The group will have a beast of burden and only the noble might be equipped with a horse (of much lesser quality than found in Rohan or Gondor). It is highly recommended to not have the group fully mounted at this stage.



The westernmost bridge

The story begins on a cool afternoon with rain and snow. The power of the winter has been broken already, but there is still a lot of snow and ice, which makes traveling considerably harder. It is February 15th of the year 3019. The group has already covered about 170 miles along the Isen and the characters have been traveling for almost two weeks already since their departure from Clothrad. They have marched eastwards following the southern bank of the river and are now approaching the point where the Adorn and the Isen meet. It would have been easier and quicker to move upriver by boat, but the breaking ice on the river prevents any shipborne travel at this time. The river Adorn marks the border between Enedwaith's "wildernes" (from a gondorian point of view) and Westmarch, a region where the Rohirrim's control has traditionally been tenuous.



The path goes on, reaching a small and apparently newly-built wooden bridge over the river Adorn. The characters arrive in the early morning of February 15 and need to cross it to continue their journey towards the Gap of Rohan. On the northern bank of the river, standing next to the bridge, there is a wooden tower garrisoned by border guards.

There is no banner waving on the tower but a column of smoke rises from the inside. The tower is now being garrisoned by a group of Dunlendings claiming to be Rohirric border guards. As soon as the characters step on the bridge, a man clad in a tarnished cape and holding a spear will come out of the tower to block their way. He informs them that due to orders by the king no one is allowed to cross into Rohan. The man speaks an acceptable Westron but with a strong dunnish accent.

Then, two more men, carrying short bows, will be visible at the topmost battlement of the tower. If the characters do not step back and return to the southern end of the bridge, the guard standing before them will shout again to his men in the tower and more men will come out to join the leader, amounting to a total as are characters in the party.

If the characters decide to avoid the fight and retreat to the southern shore of the river, the Dunlendings will laugh at them, Calling them names first in Westron and then in their own language. "Cowards" will be among the nicest appellations given to them.

The characters need to cross the bridge if they want to follow their intended way. If they travel further east, there will be no other bridge before reaching the mountains (and likely causing a massive delay). The current one is the only and freshly made by Saruman's men as a resource to bring in fresh troops in this region from across the river.

It is up to the characters which solution they prefer to get across the river, but they have to do it in any case. Social skills with which they may try to persuade or intimidate the garrison are one option, paying a hefty toll or force of arms are all viable options. The garrison is quite self-confident, but not

used to stiff resistance or people with a strong personality (which may awe them), so this peaceful solution is not unlikely, given the right skills and ideas of the characters. Subterfuge is another option, but the characters should be quite good at it to stand a chance of sneaking by unnoticed. It is obvious too, that waiting will bring no advantage.

The inside of the tower on the northern side of the river is wretched. The main floor is used both as bedroom and living room and is dominated by a fireplace built in its center. Each Dunlending has a wooden chest next to his cot in which he keeps his scarce possessions. A torn Rohirric banner with the edges burnt and obscene scenes scrawled on it hangs from the wall opposite to the entrance door. A wooden staircase attached to the perimeter walls climbs to the battlements which have no roof at all.

Once on the northern bank of the river, there is a road (even if unpaved) advancing among open fields and small wooded areas. The tower stands near the confluence of Adorn and Isen and on the Isen's side of the tower it can be seen that the building of another wooden bridge—this time over the Isen—has just begun. There is plenty of building wood lying around.

It begins to snow and rain heavily and visibility is severely reduced. The characters may encounter a lone farm to camp for the night, but more likely they will have to camp in the open. Their journey proceeds uneventful for the remainder of February 15 and the whole of the 16th and 17th. They may stay over night at farms lying along the road, but the people will be not very talkative and eye the strangers suspiciously. In this region of Westmarch, most people have a good part of dunnish blood, so there is no outright hostility towards the group. Nonetheless they are also happy when the characters are gone again. These mostly dunnish farmers are mostly left alone and treated acceptably by the new Eolderman (not surprisingly) and thus have nothing to complain about.

The Lost child

It is assumed that the characters manage to cross the bridge in whatever way on the same day they arrived. In the late morning of February 17 some characters will be aware of voices coming from one of the small groves not far from them. At the beginning it will be hard to identify both the language and origin of the voices but as the road gets closer to the wooded area, they might identify two or three different groups of people, with males and females, shouting a single word: "Holdwyn".

After a few minutes (it is not important whether they follow the road or leave it to enter the grove), the group will meet a man and a woman coming in their direction, shouting the same word. They are unarmed and look worried. When the couple sees the group, they will halt immediately and the man will move in front of the woman to protect her. They will stay quiet and lower their heads. Then the man will stand forward and ask the characters in Westron, with a strong rohirric accent, if they have seen a lost child. Only if the characters approach them calmly and peacefully, the couple will identify themselves as peasants from a nearby farm. Holdwyn is the seven year old daughter of their neighbors. She has disappeared and they are looking for her. After speaking with the characters, they will continue the search.

Later, the characters will meet a second group of three people. This time is a middle aged man with his wife and his eighteen year old daughter. They are also searching for Holdwyn.

No matter whether the group is taking part in the search or not, they will finally find the girl crouching among the roots of a huge oak. She is completely soaked and hardly moves at all. Holdwyn will answer no questions and she will keep her eyes closed. Only if someone touches her, she will shriek loudly. Right after that, a man will come out of the trees charging against the character who has just



touched the girl or the one closest to her. He is unarmed but strong. Seconds later a woman will appear from the same direction and will take the girl from the ground. They are Holdwyn's parents. The father has an aggressive attitude and he will place himself between the characters and his wife and daughter. If the characters are unable to calm him, the arrival of the other two searching parties will help to soften his mood as he understands the characters are not dangerous.

Holdwyn's father will apologize and he is so grateful to the characters for their help that he will invite them to spend the night in his home-
stead, which is half an hour away from where Holdwyn was finally found.

Holdwyn and her parents will lead the group while the man from the second encounter explains to the players the events that took place over the day. A group of tax collectors, sent by the Westmarch Eolderman (the regional governor) arrived that morning. They went to all the farms in the area taking most of the grain intended to feed them until the next harvest as well as some cattle and whatever they considered of value. Holdwyn's older brother tried to stop them and wounded one of the tax collectors with a pitch fork. Unfortunately, the tax collector hit him back with his sword, killing him with a single stroke. The child witnessed it all and ran away crying. The tax collectors took their wounded comrade and left three hours ago. At this point Leofwyn, the young maiden whose father is telling the story, will begin to cry. She was supposed to marry Holdwyn's brother next summer.

The farm is rather small and it has a single building. In the main room lies the body of the young farmer. The men begin to gather outside at some distance to the house, to dig a pit to bury him next to some other existing graves. They will appreciate any help. Meanwhile, the women will clean the body and prepare it for the burial. It will be a simple ceremony which will take about an hour. When it is finished, the whole group will join at the main room to have some hot broth and brown bread that will be shared with the characters.

The whole group of locals will remain silent. They will give more details on the situation only if

asked by the characters. It looks like one year ago a new Eolderman was appointed by the King. When he arrived, most of the local guards and soldiers were discharged or sent back to Hornburg or Edoras, being replaced by half- or full-Dunlending levies out of the more northern and eastern regions of Westmarch. Taxes increased dramatically and tax collectors inspected the households every month, taking with them everything they thought valuable. Over time, everyday life became a nightmare.

While these matters are being discussed,

Leofwyn will beg the characters to avenge her fiancé. Her father will order her to shut her mouth, but she is agitated. She will even call the characters cowards if they do not promise to go after the tax collectors.

It will not take long before the other people return to their farms, leaving Holdwyn's parents alone with the characters. They are invited

to spend the night at the farm, sheltered from rain and wind.

During the night, while the characters are sleeping, Leofwyn will sneak into their room to try to steal a weapon from the characters. If she is caught, she will begin to cry and she will confess she wanted to go after the tax collectors herself. In any case, the characters will only have a chance to discover Leofwyn's attempt if they are wary and keep watches.

The Tax Collectors

At sunrise, if Leofwyn has succeeded, the characters will notice one of their weapons and one shield has gone missing. If she was detected, she will later steal a weapon from her fiancée's father to carry out her mission of revenge. Her father will arrive some minutes later in agitation, telling that the girl has disappeared and he is afraid she might be doing something she will regret later.

Leofwyn's tracks can be followed without problems. She has been running northwards across the snowy tall grass fields. She is at least one hour ahead of the characters and moves quite fast to catch the tax collectors. After about six hours the characters will find their shield laying on the ground. The girl rested here and left it behind due to its weight and



What happened at the farm © by Daniel Bayarni Martinez

As the characters reach the location they will find Leofwyn surrounded by some Dunlendings (about the same number as characters in the party). The girl has her back against the rocks and her clothes are torn, but she stills holds the stolen sword. The men of Dunland will turn to face the characters as soon as they arrive. They will try to capture Leofwyn and use her as a hostage, but they are not supposed to represent a major threat to the characters.



The tax collectors are sitting around the campfire. They have left their cart with the grain sacks and the goods collected on one side of the camp. They are not Dunlendings but Rohirrim – though of

While this conversation is being held, they will hear the sound of horses approaching. The tax collectors will get nervous and will ask the characters to hide in the wood, as this is probably their captain and his men.



A few minutes later a group of armed men on horses will enter the clearing, three of them are riding large warhorses while the rest (Dunlendings) ride on simple horses. Eadmond and another tax collector will walk forward to meet them. If the characters have decided to stay in the open, the man leading the newcomers will point at them asking Eadmond who they are and what business they have here. He is ill-tempered and loud enough for the characters to hear. No matter what Eadmond answers or what the characters may say, the man will accuse Eadmond of treachery, telling him in a vicious tone that his family will be killed and his hamlet ravaged. On hearing this, Eadmond will lose control and attack the captain, trying to knock him down from the horse. This will initiate a fight between the tax collectors and the captain's party.

If the characters remain hidden, the scene will be similar but Eadmond will be accused of not having collected enough taxes. The captain will call him a liar when Eadmond tries to give explanations. Finally, the captain will threaten him according to the first version, and the scene will unfold as described above.

Anyway, the clash will always end up the same way, the captain and his retinue will be defeated. He will probably escape – perhaps wounded – and at least half the tax collectors including Eadmond and the one who killed the farmer will die. Two of the surviving ones will be badly wounded. Those left standing are scared. They are anxious to reach their homes and warn their families of the impending danger.

The characters' actions may influence the outcome, e.g. an especially well-fought combat may

reduce the casualties. The only important detail is the escape of the captain, so the GM should take care to facilitate this.

Cahmlen, No Time to Lose

Now the characters must decide what to do. The tax collectors are loading the bodies of their fallen comrades and the wounded men in the cart. They have left the grain behind and want to leave for their settlement, known as Cahmlen, as soon as possible. The captain has escaped and he will give word to the Sheriff of what has happened, and the people of Cahmlen will be in great peril. There is no time to lose. Leofwyn will be on her knees in one corner crying again. She feels lost and does not know what to do.

When the cart is ready and the men are about to leave, Widfara, the one who seems to lead them now, will ask the characters to join them. They will need all the help they can gather if they want to defend their homes.

This offers many chances for good roleplay, since Leofwyn's may or may not think that her fiancé has been avenged with his killer's death. As it turned out, the supposed "evil" guys were not so evil in any case, and the psychological repercussions of a not so clear black-and-white scheme may scratch her (and perhaps others') beliefs about good and evil in the world.

At a fast traveling pace during daytime they could probably reach Cahmlen in half a day, but the cart is overloaded, daylight is soon fading and thus travel is quite slow. They would be quicker if they leave the cart behind, but that may put those in it at a risk. It is expected that they will finally reach the village in the evening of February 19th, exhausted and hungry. Upon their arrival almost the whole population - around forty people - will gather in front of the Thane's house. Once the commotion has calmed down, Widfara will tell the events of the past day and an argument will start. Many people want to flee in face of the expected Sheriff's and Eolderman's retaliation, but Widfara is trying to convince them to stay and defend their homes. The Thane, a minor noble acting as community leader, will then turn to the characters, as they look like honest and worthy men, and will ask them for their counsel.

If the characters choose to evacuate the hamlet, Widfara will ask them to join him and some of the men to form a skirmish party to delay the arrival of



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Cahmlen street scene

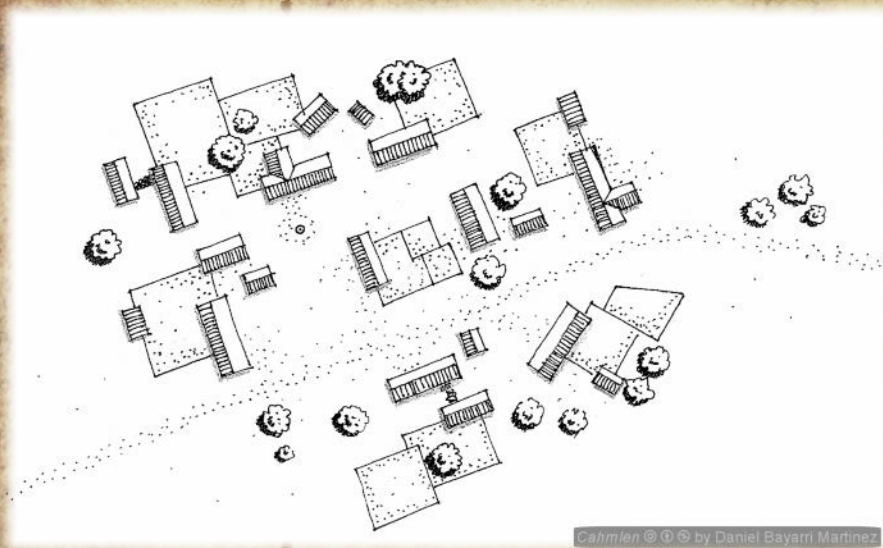
the Sheriff's force, buying time for all the villagers to flee to a safe location. It is suggested by others that a defense shall be attempted and thus the GM should have some arguments ready why an evacuation will be the greater danger (e.g. being caught in the open before a safe place has been reached). This opinion is shared by the majority.

On the other hand if they decide to stay and face the Sheriff's men, they will be asked to organize the defense, which will be led by Widfara and Théobald the Thane. Due to their slow journey to Cahmlen, it is rightly assumed that the Sheriff's attack will commence the next day. It takes some time to get word back to the Sheriff and for his forces to prepare, leaving little time for defensive preparations. They might supervise the organization of the defense or get some much-needed rest themselves (having traveled throughout the night).

At about noon of February 21st, the attack will begin. Possible actions of the characters may be found below, though others are possible of course. The GM is advised to take these as inspiration and be creative in supporting innovative ideas of his players or subtly suggesting some of those below if he feels they need a bit of support here.

In addition to possible activities, the village plan on the next page may be helpful in planning.

- *Sending out scouts and setting a watch.* It would be wise to send out scouts and set watches at appropriate observation points (the locals will know these) to raise the alarm when the Sheriff's troops arrive. If they do so, they will be informed that about one hundred armed men are moving towards Cahmlen. By the time they get this report, they will still have around one hour to prepare the concrete defenses (general preparations have hopefully been ordered to last through the night).
- *Recruiting forces.* Most men of Cahmlen, from sixteen to fifty years old, are willing to fight. All told, these are about twentyfive men. There is also half a dozen of kids from ten to fifteen which want to join in and at least fifteen of the younger women. In addition there are around twenty five old men and women, kids and handicapped people which cannot fight but may perform other tasks. Characters are free to organize groups for various tasks as they deem fitting and give the instructions they feel necessary.
- *Calling for help.* If messengers are sent to nearby hamlets and farms asking for help, some more men will come to defend Cahmlen. About fifteen men from neighboring farms will arrive in time to support the defenders if this option



© by Daniel Bayarri Martinez

is taken. They will arrive about half an hour before the attack takes place. One third of them have bows while the rest carry improvised hand weapons. If any of the messengers is given a horse, a group of six mounted men will arrive later in the middle of the battle. They will charge the enemy's rear, against the bowmen if possible. In addition, another twenty footmen will arrive half an hour later as well (they come from settlements further away).

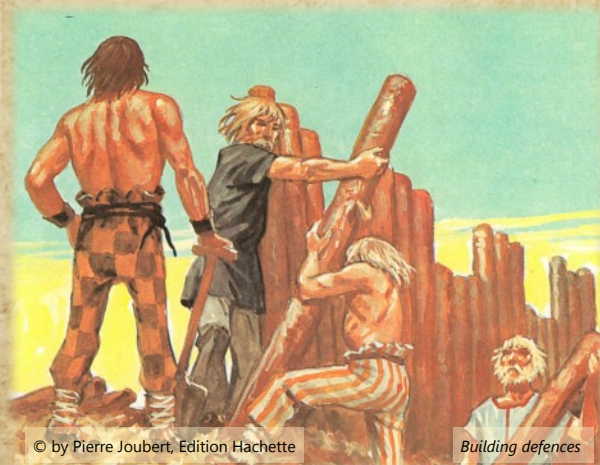
- *Improvising equipment.* The equipment at hand is rather poor. There are a total of ten bows and ten spears. Most men can provide some sort of improvised weapon (pitch forks, hand axes, scythes, etc.) Only Widfara, the Thane and the surviving tax collectors have decent war gear. There is a small forge in the hamlet and the smith can improvise about half a dozen primitive and sub-standard spear heads in time. Some crude shields can be made from wooden doors if necessary. There are three riding horses available (e.g. usable for some scouting or hit-and-run mounted tactics) as well as four pack animals.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Bow training

- *Training villagers.* The villagers have little or no combat skills at all. Some of them may make good archers but nothing else. Characters may give them basic training if they feel it will help. They can also set up a basic signal code (horn, drum, flags, etc...) to give simple orders (advance, retreat, etc.).
- *Build defenses.* The villagers can supply tools and materials to build basic defenses and barricades. They may also dig ditches, build traps or any other earthwork the characters may come up with and that can be reasonably realized in the available time



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Building defenses

- *Planning.* Characters are free to prepare any defensive strategy or plan they may come up with. They will be able to place each group of men wherever they want and give them basic orders. They can also lead groups themselves.

If scouts and watchmen have been sent out, they will report the enemy's approach shortly before noon of February 21st. One hour later, a column of men will appear over the small hill to the east of the hamlet. The Eolderman has sent around sixty Dunlending warriors ready for combat: A dozen archers, fifty foot warriors and five riders, all of them led by the Sheriff and the captain already known to the characters. The Eolderman has also sent some of his personal guard, five dark figures dressed in black garb.

The Sheriff feels confident and does not expect the villagers to pose a significant threat. He will order the main group of warriors led by the captain to advance towards the hamlet arranged in a single formation. About fifteen warriors plus the archers and the riders, as well as the Eolderman's personal guard, will remain as reserves. The first wave will fall in any trap (ditch, ambush, etc.) prepared by the characters and this first attack will falter. The Sheriff will then send everything he has left but the Eolderman's guard. The archers will prepare flaming

becomes clear they have been too optimistic in expecting to reach the castle that evening.

They will reach the Sheriff's tower by midday. The structure rises dark and somber on the top of a hill dominating the crossroad and the small wooden bridge which crosses the stream nearby. The party will stop before reaching the tower. The men's courage is wavering, so the Thane will ask the characters to scout ahead and see if there are any remaining forces at the tower.

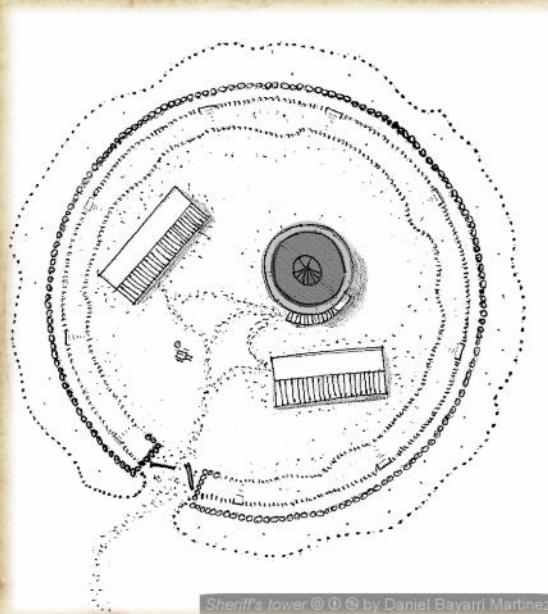
At nightfall the battle will be over. In one way or another, the characters have dealt with the attackers and probably killed the captain himself. Now will be the time to mourn the fallen and help the injured.

WESTMARCH IN WAR

The following day funerals for the fallen are held and at noon all the surviving men will meet at Théobald's house. During the day couriers have been sent to most neighboring villages and to all the southern border garrisons as well. The mood is not the best and despite the victory they do not feel very optimistic, most men agree they have no other option than going ahead with their rebellion against the Eolderman Guthlaf. Most couriers came back with encouraging and warm words from other villagers but garrisons are mostly manned by people loyal to the Eolderman, often part-dunnish, and those still being held by Eorlingas are not willing to disobey the orders they have been given.

Théobald suggests to march towards Eodenburg, the Gondorian built castle known in the past as Amon Roch, to face Eolderman Guthlaf. Everyone believes he has sold them to the Men of Dunland, and the orc-like creatures they have fought the day before may imply he has some hidden pact with the dark forces. It is decided that the traitorous Eolderman must be removed from office, held accountable for his deeds and the rule of Westmarch be returned to the King. In addition, the road leads by the Sheriff's tower where they might find further evidence.

The party leaves Cahmlen on the morning of February 22nd. Every man in the village able to fight will join the war party and as they march along the road several other small groups of local shepherds or farmers join them too. Women and children cheer them as they walk by. As the day advances, it



The construction looks ancient and not Rohirric in style at all. Someone with good knowledge in Gondorian history may recognize it as dating from the Second Age, the time when the King of Gondor ruled all the lands south of the Isen and north of the Adorn and their people erected mighty buildings with Númenoréan craft.

The circular tower is five floors high and surrounded by a three meter high wooden palisade. A trail winds up the hill before reaching the large wooden doors. Every tree on the hill has been cut long ago so that they do not block visibility from the tower and palisade.

The main wooden doors are half open and there are no guards on sight. The inner court seems to be inhabited but with the people gone. In the interior, there are a small stable and a warehouse attached to the palisade. A cart with one of its wheels missing lays next to the stable entrance. No animals can be found in the stable and overall there is no sign of life to be seen.

The warehouse has a single large door which is wide open. The interior is a mess with every box

and barrel opened and most of their content is spilled on the floor.

A wooden stair attached to the wall climbs to the tower entrance, which is on the first floor. There are no windows on the ground floor, but the first one and those above have arrow slits. The tower's main door is firmly locked.

The men inside the tower will remain silent until a group of at least ten or fifteen men are at the inner court. At that point they will open fire with their bows from the windows on the first and second floor. Firing at them effectively will be really hard. The narrow windows provide excellent protection and at least two of the archers can cover the stairs so anyone attempting to climb up to them and reach the tower's main door will need to protect himself from the arrows.

There are half a dozen Dunlendings inside the tower, most of them are wounded and were left behind by their comrades when they left the tower after the defeat at Cahmlen. If the characters break into the tower, the defenders will surrender and beg for mercy.

Each one of the five floors in the tower is a single space and all of them are linked by a spiral staircase running through the central spine of the tower. As explained before, the entrance is on the first floor, which is used as common room and kitchen. The second, third and fourth floor have been used as barracks. The fifth floor was used by the Sheriff and the ground floor was used as warehouse and armory.

The barracks are now empty, the men's cots are a complete mess and the chests lay open with their contents spilled on the floor. Most of what is left is torn or old clothing and other goods of little value.

The Sheriff's room is in complete disarray as well. Although it was much better equipped, with its own table and a bed, the furniture is now toppled and broken. If searched carefully a few coins and a bronze cup can be found under a fur cape.

The armory is still quite well stocked with simple but effective weapons. There are a dozen solid spears, a few round shields, two or three hand axes and a couple of leather jackets. In the center of the ground floor there's a wooden hatch which, if opened, uncovers a set of wooden steps leading to the basement. There is no light at all down there and both the walls and the floor are wet. The stair ends up in a small room with one cell on each side. The cells are closed with heavy wooden doors and inside each of them there are three prisoners. Two of them are dead, the other four are sick and badly wounded.

They have multiple scars on their bodies and they have most probably been badly mistreated.

As soon as the tower has been secured, and while the characters are within it, a rider will arrive galloping from the road to the south. He will stop next to the first man he meets and after exchanging some words with him, he will be directed to the characters and/or Théobald. The rider will then meet the characters introducing himself as Folcred, the third son of the Thane of Sutfolcham, the second largest town of Westmarch lying around the old Gondorian settlement of Derwath, and now called Embald. He has been riding the whole day and is very exhausted. With some effort, he will explain how, after receiving the news of what happened in Cahmlen (the news are spreading fast in this small land), the citizens of Sutfolcham revolted but were defeated by the Eolderman's garrison of Magenald (the former Gondorian Tilmentir) castle. Many people died in this insurrection. The garrison which is around two or three hundred men strong is now marching north. On his ride, he stopped at Stocham to change his horse and warned the villagers. All the people of Stocham fled and they will arrive at the tower by nightfall.

The so called Cahmlen "army" is now some seventy men strong. The party must decide if they want to risk facing the Magenald garrison were they are, keep marching towards Eodenburg or move back to Cahmlen. Most men want to go back to protect their families, and if they are pushed to keep marching towards Eodenburg, many will leave the force and head home (remember, they are no real warriors).

If the captain's tower has already been captured (which is quite likely), a garrison set here could block the road for hours. The palisade and battlements offer an ideal shooting position to fire over the road but, if besieged, it would very likely not last more than two or three days.

At this point, if the characters have not come up with this conclusion by themselves, Théobald will point out that it looks like Westmarch's men alone will not be able to defeat the Eolderman's men. They must warn the King's Marshal at the Hornburg (Helm's Deep) on what is going on and ask him to help those loyal to King Théoden.

No matter what plans are made for the "army", the characters will be asked to escort Théowulf, Théobald's son. Théowulf is handed a letter which Folcred managed to write and which he has signed with his father's, Folcwine, Thane of Sutfolcham, stamp. Théobald, Thane of Cahmlen, will also add

his stamp and so will Fulgar, Thane of Stocham, if he has arrived by that time.

The group must then ride in haste all the way to the Hornburg, giving word to everyone they meet on what is going on and only stopping at Norhithé and especially Fréaham, Westmarch's main town (the ancient Gondorian settlement of Beldwin), to ask the Thanes there to add their stamps to the letter as well.

The group is handed all the horses left and asked to gallop as fast as possible to the Hornburg, to inform Erkenbrand the Marshal of Westmarch, of the situation and hand him the letter stamped by the Thanes. Meanwhile, the men of Cahmlen and Stocham will carry out the defensive plan agreed on earlier (remember to make sure that such plans are made), be it facing the Dunlendings from Tilméntir castle, marching to Eodenburg or removing back to Cahmlen.

Norhithé

Théowulf and the characters leave as soon as the horses are ready. The plan is to ride all the way to Norhithé where they will take a short rest, from there they will keep going to reach Fréaham as soon as possible. They will not reach Norhithé until the evening when the light is failing. The village's lights will first be visible after reaching a small hill's crest.

The village looks quiet and its dozen of houses are packed near the south bank of the river Isen. All the doors and windows they go by appear to be firmly closed. Théowulf has been there before and he will lead the characters to the Thane's house. It is one of the largest buildings in the road. The large wooden door is closed and they will need to knock several times until an old man answers. It is the Thane himself. He and Théowulf will talk for a few minutes and then the doors will open to let the whole party in. The Thane will wake up his family and will ask the group to take a seat at his table and eat something while their horses are tended to.

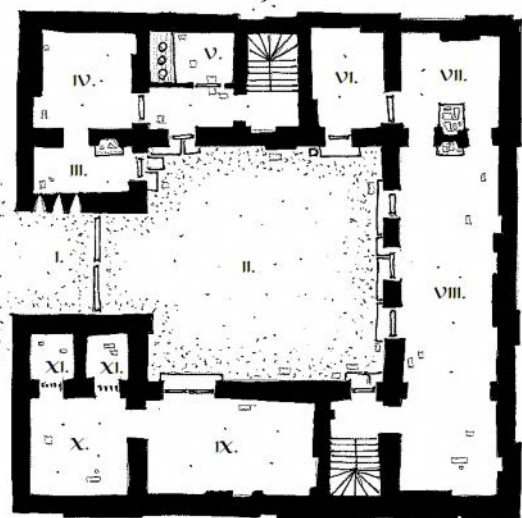
Hot broth and dry bread will be served and the Thane will listen as the letter is read to him by Théowulf. At that point the door knob will sound again. It is the ferryman's daughter. She is very nervous and speaks hastily. It looks like Dunhere, the trapper, and one of his sons are on the northern side of the Isen river and someone is chasing them. They took the ferryboat to cross the river but the current is too strong for them and they can hardly keep it stable, and they are stuck. The Thane will leave the house running with one of his sons and will ask one of his daughters to run to the town square and sound the horn. Théowulf will go with the Thane asking the characters to come along.

When the group reaches the river the ferryboat is halfway from both banks. The two men on board are holding the rope connecting both banks as hard as they can but can hardly make the boat move forward. They forgot to secure the boat to the rope and that's why the current is a problem now.

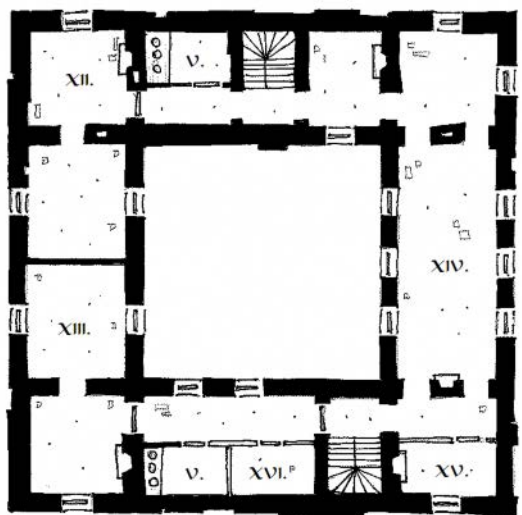
From the southern bank, the ferryman and two other men are doing their best to throw them a second rope, so they can pull the boat to their bank of the river. But from the northern bank, hidden in the darkness, a group of archers has started shooting at the ferry crew and the helping men, forcing them to take cover.

The Dunlendings on the north bank will shoot at anyone holding a light while keeping their own position unknown. They will also repeatedly shoot at the two men on the boat.

The river current is very strong and reaching the boat by swimming is really hard, more so if being



Thane's house at Norhithé ① ② ③ by Daniel Bayarri Martinez

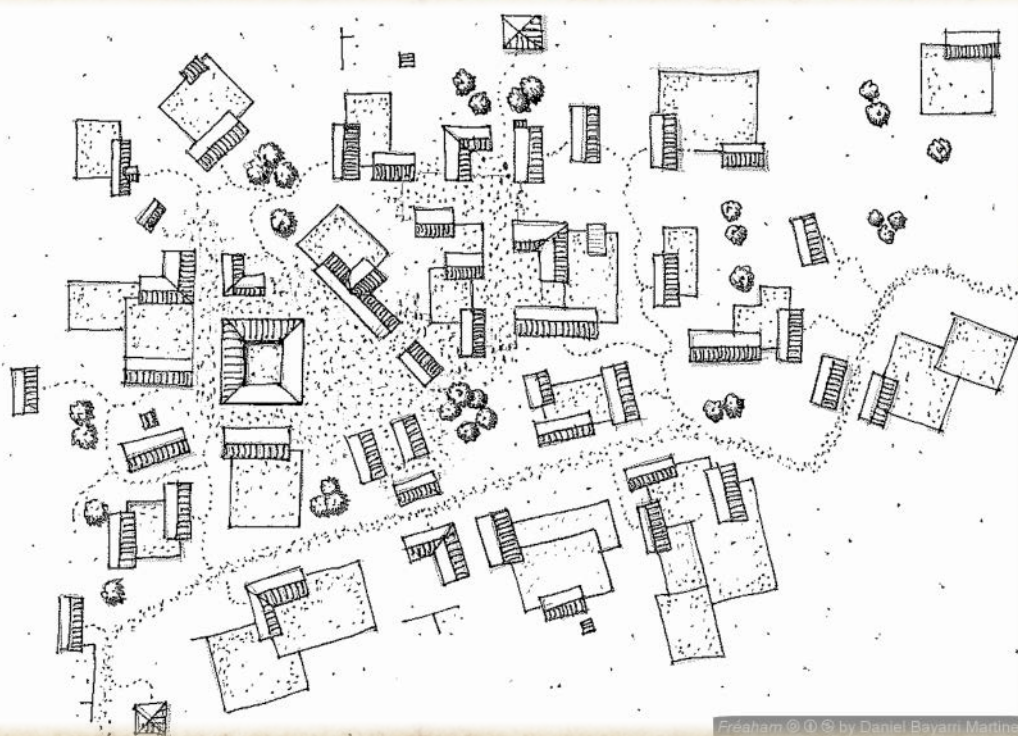


FRÉAHAM

Dunhere will have a minor wound on his thigh but unfortunately his son will be dead before they reach the southern bank. If asked about what happened, the wounded man will explain how they went to the north bank earlier that evening to set some traps for pheasants and they came across the camp of an army larger than any they had ever seen before. There were lots of people there (he isn't good at math – especially high numbers – so this should be taken as “very many”). Many of them were Dunlendings but he also saw other fearsome creatures. They were surprised by one of the hideous warriors which was riding a huge wolf and they were lucky enough to escape from his jaws and made good their escape for the river bank.

If they manage to avoid the patrols, the characters may enter Fréaham, but they must be careful and leave the horses outside, because the sound of the hooves will alert the watchmen. The horses are exhausted and if forced to run much further, they are very likely to collapse under the stress. It should be obvious to the characters that these horses need a prolonged rest, excluding them from their ongoing journey. The effects of staying awake for a prolonged time should be felt by the characters as well, since they traveled through the night without sleep.

Théowulf will guide them through the streets towards the town hall which is also the Thane's house, the prison and the city guard armory. Three Dunlending guardsmen stand by the main gate of the building which is a small fortress of its own. A solid rectangular stone structure on one side of the



market square probably an old manor from Gondorian times. The external facade has no windows on the ground floor and those on the upper floor are protected with iron bars. In the center of the market square, a temporary wooden structure has been erected and five corpses are hanging from it.

Everyone in Fréaham is really scared and will not open the door to the characters, which are really in need of fresh horses to keep traveling east. Théowulf has no family here and he has only met the Thane and the healer before so those are the only two people who know him and his status.

The healer's house is also in the market square but it is impossible to reach the front door without being seen by the guardsmen at the town hall's main gate. There is a back door in a side alley which may be reached without detection by the guards. The healer will open the door only if Théowulf himself talks to him then allowing the whole group to enter. He is very scared, the Eolderman ordered everyone to stay at home two days ago when the news of the revolt taking place in the west and the Sutfolcham massacre arrived. A mob gathered in the market square to protest but it was dispersed by the dunnish guardsmen and the leaders were hanged. The Thane was taken and most probably imprisoned in the castle. The Dunlendings have occupied the town hall and no one is allowed to leave their homes.

He will like to help but can only offer basic healing ointments or herbs. He is too scared to leave his home but may do so if the characters come up with a sound plan. He has no horses of his own but can confirm that there are a dozen of them at the town hall's stable. As far as he knows, horses from the neighboring farms have been taken by the guardsmen but if he is asked to he'll hand out a personal token which might grant the characters help from locals, he could also write a letter but almost all farmers cannot read anyway. He thinks that it will be really hard to get horses from them and probably only old Háma will accept his personal token as a proof of the characters trustworthiness and their dire need.

The Dunlendings are using the town hall as their headquarters. There are at least two dozens of them in the interior and they are using it as barracks. Patrols come in and out of the main gate which is strongly guarded. On the other hand there is no one regularly patrolling the building so the side streets are rather safe for the characters.

The town hall's roof can be reached by climbing one of the side walls or even jumping from a neighboring building roof across the street. The roof is

rather steep and allows characters to see the inner court of the building. Most of the ground floor rooms, the jail house, the armory and the stables can be accessed from the inner court which is somehow crowded with people moving from one place to another. The upper floor houses the Thane's family residence. Most rooms at that floor have been plundered and are now used as barracks. The Thane's family, his wife and two daughters of thirteen and seventeen years old, are locked in one of the rooms on this floor.

From the rooftop characters can both reach the inner court of the building or even one of the windows of the first floor, but doing it unnoticed will be extremely hard. They can also go downwards through the chimneys. There are four chimneys and only one of them, the one from the kitchen, has smoke coming out of it. The others lead to the court room on the ground floor, the guard room next to the main gate, the dining room at first floor and the Thane's office in which the kids and their mother are locked. It is not possible to know which chimney belongs to which room, but noises coming from them may help when making a guess.

If getting into the town hall wasn't easy, leaving it with the horses will be even harder. The only exit leading to the exterior is the guarded main gate. It's up to the characters to find out how to break out with their new mounts. The option of obtaining horses here is clearly the much more daunting task and the GM is advised to discourage his players from attempting this if they are not reasonably capable.

If the characters opted not to break into the Thane's House, but go straight for old Háma, they will experience the terror brought to the locals. None of the farmers around Fréaham will have horses to spare. Most of them were taken by the Dunlendings to equip their men patrolling the outskirts of the town.

When the characters reach old Háma's home-stand on the eastern outskirts of the town, they will be shocked by a macabre scene. Five Dunlendings are trying to overpower a large white bearded man while three more of them are taking several horses from the stable behind them. Not far from the brawl a woman on her knees is crying uncontrollably.

The Dunlendings are having some trouble dealing with the bearded man which will finally fall to the ground and once downed, kicked repeatedly. If the characters take part in the fight and defeat the attackers, they will realize that Háma has some broken ribs, a broken arm and he has lost some teeth. His wife asks the characters for help and she'll

and either ambush the would-be ambushers themselves or pass them by, delivering their letter.

This is the last obstacle on their way towards the Gap of Rohan. After a forced ride during the rest of the day they will meet the Great Road at dusk and encounter the Rohirrim's field camp of the force guarding the Fords' area with the green and white standards waving over them. The force is around forty men strong and will welcome the characters. The commander Fram, a strong man with a long braided beard will listen to the characters and he will inspect the letter's stamps. He can't read and will send one of his men to look for a young lad from the force which will, with a great effort, go through it very slowly. Since the complete text is not fully understood, the players' tale will be sufficient help here, since the commander deems the seals authentic. In addition, two of his scouts are missing on the northern bank of the river, adding to the character's story of a hostile army assembling north of the river.

Fram will offer dinner to the characters while their horses get some rest and will send two of his men with them to the Hornburg the next day (February 24th). He will also send a dozen of his riders to clear the route towards Fréaham and he will command all his scouting patrols to come back and be ready to march to Westmarch as soon as the orders from Helm's Deep arrive.

96

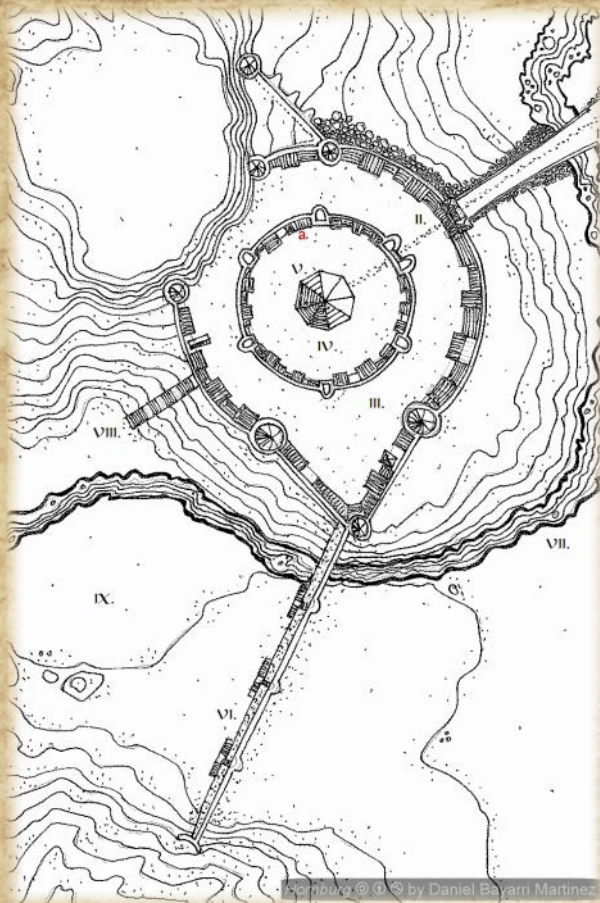
helm's Deep

Note: This part assumes that the characters chose to travel east from Westmarch as soon as possible to reach the Hornburg.

No major events will take place during the ride from the Rider's camp to the Hornburg. The characters will arrive around noon February 24th.

The fortress is built around an octagonal tower, which rises several floors high at the ramparts of the white mountains. A large wall of stone has been built around the tower enclosing the inner court and several wooden buildings have been erected against this wall. These buildings house the kitchens, mess areas, barracks and servants' quarters. A second wall was built around the first one creating an outer court. Both courts are connected by a single large reinforced door. In this second court the stables, workshops and other common spaces are located. The second wall extends to the south over the Deeping stream protecting Helm's deep.

The complex has a single gate reached via the bridge spanning the stream to the northeast, but there are two doors connecting the outer court to other parts of the fortress complex. The first one leads to the Deeping Wall and the second one to the stairs descending to the valley.



The escort riders will lead the characters to the fortress and once arrived the whole group will be led into the second court and from there to the main tower ('V' on the map). There they are received by Erkenbrand, who will listen to them quietly. Next to him stands Théodred, Prince of Rohan, who will thank the characters for their efforts when their report has ended. Both will examine the letter and the seals carefully, asking details about their encounters and the enemy forces gathering on the west bank of the Isen. When the lords have gained enough information, the Prince will thank the characters and Erkenbrand will order one Éored of the garrison to leave immediately for Westmarch to restore the order and capture the treacherous Eolderman.

From that moment on the characters are dismissed and no one seems to pay attention to them anymore. The Prince and his captains are discussing the next move by giving instructions and sending messengers.

A tall old man with a short grey beard will then walk to the characters and introduce himself. His name is Éofrer, brother of the late Éomund, the former Marshal of Rohan and brother-in-law of King Théoden. Éofrer will kindly attend the characters as the Prince is busy and he will offer them his help. One of his servants will prepare a room for the characters to spend the night, and Éofrer will meet them later for dinner. It has been a long time since the characters had a chance to have a good meal and they will have a good variety to choose from this time. The characters will be led out of the main tower and across the inner court to one of the sturdy constructions built against the second wall ('a' on the map).

Éofrer will enter the kitchen, when dinner has already been served and will chat with the characters paying attention to their history, not only to the part related to Westmarch but also about the purpose of their journey and the plan to support Minas Tirith. He will instruct his scribe, Grunna, to prepare any equipment the characters may need (as long as it is reasonable) and to have it ready the next morning. He will also promise to give them a token which identifies them as "Friends of Rohan" and which will grant them the right to travel through Rohan unmolested.

During the dinner a servant will arrive with a message for Éofrer. The Prince wants to see him so he will excuse himself before leaving the characters alone with Grunna who will be the one showing them their bedroom for that night, which is located not far from the kitchens by the second wall.

The fortress was not designed to be comfortable, but Grunna has prepared two small rooms by the northern side of the second wall to be used as quarters for the characters. Also, their clothes can be cleaned and they can even request a bath (however men usually take baths in the cold river and not too often!).

Characters will then have a few hours on their own before night falls. Those having a bath will do it in turns and in the same water (requesting clean water for each one would make the servants complain and they will be called "soft-skinned ladies" in angry Rohirric whispers. The bath will be prepared in a large wooden barrel located in a room not far from those used as quarters by the characters and the servants will fill it with water heated at the kitchens.

The following events will take place on the evening (February 24th) the characters arrive and the following night:

The secret. Grunna will appear during the evening and will tell the character which acted as the group's leader, that Éofrer wants to see him. Grunna himself will lead the character to Éofrer's room and will then leave them alone. The old Rohir will tell the character he is sick and that he is likely not to live long enough to see the outcome of the forthcoming war. A few days ago his nephew Éomer had a strong argument with the King. Against the King's will, he has started hunting down Orc parties in northern Rohan. Éofrer will ask the character to hand Éowyn, the sister of Éomer who lives with the King in Édoras, a letter for her and Éomer. The King, following Gríma's advice, has declared Éomer a persona non grata and banished him from his advisory council, so Éofrer cannot trust the letter to a messenger from the Hornburg. If he thinks it would help, he will even offer a small reward to the character if he delivers the letter safely, though this should not be necessary since the characters are supposed to help the Free People's cause willingly. The letter for Éowyn has a wax seal, and should the characters break it to read the content, they will get into trouble. In the message Éofrer tells Éomer he has discovered Gríma is acting as Saruman's agent, keeping the King bewitched and securely under his malign influence. He also thinks Gríma is not acting alone, but has helpers who are still unknown. He asks Éomer to be cautious until the whole conspiracy has been discovered and the King can be freed from the evil influence he is subjected to. Together with the letter the character will be given the free pass document signed by the Prince.

The spy. At one point during the evening one of the characters will be asked to go to the armoury to choose a

piece of equipment he needs or has lost in the previous adventure (the GM/LM should arrange for at least one of the characters to be in need of this service). On his way back to the quarters he'll notice Éofrer having an argument with someone. The person he is arguing with can't be seen but Éofrer seems to be very angry and they both are talking in a very high tone. If the character moves closer or tries to discover who the other man is he'll be spotted and both Éofrer and the other man will disappear behind a door. The argument seems to involve some issues about loyalty to the crown but references were too vague for the character to be more precise.

The thief. About two hours after the characters have gone to sleep, one of them will be woken up by subtle noise from something inside their room. In the darkness of the night he'll be just able to see a shadow leaving the room and the door closing. If he chooses leave the room and check what's going on he'll be able to see someone turning a corner of the corridor just as he opens the door and disappearing from his sight. The character might be able to follow the man through the corridors but will never get a sight of his face. He's dressed in dark robes and a black cloak. He'll be able to follow him to a door leaving the building and leading to the inner court but while doing so he will be surprised by a maiden coming round the corner. They'll clash one into another and the metal tray the maiden was carrying will hit the floor making a terrible noise. From then on the character will be unable to locate the man he was following anymore. The thief has stolen one of the characters' daggers and has left a small glass flask containing a yellowish powder in one of the character's packs. The powder is in fact a poison which can be applied directly to a weapon blade. There's enough material for two uses (any damage caused by a poisoned blade will automatically double and any wound will be considered as poisoned. The poison is lost as soon as the blade is used even if it did no damage). The thief has also left a small leather bag containing six rohirric silver coins and two rings originally belonging to Éofrer.

The assassin. The incident with the thief cannot be resolved, and after some unsuccessful investigations and/or discussions, the characters will go to sleep again (perhaps ordered by their rohirric friends), as there is nothing that can be done now anyway. One or two hours before dawn of February 25, all the characters will be woken up by the sound of people running up and down the corridors and shouting loudly. After they go up and ask for the reason of the commotion, they are told someone tried to assassinate Prince Théodred. While the characters are still being told this they'll see a group of armed men lead by Grunna

walking their way. Éofrer's scribe will point his finger to one of the characters (maybe the owner of the stolen dagger or the character who followed him—as Grunna was the thief—through the corridors that night) and will shout to the guards in Rohirric – It's him, he is the assassin!!!- The armed men will then try to arrest the character. There're at least twice as many guards as characters and there are also lots of other people gathering around them to see what's happening so it would be wise for the characters to lower any weapons. Then their comrade will be arrested and led away.

The prisoner will be then be brought under guard to the main hall in the castle. The other characters will be allowed to follow them. It looks like an hour ago Éofrer was killed. Théodred stumbled into the assassin as he left Éofrer's room but everything happened so fast he couldn't identify him. In the event the prince was wounded by the assassin's weapon while the latter was able to flee.

The main hall is full of people. Most people are still just wearing their underwear or are even half naked. The prince sits on the elevated seat, just wearing a pair of trousers and an old man is bandaging his side.

Grunna will then move forward and, speaking directly to Théodred while pointing to the arrested character, will say *"My lord, that's the man I saw running away from Éofrer's room"*. The prince is holding the stolen dagger (found on the body of Éofrer) and showing it to the characters, accusing them of being agents of the White Wizard or at least petty thieves trying to take advantage of the chaotic situation at the Hornburg.

If the arrested character is the one who followed Grunna during the night he'll be also identified by the maiden he ran into. A couple of guardsmen will then enter the hall and will show the prince the coins and rings left in their room by Grunna as well as the flask containing the poison (and any other poison the characters may have themselves).

The characters may attempt to defend their comrade but the evidence brought against him is convincing. Producing the letter from Éofrer to Éomer can be dangerous as it might be considered another stolen item. Only one of the characters is officially being accused but the whole group is now held to be of questionable loyalty or reputation as well.

Since Théodred can't delay leading his army to the Fords of Isen, he decides to postpone the trial until his return. Meanwhile the accused character will be jailed in the fortress cells while the rest of

the group won't be allowed to leave the Hornburg until the issue is resolved.

From then on the castle will be quiet and the rest of the night will proceed uneventful. The characters may leave their rooms and walk around the fortress but they will always be openly watched and for any attempt to act unnoticed the guardsmen need to be distracted. At that point they will probably have suspicions about Grunna's involvement in the plot against them and they may be able to gather some evidence against him if they act properly.

Those characters still free will be led to their rooms from which they'll be able to see the Army of Westfold leaving for battle at the breaking of dawn of February 25.

The healer who treated Théodred is still in the castle and will speak to the characters. Although he is not very cooperative he'll confirm the poison used was very rare and it's the same that was found in the character's room. The healer also treated Éofrer but he was already dead when he arrived. Éofrer was stabbed in the heart. This killed him instantly.

If they make it into Grunna's room, which is adjacent to Éofrer's one at the main tower, and search it they'll find under his rudimentary bed a small wooden box in which there are several flasks and vials with various liquids and other products including two doses of the poison used in Éofrer's murder. There's also a small glass bottle which contains a green liquid. It's a less powerful poison which Grunna plans to pour into the fortress' cisterns (located below the outer court and accessible from the tower in the Outer Court marked 'b'). This poison will cause severe gastrointestinal problems to those who consume it.

Grunna will not act if he feels like he is being watched but given the chance he'll take the bottle to the cisterns that night or day (Late February 24 or early 25) and will contaminate them.

If the characters find out about Grunna's plot and give him away to the guards, these will be unsure due to his position of power and trust in the fortress. If the evidence is strong enough they may arrest Grunna but this won't translate into the arrested character being released. He'll have to wait till the Prince, or any other authority, comes back to proclaim the final judgment.

The cell of the suspected "assassin" is at the lower floors of the main tower of the citadel. There are about a dozen cells and contain only three prisoners including the character. One of the prisoners is a man from a homestead not far to the north who has

been accused of killing his neighbour during an argument over the boundaries of their plots of land. He spends the day crouching in a corner of his cell sobbing. The other prisoner is a guard arrested after inflicting a severe wound to a comrade during a game of cards. He claims the other man was cheating and they both were very drunk at the time. The third prisoner is a common thief, he has been accused of burglary but also of rape so will most probably face a death sentence.

The characters may try to leave the citadel with or without their arrested comrade. Although the fortress is very secure the garrison has been reduced to the barest minimum and a good escape plan may succeed. To do so the characters must fool the guard watching them, leave the main tower, cross both walls and run away as fast as possible to avoid being caught by any men sent after them.

Whatever course of action they decide upon, the characters must remain in the Hornburg at least until the First Battle of the Fords of Isen is fought. All but the most excellent plans will fail until the noon of February the 25th arrives. Here the GM may subtly guide the events, so that an escape before that time will not succeed due to outer circumstances rather than artificially foiling the character's plans (which may lead to a severe loss of fun and interest in the adventure if they feel their actions and ideas do not have an impact upon the game—remember avoiding *railroading* events).

RAIDED FARM

The aftermath of the First Battle at the Fords of Isen is a temporary stalemate. Saruman's armies have been repelled but prince Théodred is dead and Isengard's forces seem to be regrouping to launch a second offensive.

The characters will get the news of the battle's outcome on the late afternoon of the 25th of February while still at the Hornburg. A courier arriving from the battlefield bears the sad tidings of Théodred's death and has been instructed to ask every man left at the citadel to join the defenders of the fords.

If by that time the characters have not come up with a viable plan to escape and are still being held at Helm's Deep the citadel commander will offer them a chance to prove themselves and together with the men that can be spared reinforce the fords' defences. This party will be rather small as the garrison left at the fortress was not very numerous and can barely spare men. The commander can just send

five more men beside the characters and they'll leave the Hornburg that evening marching towards the west. There are no horses available as all the remaining ones have been taken by the couriers that left earlier that afternoon to inform every garrison commander in Westfold of the situation at the fords.

Together with the other soldiers, the characters will leave the citadel in the early evening of February 25 on their desperate mission to reinforce the Fords of Isen. In case the characters escaped or have they been sent westwards with the remaining men at the citadel, about two hours before dawn they'll be exhausted after ten hours of marching during the night without rest and under a thin winter rain. Due to the events and the circumstances, it is likely that morale is very low and the situation looks hopeless. By this time, the group will have reached the crossroads, where the road to Helm's Deep branches off the main road. In the growing darkness they'll notice a small group of buildings some ten minutes away from the road in which lights can be seen. It's probably a farm or homestead and surely the best refuge that can be found to spend the night.

It takes those ten minutes walking north from the road to reach the group of buildings. The main one has a stone foundation of around one meter height and a wooden structure rises from that. It's a long rectangular construction with a gabled roof. Lights can be seen through the windows and a smoke column rises from the chimney. There're two other minor wooden buildings, one at each side of the main one, and a fenced field behind the one on the right. The main building is the farmer's home while the one on the right is the stable in which the cattle herd is kept in winter and the upper floor which is used as granary. The building on the left is a warehouse and has a small forge.

A trail arriving from the main road ends at the open space flanked by the three buildings.

The farm has been attacked by a raiding Orc warband about an hour ago. Depending on how the characters approach the area they'll get more or less information on what happened. There are footprints of Orcs and wargs in the fresh mud around the buildings. There are about a dozen goats and sheep corpses in the fenced field which will only be noticed if someone gets close enough to see them in the darkness. The warehouse's door is hitting its frame repeatedly as it is opened and closed by the wind. Inside the warehouse there's a badly mauled human corpse.

The main door and the one at the back of the building are unlocked. The interior of this building

is a complete mess, the simple furniture lies on the floor and pots and broken bowls are spread all over the place. Three more corpses can be found there, one of them of an old man and two middle-aged women.

If the characters closed in cautiously they'll be able to surprise three Orcs which have been left behind by their cronies and are plundering the site. Two wargs will be in the fenced field dismembering a goat, the third can't be seen and will jump on the characters from the rear at any point, but preferably whenever they feel safe and confident. The three Orcs are inside the main building turning the interior upside down.

On the other hand, if the characters weren't cautious enough or if they fail to locate the Orcs in time, the three creatures will ready themselves to try to ambush the characters when they enter the main building.

If the characters arrived at the farm with the Rohirrim from Helm's Deep these will prove to be very rash and not cautious at all allowing the Orcs to prepare themselves. All the these Rohirrim will perish during the fight leaving the characters alone once again.

When the Orcs have been dealt with or while the characters search the main building they'll be able to hear someone sobbing at the basement. Finding the trap door leading there isn't very hard. After moving around a fallen table and a worn out fur carpet a trap door on the floor will be visible. Once open, the trap door will lead to a flight of cracking wooden steps which lead to a dark cellar. In a corner of it there are two kids of about four and seven years. The younger one is on his knees crying while his brother points a dagger towards the characters.

The children's names are Baldred and Bregdran. They were sent down to the cellar by their parents when the orcs arrived and seem to be the only survivors. If treated kindly they'll calm down and will follow the characters' instructions.

The homestead will offer the characters an opportunity to resupply. There's some grain, salted meat and fresh water as well as potatoes, onions and beans. There's also fresh meat from the dead cattle if they dare to touch the corpses. In one of the trunks that are still closed there are two long swords and a rusty chain mail.

The night is failing fast and the characters desperately need some rest. It is suggested they rest for a few hours before resuming their journey. About

four hours should be enough to prevent any serious subtractions from their skills due to their weariness. If the bodies are removed from the main building, it will serve as an acceptable quarter for the rest. Around middle morning it's time again to break camp. The children don't accept to be left behind (if the characters really consider this an option) and will follow the players.

On the road the characters may choose which direction to take. The options are the Fords of Isen, Edoras or back to the Hornburg. Since the journey should go further eastward, it is suggested to direct them gently. Perhaps more raiding orcs are to be seen in the distance, so that the way to Helm's Deep and the Fords of Isen look equally blocked. Essentially, Edoras is the only easy solution (think of the children and the responsibility of the characters!). It's raining again and the children get tired very soon and need to rest. If any of the characters decide to carry them on their back or shoulder, the character will need to hand all of his large equipment like a shield or large backpack to a comrade. Even that way the pace will be rather slow and from time to time the group will encounter footprints of warg parties. At least the weather brightens up, so a sunny winter's day eases travel a bit.

BALDRED AND BREGDRAN

After walking a further four hours eastward, they'll come across a group of three middle aged women, an old man and two kids of seven and fifteen years old which are travelling eastward. The two-wheeled cart, loaded with almost everything left to them, is blocking the road. The axle is broken and they can't repair it.

Refugees © by Daniel Bayarri-Martinez



The group is fleeing from the orcish raiding parties which having been attacking the farms and homesteads on the plains of northern Westfold. The able-bodied men have joined the forces at the Fords of Isen and their families now seek protection in Edoras. The old man can hardly walk and one of the women is carrying a baby. It is obvious that they cannot proceed further without the cart.

GM note: The players should be encouraged to help the small group, suggesting that repairing the cart is essential. If necessary, add other circumstances that make the cart absolutely necessary.

A new axle can be improvised if the characters invest some time for the repair plus some good rolls to achieve it (GM discretion for the material and tools necessary, but it should not be too hard), but even if the cart is repaired the group will plead the characters to travel with them to Edoras. When the repair has been facilitated, daylight will fail as well, and so the whole group has to make camp here as best as they can. All are really tired and there is no real alternative to resting here. The next morning, they will break the camp with the first daylight and resume their travel eastward.

During the night, one of the women notices a creature prowling around them. They fear it might be a wolf or even something worse. They are really scared and fear the worst.

In fact the fear about the orc raiders is justified as one of the warg riders belonging to the party that ravaged the homestead located the group last night (February 26 to 27) and retreated to report to his leader. He is part of the warband responsible of the attacks and pillage which has been taking place the last week or so. Their objective is to spread fear among the locals and to harass the smaller groups of Rohirrim while these try to reach the Fords of Isen.

Depending on how cautious the characters are from the moment they begin moving again, the clash with the warg riders will happen sooner or later. The orcs have sent two riders ahead to follow the road and locate the group reported by the scout. If the characters have not taken the hints so far seriously and took no measures to avoid being ambushed, they won't be able to see the scouts. The orcs will then split in two groups and circle the party. The first half will charge from the front first while the second arrives minutes later from the characters' back causing havoc and panic among the women and children.

It is recommended to honour the players' good roleplaying and creative ideas in avoiding detection (e.g. travelling off-road or organizing their own scouting party). That way they might evade the orcs altogether (if they are extremely lucky or resourceful) or at least reach a defensible position which puts the orcs at a disadvantage.

ORC RAIDERS

If they try to hide from the Orcs they'll initially succeed but normally the smell of the humans will finally be picked up by the Wargs which will start a dedicated search and finally locate all the party or parts from them, depending on the circumstances. During the combat the characters will defeat the orcs but Bregdran, the six year old kid, will be wounded by a poisoned arrow while trying to flee



from an orc. The attack happens shortly before dusk, when the weak winter sun is low and shrouded by clouds. The mule pulling the cart will be also dead, its flesh torn by the Wargs' jaws.

The night will close in without the group being able to locate a safe place to camp. The best they can find is a group of rocks within the tall grass about twenty meters from the road. Bregdran's health will deteriorate rapidly. He has very high temperature and is soaked in sweat. Characters might be able to identify the poison through the symptoms or examining the arrow. If they do they'll probably identify the antidote too. If they lack the knowledge or skill the old man will help them.

To produce the antidote the characters will need a handful of three different herbs which need to be smashed and turned into a paste. This paste must be mixed with the juice produced by smashing a small river crustacean. The herbs are easy to find near their camp but the crustacean might be tricky. A search will only reveal a suitable body of water if an above-average success on the search roll has been obtained. The effect of the antidote is not immediate but once applied to the wound, Bregdan will slowly get better and after a couple of hours his temperature will be back to normal.

If Bregdran does not get the antidote by the following morning he'll be unable to stand or walk and someone must take him on his back. Alternatively, the cart may be drawn by two or three people, but will slow down the group. Travelling in the cart will be better for Bregdan though. The old man still needs help to walk and together with the kids and the baby will bring the pace of the whole group down to less than two miles an hour. The group is now around one day away from the Hornburg and even more from Edoras but at the present pace these are just optimistic assumptions. In addition, the roving orcs behind them make the Hornburg an almost impossible goal. Finally if Bregdran does not get the antidote before the nightfall of the next day (February 28) he will die in that following night.

GRUNNA'S LETTER

A second chance to find the crustacean can be offered to the group while they move on the next morning. This also gives some additional information on the background of the plot they are in. Travel is now much slower since the mule is dead and the cart must be drawn by hand. About three hours after dawn and while on their way the characters will find a stream running through the grass fields. The noise of the water and the reed bed sur-

rounding it will help to locate it. If none of the characters wanders towards the stream in search of water or the ingredients for the antidote one of the women will.

After walking just a few meters among the reed in its search for the stream a pool of blood will be found. If it was one of the women who entered the reed bed she'll start screaming for help and will run back to the road.

From the pool it's quite easy to follow a trail of stepped over canes and blood traces. The tracks around the blood pool and along the trail can be easily identified as hooves from horses but there are also other tracks in the mud. Those other prints move in the same direction as those from the horse and look like those from a wolf but much larger (medium difficulty in identifying tracks). From the prints a good tracker can tell the horse was galloping and so were the large wolves but it looks like the horse was having trouble to keep the speed, maybe because he was wounded (discerning all this needs a successful roll on a difficult tracking skill roll).

Twenty meters away the tracks leave the reed and enter the tall grass. After about 400 meters they finally they end at a group of three trees hidden from view for travellers on the road. Even before the trees are reached a strong and hideous smell is noticeable. A group of crows is flying circles over the trees and as the characters move forward the tall grass will move around them.

When they reach the trees they'll find the corpse of a horse lying there. It has been dismembered. The wounds look like those of wolves' jaws and claws—only much larger. The saddle has been torn apart and the corpse of the rider is at one of the higher branches of the nearest tree whose trunk has large markings of claws. If taken down and examined, the corpse will show claw wounds but no bites. It looks like the poor fellow died by massive loss of blood after he reached the safety of the tree.

It was a dark haired man, thin and short. He was wearing common clothing, a short sword and a leather corselet. His purse has been sliced and the contents can be found lying on the ground around the tree. If searched carefully, seven copper and one bronze coin one can be found in the grass around the tree in which the corpse was found.

The man was wearing a bag with two metallic clasps across his chest which is still there. In it there's an envelope with a wax seal portraying a snake. It's a letter from Grunna to Gríma Worm-tongue. The text is written in Rohirric and goes as follows:

My Lord.

The citadel is now ungarrisoned. There are less than fifty men defending the walls. The defenders at the Solds are also too few to stand a chance against determined assaults. If the king can be kept at Edoras and the muster is not called for, Rohan is sure to fall in less than a week.

*Your servant,
Gríma*

Back to the stream the crustacean needed for the antidote can be found easily and Bregdran can be treated. This was also the last encounter for this day, since it was a long march and all are weary.

During lunch breaks of that day a group of men will be seen walking eastward on the road towards the characters and the refugees. As the group gets closer, two carts pulled by oxen can be identified. There's a man leading each cart and four more walking behind and beside them. The men carry spears and swords and are armoured with chainmail.

Some of them carry a shield and the emblems clearly identify them as belonging to Rohan. They are in fact men of Rohan on their way to Edoras. The carts are loaded with wounded men from the First Battle of the Fords of Isen which are being transported to the capital to be treated, since the Hornburg cannot provide the necessary facilities. The first cart carries four wounded men while five ride in the second.

The small caravan will stop as they reach the characters' group and approach them. They've been travelling for two days now and have been harassed by orc raiders during the whole trip. They have already lost two other men and were forced to leave behind a third cart when the oxen pulling it was killed. They are hungry and thirsty and although they think they will reach Braedforth, the next hamlet by nightfall, they will really appreciate any help the characters may provide and a few more strong arms to defend the carts from the orc raiders.

While this conversation is taking place one of the men will recognize the characters from their stay at the Hornburg. He will walk towards the leader of the party and will whisper something to him. After that the conversation will end abruptly, the leader will grasp the hilt of his sword and take a step backwards. He'll tell the characters he knows what happened at the Hornburg and no longer wants their help.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Cart on the Road

If the characters are not convincing enough (a hard test for Diplomacy or similar social skill without any further roleplay or arguments in their favour) the group will neither accept their help nor help them. The refugees which have been walking with the characters may help in calming down the situation but is up to the characters to really ease the things with the Men of Rohan. The GM should take this opportunity for good character play and social skill use. If played out properly with all positive arguments brought forth, the test should be of medium difficulty at most.

The caravan carries basic medicines and the ingredients to produce the antidote for Bregdran (should the characters have missed the chance for doing this themselves). They also have some room left in the carts to accommodate the old man and the kids if needed. This will help the whole group to advance at a higher pace and reach Braedforth this evening (February 28).

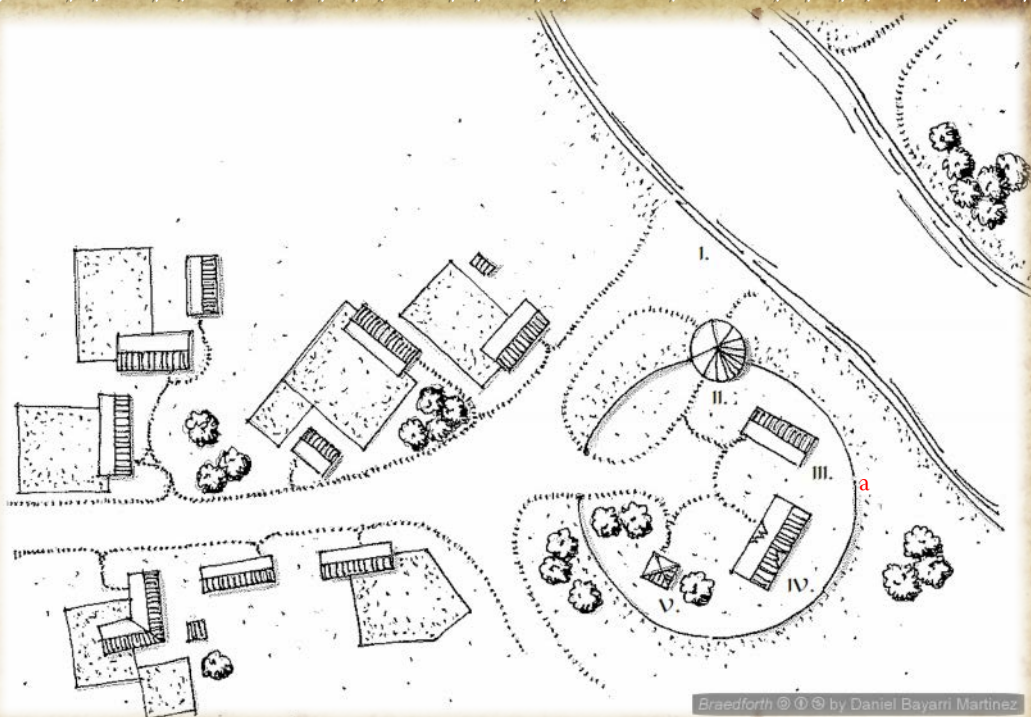
While the characters are discussing with the caravan guards or deciding what to do now, a rider will be seen travelling eastwards. He is travelling at high speed and won't stop, whatever the characters do to stop him (unless they are extremely lucky) and soon will be gone eastward only minutes later. Those characters who shared some time with Grunna in Hornburg will be able to identify him.

BRAEDFORTH

If the characters finally come to terms with the Rohirrim and travel with them or if they leave the refugees behind, they'll reach Braedforth this evening with about two hours of daylight left. On the other hand if they keep travelling with the refugees but couldn't get the Rohirrim helping them they'll reach the hamlet late at night.

Braedforth is a small hamlet on the west bank of a river running northeastward. The village grew around an old military complex built to guard the ford at the time when this was the Gondorian province of Calenardhon.

Most of the houses are wooden structures but some of them have stone foundations. They are rectangular buildings with just a ground floor or at



most a first one. The houses are around ten meters long and six wide. The hamlet has no streets as such other than the Great East Road running east to west and a secondary—unpaved—road running north to south parallel to the river. The buildings are built to leave large green fields which are sometimes fenced, in between.

The ancient Gondorian fort built at the river bank and circled by a stone wall of around two meters height has long since been abandoned and only recently repaired and re-occupied. The wall has a single gate open towards the road which was in the old days framed by a stone arch which has now collapsed. The wall ('a') circles an area of around thirty meters diameter and guards four buildings: the stable ('III'), the workshop ('V') and the tower ('II'). The latter is in fact not inside the walls but leaned against the exterior of it just above the ford. It also has an independent access from the exterior, a small wooden door on the first floor, leading down to the ford via a wooden staircase. The tower is fifteen meters high and the best preserved building in the fort as it is being used by a garrison fifteen men strong. The men use the ground floor as barracks while the captain utilizes the first floor for himself. The second floor serves as a storeroom, while the fourth is the post of the watchmen. A set of stairs goes up the tower's internal wall, connecting all the four floors.

The stable is also being used by the garrison to accommodate their mounts. It's a rectangular building with stone walls and a damaged wooden roof.

There's also a well inside the stable which allows the fort to be supplied with fresh water.

The workshop s a small structure also built with stone walls and the gabled roof of which has been recently repaired by the villagers. The interior is practical, with a small forge and other tools to repair both simple weapons as everyday gear.

The old barracks building ('IV') was the largest in the fort but it was abandoned long ago and has never been really repaired. The ground floor and first floor structure had stone walls but the second floor was made in wood. Most of the original roof does no longer exist and the state of the construction as a whole is quite deplorable.

Nevertheless during the last two days the this building's ground floor and part of the first one have been used to accommodate refugees traveling eastwards. They have occupied the barracks because the guards have been ordered by the royal advisor to halt anyone trying to travel eastwards towards Edoras. Half a dozen rohirric warriors guard the ford to make sure the order is complied with.

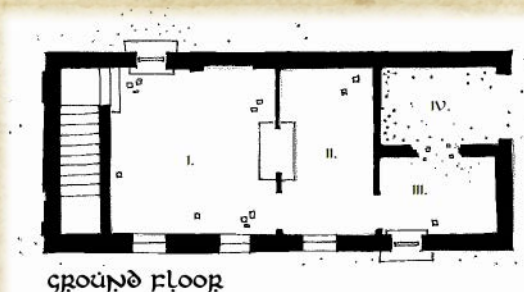
When the characters arrive at the village, they will need a place to spend the night. If they are travelling with the rohirric warriors and the wounded men, these will directly walk to the fort. If they are travelling alone they'll find the hamlet deserted and will only meet the guardsmen blocking the road at the ford. Both the guards and the owner of any house they stop to ask for accommodation will tell them to contact the captain at the fort tower.

The captain will then inform them of the orders he has been given to stop anyone travelling to Edoras. He will also suggest to look for accommodation at the old barracks as he doesn't know for how long the road will be closed.

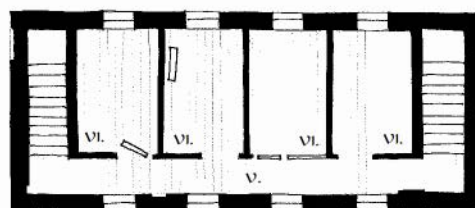
The orders received are very strict and even the carts with the wounded men will be stopped and kept from travelling eastwards. This will cause an argument between the garrison captain and the officer leading the carts which the characters will witness if they travelled with them.

The main door to the ground floor of the old barracks is open and leads to the common room, a large square room poorly lit by the almost extinct fireplace to the left of it. The flooring was once wooden but is now rotten and damaged. The scene in the interior is rather gloomy. Around twenty to thirty people, mostly women, elderly and kids, are sleeping on the floor using improvised blankets. Sitting at the steps of the stairs leading to the first floor is a middle aged woman sewing by a candle

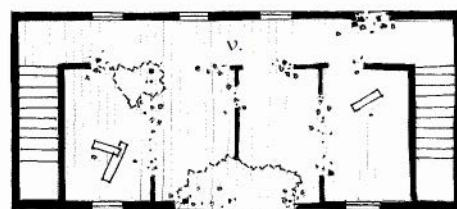
light. Next to the fireplace there's a door which connects the main room with the old kitchens. In there another six or seven people curl up on the wet floor. The old kitchen shares the large fire place with the main room. The pantry is now being used as stable and is occupied by two oxen. Part of the outer wall of this room has collapsed, so it is now open to the exterior and likely the way the oxen were brought in.



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

Braedforth barracks © by Daniel Bayarri Martinez

The stairs at the main room go up to the first floor and end at a long corridor along the southern wall of the building. The corridor has several windows whose shutters were broken long ago and opposite to those there are four doors. Each door connects to an old bedroom with a window overseeing the fort's main courtyard. At the end of the corridor another staircase leads to the second floor.

The refugees are using these rooms and even the corridor as bedroom as well. Most of them are sleeping but in the third room there's an old man awake and constantly coughing. Next to him two women take turns to place wet clothes on his forehead. It looks like his temperature is quite high.

The second floor is identical to the first one but in it the corridor is on the north wall and the rooms oversee the back of the fort. The stairs creak heavily

when someone steps on it. Most of the roof above the corridor and some of the rooms have disappeared and the stars can be seen shining up in the sky.

Large portions of the wooden partitions which used to divide the corridor and the rooms have collapsed or were used to light the fire at the main room. In fact the first character arriving to this floor will find three children picking up wood pieces to take down to the main room's fireplace.

The facade of the second floor facing the backyard has also partially disappeared. Only three people have dared to spend the night here. A potter from a small village located not far from Dunlostir who has one leg missing, his wife and his father-in-law. They are using the room closer to the stairs leading downwards which still has most of its ceiling and walls intact.

At the end of the corridor a third set of stairs used to go up to the rooftop but this has completely vanished.

The characters, and anyone travelling with them, will have to spend the night somewhere on this floor, as the rest of the building is already overcrowded. Alternatively, they might also camp on the outside of course.

If the characters start a conversation with any of the refugees, they will all tell a similar story. They've been there for one or two days and are fleeing from the orc raiders to the west and Dunlending warbands pillaging most of the western plains. They were on their way to Edoras but have been held up here and do not know which way to take now. If the characters are perceptive they feel the resignation that has gripped these people.

Also if they start a conversation with the guardsmen at the tower or the ford, they'll find their morale quite low. They are demoralized by the loss of the First Battle of the Fords of Isen, the death of the prince and the strange orders coming from Edoras.

The characters may organize their own guard shifts this night (February 28 to 29) if they don't feel safe at the barracks. If they do, the character on the shift at around midnight will notice (with a medium difficulty awareness roll) three men climbing over the fort's wall from the outside (near the river) and running through the backyard. They move cautiously, trying not to be seen by the guards at the tower.

If the characters didn't place any guard of their own, one of them will be woken up by the croak of a crow which just landed on the remains of the barracks roof. He will then see something running through the yard (hard awareness roll).

When the three men get close enough to the building with the refugees (and probably the characters) and the stables, they'll stop. They'll open their back packs and will take from them oil bottles. They'll spill the oil in the old pantry and on the lower floor windows and doors. They will then use the fire from their hitherto covered lantern, light the torches and throw them into the buildings which will catch fire rapidly.



Braedforth barracks aflame © 11 by Daniel Bayarri Martinez

The stables will be in flames in a few seconds causing the wooden floor of the first floor to light up almost immediately. As soon as the flames break out, the three men will run back to the wall to climb over it and flee. A rowing boat with a fourth man is waiting for them to take them to the other bank of the river.

If somehow the characters capture any of them, it will be almost impossible to get some useful information from them, even if beaten up or tortured (hopefully the characters won't resort to this). They are common men, probably from the Anduin valley or Rhovanion. They understand Westron acceptable and can speak Rohirric on a basic level.

The refugees will try to get hold of them to hang them from a tree but the guardsmen will not allow this to happen. The men will be arrested and locked at the tower cells.

While the old barracks are burning, those at the ground floor will be able to leave the building safely, those on the first floor will have to deal with falling beams and a floor and walls partially in flames. The stairs leading to the second floor are just above the stable so will be one of the first sections to be on fire. It will be dangerous to use them as they will not

hold the weight of more than two people at the same time.

The sick, wounded or incapacitated refugees on the first or second floor will clearly need help to escape the flames.

Any character who makes it out of the building can organize the surviving refugees and guardsmen which won't have much own initiative. A human chain can be organized to move water in pots and buckets from the well or the river. They can also help those trapped at the upper floors with hand ladders, ropes or blankets. The GM is strongly encouraged to motivate his players to organize the rescue attempts.

As the sun rises the building will have been completely consumed by the flames. Only the stone walls and the chimney will remain standing. The refugees will organize themselves to bury their dead, if any, and will search the remains of the barracks for any of their belongings which may have survived.

A courier will be sent to Edoras to inform the king and ask for permission to re-open the road to Edoras, but the guards will keep the ford closed until he comes back with the answer. The garrison will only disobey their orders if the characters can prove the orders they received were given to harm Rohan and weaken the king, but that's very unlikely.

A few refugees will suggest taking the road south to try to ford the river at Wynnburg but not all of them are capable of taking the one day walk needed to reach that destination and even if they do, no one knows whether this ford is also being guarded.

Fording the river at any spot other than Braedforth or Wynnburg is not easy. Swimming to the other side is very difficult as the river current is very strong at this time of the year. In addition the water is very cold, adding the danger of hypothermia. It has been raining for some days and the snowmelt has started. It is even harder if the character wears or carries any heavy load or equipment. Horses will be scared of the water's strength and will refuse to move forward once they notice the river is strong. A very skilled rider might get a horse through. A horse with no rider will never ford the river. All the boats and rafts in Braedforth were confiscated days ago and are docked at the Eastern bank of the river.

An improvised raft can be built using wood, buckets, ropes and other materials. If the characters choose to give it a chance, they will need to fetch the material and prove to be skilled at carpentry, woodworking and sailing (or rowing) to succeed. They will also need to be careful and hide them-

selves from the guards at the fords as they'll try to hinder any such attempt. Building a raft unnoticed will also be quite a challenge, so it should be obvious to the characters that this is an unrealistic option and finding another possibility to cross is more likely to succeed.

After spending half a day walking north or south along the river, the characters will end up at a farm with a small wooden pier in which a small and clumsy rowing boat is docked. Its owner is a farmer who uses it to transport his harvest to the spring market in Braedforth and is not going to let the characters use it with the river running so strong. If they try to buy the boat from him he'll ask for an exorbitant amount (at least five times the normal price of a boat). The GM should modify this according to the financial situation of the characters, and perhaps the man is not interested in coins, but a valuable piece of equipment the characters carry. Anyhow, if the characters get their hands on the boat they'll discover the maneuver is still not that easy. The boat has room only for three people and no horses whatsoever. The rowers will need to prove strength and skill to reach the opposite bank. If they plan it in advance and have the appropriate material, the characters may build a rope and poles system (i.e. securing the boat and pulling it along) which makes the second and subsequent crossings far easier.

The Ambush

One way or another the characters should reach the east bank of the river to keep travelling towards Edoras. They'll have about three quiet walking hours but if they do not avoid the main road they'll be ambushed by a group of armed men, mercenaries hired by Gríma to make sure no one arriving from western Rohan reaches Edoras. Among these thugs the characters may recognize the surviving arsonists (if anyone escaped) from the previous night if they had the chance of get a good look on them. They may also recognize the horse used by the courier that left Braedforth that morning and after the—victorious—combat with the mercenaries, they may find the message on them (if they search the bodies) he was carrying and never delivered. There will be as many ambushers as characters and at least half of them will ride horses. Like the arsonists, they are not originally from Rohan nor do they look dunnish. They use Westron among themselves and their origins seem to be diverse. Here the GM may choose backgrounds according to his needs.

If the characters have avoided the main road and walk through the tall grass fields, they will have a

chance at ambush the mercenaries themselves. They will spot them just at the moment they are pillaging the corpse of the courier sent from Braedforth. Both the courier and the horse will be laying dead. Half the mercenaries are on guard while two of the others search the courier and the remainder rest and/or check their equipment. The GM should choose a location suitable for the characters, as they will have the element of surprise.



The event will end up in the same way no matter how it started. The characters will find out that the messenger never made it to Edoras. For the further course of the adventure, it will be good if one of the characters will be seriously wounded and one of the mercenaries will escape, riding back towards the city. The characters may resume their way afterward, having ca. 2.5 hours of daylight left.

The mercenary will reach Edoras that evening and tell Grunna (who left the Hornburg shortly after the characters, but due to his contacts and position was able to proceed swiftly to Edoras) what happened. A note will be issued to all guards in the city and to the patrols around it, including a description of the characters and accusing them of being responsible for the assassination of Éofrer, attacking Théodred and burning the old barracks at Braedforth. If the characters meet any Rohirrim from now on, they may be recognized and arrested depending on the circumstances

The characters will be a few hours away from Edoras when the encounters with the mercenaries is over. The wounded character needs a healer so they don't have many choices. There are two villages south of the city but in neither of them will they find the necessary treatment. If they know the region, this should be obvious to them, otherwise a local may provide this information or they are completely unaware of these settlements' locations. At dusk the city will be barely visible in the distance, still more than one hour away. Depending on their situation (especially transport and the condition of the wounded character), they might reach Edoras before

dusk or later, though the latter is far more likely. Reaching Edoras before nightfall is only possible if the characters were able to cross the river at Braedforth already in the morning. The next paragraphs outline possible further events for both cases, and the GM should take his pick which is more favourable for his campaign or style of play.

EDORAS

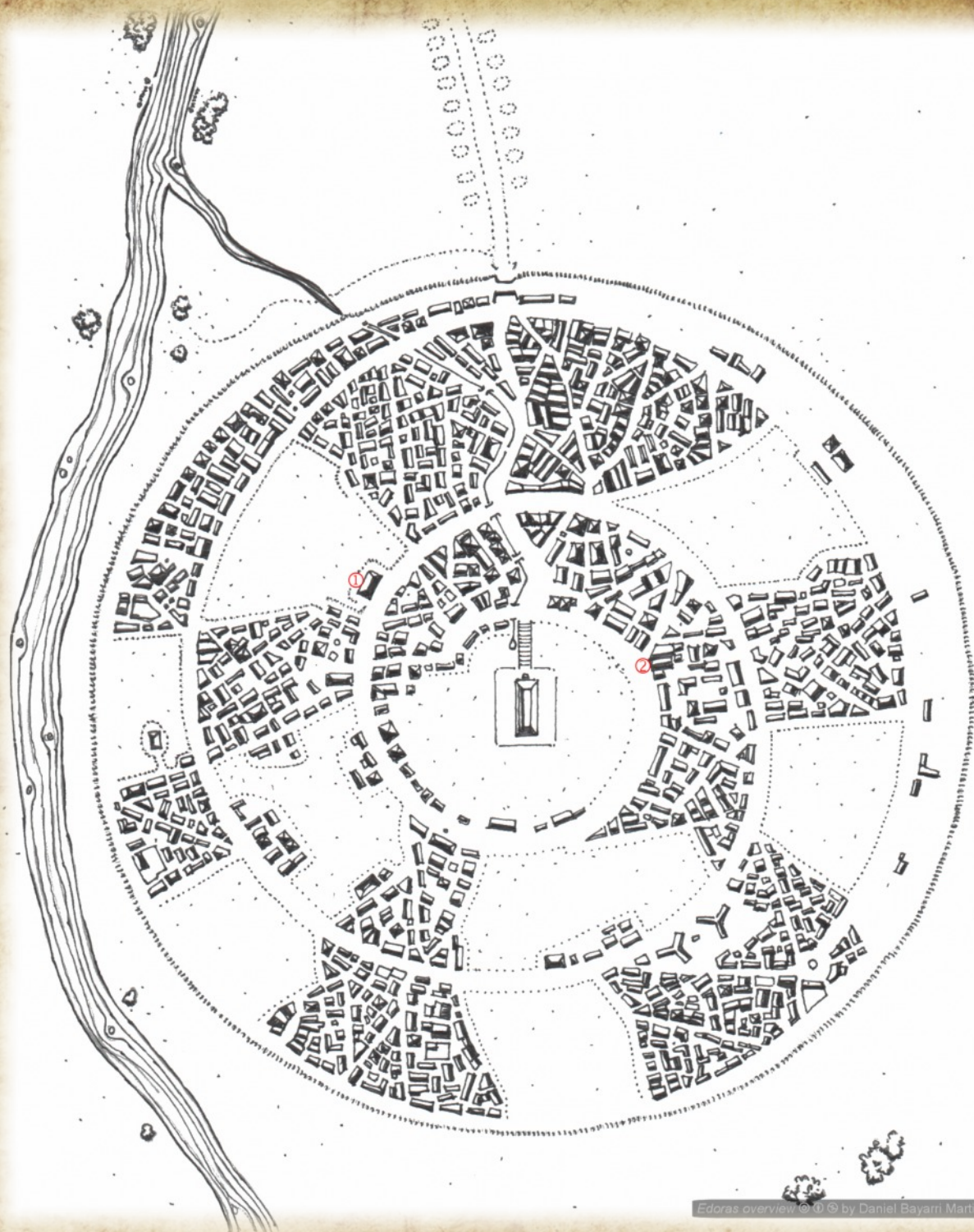
The Royal family of Rohan

By this time of the year most of Edoras' population is supposed to prepare for leaving the city and move to their summer homes in the countryside, but due to the tensions in Westfold many of them have decided to stay behind the protection of the walls. Therefore around 8,000 people are still spending their nights in the city even with the snow already melting and the grass getting its bright green color again.

Most of the population does not exactly know of what is going on in Westfold but rumors in the streets are not positive at all and the news of the death of Théodred at the First Battle of the Fords of Isen were a shock for everyone. It is not hard to notice how fear has gripped many hearts in Edoras. And all this is exacerbated by lack of understanding for the passive attitude of the king.

The city is protected by a wall with a stone base and a wooden stockade with over a dozen towers. There is only one gate, on the north section of the wall, leading to the stepped main street and to *Meduseld, the Golden Hall* of the kings of Rohan. See the map on the next page for an overview. The main gate of the city has a strong guard and the watchmen have been instructed to identify the characters so it will be dangerous to approach Edoras openly but any reasonable disguise or distraction will be enough to fool them. There is rather heavy traffic and the characters' description given to the guards was not very detailed. Any flamboyant behaviour or display of weaponry however will draw the guards' suspicions and then being a foreigner (especially dunnish looking ones!) won't be of any help either. The GM should encourage the players to be creative in their attempts of fooling the guards.

During the night the city gate is closed. If the characters arrived too late, they will see four men camping near the gate since they arrived too late to be admitted and are waiting for them to open again at dawn. Three of them are merchants from Anórien on their annual trip to Edoras to sell salt and other



spices imported from the east. At first they are sitting by the fourth man, but shortly after the characters arrive, they will turn to their bedrolls and go to sleep. They will be sleeping by their cart while their two mules are grazing a few meters away. A small distance away, the fourth man—a wandering minstrel named Hunwald—now sits alone next to the campfire. His home town is to the north of the Anduin valley (take your pick here, according to your campaign) and he makes his living out of the

stories and songs he sings at the inns and taverns he stops by. If the characters camp at the gates too Hunwald will walk to them and ask them about their trip as any new story might be useful to compose a poem or song. If the characters are cooperative he'll ask many questions and will show real interest in their story. Hunwald is a joyful and perceptive fellow with a charming presence and boyish innocence.

The characters may also try to scale the wall by their own means. The stockade is crenellated and the guards walk around it in more or less regular shifts. The city is dark (artificial lighting being an amenity only very few can afford) and consequently it is quite easy to hide oneself around the walls especially on the southern section which is much less populated and therefore even less watched. Climbing the wall on the other hand is not easy at all. The stone part offers some handholds but the stockade will ask for lots of skill. The wounded character will have even a harder time or may be totally incapacitated for the task depending on the type of wounds suffered.

There's not much night life in Edoras. A few streets are barely lighted with lanterns (primarily the big ones), but the light is just sufficient to make walking easier. The vast majority of streets is completely dark though. Some guards walk around the city and it is possible to stumble onto a drunken man or two on their way back home from the taverns or brothels which are open till almost dusk. These are mostly concentrated on the southern part of the city, close to the royal guards' quarters.

During daylight hours life is very busy though, especially at the main street climbing to Meduseld which acts as the main commercial street in town.

There's a wide range of inns—with equally varying prices—from which the players may choose. From the luxury rooms at the Golden Horse-shoe to the sordid and rickety old beds of the Happy Mare.

Inns are requested to keep a record of the registered guests. This regulation is not understood in the same way by all owners and record quality differs a lot from place to place. Those offering higher standard accommodation and meals registration is done assiduous and customers will be asked their name and home town. On the other hand at low cost inns the bureaucracy is reduced to a dirty blackboard behind the front desk in which names are scratched (and erased again if the space is needed for something else) and no further questions are asked. At the same time the regularity with which these records are checked by the guards is highly variable as they clearly prefer to avoid the dirtiest locations as much as possible.

There are several well known healers in Edoras with prices according to their skill. If the characters can spend enough to have their colleague treated at the royal healing houses, the treatment will be highly effective and a single day of will be enough

for the patient to recover from his wounds (if the game system used would necessitate a longer recovery, give the healer some magical abilities to speed up recovery). Other healers and quacks will offer their services at much lower prices but the necessary recovery time will also be longer, about half to one-third normal recovery time for the regular healer, and no benefit from the quacks (and here they may also suffer additional ailments).

On the first of March, while walking through the city, at least one of the characters will meet a retinue walking upward the main street towards Meduseld. It is led by Gríma Wormtongue and next to him walks the former scribe of Éofrer; Grunna. Grunna will recognize the character and stare intensely at him but will take no action by now. Both Gríma and Grunna are escorted by a group of guards and will later enter the Golden Hall. Any attempt to assault or accuse Grunna of his former crimes will result in the character's apprehension and imprisonment (or worse if he resists with armed force).

An hour later Grunna, who has been named commander of the city guard by Gríma, will issue an order to search the inns and arrest the characters. Entrance to the city to foreigners will be also forbidden. At least a few characters will be at their inn, may be having lunch or dinner, when the guardsmen enter it to check the guests' registration.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Edoras tavern

If the characters were clever enough to use false names and took care of not acting suspiciously, they'll have nothing to fear but if they registered under their real names or registered themselves all at once the guardsmen will ask the inn keeper to point them out. Depending on where are the characters took their quarters, the reaction of the inn keeper will be different. The lesser the quality of the place, the less information the owner will give to the guards. If they checked in at a high-quality inn, the

Other friends and hands
innkeeper will give them away immediately, forcing the characters to run for their lives.

This scene will always happen with Hunwald, the wandering minstrel. The characters probably may have met him already at the city gates on their first night there, otherwise this will be their first encounter with him. Hunwald will walk to the characters when the situation has calmed down (i.e. they escaped detection by the guards), or even later that day if the characters had to flee from the guards or were forced to hide. The meeting will always take place in a public place with as much witnesses as possible. He has put two and two together and is sure the characters are the men the guards are looking for.

The minstrel will offer his help to the characters if they narrate him his true story in return. A story like that will make for a very interesting tale he could be living from for a long time. He can offer the men an alibi if needed or provide some contacts in the city. He will make it plain clear the characters are not in a position to refuse his offer.

Hunwald is in fact an agent from the Enemy and his true objective is not to earn money or compose a beautiful tale but to gather information which could be helpful to his lord. He'll follow the characters wherever they go and will even give them sound advices and help. In practical tasks, he acts as if he is rather unskilled and may even be a burden in action scenes. He'll ask dozens of questions (often in at inappropriate moments to underline his image as a somewhat loony artist) and will try to get as much information as possible from the characters.

From the moment on their inn has been searched, the characters will have to be careful when walking the streets. Although Edoras offers them the opportunity to buy almost any common piece of equipment they might need, some merchants will not be friendly towards foreigners. The guards have also been instructed to arrest the group of undesirable westerners and will jump on them if they act suspiciously.

If the characters still have Éofrer's letter to Éowyn and Éomer and want to hand it to the former (Éomer being unavailable by now), they must first locate the princess and find a way to get close enough to her. Éowyn lives at the Princess' Hall, a large building at the last ring of Edoras ("1" on the city plan). It's a rectangular structure partially built in stone laying parallel to the street and is adjacent by one of the largest fenced grass fields of the city. The large but austere construction is used by Éowyn and Éomer when they are in Edoras. The ground

floor is used mostly for service and common areas such as the kitchen, pantries, warehouses and stable. On the first floor Éowyn and Éomer have their bedrooms.

Breaking in the Princess' Hall is not easy. It is well guarded and obviously foreigners are not welcomed at all (especially dunnish looking ones!). Nevertheless Éowyn is only spending the nights here nowadays, while staying at Meduseld during the day, comforting her uncle. Even if the characters come up with an excellent plan which allows them to enter the Princess' Hall at night, they won't find Éowyn in there as unfortunately she decided to spend that night with the King mourning the death of Théodred.

Breaking in Meduseld or the Princess' Hall can be considered impossible and no matter how hard they try, there's no way they'll be allowed to hand the letter to Éowyn.

To the gallows

In the end the characters will somehow be arrested in Edoras, but not later than the morning of the second day of March. They might get caught by a patrol while walking the city, at their inn or at a tavern, while trying to enter the Princess' Hall or trying to get close to the princess, at the gates of the city if they try to leave or given away by a merchant or the healer they hired.

Regardless of the precise date of their apprehension, they will be charged with the assassination of Éofrer, the fire at Braedforth and any other crime Grunna may come up with. He'll make sure they can't defend themselves and are brought to the cells at the Royal Armoury ("2" on the city plan).

Regardless in which the characters were arrested, the accompanying Hunwald will escape by disappearing seconds before.

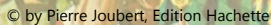
If the characters have not been arrested by the afternoon of March 1st, they'll witness the arrival of Éomer and his men to Edoras. He will ride up the main street to Meduseld where he'll be accused of treason and imprisoned at the Royal Armoury. The news of his arrest will spread like wildfire throughout the city. On the other hand, if the characters are already arrested by that afternoon they'll get the news through the prison guards and they may even get a glimpse of him while he is taken to his cell.

The afternoon of March 2nd, Grunna will visit the characters at the Royal Armoury. He'll laugh at them and will proclaim their death sentences to them.

A crowd will then pack the street and three horses will be seen riding upward towards Meduseld. The one in the front is a large white stallion ridden by an old man dressed in white and wearing a very long white beard. The horse behind him is being ridden by a dark haired man and the last one by an elf and a dwarf. They are Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli.

The city will be closed for the whole evening. The king is

If the characters were unable to escape during Gandalf's arrival, they will be taken back to their cells and later that day (March 2) will be released as victims of Gríma's machinations. They may even produce the letter from Éofrer, finally unveiling all of Gríma's plots.



At the gallows

THE BEAST IN THE BARN

Now that their “extra business” in Rohan is finished, the group should be reminded (if they don’t think of it themselves), that their original purpose and intent—supporting the Steward of Gondor in his war with Sauron—is still waiting and should now be resumed.

Since it has been proven that they were victims of Gríma’s plots and their heroic efforts to foil the traitor’s plans, of course all of their missing belong-



ings will be returned to them. If they are in need of anything, they are now in an excellent position to get it. The GM should take care that all of this stays within reasonable limits and remind them that Edoras is in a state of tension once the king has left for Helm’s Deep in the company of Gandalf and his comrades. Eowyn will be very helpful in providing any needed assistance. If they lack horses, good mounts will be provided so that they will arrive as early as possible in the White City.

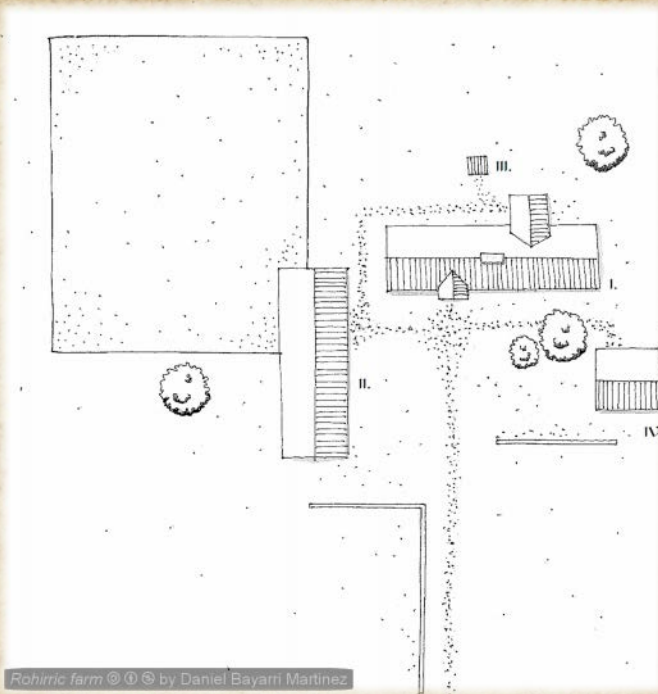
The characters will be advised to take the Great East Road when leaving Edoras the morning of the following day (March 3), since this is the quickest way to Gondor. The group will travel unmolested for miles along the southern bank of the Snowbourn. During the first hour they’ll meet groups of women, children and elderly people on their way to Dunharrow but after that, it will take several hours before they come across anyone else. The landscape with the open grass fields to the north and the mountains peaks to the south offers a great view, but it is strange to travel in the heartland of Rohan with so few people to be seen.

Finally, three hours after noon, when the group is already far along the Great East Road, a woman will be seen running through the grass field towards the characters waving her arms and shouting. As soon as she reaches them, she’ll grab the nearest character by the arm and will try to pull him off the road. She is shouting in Rohirric but can hardly be understood due to the hysteria. Her face is wet with tears. “My daughter!!! My daughter!!! Help me please!!!”

The woman will let loose of the character and run back into the grass fields for about twenty meters to stop once again and turn to the characters with more shouting and tears.

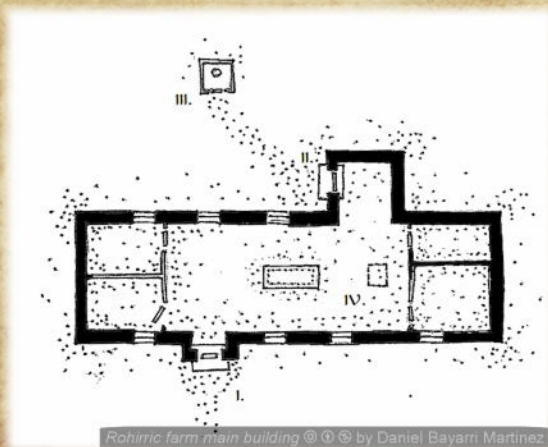
If the characters follow her she’ll start running again and after five minutes a group of four or five wooden structures and a fence will be seen behind a small wooded hill. A young lady of around fifteen years old will step out of one of the buildings, her clothes torn apart and her face red with tears running down her cheeks. The woman will point towards a granary which seems to be closed and will shout again “My daughter!! The beast!!! My daughter!!!”

The farm has three small and rectangular wooden buildings. The homestead is in the center and next to it there’s a stable in which five nervous horses are neighing. Forty meters ahead of the characters there’s a granary with a gabled roof. It has a set of double doors which are now closed and bolted with logs at the short ends and from the interior loud growls and snorts can be heard. From time to time something smashes against the doors from the inside, but they look like being strong enough to hold the creature—whatever it is—inside.



The woman will fall to her knees and hide the face in her hands. The kid will grab a character’s hand and will try to pull him towards the granary. She has a wound on her back which is still bleeding. It looks like it was caused by some sort of claw, maybe from a large dog or a wolf. She can only speak rohirric so it depends on the players’ linguistic skills to understand what is actually going on. She

was inside the granary with her older sister when some sort of beast jumped in and attacked them. She barely escaped the beast's claws and was able to close the doors behind her but her sister run up the mezzanine inside the granary and is still inside with the beast.



Rohirric farm main building © by Daniel Bayarri Martinez

The beast is in fact a surviving Warg from a previous encounter with the characters. He was wounded and has been wandering for several days, hunting weak animals and avoiding humans but his wound has worsened and it has difficulties to move quickly now and so he deemed the two girls easy prey. The corpse of the orc rider is still hanging from his loin, probably trapped by the creature harness. He is very nervous and scared. He can smell the girl in the mezzanine but can't reach it. He'll be able to smell anyone who gets close to the granary and if the doors are open he'll crouch on the other end of the building, waiting to jump on the first living creature crossing the threshold.

If the characters deal with the Warg successfully, they'll find the girl hiding in the mezzanine behind a stack of hay. She has no wounds to worry about but is really scared.

Both the mother and her daughters will prove to be very thankful. The men of the family left the day before to join the muster and now they have decided to pack and leave for Aldburg. If the characters wait for them, they can supply them with basic equipment, provisions and even horses.

The characters will reach the crossroads where they must decide whether to turn south to spend the night in Aldburg or keep travelling eastwards just when the sun begins to set behind the peaks of the Ered Nimrais. If they are travelling with the three women they'll invite the group to take the road to Aldburg and will offer them free accommodation at the house of relatives. If they are travelling alone, they'll find accommodation at a reasonable price in any of the inns in the town.

If they decide not to visit Aldburg and keep travelling east, night will fall before they reach an inn so they'll probably need to camp in the open. They'll spend the night unmolested although one of guard shifts might have some trouble with the noises made by prairie rodents living in a nearby bush.

The following two days will be the last ones the characters are in Rohan. The road from Aldburg onward is quite comfortable and the characters can travel without serious obstacles. To the southern side of the road the White Mountains can be seen at a distance, and their foothills almost reach to the road, making for varied travelling with many small hills, and dotted woods along the road.

THE WRONG CATCH

The characters ride along the road, as they spot a wagon on the road. It is drawn by two horses, though they stand still and two men can be seen near the vehicle. As the characters approach the wagon, the men at first stare in their direction and then run away. It is assumed that the characters will increase speed to overtake the men. In this case, it is almost impossible to avoid two to four concealed pit traps prepared in the ground, and in which the characters' horses will stumble. The pits are not very deep, but sufficient to injure the horses so they won't be able to proceed further. If the characters maintain their normal speed, avoiding the traps is still extremely hard.

The pits have been constructed to affect any riders coming from the west or south toward the road. The wagon and the fleeing men were a trap set for a notorious bandit of the region, Charles, a man of unknown origin who together with his gang robs merchants and people between Aldburg and the Firienwood. The Ered Nimrais serve as a retreat and refuge should the pressure become too great. Especially in the past four years he has been very successful in both robbing people as well as eluding any attempts to capture him. The characters have now unwittingly been caught in an attempt to lure the notorious bandit into a trap.

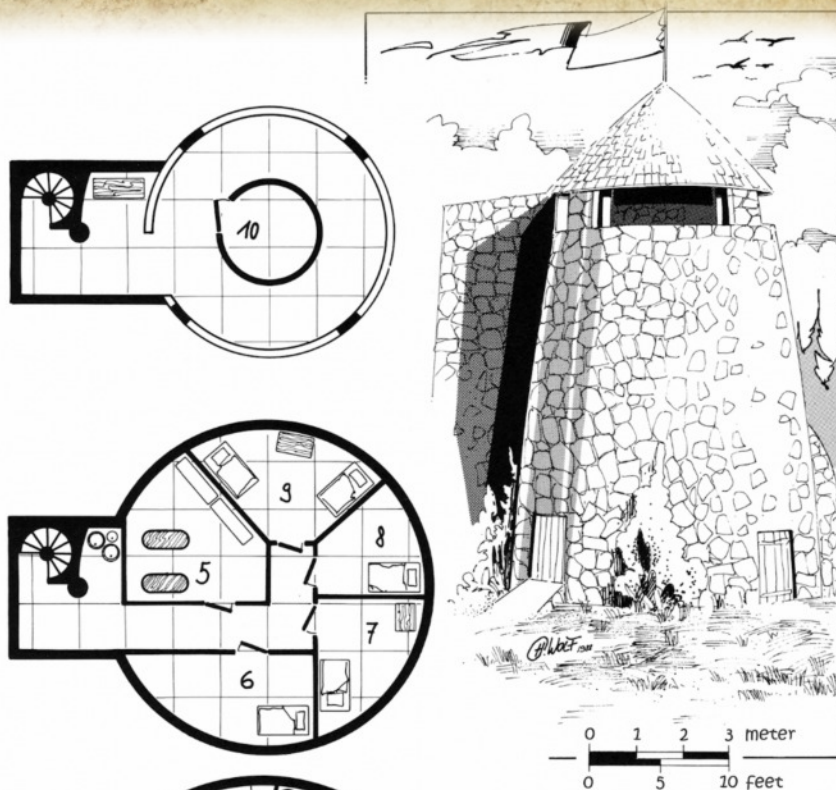
Rumours have been spread of a transport of a wealthy merchant travelling from endangered Gondor to safer grounds in Rohan and it is hoped that Charles will take the bait and try to rob him.

Immediately after the characters have been caught in the pits, warriors that lay in hiding in nearby bushes and behind hills rush to the scene. It is now up to the players to convince the Riders they have nothing to do with the bandit leader. A success-

ful roll on a medium difficulty of *Diplomacy* or a similar social skill is required to achieve this.

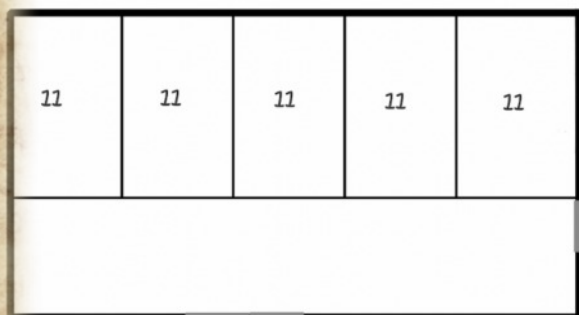
An errand rider is sent out for this purpose and ten men go on an extra patrol in an attempt to perhaps

Once the situation has been cleared, the characters will receive the apologies from Engold, the leader of the Riders. Now that the cover has been blown, they will be escorted to the nearby relay station for couriers and errand-riders. The greater part of his command will leave to patrol for Clares. They fear he (or one of his men) might have watched the episode and the bait will no longer work. Therefore it is decided to bring the wagon to the station and there wait for new orders from the Eolderman at Aldburg.



- 1 Entrance Hall
- 2 Guestroom
- 3 Larder
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Bath
- 6 Captain
- 7 Sergeant
- 8 Soldiers
- 9 Soldiers
- 10 Storeroom
- 11 Horse boxes
- 12 Fence

Relay station © by Frank Wolf, adapted



catch the bandit if he really is in the area. A footmarch of about half an hour brings the characters to the station. Normally it is intended for a garrison of about 5 and thus is a bit crowded with the extra assignment. Here Engold talks of his attempts to bring the bandit to justice. He will also offer the characters replacement horses for the ones injured in his pits, though it will have to wait until the patrol is back in the evening, and therefore they will

12

have to spend the night at the station. They may leave in the morning again. Apart from the characters, four of the Riders stay at the station with the wagon, waiting for the rest of them (10 altogether) to arrive here later after the return from the patrol.

Charles is not that easy to be caught however (there is a reason he has been able to elude the authorities for so long). Indeed he planned to attack the supposedly not so well-protected merchant on his way westward. He did not totally buy the story though, keeping his guard and sent two scouts ahead. These witnessed the characters falling into prepared pit-traps. They also noted the departure of the patrol and the small garrison remaining. They returned to their chief with all this information and he decided to first take his revenge for the trap as well as making booty in the now ill-guarded station.

Taking 10 of his men in (he places six more in the vicinity as guards and reinforcements) he plans to approach the station in disguise as the returning patrol (he rightly guesses that they are expected back at about dusk and therefore times his attack about half an hour earlier so that no suspicion is raised about their return time). He then breaks into the main house with 7 men (three go to the stable to look after the wagon) and overpower the surprised men there.

It is up to the characters to come to Engold's aid and repel the attack. Here the GM is well-advised to adapt the situation to the ideas and plans of the characters. Upon encountering stiffer resistance than expected and thinking of the tight timing concerning the expected return of the patrol, Charles will not press the attack, but retreat timely to escape the reinforcements and fight another day. The GM should play him intelligently and not as a simple minded, one-dimensional antagonist.

Shortly after the bandits retreat, the real patrol will return, but it should be obvious that any attempts of pursuing the clever bandits will be fruitless in the face of the approaching darkness.

After this event, the night will proceed uneventful. The next day, Engold will give them as many horses as they need (he keeps their injured ones in return) and wishes them well. He informs them that they can reach Aldwych, a small settlement on the border to Gondor's province of Anórien without any problems this day.

The group will proceed with good speed and until the afternoon there will be no encounters or obstacles worth mentioning until they approach the Firienwood.

GRUNNA ONCE AGAIN

As they get closer to the wood, the vegetation on the mountain side of the road gets a bit thicker.

When the characters are already under the shadow of the first group of trees they'll see a horse crossing the road fifty meters ahead of them. The trotting horse leaves the forest to their right and turns to face them. If they try to get hold of it, it'll rear up and stand on his hind legs trying to hit the characters with his hooves. It's a black stallion with rohirric-style saddle and a pair of saddlebags. Once they have managed to calm the animal, they will find some clothing and minor equipment (dagger, canteen and cookies) as well as three leather pouches with coins and jewels inside the saddlebags. This may even be something Grunna confiscated in the past (e.g. a ring or pendant). Altogether there are 2gp and 36sp and jewels worth from 5 to 10gp depending on the buyer.

Moments later a man will step onto the road from the same spot from which the horse came. Dark haired and wearing a dark beard, but no moustache, a leather corselet and a quiver hanging from his shoulder, he is holding a small hand axe and will look surprised to see the characters there. He will turn around immediately and run into the woods again. Now it is assumed that the characters pursue the man, else they will miss some important events. It is suggested that the GM encourages them (if they themselves are unwilling) to investigate what this guy has to hide (i.e. looking shabby and not very trustworthy and fleeing at first sight before them).

The vegetation is too thick to ride into the forest, so characters must dismount to go after the man. This gives him a head start and alert his comrades. When the characters finally reach him they'll find themselves in a clearing among the trees with a group of armed men in front of them and a bleeding man lying on the ground. If the characters demand to let the man go, the armed men will block his escape, pinning him to the ground. The characters won't be able to see the wounded man's face from their vantage point.

The group leader will ask the characters to hand over the horse and the saddlebags. There's at least as many robbers as characters plus one. They look experienced and their origin is diverse. Some wield hand axes but there are also men with short spears and swords. They are not nice and will not negotiate.

The man lying on the floor will try to rise his head to beg the characters to help him and will

receive a kick from one of the brigands. Characters may recognize the wounded man's voice at this point. He's Grunna and the robbers are in fact a group of men hired by him months ago to plunder and harass the countryside. When King Théoden was liberated from Gríma's wicked influence, Grunna left Edoras in a hurry with everything he could grab quickly. He owes the mercenaries their salary for the last months and they've hunted him down to get what they consider is rightfully theirs.

The mercenaries will only let the characters leave unharmed if they leave the horse and the saddlebags behind. They have a couple of archers hidden among the trees with short bows which the characters may have not noticed yet.

If the characters decide to give in and accept the mercenaries' request, the latter feel confident enough to demand from them to open their own bags and hand over any money or valuables they may have. Whenever the situation is tense enough and characters are about seriously considering giving the first blow, one of the archers will make the first shot on them and it all will end up in a fight from which the mercenaries will leave as soon as they suffer the first casualty.

It is suggested that the characters take this fight serious, but it is not intended to be deadly. Once the mercenaries retreat and flee, the characters should be satisfied with this. Any attempt in hunting them down may result in another combat with men who

think they have nothing left to loose and will fight to the end. They started the first fight only since they deemed the characters easy prey. Once they intended victims show any real resistance, they quickly lose interest. They have a realistic attitude towards combat and avoid prey capable of defending itself.

Grunna has a broken leg but this is not a serious injury. He has been beaten mercilessly and his nose is bleeding, He can't walk and looks quite pitiful overall. He has not shaved for a couple of days and from his eyes it looks he has not slept much either. He'll implore the characters to help him. He'll offer them money if necessary. If the characters depart and leave Grunna behind, the mercenaries will eventually come back and finish him off. If the characters decide to help him they must at least transport him to Aldwych to get his wounds treated.

From here, they will have only an hour or so of travel before reaching Aldwych. Due to the distance covered and the interlude with Grunna, they arrive just in the right time for their rest at the end of the day.

This marks the end of the second episode of Drúwaith laur Militiamen. The third and fourth part—'Anórien' and 'Pelennor' will be published in Other Minds Magazine, Issue #15 and bring the campaign to its conclusion.




The dead Southron © by Anke Eißmann, used with permission

MARHATHIUDA, THE HORSEFOLK OF NORTHERN RHOVANION

by Paul Kirk (paulkirk187@gmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

When I first mooted my thoughts on mounted combat for The One Ring (TOR) on their forum, I was using a series of minuses on the combat complications table from the Loremaster's Book to adjudicate on individual cases. This was met by a slightly puzzled response from a fellow poster who asked me why I was bothering to put together rules that did nothing for characters except to make things more difficult.

I replied that it was my belief that the advantages that many RPG's granted to characters simply because they were mounted did not reflect the reality of the situation, and that unless a character was trained in mounted combat, he really had no business being on a horse when the fighting started.

However, I felt unsatisfied with the way things were turning out and felt that the (seemingly) never ending variables were not in the spirit of TOR, with its more abstract approach.

I noted how servants of the enemy used Hate to power their Shadow Abilities and knew that I had discovered the answer to my needs...

The rules I have devised for mounted combat in TOR are short and simple. They are a companion piece to The Horsefolk of Wilderland and there are several cross-references to ideas discussed in that article.

INTRODUCTION

This article deals with an original group of Northmen within the re-founded realm of Dale. The reasoning was—as so often—the lack of further original information in Tolkien's works. Especially the lack of information which people might live in the wide lands beyond the Long Lake area and what became of the survivors of the first realm of Dale (and not only the town) after Smaug arrived at Erebor. It soon became clear to me that these lands need people, and after research in Tolkien's *corpus* concerning the men in these areas, the idea for the Marhathiuda manifested quickly.

This short description is focussed on the time-frame of Cubicle 7's *The One Ring* (TOR) roleplaying game. Beside background info on the people, it also provides game stats for use with TOR in a style compatible with the cultures presented in the core set.

The terminology as well as political and cultural characteristics of this article have been developed in close coordination with the content found in *Population and Urbanization in Rhovanion* on page 131 and later of this Issue.

HISTORY

As for the Northmen, a few, it is said, fled over the Celduin (River Running) and were merged with the folk of Dale under Erebor (with whom they were akin.

[...]

They [the Balchoth] were slaying or driving north up the River Running and into the Forest the remnant of the Northmen, friends of Gondor that still dwelt east of Mirkwood.

—*Unfinished Tales.*

Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan

These two quotes provide us with the only precise information about mannish migrations involving northern Rhovanion in the Third Age.

Thus they have been chosen as a focal point in the development of the Marhathiuda.

To the east and southeast of Dale and the Long Lake lies the region known in the North as ‘The Ridings’. The people that dwell in this region are known as the Marhathiuda or Horsefolk of the Northlands and their culture bears some remarkable similarities to the folk of Rohan, far away to the southwest.

The harsher climate on the northern plains of Rhovanion has never proved suitable for the breeding of large numbers of horses, except for shaggy steppe ponies. The original “bëoric” Northmen of this region had developed along entirely different cultural lines compared to their southern cousins. There were more traders, craftsmen and town dwellers—in short, settled people—to be found along the valley of the River Running (from Erebor to Dorwinion). A further offshot of this early culture are the rustic farmers and herdsman dwelling in ‘the Marches’ and ‘the Narrows’ west and northwest of Dale and Erebor.



Rohirrim attack © by Jan Pospisil, used with permission

IN FORMER YEARS

The original bëoric people (the Vogningi) north of the Celduin and west of the Carnen have lived in this area since the late First Age. Even though there have been wars, their borders have been relatively stable, and the relations with the large numbers of “marachian” Northmen to the south (of whom the later Rohirrim are the most prominent), beyond the Celduin (River Running) have been mostly good. These old settlement patterns were severely shattered when the Great Plague of the mid-17th century of the Third Age left many areas of Rhovanion

unsettled or only lightly populated. Having recovered somewhat from this disaster, wars began and the first wave of refugees from the South arrived in the middle part of the 19th century of the Third Age, fleeing the advance of the great Easterling confederation known as the “Wainriders”. The second wave about 450 years later was triggered in the early years of the 26th century of the Third Age by the Easterling people known in the West as *Balchoth*. The flight of the last relatively pure-blooded Northmen before the encroaching Balchoth Empire cemented the definite possession of the central and southern plains of Rhovanion by the Easterlings.

Both migrations into northern Rhovanion were initially met with some reservation by the Vogningi, but since the Great Plague from the mid-17th century had left many lands depopulated which was still noticeably in the 20th century, there was enough room for the newcomers. Although seriously diminished in numbers, they had brought with them the skills and the stock to breed small numbers of horses suitable for war, called *chargers*.

Over the centuries these migrants merged with the few Vogningi who lived beyond the Celduin and east of the Esgaroth/Dale area, particularly the farmers and herders of the marches until finally a new culture arose from the merging of the two. Their warlike nature enabled them to fend off the local Easterling Warlords back across the Redwater and their strong sense of self, ensured that their traditions of animal husbandry and horsemanship survived as a dominant part of this new culture on the northern plains.

These were the beginnings of the Marhathiuda, and their homes—the Three *Ridings*. At first there were two *Ridings*, but after the Balchoth purge of Rhovanion, the remaining Northmen south of the Celduin fled northward, forming the third *Riding*.

Each of these was governed by its own chieftain (Thyn) but following the rise of the Kingdom of Dale after TA 2590, they accepted the overlordship of the King in Dale in the following years. These were the first years of bliss and greatness of the *Ridings*. They strengthened their rule and became the dominant power in the eastern parts of the realm, securing the Redwater traffic and growing strong and rich by the friendship of the Dwarves in the Iron Hills.

Then came the Dragon. The people of the once prosperous city and principality of Dale were scattered to the winds. A few fled to the Anduin vales, but most south along the River Running and to the *Ridings* and founded their own

principalities, clustering around the old forts and trading posts. Some few went east, to the Iron Hills, with the Dwarves and founded settlements in the valley of the Redwater. The Ridings became fully independent principalities and survive to the present day (TA 2946). Their fortunes have changed in the last 170 years though, losing some territory to the Easterlings south and east of the Celduin. They have created such wealth as they possess now by providing horses to the Lords of the exiled Dalish diaspora and by training their young men to ride and fight from them.

normally account for less than one in five of a clan's fighting men.

There are three main settlements of the Horsefolk on the northern plains (each of which will be described in a little more depth at the end of the article) as well as dozens of smaller villages, hamlets and scores of farms and crofts scattered across the plains, the inhabitants of which owe their allegiance to one of the three Thyns.

SETTLEMENTS OF NOTE

Burh Wenjan

The seat of power of Thyn Frithalf and the stronghold of his people, it lies some hundred miles east of the Lonely Mountain, on the western slopes of the Iron Hills. Settlement here began shortly after the founding of Dale, but its importance as the seat of the Thyn came to pass only after the Dragon came and the former seat of the Thyn was removed here.

The village itself is surrounded by a log palisade, inside of which are the homes and workshops of more than a score of assorted craftsmen, several large storehouses, and the great hall and stables of Lord Frithalf himself.

The Great Hall is cruciform in shape and its western arm is the barracks for the *kuzdraughtan*. The eastern arm contains the kitchens and servants quarters while the northern arm contains the private rooms of Lord Frithalf and his sons as well as a guard tower. The centre and southern arm are the great hall where Frithalf holds audiences and feasts.

The stables are where the *chargers* of the Lord and his retainers are kept and during the winter they are also used to stable the rest of the *charger* herd.

A hundred yards to the south of the village, surrounded by another palisade, stands the great corral with its assorted barns and guard posts. For much of the year this lies almost empty, but over the winter the herds of shaggy ponies are stabled and maintained here.

Thyn Frithalf is the first of the Lords of the Ridings to swear his fealty to the new King in Dale. There are those among his detractors who scoff and say that his loyalty has been bought with the Dragon's gold but Frithalf dismisses such comments.

"My oath may have been bought with gold but now that the words are spoken, it is as strong as tempered steel" is his retort.



IN RECENT TIMES

In the present days (the mid-30th century of the Third Age) the Marhathiuda are no longer a nomadic people, but a nation of sedentary farmers and herders ruled over by a mounted warrior aristocracy. The horse herds belong to the wealthy nobility and it is they who equip and provide mounts for the riders of the *fulk*, which describes a company of mounted warriors in much the same way that the Rohirrim have their *éoreds*. Unlike an *éored*, the size and composition of each *fulk* can be vastly different and depends on the relative size and wealth of the settlement it serves. The Marhathiuda lack the numbers of warriors and steeds to engage the foe in the same manner as the Rohirrim and instead, they rely quite heavily on mounted bowmen known as 'feather men'. These lightly armoured horse archers are mounted on shaggy ponies like those of their Easterling enemies and are employed as horse herders, scouts and outriders in times of relative peace.

The riders of the Thyn's household guard (*kuzdraughtan*) are the elite warriors of the Horsefolk, mounted on *chargers* and heavily armed and armoured. They are comparatively few though and

The truth of the matter is that the Lord of the North Riding is as much a leader of his people as he is a warrior. He has sensed the wind of change that blows through the Northlands and has manoeuvred



to place himself high in the favour of the King. Only Earl Ragnald of Shieldwall, Lord of the Narrows holds equal rank at the present time.

That is not to say that he does not respect the King or that he has taken his oath lightly. He has great regard for the King and it is difficult not to be somewhat in awe of a man who has slain a Dragon.

The people of Burh Wenjan have become fairly wealthy since accepting Bard as their King. He realizes the need for a force of mounted warriors to complement his swordsmen and archers and pays handsomely to support the breeding of suitable horses.

For his part, Frithalf is required to provide a dozen *chargers* annually to the King's stables and men to train the King's riders.

In return, the men of Burh Wenjan wear coats of finely wrought mail and wield fine steel swords in arms adorned with hack silver bracelets. The women tie up their hair with threads of gold and silver and wear perfume and fabrics imported from the lands of the Uttermost East.

Thyn Frithalf is 48 years old and has been a widower since his wife succumbed to an illness five years earlier. He loves both his sons, especially Frithgern who reminds him so much of his dear departed Radegunda.

He is tall and strongly built, standing over six feet despite his bow legged gait. His eyes are bright blue and his tawny hair and beard are streaked with the grey of impending age.

He is most often encountered at Buhr Wenjan these days, his advancing years making him less useful as a herder or drover. Instead, he leaves most of that business to Frithgern. He can be encountered in Dale during the autumn when the riders of Burh Wenjan bring their annual tribute of horses to King Bard.

His eldest son, Fritheric, is Captain of the King's fledgling company of horsemen and counts Bard as a personal friend. A brash and ambitious young warrior, he has his fathers looks about him. He maintains a good natured rivalry with Elstan, the First Captain of Dale.

Frithgern (the younger son) bears an uncanny resemblance to his mother who, as previously mentioned, passed away several years earlier. He also has her kind and compassionate nature and bears no ill will toward his elder brother, who is their father's named heir to his title and lands.

As a final note, the love between Frithalf and Radegunda was the cause of an estrangement between him and his younger brother, Frithimer. Frithimer loved Radegunda desperately but his love was unrequited and so, after a fight with his brother, he departed Burh Wenjan.

Frithalf, who by this time had succeeded his father as Thyn, begged his brother not to leave and in a final attempt to pour oil on troubled waters, gifted him with the sword Wound-weaver which had been passed down through their family for centuries having been given to an ancestor by King Vidugavia himself.

Wound-weaver is easily recognisable as it is a longsword with a pommel of gold crafted to resemble a horses head.

Frithimer's mind was, however, made up and his course of action set. He left Burh Wenjan and has not been seen in almost thirty years.

LM note: *If Buhr Wenjan was opened as a sanctuary, skills, traits and Masteries pertaining to Horsemanship and Mounted combat could be attained by characters. Likewise Thyn Frithalf would make a fine patron for starting characters. His influence in the Kingdom of Dale should be comparable to that of Erkenbrand of the Westfold in Rohan. When setting Tolerance levels for a social encounter he favours Valour.*

Burh Aūstar

Burh Aūstar is the easternmost town of the Horsefolk and is the home of the people of Thyn Hunderic. It lies in a small clearing on the western edge of the forest of Ironwood, known as the Little Bight by the locals. This area has been settled by various people over the course of the Third Age, of which Burh Aūstar is but the most recent incarnation.

It is the smallest of the three seats of power, but its proximity to the Easterling held lands of the Redwater valley makes it strategically important to the future of the Kingdom of Dale. Thyn Hunderic's riders provide some protection to the Dalish refugee settlements in the region against the predatory Easterlings who attack them with seeming impunity.

Envoys have been received from King Bard, offering Hunderic and his ancestors the perpetual Lordship of the East Riding in return for his oath of allegiance.

He (Hunderic) has heard of the generosity of Bard and of the growing wealth of Burh Wenjan since Thyn Frithalf accepted him as his sovereign lord.

The appearance of a large band of Orcs in the Ironwood has made the offer even more difficult to refuse. These Orcs, led by the infamous Hobgoblin of Ironwood, were recently driven out of their lair in the Iron Hills and are making life even more difficult for the peoples of the Redwater region.

Hunderic's horsemen are stretched thin, near to breaking point and Bard has promised warriors as well as the coin to recruit and equip new riders. However, Hunderic greatly values his independence and he has not, as yet, decided upon his course.

Burh Naurthauja

The last of the main settlements of the Horsefolk is Burh Naurthauja, lying several days journey to the east of the Mirkwood on the banks of the River Running. It is the largest of the three main settlements of the Ridings with a population that almost equals the other two combined. It lies in a valley between two craggy hills where a small stream empties into the river. Both hills are quite steep and fairly high, offering easily defensible positions that dominate the area around the town. The hill to the west is where Thyn Gaisemund's hall is located, the one to the east is a fortified look out post. The area has been settled for centuries due to the favourable position along a river and the relative fertile lands found here.

An ambassador is expected soon from King Bard of Dale. Thyn Gaisemund is not so sure about the advantages of giving his oath of allegiance. The local Easterlings are as divided as his Dalish neighbours and both his own army and town are strong enough, that no mere warband could possibly threaten them. He also has to consider if, as Lord of the South Riding, he would still be able to charge his exorbitant tolls on river traffic—and whether King Bard would demand action against the piratical ruffians who dwell in the Nether Marshes and prey on the river traffic that (coincidentally?) refuse to pay them.

Warriors of the South Riding are often found at the nearby Village of Celduin. The village lies at the southern end of the wine road and Gaisemund's riders charge a fee to escort traders, travelling to and from Dorwinion, up to Laketown. It is quite a lucrative business as most merchants fear to continue their journey upriver into Mirkwood and the Long Marshes. This has become the cause of a long running dispute between the Lakemen and the Marhathiuda.

The Lakemen believe that Gaisemund exaggerates the dangers on the road in order to inflate his price for a mounted escort. The truth is that, until recently, that was a fair estimate of the situation. Five years ago, a band of goblins (survivors of the Battle of the Five Armies) took up residence in a small cave system known as the Hidey Holes. These caves are located in the small portion of Mirkwood that lies to the east of the River Running and the Long Marshes.

These goblins have been attacking isolated farmsteads and small groups of travellers using the wine road. Gaisemund himself has led his riders against the Hidey Holes on a half dozen occasions. Each time the wily goblins have retreated into the Long Marshes where the horsemen cannot follow, only to return upon their departure.

The People

The Marhathiuda are mostly typically Northman in appearance, which is to say that they are tall and brawny, fair of skin and light eyed. They are generally fair haired and unlike their Barding and Lakeman neighbours, men tend to sport full beards. Occasionally, the dark hair and grey eyes of their western cousins is seen due to their partial descent from these people. Both sexes wear their hair long. Men favour it loose although veteran warriors often plait the hair at their temples as a Mark of their standing. Young girls wear their hair long and loose but older, especially married, women tie theirs in two long plaits.

The most distinctive feature of the mounted warriors of the Marhathiuda, however, is their slightly bow legged gait. It is the mark of a life spent in the saddle.



STANDARD OF LIVING

There is little wealth to be found upon the plains of northern Rhovanion. The Marhathiuda have the skills and ability to raise small numbers of horses, suitable for the field of battle, the already mentioned *chargers*.

The price to purchase such an animal is high, but King Bard estimates a force of mounted warriors highly and has the means to pay for them. Between the sale of these horses and the stipend received to train his warriors to fight from them, the Marhathiuda have achieved a *Martial* standard of living.

MARHATHIUDA ADVENTURERS

Like their neighbours, the Horsefolk have been inspired by the great deeds and generosity of King Bard. The Thyn of Buhr Wenjan has already sworn allegiance and it can only be a matter of time before the others follow suit. The young people of the Horsefolk are lacking in neither bravery nor ambition and many have set off to Dale, keen to take up arms in the service of the 'Dragonslayer'.

Not all find their way into the King's army though. For each young rider who takes service there is another that opts for a life of adventure instead.

SUGGESTED CALLINGS

Wanderer. Warden. The urge to travel is strong among the young people of the Marhathiuda and the Wilderness draws them like moths to a flame. For others, the calling to protect their kith and kin is stronger and many become wardens in the service of King Bard or of their own Thyns along the valleys of the River Running and the Redwater.

UNUSUAL CALLINGS

As a people of no letters, Scholars are a rarity among the Horsefolk. Histories and wisdom are passed down through an oral tradition of tales, poetic eddas and songs. The handful of keepers of this accumulated wealth of knowledge are known variously as Scops or Skalds.

What the Thyn says...

Bardings

The Dalefolk now have a new King and have renamed themselves in his honour. They are a fine and generous people. They are our most stalwart of allies and make fine warriors, even if there is hardly a decent horseman among them.

Beornings

Miscreants, outcasts and trouble makers, kept in check only by the will of their mighty Lord. They

օՇհեր թիրոճս արդ հաթոճօՇհեր թիրոճս արդ հաթոճօՇհեր թիրոճս արդ հաթոճօՇհեր օՇհեր թիրոճս արդ հաթոճս

What others say about the Marathiuda...

What King Bard says....

What Lord Beorn says....

What King Oáin says....

What King Thranduil says....

What Bilbo Baggins says....

What The Master
of Laketown says....

What Radagast says....

people indeed. finest traits. Yes...indeed... 125

CULTURAL BLESSING

HORSE MASTER

Such is your skill at arms and your horsemanship that you fight just as proficiently when mounted as when afoot.

This blessing enables the character to fight effectively from horseback without spending points of Hope as he or she is regarded as being trained in mounted combat.

While mounted, the character gains a single (automatic) Combat Advantage Die per Combat Encounter. This extra die represents the tactical advantage that a trained warrior, from a mounted culture, has over his foes.

All melee attacks against opponents on foot use the Favoured Body Attribute for damage determination on greater and extraordinary successes.

STARTING SKILL SCORES

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe: 2, Inspire: 1, Persuade: 1

Athletics: 3, Travel: 2, Stealth: 0

Awareness: 2, Insight: 2, Search: 0

Explore: 1, Healing: 0, Hunting: 1

Song: 1, Courtesy: 0, Riddle: 1

Craft: 1, Battle: 2, Lore: 1

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets and record it on the character sheet.

1) (Spears) 2, Sword 1, Dagger 1

2) Bow 2, Axe 1, Dagger 1

SPECIALITIES

Choose two traits from: Animal Husbandry, Enemy Lore (Easterlings), Horseman, Region Lore (the Ridings), Smith-craft, Trading

BACKGROUNDS

Adrift upon the Sea of Grass



A horse beneath you and the horizon stretched out before you. Summer days spent following the herds and winter nights feasting in you father's hall. What more could a young rider ask for from life?

You were not there when the raiders came. They struck quickly while the menfolk were at work on the high plains. All that remains of your previous life is ash and scorched timbers along with the terrible memories of kith and kin, put to the sword, that balmy summer's evening.

You were not there, you were helpless to prevent it. You have sworn to yourself that you will never be helpless again and that you will take the fight to the servants of the Shadow, wherever they may be found.

Basic Attributes:

Body: 6 Heart: 6 Wits: 2

Favoured Skill:

Explore

Distinctive Features:

Adventurous, Curious, Hardy, Honourable, Just, Proud, Vengeful, Wrathful

Tack and Harness, Bit and Bridle

Not for you, the bright sun on your face and the brisk north wind in your hair as you rode your steed across the plains. Your youth was spent, mostly, within the confines of your village stockade. Long days spent sweating in your father's workshop, tanning the hides that he would skilfully work into saddles, straps and bridles for the riders of the *fulk*.

Long nights spent wishing that you were more like them and not, merely, the humble son of a crafter.

Basic Attributes:

Body: 7 Heart: 4 Wits: 3

Favoured Skill:

Craft

Distinctive Features:

Adventurous, Hardy, Honourable, Just, Patient, Robust, Steadfast, True

Eyes of the Horsefolk

Sometimes, as a child, you accompanied your father on his journeys into the wilds. He taught you many things about life on the plains, how to hunt and how to read tracks. He taught you about wolves of all types, but especially about the two-legged breeds that dwell in the lands beyond the Running and Redwater valleys. He taught you that he and the other scouts were the eyes and ears of your people against the raids of predatory Easterlings. *"They hate us because our forebears drove them out of these lands"* he had said. *"It is a long held grudge that only the complete destruction of our people will satisfy."*

You have determined that, as long as you live, you will never permit these human wolves to find that satisfaction.

Basic Attributes:

Body: 6 Heart: 4 Wits: 4

Favoured Skill:

Awareness

Distinctive Features:

Adventurous, Elusive, Hardy, Honourable, Just, Keen-eyed, Quick of Hearing, Wary

Born to the Battleground

Your father was a household guard in the service of the Thyn. He died with honour, in battle, against bloodthirsty raiders from the east. It was always his wish that you too should become a warrior and swear yourself to the service of your people. You have trained to fight, relentlessly, from childhood. Never have you doubted your chosen path. The Thyn has given his allegiance to the new King in Dale. This Bard is a man of wealth and reputation and you must search your heart and decide whether, or not, you serve your people best by serving him.



Basic Attributes:

Body: 7 Heart: 5 Wits: 2

Favoured Skill:

Battle

Distinctive Features:

Bold, Determined, Fierce, Hardened, Honourable, Just, Stern, Wrathful

The Song remains the Same

Your father was a storyteller, as was his father before him. The oral traditions of your people have passed down through your family from generation to generation for many centuries.

You are welcomed almost everywhere. The doors of few Noble Halls are barred to you and the warmth of even the most solitary campfire is rarely begrudged. Such is your skill with words and the passion in your oratory that few can hear you speak and remain unmoved.



Basic Attributes:

Body: 5 Heart: 5 Wits: 4

Favoured Skill:

Inspire

Distinctive Features:

Clever, Cunning, Fair-spoken, Forthright, Honourable, Just, Merry, True-hearted

Bearer of Tidings

There are tales that descendants of the Royal House of Dale can converse with birds, as can the Dwarves of Erebor. However, most people still rely on mounted couriers to deliver messages over long distances. Your ability as a Rider of the Horsefolk is in much demand when such an errand is required.

King Bard is rumoured to be recruiting messengers to deliver his missives (some would say, ultimatums) to the fractious Lords of the river valleys. Such an errand would carry with it great risk and responsibility, but would surely be an opportunity to prove your worth to the new sovereign.

Basic Attributes

Body: 6 Heart: 5 Wits: 3

Favoured Skill:

Travel

Distinctive Features:

Fair-spoken, Forthright, Hardy, Honourable, Just, Robust, Trusty, Wary

MARHATHIUDA NAMES

The Horsefolk speak Westron and the Dalish Tongue of their Barding neighbours. They favour, however, the old Rhovanian names of their southern forebears.

Male Names

Adalric, Amalric, Ansila, Atta, Badwila, Botheric, Chindasvinth, Dag, Eboric, Edulf, Ermaneric, Euric, Evoric, Frithgar, Frithgern, Gaisemund, Giseleric, Hathus, Hunderic, Kunimund, Odoacer, Ricimer, Roderic, Thorismund, Totila, Vermund, Wisanth, Wulfila.

Female Names

Adasvintha, Amalina, Brunhild, Frida, Gelvira, Giselda, Helewidis, Heva, Liuva, Radegunda, Wisantha.

ENDURANCE AND HOPE

Endurance: 22 + Heart

Hope: 8 + Heart

ADVENTURING AGE

16-30 years

CULTURAL VIRTUES - MARHATHIUDA

The Horsefolk are valiant Northmen, descended from both northern and southern bloodlines. Their skill with horses is legendary and it is unsurprising that most of their Virtues are specific to horsemanship and mounted combat.

HORSE ARCHER

The speed and accuracy of the mounted archers of the Horsefolk has been admired by their allies and enemies both, for centuries.

Lightly armoured riders make sweeping passes against the foe, concentrating their arrows on a single point in a tactic known as 'feathering'. Should the enemy be foolish enough to try to engage them in melee, they simply withdraw to a safe distance and commence 'feathering' once more.

A character with this virtue may choose to remain at *opening volley* range for the entirety of a combat encounter.

Each round, the character must succeed at an **Athletics** test at TN14 (TN16 vs mounted opponents). Success means that the character cannot be attacked by an opponent in melee combat in that turn.

Failure means that the character may be attacked as normal and counts as being in **Forward** stance.

This virtue may only be applied to 'mounted' archery.

HORSE WHISPERER

Your skill and ability with horses is peerless. Never do you resort to laying on the whip or applying spurs, yet it seems that you can urge your mount on to ever greater feats of endurance while still keeping it hale.

The character receives a bonus of +2 to all mounted **Travel** tests.

Additionally, the character may spend a point of Hope to increase the distance he can travel in a single day by one half.

The **Heal** skill counts as Favoured when used on your steed.

IRONCLAD

There are only a few riders among the Horsefolk who are trained or equipped to enter the maelstrom of melee combat. Such as there are, are almost invariably the men of the Thyn's household guards or are in training to join with those illustrious bands.

A character with this virtue is trained in how to wear heavy armour effectively, by learning to position themselves so that their steed bears a part of the burden.

Any character with this virtue may deduct 3 points from the total encumbrance of their wargear whilst mounted.

This can be improved by the spending of EP's in future Fellowship Phases. A single EP can be spent per Fellowship phase to decrease the wargear encumbrance by a further 1 point (to a maximum of five extra points).

Trusty Steed

There have always been tales that there are those among the Horsefolk who can actually converse with their mounts. A character with this virtue names his steed and in doing so, forms an unbreakable bond of friendship with this *trusty steed*.

Such is the strength of this bond that the character's **Hope** score is immediately increased by two points (both current and maximum).

The *trusty steed* will always come at its master's command and can be trained to assist him in any one of the following skill rolls (choose one): Athletics, Awe, Battle or Travel.



Tharbad © by Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska, used with permission

When he makes a roll for the skill that has been imparted to the mount, he may roll the **Feat Die** twice and take the best result. Additional skills from the list can be imparted to the *trusty steed* at the cost of 1 EP per further Fellowship phase. Only one new skill can be learned per subsequent phase.

The created bond serves well in battle also. The *trusty steed* will bite, kick and stamp to defend its master.

The rider may spend a **Hope** point to make any single 'immediate' opponent **Weary** for the remainder of the encounter. The rider may spend further **Hope** points at the same time to make more opponents **Weary** on a basis of one point per opponent.

Any time that an immediate opponent rolls an **Eye** rune during combat the mount takes an automatic wound and becomes incapable of further action. All benefits accrued from mounted combat are immediately lost.

A character may take this wound himself to prevent damage to his mount. The wound is automatic and no armour save is permitted.

The character may make a **Heal** roll at TN16 at the end of the combat encounter. If successful the steed can return to play in the following scene. Otherwise the steed does not recover until after the next Fellowship phase.

Vidugavia's Honour

Ever since the days when Vidugavia kept his oaths to the King of Gondor and made war upon his eastern kin, it has become commonly said that "a Horseman's word is his bond". The Horsefolk pride themselves upon this perceived honesty and integrity.

A character with this virtue is not easily swayed or taken in by falsehoods.

Insight becomes a favoured skill and the character gains +1 standing in his own community.

CULTURAL REWARDS - MARHATHIUDA

Quality horseflesh, weapons and badges of honour are all to be found among the rewards of the Horsefolk.

Charger

There are few horses to be found in northern Rhovanion save for dray horses and shaggy ponies. When the folk of the southern plains fled here, they brought with them the skills and the stock to breed horses that could be trained for the field of battle.

These *chargers* are still fairly rare as the land cannot support and sustain the numbers of these mounts that were once found on the southern plains. Only the wealthiest of Lords can normally afford them, but they are sometimes given as a reward to the bravest of warriors.

Most horses instinctively shy away from danger, carrying their riders away with them. Not so the mighty *chargers* of the Horsefolk.

A character mounted on a *charger* may declare a **Charge** in the first round of any combat where he has **Initiative**. The character counts as being in forward stance and may roll the feat Die twice, choosing the best result.

Additionally, opponents on foot attract a +2 adjustment on the Combat Complications table in the Loremaster's Book when attacking the rider (Opponents who possess the Shadow Ability *Great Size* may ignore this).

HORSEHAIR PLUME

A Mark of distinction among the horsemen of Wilderland, this tradition dates back to the time when Prince Vidugavia united most of the clans into a single Kingdom of Rhovanion. A horsehair crest was fixed to the helmet of a Captain or Champion as a recognition of his deeds or rank.

Awe becomes a favoured skill to the bearer of one of these tokens.

In addition, the bearer of a Horsehair Plume gains a bonus of +2 on all **Inspire** tests.

HORSEMAN'S BOW

Unlike other Northman bows which are carved from a single stave, the Horseman's bow of the Marhathiuda is a short composite bow built from layers of wood, bone and horn. These are then lacquered together in a process copied from their Easterling foes.

The 'feather men' use these bows in battle to demoralise their opponents and herd them into clusters and huddles that the *kuzdrauhtan* can crush in an armoured charge.

On a hit that scores a *Greater Success*, the target becomes **Weary** in the following combat round. This weariness continues for as long as the archer continues to attack the same target with his bow and ceases as soon as the character chooses a different target.

On a hit that scores an Extraordinary success, the target becomes **Weary** in the following combat round. This weariness continues until the end of the encounter.

Greatbows may never be Horseman's bows.

NEW BACKGROUND TRAITS

Animal Husbandry

A character with this trait is familiar with the breeding, herding and general wellbeing of domesticated animals.

Horseman

This trait means that a character can ride a horse and knows how to saddle and maintain his mount.

SAMPLE MARHATHIUDA CHARACTER

Eduſ, son of Baderic

Calling: Warden

Background: *Adrift upon the Sea of Grass*

Cultural Blessing: *Horse Master*

Body: 6 **Heart:** 6 **Wits:** 2

Distinctive Features: *Hardy, Vengeful*

Traits: *Horseman, Animal Husbandry, Shadow-lore*

Endurance: 28

Hope: 14

Valour: 2

Wisdom: 1

Cultural Reward: *Charger*

Weapon Skills: (*Spears 2*), *Sword 1*, *Dagger 1*

Shadow Weakness: *Lure of Power*

Equipment: *Leather Corselet, Cap of Iron and Leather, Spear, Sword, Dagger, Shield.*

Fatigue: 0

Shadow: 0

Encumbrance: 17

Parry: 4

After the destruction of your settlement by raiders, you found a new home with your Uncle's kin at the village of Burh Astar. Having crossed the Redwater into the wild steppe lands beyond on many occasions, you have witnessed for yourself the growing numbers of the Easterling nomads who roam there and realise the threat they represent to the scattered communities of Northmen in the upper Redwater valley.

It is not fear, but hope, that has prompted your journey west, to the Kingdom of Dale, in search of like minded individuals who are willing and able to take the fight to the enemy.


Common Skills:

Skill group	Body	Heart	Wits
Personality	<u>Awe</u> :2	<u>Inspire</u> :2	Persuade:1
Movement	<u>Athletics</u> :3	Travel:2	Stealth:1
Perception	Awareness:2	Insight:2	Search:1
Survival	<u>Explore</u> :2	Healing:1	Hunting:1
Custom	Song:1	Courtesy:1	Riddle:1
Vocation	Craft:1	Battle:2	Lore:2

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RHOVANION IN THE THIRD AGE

by Thomas Morwinsky (tolwen@gmx.de) and
by Paul Kirk (paulkirk187@gmail.com)

© 2014

per the terms of the CC license: 

When I first mooted my thoughts on mounted combat for The One Ring (TOR) on their forum, I was using a series of minuses on the combat complications table from the Loremaster's Book to adjudicate on individual cases. This was met by a slightly puzzled response from a fellow poster who asked me why I was bothering to put together rules that did nothing for characters except to make things more difficult.

INTRODUCTION

For a great part of the Third Age (TA), Rhovanion was a cornerstone in the politics of Gondor. Beginning in the 6th century, the kings had to deal with hostile incursions from this region, and after a decisive victory in the mid-6th century, the vast majority of the conquered territory was given to the – presumably allied – Northmen while a limited south-western area of Rhovanion probably became a territory of Gondor.¹ We do not hear of rhovanic politics again until after the Ship-kings, when the Gondorian focus again shifted from the South and the Sea towards the northern and north-eastern inland frontiers in the 12th century TA. This culminated in Rómendacil II's great campaign of the 13th century, in which all resistance was ruthlessly broken with fire and sword and the area re-ordered according to Gondors wishes. Vidugavia was the most prominent Northman ruler loyal to Gondor at that time and presumably enhanced his power and territory greatly afterwards due to the favour given by Gondor as a reward for his assistance.

This alliance with the Northmen of Rhovanion laid the seed for the civil war of the Kin-strife that followed almost 200 years later. Fearing a progressing “de-Númenórization” of the royal house, rebels under Castamir overthrew the half-Northron Eldacar who fled to his relatives in Rhovanion. His support from these lands proved crucial when he waged his successful campaign to regain his kingdom ten years later. The situation remained stable in Rhovanion for about the next 400 years, even though the Great Plague in 1636 severely depleted the populations both of Gondor and especially the Northmen of Rhovanion (and no doubt the various Easterlings).

In the 19th century both Gondor and the Northmen were repeatedly attacked by a people pushing into Rhovanion from the East. These were called the “Wainriders” due to the distinctive, chariot-based fighting style of their lords. Even though these attacks were ultimately repulsed before reaching the Gondorian heartland, the South-kingdom's strength

¹ See Chris Seeman's article *Rhovanion as the Northern Frontier of Gondor* in *Other Hands, Issue 1* for the problems with defining this territory ruled directly by Gondor.

in Rhovanion was shattered and the borders had to be withdrawn in the mid-19th century to the Anduin and the northern frontier of Ithilien. Even more importantly, the power of the Northman confederations from the plains of Rhovanion was broken forever. Those who wished not to be vassals or slaves of Easterling masters fled from their ancient homes, retreating to the Anduin valley. Others probably escaped north over the Celduin or east into “Dorwinion” (we only know the late-Third Age name of this land), while the great majority stayed in their ancient homes and hoped for the best. These latter were enslaved by the Wainriders.¹

For about six centuries after these events, the situation in Rhovanion remained more or less stable from the Gondorian point of view, with no major wars or invasions (and thus unfortunately no information by Tolkien). This may have been due to the lack of a strong interest – or lack of power – on the part of Gondor. At least no serious threat evolved in this time, suggesting that the defeated Wainriders were no longer interested in attacking and destroying Gondor.

All this changed in the early 26th century, when news reached the Steward Cirion that a new people from the East, called the Balchoth, had established themselves in Rhovanion and were intent on invading Gondor. The events set in motion during this time would shape the history of the region for centuries to come, and form the basis for our extrapolations on the shape of Rhovanion in the late Third Age.

The primary period of interest here are the last five centuries of the Third Age, from ca. TA 2500 until the War of the Ring, with particular focus on the very end of the Age, i.e. the time between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*: TA 2941-3019. These are covered in six of the ten timeframes. The remaining ones focus on the early to late-Third Age.

This essay is divided into two major parts. First comes the analytic part where the available sources are discussed. The second part contains the conclusions and original material based on that analysis. This ‘subcreative’ section necessarily goes far beyond the letters of what Tolkien himself wrote.

The area of Rhovanion is so diverse and the question of demographics, cultures and political entities existing there so complex, that this article limits itself to describing the underlying principles and

major trends, rather than details of all the people mentioned. This is then reserved for future contributions dealing with Rhovanion.

In addition the scarce evidence leaves even greater *lacunae* to be filled than is normal for Middle-earth, but the existing evidence already provides quite a reliable framework, from which more interpretations can be derived from.

This article also complements and takes up the ideas of another contribution in this Issue: *The Horsefolk of Northern Rhovanion*.

TIMEFRAMES COVERED

The following periods are treated here to show pivotal times in Rhovanion’s history throughout the Third Age:

- **TA 600** – the time when Gondor repelled the first Easterling attacks and established his province in Rhovanion plus a system of Northmen client-kingdoms to the east and north of it.
- **TA 1400** – the heyday of the Vidugavian Northmen as well as the Gondor-influenced order of Rhovanion. First apogee of the rhovanic demographics.
- **TA 1640** – the aftermath of the Great Plague and the absolute nadir of rhovanic demographics in the Third Age. Also MERP’s primary temporal focus.
- **TA 1940** – the height of the Wainrider’s power and influence in Rhovanion and the time of the Éothéod’s realm in the mid-Anduin vales.
- **TA 2500** – the time of the Éothéod’s stay in the upper Anduin Vales shortly before their departure following the Battle upon the Field of Celebrant.
- **TA 2600** – the apogee of Balchoth power in Rhovanion and the beginning of Erebor’s and Dale’s days of glory.
- **TA 2750** – the apogee of Dale’s and Erebor’s bliss and power shortly before Smaug’s arrival.
- **TA 2920** – nadir of northern rhovanic Northmen, rule of Smaug.
- **TA 2946** – Dale and Erebor re-founded, Northmen power revitalized. Primary setting of TOR and LotRRPG (and up to the *Lord of the Rings*-era for the latter).
- **TA 3015** – second apogee of Dale and Erebor in the Third Age, Sauron’s vassals in Rhovanion are strongest, situation at the War of the Ring.

¹ Looking at the territory available in the Anduin vales, it is very likely that only a small minority fled to this region, while the majority stayed and were likely to mingle with the new masters over time.

The sources

When dealing with extrapolations for Middle-earth, we always have to look at the available sources first. In the case of Rhovanion, they are unfortunately even more scattered and scarce than for other parts of Middle-earth described by Tolkien, e.g. Eriador as seen in Issue 13 of *Other Minds*.

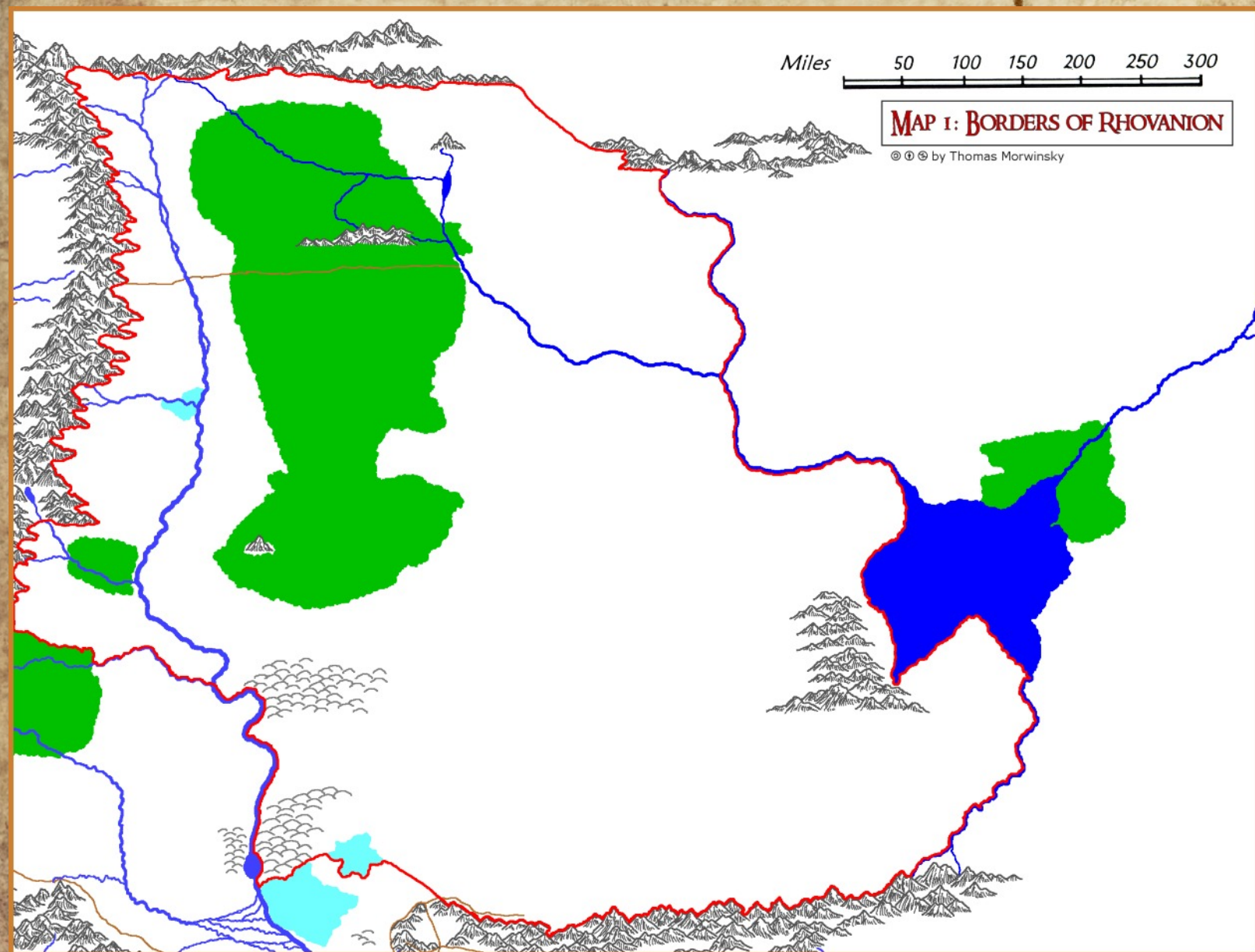
The existing evidence begins with the First Age, during the migrations of the Edain and with vast spaces in-between until we approach the end of the Third Age. The major ethnic groups of Rhovanion are mentioned together with the available evidence referencing to them.

Which area?

The borders of Rhovanion are defined relatively clearly. In the north, west and south the Ered Mithrin (Grey Mountains) and Eryn Engrin, the Hithaeglin (Misty Mountains), Gondor's Ithilien border and the Ered Lithui (Ash Mountains) constitute clearly defined natural borders. The eastern borders seem less well established, but here Tolkien gives some information in passing while talking about the Balchoth:

In the wide lands of Rhovanion, between Mirkwood and the River Running, a fierce people now dwelt, wholly under the shadow of Dol Guldur.

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A



Thus the eastern borders can be quite well defined as the Celduin (River Running; likely together with the Carnen) and the Sea of Rhûn. The only uncertain area is the gap of land between the Sea of Rhûn and the Ered Lithui. Here an original decision must be made, but the approximation should be acceptable.

The map on the previous page shows the borders of Rhovanion as assumed here outlined in red. As mentioned in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador*, the measurements should be seen as – good – approximations. The total area of Rhovanion sums up to ca. 403,000 square miles (about 1,043,200 km²). In comparison, this is almost exactly the same territory as those of Spain and France combined (or Texas plus Montana). It is also almost one-and-a-half times the size of the Eriadoran realms at their greatest extent (cf. Arnor in TA 250 in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador*).

Which People?

The following people inhabit Rhovanion in the Third Age (not all are existing at the same time):

- **Northmen:** These people are quite diverse, ranging from the Ehwathrumi (the supposed original name of the Plains-Northmen and ancestors of the Rohirrim) to the Woodmen, Beornings and Dale-men. Here we also have to include all the other – unnamed – Northmen populating the various regions of Rhovanion.
- **Easterlings:** The Wainriders and the Balchoth play a prominent role among these people and are the only ones specifically named by Tolkien (even if not by their original names, but rather generic and even derogatory terms of the Númenóreans). The hypothetical chronicler of *The Lord of the Rings* (Frodo Baggins) named only these, since these were the only ones important for Gondor (the chronicler's supposed sources). This is quite similar to the European medieval stance toward foreign people (e.g. steppe nomads), which are often grouped into generic terms without care whether this is correct or not and not giving any thought how these people call themselves (or would like to be called). As for the Northmen, there are probably many different ethnic groups among these people.
- **Dwarves:** The Lonely Mountain (Erebor) is of course the most important settlement of the Naugrim here. Other places are located in the Iron Hills (Emyn Engrin) and the Grey Moun-

tains (Ered Mithrin). Technically the latter lie outside of Rhovanion but they play an important role in Wilderland nonetheless.

- **Elves:** Almost exclusively represented by Thranduil's people in Northern Mirkwood and the Elves of Lórien. Another realm may be present in the forest on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Rhûn.
- **Hobbits:** Living along the Anduin until about TA 1000, they then leave this region due to the evil influence of Dol Guldur. About 350 years later, some Stoors return and live along the Gladden for at least about 1,000 more years. The final fate of these Hobbits is not known for sure – only that by the War of the Ring, their settlements had long been abandoned (though clearly recognizable remnants remained by the time of the War of the Ring).

NORTHMEN

There are some general passages about the rhovanian Northmen found in the *corpus* of Tolkien's work. These cover the origins of the people back in the First and early Second Age.

As so often, the *History of Middle-earth* is again a great help, this time in defining the ethnic origins of the rhovanian Northmen of the Third Age (and earlier Ages as well of course).

In the three texts given here will be found many things that are wholly 'new', such as the long sojourn of the People of Bëor and the People of Hador on opposite sides of the great Inland Sea of Rhûn in the course of their long migration into the West, ...

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12.
Late Writings*

In the following sections, these relatives of the beleriandic Edain are labeled as “Bëorians” for the rhovanian kin of the First House (with Bëor as their first and renowned chieftain first encountered by Finrod Felagund himself) and “Marachians” for people related to the Third House of the Edain (whose first chieftain known in the West was Marach).

These Atani [the beleriandic Edain of the First and Third Houses] were the vanguard of far larger hosts of the same kinds moving westwards. When the First Age ended and Beleriand was destroyed, and most of the Atani who survived had passed over sea to Númenor, their laggard kindred were either in Eriador, some settled, some still wandering, or else had never passed the Misty Mountains and were scattered in the lands between the Iron Hills and the Sea of Rhûn eastward and the Great Forest, in the borders of which, northward and eastward, many were already settled.

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12. Of Dwarves and Men*

In Tolkien's design, the Northmen in Rhovanion, much diversified by the Third Age, were descended from these people (continued next page):

This gives already some key information, namely the main settlement area of these edainic people, which encompasses northern and central Rhovanion as well as the northern and eastern fringes of Greenwood (Mirkwood). The following passage illustrates the settlement patterns (albeit still in the First Age) even more precise.

13. The Atani had never seen the Great Sea before they came at last to Beleriand; but according to their own legends and histories the Folk of Hador had long dwelt during their westward migration by the shores of a sea too wide to see across [the Sea of Rhûn]; it had no tides, but was visited by great storms. It was not until they had developed a craft of boat-building that the people afterwards known as the Folk of Hador discovered that a part of their host from whom they had become separated had reached the same sea before them, and dwelt at the feet of the high hills to the south-west, whereas they [the Folk of Hador] lived in the north-east, in the woods that there came near to the shores.

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12. The problem of ros (Note 13 to the text)*

In this context, some geographic peculiarities of these dwelling places along the Sea of Rhûn can be discovered as well.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

First Edain settlers

Also in Númenor their first king was usually given the name Elroth. The word wing(a) was not known in Adûnaic. It was maybe an invention of the Lesser Folk ["Bëorians"], (15) for in their steep shores there had been waterfalls, whereas in the wooded land of the Greater Folk ["Marachians"] that went down in gentle slopes there had been none.

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12.
The problem of ros*

That edainic Northmen settled especially in the northern half of Rhovanion from the Second Age on is further testified here:

At that time [the end of the First Age] the migrations of Men from the East and South had brought advance-guards into Beleriand; but they were not in great numbers, though further east in Eriador and Rhovanion (especially in the northern parts) their kindred must already have occupied much of the land.

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12.
Of Dwarves and Men*

We also hear about other Northmen cultures and are given proof that the Éothéod were close kin of the Beornings and Woodmen, making clear the latter's origin as "Marachians":

The Éothéod had moved to those regions [the Anduin Vales] in the days of King Eärnil II from lands in the vales of Anduin between the Carrock and the Gladden, and they were in origin close akin to the Beornings and the men of the west-eaves of the forest.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

Another good reference for the ethnic background of the Northmen is found here:

These Northmen were descendants of the same race of Men as those who in the First Age passed into the West of Middle-earth and became the allies of the Eldar in their wars with Morgoth.⁴

⁴ The Northmen appear to have been most nearly akin to the third and greatest of the peoples of the Elf-friends, ruled by the House of Hador. [Author's note.]

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl
and the friendship of
Gondor and Rohan*

Thus it is justified to develop the vast majority of the Northmen as "Marachians" and only a relative small part as "Bëorians".

Chronologically, the Northmen again appear in Tolkien's writing in the Second Age, when he tells us of the Longbeards' (Durin's Folk) relations with their human neighbours. In addition the first part also reports that the Dwarves had no scruples in bamboozling these men, as long as the latter could not assess the value of their services correctly. This gives us a small glimpse of the "real" world behind the more heroic and upright stories we hear from in most of *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*.

It also gives us insight into dwarven habits, who never husbanded animals and thus were dependent on men for the provision of foodstuffs. It also tells us something about the Old Forest road — especially that it did not end at the Celduin but ran further unto the Eryn Engrin:

*Thus there [in Eriador and Rhovanion] grew up in those regions the economy, later characteristic of the dealings of Dwarves and Men (including Hobbits): **Men became the chief providers of food**, as herdsmen, shepherds, and landtillers, which the Dwarves exchanged for work as builders, roadmakers, miners, and the makers of things of craft, [...] **To the great profit of the Dwarves.** Not only to be reckoned in hours of labour, **though in early times the Dwarves must have obtained goods that were the product of greater and longer toil than the things or services that they gave in exchange - before Men became wiser and developed skills of their own.***

[...]

The Men with whom they were thus associated were for the most part akin in race and language with the tall and mostly fair-haired people of the 'House of Hador', [...] These Men, it seems, had come westward until faced by the Great Greenwood, and then had divided: some reaching the Anduin and passing thence northward up the Vales; some passing between the north-eaves of the Wood and the Ered Mithrin.

[...]

These things [things of craft] the Dwarves amended in return for one great service that Men could offer. They were tamers of beasts and had learned the mastery of horses, and many were skilled and fearless riders.²⁹

[continued next page]

[...]

It was at that time, when the Dwarves were associated with Men both in war and in the ordering of the lands that they had secured,³⁰ that the Longbeards adopted the speech of Men for communication with them.

²⁹ No Dwarf would ever mount a horse willingly, nor did any ever harbour animals, not even dogs.

³⁰ For a time. The Númenóreans had not yet appeared on the shores of Middle-earth, and the foundations of the Barad-dûr had not yet been built [=SA 1 to ca. 600]. It was a brief period in the dark annals of the Second Age, yet for many lives of Men the Longbeards controlled the Ered Mithrin, Erebor, and the Iron Hills, and all the east side of the Misty Mountains as far as the confines of Lórien; while the Men of the North dwelt in all the adjacent lands as far south as the Great Dwarf Road that cut through the Forest (the Old Forest Road was its ruinous remains in the Third Age) and then went North-east to the Iron Hills.

—*The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12. Of Dwarves and Men*

not assess the value of their services correctly. This gives us a small glimpse of the “real” world behind the more heroic and upright stories we hear from in most of *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*.

It also gives us insight into dwarven habits, who never husbanded animals and thus were dependent on men for the provision of foodstuffs. It also tells us something about the Old Forest road – especially that it did not end at the Celduin but ran further unto the Emyn Engrin:

Chwathrumi/Éothéod

For almost 1900 years after the end of the Second Age these tamers of horses lived first on the northern Plains of Rhovanion and later (from about the 6/7th century on) expanded into the southern plains as well. Later some of them fled before the Wainrider invasion and settled in the Vales of Anduin. Even later they left this area in the 2510s to settle Calenardhon, and therefore played only a minor role in Rhovanion’s politics and fortunes afterwards. Éothéod is an original Tolkien term, while *Ehwathrumi* is a name in gothic rendering first coined as a linguistically improved term for the appellation *Éothraim* that describes the Northmen



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

riders of the plains in the MERP canon. *Ehwathrumi* translates into “horse-host”.

Due to Tolkien’s linguistic information, it is likely that these people can be counted among the “Marachian” Northmen – which is the most numerous group as described above.

The next mentioning of the Northmen after the aforementioned facts of the First Age is during the first centuries of the Third Age, when Gondor repelled the Easterling invasions in the 6th century of the Third Age. This is further detailed as well:

It was Ostohor [d. TA 492] the seventh king who rebuilt Minas Anor, where afterwards the kings dwelt in summer rather than in Osgiliath. In his time Gondor was first attacked by wild men out of the East. But Tarostar, his son, defeated them and drove them out, and took the name of Rómendacil ‘East-victor’. He was, however, later slain in battle with fresh hordes of Easterlings [in TA 541]. Turambar [d. TA 667] his son avenged him, and won much territory eastwards.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

490 First invasion of Easterlings.

500 Rómendacil I defeats the Easterlings.

541 Rómendacil slain in battle.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix B*

The narrative also tells how the Northmen came into possession of their lands in southern Rhovanion:

These [the Northmen] had increased greatly in the peace brought by the power of Gondor [after the victories of the 6th century]. The kings showed them favour, since they were the nearest in kin of lesser Men to the Dúnedain (being for the most part descendants of those peoples from whom the Edain of old had come); and they gave them wide lands beyond Anduin south of Greenwood the Great, to be a defence against 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.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

Since the first attacks occurred around TA 500-550, it is most likely that said land grant originated in this time. In the following centuries, lordships of these Northmen developed, though not always to Gondor's liking:

In the days of Narmacil I their [the Easterlings'] attacks began again, though at first with little force; but it was learned by the regent that the Northmen did not always remain true to Gondor, and some would join forces with the Easterlings, either out of greed for spoil, or in the furtherance of feuds among their princes.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

Here we see a very “normal” and mannish attitude even among the Free Peoples, i.e. greed and “shifting alliances” – even with normally hostile people to gain political advantages. After these upheavals the “Vidugavian” Ehwathumi that probably remained loyal to Gondor (at least mostly) probably profited from the victory and expanded their influence and power. Thus the period from the mid-13th to 19th century can be viewed as the era of “Vidugavian” dominance in central and southern Rhovanion with its apogee in the 16th and early 17th century of the Third Age. Rhovanion experienced its first great disaster during the mid-17th century in the form of the Great Plague:

This information about the losses inflicted by the Plague is particularly highlighting. First we get a

The waning of the Northmen of Rhovanion began with the Great Plague, which appeared there in the winter of the year 1635 and soon spread to Gondor. In Gondor the mortality was great especially among those who dwelt in cities. It was greater in Rhovanion, for though its people lived mostly in the open and had no great cities, the Plague came with a cold winter when horses and men were driven into shelter and their low wooden houses and stables were thronged; moreover they were little skilled in the arts of healing and medicine, of which much was still known in Gondor, preserved from the wisdom of Númenor. When the Plague passed it is said that more than half of the folk of Rhovanion had perished, and of their horses also.

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan*

quite precise number (which is seldom found in Tolkien's works) and second a glimpse of “real” events beyond heroic resistance against an overwhelming evil power (which makes better history records in any case) is seen here – the effect that deadly infectious diseases have on whole populations: the ability to kill far more people than any war can (at least when no weapons of mass destruction are available). It also creates a depressing mood of helplessness, since it is an enemy unseen and one you cannot fight with the sword or your courage – you can only hope for the best and that you will be spared by it.

The Northmen's history continues and the next important event after the plague has passed takes place in the 19th century of the Third Age when the Northmen are once again the focus of major events, this time the Wainrider Wars (continued on next page).

They [the Horse-folk “Ehwathrumi”] were slow to recover [from the Great Plague]; but their weakness was not tested for a long time. No doubt the people further east had been equally afflicted, so that the enemies of Gondor came chiefly from the south or over sea. But when the invasions of the Wainriders began [in TA 1851] and involved Gondor in wars that lasted for almost a hundred years, the Northmen bore the brunt of the first assaults. King Narmacil II took a great army north into the plains south of Mirkwood, and gathered all that he could of the scattered remnants of the Northmen; but he was defeated [in TA 1856], and himself fell in battle.

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan*

Again this passage hints at the “real” events behind elated histories. In this case we see Gondor’s strategy of using client-kingdoms as a buffer against enemy invasions (something done with great skill by the Romans as well). Here it is criticized that later on Gondor failed to further acknowledge this important role of the Northmen – perhaps even denying them critical support early on (e.g. help to re-build their societies after the Plague and a political focus on the area, supporting stable and secure realms there) which might have changed the following events. This failure to correctly assess the value of its north-eastern buffer zone (and strengthen it before the assault reached its own borders) leads almost to destruction for Gondor itself:

Stirred up, as was afterwards seen, by the emissaries of Sauron, they [the Wainriders] made a sudden assault upon Gondor, and King Narmacil II was slain in battle with them beyond Anduin in 1856. The people of eastern and southern Rhovanion were enslaved; and the frontiers of Gondor were for that time withdrawn to the Anduin and the Eryn Mui.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

The Ehwathrumi’s lordships are shattered forever by this event. A small part of them flee westward and settle in the Vales of Anduin, and others escape northward but the vast majority stayed and became thralls to the Easterlings as reported in the last and especially the following quote.

As for the Northmen, a few, it is said, fled over the Celduin (River Running) and were merged with the folk of Dale under Erebor (with whom they were akin), some took refuge in Gondor, and others were gathered by Marhwini son of Marhari (who fell in the rearguard action after the Battle of the Plains). Passing north between Mirkwood and Anduin they settled in the Vales of Anduin, where they were joined by many fugitives who came through the Forest. This was the beginning of the Éothéod, though nothing was known of it in Gondor for many years. **Most of the Northmen were reduced to servitude**, and all their former lands were occupied by the Wainriders.

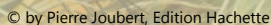
—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan (my emphasis)*

At first, these people (the Éothéod) were not content with having escaped thralldom, but planned to win back their former homes:

Messengers came to him [king Calimehtar] from Marhwini [lord of the Éothéod] warning him that the Wainriders were plotting to raid Calenardhon over the Undeeps; but they said also that a revolt of the Northmen who had been enslaved was being prepared and would burst into flame if the Wainriders became involved in war. Calimehtar therefore, as soon as he could, led an army out of Ithilien, taking care that its approach should be well known to the enemy. The Wainriders came down with all the strength that they could spare, and Calimehtar gave way before them, drawing them away from their homes. At length battle was joined upon the Dagorlad, and the result was long in doubt. But at its height horsemen that Calimehtar had sent over the Undeeps (left unguarded by the enemy) joined with a great Éored led by Marhwini assailed the Wainriders in flank and rear. [...]

The revolt planned and assisted by Marhwini had indeed broken out; desperate outlaws coming out of the Forest had roused the slaves, and together had succeeded in burning many of the dwellings of the Wainriders, [...] But most of them had perished in the attempt; [...] Thus in the end Marhwini was obliged to retire again to his land beside the Anduin, and the Northmen of his race never again returned to their former homes.

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan*



Attack on a Wainrider settlement

Wainriders (I'd say that not more than 10% of the original Ehwaethrumi moved here). The passage continues to tell us something of their past homes:

They were a remnant of the Northmen, who had formerly been a numerous and powerful confederation of peoples living in the wide plains between Mirkwood and the River Running, great breeders of horses and riders renowned for their skill and endurance, though their settled homes were in the eaves of the Forest, and especially in the East Bight, which had largely been made by their felling of trees.

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl
and the friendship of
Gondor and Rohan*

Thus we know that the Ehwathrumi formerly occupied the whole area between Mirkwood and the Celduin (River Running). This is at variance with former RPG designs for this region, which place a distinct non-edainic realm of *Folyavuld* (Dorwinion) along the Celduin in this time (pre-TA 1851), especially on its western bank and down to the western foothills of the Hills of the Inland Sea (at its south-western shores). This has of course to be fixed, since Tolkien clearly tells us something else.

140

While the Éothéod still dwelt in their former home [the Middle Vales of the Anduin] they were well-known to Gondor as a people of good trust, from whom they received news of all that passed in that region. [...] It was thus of great concern to Gondor when the Éothéod removed into the far North, in the days of Eärnil II [d. TA 2043], [...]

—UT. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan

The cause for this removal is important and told in detail in *The Lord of the Rings*:

They [the Éothéod] loved best the plains, and delighted in horses and in all feats of horsemanship, but there were many men in the middle vales of Anduin in those days, and moreover the shadow of Dol Guldur was lengthening; when therefore they heard of the overthrow of the Witch-king, they sought more room in the North, and drove away the remnants of the people of Angmar on the east side of the Mountains. But in the days of Léod, father of Eorl, they had grown to be a numerous people and were again somewhat straitened in the land of their home.

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A

Their somewhat precarious position in the middle vales is a thing to remember, since it allows us to draw conclusions about the other people of the region. They sought the new land in the north since it provided more room than they had now available. Since we know the size of this new land, it allows us to draw conclusions about their – necessarily smaller – territory in the mid-Vales (otherwise it would have been pointless to exchange a land too small for another of the same size). Their new land, which had become too small again in Léod's time is described in detail in *Unfinished Tales*:

The new land of the Éothéod lay north of Mirkwood, between the Misty Mountains westward and the Forest River eastward. Southward it extended to the confluence of the two short rivers that they named Greylin and Langwell. Greylin flowed down from Ered Mithrin, the Grey Mountains, but Langwell came from the Misty Mountains, [...] ²⁰

²⁰ These rivers, unnamed, are marked on the map to *The Lord of the Rings*. The Greylin is there shown as having two tributary brandies.

—UT. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan

Again we are given precise information, this time clearly defined boundaries of the Éothéod's lands in their new homes in the Upper Anduin Vales.

Woodmen

The origin of the Woodmen is not known for sure. Tolkien only gives us a few glimpses of them in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. There is a tantalizing hint that might be interpreted towards the existence of “Woodmen” in the Greenwood/Mirkwood area from early on:

This quote of course tells only that the Woodmen were of the same descent as for example

Most of the Men of the northern regions of the Westlands were descended from the Edain of the First Age, or from their close kin. Their languages were, therefore, related to the Adûnaic, and some still preserved a likeness to the Common Speech. Of this kind were the peoples of the upper vales of Anduin: the Beornings, and the Woodmen of Western Mirkwood; and further north and east the Men of the Long Lake and of Dale

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix F

the later Rohirrim. This does not conclusively prove that they were long present here. It also says that they were inhabitants of the **upper** vales of the Anduin (from a perspective contemporary to *The Lord of the Rings*). The linguistic grouping makes it likely that these people are “Marachians”, even though they have evolved rather differently than the most prominent of these (the Ehwathumi/Éothéod/Rohirrim).

The earliest time we know of Northmen taking homes in the forest stems from the period immediately after the War of the Elves with Sauron in the mid-Second Age (continued on next page):

Unfortunately it is not reported whether this impoverished life in the forest was a temporary emergency measure or became a typical habit.

In the Third Age, we see the Woodmen at first in the context of the Disaster at the Gladden Fields:

There were rescuers who came on the scene too late [after Isildur's force was destroyed on the Gladden Fields], but in time to disturb the Orcs and prevent their mutilation of the bodies: for there were certain Woodmen who got news to Thranduil by runners, and also themselves gathered a force to ambush the Orcs.

—*Unfinished Tales.*
The Disaster of the Gladden Fields

Unfortunately there is no information about the further whereabouts of these “Woodmen” (e.g. where they lived), but it is a hint nonetheless.

The next time we hear of genuine “Woodmen” is in *The Hobbit*, when Thorin & Co. are trapped in the trees with the Wargs below:

In spite of the dangers of this far land bold men had of late been making their way back into it from the South, cutting down trees, and building themselves places to live in among the more pleasant woods in the valleys and along the river-shores. There were many of them, and they were brave and well-armed, ... But now they had planned with the goblins' help to come by night upon some of the villages nearest the mountains

[...]

This was dreadful talk to listen to, not only because of the brave woodmen and their wives and children, ...

—*The Hobbit. Out of the frying-pan into the fire*

This is the first time we get some specific information. Of greatest interest is, of course, that these “Woodmen” did not live in Mirkwood alone (as has been suggested in MERP and might be thought by looking at Tolkien's “Wilderland” map and the Woodmen labels found there). Therefore we probably should think of these people as a folk inhabiting forested areas in the Anduin Vales in general and occupying only the peripheral areas of western Mirkwood. The inner reaches of the forest were probably far too dangerous to travel now (let alone live there) for any people not aligned with Sauron.

The final quote telling us something about these people in the late Third Age is found in *The Hobbit* as well. It deals with their beliefs and that they were likely to believe in evil creatures stealing their children or drinking blood. This is testified by Gandalf when he reports about Gollum to Frodo:

The Woodmen said that there was some new terror abroad, a ghost that drank blood. It climbed trees to find nests; it crept into holes to find the young; it slipped through windows to find cradles.

—*Lord of the Rings . The Shadow of the Past* (Gandalf speaking about Gollum)

The sources concerning the Woodmen are ambiguous and it is not possible to find a precise definition and outline of these people from Tolkien himself. Therefore we are left to a good deal of our own judgment. In my opinion, the following conclusions are reasonable:

- There were always some Northmen living in the woods of Greenwood/Mirkwood from the Second Age onward.
- After the Wainrider Wars, refugees joined these older communities, enlarging their population



- Since ca. 2500, with the massively increasing inhospitableness of Mirkwood after the return of the Necromancer, the Woodmen retreat to its western edges and settle in the forested areas of the Anduin vales on both sides of the river.

Beornings

These people are quite elusive. They first appear in the person of Beorn himself in *The Hobbit*, though at this time it is not mentioned that he is part of a group of people calling themselves by this name. Indeed, at the time of *The Hobbit*, the region around the Carrock is said by Gandalf to have been sparsely populated:

Very few people live in these parts, unless they have come here since I was last down this way, which is some years ago.

—*The Hobbit. Queer Lodgings*

Gandalf also gives some tantalizing information concerning Beorn's ancestry:

Some say that he is a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains that lived there before the giants came. Others say that he is a man descended from the first men who lived before Smaug or the other dragons came into this part of the world, and before the goblins came into the hills out of the North. I cannot say, though I fancy the last is the true tale.

—*The Hobbit. Queer Lodgings*

This latter already provides an idea of Beorn, namely that he is descended from men living in this area of Middle-earth for many long years, and this can only mean he is — not surprisingly — from Northman stock as well. Further Gandalf also provides a speculative statement about a more precise location of Beorn's (and his ancestors') home:

I once saw him sitting all alone on the top of the Carrock at night watching the moon sinking towards the Misty Mountains, and I heard him growl in the tongue of bears; 'The day will come when they [the Orcs] will perish and I shall go back!' That is why I believe he once came from the mountains himself.

—*The Hobbit. Queer Lodgings*



Beorn © by Turner Mohan, used with permission

This latter would make Beorn's people a group of mountain-dwelling Northmen driven out of the Misty Mountains (Hithaeglir) due the growing pressure by the Orcs. According to the *Lord of the Rings* (Appendix B), this infestation with the Goblins is said to have begun by about TA 2480 (which is also the timeframe dealt with in this essay). Thus we might conclude that Beorn's ancestors lived in the Misty Mountains (or their foothills) by this time and were evicted from their homes by the growing numbers and attacks of Orcs. Unfortunately we do not know exactly when this happened and what the extent of this supposed eviction was.

At least Beorn's descendants (or his people as whole; that's not entirely clear from the sources) are strongly affiliated with the mountains as seen in *The Lord of the Rings*:

Frodo learned that Grimbeorn the Old, son of Beorn, was now the lord of many sturdy men, and to their land between the Mountains and Mirkwood neither orc nor wolf dared to go. 'Indeed,' said Glóin, 'if it were not for the Beornings, the passage from Dale to Rivendell would long ago have become impossible. They are valiant men and keep open the High Pass and the Ford of Carrock[...]'

—*Lord of the Rings. Many Meetings*

Of course we have a dual focus of Beorning territory in the mountains (“...keep open the High Pass...”) and the river vale (“...their land between the Mountains and Mirkwood...”). This might reflect both their new homes in the vales, but also their continued claim to the mountains in the area.

The question of the size of the “Beorning” population remains – as well the question of how far back this ethnic group stretches. Again, we have no clue from Tolkien and have to use our own imagination. In MERP, an ancestral group of the Beornings (named *Beijabar* there) exists in T.A. 1640 as well. Looking at the overall layout, the existence of this group might be more due to the wish not to exclude “Beorning” character types from this timeframe than to any evidence or stringent argumentation that they did exist (or more clearly – wishful thinking).

Since Beorn might have come from the mountains himself, it is possible that even in his time (or shortly before) Northmen of his descent lived in or near the mountains, but being constantly threatened by the Goblins.

That they were related to the Éothéod and other Northmen can be found in Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*:

‘The Éothéod had moved to those regions in the days of King Eärnil II from lands in the vales of Anduin between the Carrock and the Gladden, and they were in origin close akin to the Beornings and the men of the west-eaves of the forest.’

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

In my interpretation the Beornings are an amalgam of different Northmen groups living in the Anduin Vales, and flocking to Beorn’s banner due to his glory as a hero from the Battle of Five Armies and his charisma as a leader. Thus, the ‘Beorning’ people come into existence only after this battle and make the *Beornings* a strictly late-Third Age (and later) group.

The quotes from *The Hobbit* mentioned above both speak of Beorn (and perhaps his people) and the Woodmen as living in almost the same region (or at least close by) near the river and the mountains. Thus it might be interesting to speculate how closely these two groups were related. Given the evidence above, it is not unlikely that a number of Woodmen clans joined the fledgling Beorning confederacy. This “hodgepodge” descent of the Beornings may be problematic in some respects, but linguistically, all these people are “Marachians”, and so communica-

tion among them is probably not difficult. Some distinct local dialects are quite likely though, representing the diverse origin of these people.

OTHER NORTHMEN OF THE ANDUIN VALES

Beside the people mentioned by Tolkien, it is likely that other men inhabited the Anduin Vales area as well. Over the course of the Third Age these groups had varying fortunes, resembling the troubled history of the region. Linguistically, it is assumed that all of these “Vale-people” are “Marachians” though. This is due to the documented people of the region belonging to them too, and so the interpretation probably is not far from the mark.

Due to a lack in the sources, we have to make up these other people. One indirect hint can be found in *The Lord of the Rings* already mentioned above:

They [the Éothéod] loved best the plains, and delighted in horses and in all feats of horsemanship, but there were many men in the middle vales of Anduin in those days, [...]

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

The note that there were a lot of people in the region between the Carrock and the Gladden hints at favourable conditions for settlements of men.

ESTARAVI and MADUGARDI

These original – and related – people are supposed to be inhabitants of a great part of the Upper Vales for long periods during the Third Age. The Estaravi are first described (though in a slightly different manner) in ICE’s *Mount Gundabad* realm module from 1989. The Estaravi are the northern part of these people that came under the influence of the Witch-king and constituted the eastern backbone of the realm until their remnants were defeated by the migrating Éothéod and vanished from history.

The Madugardi with their main settlement of the trade hub of *Mathlaburg* (ICE’s *Maethelburg*) survive longer until their remnants are assimilated into the Beornings in the late Third Age.

HERIMANDI

These original Northmen people occupy the lower vales for almost all of their existence. They are destroyed as a people in the late Third Age, their survivors being assimilated by several other people.

Dalemen

These important Northmen are a tough nut to crack. Unfortunately Tolkien does not give us a date for the foundation of the settlement of Dale. Since the dwarven colony at Erebor was originally founded in TA 1999, it seems not unreasonable to assume that a mannish settlement (not necessarily named 'Dale') was founded shortly after. The quote below is a bit ambiguous about it (since it speaks of Dale as probably extant in the mid-19th century of the Third Age), and it could be that there was a small settlement of that name already existing, but which only gained its size and significance with the dwarven arrival at Erebor. It may only be the historians' hindsight that speaks here (i.e. pre-dating his contemporary *Dalemen*, but actually meaning their ancestors of another name).

As for the Northmen, a few, it is said, fled over the Celduin (River Running) [after the defeat at the hands of the Wainriders in TA 1856] and were merged with the folk of Dale under Erebor (with whom they were akin), some took refuge in Gondor, and others were gathered by Marhwini son of Marhari (who fell in the rearguard action after the Battle of the Plains).

—*Unfinished Tales. The Northmen and the Wainriders*

Fortunately, *The Hobbit* is of help in this matter:

"Anyway they [the Dwarves of Erebor in Thrór's time] grew immensely rich and famous, and my grandfather was King under the Mountain again and treated with great reverence by the mortal men, who lived to the South, and were gradually spreading up the Running River as far as the valley overshadowed by the Mountain. They built the merry town of Dale there in those days."

—*The Hobbit. An Unexpected Party*

Thorin here refers to Dale being built in the time after Thrór's return from the Grey Mountains. This is very strong positive evidence that Dale (the settlement by this name) only existed from the end of the 26th century TA onward.

It is likely that there existed another Northman settlement in the area during the first occupation of the Dwarves (TA 1999-2210), since the Naugrim were always in need of the mannish services (primarily foodstuffs). It is likely though that this older set-

tlement had another name even if it served the same primary purpose (from the Longbeards' point of view). Since it seems that Erebor was greatly expanded after TA 2590 and the supposed diminished dwarven presence there between TA 2210 and 2590, the previous Northman settlement there might have ceased to exist (or being diminished to nothing more than a local village) due to a lack of need.

It was then only after the return of the Longbeards that it was re-founded.

As for their origin, it seems a good idea to make the Dalemen primarily "Bëorians". Bard's own appearance might be small hint here.

And in the very midst of their talk, a tall figure stepped from the shadows. He was drenched with water, his black hair hung wet over his face and shoulders, and a fierce light was in his eyes.

—*The Hobbit. Fire and Water*

The dark hair is typical of the beleriandic Edain of the House of Bëor, and this is taken as a hint that the Dalemen might have a strong "bëoric" ancestry. Thus they would be a different Northman culture, with all the others mentioned so far being "Marachians" with the archetypical light-coloured hair and a culture with an emphasis of horsemanship.

The Dalemen seem to settle in this northern region continuously, interrupted partly by Smaug's occupation of Erebor between TA 2770 and 2941. After the dragon's demise, they re-occupy Dale and begin to establish a growing realm, which finally by the time of the War of the Ring encompasses a great portion of northern Rhovanion:

The grandson of Bard the Bowman rules them, Brand son of Bain son of Bard. He is a strong king, and his realm now reaches far south and east of Esgaroth.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Many Meetings*

This rule is challenged by Sauron's northern armies during the War of the Ring, though finally the Dalemen and their dwarven allies emerge victorious and the invasion is repulsed (continued next page):

At the same time as the great armies besieged Minas Tirith a host of the allies of Sauron that had long threatened the borders of King Brand crossed the River Carnen, and Brand was driven back to Dale.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix B*



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Battle of Dale

It is natural to assume a growing realm of the Dalemen after Smaug's death. The extent of this second realm of Dale reached its Third Age-apogee some time before the War of the Ring. The quote above suggests that the Carnen was the eastern border river of Brand's realm at that time, since it is especially stressed that the enemy crossed it. In addition, since Brand was "driven back" to Dale, it is obvious he was trying to defend his border right there and end the invasion – which resulted in his defeat. With the Carnen as the eastern border, it is not unlikely that the Celduin was the southern border of the Dalemen's realm, being another natural and easily defensible barrier. Looking at the map, we see that the area in between is vast, offering lots of territory for settlers and even extensive herding.

Temporally, the Dalemen originally settled in all the territory north of the Celduin and east of the Carnen.

Ṣarhathiuda

These are another original people based on the information provided by Tolkien. In short, they are an amalgam of (pre-)Dalemen and exiled Ehwath-rumi fleeing north after the defeat by the Balchoth in TA 1856. A "second wave" came to the North after the arrival of the Balchoth almost 650 years later. See the article titled *The Horsefolk of Rhovanion* for more in-depth information on these people.

Since they cling to much of their old fashions and customs, their language still resembles many of these old terms and linguistic structures.

During much of their history, they have belonged to the realm of Dale, though culturally they remain somewhat different.

EASTERLINGS

Another extremely important people are the Easterlings with whom the other people of Rhovanion interact. The histories seem to suggest that most of the time they are stereotypical evil antagonist, trying to destroy the western realms. If we look at the timescale involved, the perspective changes somewhat though. Most of the time there is no open war (at least none reported by Tolkien), and here the Easterlings are likely to have achieved a *modus vivendi* with the other people living in Wilderland. It must not be forgotten though, that due to their origin in Sauron's sphere of influence, they are prone to his – or his servants' – influence and therefore often act as his tools, regardless whether they are aware of it or not. Still they are human beings, capable of rational thought, emotions and not evil automatons.

If we look now to Tolkien for some information about these people, the situation is quite bleak. The term *Easterling* is a very generic term (like European people called any eastern steppe nomad invaders *Huns* or *Mongols*, whether they were ethnic ones or not), and most often used in a derogatory manner. The only “real” names are descriptive ones (“people travelling in wains” and “terrible horde”) rather than genuine names. Especially the latter highlights the western chroniclers' (especially Númenóreans') disinterest in these people beyond their role as military threats.

It would not be the only instance of Númenórean mistakes though, as we know from the story of the Second Age *Gwathuirim*, when Númenórean hubris began a long tradition of hatred and war of these people versus the Dúnedain and their allies.

Despite the poor information provided by Tolkien, let's see what we actually *have* about the Easterlings.

Wainriders

The Wainriders were a group of men that threatened the existence of Gondor for a hundred years from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century of the Third Age. In addition to the blows dealt to the southern Dúnedain, these people also shattered the existence of the Northmen communities of southern and central Rhovanion (continued next column):

The third evil was the invasion of the Wainriders, which sapped the waning strength of Gondor in wars that lasted for almost a hundred years. The Wainriders were a people, or a confederacy of many peoples, that came from the East; but they were stronger and better armed than any that had appeared before. They journeyed in great wains, and their chieftains fought in chariots.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*



Easterling © by TurnerMohan, used with permission

Again we see Gondor's disinterest in the finer details concerning these people (“a people or confederacy of people”). After Gondor's defeat in TA 1856, the Wainriders took possession of the Plains which they would not relinquish even after their temporary reversal in TA 1899. Concerning the Northmen, many of these seem to have stayed at their homes and became subjects to the Wainriders:

Most of the Northmen were reduced to servitude, and all their former lands were occupied by the Wainriders. The revolt planned and assisted by Marhwini had indeed broken out; desperate outlaws coming out of the Forest had roused the slaves, and together had succeeded in burning many of the dwellings of the Wainriders, and their storehouses, and their fortified camps of wagons. But most of them had perished in the attempt; for they were ill-armed, and the enemy had not left their homes undefended: [...] Thus in the end Marhwini was obliged to retire again to his land beside the Anduin, and the Northmen of his race never again returned to their former homes.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Northmen and the Wainriders*

Here we see that the Wainriders did not only use Rhovanion as a staging ground for the campaign against Gondor, but that they came there to stay.

The operational area for an Easterling army that occupied almost all of southern and central Wilderland can be seen from the next quote:

It was Ostohor [d. TA 492] the seventh king who rebuilt Minas Anor, where afterwards the kings dwelt in summer rather than in Osgiliath. In his time Gondor was first attacked by wild men out of the East. But Tarostar, his son, defeated them and drove them out, and took the name of Rómendacil 'East-victor'. He was, however, later slain in battle with fresh hordes of Easterlings [in TA 541]. Turambar [d. TA 667] his son avenged him, and won much territory eastwards. Forthwini, son of Marhwini, indeed warned King Ondoher (who succeeded his father Calimehtar in the year 1936) that the Wainriders of Rhovanion were recovering from their weakness and fear, [...] for he was much troubled by raids into the south of his land that came both up the river and through the Narrows of the Forest.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Northmen and the Wainriders*

Raiding along the eastern bank of the Anduin between Mirkwood and the river was probably easy (especially since Sauron was interested in it and would prevent any interference from evil creatures).

Concerning the later fate of the Wainriders, we can only deduce a bit from a hint given by Tolkien:

Eärnil stormed the camp and set fire to the wains, and drove the enemy in a great rout out of Ithilien. A great part of those who fled before him perished in the Dead Marshes.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

It might be noteworthy that the enemy was only driven out of Ithilien and not further (e.g. out of Rhovanion), since Gondor's reach was limited and it lacked the strength to do anything against the Wainriders there even before this near-defeat (which left Gondor reeling). Together with later remarks that their descendants were later probably assimilated into the Balchoth (see below) it is almost sure that the Wainriders stayed in Rhovanion. Since they are not reported to have attempted any major invasion of Gondor again (for whatever reason), we can engage in some speculation:

- The Wainriders retreated somewhat into central Rhovanion, away from Gondor's border to avoid further conflicts. In any case, Gondor was unable to influence Rhovanian politics in any way (apart from scouts and – after things have cooled down enough – limited diplomacy).
- Over time we might assume that some careful trading contacts might have developed, once it became clear that the overt hostilities had cooled down and would probably not return – at least not on a major scale. This would allow both sides some advantages without having to engage in real friendship.

Balchoth

For the primary time of interest for the *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* and *The One Ring*, the Wainriders are a people long gone, though they were succeeded by others, and these – or their descendants – most likely stayed until the end of the Third Age. These latter people were the Balchoth (in western reckoning).



Easterling © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

Tolkien remarks that the Balchoth were probably akin to the Wainriders of earlier times:

They [the Balchoth] were only rudely armed, and had no great number of horses for riding, using horses mainly for draught, since they had many large wains, as had the Wainriders (to whom they were no doubt akin) that assail Gondor in the last days of the Kings.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Ride of Eorl*

This may be seen as an indication concerning common elements in both cultures that the Dúnedain recognized. It may also be that the descendants of the Wainriders still settled large parts of Rhovanion and submitted to Balchoth rule and later be assimilated by the new masters. The seemingly unstoppable approach of these new people is described by Tolkien as well:

They [the Balchoth] were slaying or driving north up the River Running and into the Forest the remnant of the Northmen, friends of Gondor that still dwelt east of Mirkwood.²³

²³ From an earlier passage in this text (p.303) one gains the impression that there were no Northmen left in the lands east of Mirkwood after the victory of Calimehtar over the Wainriders on the Dagorlad in the year 1899.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Ride of Eorl*

It is noteworthy that remnants of the Plains Northmen (the proto-Éothéod named as Ehwath-rumi here) were still settling east of Mirkwood in noteworthy numbers ca. six centuries after the Wainriders invaded Wilderland. The seeming contradiction that Christopher Tolkien notes in the quote above may be rationalized with the following interpretation: These Northmen were the least inclined in resistance against the Wainriders (these independent-minded ones had either fled the area or perished in the revolt and war of TA 1899) and thus arranged themselves with Wainrider society and accepted these Easterlings as their new masters. When the Balchoth later integrated the remnants of the Wainrider lordships, these Northmen came under their influence as well. Again, some fled the area (again the most free-spirited – and perhaps ethnically relative pure), while the rest remained and accepted the new masters' demands. Ethnically they were probably no longer pure Northmen, but of mixed descent with a more or less strong Northman strain.

The new threat

In the first decade of the 2500's, the above mentioned new people, called 'Balchoth' by Gondor, began to appear in Rhovanion as already described. They probably conquered and assimilated the descendants of the Wainriders, becoming a major threat to Gondor. We know something about their tactics from *The Lord of the Rings* (continued next column):

In the wide lands of Rhovanion, between Mirkwood and the River Running, a fierce people now dwelt, wholly under the shadow of Dol Guldur. Often they made raids through the forest, until the vale of Anduin south of the Gladden was largely deserted. These Balchoth were constantly increased by others of like kind that came in from the east, whereas the people of Calenardhon had dwindled. Cirion was hard put to it to hold the line of the Anduin.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

At first we are told that these people were wholly under the influence of Dol Guldur (i.e. Sauron) and that they were fierce. They seem to have acted systematically by first consolidating their rule in Wilderland and making exploratory raids into adjacent territories to gain intelligence and secure the north-western flank. Since it seemed worth mentioning that the area south of Gladden was largely deserted due to these raids, it can be surmised that it was different before, hinting indirectly at settlement patterns in the Anduin Vales area. The Balchoth also waited for (and received) constant reinforcements before waging their attempt to destroy Gondor. This sounds like a systematic approach rather than the image of a disorganized wave of invasion that sweeps aside the people of Rhovanion and Gondor by sheer numbers:

A great host of wild men from the North-east swept over Rhovanion and coming down out of the Brown-lands crossed the Anduin on rafts.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

This gradual build-up of power, raiding and intelligence-gathering is probably brought about by Sauron's servants who felt that it needed more than a sudden, ill-organized rush to defeat the Dúnedain. Accordingly, the decades before the actual invasion saw a consolidation of the Balchoth's power in Rhovanion. Acting wisely, they carefully mustered their strength before attacking Gondor:

It was thus not until the winter of the year 2509 was past that Cirion became aware that a great movement against Gondor was being prepared: hosts of men were mustering all along the southern eaves of Mirkwood.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Ride of Eorl*

Here we also see that the major staging ground for the campaign was the territory south of Mirk-

wood, implying that it was firmly under Balchoth control. Otherwise they would be hard-pressed with the necessary logistic support and maintenance of a major invasion force in a hostile or uninhabited (and devoid of needed supplies) land. Thus we can deduce that there was a substantial mannish population left in the area, making this support possible.

The chosen route for the invasion is a bit puzzling: The Balchoth chose first to cross a major river and then invade the least populated province of Gondor – far away from resources and spoils. The basic plan was not new though:

But at length, King Calimehtar, son of Narmacil II, being free from other dangers, determined to avenge the defeat of the Battle of the Plains. Messengers came to him from Marhwini [lord of the Éothéod] warning him that the Wainriders were plotting to raid Calenardhon over the Undeeps [...].

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan*

It is interesting that such a plan existed already in Wainrider times (and which was pre-empted by Climehtar's attack). It seems that it offered attractive options, despite lying in a – supposedly – peripheral region of the major powers. Indeed, there are several arguments for such an invasion vector:

- First, it might be that the Balchoth had learned of previous failed Wainrider invasions (and re-activated the never implemented Wainrider plan) and avoided the area where resistance was probably stiffest and where the Gondorians had short routes of supply, enjoying the tactical advantage of the “Inner Line”. Along this argumentation, Gondor's forces in northern Calenardhon would be at the end of a long supply chain as well, and in a region where replenishments (e.g. fresh troops) were barely available. The Balchoth on the other hand could more easily bring in reinforcements from their territories south of Mirkwood should it become necessary.

Choosing the Ithilien option, the Balchoth could have enjoyed other advantages though:

- There was no need to cross a major waterway: all supplies and reinforcements could have been brought in over land.
- Due to Gondor's loss of a firm grip over Ithilien (e.g. like during the Wainrider Wars), Gondor was definitely unable to hinder any

major advance here, so the Balchoth avoided the risk of sharing the fate of the Wainriders in Ithilien. The Nazgûl's occupation of Minas Ithil would have been a boost, providing a secure flank – even if the Balchoth were unaware that these terrible creatures were allies.¹

Choosing the “Ithilien option”, the Balchoth would have had another problem: Having to cross the Anduin in an area where it was much wider and heavily defended. A crossing here would have been an extremely tough military challenge. Given the relatively primitive equipment of the Balchoth (see above), this would probably have been an insurmountable obstacle.

All in all, the northern option over the Undeeps is believable for a people with limited technical and material resources. Even though this decision of a northern campaign brought disadvantages with it as well, Gondor was in an even more precarious position. Once decisively defeated there, the Balchoth could have invaded Gondor from the north and west, like in a giant pincer movement.

As we know, during the course of the campaign vitally needed help came to Gondor by the timely arrival of the Éothéod, decisively defeating the major invasion by the Balchoth and leading to the creation of the realm of Rohan. As far as the western chronicles are concerned this is more or less the end of our secure knowledge of the Balchoth. Like the Wainriders, they fade from the western view after their failed invasion. This does not, however, mean that they must have vanished altogether.

We have a hint that the defeat at Celebrant did not immediately end the Balchoth's westward ambitions:

2485-2545 1. Eorl the Young. He was so named because he succeeded his father in youth and remained yellow-haired and ruddy to the end of his days. These were shortened by a renewed attack of the Easterlings. Eorl fell in battle in the Wold, and the first mound was raised.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

Though not clearly named, these renewed attacks (especially using the term ‘the Easterlings’, likely referring to previously encountered Easterlings) are probably performed by the Balchoth. Along this line, they had not totally given up on

¹ This assumes ignorance on the Balchoth's part of Sauron using them as pawns in his goal of bringing down Gondor.

achieving their goal after Parth Celebrant. That the still newly arrived (and probably not very numerous) Rohirrim were able to defeat them alone and without massive help from Gondor, hints at a much reduced strength in these renewed attacks. It may be though that this was the first instance where Gondor honoured the alliance with the Rohirrim and sent military assistance to Eorl's aid. Even though not explicitly named, it seems very logical and in my opinion it should be indeed accepted that the Rohirrim were not left alone. The size of this supporting force is another matter of course and an interesting subject to discuss.

In any case, we have a good argument that the Balchoth stayed in Rhovanion, still trying 35 years after their great defeat to get a secure hold in Calenardhon/Rohan. This is the last word we hear on this people from Tolkien (if they are indeed Balchoth). Similar to the Wainriders, it is very likely that they stayed permanently, though in a different way compared to their early "invasion years".

These considerations form the basis for the extrapolations of the following paragraphs.

The Balchoth in Rhovanion

Cirion became Ruling Steward in TA 2489, and he was fully aware of Gondor's open northern flank, dispatching a few troops to man the old forts along Anduin and monitor the events in Rhovanion as best as possible. In context with the Balchoth, it is most important to note that their appearance was not a sudden, big invasion:

He was thus soon aware that new and dangerous enemies coming out of the east were steadily drifting in from beyond the Sea of Rhûn.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Ride of Eorl*
(my emphasis)

That the Balchoth were slowly trickling into Rhovanion is a sure indication that it was not a hostile takeover of former Wainrider territory, but rather a consensus concerning the transfer of power. As seen above, it is only the remaining Northmen that suffered from the new people – the old Wainriders seem to have fared much better.

Since all these events (Cirion becoming Steward, manning of the forts and the intelligence about the advance of the Balchoth) are named in close connection it is safe to assume that the Balchoth's gradual and slow advance into Rhovanion began ca. 2480, reaching its western regions around 2500 and causing Cirion's above mentioned concerns.

Development of the Balchoth realm

We have no clear references from Tolkien on how the Balchoth rule was established and maintained in Rhovanion. We only have knowledge of those events when these people invaded the Westlands and therefore directly entered the sphere of the Northmen and Gondor. As mentioned above, it is very likely that the Balchoth realm did not collapse after their defeat at the Field of Celebrant, but that they only retreated to lick their wounds. Eorl's death 35 years later (very likely again at the hands of the Balchoth) during a renewed attack shows that they made at least one more serious attempt of increasing their territory westward.

That the Balchoth did not contend themselves with establishing their rule in southern and eastern Rhovanion is documented as well in the tale of the Éothéod's ride southward to Cirion's aid:

*Such folk of good or evil kind as saw it
[Eorl's host] approach fled out of its path for
fear of its might and splendour. As it drew
southward and passed by southern Mirkwood
(below the great East Bight), which was now
infested by the Balchoth, [...]*

—*Unfinished Tales. The Ride of Eorl*
(my emphasis)

That the Balchoth had firmly established themselves in the East Bight this early in TA 2510 indicates their determination to stay and settle here from now on.

Going beyond the data provided by Tolkien himself, we have to extrapolate on all the facts mentioned already to achieve a comprehensive picture, usable in a roleplaying game.

Other Hands, Issue 12 already featured a long article on the Balchoth, with the name of 'Pult' as their original name. Though I do not agree with all interpretations presented there (especially the Mongol-like organization and numbers), it provides an extremely useful source of inspiration for the background of these people.

Other Easterlings

Beyond these two prominent Easterling peoples, Tolkien sometime mentions other eastern men with the standardized generic term "Easterling". A prominent example are the wars in the middle of the first millennium of the Third Age in the time of the kings Ostroher, Tarastor (Rómendacil I) and Turambar.

For the purposes of this article (and roleplaying in the region in general), we have to give all these people faces and names (even if only sketchy) and herewith go beyond what Tolkien himself wrote. This is at the very core of developing material for roleplaying games set in a world, and it must be done with the greatest care to make it fit into the framework provided by Tolkien.

OTHER MEN

Men of Dorwinion ("Dorwinrim")

Concerning the origin of these people, we have an extremely bad (practically non-existent) textual situation, Tolkien barely gives us the name of the region (Dorwinion), but already this is problematic, as its name goes back to his very early writings: "Dor-winion" appears in the *Lay of Leithian* as region south of Doriath (the "burning south"), from whence Thingol imported his wine. Later he re-used the name and theme of an elven king importing wine, and Pauline Baynes labelled the region on the lower Celduin as "Dorwinion" (with Tolkien's approval).

Beside the fact that Thranduil imported his wine from Dorwinion, nothing is known about that land from Tolkien himself. In MERP and its mid-Third Age setting, the men of the land were called "Dorwinrim" and ethnically interpreted as a mix of several races, primarily Easterlings and Northmen.

This was later further developed in *The Inland Sea* realm fan-module by making these people the result of a blending of the Donath (men related to the Second House of the Edain and thus relatives of the later Dunlendings, Bree-men and Oathbreakers) and an Easterling culture named the Gargath. This blending supposedly took place around the middle of the Second Age, from which time onward this culture became static for the remainder of the Second and the whole Third Age.

As outlined in *The Phenomenon of "Eternal Realms" in Middle-earth RPG settings from Other Minds, Issue 12*, this latter depiction is somewhat problematic.

Therefore I suggest making the realm of "Dorwinion" in its late Third Age incarnation a product of the Balchoth invasion. This attack which caused the uprooting of most of the people (namely the Northmen) of the region, resulted in important migrations. One result was the new realm "Dorwinion"; a mix of several older people.

As seen in the quotes above about the Northmen population, the northern half of Rhovanion from

Mirkwood to the Celduin, was settled by "Marachians" and "Bëorians" initially. Since Vidugavia's realm reached unto the Celduin, it is quite likely that this situation did not significantly change until the arrival of the Wainriders.

Afterwards, these Northmen saw the influx of Plains Northmen (Ehwathrumi) refugees that established themselves as lords here. Nonetheless, this new realm became subject to the Wainriders and arranged itself with this situation, even though there was some mixing with Easterlings especially along the borders. The Balchoth invasion then uprooted all these older structures in "Dorwinion" but remnants of these ethnic Northmen and Wainrider elements survived long enough to later evict the Balchoth from this land and establish the realm that is named "Dorwinion" in *The Hobbit*.

Unnamed men

Beside all these people mentioned by Tolkien, it is quite likely that there existed numerous other men, and some of these have been developed in this article as original ethnic groups. This considers mostly people in the Anduin Vales.

HOBBITS

The history of the Hobbits is somewhat complicated and only a small part concerns Rhovanion. According to information provided in *The Lord of the Rings*, they undertook several wanderings before the majority settled in the Shire at last. In addition, it provides us with some hints about their old settlement patterns in Rhovanion. Another highlighting information is found in *The History of Middle-earth*. The two long quotes on the next page display this information.

From this, we can deduce the following facts with at least some degree of certainty:

- The Harfoots are most numerous, second come the Stoors and last the Fallohides. Accordingly, their territory should reflect this. The Fallohide lands might be larger than would be appropriate to reflect their more hunter-and-gatherer orientated lifestyle compared to their more settled cousins.
- The Fallohides are the most northerly living Hobbits.

Their [the Shire Hobbits'] earliest tales seem to glimpse a time when they dwelt in the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the Misty Mountains. Why they later undertook the hard and perilous crossing of the mountains into Eriador is no longer certain. Their own accounts speak of the multiplying of Men in the land, and of a shadow that fell on the forest, so that it became darkened and its new name was Mirkwood.

Before the crossing of the mountains the Hobbits had already become divided into three somewhat different breeds: Harfoots, Stoors, and Fallohides [...]

The Harfoots had much to do with Dwarves in ancient times, and long lived in the foothills of the mountains [...] They were the most inclined to settle in one place, and longest preserved their ancestral habit of living in tunnels and holes.

The Stoors lingered long by the banks of the Great River Anduin, and were less shy of Men.

The Fallohides, the least numerous, were a northerly branch. They were more friendly with Elves than the other Hobbits were, and had more skill in language and song than in handicrafts; and of old they preferred hunting to tilling. They crossed the mountains north of Rivendell and came down the River Hoarwell.

**—The Lord of the Rings. Prologue
(Concerning Hobbits)**

The vague tradition preserved by the Hobbits of the Shire was that they had dwelt once in lands by a Great River, but long ago had left them, and found their way through or round high mountains, when they no longer felt at ease in their homes because of the multiplication of the Big Folk and of a shadow of fear that had fallen on the Forest. This evidently reflects the troubles of Gondor in the earlier part of the Third Age. The increase in Men was not the normal increase of those with whom they had lived in friendship, but the steady increase of invaders from the East, further south held in check by Gondor, but in the North beyond the bounds of the Kingdom harassing the older 'Atanic' inhabitants, and even in places occupying the Forest and coming through it into the Anduin valley.

**—The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 12
(Of Dwarves and Men)**

- The Harfoots probably play an important role in providing foodstuffs for the Dwarves of the Hithaeglin. Thus their lands should at least border near Khazad-dûm.
- A pass must exist north of Rivendell (the High Pass is approximately at the latitude of Rivendell). Since the Fallohides came **down** the Hoarwell (Mitheithel), having this pass near the source of this river is a good guess.
- The primary mannish troubles for the Hobbits around stem from "eastern invaders" rather than their long-time neighbours.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the wanderings are detailed a bit more. The events cover more than only Rhovanion, but help to understand the wandering history of the Hobbits. The following dates concerning the Hobbit history are reported by Tolkien:

As we can see, the Hobbits must be present in the Anduin Vales area up to the end of the first millennium of the Third Age. Afterwards, due to the increase of evil things, they begin to emigrate from there to Eriador. At last most of them move to the later Shire. Some Stoors however, return to Rhovanion in the mid-14th century, and these will be present there for more than a millennium and one of them plays a pivotal (even if unwilling) part in the downfall of Sauron much later.

1050 The Periannath are first mentioned in records, with the coming of the Harfoots to Eriador.

c. 1150 The Fallohides enter Eriador. The Stoors come over the Redhorn Pass and move to the Angle, or to Dunland.

c. 1300 The Periannath migrate westward; many settle at Bree.

1356 About this time the Stoors leave the Angle, and some return to Wilderland.

1601 Many Periannath migrate from Bree, and are granted land beyond Baranduin by Argeleb II.

c. 1630 They are joined by Stoors coming up from Dunland.

1636 The plague spreads north and west, [...]. Beyond the Baranduin the Periannath survive, but suffer great loss.

2340 Isumbras I becomes thirteenth Thain, and first of the Took line. The Oldbucks occupy the Buckland.

2463 About this time Déagol the Stoor finds the One Ring, and is murdered by Sméagol.

2470 About this time Sméagol-Gollum hides in the Misty Mountains.

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A

An interesting question is how long these Stoor communities survived. It seems easy to answer since we read about the Hunt for the Ring in TA 3018:

They [the other Nazgûl] were told also by Khamûl that no dwelling of Halflings could be discovered in the Vales of Anduin, and that the villages of the Stoor by the Gladden had long been deserted.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Hunt for the Ring*

So the matter might be clear – the Stoor had vanished from here long ago in the past (seen from a TA 3018 point of view). In another version of the story however, there are some differences, noticeably the following:

The account of the vain journey of the Nazgûl up the Vales of Anduin is much the same in version B as in that printed in full above (A), but with the difference that in B the Stoor settlements were not entirely deserted at that time; and such of the Stoor as dwelt there were slain or driven away by the Nazgûl.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Hunt for the Ring (Other Versions of the Story)*

So, in this version, even in TA 3018, there are some – probably quite diminished – Stoor communities in existence here. Matters are further complicated however through a letter from Tolkien:

All Hobbits were slow to change, but the remigrant Stoor were going back to a wilder and more primitive life of small and dwindling communities; [...]*

**Between 2463 and the beginning of Gandalf's special enquiries concerning the Ring (nearly 500 years later) they appear indeed to have died out altogether (except, of course, for Sméagol); or to have fled from the shadow of Dol Guldur.*

—*Letters. #214 (late 1958 or early 1959)*

This letter is also referenced in the footnote '9' found in the alternate version of the Hunt for the Ring. It is no easy matter to decide whether there still existed Stoor communities at the time of the War of the Ring in the Anduin Vales or not. Since for a project like this a decision has to be made, I opted for the first version (also in light of Letter #214) in which the Stoor are no longer living here and the Nazgûl found only long-deserted settlements.

The Elves

The Wood-elves are a constant in the ever changing settlement patterns of Rhovanion. They are present at every time, and their distinctive feature is the slow and gradual shrinking of their realm within the forest. In the beginning, it reached to a line somewhat north of the Gladden Fields and in the late Third Age concentrates in the north-eastern corner of the forest. This shrinking is mostly due to the encroaching Shadow, but losses among Thranduil's people (and the subsequent troubles in patrolling the same territory with shrinking numbers) also contribute to this long retreat.

The Maps

Concerning the maps, the timeframes as detailed above need some attention. The maps as provided in *The Lord of the Rings* are the most important reference of course, but we have to keep in mind that they represent a late-Third Age setting. Although the major features remain unchanged of course, there are some details which change over the course of the Age and these are addressed here.

Borders and features of Lórien

Interestingly, even the seemingly unchanging and eternal realm of Lórien changes in some respects – and not only its rulers.

The interesting passage is the “empty lands” of course. Thus we can deduce that it is mostly empty of men, but the context suggests that it is also devoid of tree cover – and thus all the more “empty” compared to well-wooded Lórien. This is further confirmed here:

But when the terror came out of Moria and the Dwarves were driven out, and in their stead Orcs crept in, she [Nimrodel] fled distraught alone south into empty lands [in TA 1981]. Amroth followed her, and at last he found her under the eaves of Fangorn, which in those days drew much nearer to Lórien.

—*Unfinished Tales. Amroth and Nimrodel*

This passage gives two vital pieces of information. First that the borders of Lórien exceeded the forest itself, and that in “former times” (with the late-Third Age vantage point) the woods extended farther south than at the time of *The Lord of the Rings* and even mingled with northern Fangorn without a sharp line dividing them (i.e. the “open woodland”

that bridged the more dense tree cover north and south). This is shown on the maps for the earlier times.

The most well-known centre in Lórien (Caras Galadhon) is interesting as well. Its defining feature – like most of Lórien in the late Third Age during the Fellowship’s visit – are the many impressive *mallorn* trees here. It is natural to assume that these characterize the land throughout the Third Age, though we have some hints that this might not be the case:

The whole of the grasslands between Silverlode and Limlight, into which the woods of Lórien formerly extended further south, were known in Lórien as Parth Celebrant (i.e. the field, or enclosed grassland, of Silverlode) and regarded as part of its realm, though not inhabited by its Elvish folk beyond the eaves of the woods. ... Of old the Galadhrim had claimed to govern the woods as far as the falls in the Silverlode where Frodo was bathed; southward it had extended far beyond the Silverlode into more open woodland of smaller trees that merged into Fangorn Forest, [...]

—*Unfinished Tales. The Boundaries of Lórien*

This passage provides two crucial pieces of information: First, that the *mallorn* tree itself was not native to Lórien, but introduced and that it was Galadriel’s special power that made the trees grow there. It is telling that the trees grew perfect in the Undying Lands, and only insignificantly less so in blessed Númenor. This points out Númenor’s status as a blessed land given to mortals. In the much more “mundane” Middle-earth, the trees would not grow – not even in Lindon, the most elvish of all the lands there and remnant of ancient Beleriand. The only special power possessed by Galadriel (compared to Gil-galad) is her ability to use Nenia (after Sauron lost the One) and create a “miniature paradise” with

it. Before, Gil-galad had two rings as well, but could not use their powers, due to Sauron wearing the Ruling Ring. Thus the aforementioned powers of Galadriel are most likely her use of Nenia, which transformed Lórien into some kind of “Blessed Realm *en miniature*” and enabled the growth of the *mallorn*. It must be noted that still, despite the power of Nenia, the trees did not reach the size of those in Númenor, lest those in Eressëa.

The other information is the approximate period of growth until these trees are full-grown. According to the quote above, it took the trees in Númenor about 500 years to reach a height near the one in Eressëa. The context suggests that this was also the final height reached in Númenor.

When we apply these two pieces to Lórien, we can approximate the appearance of the *mellyrn* in the land:

And about that place [near Eldalondë in Númenor], up the seaward slopes and far into the land, grew the evergreen and fragrant trees that they brought out of the West, and so throve there that the Eldar said that almost it was fair as a haven in Eressëa. [...] but only here grew the mighty golden tree malinornë reaching after five centuries a height scarce less than it achieved in Eressëa itself. [...] Its fruit was a nut with a silver shale; and some were given as gift by Tar-Aldarion, the sixth King of Númenor, to King Gil-galad of Lindon. They did not take root in that land; but Gil-galad gave some to his kinswoman Galadriel, and under her power they grew and flourished in the guarded land of Lothlórien beside the River Anduin, until the High Elves at last left Middle-earth; but they did not reach the height or girth of the great groves of Númenor.

—*Unfinished Tales. Description of the Island of Númenor*

Lothlórien by Tara Rueping



Galadriel (and Celeborn) went to that land after Amroth’s disappearance in TA 1981 and stabilized the realm. Galadriel put Nenia to full use, creating the “private elven paradise” for which the Rings of Power were devised in the first place. Thus it is likely that around this time she began planting the nuts given to her by Gil-galad.

These first-generation *mellyrn* would thus have reached their full height probably at around TA 2500, leaving another few centuries for further seedlings to grow.

Concerning Caras Galadhon, it is a good guess that the mighty *mallorn* encountered there is one of the oldest (and biggest) of these trees, which would place the founding of Caras Galadhon (at least in the form and extent we encounter in *The Lord of the Rings*) around the end of the 20th century TA. Accordingly, the earlier maps should not depict this place, as its special status appears to be especially linked to Galadriels (and Nenyas!) presence and influence here.

The borders of Mirkwood

A first hint that the borders of the Wood-elves had changed considerably over time can be found in the account of Isildur's death.

So it came to pass that late in the afternoon of the thirtieth day of their journey they were passing the north borders of the Gladden Fields, marching along a path that led to Thranduil's realm, as it then was.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields*

The fact, that Isildur's force was already near Thranduil's border when they had passed the Gladden Fields hints at a much more southerly border of the elven realm than in the late Third Age.

This gradual change can be observed as well, confirming a steady retreat since about TA 1000 until they finally established their relative small realm we encounter in *The Hobbit*.

In another passage written at the same time as the foregoing it is said that when a thousand years of the Third Age had passed and the Shadow fell upon Greenwood the Great, the Silvan Elves ruled by Thranduil retreated before it as it spread ever northward, until at last Thranduil established his realm in the north-east of the forest and delved there a fortress and great halls underground.

—*Unfinished Tales. The History of Galadriel and Celeborn and of Amroth King of Lórien (Appendix B)*

The role of a specific region in Mirkwood is highlighted as well:

The Eryn Duir (Dark Mountains) were a group of high hills in the north-east of the Forest, so called because dense fir-woods grew upon their slopes; but they were not yet of evil name. In later days when the shadow of Sauron spread through Greenwood the Great, and changed its name from Eryn Galen to Taur-nu-Fuin (translated Mirkwood), the Eryn Duir became a haunt of many of his most evil creatures, and were called Eryn-nu-Fuin, the Mountains of Mirkwood.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields, Note 14*

A very interesting passage concerns Erebor:

Thus in one essay Thranduil's realm is said to have extended into the woods surrounding the Lonely Mountain and growing along the west shores of the Long Lake, before the coming of the Dwarves exiled from Moria and the invasion of the Dragon. [...] In the Second Age their king, Oropher [the father of Thranduil, father of Legolas], had withdrawn northward beyond the Gladden Fields.

—*Unfinished Tales. The History of Galadriel and Celeborn and of Amroth King of Lórien (Appendix B)*

The information about Erebor is really fascinating stuff, as it gives us much more background information on its history. About the first millennia of the Third Age it was **surrounded** by Mirkwood. The gradual retreat of the forests is probably due to mannish (and later dwarvish!) tree-felling. Since this also heavily concerns the Wood-elves and their realm, it is likely that at a certain point the Elves made clear they would not tolerate any further tree-felling in their sphere of interest.

This gives not only a precise information about a greater extension of Mirkwood in earlier times (compared to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* era), but also the approximate time when the Wood-elves retreated northward of the Gladden Fields. This is a good starting point for the extent of the elvish realm on the maps in this article.

The extent of the forest on its western side is documented as well (continued on next page):

The rain lasted for four days; so when they came to the entrance to the Vales, between Lórien and Amon Lanc,¹² Isildur turned away from the Anduin, swollen with swift water, and went up the steep slopes on its eastern side to gain the ancient paths of the Silvan Elves that ran near the eaves of the Forest.

—*Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields, Note 14*

The long excerpt from *Unfinished Tales* on the next column gives some extremely valuable information about the borders of the forest at that time :

- At first Isildur's force marches near the edge of the forest, and here the initial attack by the orcs takes place.
- Afterwards, the Dúnedain try to evade the enemy towards the river and reach more advantageous terrain, but are halted after about a mile. Here the final battle takes place. Isildur escapes from this site by putting on the One and heading for the river.
- Since the final battle began when the sun had set and due to the fierce and continuous attacks is likely to not have lasted more than half an hour or one hour at the most, the time when Isildur left the site can be guessed with a good degree of certainty. In addition Note 27 above gives a precise distance ("seven leagues or more"). So it is safe to assume that the edge of the forest (and it is explicitly stated as this and not only as outlying woods) was about 20 to 25 miles away from the river.
- Looking at the map from *The Lord of the Rings*, we see that the forest's western edge is much farther away from the river – about twice the distance estimated in the bullet point above. Accordingly, the forest's western edge in TA 600 has been placed nearer to the Anduin to be compatible with *The Disaster of the Gladden Fields*. Since the forest's edge is farther away later, I have successively moved the border for later times further east until it matches with the map found in *The Lord of the Rings*.

To their right the Forest loomed above them at the top of steep slopes running down to their path, below which the descent into the valley-bottom was gentler. [...] Suddenly as the sun plunged into cloud they heard the hideous cries of Orcs, and saw them issuing from the Forest and moving down the slopes, yelling their war-cries. [...] "We have no hope of help: Moria and Lórien are now far behind, and Thranduil four days' march ahead." [...] The Dúnedain had gone scarcely a mile when the Orcs moved again. [...]

[...] So it was that he [Isildur] came at last to the banks of Anduin at the dead of night, and he was weary; for he had made a journey that the Dúnedain on such ground could have made no quicker, marching without halt and by day.²⁷ [...] Before he had gone far he was forced to turn almost north against the current; and strive as he might he was ever swept down towards the tangles of the Gladden Fields. They were nearer than he had thought, ²⁹ [...]

13 [...] The lake [at the Gladden Fields] had been wider west of Anduin, for the eastern side of the valley was steeper; but on the east it probably reached as far as the feet of the long slopes down from the Forest (then still wooded), its reedy borders being marked by the gentler slope, just below the path that Isildur was following.)

14 Long before the War of the Alliance, Oropher, King of the Silvan Elves east of Anduin, being disturbed by rumours of the rising power of Sauron, had left their ancient dwellings about Amon Lanc, across the river from their kin in Lórien. Three times he had moved northwards, and at the end of the Second Age he dwelt in the western glens of the Emyr Duir, and his numerous people lived and roamed in the woods and vales westward as far as Anduin, north of the ancient Dwarf-Road (Men-i-Naegrif).

27 Seven leagues or more from the place of battle. Night had fallen when he fled; he reached Anduin at midnight or near it. [Author's note.]

29 The place of the last stand had been a mile or more beyond their northern border, but maybe in the dark the fall of the land had bent his course somewhat to the south. [Author's note.]

—*Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields, Note 14*

Even though many features in Middle-earth seem to be set in stone forever, such changes in the shape of geography are rather common in Tolkien's *legendarium* (i.e. compare the continental changes described in *Mapping Arda* and *Mapping Arda – Reloaded* in *Other Minds*, Issue 1 and 2, respectively).



The Death of Isildur © by Anke Eißmann, used with permission

Another example is the Great East Bight of which Tolkien writes:

They [Éothéod] were a remnant of the Northmen, who had formerly been a numerous and powerful confederation of peoples living in the wide plains between Mirkwood and the River Running, [...] though their settled homes were in the eaves of the Forest, and especially in the East Bight, which had largely been made by their felling of trees.³

³ The East Bight, not named elsewhere, was the great indentation in the eastern border of Mirkwood seen in the map to *The Lord of the Rings*.

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan* (my emphasis)

Interestingly, we see the Great East Bight emerge as a man-made feature rather than a natural one. Considering the extent of the bight, vast amounts of trees must have been felled here (judging from the shape of the adjacent forest's edge) with the corresponding vast amounts of timber thus produced. It is hard to imagine that the Northmen have used all this timber for themselves, though doubtless they kept what they needed. Perhaps this can be seen already in context with Gondor as the main customer: Especially under the Ship-kings Gondor built great fleets of ships and since the raw material for these must have come from somewhere, the trees in the later East Bight come in handy as a source (plus timber from the western edges of the forest, see the discussion above about Isildur's death).

We might thus conclude that Gondor's demand of building timber in the first millennium of the Third Age was primarily met by wood from southern and middle Greenwood – and that the Northmen were the suppliers of this wood. It was only necessary to move the timber to the Anduin, and from here it could easily be floated to Gondor's shipyards.

Map Themes

1. The maps provided for each timeframe constitute four different themes:
1. **Cultural** – depicting the predominant cultural identity of the people. Of course, like in the real world borders are fleeting and minorities are found in almost all border regions, but still these maps give a good overview of the majority ethnicities in Rhovanion
2. **Realms** – showing the greater political entities (i.e. Gondor or Dale) with some kind of overarching authority. This is very variable though and may range from a strong king like in Gondor to a “High Chieftain” among the Hobbits who has a more representative function.
3. **Provinces** – a map showing the major subdivision within the greater realms (e.g. the provinces of Gondor).
4. **Settlements & population centers** – depicting first the major (i.e. noteworthy) settlements in Rhovanion at the given time plus the areas (in a darker shade) which have the highest population densities (i.e. population centers). Only those settlements with a minimum population of about 500 are depicted, since these represent the local centers. Overall, these small settlements (and on average smaller than their counterparts in Eriador) constitute the vast majority of “urban” centers in Rhovanion.



Transporting lumber

Demographics

Important note: All the numbers presented here are based on careful scrutiny of the sources available. The same caveats as in *Population and Urbanization of Eriador* (see *Other Minds*, Issue 13) concerning how these numbers came to be apply here also. The speculative nature of this subject suggests the numbers should be used as a guideline for the scale you are operating in. For example, it is not important whether a given realm has 210,000, 215,000 or 220,000 residents. The scale remains the same, and all deviations herefrom can be seen as regular demographic errors (e.g. because of the inaccuracy of counts). Sometimes the numbers seem quite high at first glance, but one always has to keep in mind that the areas in questions are usually very big. The population is also not evenly distributed. Some areas have higher population concentrations (mostly in areas favourable due to natural benefits like rivers or fertile soil). In addition all areas contain unpopulated parts. You have to keep in mind that in every territory covered here, **between 30 and 60% of the land is not settled at all**, which is quite high given the fact that the rest is quite sparsely settled.

Since the MERP 'canon' often had good approaches to world-building questions, these were double-checked and retained when deemed reasonable. Where available, content from TOR has been integrated as well. LotRRPG did not produce any supplements or information for the topic of this article that I know of.

The assignment of names and population numbers to towns/cities in this article is a three tiered process: firstly existing towns/cities as described by Tolkien are assigned population numbers that seem reasonable. Readers of MERP's supplements may note a high number of divergences from the MERP approach. These are intentional, since I deem the only important source are Tolkien's writings, and others are retained when it does not conflict with this primary purpose.

All the necessary information is provided here – you do not need any gaming supplements to use the information in this article. For those who have come to Middle-earth gaming more recently and who do not have access to these supplements, this approach offers the advantage of not relying on information that may be hard – or expensive – to come by.

If we follow the structure of urbanization of medieval Europe the majority of the cities would be relatively small. The average size for a city might be much smaller than in Eriador, not numbering more than 2,500 inhabitants, and in most cases even less than 1,000.

The following key shows the assignment of symbols for settlements of varying sizes:

- 10,001+ inhabitants
- 5,001 to 10,000 inhabitants
- 2,501 to 5,000 inhabitants
- up to 2,500 inhabitants

In order to avoid overt errors in placing cities and assigning inhabitants, we should consider which factors favour the development of a city:

- The most important prerequisite is the geographic location: fords, bridges, crossroads, etc. are primary sites for the establishment of a town or city because travellers of all kind (must) concentrate here and tax collecting and business is profitable and very easy to conduct. For example, a river is the prime location for building a city. A river provides the only viable transport capability for mass goods, source of water and waste removal. In addition bridges or fords, as natural chokepoints, favour trade.
- Second, existing small settlements (villages, towns) grow because of favourable conditions (good soil, easy traffic, tax exemption, etc.).
- Third, keeps and castles of lords might attract settlers because of the relative security, which these nearby fortifications offer. Of course this is only valid when the general political situation is relatively unsafe and the possibility of war threatens the settlement. The right to fortify a city however, is a granted privilege (generally from the king/lord) and it goes without saying that the wielding of this privilege is a powerful tool in the hands of a monarch.

All these factors have to be kept in mind when assigning cities and population levels in Rhovanion.

The formula on the next page (found in *From Land to Subsistence* by Juha Juuso Vesanto, see reference #7 in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador* in *Other Minds*, Issue 13) was used to estimate the population levels. The coastlines are – where applicable – integrated into the formula. To differentiate the "real" area from the "calculated" one (e.g. accounting for fishing), the coastline as a factor is added separately. All distances and areas are given in kilometres and square kilometres, respectively.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

This section shows original demographics numbers for the cultures mentioned throughout the periods mentioned in the introduction.

By necessity, it goes far beyond what Tolkien has written about the region and people in question. It does, however, use the existing evidence as a base and framework to develop the *lacunae* in between.

For all of these considerations we have to take into account the supposed population densities. Here a quote already mentioned in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador* in *Other Minds*, Issue 13 is very helpful:

Though none of the regions of the Two Kingdoms were before (or after!) the Númenórean settlements densely populated as we should reckon it.

—Vinyar Tengwar, Issue #42. *The Rivers and Beacon Hills of Gondor*

From this we can make extrapolations to judge the overall population levels. In my opinion it can be taken for granted that the Númenórean realms constituted the most organized political entities in the Northwest of Middle-earth. Since such an organization is accompanied by economic upswing due to the improved use of resources, we can deduct that the territories of Arnor and Gondor also represent the greatest population densities in the Northwest of Middle-earth. Or to put it in other words, all territories beyond the Númenórean lands (including almost all of the land under consideration here) are likely to be much less densely populated.

So, the Eriadoran population densities as laid in Issue 13 are a convenient benchmark for the upper limits that are never exceeded in Rhovanion and only seldom even reached. The same formula (shown below) to do the math is used. Table 1 on the next page summarizes the results.

At the beginning of each era, there is a short Tale of Years table which highlights the Rhovanion-relevant events that happened since the previous era.

$$POPULATION = (AREA + (COASTLINE \times 10)) \times \left(1 - \frac{WILD}{100}\right) \times \left(1 - \frac{WASTE}{100}\right) \times YIELD \times DENSITY \times \left(1 + \frac{URBAN}{100}\right)$$

The abbreviations in the formula used above are:

1. *POPULATION* = the total population of the realm
2. *AREA* = total land area of the realm/region
3. *WILD* = uninhabited land as a percentage of the total area: 20% is small, 40% is normal, 60% is big
4. *WASTE* = on inhabited land, area unusable for agriculture, (march, mountains, etc.) as % of total area: 10% is small, 20% is normal, 40% is big
5. *YIELD* = relative yield acquired from the land: 1.0 is normal, 0.5 is poor and 1.5 is great. Yield depends on a number of factors: crop, land quality, agricultural techniques and climate. Of these, the first three tend to stay relatively constant over a short time period, but the weather may vary a lot from year to year while climatic changes are slower in coming.
6. *DENSITY* = reference population density per km² in reference situation: no wasteland, no uninhabited land, yield=1. Density depends on the subsistence type of the culture. You can also figure the effect of technology and crop cycles in here. Some useful numbers are:
 - Nomad: 2/km²
 - Semi-nomad: 4/km²
 - Semi-sedentary: 20/km²
 - Sedentary: 20-40/km²
7. *URBAN* = extra people, i.e. specialists, leaders and urban population, living from the surplus of the rural population as a percentage. This depends on the margin of living, but typically not directly, as leaders and other specialists will require more food (i.e. resources) to sustain themselves than rural people. Of course, their work is valuable in increasing the extracted crop yield. Anyway, here are some figures for urban populations one could use:
 - Nomadic: 0%
 - Early Farming: 5%
 - Standard Farming: 10%

Table 1: Key population figures for Rhovanion in the Third Age

	settled area (km ²)		population				overall density (per km ²)	number of towns/cities with number of inhabitants				
	lightly settled	densely settled	total	outside towns/cities	in towns/cities	total		up to 2,500	2,501-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001+	total
TA 600	811,030	208,740	1,019,770	2,524,210	167,490	2,691,700	2,64	96	14	0	1	111
TA 1400	672,000	245,500	917,500	3,140,800	221,900	3,362,700	3,67	89	25	2	0	116
TA 1640	401,400	97,900	499,300	1,350,000	80,600	1,430,600	2,86	72	2	0	0	74
TA 1940	598,000	251,700	849,700	3,430,000	237,500	3,667,500	4,32	102	27	4	0	133
TA 2500	597,300	291,300	888,600	3,895,800	263,800	4,159,600	4,68	142	21	7	0	170
TA 2600	645,000	281,700	926,700	3,569,200	150,300	3,719,500	4,01	120	19	3	0	142
TA 2750*	756,700	269,200	847,300	3,397,300	236,600	3,633,900	4,29	112	18	5	0	135
TA 2920*	563,500	192,100	937,500	2,611,200	155,900	2,767,100	2,95	112	11	0	0	123
TA 2946*	549,900	189,600	739,500	2,659,600	160,300	2,819,900	3,81	111	12	1	0	124
TA 3015*	583,400	215,600	799,000	2,975,600	187,600	3,163,200	3,96	121	15	2	0	138

* Numbers exclude the Hunkarim, which are not of Rhovanion proper. See TA 2750 and later entries for more details

Note: The lower population limit of the smaller settlements (e.g. that were counted here) lies at ca. 500 inhabitants.

What does 'Wilderland' REALLY MEAN?

Having seen these overview demographics, it is necessary to explore the possibility of them being beyond a reasonable scope. This assertion is sometimes heard (or read), based on Tolkien's own name for the region – "Wilderland".

In this argumentation, the "wild" in "Wilderland" is interpreted as "empty", "devoid of people" – similarly to the usual connotations with the english "wilderness". While being possible if viewed on its own (and a good approach), as it bases its conclusion upon a name by Tolkien, in my opinion it is less well backed as the following alternative interpretation.

Upon closer inspection, "Wilderland" is the english translation of its original name of *Rhovanion*, which is shown on the maps in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Unfinished Tales*. Equivalent Sindarin terms for "wild" in the meaning of "empty, devoid of settlements" would be *awartha* (abandonment), *eglan* (forsaken) or *lost* (empty), which all bear little semblance to the linguistic elements found in *Rhovanion*.

This name is the key to the correct interpretation of the term "Wilderland". Indeed *Rhovanion* is translated as "wilderness" (similar to "Wilderland"), but what exactly is meant with "wild" is not so straightforward, as it can have several meanings also in Eng-

lish. In Issue 17 of *Parma Eldalamberon*

(<http://www.eldalamberon.com/>) this is discussed in more detail by scrutinising Tolkien's latest writings on that. The term *Rhovanion* thus evolved from Sindarin "S-RAB" wild, in the senses 'not tamed, domesticated'; hence often 'fierce, savage, hostile (to Elves and Men)'. This latter in turn evolved from "RAB" [astray, wandering, unsettled + ?]. The latter may suggest the "no settlement" interpretation, but it must be noted that this is a more basic form which evolved into the former term. Overall it seems that the "wild" component in "Wilderland" refers more to the attitude of its people (or at least the majority of it) rather than its settlement patterns.

Accordingly, the "Wilderland" should thus be seen as "land of the savage men hostile to Gondor/the Eldar" rather than the "empty land without settlements". Since *Rhovanion* is in most likelihood a Gondorian (or elven) term applied to the region, the "savage/hostile" interpretation is indeed appropriate, as the defining majority of people living there would be "hostile" indeed in the eyes of the Númenóreans, as has been so often the case throughout the Third Age, and especially since the 19th century.

For more information on names and translations, have a look at the Hiswelókë site (found in *The Road Goes Ever On* section), which was also an important source for the interpretation above.

The Anduin Vales

This first era is one of respite for the Men in the Vales. Their originally relatively coherent culture fragments into several sub-groups after the Shadow is removed at the dawn of the Third Age. In addition to this, the losses from the war have severely reduced the numbers of men here. The Hobbits took the opportunity and occupied much of the Vales north of the Gladden in the early decades of the Age. By around TA 500, men begin to multiply increasingly and slowly push the Hobbits out of their lands. Thus the map for TA 600 already reflects this situation and which is most sharply felt for the Fallohides, where the better organized Northmen from the Northern Vales spread into former Fallohide lands. This is abetted by the Fallohides' loosely organized society and semi-permanent lifestyle.

Accordingly, in TA 600 the men settle almost the whole area of the Vales – together with the Hobbits who begin to feel the pressure from the “Big Folk”. The former also are the main suppliers of foodstuffs for the Longbeards in Khazad-dûm. The Hobbits’ area also stretches to the Great Road, though this “control” (exactng tolls etc.) is relative. Like their late-Third Age descendants, the early Hobbits in this time are a peaceful and unambitious folk, content with trading peacefully with their neighbours. Thus their “control” of the road is relative compared to the encroaching Estaravi with a much more “human” approach on this.

This hobbitish presence changes drastically after about TA 1000, when a Shadow in southern Mirkwood appears which slowly spreads throughout the forest. The Hobbits seem to have a much more sensitive perception on it and prefer to emigrate rather than live in the vicinity of this undefined, but clearly evil entity. The by now much stronger pressure of the “Big Folk” adds to this, making the decision easy for the Hobbits. In addition, hostile invaders from the East harass the Hobbits (and people in the Vales in general) for many years.

The Northern vales are settled by the Estaravi, a “marachian” Northman culture dating back to the times of the Northman-Longbeard alliance in the early- and mid-Second Age.

The Woodmen (calling themselves Giudmaris) live almost entirely in Greenwood (it is still far off when this will be haunted and called “Mirkwood”). The western faction of the Woodmen also settles in the wooded by relative open Anduin Vale area. These possess a relative strong chieftain and an organized political entity. The vast majority of the Woodmen within the great forest live in small hunter-and-gath-

erer bands, politically independent from each other and meeting only for festivals and other cultural meetings (at least most of them). The relatively big

Year of the Third Age	Event
490	First Easterling invasions against Gondor
500	Rómendacil I defeats the Easterlings
541	Rómendacil I slain by new Easterlings
545	Turambar begins a war in Rhovanion to secure his northern borders
545-553	The Plains Wars. Finally Turambar is victorious and wins almost all of southern and central Rhovanion
555	Turambar grants most of his conquests to his Ehwathrumi allies, keeping only a small territory north of the Morannon as a permanent Gondorian possession.
ca. 560-650	The Ehwathrumi evict the remaining Easterlings from their newly won territories.
600	Ehwathrumi lordships fully established.
ca. 900	The Giudmaris (Woodmen) begin to evolve into distinct cultural groups.
ca. 1000	The Vogningi begin to fell trees in the Long Lake area on a grander scale. The first shadow falls on Greenwood the Great and the Hobbits first become restless.
1030	The Herimandi, a large splinter group of the Giudmaris (Woodmen), expand into the Anduin Vales, competing with the Hobbits for land in the Middle Vales.
1032	The Plains War. Ailgarthavuld and Antharavuld ally with Easterlings.
1035	The Easterlings betray their erstwhile allies, creating an Easterling lordship (with support from Wensgaujaher) that reaches from Celduin to the Mirkwood. In the following years, these invaders regularly raid through the forest into the Anduin vales.
1045	The Hobbits begin to migrate westward due to the growing shadow and the incursions from the East.
1050	The Harfoots reach Eriador.
1050 to 1150	Gradual expansion of the Herimandi in the Anduin Vales.
1087	Fall of the Easterling lordship to an alliance of the Northmen led by the prince of Waldingavuld and backed by Gondor
since 1100	The Grama slowly retreat from the area of Southern Mirkwood where the malevolent influence of Dol Guldur is felt the most.
1150	The Fallohides enter Eriador and the Stoors cross the Redhorn Pass. By this time the Hobbits have left Rhovanion completely.
ca.1150 to 1240	The Ehwathrumi clan wars.
1200	Building of Aradhrynd (The Elvenking's Halls) begun.
1205	Birth of Vidugavia.
1240	Amasavuld, the realm of the Herimandi in the Anduin Vales, is founded
1247 to 1250	Gondor's regent Minalcar turns his attention northward and makes alliance with Vidugavia of the Ehwathrumi. The Great Campaign secures Gondor's interests in Rhovanion and cements Vidugavia's dominance among his kinsmen
1268	Aradhrynd completed.
1284	Death of Vidugavia, now ruling a greatly enlarged territory.
1290	The northern Estaravi swear allegiance to the Witch-king and join the emerging realm of Angmar.
since 1290	Vidugavia's successors slowly enlarge their territory.
ca. 1300	The Grama lose direct contact with the Men of the Anduin Vales.
1302	Gundabad taken by the Witch-king's forces.
1356	About this time the Stoors leave the Angle, and some return to Wilderland. They settle along the upper and middle Gladden.

Woodmen territory within Greenwood is thus only sparsely settled. The most ancient settlement site of the Woodmen (later known as Woodmen Town) was founded in TA 150.

South of the Hobbits, the “marachian” Grama occupy the territory south of Greenwood. They are skilled farmers and herders, producing high-quality foodstuffs for themselves and for export. The Grama are in close friendship with the Hobbits, and the Grama influence as well as the Entwives’ teachings centuries ago (before the latter left the area) have given the Hobbits some kind of hereditary “green thumb”, a feature seen again later in the Shire.

To the south, directly adjacent to Ithilien, Gondor has established its own province of Dor Rhúnen. Bordering on this land is the vast Ehwathrumi territory, given to them by Turambar after his great victories in the second half of the 6th century. They are friends of Gondor and act as an effective buffer zone against any incursion from the East.

Central and eastern Rhovanion

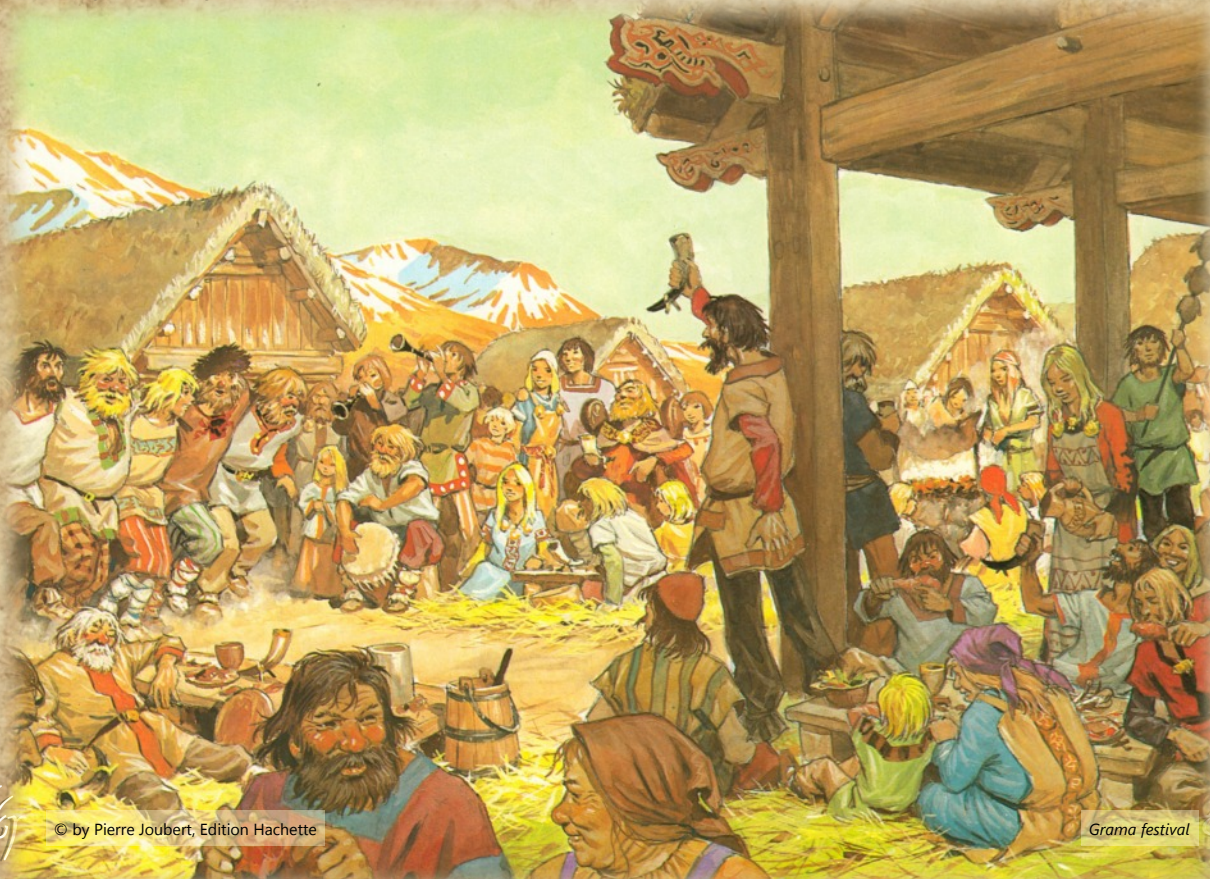
This era shows the situation after the settling of the Ehwathrumi (the ancestors of the Éothéod and Rohirrim) in southern Rhovanion and the establishment of a system of client-princedom in Rhovanion by Gondor. Several Ehwathrumi princedoms dominate central Rhovanion, allied with Gondor, but are also looking for their advantage against their neighbours. Concerning their lordships, an intentional “ethnic cleansing” took place that evicted all remaining Easterlings from these territories. Only a few

remain, totally submitting themselves to the Northmen and soon assimilating. The majority had to find new homes further eastward, spawning a long-lasting legacy of revenge against the “robbers of the land from the north”. This system is disturbed with the establishment of an Easterling lordship for about 50 years in the 11th century, which exploits the Northmen’s disunity, hunger for power and thus a temporary weakness in the buffer zone.

South of the Inland Sea and east of the Ehwathrumi we have the major Easterling population in the realm of Choreren, centered upon the city of Gelakles on the southern shores of the Sea.

East of the Ehwathrumi and north of the Mountains of Rhûn, live the “marachian” Wensgaujas, mostly settled people somewhat similar to the Grama. Like the latter, they have received some teaching from the Entwives in the past (some of the latter stayed a while in the area of the Wensgaujas’ land before moving further east).

The 12th and 13th century see an upsurge of petty wars and conflicts among the ehwathrumi, who fight each other – and sometimes in alliance with Easterlings. It is this precarious situation that leads Gondor to intervene. In the end, Gondor’s greatest rhovanian campaign in the Third Age strives to resolve these problems. It wins great glory, power and an alliance with the Vidugavians, but also contains the seed of civil war in it when Minalcar’s son Valacar weds a Northmen princess in its aftermath.



Northern Rhovanion

North of the Celduin the “bëorian” Vogningi have established several smaller lordships. They too are descendants of the Northmen who lived in friendship and alliance with the Longbeards in the Second Age. Their land lies on the fringe of Rhovanion and thus is considered as some kind of remote backwater by the major powers in this time (primarily Gondor, but also the fledgling Angmar).

Please note that in this time, Greenwood the Great is much bigger than during the late Third Age. See the section on maps above for more on this.

Table 2 on the next page shows the suggested cultures and realms with the most important numbers. The comprehensive tables can be found in the Appendix. The “wild” column gives you an overview of the **percentage of the unsettled land** in the corresponding realm.

Table 2: Population figures in TA 600

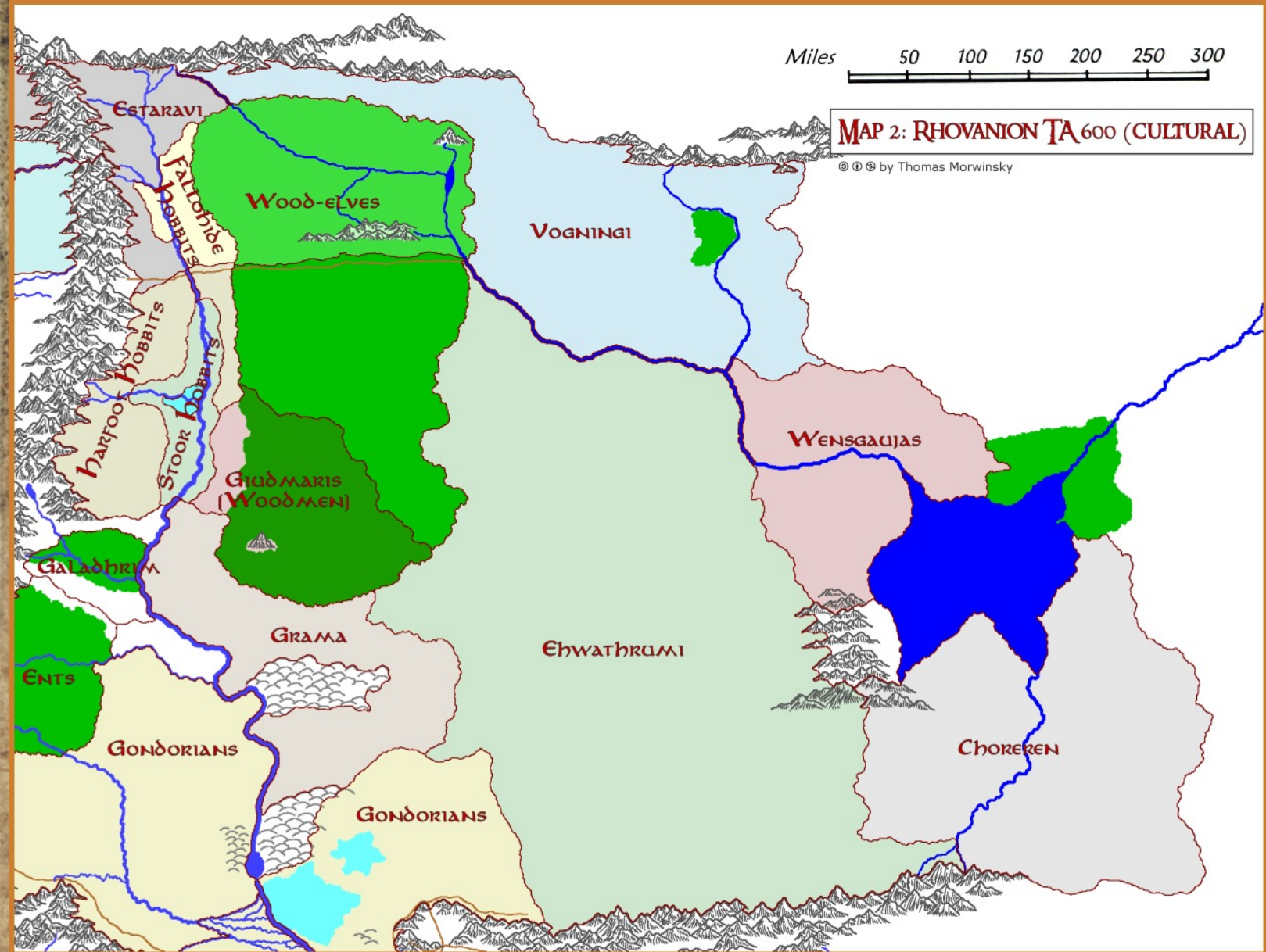
Culture	Realm	province	territory (km ²)	wild	population		
					rural	urban	overall
Estaravi	Aegartlant	Adastar	7,600	55%	16800	900	17,700
		Audipar	12,000	55%	31,400	1,800	33,100
		Mathlaburg	7,600	55%	29,200	1,800	31,000
Fallohides	Hamanangian		11200	55%	26,100	1,100	27,300
Stoors	Tharnizâr	Mantarbran	4,300	50%	15,200	600	15,800
		Tûnamin	2,100	50%	11,700	600	12,300
		Zanas	2,100	48%	11,700	500	12,300
		Nâr	4,800	48%	20400	1,200	21,600
Harfoots	Brannagamba	Zînanan	18,900	55%	45,400	2,500	47,900
		Ramban	12,200	58%	27,300	1,500	28,800
		Barantar	5,800	53%	16,900	1,100	18,000
Woodmen	Giudmareiki	Alidavuld	17,100	43%	50,000	2,300	52,300
		Podaldavuld	43,200	65%	27,600	2,200	29,900
Grama	Rainardavuld	Rainardavuld	34,300	38%	148,600	14,300	162,900
	Banoldavuld	Banoldavuld	33,800	33%	159,700	12,800	172,400
Vogningi	Gataland	Gataland	7,500	65%	8,100	600	8,700
	Afningaland	Afningaland	16,000	53%	30,300	1,500	31,800
	Heimodland	Heimod	21,900	45%	51,500	3,200	54,700
	Styniland	Styning	18,600	40%	54,900	3,800	58,700
	Sotiland	Soti	39,400	58%	47,100	2,200	49,400
	Raetaland	Raeteni	36,100	55%	66,600	3,800	70,300
	Ailgarthavuld	Ailgarthavuld	76,800	40%	153,100	9,000	162,100
	Waldingavuld	Waldingavuld	28,900	30%	88,400	5,300	93,700
Ehwathrumi	Antharavuld	Antharavuld	56,900	45%	78,200	4,000	82,200
	Beorillavuld	Beorillavuld	37,700	50%	81,200	5,200	86,300
	Gadraughavuld	Gadraughavuld	63,200	55%	81,200	4,400	85,600
	Eodaravuld	Eodaravuld	46,900	50%	88,400	6,500	94,900
	Padaruvuld	Padaruvuld	67,800	43%	174,700	7,900	182,600
	Wensgaujas	Wensgaujarar'is	41,300	50%	128,000	9,600	137,600
		Wensgaujarar'esed	30,800	0.6	76,300	5,600	81,900
Choreren	Chorengar	Chorengar	152,500	45%	475,100	36,100	511,300
Númenóreans	Gondor	Dor Rhúnen	60,700	45%	203,200	13,500	216,700
total			1,019,800		2,524,200	167,500	2,691,700

The maps on pages 166 and 167 depict the overall situation in Rhovanion for this timeframe. Specific notes are given directly in context with each map.

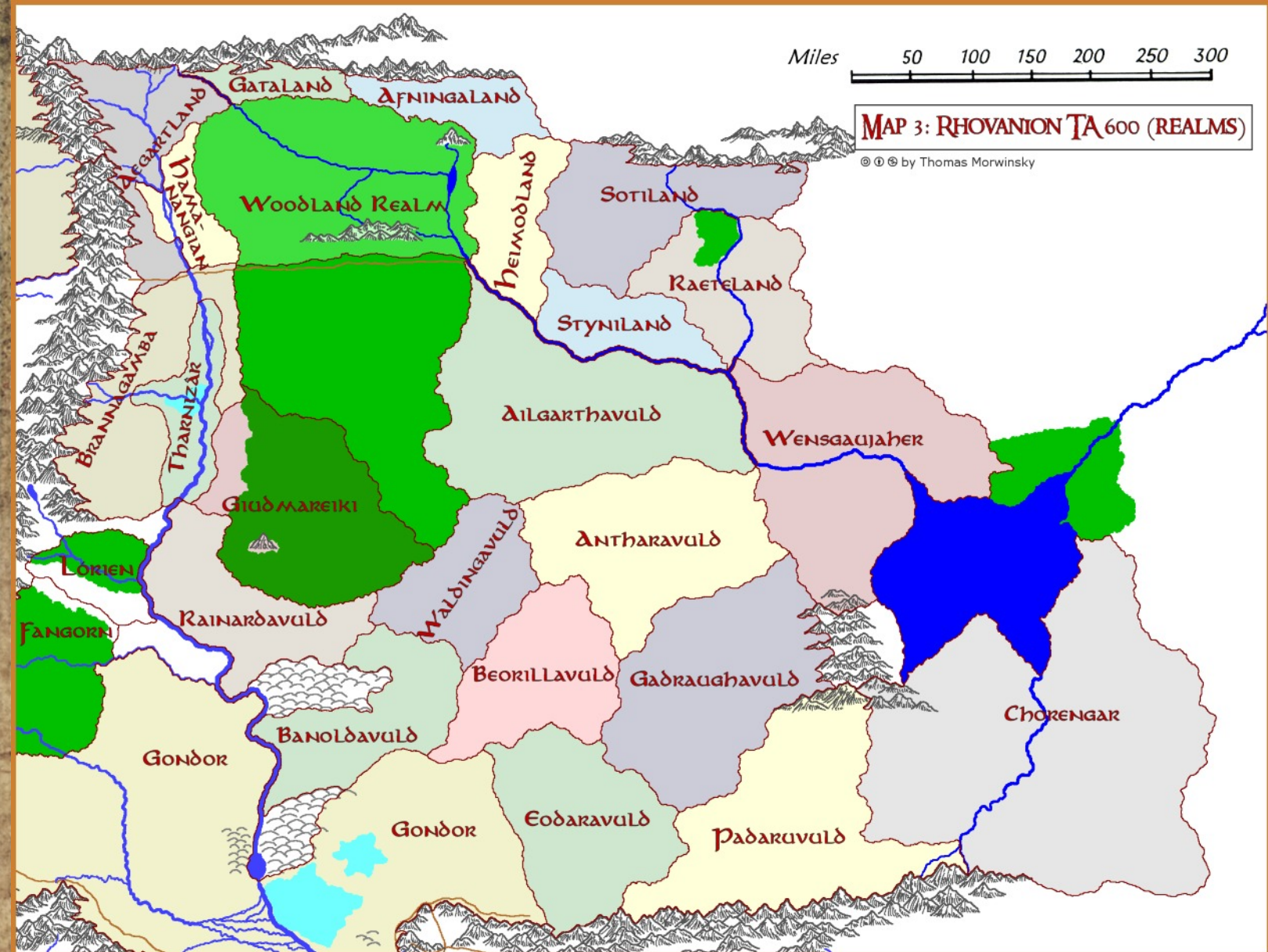


Ylāṛḡṛḡ ƛ
ṛṡṛṛṛ ṛḡṛṛ ṛḡṛṛṛṛṛ

Römendacil I © by Matej Cadil, used with permission



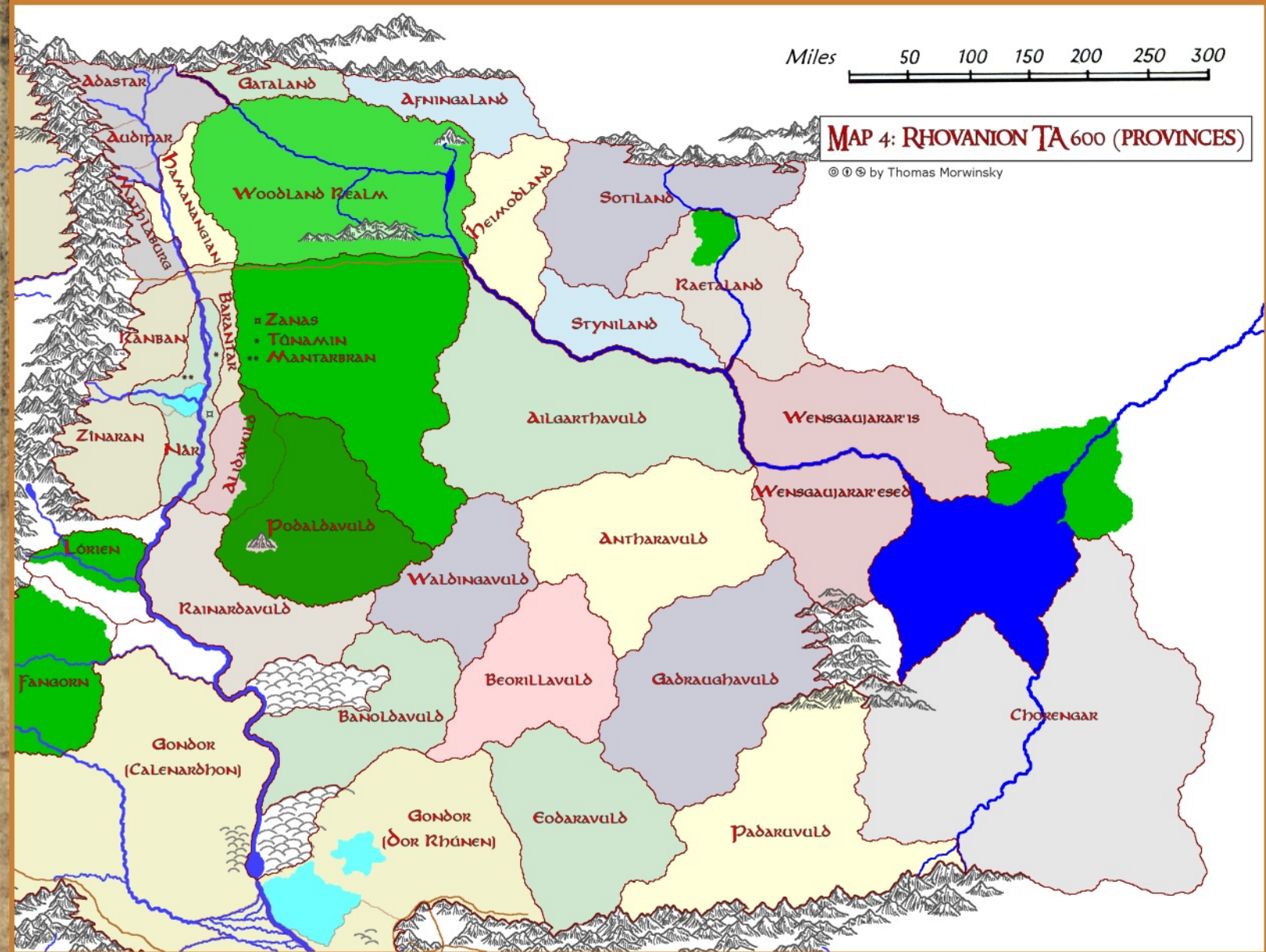
Map 2: One should not be deceived by the continuous colours of this map in thinking that Rhovanion was settled throughout. The areas (and borders which might suggest such a context) only show the area where the various ethnicities form a majority. It says absolutely nothing about the density of these areas. For example, if only 1 person of ethnicity A lives on average per 10 square kilometers in an area (and no others do), then it is the majority. And if other ethnicities average at 0.5 people in the same area, ethnicity A still is the dominant one. So, in a word, please don't view this map as one representing a homogenous and continuous settlement pattern. What it does show however, is the dominance of the various edainic groups apart from the Hobbits and the Choreren Easterlings in the Southeast of Rhovanion. The "Marachian" Ehwathrumi and the "Bëorian" Vogningi are the greatest of these ethnicities and dominate central and northern Rhovanion.



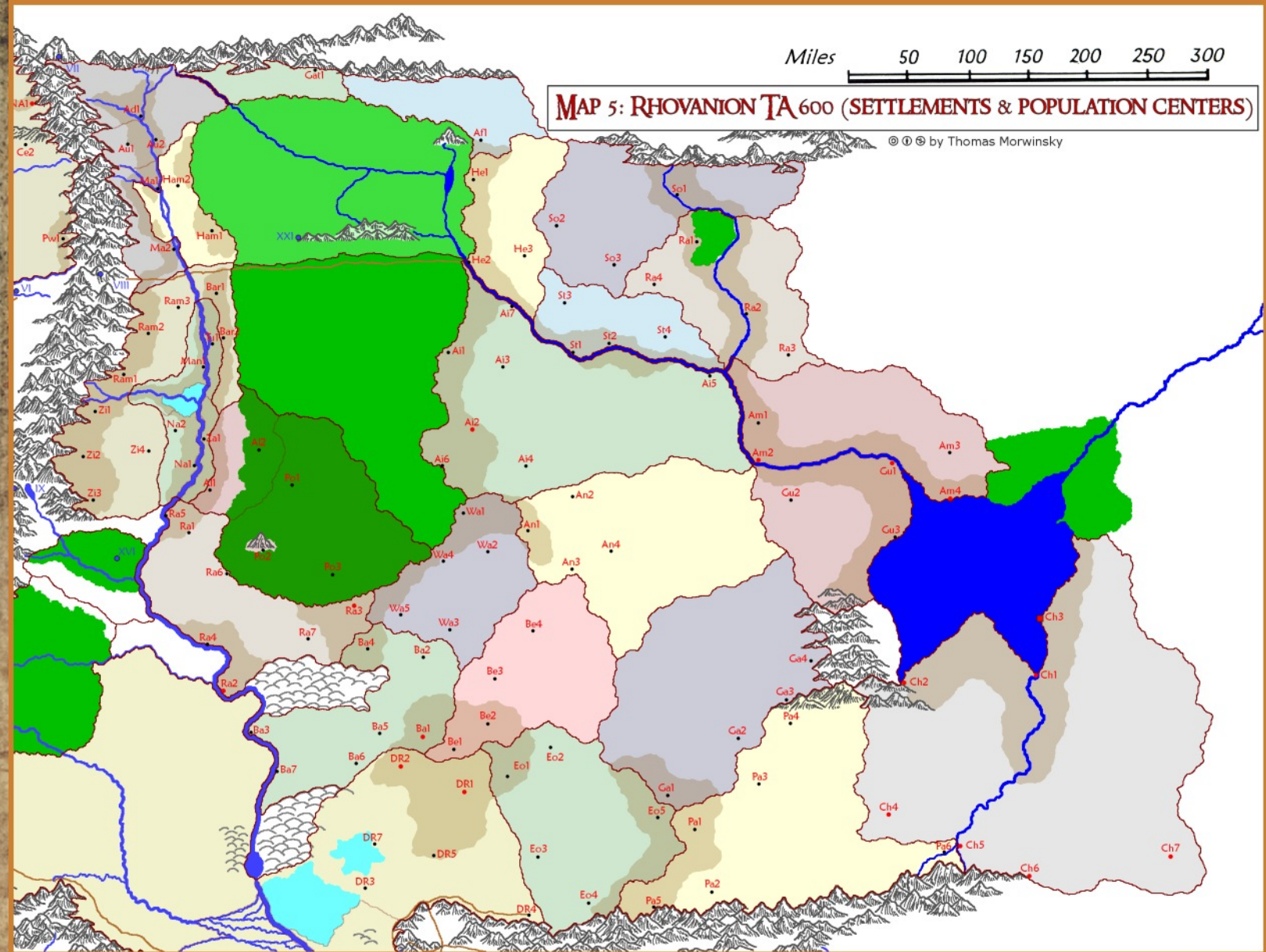
Map 3: In contrast to the cultural / ethnic map, politically Rhovanion is much more divided in this time. It is dominated by numerous small princedoms that vie for power, booty and the favour of Gondor - at least in the southwestern part of Wilderland.

Apart from Chorengar there exists no strong or dominating non-Númenórean realm in this time. And the Easterlings' power is held in check by the combined Ehwathrumi who - despite all internal differences - can mostly agree on a common defense in case the Easterlings get too ambitious. Unfortunately (for the Northmen), such alliances are invariably short-lived and fragment as soon as the common threat subsides.

Northern Rhovanion is a remote backwater in these times and it plays no role in the plans and strategies of the major powers.



Map 4: There are not many subdivisions (called “provinces” for convenience, even if their actual appellation is different) within the realms at this time. This is mostly due to the fact, that the political landscape is already quite fragmented (see Map 3) and thus there is neither room nor necessity for further subdivisions. The subdivisions among the Hobbits’ realms show their respective affiliations to influential “lords”, but thzat realtes primarily to domestic politics. The less ambitious nature of Hobbits is thus already seen in this early time.



Map 5: By this time, the focus of the population centers of Rhovanion lies in the East. Chorenar and the Celduin valley harbour the region's most populous settlements.

TA 1400

Year of the Third Age	Event
1437	King Eldacar flees to his relatives in Rhovanion after his defeat in the Kin-strife.
1447	Eldacar defeats his enemies with the help of many warriors from Rhovanion. Afterwards, he shows favour to the Northmen who helped him regain his throne.
ca. 1550	The Vidugavian Northmen reach the apogee of their power.
ca. 1570	From about this time on, Gondor's interests begin to shift slowly southward, increasingly neglecting Rhovanion.
1633	A mysterious earth-going vessel is reported by some people, though no evidence is ever found.
1635	In the winter of this year the first wave of the Plague hits Rhovanion, killing indiscriminately within the crowded homes.

This era covers the heyday of the “old order” in Rhovanion, with Gondor as the hegemonial power presiding over a system of powerful client-principalities to protect his eastern border and secure his interests here. The Northmen rule all of Rhovanion, with their power and reach unmatched in later years.

The Anduin Vales

In the last 800 years, the Estaravi have grown considerably, taking over almost all of the former Fallohide lands. By now they have developed into two still related, but already divided people. The northern branch has retained the original name and accepted the Witch-king as their supreme lord and

they are now firmly integrated into the realm of Angmar. Their outlook has become grim, though their power has increased considerably. Their southern cousins, now calling themselves Madugardi, remain independent, but maintain quite good relations with their northern relatives. The Witch-king is interested in a secure eastern flank in his war with Arnor and therefore avoids antagonizing the people in the Anduin Vales. Quite to the contrary, he wants these people as intermediaries for his trade and an independent/neutral buffer against potential attacks from the South. The Madugardi do not share the growing grimness of the Estaravi though and keep good contacts with all other people in the area, making them perfect intermediaries for the lord of Angmar. Their main settlement is at Mathlaburg – the trading hub of the Upper Anduin Vales.

Central and eastern Rhovanion

The growing Shadow in Southern Mirkwood has caused the Grama to retreat southward along the Anduin, and now they are no longer in close contact with the people of the Anduin Vales. This makes contacts with Folk of the Vales more difficult, though the Anduin still is the trading artery in western Rhovanion.

This time sees the heyday of Ehwathrumi power and influence. Among these, the realm of Vidugavia’s successors (Vidugavuld) is the hegemonial power in central and southern Rhovanion. In the near future it will play a pivotal role in Gondor’s Kin-strife, giving shelter to Eldacar in his exile and helping him to form an army to win back his kingdom. In the wake of Rómendacil II’s Great Cam-



paign in the mid-13th century, the lords of Vidugavuld were able to extend their influence up to the Celduin, dominating the resident Wensgaujas. After his final victory, Eldacar honours this support, both by giving many Northmen high ranks in Gondor, but also by substantially supporting the prince of Vidugavuld in his rhovanic policies. This support boosts Vidugavuld's power and leads to the realm's apogee in the mid- 16th century that lasted almost unto the Great Plague. In these years, Vidugavulds power extends from Mirkwood to the Celduin and its lords are the most powerful princes by far.

The Choreren have recovered somewhat from their defeat in the mid-13th century, being the primary targets of Rómen-dacil II's campaign. Still their territory has shrunken and they do'ntt only have to look to the West for enemies. Eastward of their territory there are other men awaiting their chance for plunder and glory. Chorengar is Angmar's most important partner in the area, providing a reliable supply base for goods and warriors that are channelled through the rhovanian traderoutes along the Celduin and then the east road and Anduin. This artery is the reason why the Witch-king is so tame in his activity in Rhovanion compared to Eriador. In addition, it lies beyond the reach of his enemies and thus is safe from retribution. The realm of Chorengar as well as its main city of Gelakles are known in the West as Mistrand.

Northern Rhovanion

North of Celduin, the settlement patterns of the Vogningi have changed little, lying on the fringe of Rhovanion in a region less attractive and fertile than those to the south. Politically, they are still fragmented in many lesser princedoms. Trade and

friendly contacts especially in the southern parts of their lordships have led to some mingling with the Ehwithrumi to the South.

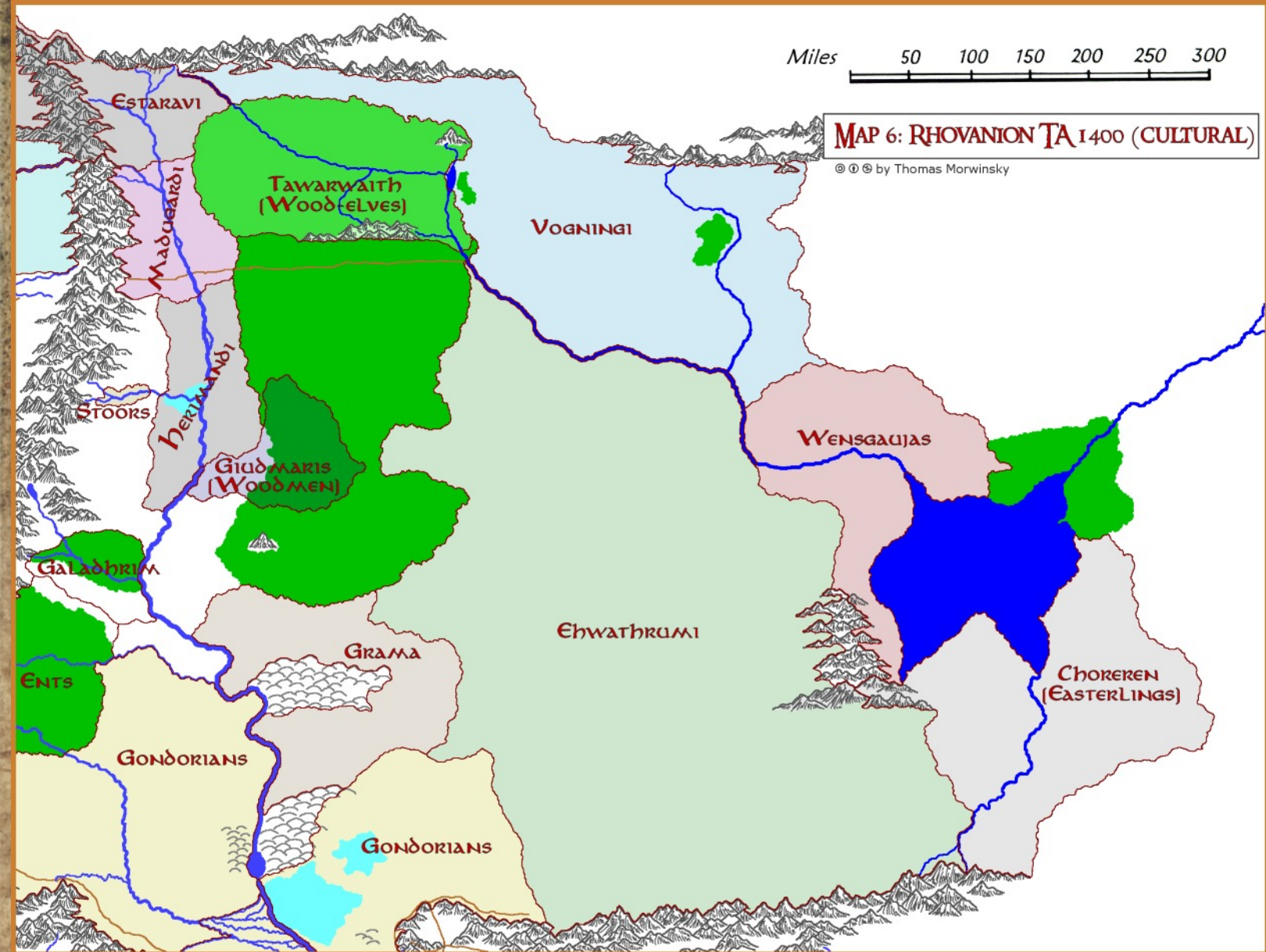
They are of no great interest to Angmar, since the – possible – route round the northern edge of Mirkwood is both longer and more difficult than the southerly one through Mirkwood and then up the Anduin. Still, it is a potentially important secondary route and therefore Angmar is very careful and friendly (through the Estaravi) with the few Vogningi living in this area.

The key population figures for this time can be seen in the following table 3:

Table 3: Population figures in TA 1400

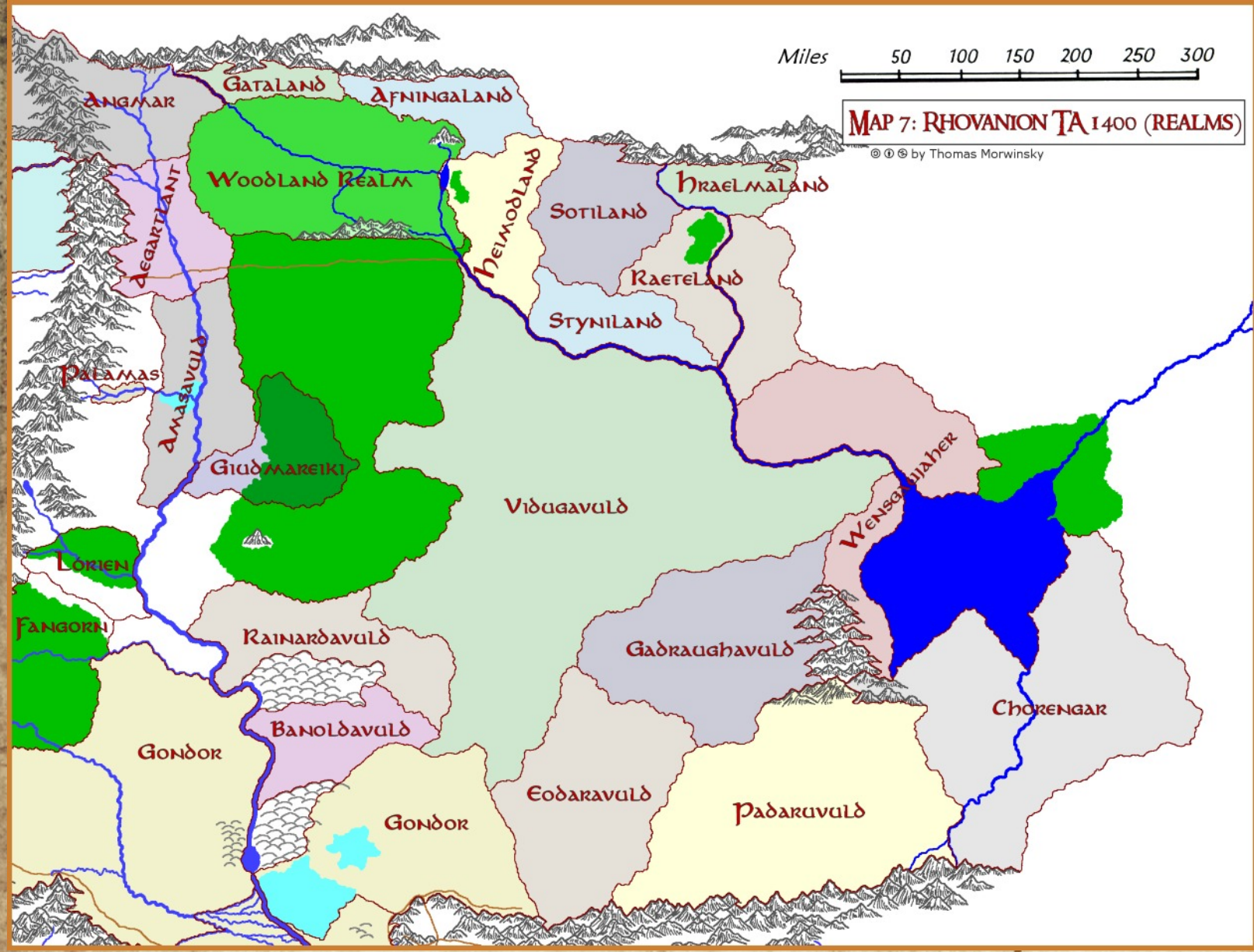
					population			
Culture	Realm	Province/ princedom	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall	
Estaravi	Angmar	Adastar	10,200	40%	123,200	11,900	135,100	
		Audipar	10,500	43%	81,500	7,300	88,900	
Madugardi	Aegartlant	Mathlaburgh	7300	40%	54,100	3,600	57,700	
		Cledinaland	14,900	0.33	102,000	6,400	108,400	
Herimandi	Amasavuld	Arimalant	12,500	43%	34,800	1,900	36,700	
		Herimerlant	8,500	45%	26,500	1,500	28,100	
		Gaudalant	8000	0.43	20,300	1,000	21,300	
Hobbits	Stoors		1,300	25%	7,500	700	8,200	
Woodmen	Giudmareiki		22,400	50%	36,500	2,100	38,600	
Grama	Rainardavuld		32,400	40%	133,200	8,400	141,600	
	Banoldavuld		20,600	33%	107,400	8,200	115,600	
Vogningi	Gataland		7,500	55%	8,600	700	9,300	
	Afningaland		16,100	50%	37,500	2,400	39,900	
	Heimodland	Audigdeill	14,400	30%	51,200	3,700	54,800	
	Heimodland	Herrá	9,100	28%	35,500	2,600	38,000	
	Styniland		18,300	35%	77,100	6,100	83,300	
	Sotiland	Efrivollr	17,500	55%	25,700	1,400	27,100	
		Nedrivollr	10,200	55%	15,400	800	16,200	
	Hraelmaland		10,800	35%	27,200	1,700	28,900	
	Raeteland	Skógrland	16,400	50%	34,400	2,400	36,800	
		Farrijód	20,000	45%	49,000	3,600	52,600	
	Ehwathrumi	Vidugavuld	Ailgardi	63,500	40%	166,100	10,000	176,100
			Waldingardi	48,900	33%	221,000	14,400	235,400
			Anthagardi	63,000	50%	102,400	5,700	108,100
			Beogardi	34,200	35%	123,200	7,800	131,000
Gadraughavuld		Vuralgardi	33,800	50%	50,900	2,800	53,700	
		Hendagardi	25,200	33%	90,400	6,300	96,700	
Eodaravuld			56,300	40%	134,600	9,700	144,300	
Padaruvuld		Pannagardi	29700	40%	112,400	7,100	119,600	
Padaruvuld	Gulemardi	64,000	35%	132,600	5,700	138,300		
	Wensgaujas	Wensgaujaher	Amnulaher	38,900	38%	159,500	12,100	171,600
		Guliaher	12,500	30%	80,300	5,600	85,900	
	Choreren	Chorengar	Deklimalda	35,500	30%	190,500	16,400	207,000
		Veltenulda	44,200	35%	152,700	12,600	165,300	
		Jirzesda	16,800	40%	40,200	3,200	43,400	
Númenóreans	Gondor	Dor Rhúnen	60,700	43%	295,400	24,200	319,500	
	Rhovanion total:		916,200		3,140,800	221,900	3,362,700	

oðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher oðher þingðs ætjð hæitðs

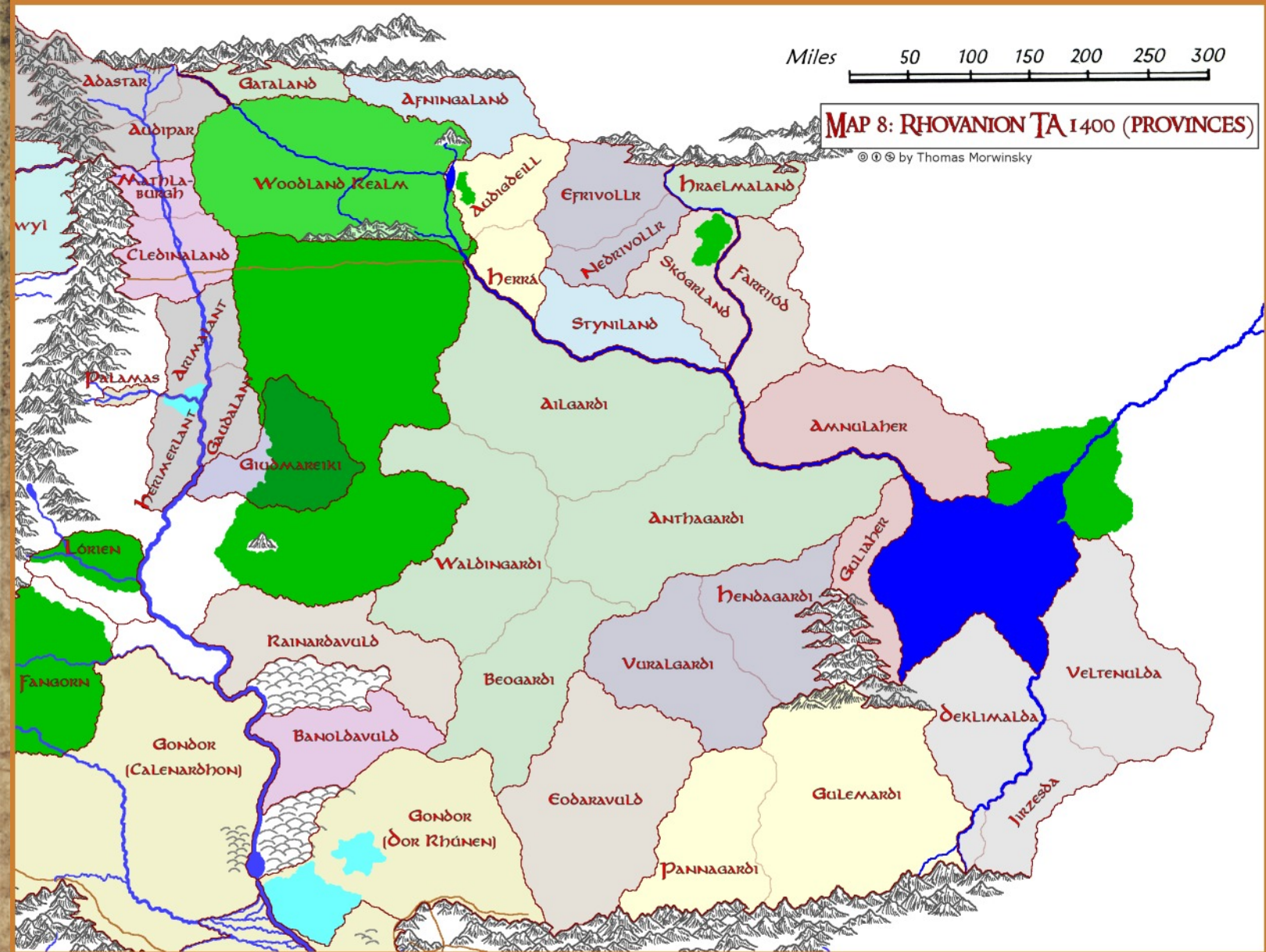


Map 6: In this time, the ethnic distribution has not changed significantly with two exceptions: In the Southeast, the Ehwathrumi gained territory at the expense of the Choreren, while in the Anduin Vales the Hobbits have almost vanished: After the complete departure of all Hobbits, some Stoors returned a few decades ago and settled along the upper Gladden.

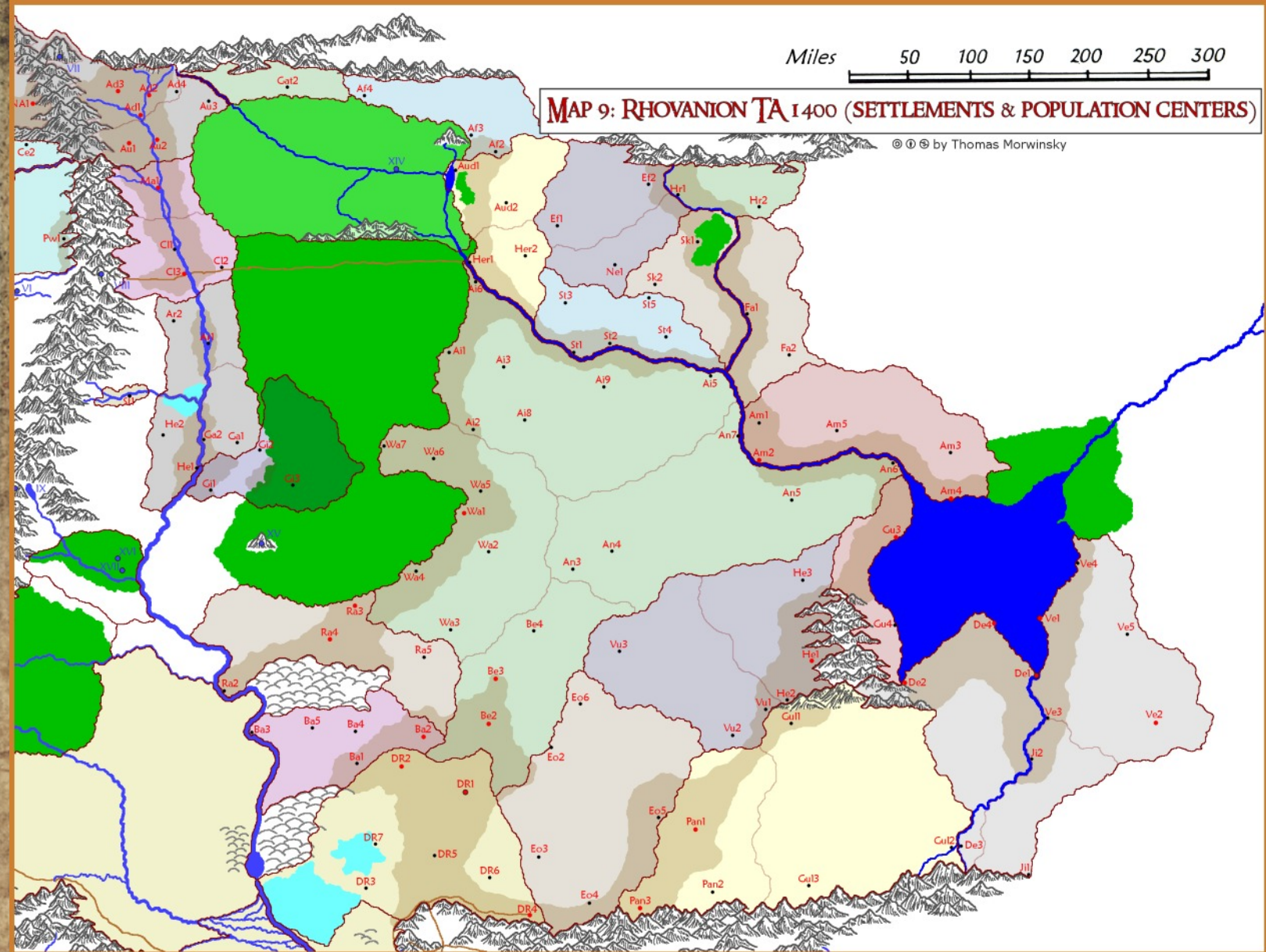
oðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher þingðs ætjð hæitðsoðher oðher þingðs ætjð hæitðs



Map 7: The political map in this time shows the dominating position of Vidugavuld (the realm of Vidugavia's successors). This situation is the height of Gondor's client-kingdom system in Rhovanion and the apogee of the Númenóreans' influence here.



Map 8: The development of larger political entities has also led to the establishment of more subdivision. In the case of Vidugavuld, formerly independent princedoms now are part of the larger realm, but their lords are persons of power and influence at the seat of the king. This greater unity has also helped ease trade and greater riches for their people, making the loss of independence much easier to bear.



Map 9: The most striking development now is the development of several larger settlements in the central and western parts of Rhovanion. The stability brought by Gondor's power and the greater unity among the Ehwathrumi has led to an increase in population and settlements.

TA 1640

The waning of the Northmen of Rhovanion began with the Great Plague, which appeared there in the winter of the year 1635 and soon spread to Gondor [...] When the Plague passed it is said that more than half of the folk of Rhovanion had perished, and of their horses also.

They [the Northmen] were slow to recover; but their weakness was not tested for a long time. No doubt the people further east had been equally afflicted,[...]

—*Unfinished Tales. Cirion and Eorl and the friendship of Gondor and Rohan*

Overall

This era is a dark one. Five years ago, the Great Plague hit Rhovanion with devastating force. As we see from the quote above, less than half of the

people survived its impact. This is **the most** traumatic and catastrophic event in Rhovanion during the entire Third Age. Neither the Wainrider or Balchoth invasions, nor the Necromancer in Dol Guldur or later Smaug’s attack on Erebor have caused deaths and upheavals in societies of this magnitude. To have a comparison what we are talking about, the estimates for the real-world plague epidemic in the mid-14th century AD peak at about one



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Ehwathrumi burial

Year of the Third Age	Event
1640	Gondor begins a slow recovery from the immediate effects of the Great Plague when the new king Tarondor begins to reorganize his realm. The default MERP campaign time
since ca. 1640	The Northmen begin their slow recovery from the Great Plague.
ca. 1800	The Mardumhesta begin to invade south-eastern Rhovanion.
ca. 1820	The folk of Rhovanion has regained much of its pre-Plague strength.
1830	The Angmarean province of Deldined is established.
1845	The Ehwathrumi notice the first increase in border conflicts to the east with the Choreren.
1846	It becomes clear that the Choreren are subject to a new people – the Mardumhesta (Wainriders) that attack the Ehwathrumi in earnest.
1847-50	In a series of campaigns, the main forces of the Ehwathrumi are defeated by the Wainriders. Their calls for help to Gondor initially fall on deaf ears in Minas Anor.
1851	The Wainriders attack Gondorian territory for the first time. In the same year, Arthedain wins a victory against an Angmarean invasion.
1851-1856	The Wainriders consolidate their gains in eastern and central Rhovanion.
1856	Gondor assembles a great army, augmented by the surviving Ehwathrumi forces and challenges the Wainriders in a great battle which ends in disaster. Narmacil II falls in battle and Gondor loses its eastern territories, retaining only Ithilien east of the Anduin.
ca. 1857-1870	Some Ehwathrumi unwilling to live as thralls of the Wainriders flee westward to the Anduin Vales and there rename themselves as the Éothéod.
1860-70	Other Ehwathrumi flee northward beyond Celduin. They come into conflict with the local Vogningi. Finally, an agreement is reached and both people begin to merge into a new culture.
1867	Official establishment of the first Marhathiuda realm of Taulagard (the East Riding), followed shortly after by Valiagard (the North Riding). Tensions between the two founding cultures persist though.
ca. 1870-1890	Mardumhesta attacks upon the Vinidira.
1895	Final defeat of the Vinidira.
1899	The Éothéod ally with Gondor to win back Rhovanion. Calimehtar wins a great victory against the Wainriders. A simultaneous Éothéod-organized revolt destroys many Wainrider settlements, but fails in the end. The Éothéod return to the Anduin Vales, giving up all hope of re-claiming their ancient homes on the rhovanic plains.
ca. 1900-1950	The fruitless victory and the losses from the previous war weaken the Éotheód position in the Anduin Vales and limit their territory amid their neighbours. Only the looming presence of Angmar prevents an outright conflict among the Northmen in the Middle Anduin Vales.
ca. 1930	The Marhathiuda are finally beginning to view themselves as a single people.

third of Europe's population. It took the continent long to recover and it seared into the collective memory of Europe's population. No single illness causes such fears than the mere mentioning of plague. The death of more than half the people of an area the size of Middle Europe in only two to three years is nothing less than a total catastrophe for the political, economic, military and cultural situation of the areas so affected. It was probably an almost overwhelming challenge for the surviving lords to keep even a semblance of order. Many areas probably saw the complete breakdown of societies, customs and law.

Around the year 1640 the situation probably slowly gets back to something resembling normalcy. People begin to re-organize their communities and return to regular life as good as possible. The world did not end, but it was changed forever. For campaign ideas set in this time as well as the implications for the men living in such times, *The 1640 Campaign – Facts and Problems* published in *Other Hands*, Issue 22 from July 1998 (downloadable through the *Other Minds* website) provides some good ideas.

In terms of adventure, this period is probably as unheroic as it can get. People think of bare day-to-day survival rather than grand strategies and noble deeds and nothing happens except people dying (and often quite miserably). If you play a few years earlier, during the Plague, it is even more unheroic: People pass away like flies and there is nothing that can be done against it. Women, children, heroes, warriors and elders perish indiscriminately, struck down by an omnipresent but unseen foe. Fatalism and superstition runs rampant. It must seem to people like a gamble who will die and who will survive. Superstition and xenophobia are likely to soar ("Just when these strangers/adventurers arrived in the village/town, people began to become sick. He/they brought doom upon us – hang him/them right now!").

The population density within the settled areas is comparable to the pre-Plague levels, but the absolute amount of settled territory is only at a fraction of its former level.

The vast unsettled territories in between are dotted with ruins of deserted settlements, signs of mass graves and an overall depressing atmosphere of loss and death.

The Anduin Vales

The Vales have been hit as hard as most other regions, and consequently the territory of the independent lordships south of eastern Angmar has shrunk drastically. The Estaravi suffered as much, but the existence of a strong central government in Angmar prevented the worst effects and enabled the realm to hold most of its eastern territories. Later on, it is able to recover quickly from the pestilence, and enlarging its territory southward, assimilating some Madugardi and making Mathlaburg the centre of its new province of Deldined. The prospects for a further expansion southward are excellent, which is viewed with somewhat mixed feelings by many people in the Anduin Vales, especially since Angmar is increasingly propagating evil ideology and becoming much more dominating with all its neighbours.

The Madugardi and all other Men (and the Stoors!) see this with somewhat mixed feelings or even outright defiance, now that Angmar is slowly becoming expansionistic and aggressive even in western Rhovanion.

Central and eastern Rhovanion

The enormous losses in life caused by the Plague are also reflected in territorial losses, since the lands were quite thinly populated to begin with and the pestilence caused many survivors to flee their old homes and relocate elsewhere. In the years immediately after the Plague, the Ehwathrumi population clusters in the western parts of its former territory, while the Choreren and Wensgaujas now are confined to their core territories along the waterways and coasts of the Inland Sea.

The number of settlements dropped drastically as well, and many former settlements are deserted, silent testimony to the great unseen killer. The Mar-dumhesta (Wainriders) are able to exploit the period of relative weakness among the established people of south-eastern Rhovanion (which has not fully recovered to pre-Plague levels) when they begin their invasion in the early 19th century. This results in the collapse of Gondor's client-princeloms and the loss

Plague refugees arriving



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

The sack of Rhúnost



Northern Rhovanion

At first the situation north of Celduin is comparable to most other areas with many people dying, settlements being deserted and struggling political control. Afterwards, a gradual recovery takes place. The most important change in this era happens with the Ehwathrumi being decisively defeated by the Mardumhesta (Wainriders) and becoming subject to the latter. Those Ehwathrumi who were not content with their subordination to the new masters fled either westward to the Vales of Anduin (and becoming the Éothéod) or northward beyond Celduin. These latter vied with the indigenous Vogningi for the land, but instead of fighting for land and supremacy, the chieftains of both groups recognize the folly of such action. They recognize that they both only have a realistic chance of survival and staying inde-

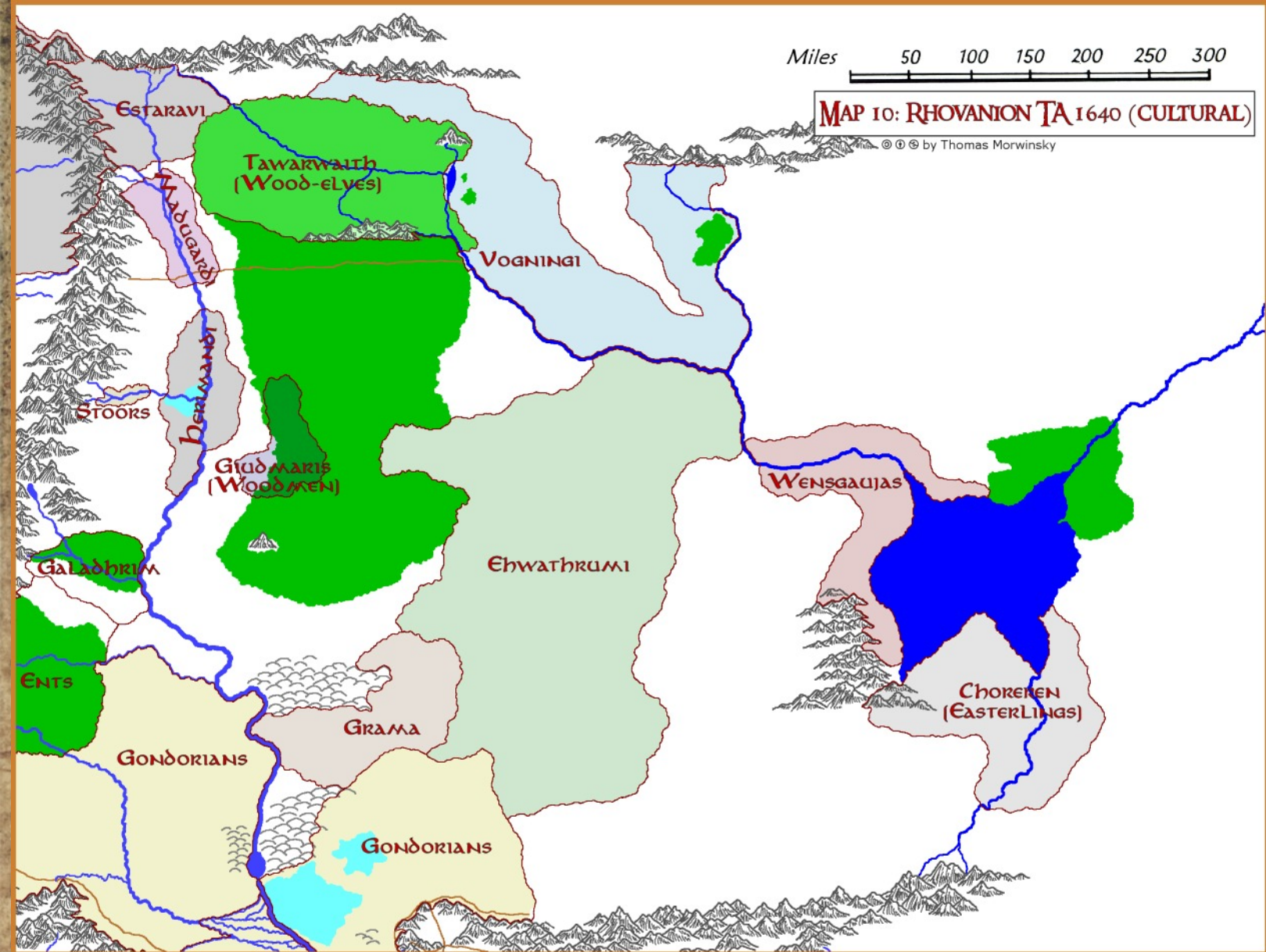
pendent if they unite. The result of this union are the **Marhathiuda**, the horse-lords of northern Rhovanion. From the official act of union it is still some time before the bulk of the population feels as one people, but it works. This is the beginning of a new culture that will decisively shape the fate of great areas of Northern Rhovanion until the end of the Third Age. Their territory stretches roughly over the eastern two-thirds of the lands between Mirkwood and the Carnen. There are two princedoms occupying this area, Valiagard and Taulagard

In this time, there is still no Dale and the Lonely Mountain lies within the borders of Mirkwood. The Long Lake area is already deforested though and the centre of regional commerce.

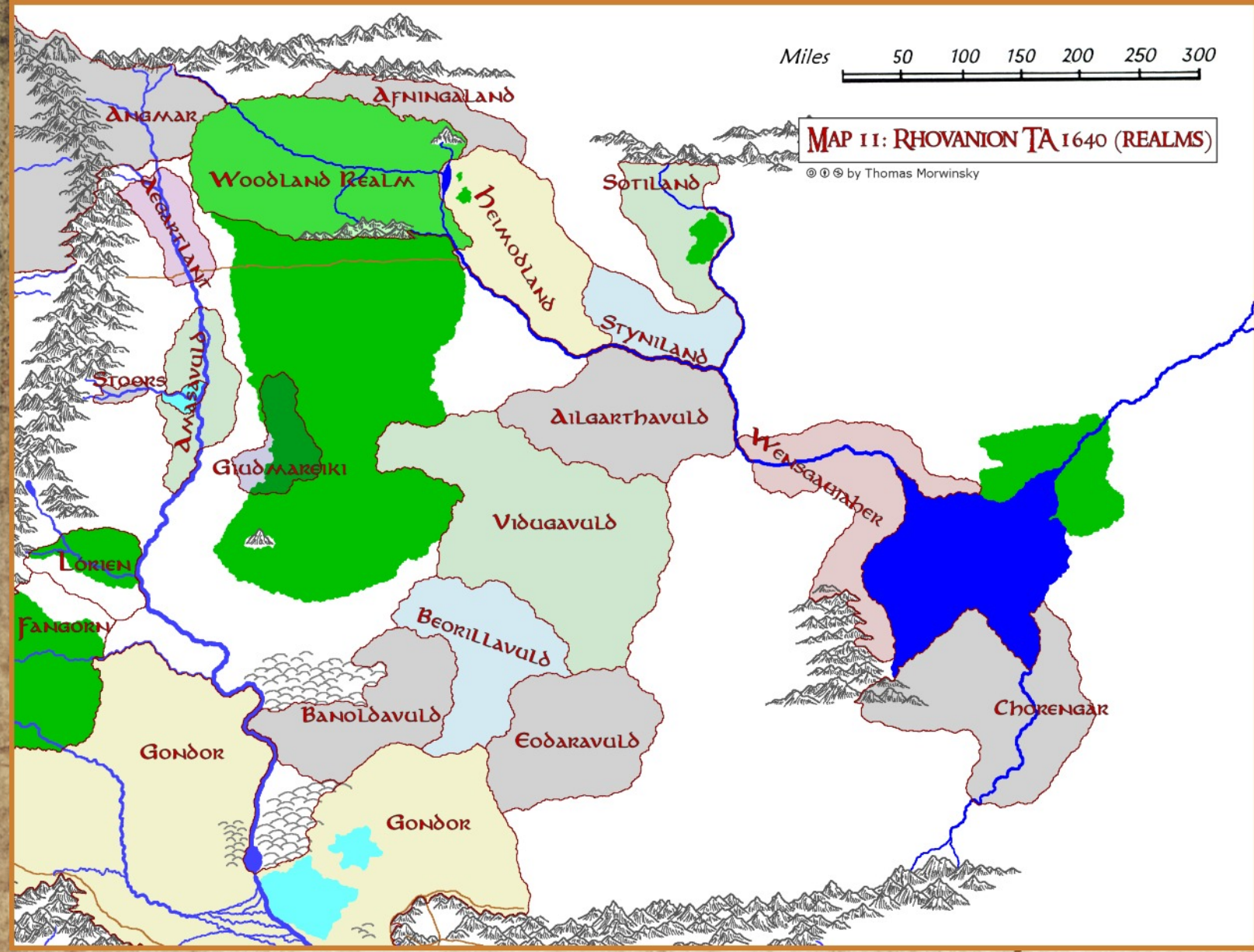
Concerning the precise changes in numbers since TA 1400, please check the following table 4.

Table 4: Population figures in TA 1640

Culture	Realm	Province/ princedom	Territory (km2)	population			
				wild	rural	urban	overall
Estaravi	Angmar	Adastar	10400	40%	91100	5,800	96,900
		Audipar	10,700	38%	58,700	3,700	62,400
Madugardi	Mathlaburgh		10800	45%	54,800	3,200	58,000
Herimandi	Amasavuld	Arimalant	7,600	43%	29,900	1,700	31,700
		Gaudalant	8200	45%	30,800	1,700	32,400
Hobbits	Stoors		1,400	45%	5,300	500	5,800
Woodmen	Giudmareiki		11,200	55%	15,800	1,100	16,900
Grama	Gramavuld		30,300	45%	62,700	3,500	66,200
Vogningi	Afningaland		12,500	50%	28,400	1,800	30,200
	Heimodland	Audigdeill	13400	48%	29,300	2,000	31,300
		Herrá	21,100	48%	38,600	2,700	41,200
	Styniland		16,600	40%	46,700	3,600	50,300
Ehwathrumi	Sotiland		19,600	55%	23,900	1,300	25,100
	Ailgathavuld		39,200	35%	106,900	5,800	112,700
		Vidugavuld	39,500	35%	127,700	8,600	136,300
		Anthagardi	38,400	43%	101,300	5,100	106,400
		Beorillavuld	30,500	35%	80,400	4,000	84,400
Wensgaujas	Eodaravuld		35,000	40%	74,800	4,300	79,100
		Wensgaujaher	19,200	55%	50,800	2,400	53,200
		Guliaher	14,700	53%	48,200	2,400	50,600
Choreren	Chorengar	Deklimalda	24,600	50%	81,300	5,400	86,600
		Veltenulda	23,200	55%	51,700	2,700	54,400
Númenórean	Dor Rhúnen	Dor Rhúnen	61,300	53%	110,500	7,400	118,000
Rhovanion total:			499,300		1,349,500	80,600	1,430,100



Map 10: Like for almost all matters, the Great Plague has left a devastating impact on Rhovanion. The territories of the various people have not changed much, but the extent of the settled land has shrunk drastically. Large swaths of formerly prosperous regions are left desolated and full of ruins and the remnants of their former (and now dead or fled) inhabitants.



Map 11: The Plague has not only killed countless people, it also battered the political system of Rhovanion profoundly. Great parts of former Vidugavulð have broken away, forming again independent lordships. Almost all other territories cling to their area, but barely so. Beside that, the reach and settled area of the princedoms has shrunk significantly. The recent subsiding of the pestilence and the associated instability has sparked hope that order will eventually return.

182
 օճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր օճեր թորձ արդ հարձ



183

TA 1940

The Anduin Vales

The third evil was the invasion of the Wainriders, which sapped the waning strength of Gondor in wars that lasted for almost a hundred years. The Wainriders were a people, or a confederacy of many peoples, that came from the East; but they were stronger and better armed than any that had appeared before. They journeyed in great wains, and their chieftains fought in chariots.

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A

In the Anduin Vales, the arrival of the Éothéod is seen with positive feelings by the local Herimandi and Madugardi since the newcomers can be counted on as allies in the event that Angmar would eventually decide on further expanding southward, which both the Herimandi and Madugardi are unwilling to accept. Therefore, the Éothéod are welcomed as support and being given land for their own in the area between the Carrock and the Gladden Fields.

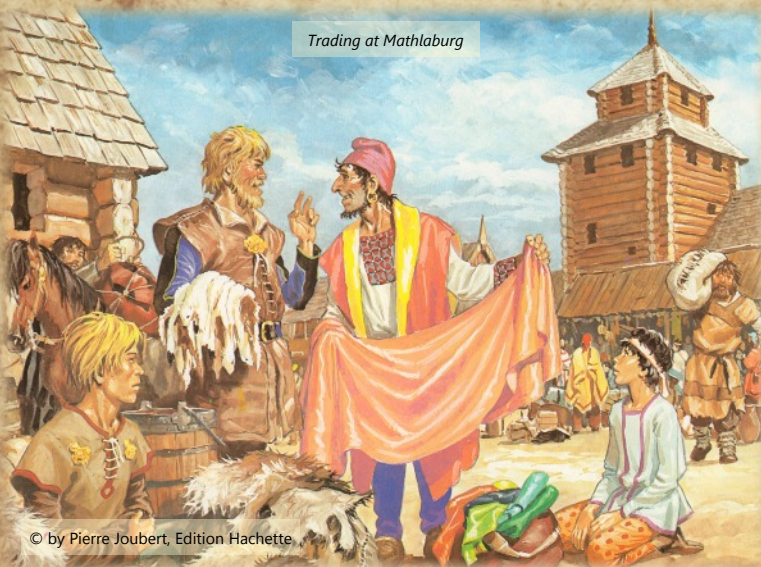
Angmar is on the verge of dominating the whole Anduin Vales in the early 1970s, when it is utterly defeated in Eriador. Shortly after its eastern territories collapse as well. Losses in the war, internal strife and attacks from orcs break the back of Estaravi power and the free Northmen take the opportunity of leading a campaign against the remnants of Angmar and winning land for themselves.

Year of the Third Age	Event
1944	The third Wainrider War. King Ondóher of Gondor and his two sons fall in battle. Constitutional crisis in Gondor when Arvedui of Arthedain claims the throne of Gondor.
1945	Earnil (victor against the Wainriders), a distant relative of the kings is given the throne of the South-kingdom
ca. 1945-55	Gondor and Arthedain again strengthen their relations and form an alliance as they perceive a single power in the attempts to destroy the remnants of the Númenóreans.
ca. 1950	The last people in Taulagard and Valiagard seeing themselves as belonging to the “old” Vogningi and Ehwathrumi finally assimilate into Marhathiuda mainstream culture.
1974/75	Angmar is utterly defeated in the Fourth Northern War. The power of the Estaravi in the Anduin Vales is shattered as well.
1977	Frumgar leads the Éothéod north, defeating the remnants of the Estaravi in the process, who are either killed or driven off into the inhospitable Northern Waste.
1981	The Dwarves are driven from Moria and for the time wander in Rhovanion.
1999	Thráin I founds the “Kingdom under the Mountain” in Erebor. The forest that has grown until now around the Mountain is gradually cleared.
2001	The town of Bjerga is founded near Erebor. Its people are in close friendship with the Longbeards and are the chief suppliers of food and livestock.
2063	Gandalf visits Dol Guldur in secret. The Necromancer (Sauron in disguise) flees before his identity is revealed. The Watchful peace begins.
2210	Thorin I leaves Erebor for the Grey Mountains. Erebor remains a southern outpost of the Longbeards.
2305-09	Successful campaign of the Wendragarda and Mardumhesta north of Celduin, resulting in territorial gains.
2460	The Watchful Peace ends. Sauron returns with increased strength to Dol Guldur and over the next years the Shadow over Mirkwood lengthens again.
2463	About this time the Stoor Déagol finds the One Ring and is murdered immediately by his friend Sméagol (Gollum).
ca. 2465	Due to the lengthening Shadow, the Giudmaris (Woodmen) begin to gradually retreat further northward within the forest. Around this time, the Wizard Radagast takes his home at Rhosgobel.
ca. 2470	The Bozorgana, a new Easterling people begin to move into south-eastern Rhovanion, gradually conquering the Mardumhesta lordships.
2480	On orders from Sauron, the orcs of the Mountains begin to increase their strongholds. He begins to people Moria with his creatures. Due to this intensified orcish activity, the Giudmaris of Mernureik erect the fastness of Mountain Hall.
2482	The great city of Gelakles on the southern shore of the Sea of Rhûn opens its gates to the victorious Bozorgana.
2490	Soon after assuming rule, Cirion again repairs the key forts along the Anduin and mans them.
ca. 2494	Cirion becomes aware that a new people (the Bozorgana, in the west only known under the derogatory name of “Balchoth”) begin to occupy Rhovanion in earnest.
2498	The Vinihesta are defeated and brought into the Bozorgana Empire.

Especially the Éothéod (being confined between the Madugardi and Herimandi), see the opportunity to increase their territory and escape the pressure from their neighbours. They seize the opportunity and form an alliance against the Estaravi. The Madugardi join in the war, depriving the weakened and disorganized Estaravi of any chance for victory. Their folk is either enslaved, killed or driven off into the inhospitable Northern Waste, where they probably died sooner or later from exposure and starvation. Nothing has been heard from them ever after.

The Madugardi get a fairly large share of the booty by enlarging their territory northward up to the confluence of Greylin and Langwell. Mathlaburg once again flourishes, recovering its old importance as the northern trade hub. Beyond that, the Éothéod settle in their larger, newly-won land.

Soon after, the Watchful Peace begins, and this is a great boon to all the people of the Anduin Vales. The Shadow on Mirkwood retreats deep into the forest to the immediate vicinity of Dol Guldur and the land is almost free of its menacing influence. All the people in the Vales thrive and multiply, including the Stoors, extending to their maximum prosperity in this era.



Trading at Mathlaburg

© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

The Giudmaris (Woodmen) and Herimandi settle a lot of territory in the southern Vales, but experience a setback since the mid-25th century with the Bozorgana (Balchoth) invasion whose raiding parties strike through Mirkwood even into their territory.

Most importantly, in TA 2460, Sauron returns with renewed strength to Dol Guldur, thereby ending the Watchful Peace. Soon thereafter the Shadow on the forest quickly spreads again and threatens the people living there.

Central and eastern Rhovanion



Dol Guldur © by Matej Cadil, used with permission

In the east and south of Wilderland, the Mardumhesta have firmly established their empire in the last 100 years and are still eager for the final conquest of Gondor. In TA 1940, preparations for another – decisive – campaign are underway and it is expected that it can be launched in a few years. The Brivarinda are the main source of the unexpectedly strong cavalry arm in the Wainrider army during the TA 1944 campaign. Despite overwhelming initial success it becomes the greatest Mardumhesta defeat though, after which they show no further interest in attacking the West. Afterwards, more or less content with the *status quo* on their western borders they focus on Rhovanion and the stabilization of their rule there.

From about TA 2000 onwards, the realm (called *Hakamanesh* by its people) settles and remains quite stable for about the next five centuries. One of the most remarkable features is its multi-ethnic design: In the North and West several vassal princedoms mostly of Northmen origin exist (the Brivarinda and Vinidira – respectively). In addition, the Choreren possess a great deal of autonomy as well and retain a relatively pure distinct culture for long years. Even though the western chroniclers wrote about the Mardumhesta (only called “Wainriders” by them) quite pejoratively, the overall rule of the Easterlings is mostly characterized by pragmatism. As long as the other ethnicities do not question the Mardumhesta authority and provide support when it is called for, these foreign lordships have much leeway to manage their own affairs. In a sense, a part of the “old order” of Rhovanion is thus preserved even under the Easterling rule.

This changes after TA 2470, when a new people – the Bozorgana – begin to appear in the East and conquer Hakamanesh piece by piece. Resistance against this new people is partly fierce but some regions and lords willingly take the side of the invad-

ers to avoid harsh retribution. Before the end of the 25th century, the Bozorgana (known only as “Balchoth” in Gondor) have consolidated their rule in Rhovanion. The Chorenghesta (the people emerging from the eventual mixing of the old Choreren and Mardumhesta) maintain their core territory on the southern shores of the Sea of Rhûn. The Vinihesta (the former Vinidira that mixed with the Mardumhesta over the centuries) still control a sizeable territory on the western fringe of the empire.

In the early 24th century, the Mardumhesta also conquer a small area north of Celduin, in alliance with the Wendragarda.

After the gradual conquest of Hakamanesh by the Bozorgana, a remnant of the Mardumhesta that is unwilling to submit to the new masters still hold on, as do the – much reduced – Brivarinda in the north-eastern corner between Mirkwood and Celduin. By the last years of the 25th century, they are hard pressed indeed and it seems only a matter of time before they will succumb as well.

The Wendragarda are able to maintain their semi-neutrality – coupled with a careful support of first the Mardumhesta and later the Bozorgana. In this they are realistic enough to recognize that their

position is both vulnerable but also valuable for their southern neighbours – regardless who they are.

So even before the end of the 25th century the Bozorgana dominate the southern and central plains while the north-central areas are still held by people opposed to them.

Northern Rhovanion

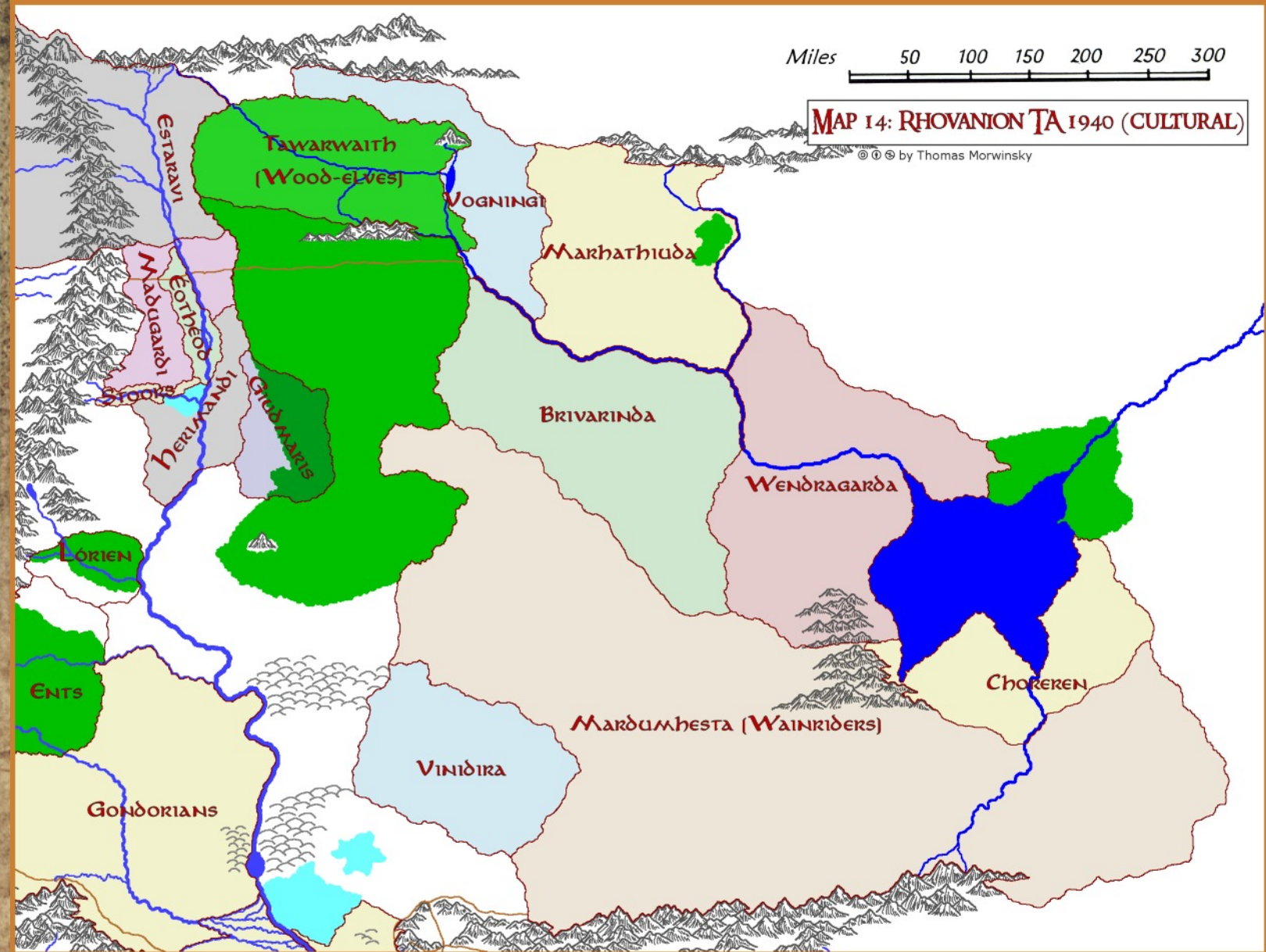


For this part of Rhovanion, this era is one of the most bliss- and successful ones. First the Longbeards settle Erebor and discover the Arkenstone and then later explore the Grey Mountains, unearthing great riches there and trading with the South through the area north of Celduin. The Vogningi greatly profit from the dwarven presence and make alliance with Durin’s Folk soon after it appears at Erebor. The town of Bjerga is founded as the central trading post. It lies almost at the same site as later Dale. This period of the first dwarven presence there is also characterized by an extensive felling of trees whose timber is used in much construction work as well as the smithies of the Longbeards. It is in this time that Erebor is no longer located within the forest, but outside (east) of it.

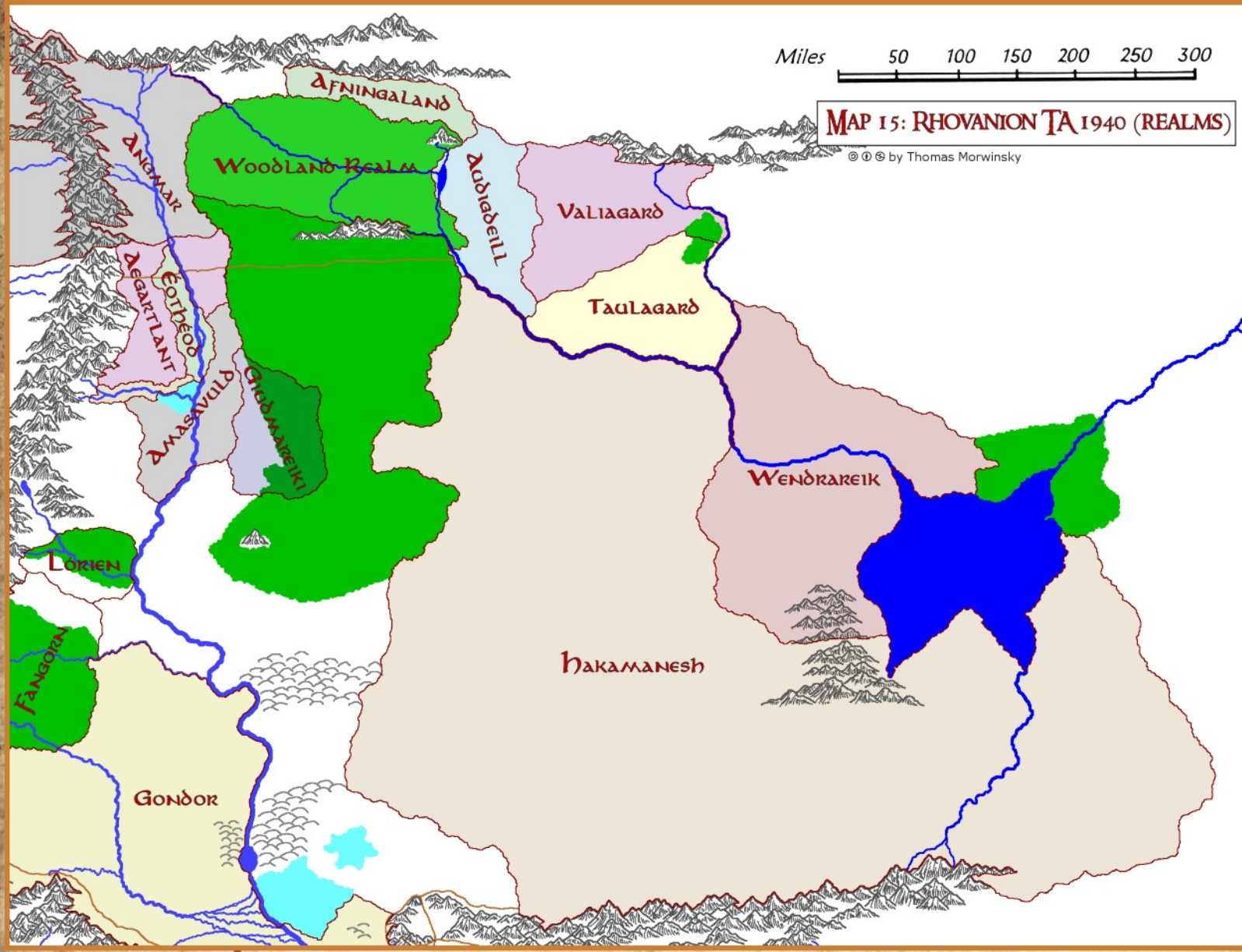
The Marhathiuda take a few decades to become a unique people from their two founding cultures, but in the end a proud new identity emerges. They become an integral part of the people north of Celduin and do get along quite well with the remaining Vogningi in the west. Both are allied in order to check the advance of the Wendragarda and Mardumhesta and plan to regain their lost lands, viewing all territory west of Carnen and north of Celduin as their very own core land.

Table 5: Population figures in TA 1940

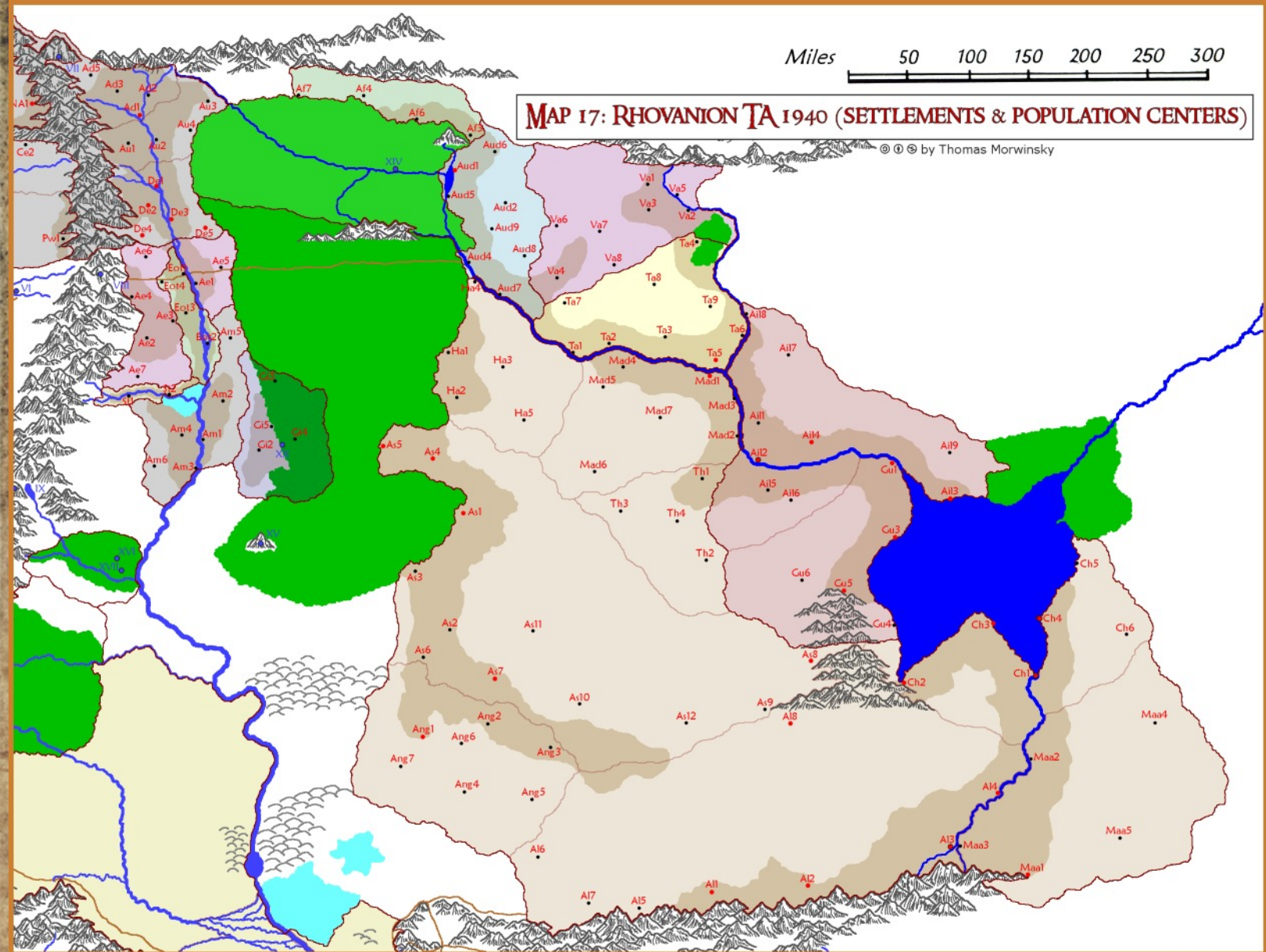
					population		
Culture	realm	Province/ Princedom	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall
Estaravi	Angmar	Adastar	10400	40%	119200	11,300	130,500
		Audipar	10,700	38%	96,500	9,000	105,500
		Deldined	12,500	38%	156800	15,300	172,100
Madugardi	Aegartlant		18,800	35%	108,100	7,500	115,600
Éothéod	Éothéod		6,300	33%	70,000	4,700	74,700
Herimandi	Amasavuld		19,900	35%	102,400	7,600	110,000
Hobbits	Stoors		2,200	25%	13,600	1,400	15,000
Giudmaris (Woodmen)	Giudmareiki		19,400	50%	51,300	3,000	54,300
Vogningi	Afningaland		11,500	48%	48,000	3,400	51,400
	Audigdeill		22,900	35%	149,200	11,000	160,300
Marhathiuda	Valiagard		37,000	45%	116,700	8,200	124,900
	Taulagard		31,600	35%	190,300	12,100	202,400
Brivarinda		Hasugardi	28,800	43%	98,000	5400	103,400
		Madegardi	37,300	40%	147,300	10,000	157,300
		Thiregardi	24,500	43%	79,400	4,700	84,100
Vinidira	Hakamanesh	Angramayn	50,800	40%	142,500	9,800	152,300
Ashkania		143,200	48%	468,400	26,800	495,200	
Mardumhesta (Wainriders)		Alborz	147,300	48%	357,800	23,400	381,200
	Maad	72,800	48%	174,700	9,000	183,800	
Choreren		Chorengar	43,000	38%	231,700	21,800	253,600
Wendragarda	Wendrareik	Ailaher	60,300	43%	311,100	20,100	331,200
		Guliahher	38,600	48%	201,100	12,000	213,200
Rhovanion total:			849800		3,434,500	237,500	3,672,000



Map 14: This era sees the beginning of the Wainrider (Mardumhesta) domination of most of Rhovanion. Remnants of Northmen societies hold out (Brivarinda and Vinidar), but they are subject to the Easterlings. The Marshathiuda have established themselves as a new people in the North.



Map 15: The Wainrider (Mardumhesta) Easterling Empire dominates Rhovanion south of the Celduin, having ended the Ehathrumi rule forever.



Map 17: Due to the recovery of the population after the Great Plague, the number (and size) of cities has risen again significantly.

In the wide lands of Rhovanion, between Mirkwood and the River Running, a fierce people now dwelt, wholly under the shadow of Dol Guldur. Often they made raids through the forest, until the vale of Anduin south of the Gladden was largely deserted. These Balchoth were constantly increased by others of like kind that came in from the east, whereas the people of Calenardhon had dwindled. Cirion was hard put to it to hold the line of the Anduin.

—*The Lord of the Rings. Appendix A*

Year of the Third Age	Event
2509	Celebrian is waylaid and abducted by orcs on the Redhorn Pass. Soon after she is rescued by her sons, but receives a poisoned wound. Elrond heals her, but her joy of Middle-earth is lost.
2510	Celebrian departs over the Sea. Battle on the Field of Celebrant, where Gondor and the Éothéod defeat the Balchoth invaders. Simultaneous Bozorgana campaign against the Mardumhesta and Brivarinda.
2510-12	The Éothéod move to Calenardhon.
2512	Delayed by the disaster at the Field of Celebrant, the Bozorgana crush the Mardumhesta and Brivarinda resistance. Many of the latter flee northward and join their Marhathiuda cousins, founding the third and final Riding: Brivagard.
2520	Angered by the Marhathiuda and Vogningi assistance to the Brivarinda, the Bozorgana attack the North.
2530	After years of fighting, the Easterlings are able to secure the south-eastern corner of the Marhathiuda lands.
2545	The Bozorgana make a second attempt on Rohan (Calenardhon). Gondor sends assistance. The invasion is defeated but Eorl is slain in battle.
ca. 2570	Dragons reappear in the North and begin to afflict the Longbeards in the Grey Mountains.
2574	The Bozorgana demand total submission from the Wendragarda. After this is declined, war is declared.
2589	Dáin together with his second son Frór slain by a great Cold-drake before the gates of his great hall.
2590	Dáin's heir Thrór returns to Erebor while his brother Grór goes to the Iron Hills. About this time, the first organized orcish raids into the Vales begin.
2593	End of the Wendragarda wars. About half of the Wendragarda's lands fall to the Easterlings. Some more lands north of Celduin are seized by the Easterlings against Marhathiuda resistance.
2594	The city of Dale is founded.

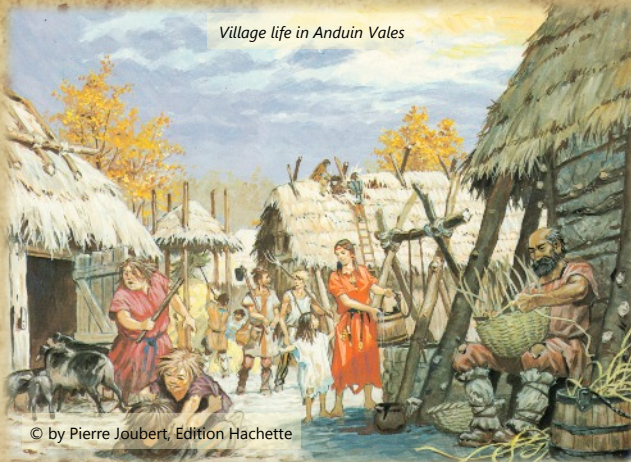
In the early years of the 26th century, the Éothéod are again in trouble. The land they have moved to 500 years ago is becoming too limited for their increased numbers, but there is no easy solution to this. Southward the Madugardi guard their own lands, and beyond their (and the Giudmaris' territory) are the empty lands close to Dol Guldur, which are the only unclaimed ones in the Anduin Vales. For obvious reasons, the Éothéod are not interested in this neighbourhood and any other solution would mean a – very likely – costly war with the Madugardi and/or Giudmaris (and Herimandi) with quite uncertain results. In the east the Vogningi occupy the Narrows, while neither the former lands of Angmar nor the Northern Waste offer viable alternatives. In this difficult situation Gondor calls for help against the Balchoth (Bozorgana). In TA 2510, Eorl, chieftain of the Éothéod bets everything on one card by leading his whole host southward to help the Steward Cirion. The gamble pays off and the Éothéod and Gondor win a crushing victory.

It must be said that Gondor did not only call for help from the Éothéod, but also the other people from the Vales, but none of them had any current or former close ties of friendship or alliance with Gondor, so that the Madugardi, Herimandi and Giudmaris denied Gondor any significant assistance beyond a few symbolic warriors and warm words. These missions are successful in another sense though, since all these people are aware of the Balchoth danger (especially since their lands are being raided or threatened by it as well). For this, and for their kinship, they allow Eorl's host to pass their lands unmolested and even supply it as far as they are able to. Furthermore, some more upright warriors from these lands join Eorl's host due to a sense that this is the right thing to do.

After the victory, Cirion grants the Éothéod the great land of Calenardhon, which results in great treks of people moving from the North to Calenardhon in 2511 and 2512. This is not an easy thing since Eorl had to organize the safe passage of tens of thousands of his people over hundreds of kilometres with Balchoth raiders still a threat.

The Madugardi profit the most from this exodus and enlarge their territory by the former Éothéod lands.

In addition to the departure of their kinsmen, the Men of the Vales are weakened by repeated attacks from the Shadow as well as Bozorgana raids both through the Narrows of the forest as well from the South near Dol Guldur. As a result, the Northmen



Village life in Anduin Vales

© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

In addition to the departure of their kinsmen, the Men of the Vales are weakened by repeated attacks from the Shadow as well as Bozorgana raids both through the Narrows of the forest as well from the South near Dol Guldur. As a result, the Northmen on the eastern shore are gradually pushed northwards to about the latitude of the Gladden Fields. The Herimandi have fared better, being protected by the river.

Apart from the departure of the Éothéod the changes in this area are limited. The territories in the southern parts of the Vales shrink due to Balchoth raids as well as the Shadow from Dol Guldur. The Stoors dwindle in numbers, both due to the Shadow and the pressure of the Big People claiming more land for their own.

In addition, near the end of the 26th century, the now numerous orcs in the mountains begin to raid

the mannish lands on the western bank of the Anduin. Since the routes to their targets are short and invasion vectors plenty, men have to organize an effective defence against this threat.

Central Rhovanion

This era sees the beginning of many changes. The seemingly unstoppable Bozorgana conquer almost the whole Wainrider (Mardumhesta) empire of Hakamanesh and almost destroy Gondor. By the beginning of the 26th century the Chorenghesta and Vinihesta as well as the majority of the remaining Wainriders submit to the new masters. Only in the northern parts of the former Wainrider realm resistance persists. Here the remnants of the Mardumhesta together with the Brivarinda continue their resistance. The campaign that nearly destroys Gondor is only part of a grander strategy, which also includes a simultaneous attack on these people to prevent them from aiding Gondor. While the western attack ends in the well-known disaster for the Bozorgana on the Field of Celebrant, the northern campaign is more successful – even if delayed for two years due to the repercussions of the setback at Parth Celebrant. This defeat sees many Brivarinda fleeing northward to their Marhathiuda cousins, founding the Third Riding – the one which bears the name of their forefathers (Brivagard).

From the onset it is clear that the Bozorgana are not nearly as tolerant towards other ethnicities in their sphere of power as the Mardumhesta. As a standard procedure, the Bozorgana begin ethnic and

Celduin Crossing



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

result of Saurons influence, who – through agents – manipulates these men to his wishes.

The final victim of the Bozorgana aggression are the Wendragarda, who lose the majority of their territory in a series of campaigns that span almost twenty years between 2574 and 2593.

Northern Rhovanion

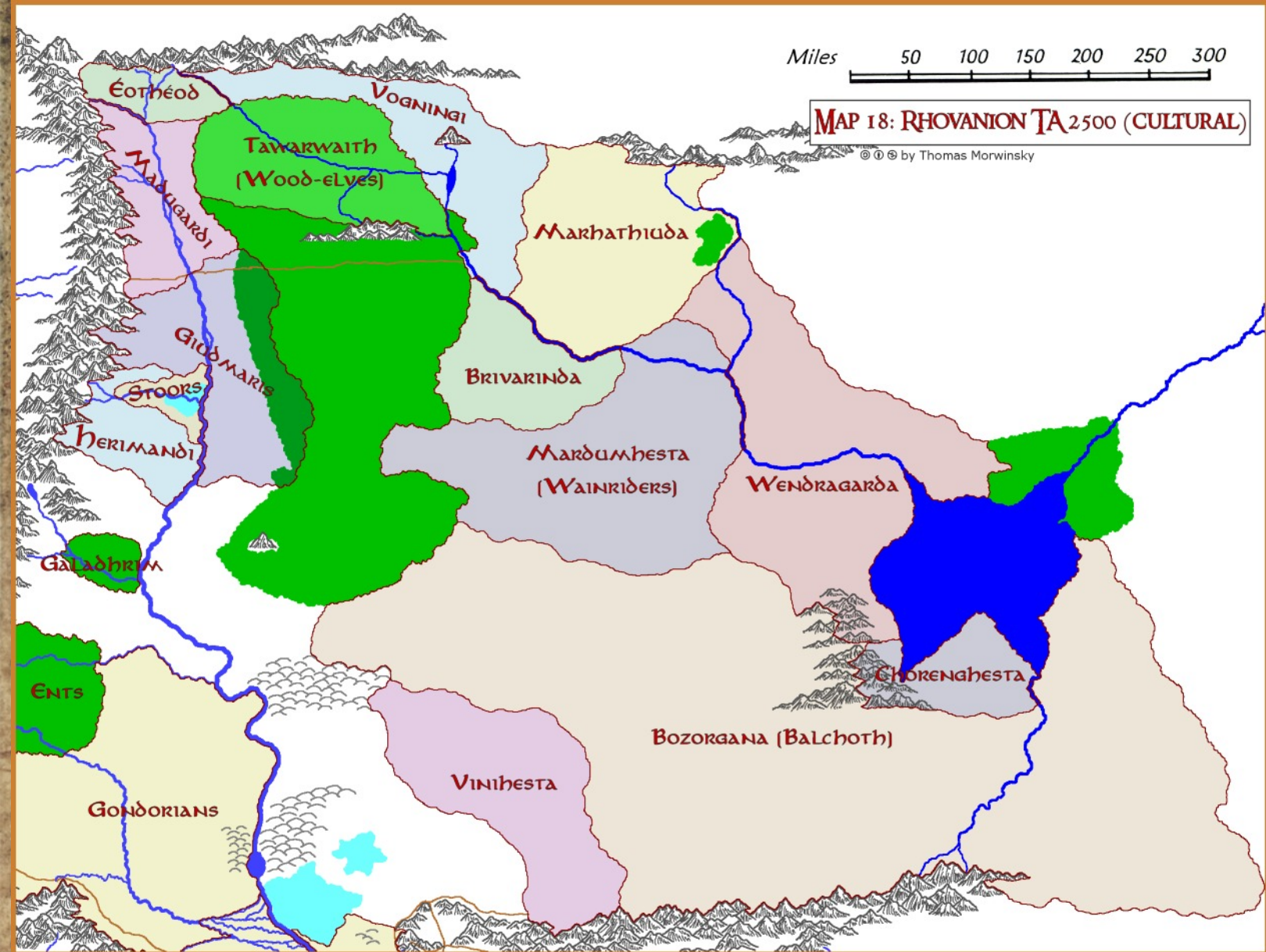
Apart from the aforementioned influx of the Bri-varinda refugees, the territories remain relatively stable. Since Erebor remains only an outpost of the Longbeards until TA 2590, the focus of the mannish population and power lies in the areas along the Celduin and east of Mirkwood. The area of the Long

Lake and around Erebor is a backwater with little power and significance.

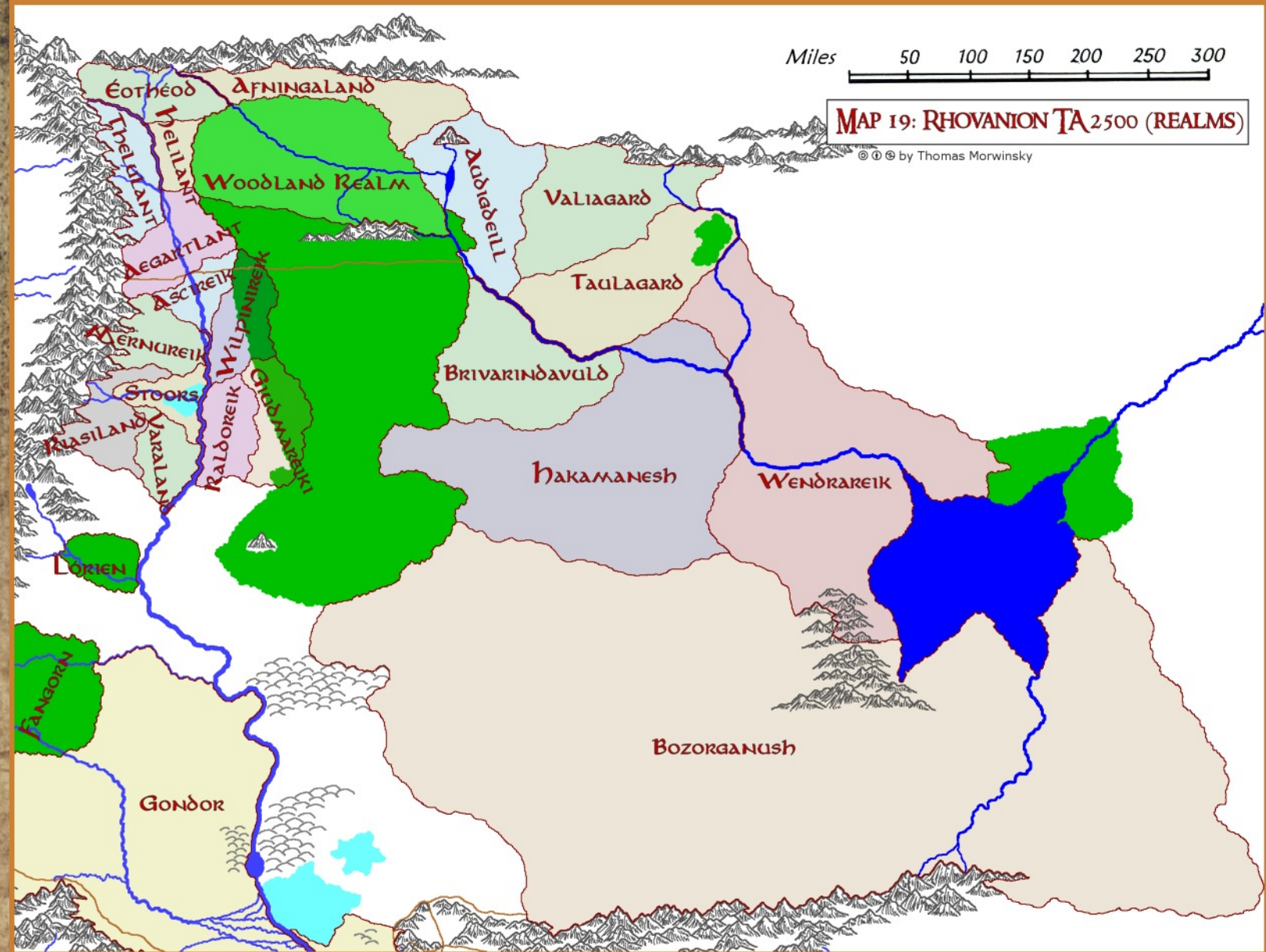
It is only with the arrival of Thrór and the bulk of Durin’s Folk after their eviction from the Grey Mountains by the dragons, that this changes drastically. Vogningi living near the trading centre of Bara (whose ruins provide the setting for TOR’s *The Marsh Bell* introductory adventure) at the eastern end of the Old Forest Road and further downstream recognize the potential of the renewed dwarven presence and move towards Erebor, founding Dale and thereby laying the foundations for the power of the later Dalemén (which are of Vogningi stock and thus a subculture of these ancient people).

Table 6: Population figures in TA 2500

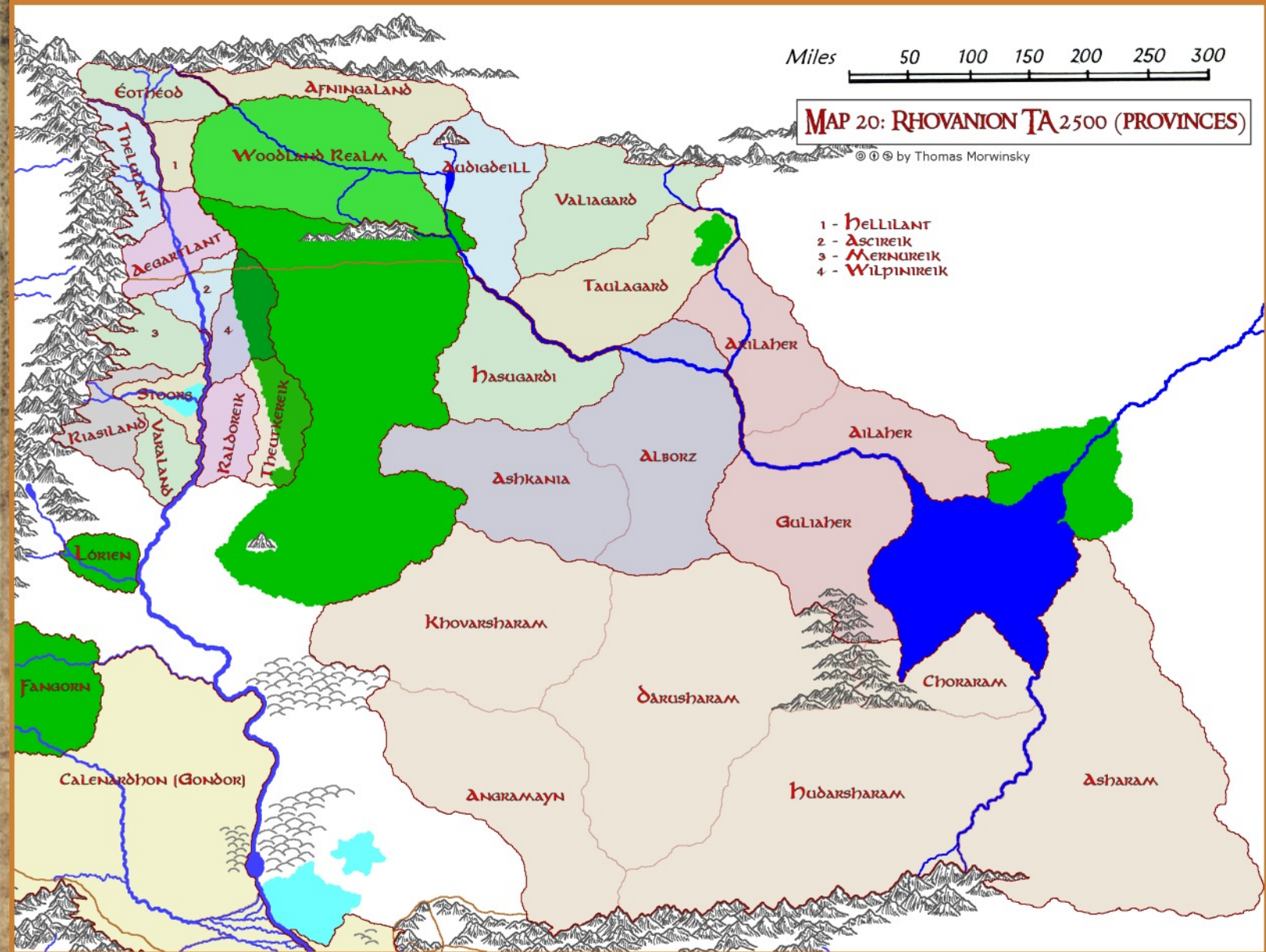
					population		
Culture	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall
Éothéod	Éothéod		10600	35%	118500	9,300	127,800
	Thelulant		9,300	38%	80,800	5,500	86,300
Madugardi	Hellilant		4,500	38%	30,000	2,200	32,200
	Aegartlant		12,400	35%	111,200	8,200	119,300
	Ascireik		5,900	33%	64,200	4300	68,500
Giudmaris	Mernureik		9,200	35%	57,400	3,800	61,200
	Wilpinireik		10,600	25%	36,400	2,100	38,600
	Raldoreik		9,100	30%	76,400	6,300	82,700
	Theutkereik		11,000	35%	56,000	3,900	59,900
Hobbits	Stoors		5,800	30%	56,100	4,200	60,300
Herimandi	Riasiland		10,000	45%	38,300	2,700	40,900
	Varaland		7,500	33%	43,200	3,300	46,500
Vogningi	Afningaland		16,300	43%	61,300	3,600	64,900
	Audigdeill		24,100	30%	196,400	18,100	214,500
Marhathiuda	Valiagard		29,200	43%	116,500	7,600	124,100
	Taulagard		32,200	40%	175,100	12,900	188,000
Wendragarda	Wendrareik	Ariлахer	27,600	48%	99,300	5,900	105,200
		Ailahaer	26,000	43%	179,900	13,000	192,900
		Guliahher	45,300	0.45	322,000	22,300	344,400
Brivarinda	Hasugardi		28,800	38%	112,600	9,500	122,100
Mardumhesta	Hakamanesh	Ashkania	40,400	45%	149,100	9,700	158,800
		Alborz	51,400	45%	153,100	9,500	162,500
Vinihesta	Bozorganush	Angramayn	57,300	43%	172,800	9,700	182,500
Chorenghesta		Choraram	21,600	43%	186,700	14,300	200,900
Bozorgana		Khovarsharam	66,700	43%	282,400	18,000	300,500
		Dârusharam	104,800	48%	256,600	14,900	271,500
		Hudarsharam	97,500	45%	310,100	19,200	329,300
		Asharam	113,500	48%	353,500	19,700	373,300
		Rhovanion total:	888,600		3,895,800	263,800	4,159,600



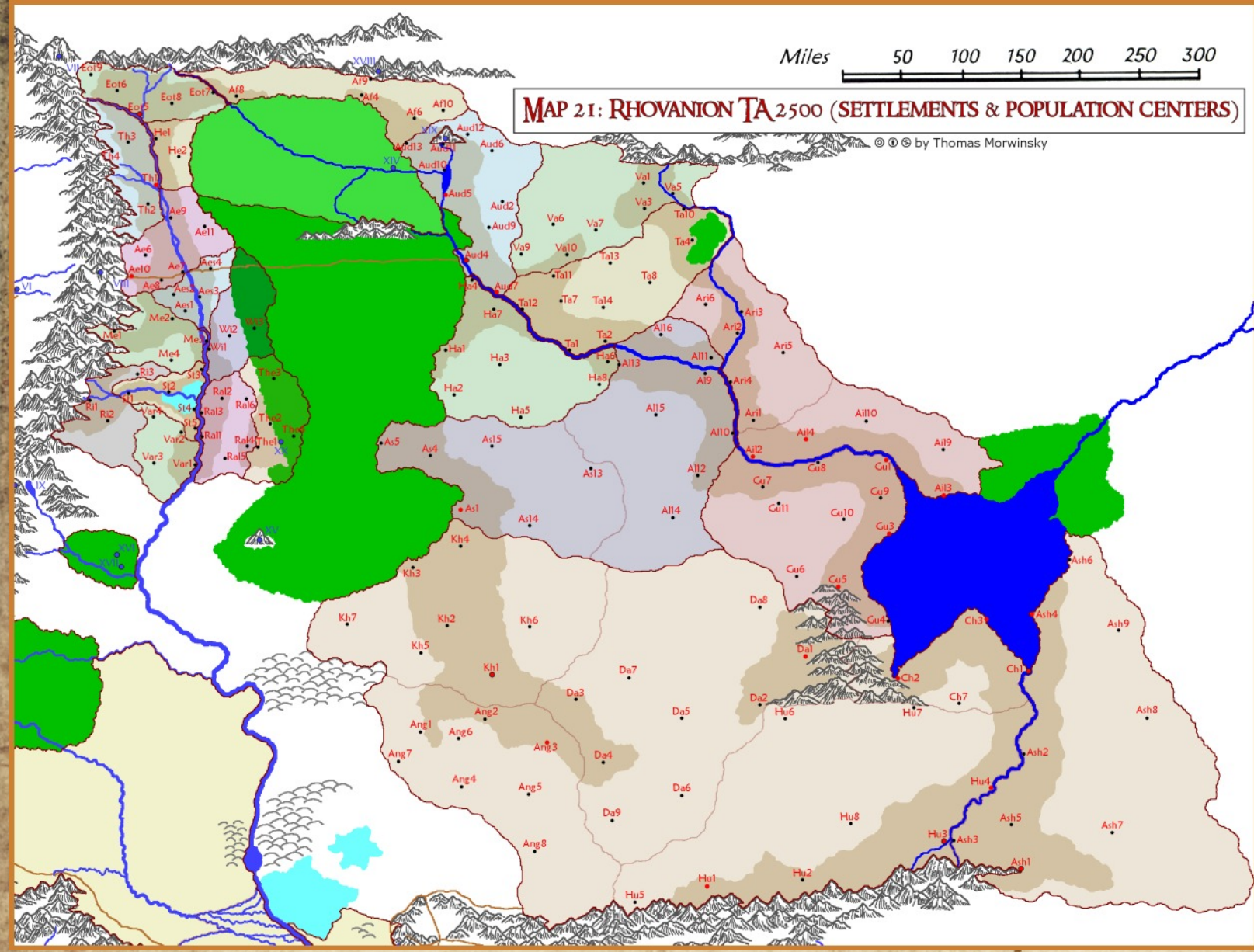
Map 18: The next major group of Easterlings dominates now southern and central Rhovanion. The Bozorgana (Balchoth) have taken over the Wainrider lands.



Map 20: This time sees the emergence of a new empire in Wilderland: The Bozorgana (Balchoth) will build the strongest Easterlingg rule in the region. Remnants of Wainriders and - now independent - Northmen south of Celduin still resist the onslaught, but they fight a losing battle.



Map 20: The map shows the provinces/territories in this time. Especially the Bozorgana Empire is sub-divided due to its size.



Map 21: This map shows the overall settlement patterns in TA 2500. Many older towns and cities have been taken over by new masters and continue to exist, albeit under new names.

“O very well,” said Thorin. “Long ago in my grandfather Thrór’s time our family was driven out of the far North, and came back with all their wealth and their tools to this Mountain on the map. [...] Anyway they grew immensely rich and famous, and my grandfather was King under the Mountain again and treated with great reverence by the mortal men, who lived to the South, and were gradually spreading up the Running River as far as the valley overshadowed by the Mountain. They built the merry town of Dale there in those days.”

—*The Hobbit. An Unexpected Party*

Even though it has been only 100 years from the last era to this one, a number of significant events took place that influence the events in Rhovanion for the remainder of the Third Age.

This era is characterized by more than a century of trouble with the orcs from the mountains. Beginning with small-scale raids, later it becomes a full war and is only won with the help of Dalr (Dale) and the Longbeards. The many smaller lordships in the Vales are not able to effectively contain the threat and because of this more centralized structures develop in the Madugardi, Giudmaris and Herimandi lordships, shifting power away from household chiefs and local chieftains towards the princes.

In the southern areas of the Anduin Vales, pressure of Balchoth raids leads to depopulation in south-eastern areas.

The eastern bank of the southern Anduin Vales is almost empty of men due to Balchoth raids since the late 25th century. The people formerly living here fled north or west over the river. The Anduin forms a good defensive line, enabling more southerly secure settlements on the western bank. This security is a relative one though, once the orcs from the mountains begin their own raids. Dalr supports the men in the northern Vales though and with this support the situation stabilizes.

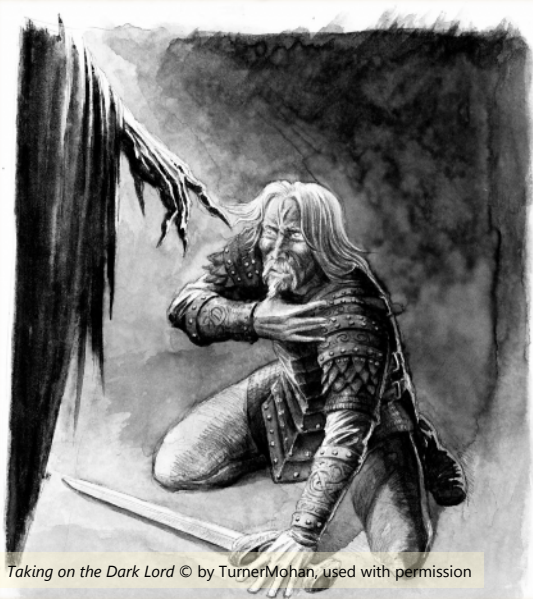
Year of the Third Age	Event
ca. 2600	Under the leadership and influence of Dalr (Dale), the Vogningi now begin to call themselves the Dalringi and (backed by the friendship of the Longbeards in Erebor) ascend in power in the region.
2605	About this year, traffic and trade between Erebor and the Longbeards in the Iron Hills is established on a regular basis.
2610	The Orcs from the Hithaeglrir begin to become a problem for the men on the western bank of Anduin. All the men there begin a rapid process of political centralization to counter this problem.
2620-75	The Men of the Vales are successful in containing the orc threat.
2675	A new and powerful orcish leader begins a new era of warfare. The frequency and tenacity of the attacks becomes critical.
ca. 2680	Mountain Hall is abandoned due to the increasing pressure from the orcs.
ca. 2685	Around this time, most areas west of Anduin are abandoned and only a few strongholds on the western bank are able to hold out. Several orcish attempts to cross the river can be repelled.
2690-2720	The orcs try to break the defences of the eastern bank, but are ultimately repelled when Dale sends assistance to the Men of the Vales. Dalr makes alliance with Wendrareik to regain the territories that the latter's forefathers lost to Bozorganush.
ca. 2700	Around this time, the Hunkarim, a nomadic people from the East are first encountered in the dry and cool steppes east of the Redwater and the realm of Rouavald (Dorwinion).
2723	With the help of Dalr and its other allies (some mercenary Hunkarim warbands are won for this campaign as well), Wendrareik wages war against Bozorganush.
ca. 2710	The Herimandi begin to deal with envoys from Dol Guldur in exchange for assistance against the orcs of the mountains.
2720-2735	With the help from Dalr and the Longbeards, the men of the Vales are able to reclaim many of their lost lands on the western bank. An effective defence is established and manned to contain any further incursions.
2730	In a great battle on the lower Celduin, the Bozorgana are defeated, resulting in the reconquest of many of the lands formerly lost from Wendragarda. From this time onward, the people living here are known as the Rouadengi after their great lord who led them to victory.
2731-34	Exploiting the Bozorgana's weakness, Dalr reclaims parts of the land once belonging to the Brivarinda south of Celduin.
2735	The town of Haycombe is finally abandoned.
2740	In search of easier prey, the orcs of the Misty Mountains begin to raid the scattered communities of Eriador in earnest. Mount Gram is one of the primary staging points, though all orc holds in the mountains are involved.

Dalish host marches to Madugardi aid



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

In the 27th century Riasiland and Varaland (the Herimandi's lordships) are in a very uncomfortable position, being more distantly located from their northern kinsmen and wedged in between the orcs and Bozorgana. This leads them to seek help elsewhere and their lords take the offer of assistance from messengers from beyond the river. With this help, they are much better capable of keeping the orcs at bay, though at a price. As it turns out, the oaths they took weigh heavily on their spirits. In



Taking on the Dark Lord © by TurnerMohan, used with permission

addition, their outlook becomes much more grim – reminiscent of the Estaravi of old. The Giudmaris and the Stoors slowly become wary of the Herimandi and worry about possible problems.

Northern Rhovanion

The newly-founded Dalr (Dale) has re-invigorated the spirit of the local Vogningi, lending its name to the whole principedom. In addition, some years into the 27th century, the Vogningi begin to call themselves *Dalringi*, expressing their new identity. The realm of Dale is also able to hold its territory on the Great East Road and thereby control the trade revenues from the traffic moving along this vital economic artery.

All this is possible for a number of reasons. First, years of Balchoth-threats have created a sense for the need of stronger central authority (and thus military capability) in the principedoms north of Celduin to defend themselves against the great threat from the south. Unfortunately, the local chieftains in the Erebor area were too disunited and wary of each other. Gandalf the Grey perceived this as a problem and through his advice local princes from the down-river area east of Mirkwood moved to Erebor in order to take the chance offered by the Longbeards' return to the Lonely Mountain. Instrumental in making the right connections with the Dwarves and brokering the political arrangements among the Northmen princes was the lord of Afningaland (encompassing the Narrows between Mirkwood and the Grey Mountains) who had the trust of the Naugrim and was regarded as an honourable man. It was also his advice that resulted in the establishment of a kingship at newly-founded Dalr/Dale.

The commercial centre of Dalrland (the realm of Dale) still is the city of Bara at the eastern end of the Old Forest Road. In these times, traffic is still quite high since Eriador is still fairly populated, even though the passes can be risky. Bara lies at the cross-roads between the main east-west route and the Celduin river traffic, thus being a natural hub for trade in the region.

Due to the alliance with the Longbeards, Dalr is able to consolidate its influence and power and becomes the hegemonial power in the North. In the mid-28th century and under pressure from the Marhathiuda lords in his council, king Bladorthin of Dalr leads an expedition to re-conquer the Brivarinda lands. Exploiting a phase of weakness among the Bozorgana, this campaign is successful. At about the same time, the territory south of the Iron Hills is added to the East Riding's (Valiagard) territory.



© Pierre Joubert—Edition Hachette/Used with permission



Trade and craft in Dale

These gains constitute the high-water mark in the reach of the first Dalrland.

To the appearance of the nomadic Hunkarim in the northeast around TA 2700 little importance is attributed by many people, since they are few in number and lack permanent dwellings. They are however, fearless warriors and occasionally employed as mercenaries. Their origin is note entirely clear, but it seems that they fled from their original homes to the south and east where they lost a war with relatives of the Bozorgana. Near the border of Rouavald (Dorwinion) a small semi-permanent settlement has been established, mostly for trade with the Rouadengi.

Central Rhovanion

After the failed western invasions of 2510 and 2545, a phase of consolidation set in Bozorganush (the Bozorgana empire). Its lords give up any further attempts of expanding their territory westward. Around 2600, Bozorganush has reached its maximum extent: In the West, the Anduin is their border and from their lands south of Dol Guldur they regularly raid northward, pushing the Giudmaris communities ever further northward. Simultaneously, they use the forest Narrows as a way to raid through Mirkwood as well. Sauron, satisfied with his – unknowing – pawns, allows safe passage for their troops by manipulating local guides into scouting “safe” routes through the dangerous forest.

Around the time of the realm’s greatest extent, the policy of ethnical uniformity is even more pro-

nounced – now that there are no longer any external enemies worth speaking of and the attention of the elite shifts inward. Even though this policy achieves a much more homogenous population and culture, it also causes loss of manpower in Bozorganush overall due to deaths in these cleansings or because of people fleeing to other lands.

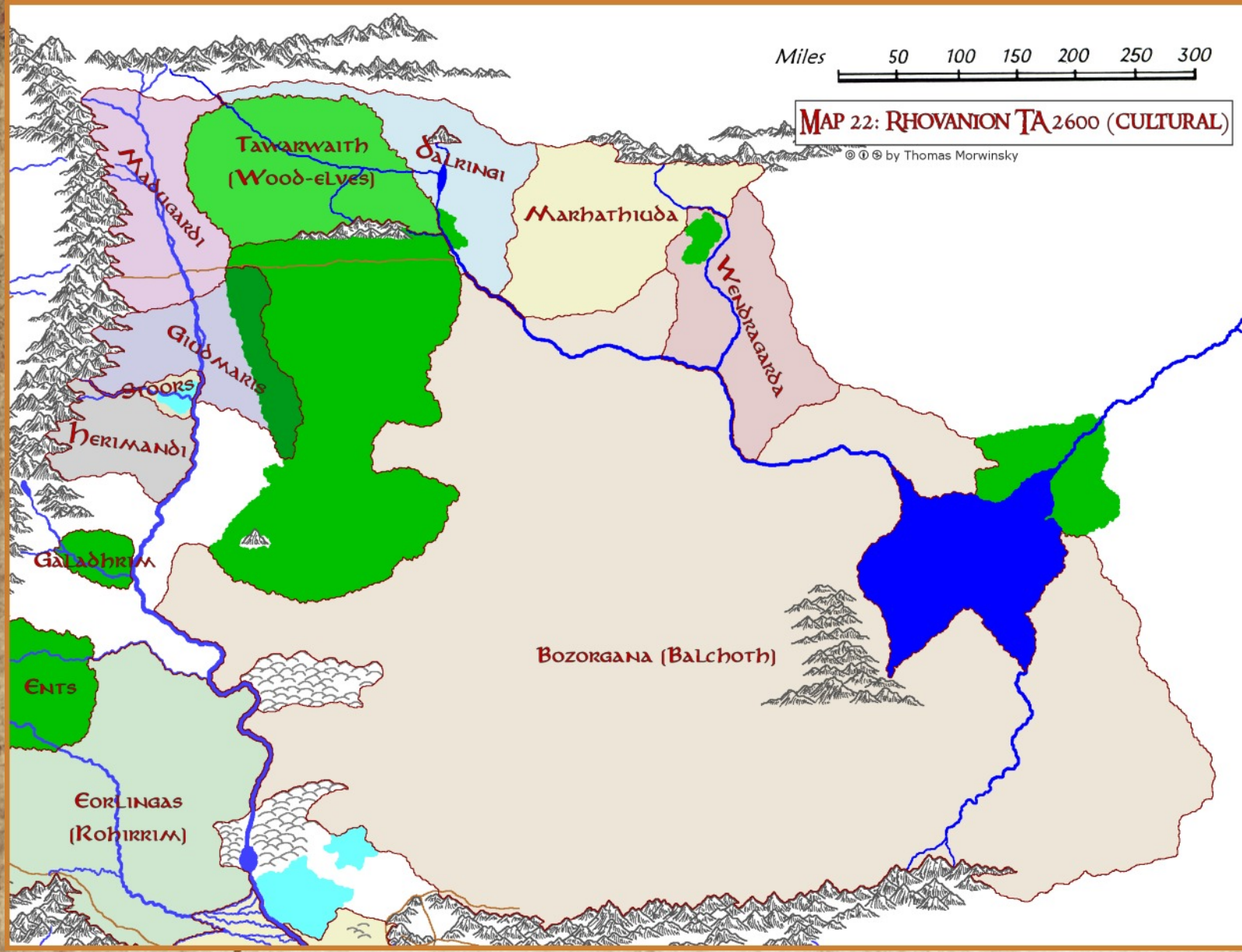
Thus the establishment of Bozorgana rule is the real end of the “old order” of Rhovanion, removing the last remnants of these features that shaped the region for more than two millennia.

There is still a large group of Wendragarda living in Bozorgana-controlled land. These survive since they have unconditionally submitted themselves to the Bozorgana, their way of life and religion. In secret though, they wait to be free again one day. Until then they bide their time and hope that it will not be too long until then. The wish for independence remains strong among them, and the chance comes in the early 28th century: A powerful and charismatic leader named Rouad rallies the Wendragarda in the rump state of Wendrareik and with the support of the ascending realm of Dalr, leads a campaign of re-conquest that culminates with the final defeat of Bozorganush seven years later. After him they – as a new people merging many ethnicities resulting from previous settlement and Bozorgana policies – name themselves Rouadengi and their land Rouavald. The parts of this realm are ruled by *knezi* (princes).

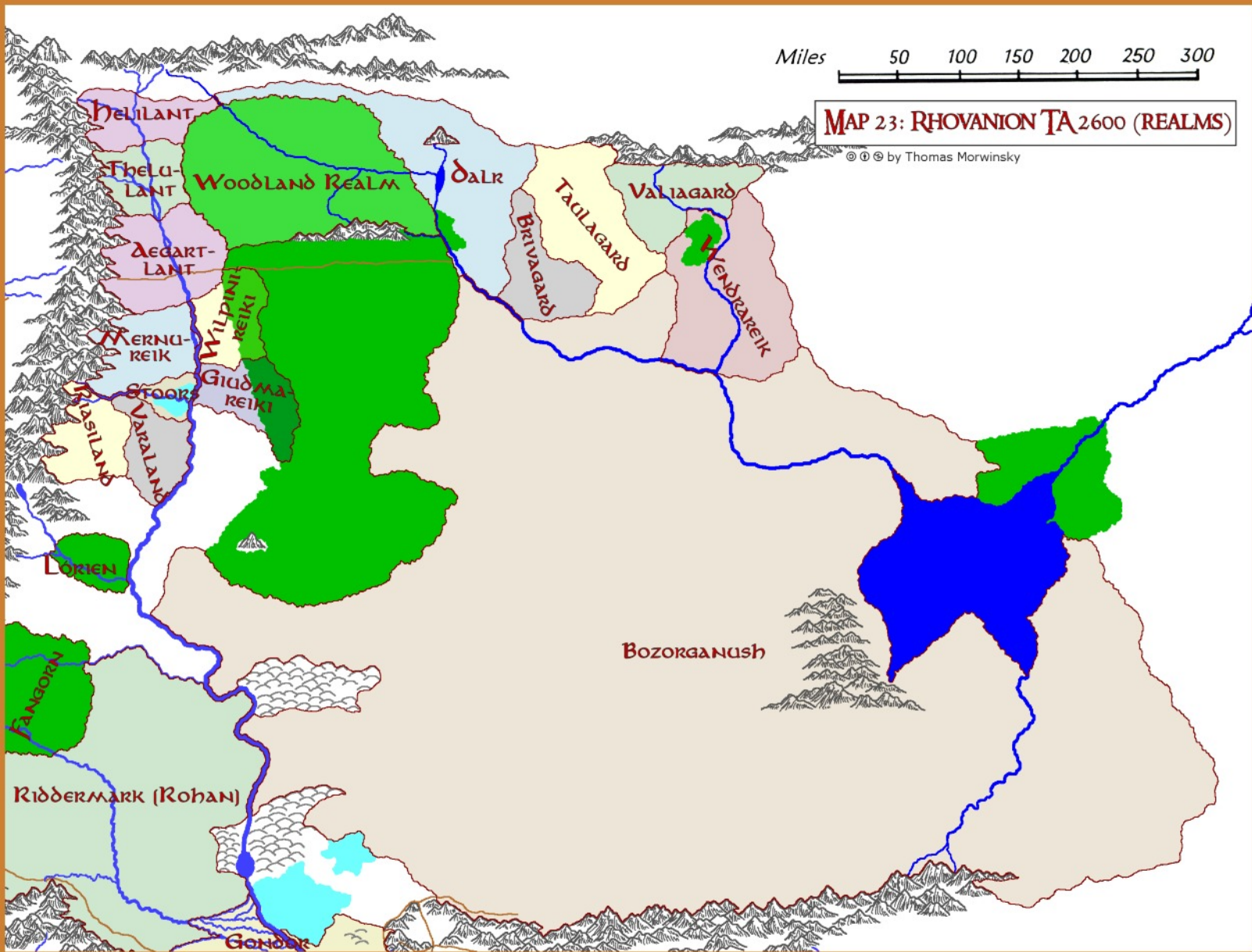
The table 7 on the following page details the demographic data for this era.

Table 7: Population figures in TA 2600

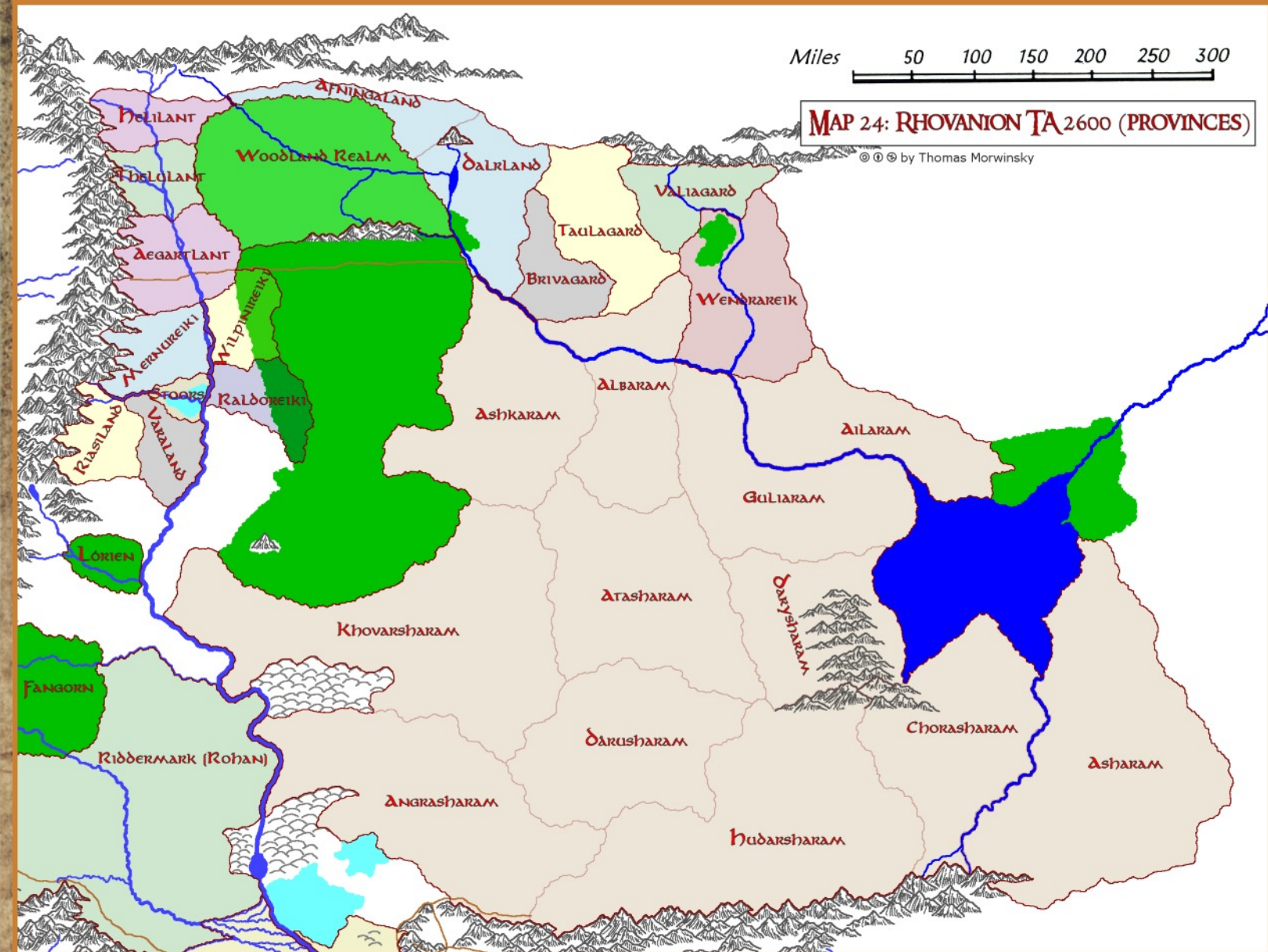
					population		
Culture	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall
Madugardi	Helilant		9900	40%	5200	83,400	9,900
	Thelulant		9,500	38%	5,200	83,200	9,500
	Aegartlant		17,800	38%	8,500	129,300	17,800
Giudmaris	Mernureiki		12,000	35%	4,900	83,900	12,000
	Wilpinireiki		10,100	33%	2,100	43,400	10,100
	Raldoreiki		10,800	35%	2,700	48,500	10,800
Hobbits	Stoors		3,300	25%	1,700	24,600	3,300
Herimandi	Varaland		9,400	30%	5,700	76,000	9,400
	Riasiland		10,300	35%	2,800	51,000	10,300
Dalringi	Dalr	Afningaland	9,900	30%	4,600	66,200	9,900
		Dalrland	24,000	45%	10,200	147,200	24,000
Marhathiuda	Brivagard		12,500	33%	7,200	115,300	12,500
	Taulagard		23,700	43%	5,600	113,500	23,700
	Valiagard		14,600	30%	8,300	119,700	14,600
Wendragarda	Wendrareik		33,600	43%	17,200	245,300	33,600
Bozorgana	Bozorganush	Ashkaram	49,200	40%	10,800	166,200	49,200
		Albaram	37,400	48%	5,200	110,400	37,400
		Ailaram	35,300	43%	8,000	160,000	35,300
		Guliam	47,300	45%	9,100	147,800	47,300
		Darysharam	37,600	38%	10,400	176,000	37,600
		Atasharam	59,100	45%	5,900	122,000	59,100
		Khovarsharam	90,900	45%	17,700	342,100	90,900
		Angrasharam	71,400	43%	8,400	174,100	71,400
		Dârusharam	49,500	43%	9,100	154,300	49,500
		Hudarsharam	92,900	43%	14,200	307,800	92,900
		Chorasharam	49,700	48%	12,800	208,500	49,700
		Asharam	95,000	45%	16,700	289,600	95,000
		Rhovanion total:		926,700	39%	3,569,200	220,200



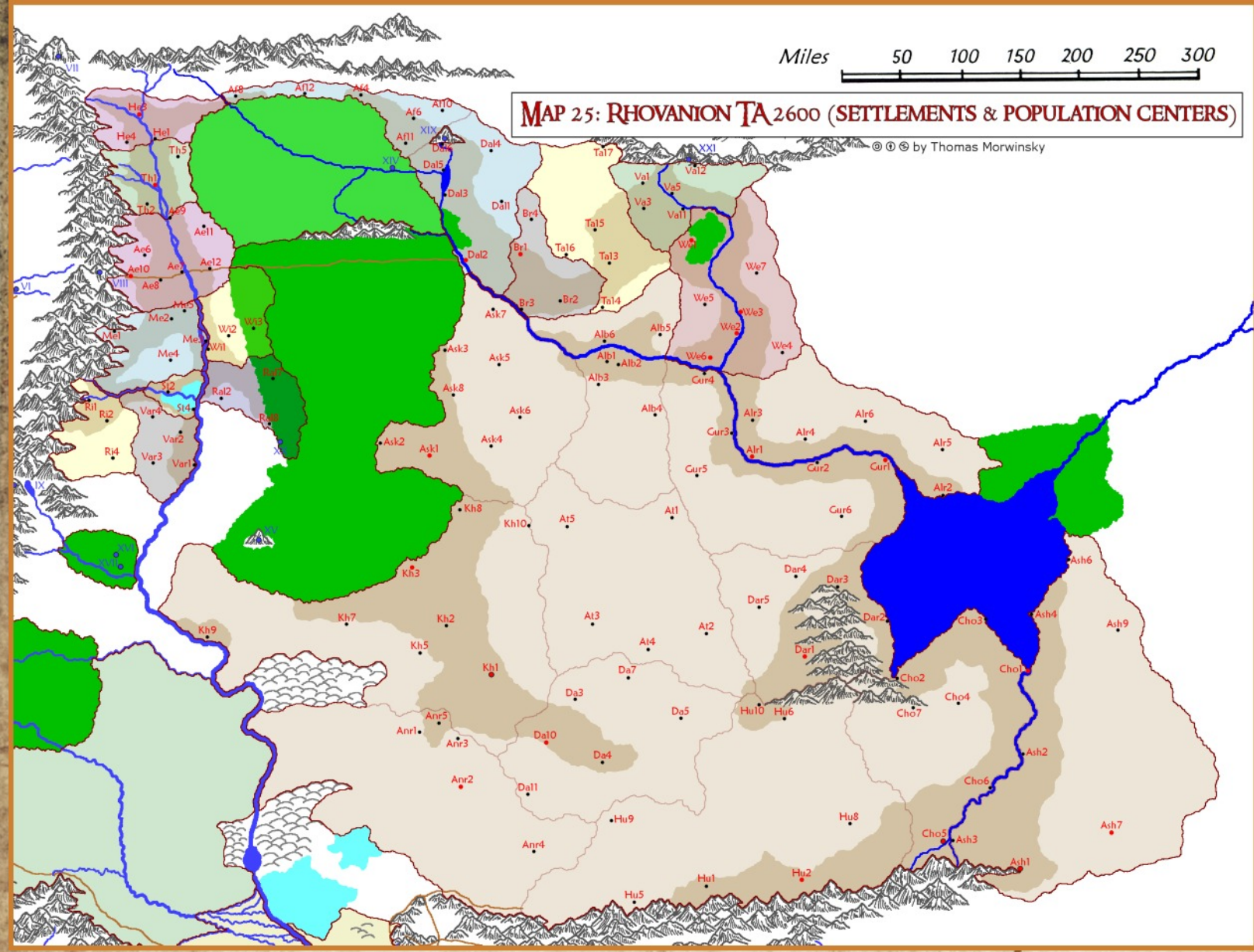
Map 22: The establishment of the Bozorgana was accompanied by a policy of ethnic cleansing and consolidation. As a result, Rhovanion east of Anduin and south Celduin is now dominated by the Bozorgana (Balchoth to the Gondorians).



Map 23: Similar to the cultural map, the Bozorgana dominate almost all of Rhovanion, and it is only at the fringes in the North and Northwest that Northman reams are able to remain independent and opposed to Easterling rule.



Map 24: The vast extent of the Bozorgana Empire makes an efficient subdivision necessary, and the result of this are the provinces shown here. Beside administrative reason, it is also a way to avoid giving too much power to a distant local lord who might have greater ambitions. In fact this is an application of the well-known “divide et impera” principle of the real world.



Map 25: Demographically, this time sees again a further increase in settlements.

TA 2750

Anyway they [the Dwarves of Erebor] grew immensely rich and famous, and my grandfather was King under the Mountain again and treated with great reverence by the mortal men, who lived to the South, and were gradually spreading up the Running River as far as the valley overshadowed by the Mountain. They built the merry town of Dale there in those days." [...]

There was a most specially greedy, strong and wicked worm called Smaug. One day he flew up into the air and came south. The first we heard of it was a noise like a hurricane coming from the North, and the pine-trees on the Mountain creaking and cracking in the wind.

—*The Hobbit. An Unexpected Party*

Year of the Third Age	Event
2750	Final defeat of the orcs in Eriador. The first realm of Dalr reaches its greatest extent.
2758	The Bozorgana prepare a major invasion against the realm of Dalr (Dale). There are only a few minor clashes before the Long Winter sets in.
2758/59	The Long Winter holds north-western Middle-earth in its deadly grasp. Its effects persist even longer, preventing greater conflicts.
2766	Civil war in Bozorganush erupts.
2770	Smaug descends on Erebor and drives Durin's Folk from the mountain. Thrór escapes with Thráin II and Thorin II. Later, Dale is abandoned as well.
2772	Mansion of Gindabaz founded by Thrór in Dunland.
2774	End of Bozorgana civil war. The old Bozorganush splits up into the three successor states of Rostamush, Narimanush and Bozorganush. Around this time, tensions with the Herimandi increase significantly.
2790	Entering Moria alone, Thrór is killed by Azog. Thráin vows vengeance and the Dwarves begin preparations for their war against the orcs. Sixth Union of the Khazâd.
2793	The War of the Dwarves and Orcs begins. Secretly, the Herimandi support the orcs in exchange for gold and slaves.
2795	Gundabad re-taken by the Dwarves.
2799	Battle of Nanduhirion. Crushing defeat of the orcs in the War with the Dwarves. Moria remains in orcish (or even more evil) hands.
2801	Thráin II abandons Gundabad and leaves for the Blue Mountains.
2805	Mountain Hall re-claimed due to the weakness of the orcs in the mountains after their great defeat in the War with the Dwarves.

Year of the Third Age	Event
2830	Rostamush in alliance with Rouavald wins lands in the angle of Carnen and Celduin.
2841	Thráin sets out to re-claim Erebor. His company is shadowed by the agents of Sauron early on.
2845	Thráin II is captured when his company camps under the eaves of Southern Mirkwood.
2850	Gandalf penetrates the defences of Dol Guldur a second time. He discovers that Sauron is "The Necromancer". He also finds the dying Thráin II from whom he obtains the map and key to Erebor.
2851	The White Council meets. Gandalf presses for an attack on Dol Guldur, but is overruled by Saruman. The latter begins to search the Gladden Fields for the One.
2898	The Herimandi begin an attack on the Giudmaris with the goal of conquering their lands in the Middle Vales. Initially they are successful due to their good organization and good armament.
ca. 2900	Many Men migrate the Anduin upwards and are welcomed and supported by Radagast the Brown.
2903	Birth of Beorn.
2904	Birth of Bard.
2901-2911	The conflict in the Middle Anduin Vales sways back and forth, but in the end the Giudmaris are successful. At about the same time, orcish attacks on the Northern Vales begin again. Bolg is their leader.
2910	Mountain Hall again abandoned due to the increasing orc strength. In the autumn of this year a major orc invasion devastates the Madugardi settlements, especially on the eastern bank.
2911	The allied Madugardi and Giudmaris enter the Heriminadi lands, intent on eliminating this threat. Many are killed, but a lot of the latter are able to hide from the victors. A Bozorgana raid devastates Esgaroth. Bolg launches a big campaign on the eastern bank of the Anduin. The Long Winter holds all of Rhovanion in its deadly grasp.
2912	Great meltwater floods from the mountains inundate large areas. All people suffer dearly and many die. The few remaining Stoors either perish or flee far away. The re-building of Esgaroth commences.
2912-15	Weakened by the Fell Winter, the remaining Herimandi settlements are destroyed by the Giudmaris. Orcish raids decimate the survivors who flee eastward to Narimanush.

The Anduin Vales

The orcish attacks have left their marks on this region in several ways. First, the men do no longer settle up on the mountain's foothills, thus creating a stretch of "no man's land" between them and the Yrch. This decade-long pressure also has the effect of centralizing power in most lordships. Both the Madugardi and Herimandi have united in one



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Landslide after the Long Winter

princedom each while only the Woodmen retain their traditional, decentralized political structure (and are protected by the river of course). The development of the Herimandi and Madugardi is quite different though. While the latter remain faithful and true to their heritage, the Herimandi fall from grace and accept an alliance with Dol Guldur to support them against the orcish invasions in the 27th and early 28th century.

Accordingly, the Herimandi develop into a grim and brutal society bent on strength and an ideology of the rule of power. They justify this by their “hard lessons against the orcs”. In this time they begin feuds with their neighbours. Especially the few remaining Stoors suffer from their depredations, but the Giudmaris are targeted as well.

The Long Winter spells disaster for many communities and homesteads, killing many over the course of its long stay as well as famine and inundations and landslides that follow after.

At the beginning of the 30th century this local conflict escalates and Varaland tries to conquer Giudmaris territory. Ultimately the attack is repelled and the counterattack causes many casualties. The Fell Winter that follows immediately after (and the floods after the winter) causes great suffering and many deaths all over Rhovanion, but the weakened Herimandi are especially hard hit. Further clashes with the Giudmaris crush their lordships and the remnants are later decimated by marauding orcs. The last survivors eventually flee eastward to Narimanush.

Parallel to this many people from isolated homesteads south of the established Giudmaris lordships migrate northward since they are more and more threatened by the activities of Dol Guldur and the Herimandi in the area. Radagast the Brown helps them to integrate into the Giudmaris society.

Parallel to the defeat of the Herimandi, orcs begin to multiply again (and as already told, finally destroy the Herimandi). The Giudmaris living near the mountains once again come under orcish pressure and in TA 2910 Mountain Hall finally becomes indefensible and must be abandoned. Young Beorn is among the exiles, from which comes his vow to **return** to the mountains once the orcs are gone or weak. After much wandering, his family finds a home north of the Old Road.

The Northern Vales are especially hard hit by the renewed orc activity, which is led and coordinated by the undisputed new king in Gundabad – Bolg, son of Azog. It is relatively easy for the goblins to attack settlements on the western bank of the Great River (which are nonetheless well defended), but the line of Anduin forms an effective and powerful barrier against any attack on the eastern bank. Therefore he devises a plan to bypass this natural line by moving his warriors through newly-built (or pre-existing) secret tunnels in the Grey Mountains. Thereby he circumvents the river and his troops are able to launch a devastating surprise attack on the unsuspecting Madugardi from the north. The orcs are finally defeated, but at a high price: many people are slain or unlucky souls carried away as slaves, livestock killed or stolen and crops destroyed. Shortly after the orcs are finally driven out from the

Madugardi lands, the Fell Winter hit the region with full force and the people who just had lost a great part of their livelihood were naturally much harder hit by it than other people. This led many of them to seek protection from their southern neighbours. In the following year, many of them join the Giudmaris lordships, and thus greatly diminish the independent Madugardi clans. For the orcs, the ultimately successful campaign (measured in terms of booty) serves Bolg as the blueprint for his much more ambitious and grander assault on Erebor after Smaug's demise. Compared to this, the campaign against the Madugardi was only a local affair with limited resources.

Central Rhovanion

For the Bozorgana, this era is a crucial one. The loss of many territories to the Rouadengi in the early and mid-28th century has dented the reputation of the royal line somewhat, and by the mid-28th century, the current ruler sees his only chance by diverting from domestic troubles via great victory on the battlefield. Consequently, a major campaign to conquer wide territories and restore the glory of his line is being prepared. The campaign is to commence with a quick attack during the summer of 2758 to create precedents and bridgeheads, then



Warg Riders © by Andres Canals, used with permission

The few remaining Stools in the Gladden area are especially hard hit by the renewed orc attacks and the Giudmaris-Herimandi conflict. The Fell Winter and its aftermath finishes off the last Stool settlements along the Gladden and the few survivors either flee far away (to an unknown fate) or perish in the wake.

The traffic on the Old East-West-Road (and the Old Forest Road as well of course) has become insecure due to orcish activities east and west of the mountains and consequently traffic has decreased significantly. This is enhanced by the fall of Erebor and Dale to Smaug and the destruction of these once powerful realms.

consolidate the gains and in the next year defeat the dalish counterattack that is sure to come. The preparations are delayed however and the Long Winter terminates any hopes of a campaign that year or the next. Moreover, the extreme winter and its aftermath with inundations and famine wreak havoc among the Bozorgana, effectively dispersing the once great army.

Many lords hold the king responsible for this miserable failure and long-accrued arguments erupt into warfare, leading directly to the Bozorgana civil war. After many years of fighting and shifting alliances Bozorganush collapses and three successor states emerge from the ashes of the once-mighty

Both the Longbeards and the Dalemén become fugitives. The former find refuge both in the Iron Hills and later the Blue Mountains while many of the latter flee south along the Celduin and settle in their own small communities. The majority finds refuge among their relatives under overlordship of the Marhathiuda. These become independent lordships again, and for many years the Three Ridings fill the power vacuum north of Celduin as best they can. Due to the Bozorgana's own weakness, this much-diminished power is sufficient to prevent the worst from Rostamush's ambitions. In later years, the Fell Winter is another extreme winter that causes many casualties, especially now that the realm of Dalr is no more. The many isolated homesteads are hard



Fortunately, the Bozorgana are disunited and concerned with their internal strife, so the weakness in the North is not exploited to its full extent by its enemies. In addition, the Marhathiuda are pragmatic enough not to press their status as pure “Free People” and therefore cooperate with all their neighbours if it serves their primary purpose of staying independent. This less ideological approach in dealings with all neighbours – including Easterlings – probably contributed to Gandalf’s not mentioning them when he talks about the reliable people that might obstruct a determined campaign of Sauron to gain access to Eriador via northern Rhovanion (see also next section). This could be seen most prominently in the 2830s when an alliance of Rostamush and Rouavald conquered territory from the Ridings in the angle area of Carnen and Celduin. The war was going bad for the Ridings, but when Rostamush tried to overreach their ally, the latter quickly changed sides and in the end the Ridings got off fairly lightly with limited territorial losses.

This period sees both the apogee and the downfall of the North. Around TA 2750, Dalr (Dale) reaches its zenith. The Marhathiuda lords have sworn allegiance long before to the king in Dale and hold positions of power in his court. The power of Dalr reaches beyond Carnen and Celduin, and its loose alliance with Rouavald coupled with Hunkarim mercenaries is more than enough to keep the threat of the fragmented Bozorgana in check. In addition to the somewhat perilous Old Forest Road, the trek north around the forest (through the Narrows between Mirkwood and the Grey Mountains) ensures communication with the Madugardi and Giudmaris from the Anduin Vales. The Long Winter and its effects is a great challenge for the whole realm, causing many deaths, but overall Dalr fares relatively good. Then comes the Dragon and in one fell swoop all the hopes and grand prospects are vanquished.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

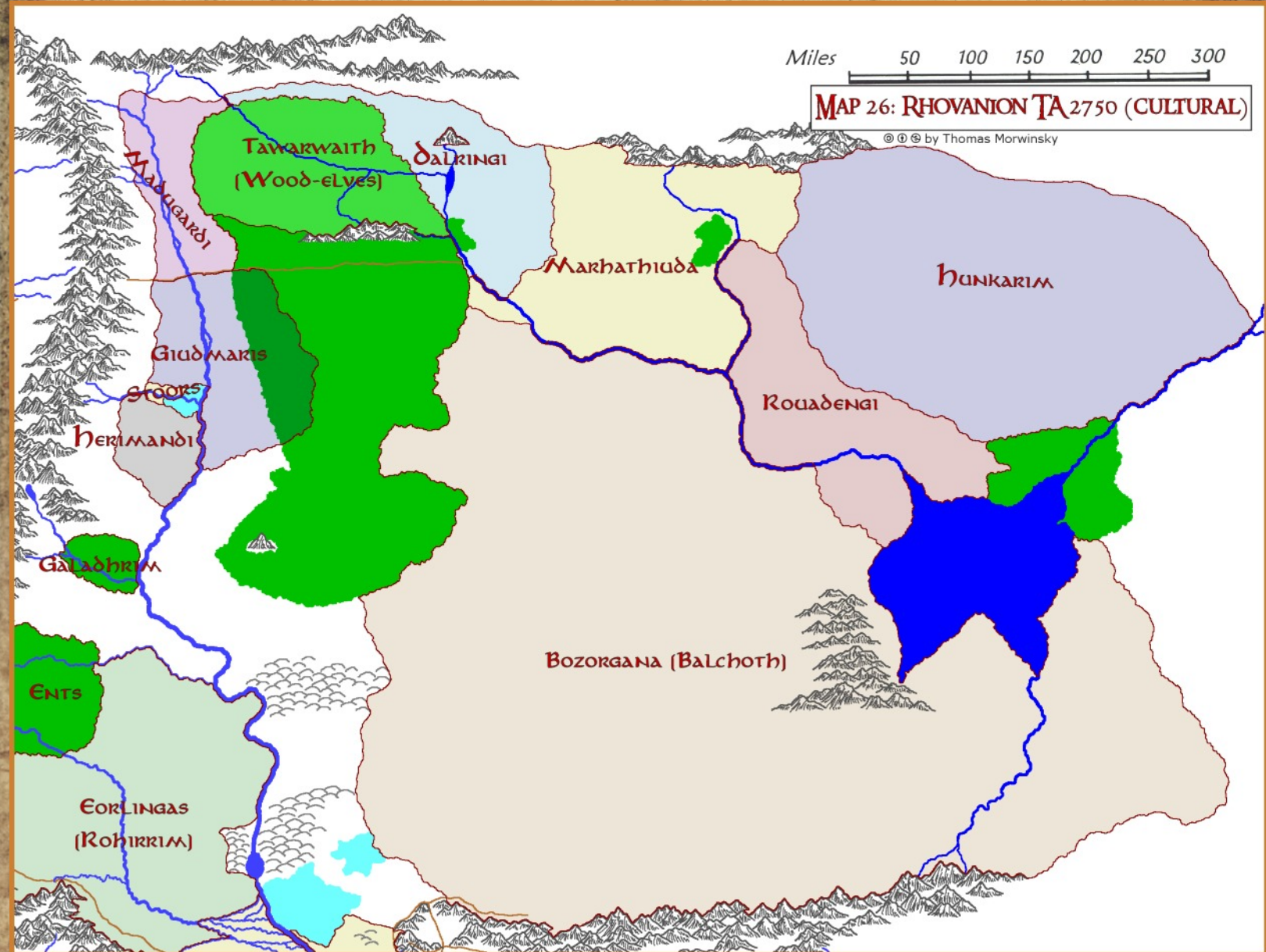
An aftereffect of this conflict is constant raiding along the borders, and one of these Bozorgana raids penetrates deep, and destroying old Esgaroth in the process. The following Fell Winter is all the more devastating for the survivors who begin to re-build their home the next year.

The Hunkarim, being nomadic hunters and gatherers, were especially hard hit (even more so than

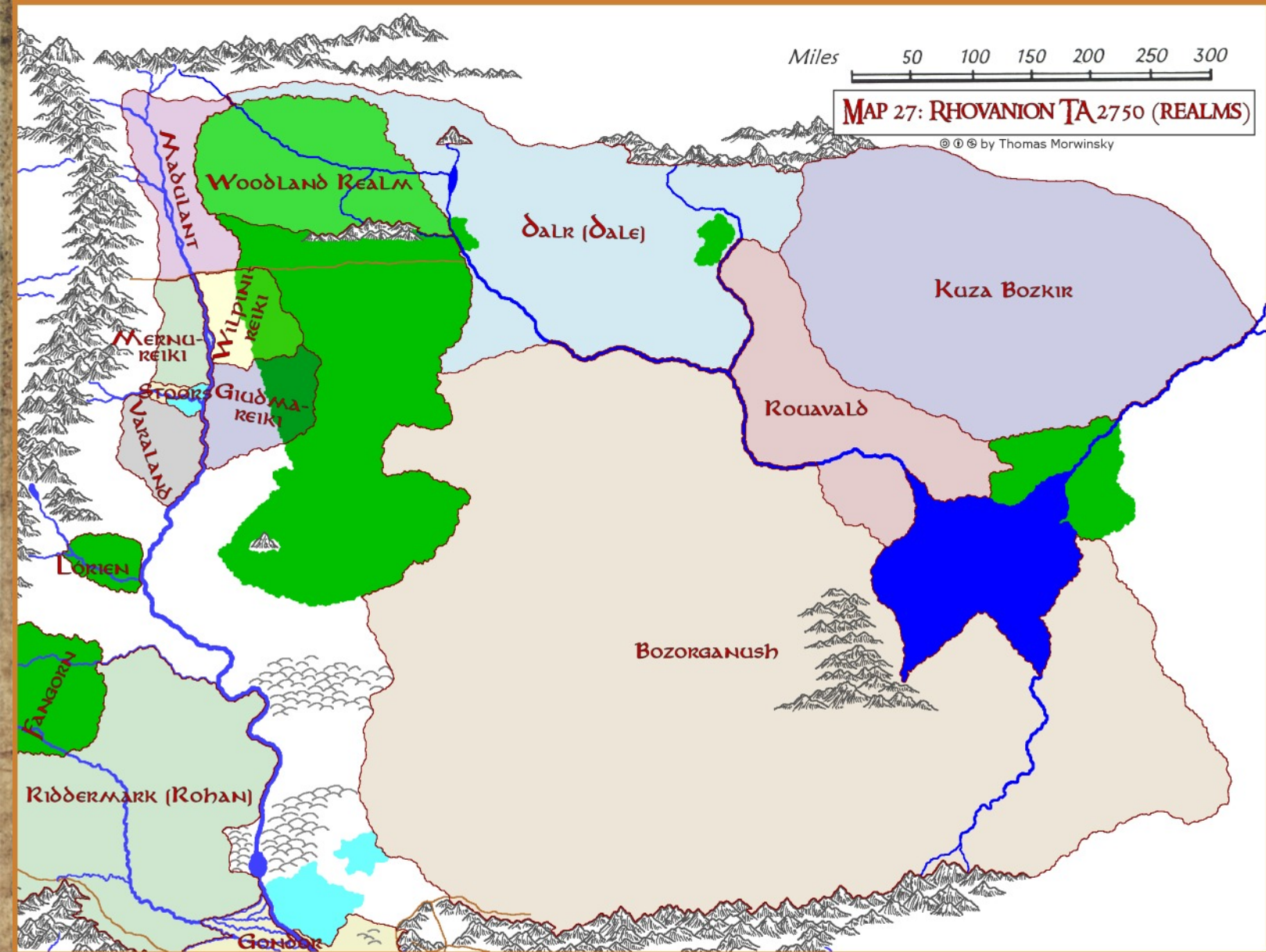
the settled people) by the Long and the Fell Winter, leading to a sharp decline in numbers. The Fell Winter also resulted in the creation of the Long Marshes, destroying the remnants of the former trade hub at the end of the Old Forest Road in the process. Since the fall of Erebor and Dale, this had been in decline anyway, but now it is completely deserted.

Table 8: Population figures in TA 2750

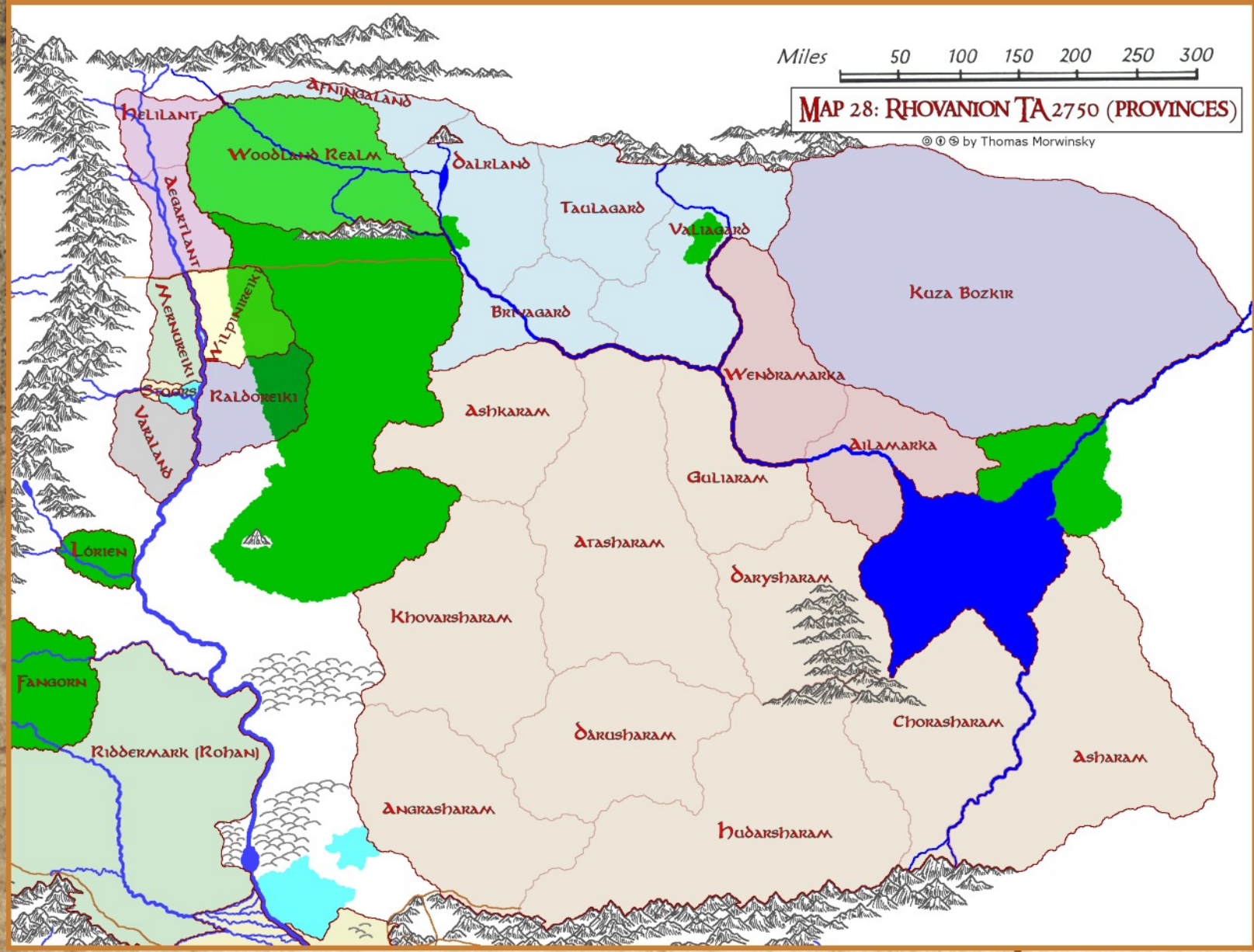
					population		
Culture	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall
Madugardi	Madulant	Helilant	10400	40%	77700	5,200	82,900
		Aegartlant	12,200	38%	81,100	5,200	86,400
Giudmaris	Mernureiki		8,700	38%	53900	3,500	57,400
		Wilpinireiki	13500	35%	72,200	3,500	75,700
		Raldoreiki	17,600	33%	81500	4,500	86100
Hobbits	Stoors		1,000	35%	8,800	600	9,400
Herimandi	Varaland		12,100	25%	85,600	6,000	91,500
Dalringi	Dalr	Afningaland	10,300	30%	70,900	5,300	76,200
		Dalrland	29,700	35%	192,500	14,600	207,100
Marhathiuda	Brivagard		21,600	30%	151,100	10,200	161,200
		Taulagard	25,000	45%	114,100	7,300	121,400
		Valiagard	40,200	38%	176,400	10,900	187,400
Rouadengi	Rouavald	Wendramarka	31,800	43%	173,400	12,100	185,500
		Ailamarka	30,100	35%	208,000	12,500	220,500
Hunkarim	Kuza Bozkir		178,600	43%	156,700	1,600	158,300
Bozorgana	Bozorganush	Guliamaram	30,400	40%	96,700	6,700	103,400
		Darysharam	42,700	48%	215,700	11,300	227,100
		Atasharam	83,600	43%	209,900	9,000	218,800
		Ashkaram	40,300	43%	179,800	11,000	190,800
		Khovarsharam	62,500	45%	252,200	18,200	270,400
		Angrasharam	53,900	38%	109,700	5,600	115,300
		Dârusharam	49,200	45%	124,300	11,500	135,800
		Hudarsharam	92,400	45%	235,700	24,900	260,600
		Chorasharam	49,400	43%	189,600	22,400	212,000
		Asharam	78,800	45%	237,100	14,500	251,600
Rhovanion total:		1,025,890	39%	3,554,600	238,100	3,792,800	



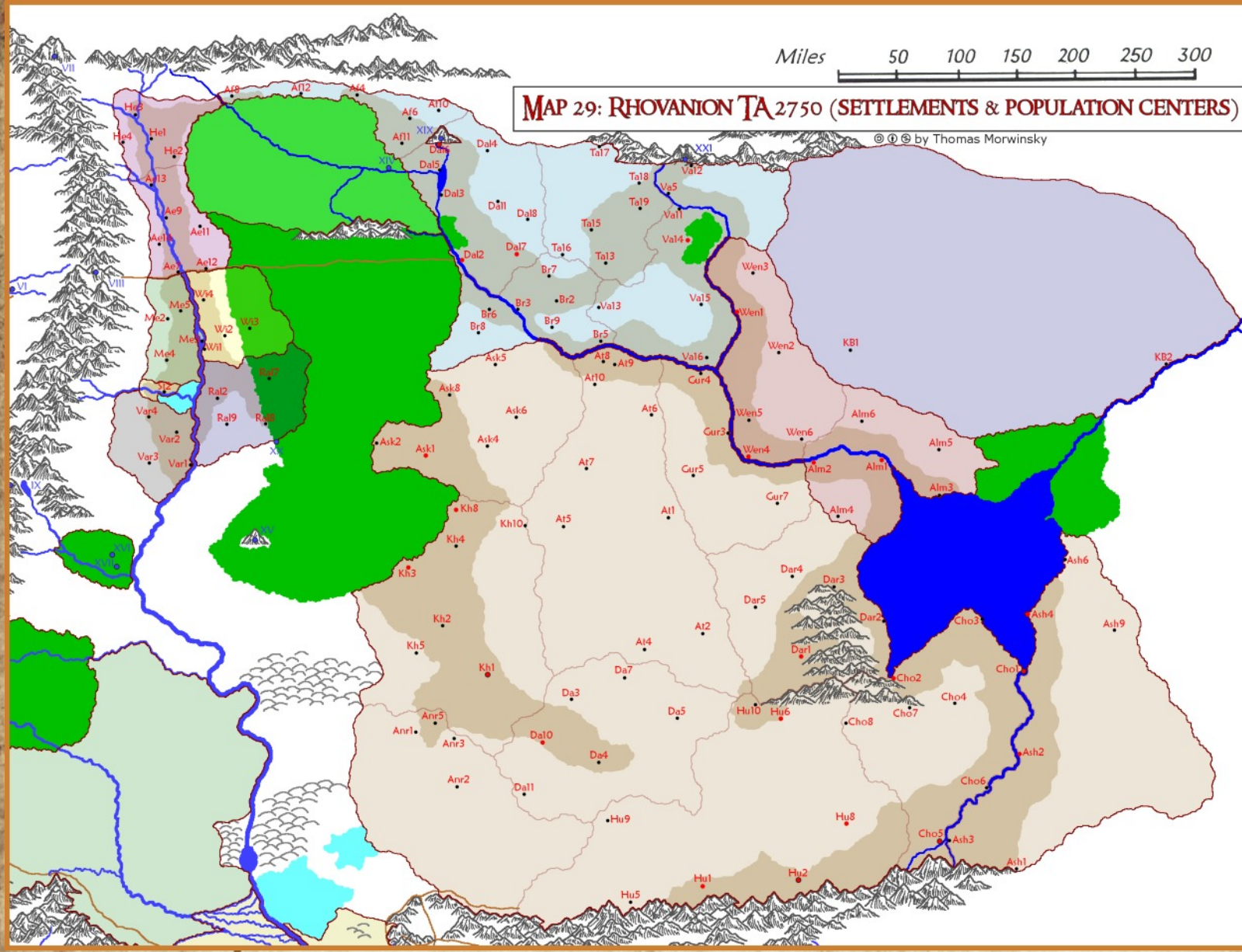
Map 26: While the Bozorgana are still the dominating ethnic group in Rhovanion south of Celduin by far, their territory has shrunken a bit, while other people were able to expand. In addition to that, the arrival of the Hunkarim in the Northeast (strictly speaking outside of Rhovanion proper) adds another player in the system of Wilderland.



Map 27: Beside the slight shrinking of the extent of Bozorganush, the formation of the realm of Dalr (Dale) is the most noteworthy development in this time. It is at the height of its power and acts as the main antagonist for the great easterling realm. Beside that, the establishment of Kuza Bozkir as a new realm (if it can be could as such) is worth noting.



Map 28: There are no significant changes in the subdivision of the major realms - apart from dair, which has incorporated the former independent Marhathiuda lordships, who are now provinces of the kingdom.



Map 29: The consolidation of the realms (namely Dalr and Bozorganush) has favoured the growth of towns.

TA 2920

"[Gandalf speaking] You may think that Rivendell was out of his [Sauron's] reach, but I did not think so. The state of things in the North was very bad. The Kingdom under the Mountain and the strong Men of Dale were no more. To resist any force that Sauron might send to regain the northern passes in the mountains and the old lands of Angmar there were only the Dwarves of the Iron Hills, and behind them lay a desolation and a Dragon [...]"

—*Unfinished Tales.
The Quest for Erebor*

Year of the Third Age	Event
2920	The situation in the Anduin Vales has stabilized again after the Fell Winter and orc incursions. The Madugardi suffered the most from both.
2927-30	The River War. An alliance of Marhathiuda, Bozorgana-soma (Rostamush) and Roudengi (Men from Dorwinion) defeat an alliance of Bozorgana-karb (Narimanush) and Bozorgana.
2931	Birth of Aragorn II and Bain, son of Bard.
2934	Rostamush wrestles control of the area north of Celduin and west of Carnen from Rouavald (Dorwinion).
2939	Saruman discovers that Sauron's agents search the Gladden Fields for the One Ring and thus the Dark Lord has learned the tale of Isildur's end. He is alarmed but does not inform the White Council.
2941	The Quest for Erebor. Smaug is killed. Battle of Five Armies and death of Thorin Oakenshield. Dáin II becomes King under the Mountain. The White Council attacks Dol Guldur. Sauron retreats to Mordor. The Shadow over Mirkwood retreats somewhat. Realm of Dalr and the town of Dale officially re-founded. Rouavald occupies a stretch of land east of Carnen up to the Iron Hills.
2942	Reconstruction of Dale begins after the winter has passed. The Master of Lake-town leaves with a good share of the dragon-hoard. Later he dies alone in the wilderness. The Giudmaris of Mernureiki re-settle Mountain Hall.
2943	Some southern Madugardi join the Beornings. People begin to look for Beorn as a leader beyond local level. Beginning of the Beornings.
2944	Most of the reconstruction of Dale is finished and Bard becomes the first king of the Second Line. Gollum leaves the mountains in search of the thief.
2945	Dale is rebuilt. The Beornings officially claim their territory as their own lordship – Beraland.

Overall, this era (until Smaug's death) represents the demographic nadir of Rhovanion in the late Third Age. Due to many factors, population numbers in all areas are low and only begin to rise slowly afterwards.

Malnutrition and diseases among the weakened people after the Fell Winter lead to further casualties. Two natural catastrophes (Long and Fell Winter) have been more devastating than all man-made killings in the last centuries. The effects of the winters have been somewhat less severe in the more southern latitudes.

The Anduin Vales

The orcish attacks have left their marks on this region. Foremost, the influence and reach of the Giudmaris has increased considerably, mainly due to many former Madugardi joining them. The latter still hold to their ancient lands, but by now in a much diminished size and close to the forest. Gone are the days of their power as a major player in the affairs of the region.

The Giudmaris are traditionally disunited politically, with three major realms constituting the area of influence for the greater chieftains. It is noteworthy that Gandalf deliberately led Thorin & Co. not to one of these overlords, but a local chief – Beorn – whom he judged to be much more trustworthy and with greater potential for the future than all his peers combined.

Beside the few Madugardi in the Far North of the Vales, the Giudmaris are also the last men inhabiting the Vales in these times. After the events of *The Hobbit*, men begin to look for Beorn as their leader, which is the beginning of a new people that call themselves *Beornings*. Some Madugardi as well as many Giudmaris join this new confederacy. Thus the Beornings are the result of many Northmen of diverse roots flocking together under a new leader. The official founding date of *Beraland* (the realm of the Beornings) is TA 2945.

The Giudmaris however, soon perceive the depleted power of the orcs after the Battle of Five Armies and set out to reclaim Mountain Hall. The old Woodmen site is once more a place of safety and a bulwark against the ever-looming threat from the orcs.

Central Rhovanion

The overarching and defining characteristic of this era in central rhovanic politics is the relative weakness and disunity among the successor states of the once mighty Bozorgana Empire. Even though these people indirectly serve the Shadow (through agents and priests teaching and preaching a sauronic ideology), they are also affected by it and thus abandon some lands close to Southern Mirkwood, the Brown Lands and the Dead Marshes region. Since this is also Sauron's (still residing in Dol Guldur) most important route of communication with Mordor – and he does not want to be disturbed here – it may also be that his agents manipulated the retreat deliberately to serve their master's goal. Whatever the real reason (it may well be a mixture of several), the result is the same.

Rostamush, the northernmost of the successor realms develops the most independent-minded and less ideological habits. They are more likely to deal with their northern and eastern neighbours on pragmatic terms and thus are more influenced by them as well. Still, they are a dangerous neighbour. Another sign of their divergent development is their name – Bozorgana-soma – that they use for themselves. While still acknowledging their roots, it stresses their peculiarity (“north”) as well.

Their southern neighbours, the Bozorgana-karb, can be characterized somewhat similar, though through their closeness to the Bozorgana, remain more traditional.

The Bozorgana in southern and south-eastern Rhovanion remain the closest to their old beliefs and identity and see themselves as the legitimate rulers of all their ancient lands. It is here that Sauron's agents have the greatest influence.

This disunity among the Balchoth (over the “right” to rule) is the biggest asset in favour of the Northmen. Would the Bozorgana be united, the remaining Northmen in this period of relative weakness would probably stand no chance of a successful resistance. Rouavould (Dorwinion) often acts as the power that tips the scales, but allies mostly with the Ridings against the various Bozorgana realms, whom they bear in ill memory.

The most important event in this time (apart from the killing of Smaug) is the *River War* that is fought between an uneasy alliance of Marhathiuda, Bozorgana-soma and Rouadengi on the one side and an equally fragile alliance of Narimanush and Bozorganush on the other. The latter alliance tries to win new lands in the north, which the former – success-

fully – denies to them. Apart from the outcome, the sheer existence of such unlikely alliances is the most interesting observation.

This era also sees a population shift within the northern Bozorgana of Rostamush eastward.



Thorin Oakenshield © by Jenny Dolfen, used with permission

This time is also the height of Rouavald's (Dorwinion) power and extent by the winning of a stretch of land east of Carnen up to the Emyrn Engrin. A careful balance of power in central and northern Rhovanion is maintained throughout these years.

Northern Rhovanion

Since the Marhathiuda of the Ridings are pragmatic enough to cooperate with their southern and eastern neighbours if necessary, they are not counted as “reliable” allies of the Free Peoples without some “guidance” by more loyal men (i.e. the Dalringi) by Gandalf. Even so, the more or less faithful policies of these Northmen prevent a further expansion of Easterling power into the North. Of course this is greatly assisted by the disunity of the Bozorgana, as a concerted campaign by them would hardly be manageable by the Marhathiuda and the Vatningi (Lakemen) to the west.

These Lakemen live in a relative backwater of rhovanic politics in these days, on the fringe of settled territory and with a mighty dragon in their



vicinity. It is no wonder that there is little talk about other regions or representatives of other powers here in Bilbo Baggins' famous travel report *There And Back Again*: The region of the Long Lake and the adjacent lands east and south simply are too unimportant and dangerous (beware the dragon!) for

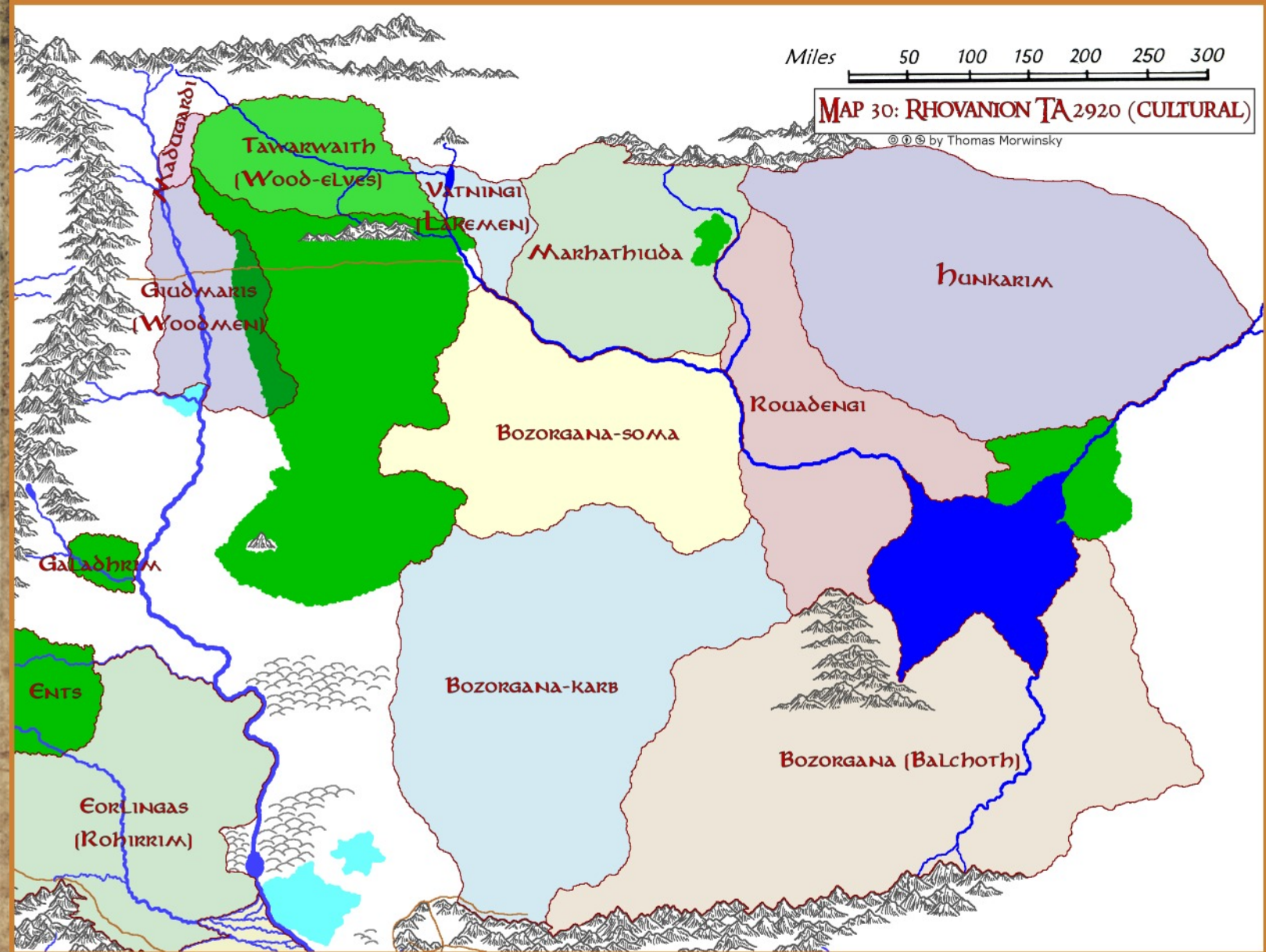
other people to care about. The grand events reported by Bilbo take place in this time; the *Quest for Erebor* and the re-establishment of both Dalr and Erebor.

Politically, the Vatningi are ruled by a loose assembly of semi-independent chieftains. A general population shift in the Laketown area towards the south is observable. In light of the unpleasant and potentially devastating northern neighbour (Smaug), this is quite understandable.

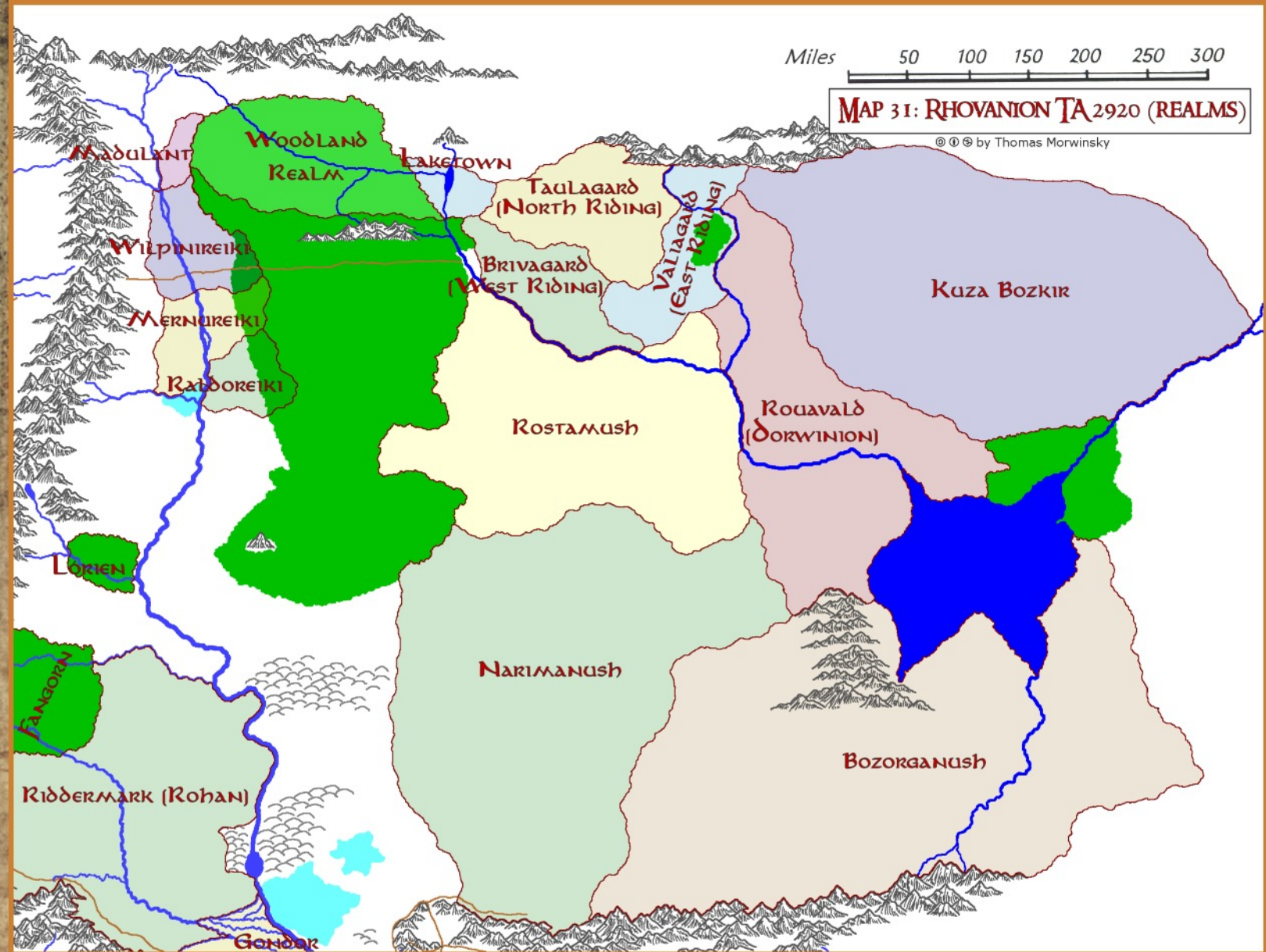
Rostamush's takeover of the remaining area of Rouavald (Dorwinion) north of Celduin and west of Carnen, alienated Dorwinion enough so that it seeks alliance with the Ridings for revenge.

The following table 9 details the key demographic data for this era.

Culture	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	population		
					rural	urban	overall
Madugardi	Madulant		3300	40%	18400	1,000	19,400
	Mernureiki		14,400	38%	48,200	2,900	51,100
Giudmaris	Wilpinireiki		15,800	43%	67,600	3,500	71,100
	Raldoreiki		9,400	48%	42,600	2,200	44,800
Vatningi	Laketown		5,700	35%	24,100	1,500	25,600
	Brivagard		20,600	35%	152,500	10,400	163,000
Marhathiuda	Taulagard		30,800	43%	133,900	8,300	142,300
	Valiagard		23,000	45%	100,000	6,200	106200
Rouadengi	Rouavald	Nordmarka	16,500	43%	76,000	5,000	81,000
		Wendramarka	32,100	43%	147,300	10,300	157,600
		Ailamarka	43,800	43%	222,800	16,500	239,300
Hunkarim	Kuza Bozkir		181,900	48%	85,100	900	86,000
Bozorgana-soma	Rostamush	Ashkaram	44,100	43%	121000	8,500	129,500
		Guliamram	65,900	45%	220,500	10,700	231,200
Bozorgana-karb	Narimanush	Khovarsharam	64,100	45%	228,700	11,700	240,400
		Atasharam	47,600	40%	85,000	3,400	88,400
		Dârusharam	77,500	48%	155,900	8,500	164,400
		Darysharam	34,500	40%	148,200	9,800	158,000
		Hudarsharam	65,400	45%	137,500	6,500	144,000
Bozorgana	Bozorganush	Chorasharam	79,200	45%	285,800	18,200	304,000
		Asharam	61,900	45%	195,200	10,900	206,000
		Rhovanion total:	937,500	36%	2,696,300	156,900	2,853,300

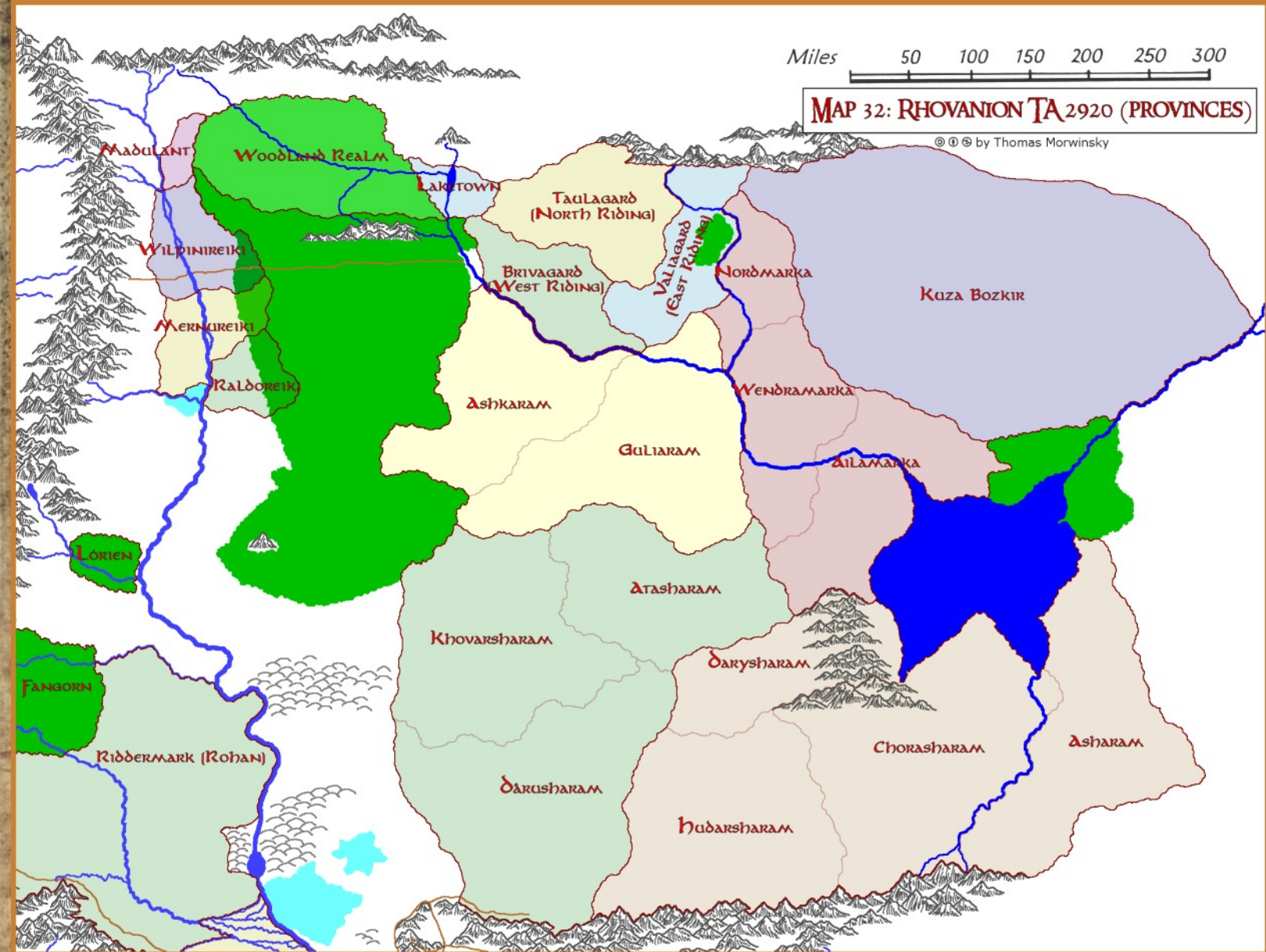


Map 30: The most striking ethnic development is the breaking-up of the Bozorgana into three closely related, but also distinct successor groups. This is also reflected in the political fragmentation (see next map).



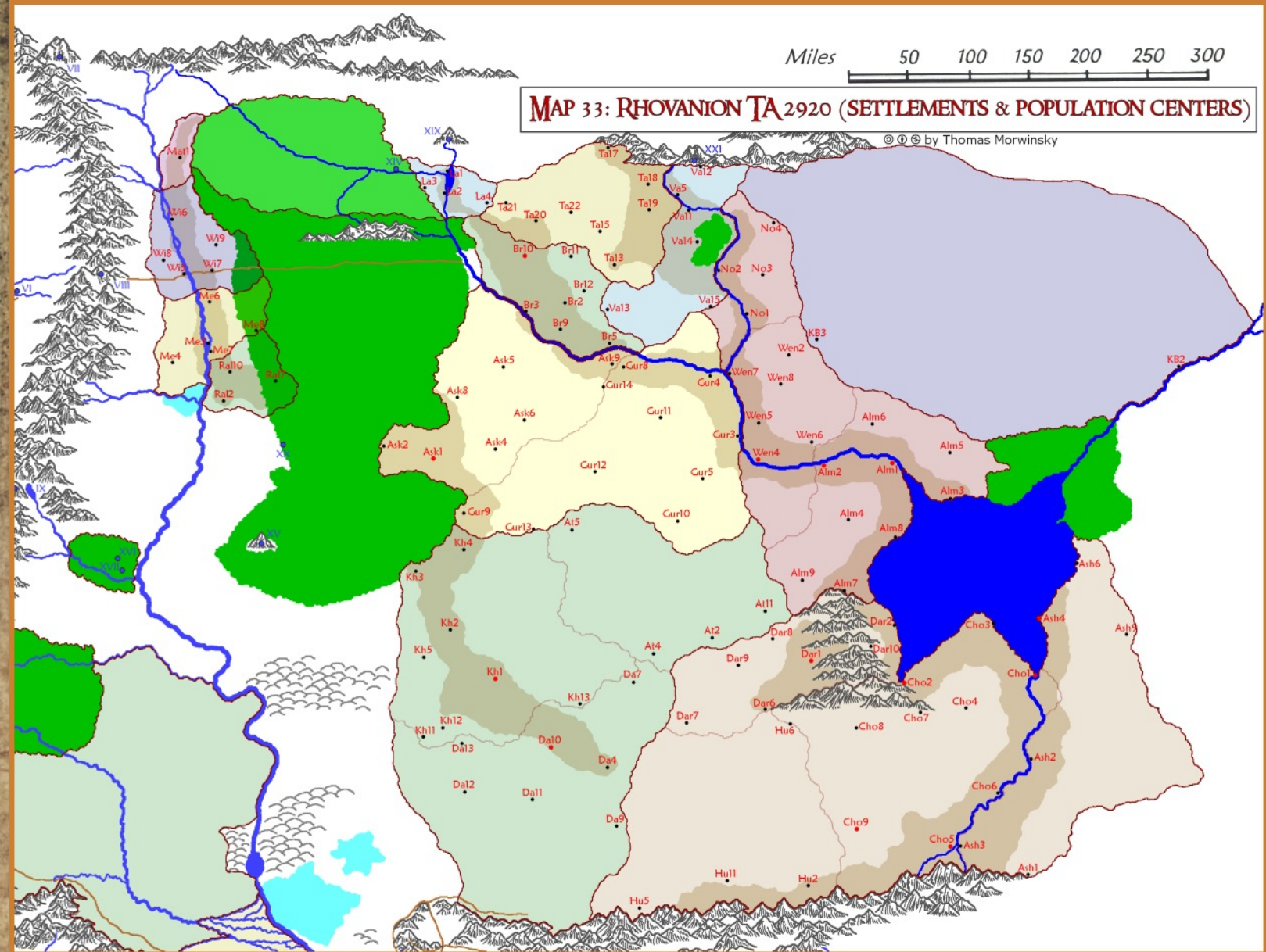
Map 31: Even though thze North is much weakened and fragmented, it is lucky since the powerful southern Bozorgana Empire has also fragmented and is often engaged in internecine warfare, largely neutralising its threat to the other communities.

oṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr oṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr



Map 32: The internal subdivision of the realms has not changed much, only the outer borders are different to the last era.

oṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr oṭhēr mīrds ānd hārdsoṭhēr



Map 33: The urbanization map shows no big differences to the last era. The only great exception is the North, where the coming of Smaug has led to the total collapse of the nearby urban centers.

TA 2946

And in the very midst of their talk, a tall figure stepped from the shadows. He was drenched with water, his black hair hung wet over his face and shoulders, and a fierce light was in his eyes.

—*The Hobbit. Fire and Water*

Year of the Third Age	Event
2946	The Gathering of Five Armies, a great feast with many guests, commemorating the fifth anniversary of the great victory, is held at Dale. In autumn, Beorn returns to the mountains with many of his people, fulfilling his vow. The fief of Nordmork is established, shortly after this the North Riding joins Dalr.
2947	Gollum abandons his search for Bilbo and turns away. Rumours of his wicked deeds as an evil spirit preying upon the unwary startle the Woodmen.
2949	The East Riding joins Dalr as well. With help from king Bard, a good part of the territory lost to Bozorganush is regained. Birth of Grimbeorn, Beorn's son.
since 2950	Southward population shift in Narimanush.
2951	Sauron declares himself in Mordor. Three Nazgûl re-occupy Dol Guldur, whose shadow once more spreads through Mirkwood, stronger than ever before. Bozorganush swears fealty to Mordor. Gollum is slowly travelling in the direction of the Black Land.
2953	Last meeting of the White Council. Saruman feigns he has discovered that the One has been washed down Anduin into the Sea. He begins to fortify Isengard.
2956	In Rhovanion Aragorn meets Gandalf for the first time, and their friendship begins.
2958-59	Aragorn serves king Bard in disguise, just as he does later for Thengel of Rohan and Ecthelion II of Gondor.
2963	The lord of Mountain Hall joins the Beorning confederacy.
2965	Brand, son of Bain born.
2968	A new king is crowned in Bozorganush who starts a program of renewal and expansion.
2970	Owing to the growing pressure from the south and the success of the other Ridings who have joined Dalr years ago, stubborn Brivagard (the West Riding) is the last Marhathiuda lordship to join king Bard's realm.
since 2972	Bozorganush's revival leads to gradual territorial losses for Narimanush
2977	Death of Bard. Bain, son of Bard becomes king of Dale.
2980	Aragorn and Arwen plight their troth on Cerin Amroth.
2985	Narimanush is made tributary to Bozorganush, even though formally it retains its independence.

Year of the Third Age	Event
2987	Death of Beorn. His son Grimbeorn becomes lord.
2989	Balin leaves Erebor to found a dwarven colony in Moria.
2994	Balin is killed. The dwarvish colony in Moria is destroyed without survivors. Rostamush becomes a vassal of Bozorganush.
2997	Bard II, son of king Brand is born.
ca. 3000	The Shadow of Mordor lengthens. Saruman uses the palantír and is ensnared by Sauron. Bozorganush begins building infrastructure and settlements along the Ered Lithui.
3001	Gandalf asks for Aragorns help to find Gollum.
3005	Rouavald (Dorwinion) is defeated by Bozorganush and loses its northern territory, which is made into the new Bozorgana client-realm of Rouanush.
3007	Death of Bain. Brand becomes king of Dale
3010	Former Rhúnost finally abandoned.
3009	Rouavald begins an eastward expansion along the eastern forest.
3012	Rouavalds new lordship of Ostramarka is established.

The Anduin Vales

Right at the beginning of this period, Beorn leads a great part of his people to the Hithaeglr, thus fulfilling his oath to return to the mountains. He has not returned to Mountain Hall though, as this still lies in Giudmaris (Woodmen) territory. His new “realm” is vigorous and expanding, attracting many Giudmaris and Madugardi by the emerging sense of optimism and hope felt throughout this community. Over time, the remaining Madugardi join the Beornings as well as even more Giudmaris. By the end of the century, Beraland has become the preeminent mannish lordship in the Anduin Vales.



© by Pierre Joubert, Edition Hachette

Years after the events of *The Hobbit*, even Beorn's ancient home of Mountain Hall joins his confederacy, finally completing his long wish and dream of returning both to the mountains and his old home. Later, he is buried there.

With four lordships, the old Giudmaris communities are even more fragmented than before. The most recent of these is the re-occupied Mountain Hall. Consequently (in context with the rise of Bera-land) the size and number of Giudmaris (Woodmen) lordships shrinks, even though they remain the foremost people on the eastern bank of the river and south of the Old Forest Road.

Central Rhovanion

The situation in this region has not changed much in the past years. The overarching and defining characteristic of this era in central Rhovanion politics is the continued relative weakness and disunity among the successor states of the once mighty Bozorgana Empire. Due to the increased activity of evil creatures between Mirkwood and Mordor, Narimanush has abandoned further land on his western borders. This is facilitated and enhanced by the priest's sermons that this is a punishment by their unforgiving lord and that the concerned regions must be given up to placate his will. These priests are under the influence of Sauron's minions though and by this manipulation serve and follow the Dark Lord's plans for the region.

As soon as Sauron declares himself in Mordor, Bozorganush swears fealty to the Dark Lord, becoming Sauron's most important servant in Rhovanion. Shortly thereafter, their fortunes begin to rise: Bozorganush enjoys a revival of power and it begins an era of expansion and reconquest, primarily at the expense of Narimanush and Rouavald. Narimanush, the first target, is made tributary by TA 2985, and later on both Rouavald and Rostamush become targets of the revived Bozorgana power.

In Narimanush, there is a shift of the population focus southward, since Sauron wants to establish reliable logistic support along his planned primary invasion path towards Rohan and Gondor.

Only the support by Dale and Rostamush prevents a total defeat of Rouavald (Dorwinion), but it loses much territory. Later on Rostamush is brought under Bozorganush overlordship as well. Northern Rouavald is given independence and many Bozorgana relocate there, followed by a radical program of ethnic cleansing and re-education to establish a – from a Bozorgana point of view – reliable and loyal realm in this area. This new lordship is called Rouanush, and its people the Rouagana. Rouavald becomes a semi-vassal of Bozorganush and is effectively removed from supporting its old Northman allies north of Celduin. As a partial compensation, it begins an eastward expansion north of the eastern

forest, which results in the establishment of its new territory of Ostramarka.

On a sidenote, after about 2,500 years of existence the ancient gondorian-built settlement at former Rhúnost is finally abandoned as a population centre in this time. Only a small village near the ancient ruins remains. Under orders of Sauron's servants, Bozorganush begins to strengthen its population and infrastructure along the Ered Lithui around TA 3000. This is done as preparation for the great war Sauron is planning.

Northern Rhovanion

In Dale, the fief of Nordrmorkr ("North-march") is re-established and its lord becomes the king's first counsellor. It commands the northern territories of the realm, over the years stretching north of Mirkwood and finally reaching the Greylin in the west and making contact with the Men of the Vales. Due to its peculiarities, it is known by other names like Pvengrland ("Thong-land"; due to its form) or simply "The Narrows". The former Vatningi ("Water-men"; from the Long Lake) have again taken the old name of "Dalringi" (Dale-men). Their cousins along the Celduin immediately east of the Old Forest Road have renounced their Marhathiuda allegiance and joined the re-founded realm of Dalr (Dale). Of course this has created some tension with the West Riding, which remains unresolved for some years.

In this time, there is a strong population growth in Dalr. Partly this is caused by the immigration of people that are accepted among its ranks, but even more so due to an increased birth rate that leads to a strong growth in numbers. Balancing the interests of the Dalringi (including Lake-men) and Marhathiuda is the greatest challenge and skilfully mastered by Bard and his successors. Another important task is to ensure communication and trade routes with the West (namely the Anduin Vales). The route through Mirkwood (primarily the Elf-path) is always possible, but Bard deems additional options necessary. In this context, the lordship of Nordrmork is strengthened with the goal of extending its territory westward and to link up with the Beorninga and Madugardi in the Northern Anduin Vales.

The first Marhathiuda lord to correctly assess the winds of change is the one from the North Riding (Taulagard). Consequently, he joins the realm of Dalr, thereby securing a position of both honour and premier influence at Bard's court as someone who joined his ranks quickly and out of free will.

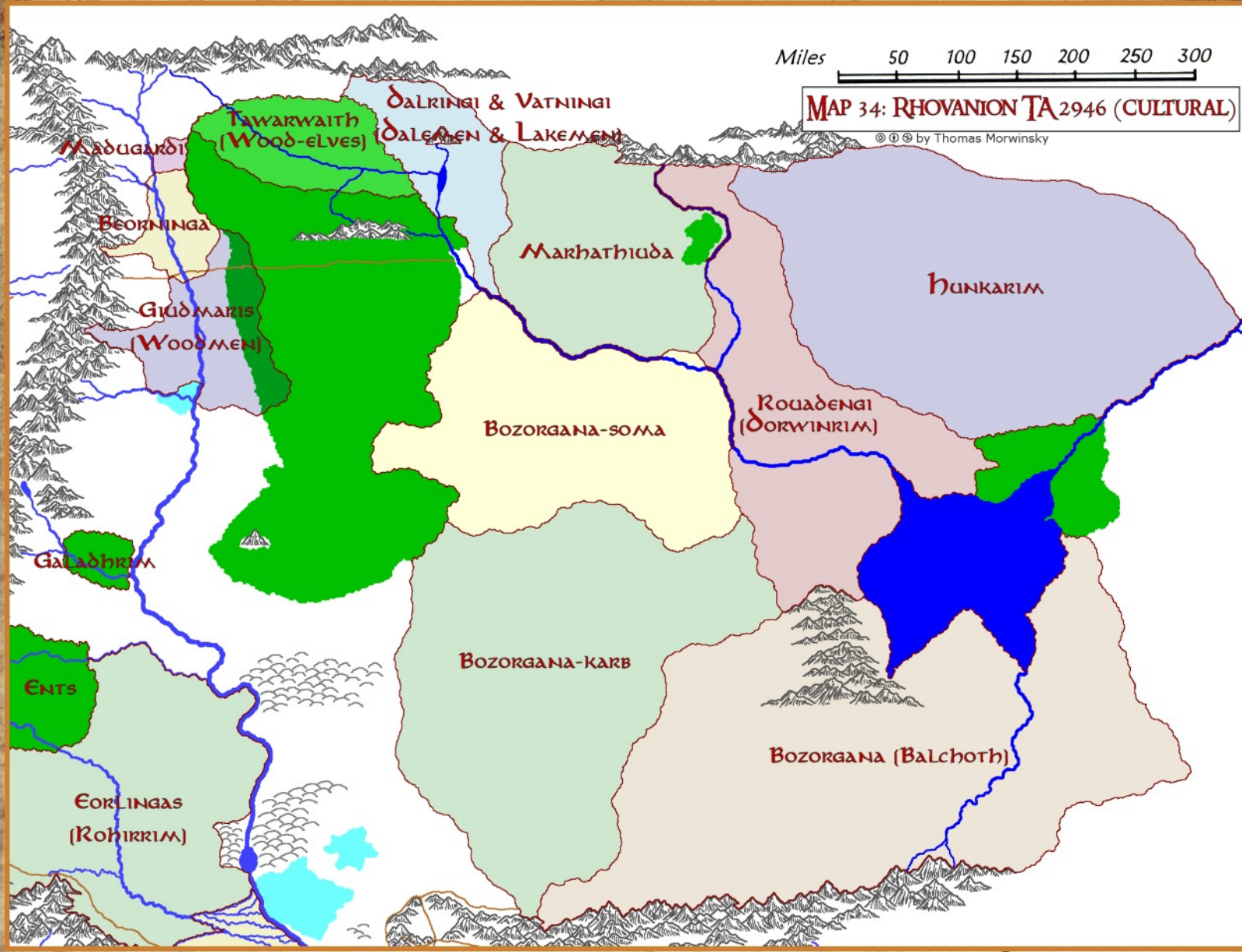


The West Riding is very reluctant to join Dalr and lose its independence, but the impending Bozorgana unification and resurgence makes it clear that they cannot hope to withstand an attack without Dalr. Therefore, even the stubborn West Riding eventually joins the realm of king Bard.

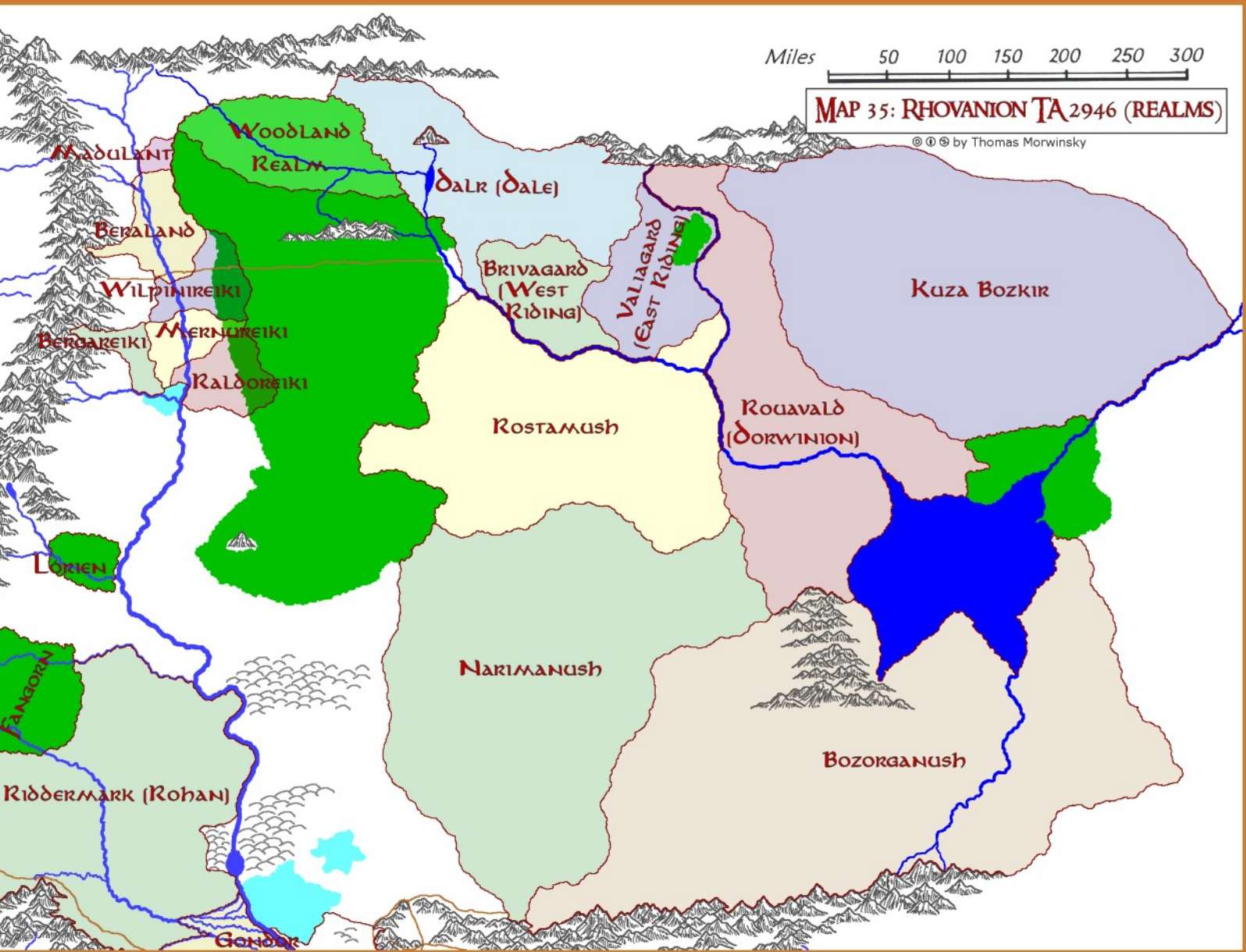
Overall, during its first 10 years of existence or so, the realm of Dalr is quite weak, but it enjoys a fresh spirit, the dwarven support and a central position of the town of Dale within its core territory, making it relatively easy to rule. In addition, it is fortunate that only local conflicts exist in this time, making consolidation easier for the rougher years that follow after the revival of Bozorgana power.

Table 10: Population figures in TA 2946

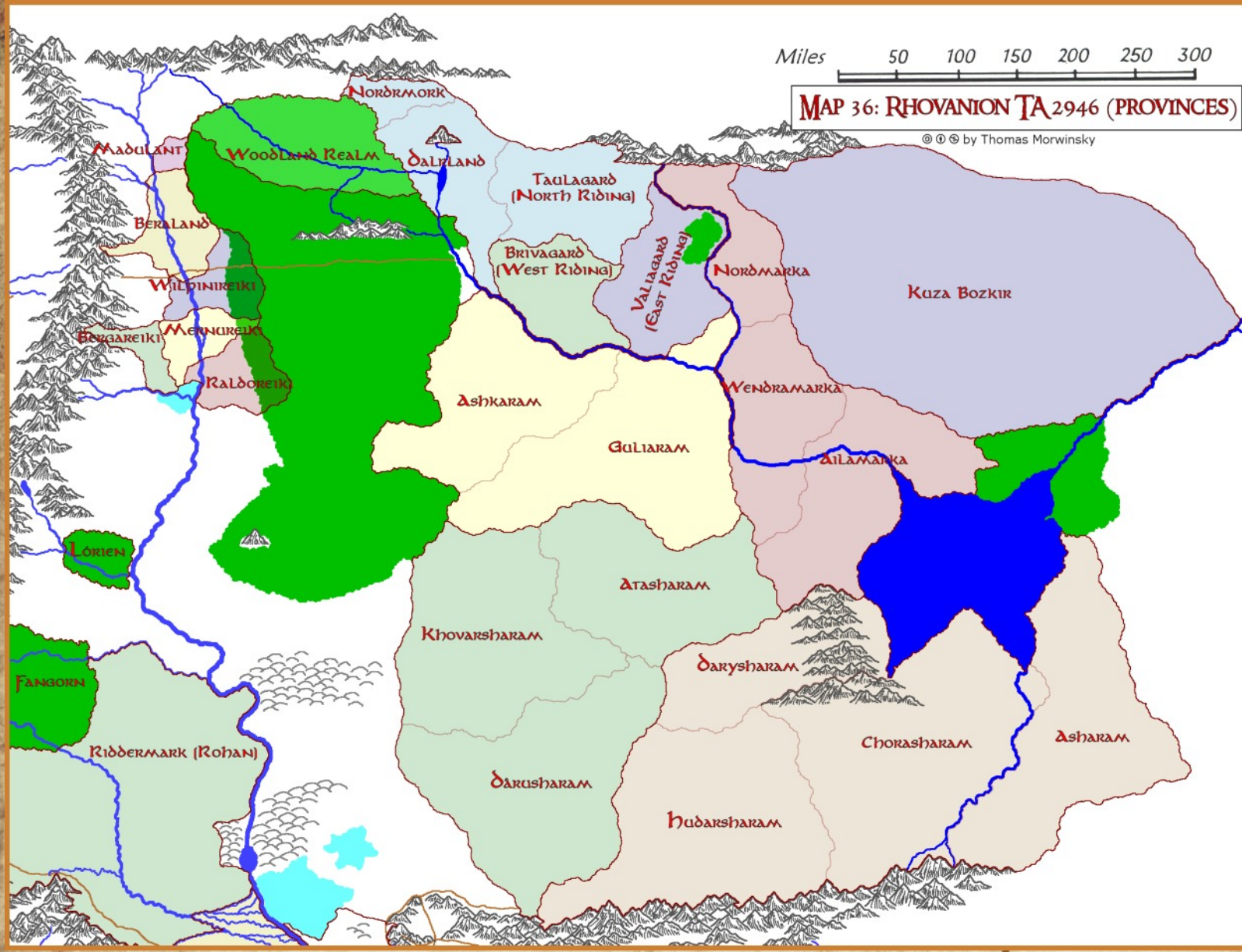
Culture	territory				population		
	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	rural	urban	overall
Madugardi	Madulant		1700	40%	6900	500	7,400
Beorninga	Beraland		11,300	38%	59,400	3,800	63,200
Giudmaris	Wilpinireiki		9,500	0.4	31,000	1,400	32,400
	Mernureiki		7,000	40%	34,800	2,000	36,800
	Raldoreiki		10,100	43%	46200	2,400	48,500
	Bergareiki		4,500	45%	17,300	1,400	18,700
Dalringi/Vatningi	Dalr (Dale)	Nordrmork	5,600	45%	15,600	800	16,300
		Dalrland	21,700	35%	104,100	5,800	109,900
		Taulagard	26,600	40%	113,400	6,900	120,300
Marhathiuda	Brivagard		19,100	35%	139,700	9,500	149,100
	Valiagard		25,400	45%	105,400	6,600	112,000
Rouadengi	Rouavald	Nordmarka	18,100	43%	75,300	4,900	80,100
		Wendramarka	32,500	38%	163,000	11,400	174,400
		Ailamarka	44,000	40%	232,900	17,300	250,200
Hunkarim	Kuza Bozkir		182,300	45%	119,900	1,200	121,100
Bozorgana-soma	Rostamush	Ashkaram	44,700	40%	135,000	9,600	144,700
		Guliamaram	63,300	43%	220,300	10,800	231,000
Bozorgana-karb	Narimanush	Khovarsharam	59,200	40%	239,800	12,400	252,300
		Atasharam	47,700	38%	92,900	3,700	96,700
		Dârusharam	65,300	48%	135,400	7,500	142,900
		Darysharam	34,600	40%	149,400	9,800	159,200
Bozorgana	Bozorganush	Hudarsharam	68,600	48%	136,000	6,600	142,700
		Chorasharam	79,400	45%	296,000	19,000	314,900
		Asharam	62,000	45%	191,200	10,500	201,700
Rhovanion total:			944,200	41%	2,860,900	165,800	3,026,500



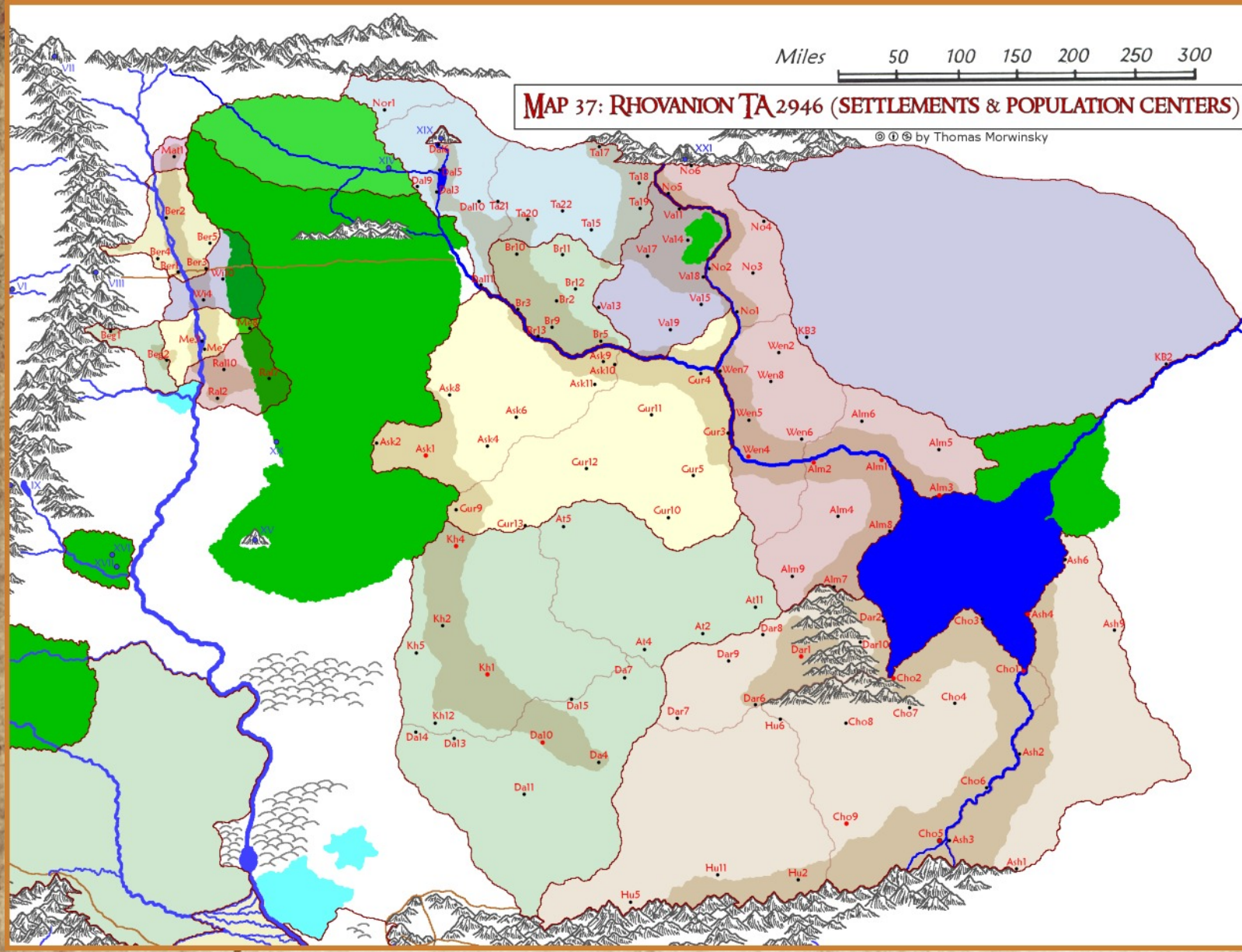
Map 34: There are no ethnic changes worth mentioning since the last era. The most striking is the slight enlargement of the Rouadengi territory along the upper Carnen.



Map 35: The past 25 years have seen the establishment and constant growth of the realm of Dale. The other realms in Rhovanion have remained more or less constant in their borders.



Map 36: Similarly to the realms overall, change has been minor with the exception of Dalr. The formerly independent North riding is now part of the realm.



Map 37: The past years have seen much migration to Dale with the associated growth and re-building of Dale (the city).

TA 3015

The grandson of Bard the Bowman rules them, Brand son of Bain son of Bard. He is a strong king, and his realm now reaches far south and east of Esgaroth.

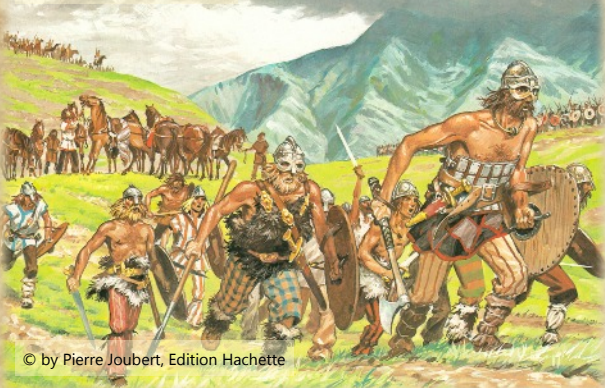
—The Lord of the Rings.
Many Meetings

Year of the Third Age	Event
3015	The Bozorgana realms and Rouanush begin to trouble Dale.
3017	Gollum captured by Aragorn in the Dead Marshes. He brings his captive to Thranduil where Gollum is questioned by Gandalf. A Nazgûl comes as messenger to Dáin II, asking for Hobbits.
3018	Orcs attack Gollum's guards. Gollum escapes.
3019	Lórien and Woodland Realm attacked by Dol Guldur. Battle at the Iron Wood. Battle of Dale. King Brand and Dáin II Ironfoot fall in battle. Easterlings defeated in second battle of Dale. Bard II becomes king of Dale and Thorin III Stonehelm king of the Longbeards.
3021	Rouagana defeated by a coalition of Dale, Dorwinion and Hunkarim auxiliaries.

The Anduin Vales

By this time, the Beorning confederation has grown in strength and dominates the Northern and Middle Vales. They command the Great East Road and the High Pass over the Hithaeglr. This is done for the benefit of all the Free People, but the Beornings suffer losses and consequently see every justification to also demand tolls for the freedom of the road that is paid with their blood.

Beornings assemble for battle



Later, after the defeat of Sauron in the War of the Ring, the Beornings slowly extend their territory southward along the Misty Mountains and later also – on the western bank – up to Anduin the Great.

Many clans of the Woodmen have now joined the Beorninga, leading to substantial losses in territory for the former. Many new settlements are founded in this era, with the Beornings enjoying such a vigorous time.

The remaining land is relatively safe and secure though. Woodmen Town and Woodland Hall are the biggest and most important Giudmaris settlements in this time. A shrinking tendency can be observed though, and the Woodmen concentrate their people more and more on the eastern bank the Great River.

Central Rhovanion

The situation in this region has not changed much in the past years, the overarching goal of the unified Bozorgana realms is to defeat the Northmen beyond Celduin once and for all. In this they are supported and indoctrinated by Sauron's emissaries who do everything they can to further this goal. Religious hate and economic envy is fostered to increase this in addition to an ideology of racial superiority over the Northmen and the "natural right to rule" of the Bozorgana.

The Rouagana have established themselves firmly in this time and are the most zealous proponents of the forthcoming war. At first it looks as if everything would run in their favour, but later they – and all the Easterlings – are thoroughly defeated after the fall of Barad-dûr. In the end the Rouagana (and with them their land Rouanush) vanishes from history almost as quickly as it appeared.

Dorwinion marketplace



Rouavald (Dorwinion) again exists in almost exactly the same borders as it did during the 1st millennium of the Third Age (apart from newly acquired Ostramarka). Its economic strength is still considerable, carefully preserved by its lords. Until the War of the Ring it is independent, but a satellite state of Bozorganush.



De facto, the formally independent states of Ros-tamush and Narimanush are little more than provinces of Bozorganush now, and it is planned to catch up with this formality in a grand ceremony after the final victory against the Northmen and the re-establishment of the great Bozorgana Empire.

When all is ready, the greatest Bozorgana army in centuries marches north to challenge Dale and its – few – allies in TA 3019. The army assembles and crosses the Celduin through a prepared bridge into Rouanush, planning to cross Carnen (which is easier to ford) in force. At first everything goes well, and the forces of Dalr are quickly defeated near the Iron Wood in the East Riding. The Northmen are able to retreat in good order though, and the Bozorgana army follows up until the Northmen give battle again at the very heart of their realm near the Lonely Mountain – this time together with the local Dwarves. There they defeat them again, both their kings killed and the remaining enemy forces driven into the mountain, which is besieged. Around this time, Frodo sees Bozorgana warriors marching into the Morannon. In the North, disaster strikes unexpectedly, when suddenly all the motivation and self-confidence of the warriors is blown away like leaves in the wind and then the re-grouped Enemy sorties and utterly destroys the whole, totally disheartened army.

These events herald a new era. The power of the priests melts away like snow in the sun, when their god in Mordor is thrown down from his high throne. The Bozorgana society is shaken to its core by these events, with all of the client-kingdoms left

to fend for themselves. Two years later, they suffer another defeat and Rouanush is destroyed.

Northern Rhovanion

70 years after its re-founding, the realm of Dale has grown considerably and internally, it is much more stable too. All the kings from Bard to Brand ruled wisely by carefully integrating all the people that were patched together after the re-establishment of Dalr. The realm is strong again – both politically and economically.



The link and communication with the Anduin Vales through the northern route round Mirkwood is now established, even if somewhat arduous due to the harsher weather, landscape and the still thinly spread-out population.

All in all, Dalr has developed into a stable and fully matured realm, the primary power in the North. The growing tensions with the sauronic-led

Bozorgana since about 3015 cause trouble for king Brand. He knows that the united Bozorgana (plus the pressed Rouadengi) are too powerful for his realm to resist alone. Nonetheless, he meets the invasion far to the east, testing their strength and hoping to gain an advantage by contesting their crossing of the Carnen. This fails, and he is beaten back to Dale, though the losses are modest and the retreat is done in relative good order. He sees his only chance in linking up his forces with the Long-beards', and so he retreats right unto Dale and there makes a stand together with the Dwarves. Again, Dalr is defeated and Brand slain, but the survivors are able to retreat to the impregnable fortress of Erebor and from there later launch a counterattack that scatters the Enemy that has lost all its will to fight after Sauron's fall.

Only two years later, the young king Bard II takes the opportunity while his foes are still disorganized and heartless to reclaim territory and status.

Dalr launches an attack eastward, destroying Rouanush in alliance with Rouavald (Dorwinion). The territory is then divided among Rouavald and Dalr, laying the foundation for Dale's splendour in the Fourth Age.

The following table 11 lists the key demographic data for this period.

Epilogue

In the next Issue of *Other Minds* the theme of rhovanic demographics will be brought to its conclusion with a detailed listing of all the settlements.

By now, only the overall maps are provided. In Issue 15 you will find also short descriptive paragraphs plus some information on the more important settleemnts of each realm. The sheer size of all the settlements precludes to go into detail for all of them.

Table 11: Population figures in TA 3015							
Culture	realm	province	Territory (km2)	wild	population		
					Rural	urban	overall
Beorninga	Beraland		41700	38%	155500	10,300	165,700
Giudmaris	Mernureiki		7,900	40%	31,700	1,700	33,400
	Raldoreiki		9,600	43%	47,900	2,900	50,800
Dalringi/Vatningi	Dalr (Dale)	Nordrmork	12,500	45%	33,800	2,000	35,800
		Dalrland	27,000	35%	183,000	15,200	198,200
Brivagard		17,700	35%	114,700	7,600	122,300	
Taulagard		31,600	40%	144,500	9,000	153,500	
Valiagard		25,400	45%	117,600	7,500	125,200	
Rouagana	Rouanush		19,300	40%	89,600	6,000	95,600
Rouadengi	Rouavald	Wendramarka	24,500	38%	124,200	8,700	133,000
		Ailamarka	34,800	40%	214,100	15,900	229,900
		Ostramarka	13,500	48%	21,800	1,500	23,300
Hunkarim	Kuza Bozkir		166,500	45%	131,500	1,300	132,800
Bozorgana-soma	Rostamush	Ashkaram	42,400	40%	132,100	9,400	141,500
		Guliam	57,300	43%	201,800	9,900	211,700
Bozorgana-karb	Narimanush	Khovarsharam	67,600	40%	232,900	11,300	244,200
		Dârusharam	70,200	48%	172,200	10,100	182,300
		Darysharam	69,500	40%	285,300	18,700	304,000
Bozorgana	Bozorganush	Hudarsharam	83,700	45%	182,700	10,200	192,900
		Chorasharam	80900	45%	299,200	19,100	318,300
		Asharam	62,000	45%	191,100	10,500	201,600
Beorninga	Beraland		41,700	38%	155,500	10,300	165,700
Giudmaris	Mernureiki		7,900	40%	31,700	1,700	33,400
	Raldoreiki		9,600	43%	47,900	2,900	50,800
Rhovanion total:			965,600	42%	3,107,200	188,800	3,296,000

Miles 50 100 150 200 250 300

MAP 38: RHOVANION TA 3015 (CULTURAL)

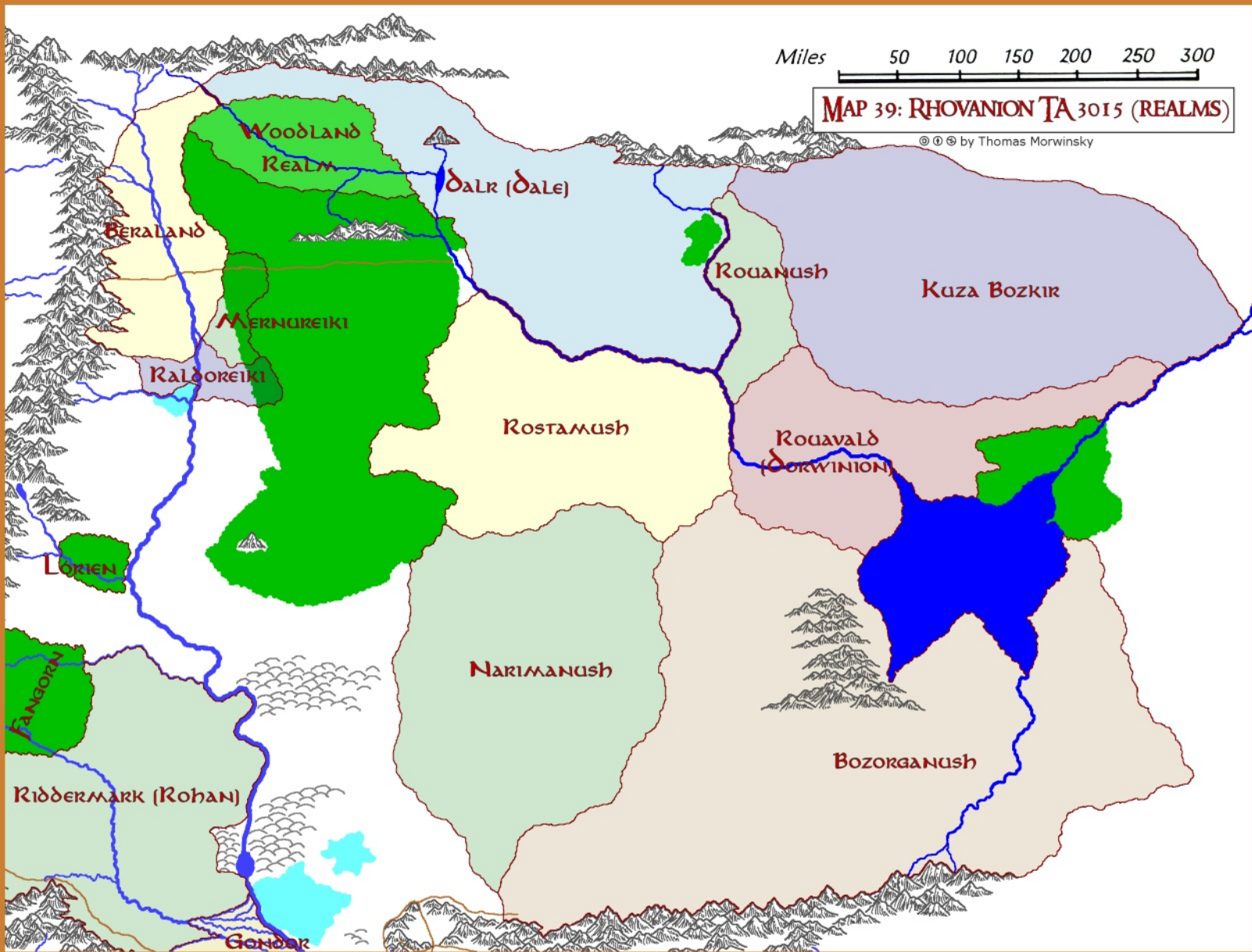
© 1995 by Thomas Morwinsky

Regions shown on the map:

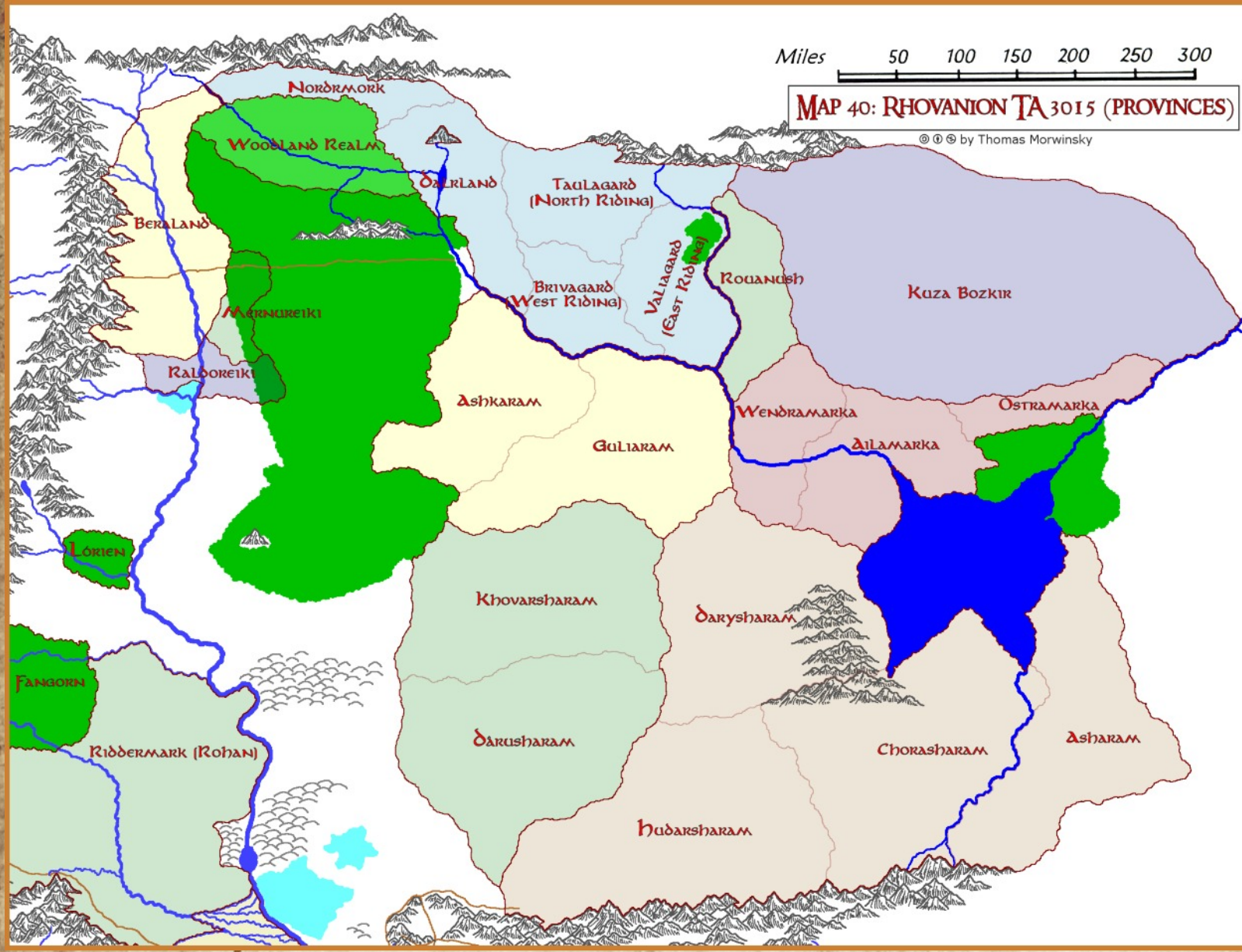
- Tawarwaith (Wood-elves)
- Dalemen & Lakemen
- Beorninga
- Gudmaris (Woodmen)
- Marhathiuda
- Rouagana
- Hunkarim
- Bozorgana-Soma
- Rouadengi (Dorwinion)
- Galadhrim
- Ents
- Eorlingas (Rohirrim)
- Bozorgana-Karb
- Bozorgana (Balchoth)

232

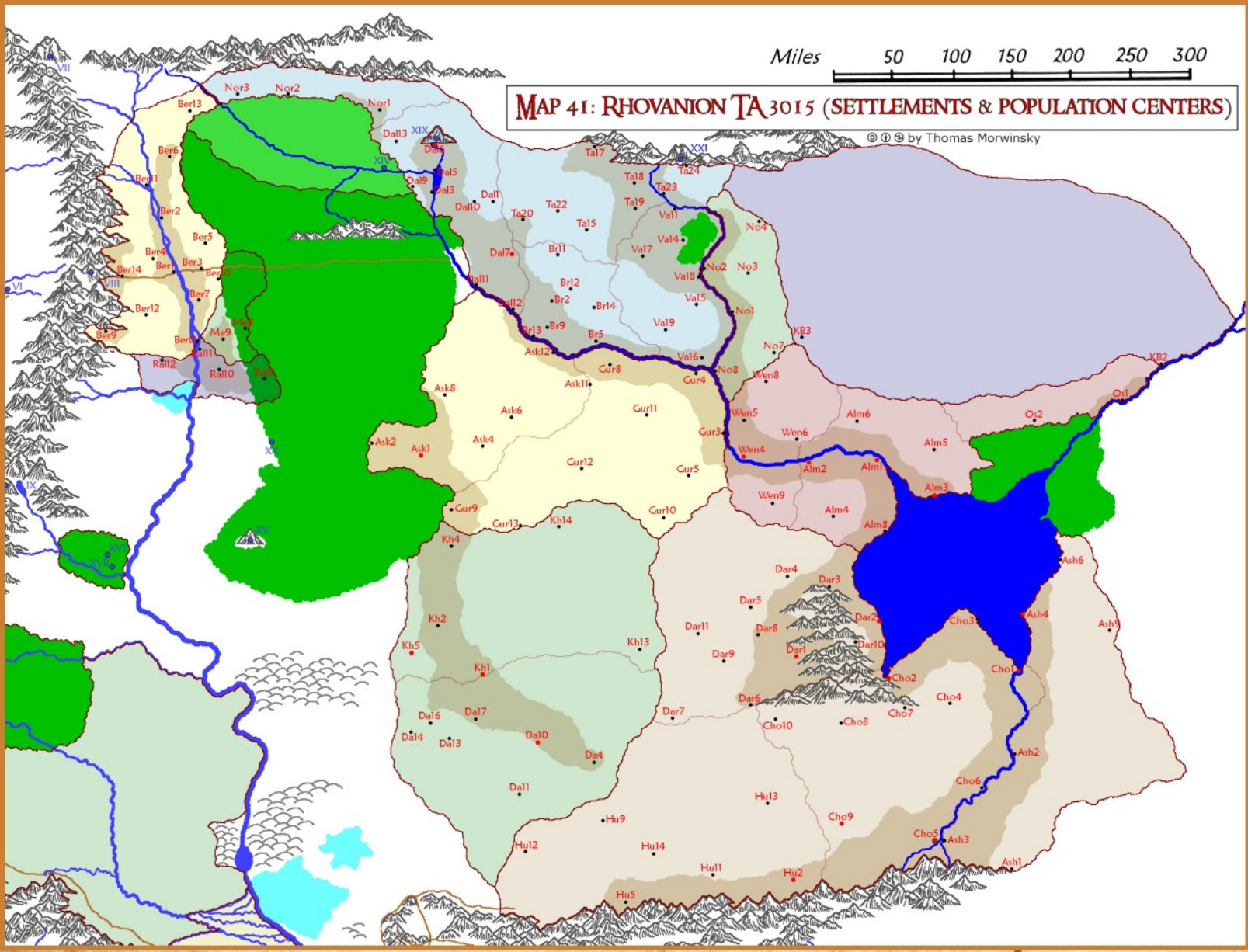
232
 օճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր թորձ արդ հարձօճեր օճեր թորձ արդ հարձ



Map 39: The most important change to the last era is the now unified realm of Dale that extends to the Carnen, creating a formidable barrier for all Easterling invaders.



Map 40: By this time all of the former ridings are part of Dale.



Map 41: The relative peace of the past 70 years has led to a strengthening of the demographic situation in Dale