

OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role-Playing Magazine for J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

Other Minds

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Númenor

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Editorial

Here we are!

Perhaps you know the famous Fantasy movie in whose title track this line is the opener – and how it continued.¹ We do not claim such honors as in the next lines of this track, though they create a powerful image indeed. But everything in due order:

Since the demise of *Other Hands* magazine in 2001 there was a distinct lack of a gaming fanzine that addressed specifically the Middle-earth gaming community on a broad basis. This went on for some years, despite several community-based efforts like the *fan-sourcebooks* project.²

Nearly two years after the introduction of Decipher's *Lord of the Rings Role Playing Game (LotRRPG)* in 2002, the Online Fanzine *The Hall of Fire* (<http://www.halloffire.org>) opened its doors in December 2003 to support this game. One might wonder why another magazine should be needed if there is already one which does a pretty good job. The answer is that the *Hall of Fire* is focused on providing *LotRRPG*-only material plus supplements for the specific timeframe of this game.

This focus leaves everything else out. *Other Minds* strives to fill this gap. It is open to suggestions for any game system, though we will provide our own generic system of describing character and creature abilities to make conversions easier if your system of choice is not mentioned in a specific article. This system will be published on the *Other Minds* website (<http://www.othermindsmagazine.com>) as well as in the next issue.

Providing a platform for any Middle-earth gaming related issue is the central and pivotal *raison d'être* for this magazine.

Thus we see *Other Minds* not in competition to the *Hall of Fire*, but rather as a complement due to the different foci of both publications.

The photos to the right show the guys most responsible for *Other Minds*. The first one is Hawke Robinson, long-time manager of the Merp mailing list and organizer of MERPCON. The second you might know from *Other Hands*' times; it is Thomas Morwinsky who has contributed a number of articles to this magazine as well as some online-essays and maps.

The team of *Other Minds* is much bigger of course (proofreaders, contributors etc.) This great *voluntary* effort of so many people is what makes this whole project so good (beside

the Tolkien-related content of course). More of the team will be introduced in later issues.



Hawke Robinson



Thomas Morwinsky

We hope that you will find as much joy in reading this first issue of *Other Minds* as we had in making it happen!

This leads us already to the last subject in this context: If you want to see *Other Minds* endure for any length of time, please submit contributions. For details how to submit, see page 37 We have material assembled by ourselves, but to achieve a viable long-term survivability, we need your contributions. If

you want to see your adventure, realm description, or whatever else in print – you know whom to look for!

We are especially in need of good artists and images to enhance the magazine with original art. If you submit someone else's art, please add a written approval from the artist.

Now, for the actual content of this inaugural issue: First we have an insightful essay in the category "Opinion" by Hawke Robinson, in which he details the development of the Middle-earth gaming license since the advent of the Peter Jackson movies. If you were ever interested in such "behind-the-scenes" issues, this article is for you!

The second is from Hawke as well and deals with the image of RPG's in the general public and media and how this is handled.

The third contribution is the main feature to be sure: A fully-fledged essay on the problems and possible solutions when mapping Middle-earth on a global scale authored by Thomas Morwinsky, Stéphane Hoerlé, Gabriele Quaglia, Oliver Schick and Christian Schröder. It has been developed with the highest priority on Tolkien sources and RPG sources as a secondary need when it did not contradict Tolkien. This is capped with several maps to match the essay. They depict Arda throughout the Ages. And all this in a resolution sufficient for a printed-out wallpaper! We hope that it will be useful for your game and a suitable base for further articles.

Neville Percy provides us with an excellent essay on the Barrow-wights. Here you can see all the relevant facts assembled together with a well-based interpretation of what these creatures might be – and what not. Stuff for adjusting the standard Undead-cliché for sure!

Chris Seeman gave us permission to publish his excellent summary on the manifestations of magic in Middle-earth. As is to be expected, you'll not be disappointed.

Finally we provide you with an interesting essay on the nature of Imladris. Tolkien's many hints are summarized and set into context with the professional RPG products. Discover some fascinating facets here!

So much for now, we hope to greet you again next January for the second issue.

Hawke Robinson
Thomas Morwinsky
July 2007

¹ As a hint, this movie does not deal with Tolkien and it was released quite long ago.

² <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules>

Opinion


“Opinion” is a section of *Other Minds* devoted to personal views of individual authors about topics related to roleplaying in Middle-earth. Even more so than the other sections, it is a highly subjective forum for which the caveats mentioned in the Disclaimer on page 37 are especially stressed.

We encourage anyone to submit follow-up(s) to topics mentioned in “Opinion”, thus allowing for different points of view on a certain subject.

The Acroteriasm of Other Hands

The Tolkien Legacy, The Tolkien Estate, Tolkien Enterprises, and “Other Hands”

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The Tolkien Estate sold the film, stage and merchandise related rights for the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit to Saul Zaentz who then created Tolkien Enterprises.

J.R.R. Tolkien indicated in some of his letters that he wanted others to build upon his legacy, especially in the areas of visual arts and music, as well as quality derivative written works. He had a strong sense of how these derivative works must meet a strict level of purity, appreciation and accurate understanding of his works. The Estate has kept for the most part, a very loyal academic and literary approach in the treatment of J.R.R. Tolkien’s many works. While not being significantly heavy handed in preventing derivative works, they have been discouraging of such efforts. Enterprises on the other hand has had a solely commercial and legal interest, with little indication of any concern for preserving the literary quality or “purity” of the works. They have shown a very significant heavy handedness in dealing with absolutely any derivative works on any scale. Other Hands (OH) magazine was a non-profit journal run by fans of J.R.R. Tolkien and role playing gamers who had a strong reverence for his works. This journal was originally given permission to operate by Enterprises, then nine years later Enterprises demanded that the publication be shut-down.

The Creator

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote prolifically during his 81 years of life. He loved languages, studying many, and he even created more than a dozen of his own languages. Tolkien was a world renowned philologist, and translated a number of famous works. He was Professor of Anglo-Saxon and English, and later Professor of English language and literature for Oxford University in England. Outside of the purely academic world, he is most famous for his creation of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* as well as *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, *Book(s) of Lost Tales*, *History of Middle-earth* series, and other works published posthumously by his son Christopher Tolkien including the recent 2007 release of *The Children of Húrin*.

An Open Invitation

In some areas, under strict consideration to “understanding” his works, he clearly wanted derivative works such as art and music to be allowed, as he stated in his “other minds and hands” quote:

“I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama.”
Tolkien, J.R.R. Letter #131 to Milton Waldman. Circa 1951

This quote strongly indicates Tolkien’s wish that others would build many derivative works based upon his legacy. That being said, he was very picky about these artists staying true to the complexities of the world he created. He hoped that derivative writers would see:

“how closely linked is linguistic invention and legendary growth and construction.” **Letters, #297, p 387**

He was very frustrated by the majority of submissions not seeming to “get” his vision, and referred to the poor quality fan fiction attempts as “tripe” (Letters, #292, p.371).

He was not particularly impressed with large corporate art resources either, especially from the United States. Whereas he was potentially open to individual artists themselves, he had

... a “heartfelt loathing” for “anything from or influenced by the Disney studios” **Letters #13, p 17**

In 1966 J.R.R. Tolkien sold the film, stage and merchandise rights to United Artists. When he died those rights reverted to the family. The family, represented by The Tolkien Estate, sold the rights to Saul Zaentz who established the business entity Tolkien Enterprises to manage the intellectual property licensing and legal enforcement. Tolkien Enterprises has taken a very commercial, rather than literary, view of the works, and has been very aggressive in using IP (Intellectual Property) laws to enforce the rights it acquired though never created.

Tolkien Enterprises’ imperious enforcement has led to many authors, artists, musicians and publications having their works forcefully removed from the public venue. Some artists’ lives have been dramatically impacted by Tolkien Enterprises, having their life’s works removed from public access (Anois music group. 2007), rather than allowed to be released to the general public, something Tolkien may very well have wanted for the betterment of mankind, and specifically England. He would probably have wanted the enhancement of his world being opened up to a broader audience worldwide than Tolkien Enterprises has allowed, though he most likely would have disapproved of the ways in which Tolkien Enterprises already has capitalized on his works.

Tolkien would likely have been dismayed by the stifling of the potential for development of quality works created by “other minds and hands” as derivations of his original works as he implied he wanted (Letters, #131).

On the other hand Tolkien was not at all impressed with the early attempts at fan fiction proposals he received, and the general “pop” culture over his works. He was far more supportive of musical works however, stating in 1964 to an aspiring musician wishing to compose a Hobbit Overture:

"You certainly have my permission to compose any work that you wished based on The Hobbit. As an author I am honoured to hear that I have inspired a composer. I have long hoped to do so, and hoped also that I might perhaps find the result intelligible to me, or feel that it was akin to my own inspiration as much as are, say, some (but not all) of Pauline Baynes' illustrations. ...

I have little musical knowledge. Though I come of a musical family, owing to defects of education and opportunity as an orphan, such music as was in me was submerged (until I married a musician), or transformed into linguistic terms. Music gives me great pleasure and sometimes inspiration, but I remain in the position in reverse of one who likes to read or hear poetry but knows little of its technique or tradition, or of linguistic structure." **The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien. #260. August 16, 1964**

A Clear Stance On Piracy

Though J.R.R. Tolkien provided a fairly open invitation for others to create derivative works, he provided at best, mixed views on his attitude towards those specific derivative works submitted over the years. On the other hand, he was very clear on his strong active stance against any piracy of his works, especially in the case of the USA Ace Books piracy scandal (Letters, #269, 270, 271, 364, 367).

The Estate vs. Enterprises

The relationship between The Tolkien Estate and Tolkien Enterprises over the decades has at best been strained. The Estate does not directly get a single penny from the movies or merchandise created from the Lord of the Rings or The Hobbit movies. Only if the products are directly derived from the books, does the Estate directly benefit financially. As an example, The Hobbit cartoon movie led to figurines made by Knickerbocker toys in the styling of the Hobbit cartoon characters, rather than accurately fitting the descriptions of the books. This meant that Enterprises would get the profits, and the Estate would not see a penny. On the other hand, Toy Vault made miniature figurines that were accurate renditions straight from the books, letting the Estate get some profits with Enterprises getting none (Lord of the Rings. 2001).

This dichotomy of IP ownership, means profits on all the billions of dollars and pounds made on the Peter Jackson Lord of the Rings films went to Tolkien Enterprises/Saul Zaentz (and New Line Cinemas and Peter Jackson), and not a penny went to the Family/Estate.

However, the Estate has indirectly benefited because of the renewed interest in the books, leading to a very significant spike in book sales.

Iron Crown Gets ICEd

Iron Crown Enterprises was given exclusive world wide rights by Tolkien Enterprises to create role playing games based on Tolkien's works. The company had this license from 1981 to 1999. When Tolkien Enterprises obtained a court order to force ICE to freeze sales of MERP (Middle-earth Role Playing) related products, income plummeted. In addition to freezing sales, ICE was forced to pay for expensive storage and insurance of the products, while being prohibited from selling off the remaining inventory assets. This went on all the while continuing the expensive legal battle with court hearing extensions, court costs, lawyers, etc. Since ICE was very dependent on MERP sales as a revenue stream, this multi-pronged strategy by Tolkien Enterprises quickly drained the limited coffers of ICE and led to the company's being forced to file bankruptcy and eventually led to ICE's demise in 1999, ending an 18 year series of role playing products for gaming in Middle-earth.

The company was later reincarnated by Aurigas Aldabaron LLC, but was not allowed to (re)acquire the rights to continue creating Middle-earth/Tolkien-based games.

Conspiracy Theories

Many, if not most, believe that it was Enterprises' wish to maximize on the potential windfall from the Peter Jackson movies, that led to their using what many considered at best, questionable legal practices, to free the license up from ICE, and then reissue it for a significantly higher rate, with far more restrictions than when ICE owned the rights. Whether that was the original plan is not publicly certain, but it clearly has been the end result.

Short Lived Resurrection

A company known as Decipher, maker of many card games and some role playing games, acquired the rights to create a much more restricted Middle-earth role playing role playing gaming system known as Decipher's LotR (Lord of the Rings) RPG. They invested much in the cards and other venues, but arguably only half-heartedly put forth effort into the RPG portion of the very restrictive license. Those who actually worked on the LotR RPG project worked very hard on it, looking at the changing of the guard as an opportunity to "start fresh" and make a better RPG system more "true" to a Tolkien Middle-

earth setting than ICE's Rolemaster derivative MERP system had been.

Unfortunately, the licensing was so restrictive, that even when writers of modules and source material knew the correct names and places for NPCs (Non Player Characters) and races and cultures, they could not use that information because it was outside of the limits of the license agreement with Tolkien Enterprises, and the writers were forced by legal pressures to "make up" information. Decipher just recently announced in Spring 2007 that it would not renew it's Tolkien Enterprises license in Summer 2007, so the licensing will once again open up. However, the current conversation is that no one will want to touch the license with a ten foot troll prod, because of how overly restrictive and expensive it is.

Hands Off

The confusion and complications caused by the split ownership and licensing between the Estate and Enterprises, was exemplified in the seemingly unwarranted, and on the surface inexplicable, forced termination of the well respected, nine years long nonprofit journal Other Hands magazine. In 2001, two years after the destruction of Iron Crown Enterprises, Tolkien Enterprises forced OH to shut down. OH played a strong supportive role to those using the Iron Crown Enterprises Middle-earth Role Playing game system, but was always a useful resource for Tolkien enthusiasts world wide, whether a gamer, or a non-gaming Tolkien fan.

Other Hands magazine was a non-profit journal founded by Professor Chris Seeman for those fans of J.R.R. Tolkien's works that wished to role play in his imaginary Middle-earth. Though primarily a role playing gaming magazine, many Tolkien scholars and non-gaming Tolkien fans found the publication extremely valuable. The magazine was given verbal permission by phone (Chris Seeman, email, 2007) to publish by Laurie Battle, Licensing Director of Tolkien Enterprises in 1992. In fact, she was interviewed in Other Hands in Issue #10/11 on November 1995 by Chris Seeman on the topic of the role playing gaming rights of Iron Crown Enterprises for MERP (Middle-earth Role Playing).

In 2001, Tolkien Enterprises apparently desiring to "clear the slate" for the role playing and Tolkien fanzine world, sent OH a "Cease and Desist" letter forcing the journal out of publication, claiming that Other Hands was "an unauthorized derivative work of the Tolkien works"
Hurst. 2001

Frustration

Since then, the Tolkien-based role playing gaming world has struggled. Long gone are the heady days of Iron Crown Enterprises' more than one hundred supplement books. The new licensing restrictions have severely stifled the creativity and accuracy that most gamers desire in a Tolkien based role playing gaming system. It is likely the overly restrictive license that has led to Decipher only minimally supporting the Lord of the Rings Role Playing Game product line intermittently, and then their opting not to renew the license in 2007, will dissuade anyone wanting to continue the legacy as a public or commercial venture. Even if some company sees an opportunity to capitalize on any upcoming Hobbit movie, the product produced is likely to continue to let down the general public clamoring for "true" contributions to the Tolkien legacy, in the the Tolkien based role playing gaming community.

Worldwide Community

In frustration with the lack of much material available in the way of "authorized" resources, there has been a growing "underground" movement growing steadily internationally. Many of the community members in this movement were part of ICE, OH, and Decipher LotR authorship spanning more than 25 years, others are just inspired by those, the original J.R.R. Tolkien works and subsequent Tolkien works released by his son Christopher Tolkien. There are now hundreds of authors, and millions of participants in this movement. There are multiple "unofficial" magazines, websites and game systems now available. Beside many others, these include the following resources:

- Hall of Fire zine
<http://www.halloffire.org>
- Other Minds magazine (new)
<http://www.othermindszine.org>
- Fan-sourcebooks at Yahoo Groups
<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules>
- Ambarquenta RPG system
<http://www.ambarquenta.com>
- Hither Lands role playing game system
<http://www.hither-lands.com>
- Eä d20 role playing game system
<http://ead20.com/>

In addition, there dozens of adaptations of existing games systems to Middle-earth (GURPS, D&D, HarnMaster, HARP, etc.), as well as hundreds of new adventure modules and supplements for many game systems set in Middle-earth.

30+ Years To Freedom

It will be another 30-40 years before the Tolkien works officially become public domain, assuming no further extensions to copyright posthumous laws. So for now, the legal wrangling and the up and down drama of those wishing to heed Tolkien's open invitation to use their "other minds and hands" building on Tolkien's works will have to continue to worry about their creative hands being dismembered when trying to make their works publicly available.

Acroteriasism definition: A word derived from the Greek verb akroteriazerein meaning "amputation of the extremities", or the act of cutting off the extreme parts of body by a saw. Used in the case of this opinion article as a (bad) pun on Other Hands magazine being "cut off" from publication.

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¹ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

The Battle Over Role Playing Gaming

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History Overview

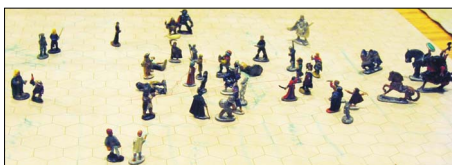
War-gaming has been around for thousands of years in the military and elite levels of society. It was H.G. Wells' "Little Wars" that made it accessible to the general public in 1913.

Role playing gaming (RPGing) originally grew as an offshoot from war-gaming in the 1960's and 1970's, and has grown significantly since 1974 with the publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*. This splitting off from classical war-gaming was due in part to the popularity and influence of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of Rings".

Detractors of RPGing claim serious risks to life, limb, mind, and spirit for those who engage in this endeavor. Advocates claim little to no risk, and a lengthy list of benefits for those who participate in this recreational activity. Meanwhile the media has had an unbalanced bias on this topic.

Studies that have been run by both sides of the debate, as well as neutral parties, have provided some interesting data. Most of the data, when valid and verifiable, has either been correlative rather than causal, or been on such a small scale in either the number of test subjects or duration, that it is difficult from a scientific perspective to clearly ascertain exactly what exact characteristics of role playing gaming have the claimed positive or negative impact.

The emphasis of this document is on the verb "role playing gaming" as opposed to the noun "Role Playing Games". Live Action Role Playing known as LARP, which is a physical enactment of role playing, is not included in this essay due to the significant differences from paper and dice role playing gaming. This essay also does not cover computer based role



playing gaming or MMORPGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games).

For the purposes of this document, the perspective that this topic is being approached with, is that role playing games are merely neutral tools as a collection of paper, rules and dice that are inert and have no causal influence on anyone until they are actually used by players to participate in role playing gaming sessions. As an example corollary, a shovel inherently has neither a positive, nor negative influence when it is sitting in the storage shed on



the wall. Only when someone uses the shovel to dig a ditch for drainage, or as a weapon to assault someone, does the potential for assessing positive or negative aspects manifest.

What is Role Playing Gaming?

Role playing gaming can be summed up as "interactive storytelling". The participants create on paper imaginary characters in a story run by the "game master" or "narrator" who acts as writer, director and referee of this imaginary, verbal-only play. The activity is similar to childhood "let's pretend" games such as "cops and robbers" or "treasure hunt", but with some key differences; the players are sitting around a table using their imagination and verbally describing their character's actions to each other, rather than physically acting out the scenes. Addi-



tionally there are clearly defined rules with a moderator, the GM (Game Master), to keep the game flowing.

The Opponents

Some of those who are opposed to role playing gaming focus their concerns on entire genres, such as fantasy or horror. Others focus on specific products such as "The Lord of the Rings", "Dungeons & Dragons", "Harry Potter", or "Call of Cthulu". Still others express concerns about all role playing gaming in general, which has a nearly limitless range of gen-

res, from fantasy and science fiction to horror, historical, bible-based, mystery, American "Old West", time travel, espionage and modern to name just a few.

Those who oppose the manufacture and use of role playing games in general, and "Dungeons & Dragons" specifically, have gone so far as attempting to have laws passed outlawing their use. One effort attempted to lobby the United States Federal Trade Commission, and then subsequently the Consumer Product Safety Commission, requesting a mandate to put warning labels on gaming materials that they "were hazardous and could cause suicide" (CARDWELL, JR., PAUL. 1994).

The one woman organization, B.A.D.D. (Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons), widely distributed pamphlets to law enforcement agencies for use in interrogating children

for potential links to satanism, included role playing gaming as one of the “danger signs” to check for during interrogation (STACKPOLE, A., MICHAEL, 1990).

These organizations take a zero tolerance stance that all forms of role playing games must be prohibited. A section of a tract distributed by the “Daughters of St. Paul” clearly spells out their position as:

“Thus more families must become informed of the hazards of Dungeons and Dragons in order to prevent it’s introduction into the home, neighborhood, and school. An absolute prohibition of the game must be maintained.” Games Un-suspecting People Play, 1984

The Case of Eggbert III

Prior to 1979, there does not appear to be any publicized detractors of role playing gaming. Then in 1979 a 16 year old “genius” student at Michigan State University named Dallas Egbert III suddenly disappeared. Egbert’s uncle hired a private investigator named William Dear to find out what happened. Mr. Dear stated eleven possible reasons for Egbert’s disappearance,

conjecture “#9 That Dallas had come to identify so much with his D&D character that he believed he was his character”
The Dungeon Master: The Disappearance of James Dallas Egbert III (Part I), 1991

This case became the inspiration for books and television movies for the next fifteen years, as well as a mis-stated example by role playing gaming protagonists when listing evidence of the potential pitfalls.

The truth of the story is it turned out that Egbert had attempted suicide in the steam tunnels. His suicidal ideations had been building from his ongoing drug abuse and finally triggered by his mother being dissatisfied with him not receiving a 4.0 on his grades. He had run away and hidden under the campus steam tunnels. After failing in his drug overdose suicide attempt he hid at a friend’s house for approximately a month, before finally “turning up”. A year later he finally committed suicide with a gun. The media did not retract the earlier focus on the D&D related statements. Mr. Dear revealed five years later that he found Dallas Egbert had not played D&D much at all, and never participated in “Live Action Role Playing”.

Changing Tactics

Detractors first started out stating that role playing greatly increased the risk of suicide.

(PULLING, RADECKI, BADD, & NCTV). Using the list of supposedly D&D related suicides, the claims were later shown to be based on incorrect data. Even later correlative research based on the numbers given by the detractors indicated that role playing gamers would be at less than one tenth the risk of the general United States population for suicide if based on the numbers of supposed suicides posited by the BADD & NCTV organizations (Cardwell, Jr., Paul 1994). The overturning of supposed “proof” about the dangers of role playing games has been a common theme.

The opponents of role playing gaming later claimed that participants were at a risk of increased antisocial behavior such as kidnappings, robbery, assault and even homicide (RADECKI and PULLING). Research in the following years determined these claims to be completely mistaken as well (CARDWELL, JR., PAUL. 1994).

Those in the religious camp that were supporting the fight against role playing gaming, focused on stating that role playing gaming led participants down the path of occultism and satanism because of magic being a topic included in some role playing games (Dungeons and Dragons, Only A Game? 1986). This was strongly refuted by a number of scientific studies that indicated there was no such correlative statistical link, and also showed a distinct difference in personality from those admittedly involved in satanism and those who were role playing gamers (Leeds, Stuart. 1995).

Lastly the religious portion of those against role playing gaming quit trying to create or use “scientific” data that kept getting overturned, and were no longer able to capitalize on the wave of “satanic panic” that was popular in the 1980s. They instead consolidated their focus on the general “risk” of straying from a “one true god” by playing games that included non-monotheistic deities, using many citations from the bible as “proof”. Ironically there is a very strong and large group of devout Christians who are avid role playing gamers, known as the “Christian Gamers Guild”, who refute what the other groups state are the risks. This has led to a considerable amount of “name calling” and rifts between the different religious organizations (Should A Christian Play Dungeons & Dragons?, 2001).

The Media Has Picked Sides

The media has not by any means been a neutral bystander in this controversy. A study published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* on the media and it’s potential bias in reporting on this debate indicated:

“The Associated Press and United Press International, between 1979 and 1992, carried 111 stories mentioning role-playing games... Almost all named only Dungeons & Dragons, even though there are several hundred such games on the market... Of the 111 stories, 80 were anti-game, 19 had no majority, 9 were neutral, and only 3 were pro-game. Those three pro-game stories were all from UPI, which is a considerably smaller wire service than AP.” Cardwell, Jr., Paul 1994

The supporters refute the detractors “evidence” by providing a large body of scientific research indicating potential benefits ranging from lower criminal and social risks (CARDWELL, JR., PAUL. 1994), to more rapidly developing foreign language skills (PHILLIPS, D. BRIAN. PHD, C.H. 1993). Many cite the benefits for developing stronger skills in reading, mathematics, creative thinking, cooperative play, history and many other cognitive and creative skills as well as potential therapeutic benefits (KESTREL, 2005).

Cooperation

Role playing gaming is by design a cooperative past time, which in and of itself may have significant benefits in a world where everything is becoming competitive at all ages and levels of society. There are very few social table-top recreation activities available that are cooperative rather than competitive in nature. Jessica Statsky, author of the essay Children Need to Play, Not Compete, expressed her concern about the over-competitive attitude towards play, and the lack of cooperation-based activities by stating:

“Their goals should be having fun, learning, and being with friends. Although winning does add to the fun, too many adults lose sight of what matters and make winning the most important goal.” 157

Return of the Shadow

The mid to late 1990s saw the decline of attacks on role playing games. This may be due to the same organizations changing their focus to other targets such as books (à la Harry Potter), computer based and online gaming, movies, television and music. It could also be a parallel to the decline in paper and diced role playing gaming market share growth, when having to compete with the aforementioned media entertainment.

In recent years however, there has been a revivalism of some of the old issues, including exact reprints of pamphlets on the topic from

more than 20 years ago that have already been refuted.

Additionally, as role playing gaming has begun to spread throughout other countries, some are going through the same or similar debates, including somewhat surprisingly,

the Israeli Defense Force as recently as 2005. They have come up with a new twist to the arguments against role playing gaming, and are denying higher level security clearances for anyone found to have participated in role playing gaming at any point in their lives **Army Frowns on Dungeons and Dragons**

Scientific Research

As of 1998, there had been more than seventy four research projects related to various aspects of role playing gaming (RPG Studies.net, 1998). For over 30 years there has developed a large body of correlative scientific work, as well as smaller causal studies, refuting the anti-RPGing parties' claims, and pointing to potentially very powerful positive therapeutic benefits to role playing gaming in social, intellectual and creative areas.

There is not yet a sufficient body of long term, large scale, causal scientific work detailing which components of RPGing are key to optimizing potential therapeutic benefits for the most efficient implementation as a therapy modality. Such an endeavor would require a properly designed, funded, and implemented long term project spanning ten to twenty years. It should use the key requirements of truly scientific research study, including being triple-blind, with multiple types of control groups and tracking of multiple variables, with a number of test subjects in the thousands. There is such an effort currently in it's early stages at the RPG Research Project (<http://www.rpgresearch.com>).

The Battle Continues...

Until such an overwhelming body of evidence is clearly developed, the debate on the pro's and con's of role playing gaming will continue to flare up periodically. Meanwhile the millions of role playing gamers will keep playing despite the stigma, while many millions more potential participants will avoid or be denied the benefits from role playing gaming because of the misconceptions and misinformation propagated by misguided individuals and organizations, extremist religious groups, the press and the misinformed general public.

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Mapping Arda

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Gaming in Tolkien's imaginary world of Arda has many aspects, each of them capable of spawning an entire book in its own right. One of the most basic necessities for the development of epic fantasy is solid geography. Tolkien deemed it very important to have detailed and good maps that matched his narratives.² Hence, he took great care to map the North-west of Middle-earth while writing the Lord of the Rings (LotR). (Further information is provided in Unfinished Tales – UT). The territory beyond this well-known North-west remains much more problematic.

At first glance, this article may appear to be just another futile attempt at cracking the many problems inherent in mapping Middle-earth. However, we are convinced that it presents the best, most comprehensive and exhaustive determinations yet to some of the most difficult apparent contradictions, ambiguities, and canonical puzzles.

This essay complements the set of new maps provided with this issue of Other Minds. Both map-set and essay are meant to present a profoundly reliable basis from which to enable those endeavouring to produce their own extensions to Tolkien's secondary world, while staying consistent with his original imagination of its shores and shires.³

Foundations and aims

Since the publication by Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE) of *Middle-earth Role-playing (MERP)* in 1982, gamers have had a continental map at their disposal. This was drawn by Peter C. Fenlon of ICE for use with the game. Despite several later attempts to re-draw Middle-earth, Fenlon's map for some still serves as some kind of *de facto*-standard for any expansion of the geography of Middle-earth beyond the boundaries presented by the maps from *LotR* and *UT*.

Another attempt at a continental map was published in *Other Hands (OH)* magazine in July 2000.⁴ It depicted a greatly enlarged continent, bringing Middle-earth near the size of Eurasia. While considering Tolkien's original intent of making Middle-earth the past of our world⁵, it failed to address several key issues of Tolkien's vision and therefore remained fundamentally flawed:

- It took Tolkien's words too literally. Tolkien envisioned his world only as a "mythological past" of our world; e.g. perhaps as historically and geographically accurate (in context with the real-world's history) as the Arthurian

legends. Because of this we deem it pointless to equate Middle-earth geographical features (e.g. rivers or mountains) directly with existing real-world ones.

- More importantly, it ignored Tolkien's own drafts or thoughts of the continental shape as published in the *History of Middle-earth Vol. 4 "The Shaping of Middle-earth"* (*HoMe 4*), and the *History of Middle-earth Vol. 7 "The Treason of Isengard"* (*HoMe 7*).

Image 1 below illustrates these different approaches. Pete Fenlon's map from 1982 is in color, while the one published in *Other Hands* in 2000 is in B/W.

Our recent map-set and essay provided with this text aims to rectify the shortcomings of both of these older publications and to give future explorers of the wide realms of Arda highly consistent continental maps ready for use. The maps were made with the following aims in mind:

- Being very close to Tolkien's final ideas concerning the shape of the world of Middle-earth.
- Retaining as much of Pete Fenlon's continent as possible. This is not in conflict with Tolkien since it seems that Pete Fenlon had many of Tolkien's quotes in mind when he drew his map – even when it does not seem so at first glance.⁶ In addition, the Fenlon continent does fit neatly into the limits of the earlier "bounded" world as detailed below.⁷

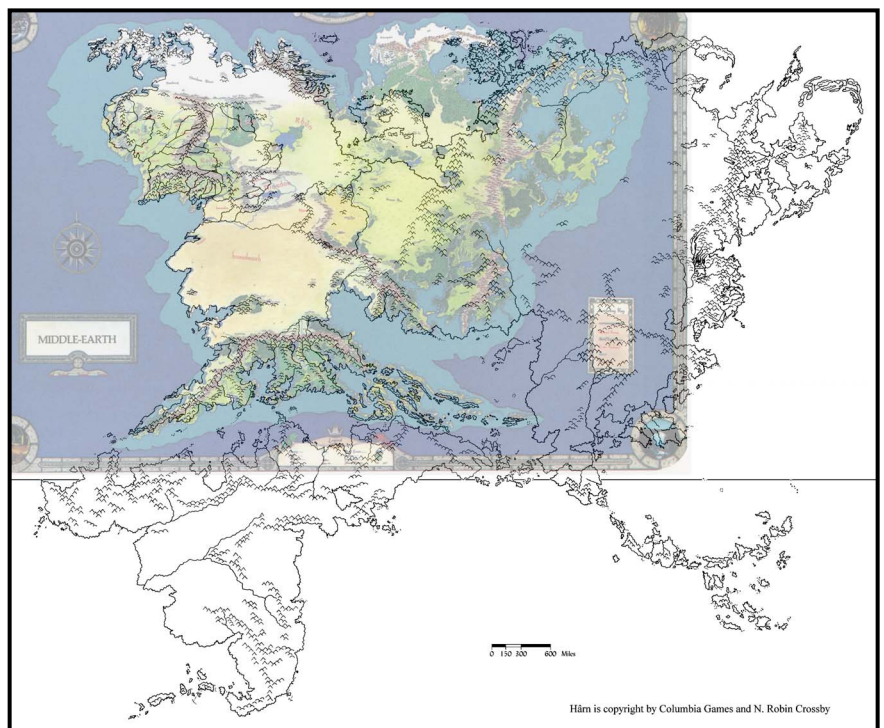


Image 1: Fenlon and *Other Hands* map overlaid

- The maps are meant to show the geographic “reality” of Middle-earth in precisely defined timeframes.

The sources

The *diagrams I to III* and the *maps IV and V* plus the accompanying text from the *Ambarkanta* in *HoMe 4* were the pivotal sources when devising the general shape of the lands of the First Age (and indirectly of later Ages). In addition, the relevant geographical and cosmological passages all throughout the *History of Middle-earth* and the published *Silmarillion* were of great use. Further sources (e.g. *Letters*) were consulted when necessary.

Timeframe of the maps

A severe problem in former mapping-attempts of the whole of Middle-earth lay in the fact that they were viewed as more or less universally applicable – regardless of the envisaged temporal setting. For instance, the Fenlon continental map was drawn with the late Third Age in mind (see note 6). However, it was used (both by *MERP* authors and later writers) as if exactly the same shape had already been present in the Second or even the First Ages (apart from sunken Beleriand). However, careful study of the relevant passages in *LotR* and other primary sources makes very clear that the overall shape of Middle-earth changed drastically over the ages.⁸ Therefore, every one of our new maps is explicitly made with a certain clearly defined timeframe in mind. Naturally, there still remain significant temporal gaps between the various maps. The choice of “time slots” was made based on which ones seemed most useful for the majority of game settings.

Basic approach

The core of all development has been the map from *LotR*. It was referenced to fix a few glaring discrepancies inherent in Fenlon’s map. Further modifications were then applied to Fenlon’s map because of material found in other primary sources. This “adjusted Fenlon map”⁹ has been used throughout. Hence our new map-set is still rather a derivative of Fenlon’s original concept than a complete substitution. This was done because it still is probably the one most broadly used when large-scale mapping of the uncharted lands beyond the North-west is needed. Beleriand (taken from *HoMe 4, 5 & 11*) was attached to Lindon and the Blue Mountains. From this reconstructed area found in Tolkien’s original works, the overall coastline for the First Age was developed, based on the general shape of the shores as seen on Map V of the *Ambarkanta* and applied to an enlarged continent.¹⁰

The continents of Morenorë (“the Dark Land”), Aman and the Empty Lands with their internal structures were developed in the same way. The coastline of the Empty Lands as shown on *Ambarkanta*-Map V was abandoned in favour of the coastlines as shown on *Ambarkanta*-Map IV, since the latter fits much easier with Tolkien’s later image of this continent as hinted at in *The Drowning Of Anadûne*.

Finally, the southern half of Endor (“Pseudo-Africa” or Dark Harad) was enlarged to fit with Tolkien’s global view as first developed in the aforementioned fragments of *The Drowning of Anadûne and Letter #294* (v.i.), respectively. The outer dimensions of the habitable (for the *Eruhîni*) world were equated with the corresponding distances in the real world, e.g. the distance from the farthest North to the deepest South on Earth¹¹ and in Arda are presumed to be equal.

When Tolkien died, he left an enormous bundle of textual fragments, making it very hard for later scholars to assemble a coherent and complete narrative, especially for the earlier ages of Arda. With this lack of coherent narrative went a lack of coherently narrated geography and cosmology. This meant that we had to delve deeply into the various posthumous fragments to recover – as far as possible – all of the relevant geographical passages to present maps with a very high level of “canonicity”. In this process, we often weighed up very carefully the respective merits of inconsistent and sometimes contradictory sources: The corpus of Tolkien’s *legendarium* (especially *HoMe*) offers countless quotes for nearly every interpretation imaginable. We had to develop a strict approach to choosing between passages worth considering and quotes it was possible to ignore.

We also developed numerous consistent solutions to non-literal interpretation of key texts. The following example shows an example of such interpretative work:

“And all the coasts and seaward regions of the world suffered great ruin and change in that time; for the Earth was sorely shaken, and the seas climbed over the lands, and shores foundered, and ancient isles were drowned, and new isles were uplifted; and hills crumbled, and rivers were turned into strange courses.”

HoMe 09: The Drowning of Anadûne II; 1946

“And all the coasts and seaward regions of the western world suffered great change and ruin in that time; for the seas invaded the lands, and shores foundered, and ancient isles were drowned, and new isles were uplifted; and hills crumbled and rivers were turned into strange courses.”

Sil: Akallabêth; 1958

The issue that some islands sank, others were raised and hills crumbled but **no mountain raised** might seem indicative what happened as a result of the Akallabêth and what not. Here we had to consider the imaginary composer of the narrative (e.g., Elendil for the *Silmarillion*-Akallabêth) with his limited knowledge. In this context, it looked as if the author was describing events that had happened in regions he was familiar with. Things might have looked differently in places unknown to the author. Additionally, his account is highly stylised, merely indicating the titanic forces at work that re-shaped whole lands. Thus we concluded that this was not an exact description of all events.

“I have crossed many mountains and many rivers, and trodden many plains, even into the far countries of Rhûn and Harad where the stars are strange.” **LotR I: The Council of Elrond**

Again, the exact wording suggests that Aragorn never used any other form of transportation than his own feet (“trodden”). While theoretically possible, it is highly unlikely, that Aragorn **never** used any other mode of travel. Therefore, the quote should be read by recognising the rhetorical devices that Aragorn uses to give the audience an image of the magnitude of his travels while he is at the same time unconcerned with the detail of the forms of transport.

A note on scale

Since these maps are drawn on a large scale, they cannot be completely precise.¹² Instead, the scale actually offers the possibility of minor geographic changes.

Changes to the coastline of up to about 10km are not noticeable at such a large scale. At the scale of the maps, the width of the line depicting the shoreline corresponds to ca. 9km. It is therefore possible for the maps to be unaffected in their accuracy by individual events that change the coastline. Likewise, river deltas could silt up without much effect on the integrity of these **continental** maps. Such changes should of course be visible on regional maps drawn on a much smaller scale.

The First Age

Our map shows the geographical situation of Arda after the tumults following the Battle of Powers have settled into a new, stable geography. After Morgoth's escape from Aman following his theft of the Silmarils, he piled up Thangorodrim, shortly before the Noldor arrived in Middle-earth. In most of its parts this map of the First Age shows the state of Middle-earth **from the creation of the Thangorodrim until the beginning of the War of Wrath**, when large portions of the continent were again changed. In our opinion, this is also the most promising period for gaming in the First Age: The Noldor have returned to wage war upon Morgoth, and eventually men (Edain and Easterlings) reach Beleriand and become involved in this bitter struggle. The Dwarves of the Ered Luin are still reclusive but trade is gradually established, as told in the *Silmarillion*, and they have some involvement in the later wars.

There were some important questions that had to be solved when mapping out this phase of the First Age of Arda. These key issues were:

- How should Beleriand be stitched to the *LotR* map?
- How useful is the Fonstad atlas for this project?
- What is the position of the Ered Engrin and Thangorodrim, both so elegantly absent from Christopher Tolkien's *Silmarillion*-map?
- Is a great Bay of Utûm – as drawn and labeled as such on the Fenlon map¹³ – justified when compared to Map V of the *Ambarkanta*?
- Is pre-Akallabêth Arda globed or flat?
- Are the Grey Mountains from Map V of the *Ambarkanta* still justified?
- Should the general shape of Mordor already be present in the First Age?

The most important question of course, was how the **maps of Beleriand and those of the late-Third Age North-west** of Middle-earth were to be fitted together. The general placement is no problem, since the eastern boundary of Beleriand – the Ered Luin – is more or less the western boundary of Eriador on the *LotR* map. The map found in *The History of Middle-earth, Vol. 11 "The War of the Jewels"* (*HoMe 11*) is nearly identical to the one published in the *Silmarillion*,¹⁴ but conveniently contains a scale.

One of the common features on both the Third- and First Age map is Himring. This fortress-hill of Maedhros probably survived as the island of the same name into the late Third

Age. Tolkien had drawn this island only one time and on his own first *LotR* map in 1940. At that time he still pronounced Maedhros' fortress Himring and Christopher Tolkien erroneously did not update the spelling when he included Tol Himring on his *UT* map. We chose to use Himring as the anchor point for the addition of Beleriand, as this method enabled us to obtain the best fit between the two maps. It resulted in the northern range of the Ered Luin fitting perfectly for both *HoMe 11* and *LotR*-maps, with only the southern range diverging slightly between them.

At first glance, the **usefulness of the Fonstad atlas** seems great since it shows even not widely known aspects of the world in great detail. Unfortunately, however, the map-design of the second edition in particular is based on a mixture of varying sources melted together without much care for their compatibility.¹⁵ With respect to the First Age, the Fonstad map used a hodgepodge of fragmentary sources while totally disregarding the various phases of Tolkien's work or even making them clear in the mapping. Even worse, Fonstad includes her own inventions and personal additions and does not show them as such. For these reasons, her *Atlas* can only be used with great caution for issues not covered in the *Hobbit* or *LotR*.¹⁶

The **position of the Ered Engrin and of Thangorodrim** is a very important issue as well. Looking at Tolkien's older ideas on the subject (seen in *HoMe 4*), the Ered Engrin are shown at a fairly southerly latitude and as lying very close to Beleriand. In the further development of the legends, Tolkien changed this and moved Thangorodrim further north, as expressed clearly in the *Silmarillion*, for instance. This position of Thangorodrim is also found in the final version of the First-Age-mythology (cf. *HoMe 11*), so that it is possible to use this part of the *Silmarillion*:

“... and the gates of Morgoth were but one hundred and fifty leagues distant from the bridge of Menegroth: far and yet all too near.” **Sil: Of the Sindar**

Since Tolkien tells us the measure of a league (nearly exactly 3 miles),¹⁷ we know that the distance from the doors of Angband to the bridge of Menegroth was 450 miles.¹⁸ This is clearly not compatible with the position of Angband in the older versions, which was much closer to Menegroth. But that the new version was Tolkien's final thought on the issue is well-documented in the *Grey Annals* (one of the key sources of the published *Silmarillion*). Since these were not wholly set in the

'epic style' prose of the true *Silmarillion* tradition, Christopher Tolkien could not draw exclusively from these newer materials as he compiled a publishable text of his *Silmarillion*. This choice meant that outdated geographical information would have to be included in the published *Silmarillion*, drawn from older and other texts, in the process confusing every cartographer after him.

However, the fact that the Ered Engrin and Thangorodrim are **not** featured on the *Silmarillion* map can be seen as a hint that Christopher Tolkien was quite aware of the textual discrepancies concerning their locations and avoided a clear statement by excluding any Thangorodrim features from the map in the published *Silmarillion*. Had he stuck to the older version, both of these should be mapped at least partially. Their omission might be surmised to indicate that Christopher Tolkien tended towards the “northern position”.

We eventually chose Tolkien's final vision as our preferred solution. It is the only version in all of the sources which gives a definite measurement of the distance. We chose to ignore the older passages and maps. Interestingly, K.W. Fonstad used the older placement of the Ered Engrin and Thangorodrim in the 2nd edition of her *Atlas* without comment or note about the associated problems. This is even more interesting because she originally followed Tolkien's 450 miles in the 1st edition. To the best of our knowledge, she did not explain or even mention the reasoning behind this change anywhere.

The question whether the great **Bay of Utûm** in north central Endor of the Fenlon map is acceptable is a tricky one. Map V of the *Ambarkanta* does not show any comparable feature, and this map is supposed to show the geography of Arda after the Battle of the Powers – even if only in a very rough and sketchy way. So Map V seemed to preclude any inclusion of this bay as the result of the destruction of Utumno.

On the other hand, Tolkien's final writings concerning the Battle of the Powers do justify this bay exactly at this phase of the First Age and precisely in this position. In this context, the date of the *Ambarkanta*-map is of pivotal importance. It was drawn before Tolkien developed the idea of the widespread destruction of Arda during the Battle of the Powers. In fact, at the time of the map's inception, Utumna and Angband were in the same location; i.e. Utumna **became** Angband after the necessary repairs had been carried out. It was only later that Tolkien returned to his original idea (first developed in *The Lost Tales*) that Utumna and Angband should be in two sepa-

rate places. Following this change, the description of the effects of the destruction of Utumno in the *Silmarillion* and the *Annals of Aman* became nearly identical to those of the breaking of Angband and its subsequent submersion.¹⁹ This is why we think that the submersion of the ruins of Utumno and the creation of a great bay after the Battle of the Powers is highly likely. It is completely justified to regard Fenlon's Bay of Utûm as a result of that conflict. At the same time, the Ered Engrin were broken and twisted southward, thus creating a mountainous coastline along the shores of the bay. Furthermore, in the late 1950s Tolkien clearly stated that Utumno should be positioned in the northern centre of Middle-earth:

"In the North of the world Melkor reared Eryd-engrin the Iron Mountains; and they stood upon the regions of everlasting cold, in a great curve from East to West, but falling short of the sea upon either side. These Melkor built in the elder days as a fence to his citadel, Utumno, and this lay at the midmost of his northern realm." **HoME 11: LQ2 with last emendations after 1958**

When reading the *Silmarillion*, it seems undeniable that **Arda was flat before the Akallabêth** and that it was only globed after the sinking of Númenor. But this is just an illusion, a trick intentionally being played on us by Tolkien, as he got more and more used to write his texts in the view of his virtual authors and strictly within their limited knowledge. As far as the "real" conceptual basis is concerned, Tolkien had explicitly changed his mind about the shape of the world of the First Age nearly ten years before the publication of the *LotR*. In the first half of 1946, Tolkien began to re-work the ancient "flat" world into a "round ptolemaic" world:

"[The Messengers of the Avaloi said:] '[...] And behold! the fashion of the Earth is such that a girdle may be set about it. Or as an apple it hangeth on the branches of Heaven, and it is round and fair, and the seas and lands are but the rind of the fruit, which shall abide upon the tree until the ripening that Eru hath appointed ... So would you but come at the last back to the places of your setting out: and then the whole world would seem shrunken, and you would deem that it was a prison.'" **HoME 09: The Drowning Of Anadûne II; first half of 1946**

"The ancient Númenóreans knew (being taught by the Eledai) that the Earth was round; but Sauron taught them that it was a disc and flat, and beyond was nothing, where his master ruled." **HoME 09: Preliminary Sketch to the Drawing of Anadûne III, first half of 1946**

It is interesting to note that that the Elves (called "Eledai" here) are credited with teaching the Númenóreans about the world as being globed. It is only Sauron, lying according to his needs, who teaches that the world is flat.

"But they [The mariners] found it [the isle of the Meneltarma] not, and they said: 'All the ways are bent that once were straight.' For in the youth of the world it was a hard saying to men that the Earth was not plain as it seemed to be, and few even of the Faithful of Anadûne had believed in their hearts this teaching; and when in after days, what by star-craft, what by the voyages of ships that sought out all the ways and waters of the Earth, the Kings of Men knew that the world was indeed round, then the belief arose among them that it had so been made only in the time of the great Downfall, and was not thus before. Therefore they thought that, while the new world fell away, the old road and the path of the memory of the Earth went on towards heaven, as it were a mighty bridge invisible." **HoME 09: The Drowning Of Anadûne III; first half of 1946**

After 1946 Tolkien established two or rather three traditions. One of elvish scholarship (globed world) and one of mannish origin (flat world), which appears to have been reinforced by Sauron, but which existed independently of him and before he came to Númenor. In addition to these, after the drowning of Anadûne the traditions kept by

the Faithful were of mixed nature in varying degrees, representing the knowledge of north-western Dúnadan scholars with limited access to (dark-)elvish sources.²⁰ The *Akallabêth* was the most notable outcome of such mixed leg-ends.

"All these histories are told by Elves and are not primarily concerned with Men.

*I have ventured to include 2 others.
(1) A 'Round World' version of the 'Music of the Ainur'*

(2) A 'Man's' version of the Fall of Númenor told from men's point of view, and with names in a non-Elvish tongue. 'The Drowning of Anadûne'. This also is 'Round World'.

The Elvish myths are 'Flat World'. A pity really but it is too integral to change it." **Letters: Initial draft for a letter to Katherine Farrer; 1948**

So, a fine but important distinction must be made between elvish (high- and dark-elvish) and mannish traditions. Unfortunately, this is not made clear in the *Silmarillion* as edited and published by Christopher Tolkien. This spawned a widespread but incorrect belief that Arda was flat before the *Akallabêth*. And if one considers what Tolkien says in the *Prologue* of the second edition of the *LotR*, it is most likely that at last Tolkien wished the *Silmarillion* to be regarded as a compilation of late Dúnadan or dark elvish legends translated and written down by Bilbo Baggins in Rivendell from his limited hobbitic point of view and with just a little help from high-elvish scholars who did not care to correct every false assumption found in his sources. It was no longer Tolkien's intention to tell the accurate historical and geographical "truth" in favour of legends with varying (but lesser) degrees of "historical truth".

“Actually in the imagination of this story we are now living on a physically round Earth. But the whole ‘legendarium’ contains a transition from a flat world (or at least an οἰχογένη with borders all about it) to a globe: an inevitable transition, I suppose, to a modern ‘myth-maker’ with a mind subjected to the same ‘appearances’ as ancient men, and partly fed on their myths, but taught that the Earth was round from the earliest years. So deep was the impression made by ‘astronomy’ on me that I do not think I could deal with or imaginatively conceive a flat world, though a world of static Earth with a Sun going round it seems easier (to fancy if not to reason).

The particular ‘myth’ which lies behind this tale, and the mood both of Men and Elves at this time, is the Downfall of Númenor: a special variety of the Atlantis tradition.

[...], and eventually in the height of their [the Númenóreans] pride attempted to occupy Eressëa and Valinor by force, Númenor was destroyed, and Eressëa and Valinor removed from the physically attainable Earth: the way west was open, but led nowhere but back again - for mortals. [...]” Letter #154; 25 September 1954 (our emphasis)

The quote above is of special interest since it offers a possibility to reconcile the flat with the globed earth.²¹ The former’s major characteristic was of course a definitely bounded world which the Númenórean mariners were not able to leave. Accordingly, they were only able to navigate the disc of the known world.

But with *Letter #154* Tolkien offers the possibility that the world was globed even in Númenor’s days but the edges of this “old world” were made in such a manner that it seemed flat and bounded: In the West, the range was limited by the Ban of the Valar and the continent of Aman, in the East sailors were blocked by the impassable barrier of the Empty Lands, while in the Utter North and the furthest South the way was blocked by massive pack ice. Hence the Númenóreans were duped into believing the world was a disc, while in reality they were merely prevented from passing to the other half of the globe.

If we follow this line of thought, the “New Lands” were perhaps not meant to be entirely newly made in the wake of the Akallabêth but could just be newly reachable after the former obstacles were removed. Since the Dúnedain had no way of discerning whether these lands were really new or merely made newly accessible, they seemed to have developed a tradi-

tion that fit into their limited cosmological views, as experienced on their former expeditions and manipulated by the lies of Sauron (v.s.).

So, on the one hand there is the well-established and widely known “flat earth” tradition somehow present in the *Silmarillion*. On the other hand there exist many letters and fragments clearly showing that Tolkien abandoned any idea of a “real” flat world in the first half of 1946. However, it was Tolkien himself who offered a possibility to reconcile both views (as outlined above). Thus our maps of the First and Second Age may be read in two ways:

1. The boundaries are the “real” boundaries of a disc-shaped world according to the *Ambarkanta*.
2. The boundaries only show those parts of the globe that were accessible to the Númenóreans, but were interpreted by them as borders of a flat world.²²

Thus anybody can use these maps regardless of their personal opinion concerning the shape of Arda. However, we strongly recommend the usage of a globed world from the beginning. All our future treatises on geography will exclusively use this “globed world from the beginning” version. This does not mean that in role-playing environments such interpretations should be universal knowledge for players or even game masters; rather, the atmosphere should be set, and players’ actions determined, by the state of the prevailing traditions and limited knowledge of the protagonists.

The last big issue to resolve were the **Grey Mountains** from *Map V* of the *Ambarkanta*. Is the continued existence of these mountains still justified in light of the fact that there exists another mountain range of this name in the north of Rhovanion? This question is further complicated by the fact that the Southern Grey Mountains did not leave any visible remnant on the *LotR* map. As they appeared on *Map V* of the *Ambarkanta*, we decided to retain them. Their continued existence solves very elegantly an interesting issue of the Second Age, which will be discussed later.

We decided that the **general shape Mordor** was created as early as the First Age. Here we differ from the lore of the 2nd Edition of Karen Wynn Fonstad’s *Atlas*, in which she introduces Mordor as a tectonic result of the much later War of Wrath. It is commonly known though, that Sauron initially chose Mordor as his stronghold around the year 1000 SA:

“c. 1000 Sauron, alarmed by the growing power of the Númenóreans, chooses Mordor as a land to make into a stronghold.” LotR App. B: The Second Age

“But slowly he [Sauron] reverted again to the allegiance of Morgoth and began to seek power by force, marshalling again and directing the Orks and other evil things of the First Age, and secretly building his great fortress in the mountain-girt land in the South that was afterwards known as Mordor.” HoMe 12: Late Writing; Of Dwarves And Men; 1969

In those days the land might already bear its name ‘Black-Land’, which was based on the volcanic nature of its landscapes :

“No doubt because Gil-galad had by then discovered that Sauron was busy in Eregion, but had secretly begun the making of a stronghold in Mordor. (Maybe already an Elvish name for that region, because of its volcano Orodruin and its eruptions – which were not made by Sauron but were a relic of the devastating works of Melkor in the long First Age.)” HoMe 12: Last Writings, authorial note; 1972

Part of Mordor were the plains around the Lake of Núrnen. During the time of the War of the Ring these plains were extensively cultivated to produce food for Sauron’s armies :

“Neither he [Sam] nor Frodo knew anything of the great slave-worked fields away south in this wide realm, beyond the fumes of the Mountain by the dark sad waters of Lake Núrnen; nor of the great roads that ran away east and south to tributary lands, from which the soldiers of the Tower brought long waggon-trains of goods and booty and fresh slaves.” LotR II: The Land of Shadow

It is not unreasonable to assume this area might have served already the same purpose during the Dark Years of the Second Age. But fields need soil, and soil is withered from rock. It needs a couple of thousands of years of withering to accumulate enough soil to enable agriculture. Hence if Mordor was already supplied with grain from the fields of Núrn during the Second Age, the withering of the plains must have begun much earlier deep into the First Age. More importantly, Mordor consists of a couple of volcanic mountain ranges. They form three topographic arcs, building a unified whole. Thus it is not unreasonable to assume

that their uprising has taken place approximately around the same time. Just halfway in the middle of two protrusions of Ered Lithui and Ephel Dúath stands Mount Doom. Tolkien states that this volcanic mountain was erected many years back during the First Age (see above). Because of the unified tectonic structure along all of Mordor, it is reasonable to accept an early creation of the majority of the mountains of Mordor already in the First Age. The rise of the Mountains of Mordor might be accompanied by a certain uplifting of the whole area which lead to a segregation of the Lake of Númen from the rest of the Sea of Helcar as is shown on our maps.

The Second Age

This Age was the most difficult for mapping purposes. Since the large Inland Sea of Helcar from the First Age had to disappear somehow until the dawn of the Third Age, it was not possible to make only one satisfying map for the Second Age. We decided to make several maps to account for the changes of the shape of the central continental sea. Since the shrinking of the Sea of Helcar was most likely a gradual process over thousands of years, each individual map can only show a narrow time-frame. For this reason, we chose to make maps for four periods of the Second Age. It should not be too difficult to adapt the maps for the intervening periods.

The time periods chosen were:

- S.A. 1200: The time of the first great expeditions of the Númenóreans within accessible Arda
- S.A. 2000: The beginning of Númenórean colonisation
- S.A. 2600: The period of massive colonial expansion and the establishment of a great empire in the western hemisphere
- S.A. 3200: The apex of the Númenórean empire a few decades prior to Sauron's surrender before Ar-Pharazôn

We suggest that our Second Age maps be used as applicable to temporal settings no more than 50 years before or after these times. Adapting the maps for other times is laborious and would involve, at the least, redrawing the Sea of Helcar (or its remnants).

Apart from the various temporal settings provided, there were a number of other issues that needed scrutiny. These were:

- The mechanism of the shrinking of the Sea of Helcar
- The placement of Númenor in relation to Aman and Middle-earth (especially the distances between them)
- The supposed location of Númenor and the climate of the island
- The visibility of Eressëa from Mount Meneltarma or from a ship lying off the western coast of Númenor
- The coastline in the North-west after the sinking of Beleriand and of the neighbouring Northlands
- Changes in the coastlines (eastern as well as the western ones) to achieve a transition to the coastlines of Fenlon's mapping of the Third Age
- The importance of the Southern Grey Mountains

We explain the **shrinking** and near total disappearance of the **Sea of Helcar** during the Second Age by draining of water into subterranean cracks and enhanced evaporation due to a general warming in climate. This warming was caused by the absence of Melkor who had very strongly cooled his northern abode, thereby binding great quantities of water in the form of ice and snow in those regions. This ice reflected sunlight more and thus led to a cooler global climate. The absence of Morgoth's direct influence caused more ice to melt and led to global warming.²³ The freed water later emerged in other places through the global water cycle, raised the water level and led to massive inundations, especially in the East of Middle-earth. Such inundations offer plausible causes of diluvian-style legends among the mannish cultures of these regions which will certainly influence their beliefs even in later ages.

The actual **placement of Númenor** may be thought to pose some difficulties due to the scarce direct information found in Tolkien's work. However, the problem largely disappears if one considers indirect evidence provided by him:

- The Calacirya and the Bay of Eldamar lay very near to the *Girdle of Arda* (Equator). This is shown very clearly in the *Ambarkanta* maps²⁴ and the *Silmarillion*²⁵.
- The Bay of Eldanna opened up more or less opposite to Eressëa²⁶.

The only logical conclusion from these facts is that Númenor itself must lie near to the equator.

This leads directly to the next issue: The **climate of Númenor** as described by Tolkien does not correspond well with the island's supposed location near the equator. Tolkien describes the seasons of Númenor as if the island were located in the temperate zone:

"Thrice only in each year the King spoke, offering prayer for the coming year at the Erukyermë in the first days of spring, praise of Eru Ilúvatar at the Eru-laitalë in midsummer, and thanksgiving to him at the Eruhantalë at the end of autumn." **UT: A description of the Island of Númenor (our emphasis)**

At Númenor's supposed tropical latitude, there should be no seasons beside rainy and dry seasons. But Tolkien's description suggests that he definitely had a temperate climate in mind when imagining Númenor:

“The Forostar was the least fertile part; stony, with few trees, save that on the westward slopes of the high heather-covered moors there were woods of fir and larch.” **UT: A description of the Island of Númenor**

Vegetation such as heath moors, fir and larch trees is typical for a more northern temperate climate (e.g. northern England or Scotland), but certainly not a tropical one. It is impossible to explain this conclusively by reference to unknown climatic factors, such as a cool ocean stream, around Númenor, as we have no other evidence. We therefore have to conclude that the temperate climate of Númenor – e.g. similar to the Eriadoran one – is an effect of the Secondary World. Perhaps the Valar arranged for a climate which was reminiscent of the Edain’s ancient homeland:

“Now aforesaid in the isle of Númenor the weather was ever apt to the needs and liking of Men: rain in due season and ever in measure; and sunshine, now warmer, now cooler, and winds from the sea. And when the wind was in the west, it seemed to many that it was filled with a fragrance, fleeting but sweet, heart-stirring, as of flowers that bloom for ever in undying meads and have no names on mortal shores But all this was now [in the days of Ar-Pharazôn] changed; for the sky itself was darkened, and there were storms of rain and hail in those days, and violent winds; and ever and anon a great ship of the Númenóreans would founder and return not to haven, though such a grief had not till then befallen them since the rising of the Star.” **Sil: Akallabêth**

The greatest problem was the distance between Númenor and Eressëa on the one hand and Númenor and Middle-earth on the other. This cannot be estimated without doubt. However, a few conditions are unavoidable.

This brings us to the next issue – the **visibility of Eressëa for the Númenóreans**. Tolkien tells us that:

- from the summit of the Meneltarma, one can get – under favorable conditions – a glimpse of Eressëa.
- the same is possible from a ship lying as far off the western coasts of Númenor as is lawful to do, i.e. before Númenor vanishes from sight.

“But the Lords of Valinor forbade them to sail so far westward that the coasts of Númenor could no longer be seen; and for long the Dúnedain were content [...] and at times, when all the air was clear and the sun was in the east, they would look out and descry far off in the west a city white-shining on a distant shore, and a great harbour and a tower. For in those days the Númenóreans were far-sighted; yet even so it was only the keenest eyes among them that could see this vision, from the Meneltarma, maybe, or from some tall ship that lay off their western coast as far as it was lawful for them to go. For they did not dare to break the Ban of the Lords of the West. But the wise among them knew that this distant land was not indeed the Blessed Realm of Valinor, but was Avallónë, the haven of the Eldar upon Eressëa, easternmost of the Undying Lands” **Sil: Akallabeth; 1958**

This well-known quote is responsible for the general interpretation of the visibility of Eressëa for the Númenóreans. It can be argued that it carries within itself an inconspicuous though pivotal contradiction:

If you can see Eressëa – under favorable conditions – from the top of Meneltarma,²⁷ you can likewise see the top of the Meneltarma from the opposite end at Eressëa. This would set the lawful limit for western Númenórean travel right at the quays of Avallónë. Since this is obviously not the case, it simply is not possible to see Eressëa both from the Meneltarma **and** from a ship lying at the western end of the lawful limit.

We say “can be argued” intentionally, since if we take the words literally, only the coasts of Númenor are relevant for the law and not the Meneltarma as a part of Númenor. Considering the circumstances, it is not unreasonable to assume that the meaning of the law is that the Valar forbade the Númenóreans to sail further west than any part of Númenor (any part thereof) can no longer be seen. As outlined below, on a round world the Menel-

tarma is unlikely to have been visible even from within the Bay of Eldanna – let alone one of the western promontories of Númenor. Therefore, the inference above is already problematic.

Unfortunately, there is also another crucial quote to consider.

“... the son [Aldarion] of the King’s Heir of Númenor sailed from the land [probably Rómenna]; and ere day was over he saw it [the land] sink shimmering into the sea, and last of all the peak of the Meneltarma as a dark finger against the sunset.” **UT: Aldarion and Er-endis**

Thus the cliffs of Númenor get quickly out of sight when leaving on a ship. If the world of the Second Age was not globed, Númenor’s coasts would not vanish as quickly. The disappearance of the land out of sight within a few hours is only possible if Aldarion travels on a globe in the quote above. The curvature of earth limits the vision through the horizon; another clear hint that Tolkien was sure about the globed nature of the world even during the Second Age in his later years.

Diagram 1 below illustrates all the factors needed to calculate the distance to the horizon on an earth-sized globe.

If you keep a lookout on a globed earth under clear atmospheric conditions, your range of sight (d) depends on three parameters. The radius of the earth (r), your position above the surface of the earth (h), and the position of the object you wish to look at (H).

In the initial quote on this matter, the Númenóreans descry the great harbour basin of Avallónë itself ($H_{Avallónë} = 0m$). We equate the great cliffs of the western Númenórean coast with very large earthen cliffs, such as the White Cliffs of Dover ($H_{cliffs} = 100m$). Furthermore, we generously estimate the height of the crow’s nest of a tall Númenórean ship with the height of the crow’s nests of a **very** tall pre-enlightenment-era sailing ships ($h_{nest} = 45m$).

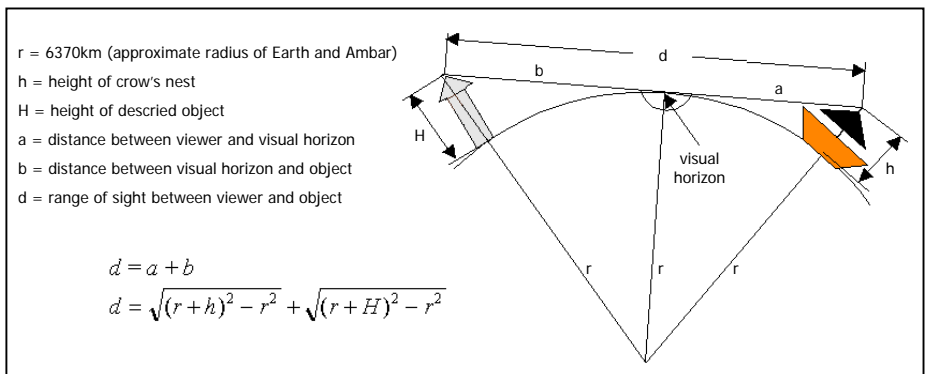


Diagram 1: Calculating distances

$d_{\text{nest-cliffs}} \approx 59\,637\text{m} \approx 37$ miles

$d_{\text{nest-Avallone}} = 23\,944\text{m} \approx 15$ miles

According to this calculation, the most westerly position allowed to a Númenórean ship is 37 miles off Númenor's coast. If the sailors could see a glimpse of the real port of Avallóne from that point, Tol Eressëa would be just 52 miles off the Númenórean shores. This would mean that that Numenor itself would lie inside the Bay of Eldamar! Since this is obviously not the case, we must assume that it was not a natural image of Avallóne that is visible from the crow's nests. Considering this, we found an acceptable explanation based on an atmospheric phenomenon known as *fata morgana*. On the open sea, this is known to extend the range of vision and make faraway objects visible. The greatest known distance covered in this way is a little over 400km.²⁸ If Eressëa had been up to 450km (280 miles) distant to Númenor, the sighting phenomenon would still be explicable by reference to *fata morgana*. This distance could be even greater if we assumed a greater height for Númenor's most westward point (e.g. a small mountain instead of the cliffs above). Thus we found ample room for variation here. It is important to note that even using conservative estimates (e.g., a Dover-like cliff), the phenomenon of describing Eressëa from a ship as described by Tolkien is realistic.

Due to the origin of Númenor (lifted up from the bottom of the sea by Ossë) it is highly probable that the island is of volcanic origin with the Meneltarma as the pre-eminent volcano²⁹. Thus, in terms of elevation and nature, we deem a comparison with the real-world Kilimanjaro as a volcanic mountain fitting. Since the summit of the Meneltarma was the place for the gathering of large number of people at the High Feasts, it must have been fairly easy to climb.³⁰ The Kilimanjaro is also relatively easy to climb – if you follow the major tourist paths ($h_{\text{Meneltarma}} = 6,000\text{m}$). With the help of the formula shown above we can calculate the maximum distances between the places mentioned above:

$d_{\text{Avallone-Meneltarma}} = 276\,543\text{m} \approx 172$ miles

Given the assumption of natural visibility from the top of Meneltarma, Avallóne must have been just as far away as the harbour of Eldalondë, right to the very end of the Bay of Eldanna! This too is impossible. Raising the supposed elevation of the Meneltarma does not solve the problem at all. A height comparable to Mount Everest (ca. 9,000m) results in a horizon that barely extends to half the Bay of Eldanna and well east of the two westernmost

points on the two western promontories of Númenor. Only a height comparable to that of Olympus Mons on Mars at about 26,400m³¹ leads to a horizon that extends well westward into the open sea. It goes without saying that such an elevation is no serious option at all.³² There seems to be no possible natural explanation for the sight of the haven of Avallóne from the peak of Mount Meneltarma. The most likely solution is that Eressëa is not really visible from the Meneltarma through natural means at all. Instead this sighting of Eressëa should be attributed to the grace of the Valar. The idea that glimpsing Eressëa was only possible with the additional help of the Valar has some justification in its nature as a "holy mountain" endowed with special properties right from the beginning of Númenor.

"Thus it was that great mariners among them [the Third Age - Dúnedain] would still search the empty seas, hoping to come upon the Isle of Meneltarma, and there to see a vision of things that were."
Sil: Akallabêth; 1958

That people believed that even the Third-Age-Meneltarma (now an island of undoubtedly much diminished elevation) might offer a vision of Eressëa may be understood as evidence – already shared by the Númenóreans of the Second Age – that the vision from top of Mount Meneltarma was granted by enchanted means and not natural at all.

Support for the interpretation of the sacred and therefore special position of the Meneltarma might be seen in the following quote:

Near to the centre of the Mittalmar stood the tall mountain called the Meneltarma, Pillar of the Heavens, sacred to the worship of Eru Ilúvatar. **UT: A description of the island of Númenor**

For such "aided sight" the height of the vantage point would have been irrelevant, of course.

Hence we set the Isle of Númenor right into the midst of Belegaer. 450 miles east of the eastern protrusion of Tol Eressëa and still many miles beyond the girdle of the Enchanted Isles.³³

The **coastline in the North-west after the sinking of Beleriand**³⁴ has been developed mainly along the two following quotes:

"These [the coasts of Middle-earth] were much changed in the tumult of the winds and seas that followed the Downfall; ... Thus while Lindon suffered great loss, the Bay of Belfalas was much filled at the east and south, so that Pelargir which had been only a few miles from the sea was left far inland, and Anduin carved a new path by many mouths to the Bay. But the Isle of Tolfalas was almost destroyed, and was left at last like a barren and lonely mountain in the water not far from the issue of the River." **HoMe 12: The Tale of Years**

Though the quote reports primarily changes after the Akallabêth, it gives valuable indirect information about the situation before this event. We are not only told that Pelargir lay near the sea in the Second Age, but also that the isle of Tolfalas was larger before the Downfall. The shape that we see on the LotR map is only the pitiful remnant of the bigger Second Age-island. It also says that Lindon was larger in the Second Age, since the well-known geography of the Third Age as seen in the LotR maps is the result of the "great loss" that Lindon suffered during the Akallabêth.

"After the 'breaking of the North' in the Great Battle, the shape of the North-west of Middle-earth was changed. Nearly all Beleriand was drowned in the Sea. Taur na Fuin became an Island. The mountains of Eredwethion etc. became small isles (so also Himling). Eredlindon was now near the Sea (at widest 200 miles away). A great gulf of the Sea came in through Ossirand and a gap made in the Mountains through which the Lhûn flowed." **HoMe 07: The History of Middle-earth, Volume 7: LotR-Fragment; 1939/40**

The number of miles given here for the maximum width of Lindon west of the mountains is important because it is the only known instance where Tolkien gives us a concrete measurement for the width of this region in times past. The maps of the Second Age have been adjusted to fit this statement.

The same passage deals with another very mysterious issue: How many fragments of Beleriand actually survived the War of Wrath? Tolkien mentions the islands of Taur-nu-Fuin (Tol Fuin) and of Himring (Tol Himring), together with surviving mountain tops of "Eredwethion etc." The latter must mean that the summits of the mountains of Ered Wethrin, Ered Lindon, the Mountains of Mithrin and perhaps even some summits of the

mountains around Nevrast should still remain above the wave.

“But there remains a legend of Beleriand. Now that land had been broken in the Great Battle with Morgoth; and at the fall of Númenor and the change of the fashion of the world it perished; for the sea covered all that was left save some of the mountains that remained as islands, even up to the feet of Eredlindon. But that land where Luthien had dwelt remained, and was called Lindon. A gulf of the sea came through it, and a gap was made in the Mountains through which the River Lhûn flowed out. But in the land that was left north and south of the gulf the Elves remained, and Gil-galad son of Felagund son of Finrod was their king.”

HoMe 05: The Last Tale: The Fall of Numenór (Revision); 1936/37

This is an older fragment from a period a few months before Tolkien wrote down the first version of “A Long-expected Party” in the middle of December 1937. Hence in 1937 he wrote “some of the mountains that remained as islands”, which in 1939/40 changed to “the mountains of Eredwethion etc. became small isles”. In the interim period of about two years Tolkien seems to have decided that more than just some mountaintops should still reach beyond the waves.

After Tolkien had written the second fragment, he went on to draw his first LotR-map (1940). On the left part of the map he pencilled in Tol Fuin and Tol Himring, but he excluded the mountain-top-islands. Furthermore, he did not mention Tol Morwen, the site of the Stone of the Hapless that also survived the drowning of Beleriand³⁵, as this island would only be invented some 15 years later.

“And a seer and harp-player of Brethil, Glirhuin, made a song saying the Stone of the Hapless should not be defiled by Morgoth nor ever thrown down, not though the Sea should drown all the land. As after indeed befell, and still Tol Morwen stands alone in the water beyond the new coasts that were made on the days of the wrath of the Valar”

HoMe 11: The Wanderings of Húrin; second half of 1950s

The omission of the tiny isles of the former mountain-tops on the maps may be explained by the small scale of the maps. They are too small to be shown. On the other hand, the maps might show that after 1940 Tolkien

abandoned the idea of islands formed from mountaintops.

Tol Morwen had not been invented yet, so that when Christopher Tolkien drew his LotR-map in 1954 he could not have considered it. Since Christopher turned back to this map as model for his new *Unfinished-Tales*-map in 1979, it is not surprising that Tol Morwen is still missing from it.

However, for that new map, Christopher also consulted his father’s old map-sketches from the year 1940. This led to Tol Himring (Himling) being reintroduced, although there is no evidence that Tolkien planned to retain this island after 1940. It is not known whether he complained about its omission on Christopher’s original LotR-map.

You can see the development on this matter depicted in table 1 on the bottom of this page. Of course such an inconsistent situation concerning the available sources is not very satisfying for a cartographer. Accordingly, we suggest a compromise: During the Second Age, many mountaintops survived as islands together with the larger islands of Tol Fuin and Tol Himring. South of it of all of former Beleriand west of Lindon only Tol Morwen remains above the waves.

After the Downfall of Númenor, most of the smaller isles sunk or were shifted to the Straight Path into the Realm of Hidden Things. Some may still endure in the physical world, among them certainly Tol Morwen. But these isles are still too small or not important enough to be shown on J.R.R. Tolkien’s and Christopher Tolkien’s maps. We show at least some of them on our own maps.

The changes in the eastern shores from the First Age are caused by massive inundations from melting ice of Morgoth’s northern realm. Since many eastern lands are considered to have been quite low-lying, widespread loss of land should be the natural consequence.

The existence of the Southern Grey Mountains benefited the Númenóreans in their colonial ventures. West of them lay “West Africa”³⁶, which formed the core and most developed region of their colonial possessions in Middle-earth. The Southern Grey

Mountains form a natural and formidable barrier to protect this area, and only the passes had to be watched and guarded. In its north lay Umbar with its natural harbour.

From the LotR and UT maps it could be guessed with a great degree of certainty that Umbar lay in an arid region, comparable to northern Africa or the Near East of our world. This rough comparison of the Mediterranean with the southern part of the LotR map is indirectly alluded to in the Letters:

“The action of the story takes place in the North-west of ‘Middle-earth’, equivalent in latitude to the coastlands of Europe and the north shores of the Mediterranean The Mouths of Anduin and the ancient city of Pelargir are at about the latitude of ancient Troy.” Letter #294

On the maps Umbar lies well south of Pelargir, so its comparison with a Near East or northern Africa region is obvious. Unfortunately, the placement of Umbar and its mentioning in the various books offered no hint why this place in a peripheral region of the original map held such importance for the Númenóreans that they fortified it heavily even in the mid-Second Age. The geography developed according to Tolkien’s sketches clarifies the importance of Umbar: It was located at a key strategic point for their core colonial possessions in Middle-earth and guarded the access to them against the threat of the other major power: Sauron’s inland empire. This makes it perfectly understandable why the Dúnedain invested so much to make this place secure and strong. The regional climate may also have been different in the Second Age, making the Umbarean region more favorable to agriculture in this time. Further, this helps to explain why Pelargir was founded as the major port of the Faithful. The later Númenórean kings probably found it convenient to get rid of these unreliable subjects in one place far away from the most profitable and populous colonies. Nonetheless, they would have wished to situate it in the vicinity of their loyal and powerful fortress of Umbar to keep an eye on the Faithful while at the

Lands west of the Ered Luin that survived the War of Wrath						
Year	1936/37	1939/40	1940	1954	later 1950s	1979
Source	HoMe 05: The Last Tale: The Fall of Numenór (Revision)	HoMe 07: LotR-Fragment	HoMe 07: First LotR-map	LotR – Original map by Christopher Tolkien	HoMe 11: The Wanderings of Húrin	UT – Re-drawn map by C. Tolkien
Parts of	Beleriand	Lindon	Lindon	Lindon	Lindon Tol Morwen	Lindon
	North-lands	some mountaintops	more mountaintops	—	?	—
			Tol Fuin Tol Himring	—	?	—
					?	Tol Himring

Table 1: Development of surviving regions

same time establishing a potential ally against Mordor, their common enemy.³⁷

Together with Númenor, the lands between the Grey Mountains and Belegaer (the second centre of Númenórean power) suffered the greatest damage because of the Downfall. Most of these colonies sank beneath the waves of the Great Sea within about one and a half centuries after the Downfall with only scattered remnants of it remaining above the new sea level.

The Third Age

Since no major upheavals occurred during this Age, the map shows continuity of geography throughout the whole age.

The following list shows the necessary changes to the Fenlon map:

- The coastline of Forodwaith had to be changed according to the map in *HoMe 7*; thereby unfortunately causing problems with one of the best MERP modules, ICE's *The Northern Waste*. Fortunately, these are well manageable.
- The North-west of Middle-earth had to be re-drawn based on the *LotR* and *UT* maps, since Fenlon had distorted the relative internal distances and areas in the known North-west, sometimes heavily.³⁸ The outer boundaries had to be corrected, too, since Fenlon stretched this area quite noticeably from East to West, as well.
- A few – minor – mountain ranges had to be added in order to achieve greater consistency with earlier ages.
- Changes to the bay of Utûm
- Changes in the geography of Lindon
- A part of Aman remaining in the mortal world as Oiomúirë
- Why are so few New Lands depicted on the TA-map?

The **Forodwaith coastline** of the Fenlon map is unfortunately incompatible with the map Tolkien himself made for the area in the year 1940. It was published in *HoMe 7*. The *LotR* map did not extend as far as Forodwaith, probably because that was irrelevant to the plot of the book. In our present continental map, it was added to the *LotR* map, thereby eliminating Fenlon's Forodwaith. Fortunately, we found a way to preserve the core content of ICE's *The Northern Waste* module for the new map. An island with the Ered Rhivamar from *The Northern Waste* was created to salvage as much as possible of this module. The island was moved further north-westward from its original position on Fenlon's map because it should lie outside the area covered by the maps in *HoMe 7*, but this should not reduce its usability in gaming. We explain the movement with massive tectonic activity following the Downfall of Númenor. In the Third Age, pack ice connected this island with the mainland. The ice should only be reduced in extraordinary warm summers, as it is largely located in Middle-earth's Arctic region, and should very rarely leave the island separated by open water.

The massive changes in the geography of Middle-earth between the Second and Third Ages were all triggered by the Downfall of Númenor. It is suggested that most of the changes were not abrupt but took place over the course of about a century, from the Downfall of Númenor to the Last Alliance. The geography settled at the onset of the Third Age, about the same time when Sauron's shape was destroyed for the third time.

The well-known **area of the North-west** needed to be re-drawn too, since the layout and the proportions of the Fenlon map were much distorted. Just have a look at the image 2 below for a comparison. It shows a part of the Fenlon continental map overlaid with a B/W image of the map found in the *Lord of the Rings*. Both maps are shown in the same scale and the overlay has its reference point on the north-western cape of the Bay of Forochel.

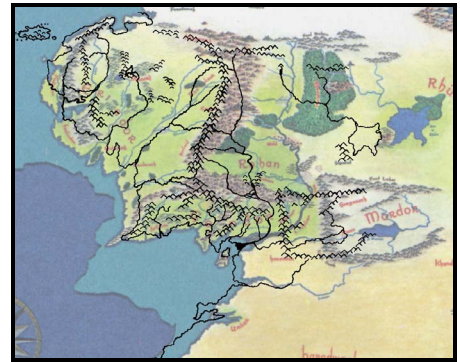


Image 2: NW of Middle-earth in Fenlon and Tolkien version overlaid

Please note the massive distortions especially in central Gondor, Mordor and Rhovanion. Eriador is also of a very different shape. One of the most obvious changes is the position of Mordor, whose eastern tip ends much further westward than on the Fenlon map. This leads to a significant enlargement of the Gap of Khand. The greater gap has been remedied somewhat by the addition of a few hills on the eastern and western mountains adjacent to it.

The **geography of Lindon** required some changes, too. Since the curvature of the Ered Luin/Lindon corresponds well only in their northern part (see also this topic in the part on the First Age), it is supposed that the southern range of the mountains was moved to some extent by the massive changes of the Akallabêth. Correspondingly, it is Harlindon, too, that suffers the greatest loss. Ancient places like Tol Galen that were still in existence after the sinking of Beleriand vanished in the wake of the changes. This is a fitting image

for the transition between ages of the world and the waning of the Elves.

Some **additional mountains** had to be added in order to make a more consistent transition from earlier ages where these mountains were present, too. The mountains are mainly located around the Sea of Utûm and do not interfere much with the general outline of the continent.

Some **changes to the Bay of Utûm** took place, too, and the most southerly part of the bay was added based on the supposition that it was created by the tumults of the Akallabêth. This resulted in the final shape of the bay that we know from the Fenlon map.

In the Third Age, the ancient continents of **Aman and the Empty Lands** are no longer in the mortal world. As we know, Aman has been removed by Eru himself, unreachable for mortals. Unfortunately, the fate of the eastern continent of the Empty Lands is not as certain. It may either share the fate of Aman and may have been removed into the Realm of Hidden things, or, as Tolkien's later fragments concerning its fate are ambiguous enough, may have remained within the planet of Ambar.

If the latter view is followed, the Empty Lands should have been broken and moved eastward and their fragments built a chain of islands in the far eastern seas of Middle-earth. If the former view is followed, the Empty Lands were drawn into the Realm of Hidden Things. In this case the eastern chain of islands should be considered as the nearest New Lands. Either explanation is plausible.

We added the island of **Oiomûrë** in reference to the excellent article by Jeff Erwin which appeared in *Other Hands* issue 31/32 from January 2001. This essay deals with real-world legends and "lost isles" of the North Atlantic. Here Jeff identifies the land of *Oiomûrë* as a part of Araman that broke off in the wake of the Akallabêth and remained in the mortal world – though still much "enchanted" and thus fitting for such a "lost" place. See the respective issue of *Other Hands* for more details on Oiomûrë.

In the same way as with the possible remnants of the Empty Lands, this "Greenland-like" land can be either interpreted as a part of Araman broken off (like Jeff did) or indeed one of the genuine "New Lands". If you follow the former view, this sundering can be explained by the weakening of the fabric of Arda in the northwestern regions of Middle-earth through the many conflicts against Melkor/Morgoth that took place in this general area. Some seismic shockwaves could have

reached Aman and caused a fault there that cracked during the Akallabêth.

We have deliberately left out almost all of the **"New Lands"** that became accessible after the Akallabêth. Oiomurë (see above) might technically be a remnant of the old lands (see above) while the sole undisputable genuine part of the "New Lands" is the single island in the western sea, whose reasoning is detailed below. We think that it is up to each GM to design the remainder of the "New Lands". Perhaps we will elaborate upon this topic in a future publication, but this is uncertain.

Future prospects

Our new map-set offers the possibility of correcting many issues of mapping that have not really been worked on in Middle-earth related publications until now. We regard these maps as a broad and firm basis for many future publications, covering all the Ages of Middle-earth. Possible follow-up issues that may be of the greatest interest for mapping might be:

- ❖ colour-coded versions of these maps to show vegetation zones
- ❖ maps of the habitats of the notable animals
- ❖ migration routes for the major movements of elves, dwarves, men and other important races/creatures during their respective histories
- ❖ topographic maps that show the names of all the major – and not so major – physical features
- ❖ an overview map depicting the major courses of the famed Underdeeps
- ❖ political maps showing the extent of various realms at various times. This could be Númenor's colonial realm and Sauron's continental empire plus their respective client-states during the Second Age, the realms of the Free Peoples and the growing shadow in the Third Age. Even the extent of the realms of the non-mannish races (primarily elves and dwarves of course) are of great interest too.

A final personal note

An island of the New Lands – created after the submersion of Númenor and the removal of Aman – has been placed on the Third Age map in the western sea. The same isle can be found in the 2nd ed. atlas of Karen Wynn Fonstad as a result of the changes made by the Akallabêth. Though we are at variance with Ms. Fonstad on many issues, we recognise her pioneering work in mapping Middle-earth and added this island in tribute. It shall bear the name *Tol Ugwathannen*.

'Karen' is the Danish form of the original Roman Christian name 'Katharina', itself deriving from the Greek word καθαρός (katharós), 'pure'. Professor Tolkien gives us no Elvish (either Sindarin or Quenya) form for such a word, but if we follow the elven way of seeing things, we can render 'pure' as 'free from Shadow'. Therefore, we translate Karen with the Sindarin "Ugwathannen".

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Notes

- ¹ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>
- ² "I feel that the maps ought to be done properly." (Letters. #141 from October 9th, 1953)
- ³ As far as this is possible due to the incomplete nature of the corpus.
- ⁴ Unfortunately, this map was created by one of the authors of this essay. The fundamental errors and flaws of this older attempt in re-drawing the continent are apparent. The author expresses his deep regret to have published such a flawed product that did not meet an adequate standard for developing Middle-earth gaming aids.
- ⁵ cf. *Letter #211*
- ⁶ For more insight into how the map came to be, see "Mapping Middle-earth: an interview with Pete Fenlon" OH12, January 1996.
- ⁷ In contrast, the continent from the OH article already mentioned is far too large to fit into this early Arda.
- ⁸ For example: "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." *Silmarillion. Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*
- ⁹ See the chapter on the Third Age for more details on these adjustments.
- ¹⁰ Neither Eriador or Rhovanion were envisioned by Tolkien at the time when the Ambarkanta map was made.
- ¹¹ The geographical North Pole and South Pole, respectively.

¹² Neither are they intended to be so.

¹³ Fenlon's Bay of Utûm is obviously supposed to show the place of the sunken remains of Melkor's first fortress, Utumno.

¹⁴ This is probably the base for Christopher Tolkien's drawing of the *Silmarillion* map.

¹⁵ The greatest problem is that Karen Wynn Fonstad does not explain her reasoning in creating her maps.

¹⁶ Nonetheless, in illustrating the well-documented parts (e.g. *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*) the atlas is quite useful and a delight to look at.

¹⁷ "League" is used because it was the longest measurement of distance: in Númenórean reckoning (which was decimal) five thousand *rangar* (full paces) made a *lár*, which was very nearly three of our miles. ...

Therefore, five thousand *rangar* would be almost exactly the equivalent of 5280 yards, our "league: 5277 yards, two feet and four inches, supposing the equivalence to be exact." *Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields (Appendix)*

¹⁸ Or 449.8105 miles to be exact

¹⁹ "And the lands of the far North were all made desolate in those days, and so have ever remained; for there Utumno was delved exceeding deep, and its pits and caverns reached out far beneath the earth, and they were filled with fires and with great hosts of the servants of Melkor."

HoMe10. Annals of Aman

"In those days [the assault upon Utumno] the shape of middle-earth was changed and broken and the seas were moved. ... But when the Battle was ended and from the ruin of the North great clouds arose and hid the stars, the Valar drew Melkor back to Valinor [...]." **HoMe 10: LQ1, 1951**

"For so great was the fury of those adversaries that the northern regions of the western world were rent asunder, and the sea roared in through many chasms, and there was confusion and great noise; and rivers perished or found new paths, and the valleys were upheaved and the hills trod down; and Sirion was no more." **The Silmarillion. Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath**

²⁰ Probably even Elendil himself.

²¹ Perhaps Tolkien even had similar thoughts when he wrote this.

²² We are aware that the problems of projecting a three-dimensional object (a globe) onto a two-dimensional map persist. For reasons of practicability, we ignore these and thus the shape of the world would be a cylinder. We consider this inaccuracy unavoidable.

²³ The binding of the water might also be a nice motif of opposition against Ulmo.

²⁴ See *Ambarkanta-map V*.

²⁵ "Túna beneath Taniquetil was set nigh to the girdle of Arda" *Sil: Of the Flight of the Noldor* cf. *UT: A description of the Island of Númenor*

²⁶ A handy formula for calculating small angles is found at the following web page:

<http://www.sciencecore.columbia.edu/demo/web/etextbook/6266.html>

²⁷ The following two web pages discuss this matter. Please note that they are in French: <http://www.jrrvf.com/hisweloque/site/articles/geographie/numenor/index.html>

<http://www.jrrvf.com/hisweloque/site/articles/geographie/numenor2/index.html>

²⁸ Though dormant until the Downfall: "For the land shook under them, and a groaning as of thunder underground was mingled with the roaring of the sea, and smoke issued from the peak of the Meneltarma." (*Sil: Akallabêth; 1958*)

²⁹ Relatively speaking for a mountain several thousand meters high.

³⁰ Or about 86,613.91 ft. It is the highest known mountain in the solar system.

³¹ Not even a height comparable to Mount Everest is a realistic option due to the mountaineering and physiological problems associated with such extreme altitudes. Imagine hundreds or even thousands of normal people (not highly-trained experts) ascending Mount Everest three times a year. The air is very low in physiologically available oxygen there and the temperatures are not gentle either ...

³² "And were you so to voyage that escaping all deceits and snares you came indeed to Aman, the Blessed Realm, little would it profit you." (*Sil: Akallabêth; 1958*)

³³ This concerns mainly Lindon.

³⁴ Not all sunken fragments of the western world are counted as parts of Beleriand. Hithlum and its mountains (Ered Lomin and Ered Wethrin) as well as the highlands of Dorthonion and Himring constitute the Northlands which lay north of Beleriand proper:

"Now the great and fair country of Beleriand lay on either side of this mighty river Sirion, renowned in song, which rose at Eithel Sirion in the east of Eredwethion [> Ered Wethrin], and skirted the edge of Bladorion [> Dorthonion], ere he plunged through the pass, becoming ever fuller with the streams of the mountains." **HoMe 05: Quenta Silmarillion. Of Beleriand and Its Realms; 1937**

"And Nivrost [> Nevrast] was by some held to belong rather to Beleriand than to Hithlum, for it was a milder land, watered by the wet winds from the Sea and sheltered from the North and East, whereas Hithlum was open to cold north-winds.

But it was a hollow land, surrounded by mountains and great coast-cliffs higher than the plains behind, and no river flowed thence." **HoMe 11: LQ2; 1958**

³⁵ We are aware of this provisional designation and attempts are underway to devise a better genuine name.


³⁶ This supposes of course that Pelargir was not founded by the Faithful on their own accord, but through orders from and/or permission by the king in Armenelos.

³⁷ Interestingly, the same problem applies to the more detailed maps by Pete Fenlon that appeared in many MERP campaign modules.

Of Barrow-wights – Part One

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Tom Bombadil: "A shadow came out of dark places far away, and the bones were stirred in the mounds. Barrow-wights walked in the hollow places with a click of rings on cold fingers, and gold chains in the wind. Stone rings grinned out of the ground like broken teeth in the moonlight." LotR: In the House of Tom Bombadil

The barrow-wight is best known from the early part of JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as the dread foe that haunts the burial mounds of a former age, waylays the hobbits, and would have executed them were it not for the intervention of Tom Bombadil. The episode is an example of great horror writing, evoking imaginative fear in the reader precisely because little is ever made explicit; and the barrow-wights' haunting of the mounds further proves to be a deliberate work of deception by the forces of darkness. Vagueness and deception combine to prevent the reader from knowing almost anything certain about the true nature of this episode, and the barrow-wights are often misunderstood.

Tolkien did not, however, first conceive of barrow-wights for *The Lord of the Rings*, this being one of several instances in which he drew on his own earlier writings in the creation of that work. Through a full review of the conception and development of the barrow-wights, we may hope to glean as much understanding of them as possible.

The term "barrow-wight" was in fact first coined as a passing reference by the author Andrew Lang in 1891, but it seems to have struck a chord in Tolkien, inspiring him to elaborate upon it: to put flesh on the bones, so to speak. He first wrote of "Barrow-wight" as a hostile character in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, published in *The Oxford Magazine* in 1934, and "barrow-wights" are mentioned in *Bombadil Goes Boating*, written in the same style. And then he added further detail to the same barrow-wight concept in writing *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954.

Though there is more to the true nature of the barrow-wights than meets the eye, the people of Middle-earth would have considered them to be undead. They appear as corpses risen again after burial in the barrow-mounds, living on by a power of sorcery and preying on anyone they find in the countryside during the hours of darkness.

Wights as Spirits

In fact barrow-wights are primarily spirits – explicitly termed "evil spirits", "evil wights" and "deadly spirits" when they were sent to Cardolan, before their association with the Barrow-mounds and the corpses of men interred there.

In the days of Argeleb II ... evil spirits out of Angmar and Rhudaur entered into the deserted mounds and dwelt there.

LotR: Appx A

The Witch-king had now a clearer understanding of the matter. He had known something of the country long ago, in his wars with the Dúnedain, and especially the Tyrn Gorthad of Cardolan, now the Barrow-downs, whose evil wights had been sent there by himself. ... he himself visited the Barrow-downs [and] stayed there for some days, and the Barrow-wights were roused, and all things of evil spirit, hostile to Elves and Men, were on the watch with malice in the Old Forest and on the Barrow-downs.

UT: The Hunt for the Ring

1409 ... The deserted mounds of Cardolan become filled with deadly spirits; ... PoME: The Tale of Years of the Third Age (T2)

These spirit-animated corpses of the dead not only prey upon careless travellers but also appear to be undead beings that defy nature and the very rule of Ilúvatar (although the true souls of the deceased have indeed passed into the West). It seems likely that the Witch-king deliberately intended for this deception to challenge the beliefs of the Faithful.

Suggestions as to the nature of the Wight-spirits include fallen maiar, corrupted éalar or nature spirits, 'Houseless' Elves, or the souls of sorcerers or morgûl-stricken Men. Though the wights were described as being sent from Angmar and Rhudaur, their primary existence seems to be in an 'other world' as hinted at by Tolkien's use of metaphors of extreme distance. This suggests them to be more alien than the souls of formerly incarnate Elves or Men.



He [Frodo] thought there were two eyes, very cold though lit with a pale light that seemed to come from some remote distance.

...

*Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!
Shrivel like the cold mist, like the winds go wailing,
Out into the barren lands far beyond the mountains!
Come never here again! Leave your barrow empty!
Lost and forgotten be, darker than the darkness,
Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended.*

At these words there was a cry and part of the inner end of the chamber fell in with a crash. Then there was a long trailing shriek, fading away into an unguessable distance; and after that silence.

LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs

The same metaphors of remoteness are used of the speech of the Barrow-wight (discussed below), and correspond exactly to the metaphors used to describe Frodo's voice whilst wearing the Ring. The Wight-spirit is therefore clearly a being of the same "wraith-world" as the Nazgûl.²

Bombadil's song sounds like an exorcism, but there is no suggestion of banishing the Wight-spirit from the 'Seen' world of the here and now. The song is one of driving away to other parts of Middle-earth, whereas the rightful place for an Elven or Mannish spirit to be sent would be the Halls of Mandos. The offending spirit is also not destroyed but reduced to the same sort of futile impotence, as Tolkien described for Sauron after the destruction of the Ring.³

The song surely evoked great power, given its destructive effect on the barrow's structure,⁴ but the exorcism was still not complete. Frodo thought he saw the severed hand of the wight move, and then Bombadil returned for a bout of "thumping and stamping" – perhaps very literally describing yellow-booted feet fighting an animated hand? – and it required the removal of the barrow-hoard into the light of the Sun to truly disempower the wight.

A descriptive passage in one of Tolkien's earliest conceptions, admittedly not subsequently repeated, nevertheless describes corrupted maiar or ëalar originally of Mandos' following which closely resemble what we know of the nature of the Barrow-wights:

At that time many strange spirits fare into the world, for there were pleasant places dark and quiet for them to dwell in. Some came from Mandos, aged spirits that journeyed from Ilúvatar with him who are older than the world and very gloomy and secret, and some from the fortresses of the North where Melko then dwelt in the deep dungeons of Utumna. Full of evil and unwholesome were they; luring and restless and horror they brought, turning the dark into an ill and fearful thing, which it was not before.

HoMe 1: The Chaining of Melko

The Spirit-powers of the Wights

The Wight-spirits were known to be capable of 'magic', with even the folklore of the parochial Shire including "the dreadful spells of the Barrow-wights about which whispered tales spoke". Their most prominent power is that of possessing and animating the bodies of the dead (discussed in detail below), but they can also create sickly-glowing light and arguably raise and control the fog to confuse and draw in their victims.⁵

More directly, they appear to possess a power of dread similar to that of the Nazgûl and the Dead Men of Dunharrow. This dread spills out into the hills amongst which they dwell, the very sight of which was "disquieting" to the hobbits, and the fog upon the hills gave the hobbits the unnerving sense that a trap had closed about them. This dread was not particular to the time that the Lord of the Nazgûl had "roused" the barrow-wights in the Hunt for the Ring; their longstanding name in Elvish, Tyn Gorthad, translates as "Hills of Horror".

This dread would seem either to be a manifestation of a fear of death that Melkor-Morgoth planted in the hearts of Men in their earliest days,⁶ or an instinctive response to a concentration of the Morgoth-element that was a pre-requisite to all works of sorcery (see quote below) and always "fills the heart with loathing"⁷ or a combination of both. Projecting or intensifying its power the Wight-spirits can so oppress their victims' will and vitality as to instil drowsiness, daunt them or rob them of volition, or even cast them into a sorcerous sleep from which there is no natural waking.⁸

The song sung by Bombadil after he has carried the unconscious hobbits out of the barrow first bids them to awaken, then gives an account of how his opening the barrow and exorcising the wight has made that waking possible:

*Wake now, my merry lads! Wake and hear me calling!
Warm now be heart and limb! The cold stone is fallen;
Dark door is standing wide; dead hand is broken.
Night under Night is flown, and the Gate is open! **LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs***

The final line appears to relate to the condition the Barrow-wight had imposed on the hobbits. By this point Bombadil has already removed the hobbits from the barrow, so "the Gate" cannot refer to that physical exit and must instead be a metaphor: the gate between unconsciousness and waking. The phrase "Night under Night is flown", despite the close correspondence with the phrase "darker than the darkness" earlier in the passage but not quoted here, therefore refers not to the departure of the Wight-spirit but to the removal of the sorcerous sleep that it had imposed. The hobbits are no longer under the spell of the Barrow-wight but merely asleep and now able to wake naturally once again.

The Death Ritual

A common feature of undead monsters is the dark designs they have upon the living. The Barrow-wight in LotR performs a ritual on the hobbits that resembles a human sacrifice, in which they are dressed in ceremonial garments and bedecked with jewellery, with a sword intended as the instrument of their deaths laid across their throats.

The earliest-conceived Barrow-wight in told Tom:

*He's [Barrow-wight's] got loose again. Under earth he'll take you.
Poor Tom Bombadil! pale and cold he'll make you! **The Adventures of Tom Bombadil***

But there is no indication of whether this "pale and cold" fate is simply death, or some darker abomination. Other 'undead' are known for stealing the life force from their victims or causing them to join the ranks of the undead – the Witch-king with the morgul-knife, and the corpse-candles of the Dead Marshes, and the barrow-wight's drone is described as "the cold cursing the warmth for which it hungered" (my emphasis). But its subsequent incantation suggests the hobbits will suffer a cold sleep rather than be fed upon or converted into undead themselves.

*Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone:
never more to wake on stony bed,
never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is
dead.*

*In the black wind the stars shall die,
and still on gold here let them lie,
till the dark lord lifts his hand
over dead sea and withered land. LotR:
Fog on the Barrow-downs*

These words describe the victims being prepared for the “dark lord” to raise at the end of days – either by preserving their corpses from which the warmth has been devoured to be available for eventual re-animation, or far more horrifically by causing the hobbits’ very souls to lie in limbo until they are awoken as the dark lord’s slaves. But it would be a potent deed of necromancy indeed to overcome Ilúvatar’s will that souls should pass west and duly receive the Gift of Death.

The way this incantation refers to a dark lord ruling over a nihilistic end of the world is more characteristic of the original dark lord, Melkor-Morgoth, than of Sauron, again indicating the truly ancient nature of the Wight-spirits.

The nature of Wight-spirits embodied as Barrow-wights

The barrow-wight encountered by the hobbits is not a discorporeal spirit, not one projecting an image of its appearance either into the air or into the minds of those who behold it, nor yet one wearing a fana body of its own making. It sorcerously animates the manish corpse for which the barrow was originally raised. The way Frodo elicits a shriek from it when he hews off the barrow-wight’s hand and causes the sickly light in the barrow to be extinguished also indicates that the wight was more intimately associated with the corpse than would be expected if it was merely using some power to manipulate it like a puppet.

The senses of a barrow-wight do not, however, depend on the physical sense organs of the corpse they animate. They detect the features of Middle-earth and interact with it and its inhabitants in the Unseen, the wraith-world, rather than in the Seen world as experienced by the Free Peoples.

Appearance

Trembling, [Frodo] looked up, in time to see a dark figure like a shadow against the stars. It leaned over him. He thought there were two eyes, very cold though lit with a pale light that seemed to come from some remote distance. Then a grip stronger and colder than iron seized him. The icy touch froze his bones, and he remembered no more. LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs,

In keeping with the principles of good horror writing, Tolkien never provides a direct description of the Barrow-wight. Instead we have a mere silhouette on which no detail is discernible save its palely glowing eyes, and even in the direct encounter inside the barrow itself, only one arm of the Barrow-wight is ever seen.

Tom Bombadil had previously told the hobbits that “the bones were stirred in the mounds”, and in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* he commands Barrow-wight to lay down his “bony head” on “stony pillow”. These fragmentary descriptions suggest the Barrow-wight to be embodied in a skeletal corpse. But Tom also then went on to refer to the “click of rings on cold fingers” rather than finger-bones; the arm that Frodo saw also did not warrant any particular description as either skeletal or spectral. It moved with “a creaking and scraping sound”, and it was described as “breaking off” when Frodo chopped at it with a sword, which suggests a desiccated, decayed or probably embalmed corpse. It is likely that the Dúmedain of Cardolan would have embalmed their dead, or at least the great amongst them, but the dead of the pre-Edainic men for whom the earliest barrows were raised in the First Age were probably not thus preserved, and their skeletons would therefore give rise to entirely fleshless barrow-wights.

Vigour and Mobility

The power by which the barrow-wights animate their corpse-bodies affords them greater strength than a living man. In *The Lord of the Rings*, when the barrow-wight seizes Frodo it has immense strength: “a grip stronger and colder than iron”. But its ability to grasp him gives no indication of how rapidly it could move, as Frodo had collapsed to his knees in abject terror. Within the barrow the creaking and scraping of its hand suggests stiff and laboured movement, and there is a long description of Frodo’s thoughts as it advanced on its fingers, but in that time it still does not move so far that even its shoulder follows the arm into view. Again this slowness indicates

little, as it might well be a feature of the quasi-religious ritual it was performing.

In the earlier *Adventures of Bombadil*, though, when Tom drives off Barrow-wight:

*Out fled Barrow-wight through the window leaping,
through the yard, over wall like a shadow
sweeping,
up hill wailing went back to leaning
stone-rings,
back under lonely mound, rattling his
bone-rings. The Adventures of
Tom Bombadil*

This fleeing, leaping through a window and sweeping over a wall certainly seems to describe a creature capable of at least the same agility as a normal active man.

If this establishes that the Barrow-wights were fearsomely strong, and not hindered by any particular lurching undead ponderousness, their movements were nevertheless constrained to some extent. They must at least fear the daylight, and it is probable that the evil magic by which they possess their corpses would be suppressed or dispelled by the light of the Sun, meaning that they would never roam more than half a night’s journey from the safety of their barrows. When Barrow-wight accosts Tom in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* it declares, “Barrow-wight has got loose again,” sounding as though it rarely leaves its barrow, owing to something or someone actively constraining it.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn tells us “‘Strider’ I am to one fat man who lives within a day’s march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly.” And since the deadly spirits only come to Cardolan after the mounds are deserted (cited above) this might not have been possible if the lands were still inhabited. Is it possible that some effort on the part of the rangers or the wandering companies of the Elves prevent the barrow-wights from preying more widely than they do?

Whatever the reason, the normal condition of the barrow-wights – when not “roused” during the Hunt for the Ring, for example – seems to be to languish morbidly within their barrows, and during the hours of daylight they are no great threat to anyone who does not tamper with their dwelling-places. In the first draft of *The Lord of the Rings* Tom Bombadil says “Horsemen. Dead men [riding the wind. ‘Tis long since they came hence.] What ails the Barrow-wights to leave their old mounds?”⁹

There seems also to be another constraint upon them that lessens the threat that they

pose specifically in a westerly direction. Bombadil advises the hobbits thus:

"Keep to the green grass. Don't you go a-meddling with with old stone or cold Wights or prying in their houses, unless you be strong folk with hearts that never falter!" He said this more than once; and he advised them to pass barrows by the west-side; if they chanced to stray near one. LotR: In the House of Tom Bombadil

And whether his steps were misdirected by the fog or by some other sorcery of the Barrow-wight's, or whether it was through simple chance, Frodo eventually finds himself inadvertently approaching the barrow exactly from the east:

A glance showed him that he was now facing southwards and was on a round hill-top, which he must have climbed from the north. Out of the east a biting wind was blowing. To his right there loomed against the westward stars a dark black shape. A great barrow stood there. LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs

This appears to be one of several examples in which Tolkien attributes goodness with the direction of west, westerly winds etc., by association with the Blessed Realm of the Valar. Perhaps any reminder of the goodly west is uncomfortable to the corrupted Wight-spirits in a way similar to the name of Elbereth being painful to the Nazgûl, and they avoid looking westwards whenever possible.

Speech

Whilst the Wight-spirits clearly animated their adopted corpse-bodies with strength and agility, it is doubtful that the same power could elicit voices from their dead throats, and yet the Barrow-wight 'speaks'. But its speech is always mysterious and otherly: sometimes described as ethereal and sometimes chthonic.

"Where are you?" he [Frodo] cried again, both angry and afraid. "Here!" said a voice, deep and cold, that seemed to come out of the ground. "I am waiting for you." "No!" said Frodo; but he did not run away. His knees gave, and he fell on the ground.

... Suddenly a song began: a cold murmur, rising and falling. The voice seemed far away and immeasurably dreary, sometimes high in the air and thin, sometimes like a low moan from the ground. Out of the formless stream of sad but horrible sounds, strings of words would now and again shape themselves: grim, hard, cold words, heartless and miserable. The night was railing against the morning of which was bereaved, and the cold was cursing the warmth for which it hungered. Frodo was chilled to the marrow.

... Then there was a long trailing shriek, fading away into an unguessable distance; and after that silence. LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs,

Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow laughter! The Adventures of Tom Bombadil

Tolkien employs the same mode of description for the voice of Frodo whilst wearing the Ring on Weathertop:

Suddenly to his horror Sam found that his master had vanished... He heard Frodo's voice, but it seemed to come from a great distance, or from under the earth, crying out strange words. LotR: Flight to the Ford

(The words as Frodo heard himself utter them were not strange, but perfectly normal: "What has happened? Where is the pale king?")

These varying descriptions represent the way the speech of the Barrow-wight defies the normal senses of Frodo, the protagonist from whose perspective this episode is described. It is possible that he is not hearing true speech at all. Later in *The Lord of the Rings*, Elves converse by direct exchange of thoughts,¹⁰ and it is also suggested that the Ring allows an understanding of unknown languages by hearing the thoughts behind the words.¹¹ This allows the possibility that the Barrow-wight made no sound but projected its thought in a fashion that Frodo perceived as speech.¹² Its speech would then properly be considered as a 'spirit power' of the wight, as discussed above.

Other witnesses less sensitive than Frodo the Ring-bearer – the other hobbits included – might not have perceived anything at all.

Intelligence

There is little evidence on which to base an assessment of how intelligent the Barrow-wights were. They might be imagined to be fiendishly cunning in stalking and trapping their victims, and learned enough to have a mastery of magic. Alternately, what hobbit folklore called their "dreadful spells" might not have employed any complex magical lore but might simply be a spirit-being's purely instinctive projections of power or dread.

The Barrow-wight in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* refers to itself in both the first and the third person, using just "Barrow-wight" almost as its own name:

*'Hoo. Tom Bombadil' Look what night has brought you!
I'm here behind the door. Now at last I've caught you!
You'd forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the old mound
up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round. The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*

The lack of a name suggests that much is missing from this creature's identity and sense of self.¹³

The Barrow-wight in *The Lord of the Rings* is far less vocal than this first conception. Early draft notes in which more than one barrow-wight worked together, and therefore presumably communicated with one another, were in fact rejected so we only have evidence of the solitary one that waylays the hobbits. This one also doesn't exactly engage in dialogue; its "[I am] here! I am waiting for you," is the only moment in which it addresses the hobbits at all.

Some readers speculate as to why the Barrow-wight didn't take the Ring from Frodo, since all evil things were known to be drawn to it. We know that it did keep Frodo aside when it prepared the three other hobbits for sacrifice, but since its plans were interrupted by Frodo's sword-blow and Bombadil's intervention, we can derive little else from this. But it does at least suggest that beyond merely being "roused", it had received and understood and was acting on instructions from the Lord of the Nazgûl.

Drawing on other details from Tolkien's later writings, we know that good and righteous spirit-beings of great strength, the Valar and maiar, could create physical bodies, or *fanar*, for themselves.¹⁴ They lost some of their powers in becoming associated with the mate-

rial world in this way. Embodiment achieved only by possession of a corpse might reduce the powers and intelligence of a spirit-being even more dramatically. If the wight-spirits had already long been corrupted by Morgoth, their very sanity might have been questionable, and perhaps centuries-or millennia-long association with a corpse and impersonation of its original owner caused the Wight-spirits to come to think of themselves as the deceased.¹⁵

The 'Magic' of the Animation/Possession

Little can really be known of the 'magical' mechanism by which the Barrow-wights inhabited and animated the corpses that they took as their own. But whilst the Lord of the Nazgûl was responsible for their taking up residence in the Barrow-downs, it was stated that he "sent" them there, so he was not present in person to ensorcel the spirits into the corpses. The 'magic' involved must therefore have been their own.

In a late essay, Tolkien discussed the spirits of wrongful-minded Elves that defied the call of Mandos when their mortal bodies died and thus remained incorporeally in Middle-earth – and their ability to cohabit with or subdue the soul of the natural owner of a living body and thus possess it.

[A spirit] may plead for shelter, and if it is admitted, then it will seek to enslave its host and use both his will and his body for its own purposes. It is said that Sauron did these things, and taught his followers how to achieve them. HoMe 10: Laws and Customs among the Eldar

If the Wight-spirits had the strength or power to possess a living being, that would surely have been preferable, if only for the mobility it would allow. But since there is no suggestion of the wights dis-associating themselves from their corpses to travel abroad as naked spirits, nor transferring their possession to a living being, the large part of their strength must have been spent in binding the Barrow-corpses to them, such that they could not move on. Maybe the act of possessing a living being would cost them more power than they could recoup in the living host's lifetime, meaning they wouldn't have the strength to take another when that one died. The one advantage of inhabiting the (presumably embalmed) corpses in the barrows is that despite their limitations they don't degrade beyond a certain point, even with the passing of many years.

The golden treasure hoards of the barrows are also of significance to the wights' animation of the barrow-corpses.

Morgoth's power was disseminated throughout Gold, if nowhere absolute (for he did not create Gold) it was nowhere absent. (It was this Morgoth-element in matter, indeed, which was a prerequisite for such 'magic' as Sauron practised with it and upon it.) HoMe 10: Myths Transformed VII (ii)

And indeed, the final stroke of Bombadil's 'exorcising' of the Barrow-wight that had taken the hobbits was to expose the treasures of the hoard to the light of the Sun and leave the hoard to be dispersed.

When he [Bombadil] came out he was bearing in his arms a great load of treasure: things of gold, silver, copper, and bronze; many beads and chains and jewelled ornaments. He climbed the green barrow and laid them all on top in the sunshine. ... [Bombadil bade the mound-treasures] lie there 'free to all finders, birds, beasts, Elves or Men, and all kindly creatures'; for so the spell of the mound should be broken and scattered and no Wight ever come back to it. LotR: Fog on the Barrow-downs

When Frodo struck at the arm of the Barrow-wight, he did so by taking up a sword that he found close by. In striking off the Barrow-wight's hand, "the sword splintered up to the hilt." This is very similar to what happened when Merry used his barrow-blade to strike at the Lord of the Nazgûl, a blow which we are told could not have been struck by any lesser weapon. As the two swords came from the same place, it may also be that normal blades would not bite on the Barrow-wight, and that Frodo's choice of weapon was a very fortuitous one.

The corpse possessed by the Barrow-wight was of a very different nature from the sorcerous body of "unseen sinews" possessed by the otherwise incorporeal Lord of the Nazgûl, but the similarity between the two events suggests a common factor. Perhaps the concentration of Morgoth-element in each caused the destruction of the swords that struck them.¹⁶

It is said that in the time leading up to the War of the Ring, Sauron "roused all evil things". It is possible that this was achieved by some sort of 'potentiation' of the power of the Morgoth-element in the fabric of Middle-earth – and especially in gold.

Barrow-wights as enemies in a RolePlaying game

Tolkien's chapter 'Fog on the Barrow-downs' is an exercise in horror-writing in a very different vein from most of the rest of *The Lord of the Rings*. To recreate the atmosphere of *The Lord of the Rings* in a roleplaying game it would therefore be ideal for a Game Master to use barrow-wights as a source of drama through horror rather than as a source of sword-fodder enemies to be defeated for their treasure. *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* do not see Barrow-wight destroyed, only defeated or repelled. It takes the Barrow-wight, as roused by the Lord of the Nazgûl, to threaten the lives of the hobbits before Tom Bombadil is moved to truly vanquish it, and Tom is a unique being of ineffable power.

However confident a group of adventurers might be in their abilities at the outset, when they encounter a barrow-wight they are likely to be caught unaware by the full range of powers at the wights' disposal, which are known only in broad outline even by such loremasters as Elrond Halfelven. They should often count themselves lucky if they survive the encounter, let alone succeed in fulfilling their original goal in going there, and the wight-spirits are next to impossible to truly vanquish. If its host corpse is dismembered, the wight-spirit can continue to animate the acroteriased body parts. The least 'sane' wight-spirits may have lost their sense of their true identities as spirits and will be reduced to relative impotence by the crippling of the corpses to which they are (after long centuries, irreversibly) bound, the most powerful ones that have retained full knowledge of their own true nature will still retain their spirit-powers even if the corpses they inhabit are utterly destroyed.

Many players can be very blasé in their attitude to encounters in which their characters are supposed to be affected by fear, and if fear is to be central to an episode of the game, it needs to be tangibly represented in the game mechanics. GMs should, however, employ caution in imposing mechanics which deprive players of their normal options to control the actions of their characters (either to act as valiantly as they might wish or indeed even to act at all rather than cowering in terror). Whilst partial loss of player-control can be a potent source of tension, there is a great danger of confounding and irritating them rather than giving them a fulfilling dramatic experience.

Physical attributes

- Because they do not depend for their animation upon the physiology of the corpses they have taken, only gross (skeletal) structural damage truly debilitates them. Damage to their skeletons is difficult to inflict with piercing or slicing strikes (e.g. halving absolute attack chances), whilst hacking and bludgeoning strikes attack normally.
- Brittle skeletal wights lacking flesh may suffer up to double damage from hacking and bludgeoning strikes.
- Because they merely possess and animate the corpses they have taken, barrow-wights suffer only distress but no pain at any damage inflicted upon them. This means that wounds which would normally cause dazing/stunning/bleeding etc. have no effect upon them. Physical damage only affects them in the mechanical sense, and any associated penalties should be halved to represent their imperviousness to pain.

Power Levels

The very lack of definition of the nature of the Barrow-wight that made 'Fog on the Barrow-downs' such an evocative chapter leaves the GM a great deal of leeway in selecting the power level of the barrow-wight(s) with which he can confront his characters.

The more primitive, First Age Eadainic barrows are simple mounds with a stone-sealed entrance leading down a short corridor to the burial chamber in which the corpse(s) are interred along with the grave-goods which constitute a relatively meagre hoard. These corpses will typically have decayed to brittle skeletons and are often unarmoured.

The barrows of the Second and Third Ages can be increasingly sophisticated in design, being enclosed within earthwork 'garths', sometimes featuring standing stones and processional avenues, and containing longer corridors and various alcoves or side-chambers and ante-rooms. These corpses will more often have been embalmed and therefore able to withstand more physical punishment, whilst their hoards and the armour and weapons with which the corpse(s) were decked for burial reflect their more technologically and economically advanced cultures.

The source of the barrow-wights' power is the hoarded treasure in the barrow-mound in which they dwell: the greater the hoard, the more powerful is its guardian. Apart from the condition and equipment of the corpse the

wight-spirit inhabits, the abilities of a barrow-wight all derive from the power they receive from the Morgoth-element inherent in their hoards, up to a maximum capacity determined by the strength and sanity of the spirit itself. The rate at which this power is expended in animating its body and exercising its powers, and the rate at which it is regained from its hoard are up to the GM. It will, however, be appropriate for barrow-wights to behave with ponderous undead slowness to conserve their power until such time as they have need of strength and speed (and the more cunning ones will be aware of the advantage to be won from deceiving their opponents as to their true abilities). In deciding the actions of a barrow-wight, the GM should consider than anything other than complete inertness, even the exercise of its senses, will cost the wight-spirit a certain portion of its power. But for practical purposes, the use of its senses and normal animation of its body should not be considered so demanding as to require book-keeping.

The greater the power of a wight-spirit, the more scope it has for the exercise of its spirit-powers, and the better it is able to retain its intelligence and 'sanity': its sense of its true nature as a spirit-being. The least potent wight-spirits have lost all sense of themselves as anything other than "Barrow-wight", identify completely with the corpse they inhabit, and lack any sophistication in their actions, attacking their victims with brute grasping attacks of their out-stretched arms. The most potent retain much of the intelligence they had as mighty spirits and all the cunning gained down long centuries, read and anticipate the actions of their victims or enemies and use their powers to maximum effect, wielding weapons at need with more strength and speed (if not practiced skill) than any mortal warrior.

Specific Powers

- Radiated fear (inherent at no cost, range/intensity may vary)
Men and probably hobbits are very susceptible to this, dwarves less so, and elves still less.
- Focussed fear, a 'gaze' power requiring the victim to be facing them with eyes open, whereby the wight can expend power to inflict fear with greater range/intensity
- Exertion of unnatural strength
- Feats of agility
- Illumination with sickly green light (this seems 'theatrical' rather than required by the wights, except that letting their victims see them exposes

them to the full effects of the fear they exude)

- Suppression of light to deepen shadows, reducing the vision of their victims (not attested, but easily applicable)
- Fog-weaving: raising and controlling mists and fog (if deemed applicable by the GM)
- 'Mazes Unseen', dark enchantment to misdirect the steps of a target, drawing in their victims or confounding those who flee them.
- 'Night Under Night', a 'gaze' power requiring the victim to be facing them with eyes open, which oppresses the victim's will and vitality to an extent dependent on the wight-spirit's power.
- lack of volition, requiring a real effort of will (expenditure of points?) to act:
 - drowsiness, inflicting a penalty on any attempt to act,
 - sleep
 - sorcerous sleep from which there is no natural waking (and which can cause loss of memory, the power of speech, skill ranks, Intelligence points, etc.)

Each of these degrees of oppression is easier (cheaper in power cost) to inflict upon a victim who has already succumbed to a lesser degree.

Behaviour:

Motivation and Weaknesses

Except when roused and acting under the instructions of the Lord of the Nazgûl or another necromancer, barrow-wights' motives are simple.

Sunk in morbid obsession with their own existence many do not even expend the power to open the stone doors of their barrows, and will encounter only such foolhardy tomb-robbers as deliberately break in. Others, the more powerful, keep their hatred of the living more in mind and roam the (mostly deserted) downs by night in the abject hope of snaring some unwitting benighted traveller.

All barrow-wights act to preserve their hoards (either wittingly or even out of nothing more than a remembered instinct) to destroy the hated living interlopers, to steal the warmth from them, or to sacrifice them to the Dark Lord. Conceivably, if they detect gold or some other concentration of the Morgoth-element, they might seek to add it to their hoards.

This predictability is the greatest weakness of the barrow-wight, but with counsel from the Wise, other constraints upon them might be turned to the advantage of the cunning adventurer.

Twisted and evil as they are, barrow-wights loathe (and fear) the purity, goodness and power of the Valar. Distracted by this fear and loathing, they are less capable of focussing their senses effectively in a westerly direction. Other reminders of the Valar, such as the uttering of their names – especially that of Elbereth – causes distress and distraction to a barrow-wight, as do pure silver and pure running water.

The emissaries of the Valar, Arien the Maia of the Sun and Tilion the huntsman-maia of the Moon have a more direct impact on barrow-wights. Daylight blinds their spirit-senses and negates their every power including the ability even to move, and exposure to the direct light of the Sun is grievously damaging to them, rapidly destroying their stock of Morgoth-element power. In consequence of this, even the more aggressive barrow-wights range only a limited distance from the safety of their dark crypts. Exposure to the direct light of the Moon halves the range of their senses and impedes their powers (by doubling all power costs), but this effect is cancelled by even a light mist.

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Notes

- ¹ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>
- ² The closeness between the Sindarin element *gûl* for (a creation of) dark magic in *Nazgûl*, and Arabic *ghul* or *ghûl* ("grasper") as the original "ghoul" is not often noted.
- ³ *HoMe 10: Myths Transformed*
- ⁴ Cf. Gandalf's Word of Command destroying the door in the Chamber of Mazarbul.
- ⁵ Cf. the control of fog attributed to Galadriel in *The Ride of Eorl, UT*.
- ⁶ Seemingly the same dread is also radiated by the 'Dark Door' of Dunharrow, but that did not only affect Men but also Gimli the Dwarf and the Grey Company's horses.
- ⁷ "Nay it was not so," said Faramir. "For his [Sauron's] works fill the heart with loathing; but my heart was filled with grief and pity. **LotR: The Window on the West**
- ⁸ These effects present a coherent magical principle such as is rarely explicit in Tolkien's writings. In other situations the same principle appears to extend into the paralysis of "holding-spells" and into the theft of memory or even of the power of speech.
- ⁹ *HoMe 6: Tom Bombadil*
- ¹⁰ *For they did not move or speak with mouth, looking from mind to mind; and only their shining eyes stirred and kindled as their thoughts went to and fro. LotR: Many Partings*
Tolkien discussed this ability at some length in the essay *Ósanwë-kenta*.
- ¹¹ "While I wear the Ring I can understand much of orcish speech," said Frodo, "or of the thought behind it – I don't know which." **HoMe 7: The Story Foreseen from Lórien**
- ¹² Cf. this passage from a piece of Tolkien's work:
"Spirits are often recorded as speaking."
"I know. But I wonder if they really do, or if they make you hear them, just as they can also make you see them in some appropriate form, by producing a direct impression on the mind." **HoMe 9: The Notion Club Papers**
- ¹³ Cf. the Mouth of Sauron having been so immersed in sorcery and service to the Dark Lord as to forget his name.
- ¹⁴ The main examples of this are the Valar, and *Maiar* such as Melian, Sauron and the Istari, and Bombadil's spouse Goldberry, River Woman's daughter, is probably also embodied in the same fashion.
- ¹⁵ "For purposes of my [ICE] modules, the spirits in the barrows are those of mannish warriors sworn to, and cursed by, Morgoth or Sauron. Their reward for their service to Darkness is a hideous sto-




len identity, haunting someone else's tomb and half-believing they are the true owner of the place." **Wes Frank, 15/05/2001**

- ¹⁶ The Lord of the Nazgûl also broke Frodo's next sword, even at a distance, when Frodo raised it in defiance of his pursuers at the Ford of Bruinen. Does this suggest a power of projecting raw Morgoth-element as a form of attack?

Magic in Middle-earth

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There are literally hundreds of examples of magic use in Tolkien's writings upon which a game mechanics of supernatural power might readily be developed. Unfortunately, most attempts at devising principles of Middle-earth magic have either chosen to totally ignore this extensive source material, or to narrowly focus only on one or two facets of it, or to impose abstract generalizations that do not fit the evidence. The only way to remedy this is to undertake the research necessary to do justice to what Tolkien has actually written. What follows is a preliminary list of some prominent manifestations of supernatural power that appear in the Silmarillion. Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers are in reference to this book.

Oaths and Curses

The magical efficacy of oaths and curses is the primary engine that drives the drama of Middle-earth's history (at least in the First Age, though it is not absent from the Second and Third). A game mechanics worth its mettle must create guidelines for how such words, spoken in the course of a game, may come to exercise such an all-embracing power on the course of events in a way that forces the PCs to take them seriously. The Oath of Fëanor;

"For so sworn, good or evil, an oath may not be broken, and it shall pursue oathkeeper and oathbreaker to the world's end" (83). The Curse of Mandos (88; cf. 139, 176)

Eöl curses his son (138). Thingol swears not to slay Beren (167). Morgoth curses Húrin and his family (197).

Arts of Enchantment

The creation of enchantment is the hallmark of Elven magic. At times its effects are similar to those wrought by sorcery, but its intentions and motivations are generally quite different from it. At the same time, there are no set formulas for enchantments, there are no "spell lists" involved here. They simply are expressions of the wielder's Will, the effects of which are determined by need, occasion and circumstance. Lúthien's dance enchants Beren (165). Melian most skilled in songs of enchantment of all the folk of Lórien² (55).

Melian's voice enchants Thingol, who falls into a trance and *"forgot then utterly all his people and all the purposes of his mind"* (55, 58).

Eöl *"set his enchantments about Aredhel so that she could not find the ways out, but drew ever nearer to his dwelling in the depths of the wood"* (133).

Finrod's minstrelsy conjures visions in the eyes of its hearers (140-141; cf. Celegorm and Curufin's words 170 and Lúthien's song to Beren 174). Lúthien's arts of enchantment cause her hair to grow (172).

Enchanted sites

The Girdle of Melian, *"an unseen wall of shadow and bewilderment,"* a *"girdle of enchantment"* (97, 108); *"for love of Elwë Singollo she took upon herself the form of the Elder Children of Ilúvatar, and in that union she became bound by the chain and trammels of the flesh of Arda. In that form she bore to him Lúthien Tinúviel; and in that form she gained a power over the substance of Arda, and by the Girdle of Melian was Doriath defended..."* (234). *"the Enchanted Isles were set, and all the seas about them were filled with shadows and bewilderment. And these isles were strung as a net in the Shadowy Seas..."*; *"... shadow and enchantment lay upon [the seas];" "defeated by shadows and enchantment"* (102, 159, 246). *"... enchantment lay upon [Nan Elmoth] still"* (132).

"... all the forest of the northward slopes of that land was turned little by little into a region of such dread and dark enchantment that even the Orcs would not enter it unless need drove them... those that strayed among [the trees] became lost and blind, and were strangled or pursued to madness by phantoms of terror." (155).

A spell of mastery binds the stones of the tower of Tol Sirion (175; cf. Barad-dûr 304).

The River Esgalduin (234). The Hills of Tumladen (240).

Enchanted artifacts

The enchantment of an artifact involves the transfer of Will (sometimes permanent, at other times temporary) from the wielder to an external object. The Silmarils [see "Proximity to Holiness" below]. The Nauglamir enhances the grace and loveliness of its wearer (114). Lúthien's cloak was *"laden with a spell of sleep"* (172; cf. 175). Angrist *"would cleave iron as it were green wood"* (177). Anglachel *"would cleave all earth-delved iron"* (201). Lembas [cf. PoMe for virtues]. Ulmo's cloak shadowed Tuor from the eyes of his enemies (239; cf. UT). The One Ring stores will and enables the wearer to see/control thoughts of the other Ringbearers (287-288). The Three Rings ward off the decays of time (288). The Seven Rings generate treasure hoards (289). The Nine Rings allow wearers to view things invisible to Men (289). Narsil breaks when its wielder dies, its light is extinguished (294, 295). The Palantíri permit the viewer to see other times as well as places (64, 281, 292). The Ulumúri

put an eternal sea-longing in the heart of their hearer (27).

Spells

The most notable category distinction between spells and enchantment is that the former tend to involve coercion. Beren is stricken dumb, “*as one that is bound under a spell*” (165). Lúthien declares her power/mastery over Sauron’s isle, “*and the spell was loosed that bound stone to stone, and the gates were thrown down, and the walls opened, and the pits laid bare*” (175). Túrin falls “*under the binding spell*” of Glaurung’s eyes, unable to move or speak until released, and bemused, the dragon’s words altering his perception of events (213-215; cf. 217, 222, 231). Glaurung lays “*a spell of utter darkness and forgetfulness*” upon Nienor, causing her to lose all volition (218, 225).

Word of Command

I left this in a separate category because in *LotR*, Gandalf intimates that a word of command is different from a normal spell, which generally takes more time to work. A “*command*”, on the other hand, is more immediate and more draining on the speaker. Lúthien commands Carcharoth to sleep, a power derived from her divine heritage (180, 181).

Songs of Power

Why do certain effects require a song rather than some other kind of utterance? Yavanna’s song creates the Two Trees (38; cf. 78). Finrod and Sauron duelled in song to conceal/reveal Finrod’s identity (171). Lúthien drives Morgoth and his court blind and lays sleep upon them (180-181).

Healing

Lúthien uses her arts to heal Beren (178; cf. 182). Lúthien heals Thingol by her touch (188). The Silmaril brings healing and blessing to the refugees of Gondolin (247).

Sorcery

By contrast to enchantment, spells or wizardry (which may be either good or evil in intent), sorcery always has a negative connotation. We learn elsewhere (*HoMe*) that sorcery, unlike all other forms of supernatural power, has its source in the Morgoth element “*the Shadow*”, Morgoth’s evil will that inheres in all of Arda Marred, lying dormant, waiting to be used by those who would further its ends. As the examples show, necromancy (the domination of other wills and spirits) is a hallmark of sorcery. “*Sauron was now become a sorcerer of dreadful power, master of shadows and of phantoms...misshaping what he touched, twisting what he ruled...lord of werewolves*” (156; cf. 289 on phantoms and delusions). Sauron conjures an

illusion of Gorlim’s dead wife to trap Gorlim, “*a phantom devised by wizardry*” (162-163). “*Sauron brought werewolves, fell beasts inhabited by dreadful spirits that he had imprisoned in their bodies*” (164; cf. 180). Some of the Ringwraiths became sorcerers with the aid of their rings (289). Sauron “*used the fire that welled there from the heart of the earth in his sorceries*” (292). Morgul = “*Sorcery*” (297). Sorcerer = “*Necromancer*” (299, 300).

Domination of Will

The thralls of Morgoth are chained to his will, even when set free (156). Sauron daunts Gorlim to reveal his secrets, even though he resists (163).

Morgoth Element

Morgoth’s will “*remained and guided his servants, moving them ever to thwart the will of the Valar and to destroy those that obeyed them*” (260; cf. 264).

Wizardry

No power of wizardry could defend anyone from the Oath of Fëanor (169). The Elven warriors of Nargothrond went into battle using wizardry, along with other weapons of secrecy and deception (170). Wizardry = Sorcery (171). Wizardry distinguished from spells (175).

Shape-changing

Morgoth’s spies assume the shape and appearance of those whom they spy upon (144-145, 156). Finrod disguises himself and his companions as Orcs (170, 171). Sauron exercises power over his own fana (175; cf. 285). Lúthien, Huan and Beren assume the forms of Draugluin and Thuringwethil; Morgoth strips her of her disguise by his will (178-179, 180). Ulmo gives Elwing the shape of a bird, which she subsequently gains the power to do on a regular basis, like Beorn (247, 250).

Foresight and Prophecy

Premonition of the future is a pervasive theme in Tolkien’s stories. Practically all astute characters experience it at some point. The Wisdom stat could be used to measure the degree to which PCs can accurately perceive and interpret such premonitions. It also has a bearing upon the role of the prophet or seer (which actually turns up more often than one might think among Tolkien’s characters). Characters experience foreboding or foreknowledge of future events (67, 78, 127, 130, 136, 162, 179, 185, 194, 196, 202, 205, 213, 216, 220, 221, 295-296, 298, 301). Ulmo delivers prophetic oracles through Elven or human messengers (212, 240). Tar-Palantir’s foresight marks him as a prophet and a true-seer (269).

Read Thoughts

The ability to read another’s intention by the light in their eyes is also a recurrent motif that often drives the actions of characters. The ability to do so is based upon Wisdom, combined with the active engagement of Will and perhaps Presence. Characters reared in a culture that abstains from falsehood and lies (like the Dúnedain and the Rohirrim) are, according to Faramir’s claim at any rate, more capable of penetrating the deception of others and discerning truth. Incorporating this principle into the game mechanics would encourage PCs who desire the power to take seriously their own truthfulness in speech and action.

Maeglin’s thought “*could read the secrets of hearts beyond the mist of words*” (133, 134, 139). Finrod interprets the speech of Men through their thoughts (141). Melian “*read the doom that was written*” in Lúthien’s eyes (188). Melian reads the disposition of Eöl’s sword (202).

Divine intervention

The Valar do in fact lend aid to the Free Peoples, but in all of this there is no trace of the notion that there exist individuals capable of “*Channeling*” the power of the Valar for magic. On the contrary, the Valar would regard such a notion as dangerously conducive to “*worship*”, a claim to which Eru alone has a right. This is, in fact, what distinguishes “*good*” magic from sorcery: authentic magic originates solely in the Will of the caster, whereas sorcery seeks to Channel the Morgoth element. Ulmo communicates to Finrod and Turgon via dream (114, 158). Ulmo sets unquiet in Turgon’s heart (125). Gorlim’s wraith warns Beren of his father’s death in a dream (163). Ulmo “*set it in [Tuor’s] heart to depart the land of his fathers*” (238). Ulmo appears to Turgon in person and guides him to Tumladen (115; cf. 125-126). Ulmo appears to Cirdan and delivers his oracle (212). Ulmo appears to Tuor and commissions him (239). Ulmo speaks through Tuor in Gondolin (240). Uinen aids mariners that call upon her (30). Fingon prays to Manwë for aid and is answered by Thorondor (110). Ulmo raises mist from Sirion to aid the escape of Huor and Húrin (158). Ulmo rescues Voronwë from Ossë’s wrath (239).

Hallowing

Being Ainur (Holy Ones), it is not surprising that one of the main “magical” activities of the Valar and the Maiar is to make things holy; that is to say, to render them inviolate to evil and corruption, and to make them a blessing to all who dwell in proximity to them. From a game mechanics perspective, it is interesting to note that certain heroic Men and Elves also exude a kind of holiness, at least after they have died, as the sanctity of graves attests. This suggests that characters with a great enough Presence may well come to possess certain hallowing powers (in their measure). The priest-kings of Númenor, for instance, had the power to bless and curse, and to heal. Manwë hallows the Great Lamps (35). Yavanna hallows Ezellohar (38). Dwarves believe that Ilúvatar will hallow them at the End of Time (44). Varda hallows the Silmarils “so that...no mortal flesh, nor hands unclean, nor anything of evil will might touch them, but it was scorched and withered” (67). Manwë hallows the last fruits of the Two Trees (99). “No Orc dared ever after to pass over the mound of Fingolfin or draw nigh his tomb, until the doom of Gondolin was come...” (154). Melian hallows the water of Tarn Aeluin (162). “They buried the body of Felagund upon the hill-top of his own isle, and it was clean again; and the green grave of Finrod Finarfin’s son, fairest of all the princes of the Elves, remained inviolate, until the land was changed and broken...” (175-176). Ulmo protects the waters of Ivrin (209). “It is told...that the Stone of the Hapless should not be defiled by Morgoth nor ever thrown down, not though the sea should drown all the land...” (230). “...they buried Glorfindel in a mound of stones beside the pass; and a green turf came there, and yellow flowers bloomed upon it amid the barrenness of stone, until the world was changed” (243). The Valar hallow Vingilot (250). The Meneltarma is hallowed to Eru (261; cf. 281). The presence of the Deathless hallows the land of Aman (264; cf. 37-38).

Proximity to Holiness

The native power of Manwë and Varda is enhanced when they stand together (26). “Great power Melian lent to Thingol” (56). Thingol’s sojourn with Melian at Nan Elmoth enhances his presence to god-like heights (58). The wearing of the Silmaril enhances Lúthien’s beauty but hastens her end (236). The presence of the Silmaril brings healing and blessing to the exiles of Gondolin (247). The power of the Silmaril enables Eärendil to confound the enchantments of Aman (248).

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Notes




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² The Vala Irmo; not the elven land west of Anduin.

Thoughts on Imladris

Part One

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Frodo was now safe in the Last Homely House east of the Sea. That house was, as Bilbo had long ago reported, 'a perfect house, whether you like food or sleep, or story-telling or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all'. Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness.

The Lord of the Rings, Book II (Many Meetings)

Imladris is the house of Elrond Half-elven, "The Last Homely House east of the sea" as so vividly described above. Its role and history is of utmost importance for Middle-earth in general and Eriador in particular.²

The rôle of that location is well reflected in its popularity in roleplaying – who would not have wanted to visit the Hidden vale, talk to Elrond or experience the magnificent atmosphere of that place. Regardless whether you play in the early, middle, or late Third Age, Rivendell always is something special.

History

The history of this place begins in the middle of the Second Age during the War of the Elves with Sauron. According to the tale of years in the Appendix B of the *Lord of the Rings* (LotR), Elrond founded the site in the year 1697 of the Second Age. In *Unfinished Tales* (UT) this is further elaborated upon:

"...that he [Elrond] established a refuge and stronghold at Imladris (Rivendell)." UT, The History of Celeborn and Galadriel and Amroth king of Lórien

In this quote we already find a phrase that appears also in other passages and makes the definition of Imladris a bit problematic. It is the appellation as a stronghold that is a bit puzzling. Normally a stronghold is a fortified place, often located in an inaccessible area. Although the vale is quite inaccessible because of its hidden location – as well as in a remote area – there is no mention of any fortifications. When we read about Imladris in the LotR or the Hobbit we get the impression, that it was more like a big manor house (in whatever style) and not a (small) fortress with defensive walls, ditches etc.

The history continues with the notion that

"...his [Sauron's] force was weakened by the necessity of leaving a strong detachment to contain Elrond and prevent him coming upon his rear... By that time [SA 1700] Sauron had mastered all Eriador, save only besieged Imladris." UT, The History of Celeborn and Galadriel and Amroth king of Lórien

This strongly suggests the image of a besieged fortress – and this is developed further in the course of the narrative:

"The army that was besieging Imladris was caught between Elrond and Gil-galad, and utterly destroyed ... and it was there[at the first Council after the war] determined that an Elvish stronghold in the east of Eriador should be maintained at Imladris rather than in Eregion." UT, The History of Celeborn and Galadriel and Amroth king of Lórien

Here we meet again the phrase of the "stronghold". We also learn that the decision not to re-settle Eregion was a deliberate one. Certainly the assembled elven leaders perceived that the latter's time was over and a new, hidden and more modest refuge was a better choice rather than the splendid Eregion with its bitter memories.

Concerning the military involvement of this place, the next textual evidence is for the Third Age.

"It is said that at this time [after the accession of Arveleg I. of Arthedain in the second half of the 14th century TA] Rivendell was besieged." LotR, Appendix A

Again it is a bit hard to conceive how a place is "besieged" if it is not protected by regular fortifications but only its remote and hidden location: To "besiege" someone, you have to know where he is, otherwise you are hard put to set up a siege indeed. For the Third Age we have the factor of Elrond's ring, but as shown above, the place was already besieged by Sauron's forces when Elrond had no ring in SA 1697-1700 and therefore lacked its powers. And even then he was "besieged" in that very place.

A possible solution to this problem is presented later in this essay.

The makeup of Rivendell

We find a few scattered hints about the makeup of the place in the Lord of the Rings:

"He [Frodo] lay a little while longer looking at patches of sunlight on the wall, and listening to the sound of a waterfall." LotR, Book II (Many Meetings)

The waterfall at the bridge of the Bruinen must have had quite a good sound to carry so far, or there was perhaps at least one more waterfall nearer to the house. Or maybe it was just a silent moment and the sound from afar was carried a bit better (see also next quote).

"He [Frodo] walked along the terraces above the loud-flowing Bruinen and watched the pale, cool sun rise above the far mountains, and shine down ... 'I [Frodo speaking] should like to get into those pine-woods up there.' He pointed away far up the side of Rivendell to the north." LotR, Book II (The Council of Elrond)

So there were some terraces, walkways etc. leading from the house to the bank of the river; indicating at least a spatial separation between these (see also picture on the next page). The elaborate structure of Elrond's gardens is also shown in the LotR:

"Sam led him along several passages and down many steps and out into a high garden above the steep bank of the river. He found his friends sitting in a porch on the side of the house looking east. The air was warm. The sound of running and falling water was loud, ..." LotR, Book II (Many Meetings)

It is the same porch where later the Council of Elrond is held. Though the location above the steep river bank pertains to the gardens, it is probable that the porch also lay near it (perhaps not as near as the gardens). It might also be that at first Frodo and Sam wandered a bit before returning to the house and there found their friends. Since the sound of running water is also to be heard here (Frodo heard it in his bed as well), it seems possible that perhaps another waterfall was near this end of the house or the one west of the bridge was loud enough to be heard here.

The room where Bilbo was housed lay close to the ground (probably ground-level), as is shown in the following quote:

"Then you certainly will not be chosen, Peregrin Took!" said Gandalf, looking in through the window, which was near the ground." LotR, Book II (The Ring goes South)

The river below the Bruinen ford is also alluded to:

"On the rocks of the rapids below it searchers discovered the bodies of five more..." LotR, Book II (The Ring goes South)

It is interesting that the Bruinen had rapids, indicating a turbulent river that is neither easy to cross nor to navigate.

The accommodation needs varied over the course of the habitation as the population number changed (see below). An extreme case of a temporary "overpopulation" must have been the days of the Last Alliance.

Elrond's own account of the time seems reasonable:

"But Sauron of Mordor assailed them, and they made the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, and the hosts of Gil-galad and Elendil were mustered in Arnor.

...

Thereupon Elrond paused a while and sighed. 'I remember well the splendour of their banners,' he said. 'It recalled to me the glory of the Elder Days and the hosts of Beleriand, so many great princes and captains were assembled.'" LotR, Book II (The Council of Elrond)

Here we learn that the hosts were mustered in Arnor. This implies that all these troops were assembled and mobilized all over Arnor (and probably Lindon). When the muster was complete, the army must have moved somewhere (cf. the Muster of Rohan in the LotR!). This is alluded to in the Silmarillion, where we are explicitly told that all this great host stayed at Rivendell some time after the muster:

"Therefore they [Elendil and Gil-galad] made that League which is called the Last Alliance, and they marched east into Middle-earth gathering a great host of Elves and Men; and they halted for a while at Imladris." Silmarillion (Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age)

Unfortunately, it is not told, how long "a while" was. This is indirectly mentioned however in another place:

*[Years of the Second Age]
3431 Gil-galad and Elendil march east to Imladris.
3434 The host of the Alliance crosses the Misty Mountains. LotR, Appendix B (Tale of Years)*

This strongly suggests that that the aforementioned stay of Elendil and Gil-galad at Rivendell lasted three years. The encamped great host would have made the necessary logistics an impossible nightmare if the whole army was really assembled in the limited valley of Rivendell.³ Even if we factor in the distribution of the army in the surrounding territory, the picture does not get much better because of the inhospitable and barren nature of the lands about (rocks, heath and moors – see also the following paragraph). In any case we face a serious problem: either the army was more dispersed in Arnor in order to supply it or Elrond had some very good logistics officers (with nearly unlimited stores of supplies of every kind!) at his fingertips in Rivendell.

The surrounding territory

An insightful account of what the heights surrounding Rivendell looked like can be found in the LotR as well:

"They [the Fellowship] crossed the bridge and wound slowly up the long steep paths that led out of the cloven vale of Rivendell; and they came at length to the high moor where the wind hissed through the heather. Then with one glance at the Last Homely House twinkling below them they strode away far into the night." LotR, Book II (The Ring goes South)

So there was no dense vegetation around here (at least on this side of the valley) that could be used as a cover for the hidden vale. On the other hand, a high moor with bogs, fog etc. is nearly as good a defense when the safe paths through it are only known to a handful of trusted people. Potential invaders had to find these paths, and any misguiding or even killing of such scouts would be relatively easy for Rivendell's guards.

Combined with the quote above, we get quite a good picture of the supposed vegetation around Imladris. It was a mix of pine forests plus high moors; e.g. typical for rugged and cool northern regions like Scotland or Russian Taiga.⁴

That the area around Rivendell was quite rugged and not very hospitable is vividly described in the LotR as well:

“At the Ford of Bruinen they left the Road and turning southwards went on by narrow paths among the folded lands. Their purpose was to hold this course west of the Mountains for many miles and days. The country was much rougher and more barren than in the green vale of the Great River in Wilderland on the other side of the range...” **LotR, Book II (The Ring goes South)**

The territory in the vicinity of the valley is rugged and inaccessible as well. Especially the troll-fells are described as being not manageable for horses:

“I [Gandalf speaking] reached here at last by a long hard road, up the Hoarwell and through the Ettenmoors, and down from the north. It took me [Gandalf] nearly fourteen days from Weather-top, for I could not ride among the rocks of the troll-fells, ...” **LotR, Book II (The Council of Elrond)**

Beside the textual hints concerning the nature of Imladris, we have five pictures by Tolkien which show Imladris. Four represent sketches or earlier versions (#104-107 in HAMMOND, WAYNE C. & SCULL, CHRISTINA, 1995), while the fifth (#108, *ibid*) has been published in the second impression of the british “Hobbit” (and in the first US impression of the same title). This final one is shown in the Image 1 to the right. Several bits of information can be gleaned from here:

- The house stands not directly above the river, and its style is quite conservative.
- The river bank at the house is quite steep.
- There is at least one small waterfall west of the bridge
- The heights above the valley are not extremely forested

The question now is, how do we reconcile the “stronghold” that has been “besieged” at least two times and the impression of the generous manor house without defensive walls or other artificial fortifications – only protected by a hidden valley?⁵

In my opinion this can only be achieved by a consequent patrolling of the extensive moors around Rivendell that hide the exact location from potential enemies. So the principal defense is its inaccessibility and the watch that keeps prying eyes away from the vicinity.

The only problem here is the southern fork of the Bruinen river that runs through the valley. Any invader or a simple scout only has to

follow the course of the river to find Elrond’s house. This may be prevented by two factors:

- First the geography: after passing through the vale of Imladris, the river can descend through a deep gorge and steep rapids or even a small waterfall down to the union with the northern fork. That the Bruinen had rapids below the ford where the Nazgûl lost their horses has already been mentioned. In addition, owing to the structure of the river bank, one cannot look past the edge of the barrier, effectively barring any further investigation. In this way it is not that easy to use the river as a guide into the vale. The principal problems remain though.
- Secondly the elves: Elrond takes great precautions against any intruders (by chance or purpose) by setting a dense patrol for the area through his guards. In this way normal folk who come too close can be misguided so that they do not even suspect being near Imladris.⁶

Here another picture by Tolkien is of help that shows a sketch of Imladris looking west (Image 2 to the right; #105 in HAMMOND, WAYNE C. & SCULL, CHRISTINA, 1995). We have to be careful since it is only a preliminary sketch, but interesting nonetheless.

Here we see that the valley narrows extremely and the Bruinen flows through a gorge of sheer cliffs before meeting the northern arm of the river (beyond the cleft). It seems that the geography favors the secrecy of the place, because it is not easy (in fact impossible) to find a way through such a gorge. To prevent any suspicions about this particular gorge/waterfall being the entrance to the hidden vale, it might be helpful that this was not a unique occurrence in the area, but that there existed several other similar geographic features that might have helped the elves in eliminating an enemy (see also below).



Image 1: Rivendell looking east (Tolkien, 1937)



Image 2: Imladris, looking west (sketch by Tolkien)

So, one of the key measures for the security of Imladris is the active and offensive patrolling of the outer perimeter of the vale to eliminate any security threats well before they reach the vicinity of the hidden valley. In the context of the above mentioned why Sauron’s, as well as the Witch-king’s, minions only had a general idea that in this heavily rugged area with its many vales, Imladris was located. They knew nothing certain, and so these “sieges” should be more envisioned as a series of forts/camps around the area and a lot of heavy patrolling in between.

Elrond and his guards surely used the supposed other vales in the area to their advantage when they had to deal with larger groups of enemies (e.g. by misleading an enemy force into a wrong vale and then ambushing them there).

The size of the “general area” to which Imladris could be located by an enemy would vary, but I suggest it to be at least 30 km⁷ in diameter

Inhabitants and Population

The elven inhabitants of the place vary wildly. As it is the only elven refuge in Eriador east of Lindon, it is natural to find a mix of many elven races here, just as Sam observed in the LotR:

“And Elves, sir! Elves here, and Elves there! Some like kings, terrible and splendid; and some as merry as children.”

LotR, Book II (Many Meetings)

The first kind surely describes Noldor and perhaps Sindar, while the more merry ones (who appear so prominently in the Hobbit) are surely of the “lesser” Silvan kindred.

The population number of Imladris is very hard to pin down. It seems certain that it reached its population peak right at the beginning, when many refugees from Eregion were in Elrond’s host. After the war, there were probably a number of the survivors leaving over the sea. This emigration is likely to have continued all through the remaining existence of Imladris. The peaceful second half of the Second Age (at least for Eriador) and the growing power and influence of Gil-galad might have mitigated this trend a bit. After the war of the Last Alliance however, another great exodus is likely to have taken place. The use of Vilya by Elrond⁸ since the beginning of the Third Age surely lessened this trend – or perhaps stayed it almost totally – and enabled the demographic survival of this place⁹ – apart from real danger like military attack.

At the end of the second millennium of the Third Age, Imladris was still powerful enough to field a sizable contingent that landed the felling strike for the remnants of the Witch-king’s force in the battle of TA 1975:

“At the same time [when the remnants of Angmar’s army tried to flee to Carn-dûm] a force under Glorfindel the Elf-lord came up out of Rivendell. Then so utterly was Angmar defeated that not a man nor an orc of that realm remained west of the Mountains.”

LotR, Appendix A (The Númenórean Kings, part IV)

The nadir of Rivendell’s population surely was the end of Third Age when almost all of its prominent inhabitants like Elrond left Middle-earth and only a small remnant lingered on for a while. Not long after the end of the Third Age there arrived a new prominent resident however:

“But after the passing of Galadriel in a few years Celeborn grew weary of his realm [greater Lórien] and went to Imladris to dwell with the sons of Elrond.”

LotR, Appendix B (The Tale of Years)

This last tarrying might have endured until the death of Elessar in the year 120 of the Fourth Age, because the king states that

“Lady Undómiel,” said Aragorn, “the hour is indeed hard, yet it was made even in that day when we met under the white birches in the garden of Elrond where none now walk.”

LotR, Appendix A (The Númenórean Kings, part V; my emphasis)

So the sons of Elrond and Celeborn had departed sometime before that date, ending the long elven habitation of the Last Homely House.

Imladris in RPG’s

Being a premier place in Tolkiens Middle-earth legendarium, Rivendell quickly caught the attention of game designers with the license for gaming in Middle-earth. Correspondingly, we have two RPG-incarnations of Imladris:

- “Rivendell – the House of Elrond” by ICE
- “Maps of Middle-earth – Cities and Strongholds” by Decipher including a map and short description of Rivendell

ICE’s Imladris

ICE chose a rather conservative design for the location. It depicts the place in a style reminiscent of an english 19th – century rural manor (see Image 3 below). It resembles Tolkiens picture quite well, though some indirect descriptions from the LotR (see quotes above) do not fit very well with the floorplans and the immediate surroundings of the house.

Some details like the many and high chimneys also do not appear on the painting, but this can be amended with ease.

The shortcomings concerning the textual evidence must be amended as well to make them more compatible with the LotR descriptions. Like the house layout, this is relatively easy. Also the placement of the house in relation to the river also has to be corrected.

All in all, there are some issues, but these can be addressed too without major re-workings. In general, the ICE layout is relatively near to Tolkiens picture of the location.

Decipher’s Imladris

The Decipher Imladris is basically the ver-



Image 3: Cover Image of ICE’s Rivendell (*Rivendell – The House of Elrond*, 1987. Artwork by Angus McBride)

sion from the Peter Jackson movie trilogy (see Image 4 below). It corresponds well with the aforementioned quotes from the LotR (concerning locations in relation to the river; see above) and so seems to be more compatible with Tolkien's work. It does not, however, resemble the images by Tolkien (see Images 1 and 2). The house is more or less built directly above the river and the overall design is more "fantastic" rather than the "down to earth" style used by Tolkien. This shows the problems of any RPG module that is forced to rely solely on the Hobbit and LotR for its design: It must disregard any other material which supplements or highlights Tolkien's world in more depth. Some topics are only vaguely or peripherally mentioned in the LotR, while other sources (the HoME being a primary one) must be left aside. In this case, the publications *Pictures by Tolkien* and *Tolkien – The Artist* seem to have been unavailable for the design.

Consequently, the result is unnecessarily flawed. One can only imagine how the superb designers would have sculpted Imladris, had they been allowed to use all available sources.

RPG conclusions

Essentially, both versions are usable. Most contemporary gamers probably will prefer the Decipher version, this being the current "official" one.¹⁰ For the reasons explained above, I deem the ICE version better suited to Tolkien's image of the valley, because its errors can be amended without too much work, while fixing the ones in the Decipher version would need a major re-design of the place.

Both RPG incarnations of the place seem to lack one important structure: stables are absent in the ICE version as well as Decipher's design. Even if we allow the Elves to house their mounts and their equipment not in a mannish way, at least the needs of the mannish guests/travellers¹¹ should be addressed in the design. In my opinion, a stable with the capacity for 20-30 horses plus their equipment should be enough for Elrond's needs most of the time.

Further plans

This essay did mention some basic and sometimes academic issues concerning Rivendell. In a follow-up to this article I will present a more game-oriented article that will make use of the issues mentioned above. This will appear in one of the next issues of *Other Minds* – perhaps even already in the next one.

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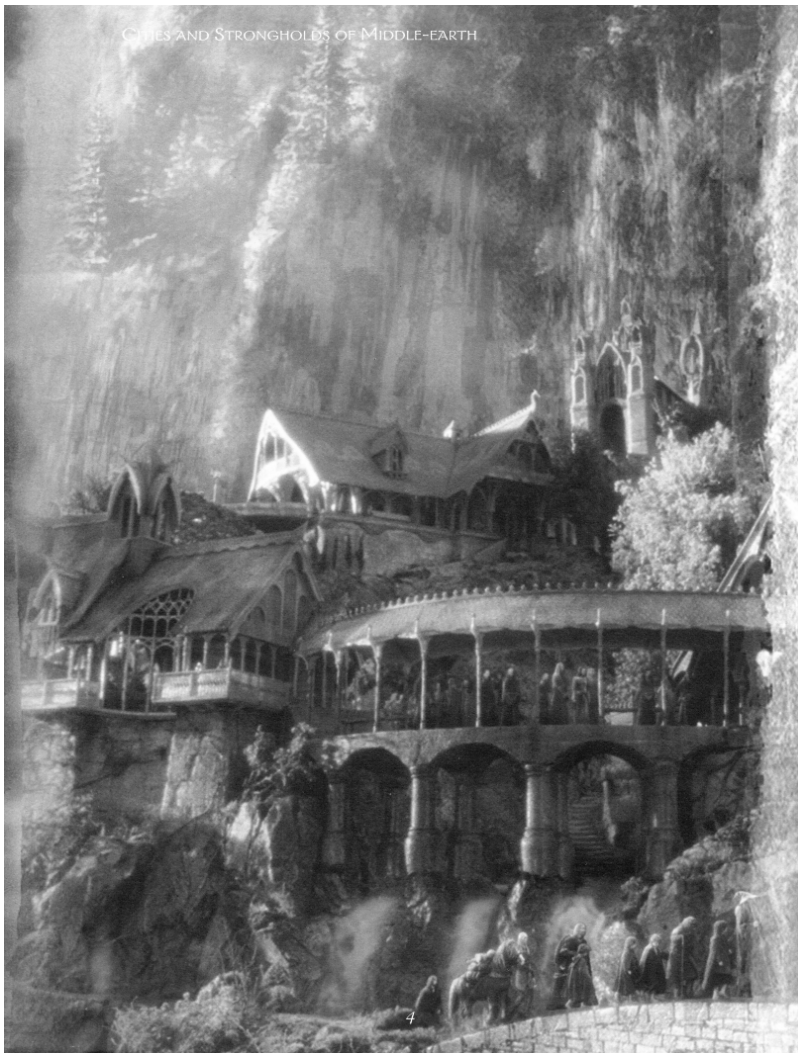


Image 4: Decipher's Imladris (*Maps of Middle-earth – Cities and Strongholds*, 2004. Design by Weta)

Notes

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² First Elrond shelters the remnants of Arnor's royal line and secondly it is here where the fate of the Ruling Ring is decided.

³ Remember – it was the combined host of Lindon and Arnor, that formed a key – perhaps the greatest – contingent of the army of the Last Alliance; the remainder being the Elves of Oropher in Greenwood, Amroth from Lórien and the Gondorian host under Anárion. Since Elrond compares it to the host that threw down Thangorodrim(!), even a very careful estimate of the troops of Elendil and Gil-galad should leave us with several tens of thousands men (probably somewhere between 25-50,000).

⁴ Which of course lacks the foothills of Alpine mountains. Only Taiga regions around the Ural mountains might be comparable to the area around Rivendell.

⁵ and later the power of Vilya

⁶ The course of action depends heavily on the nature of the intruder. Evil people or creatures might be dispatched straight away when they endanger the security of the refuge.

⁷ about 20 miles

⁸ With the corresponding “timelessness” that the Elves so desired

⁹ Otherwise Elrond was likely to have sit in an empty house at the end of the Third Age

¹⁰ Which is also more “flashy” and “elvish” according to the contemporary perception of “elvishness”.

¹¹ Mostly Dúnedain of course

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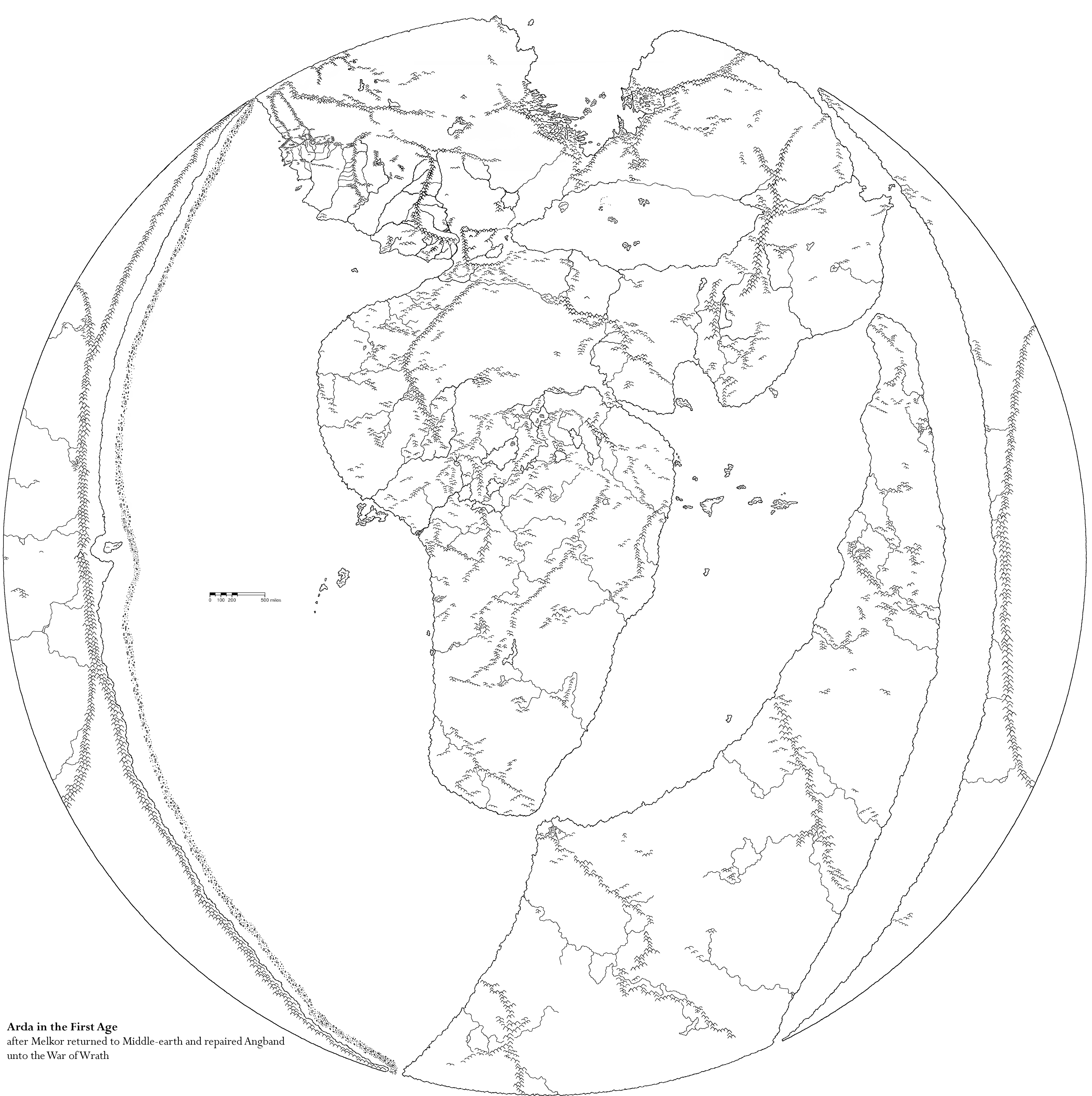
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Maps for *'Mapping Arda'*

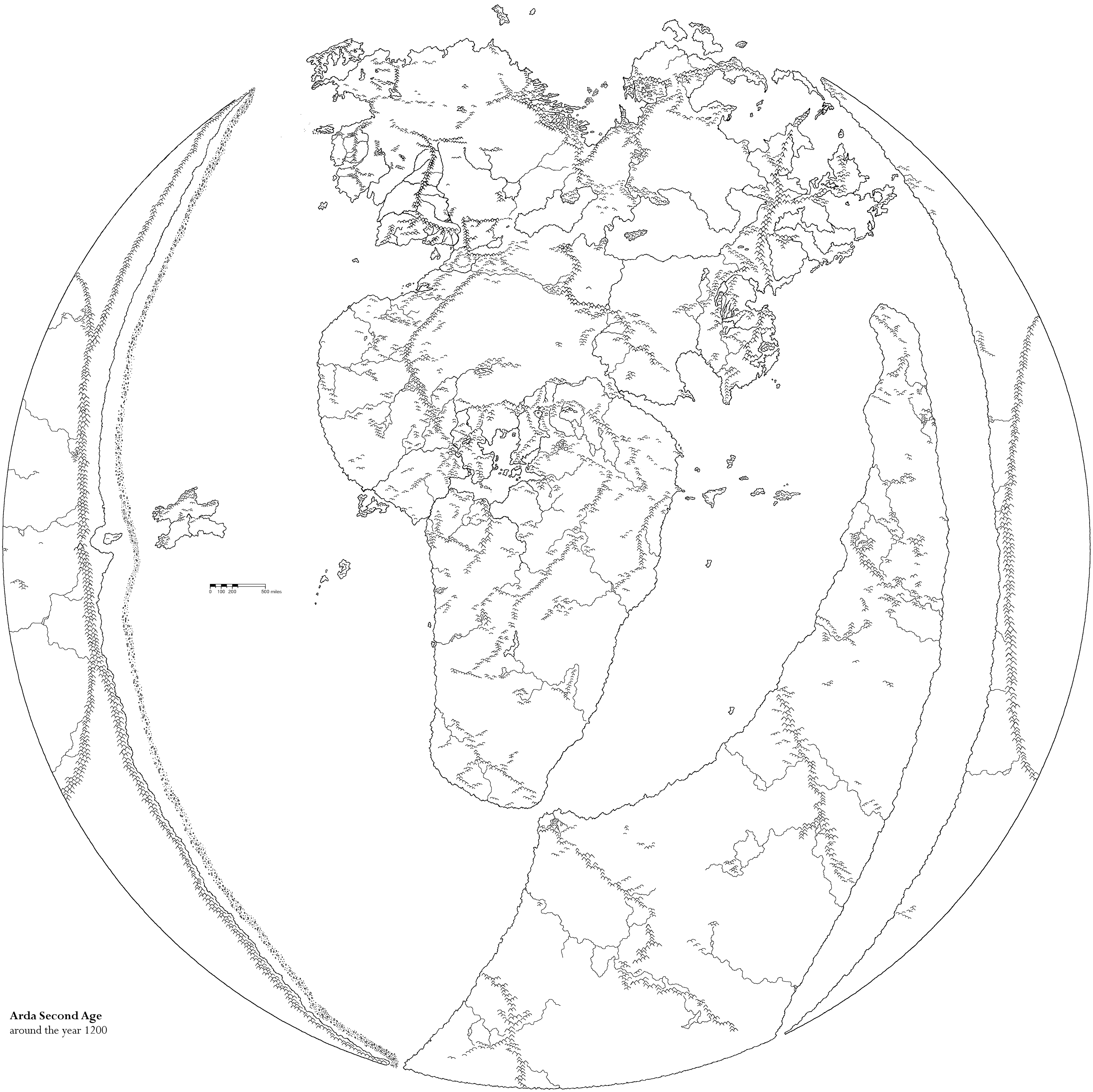


0 100 200 500 miles

Arda in the First Age
after Melkor returned to Middle-earth and repaired Angband
unto the War of Wrath

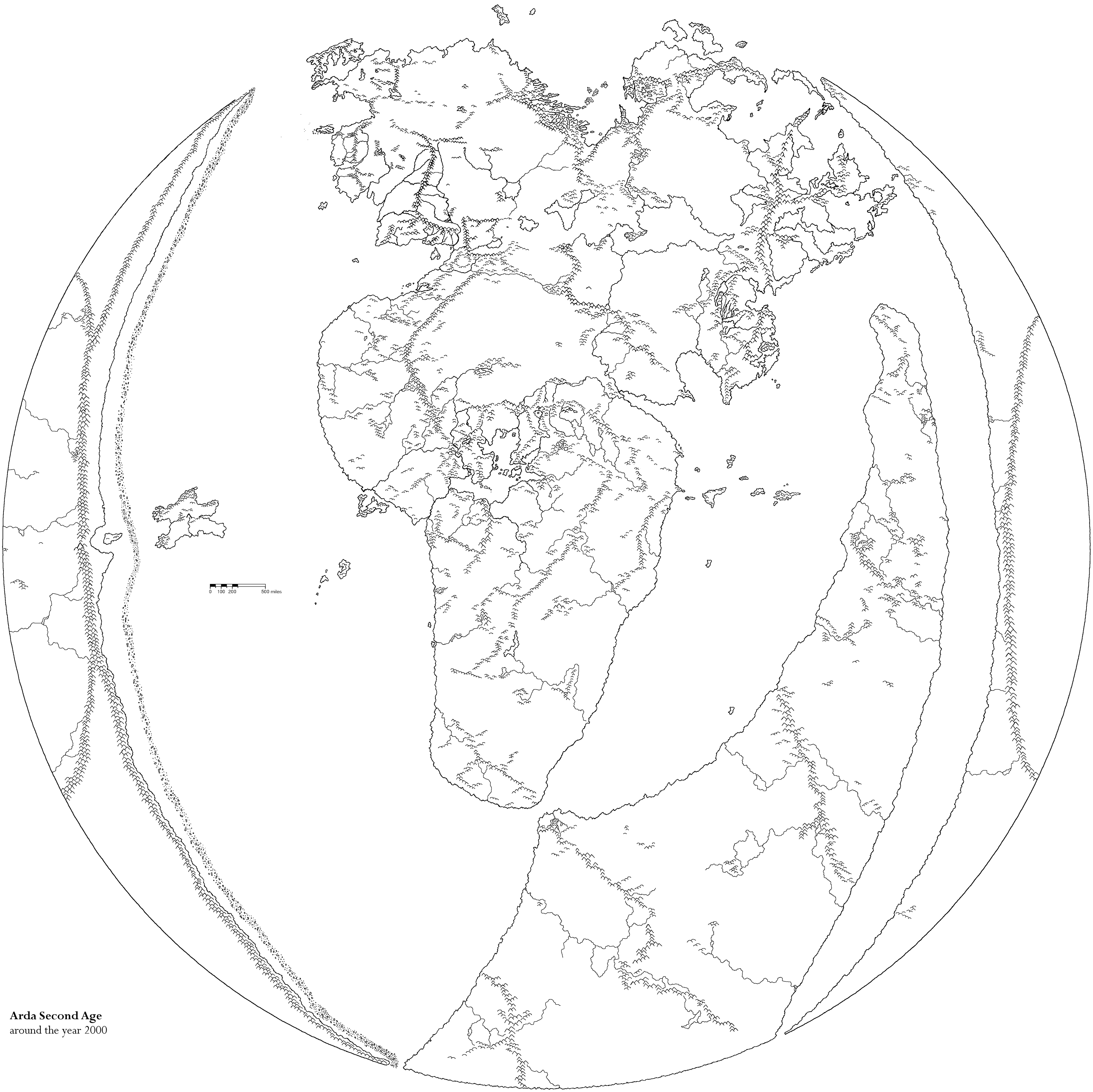


Arda around Second Age 1200
overlaid with First Age

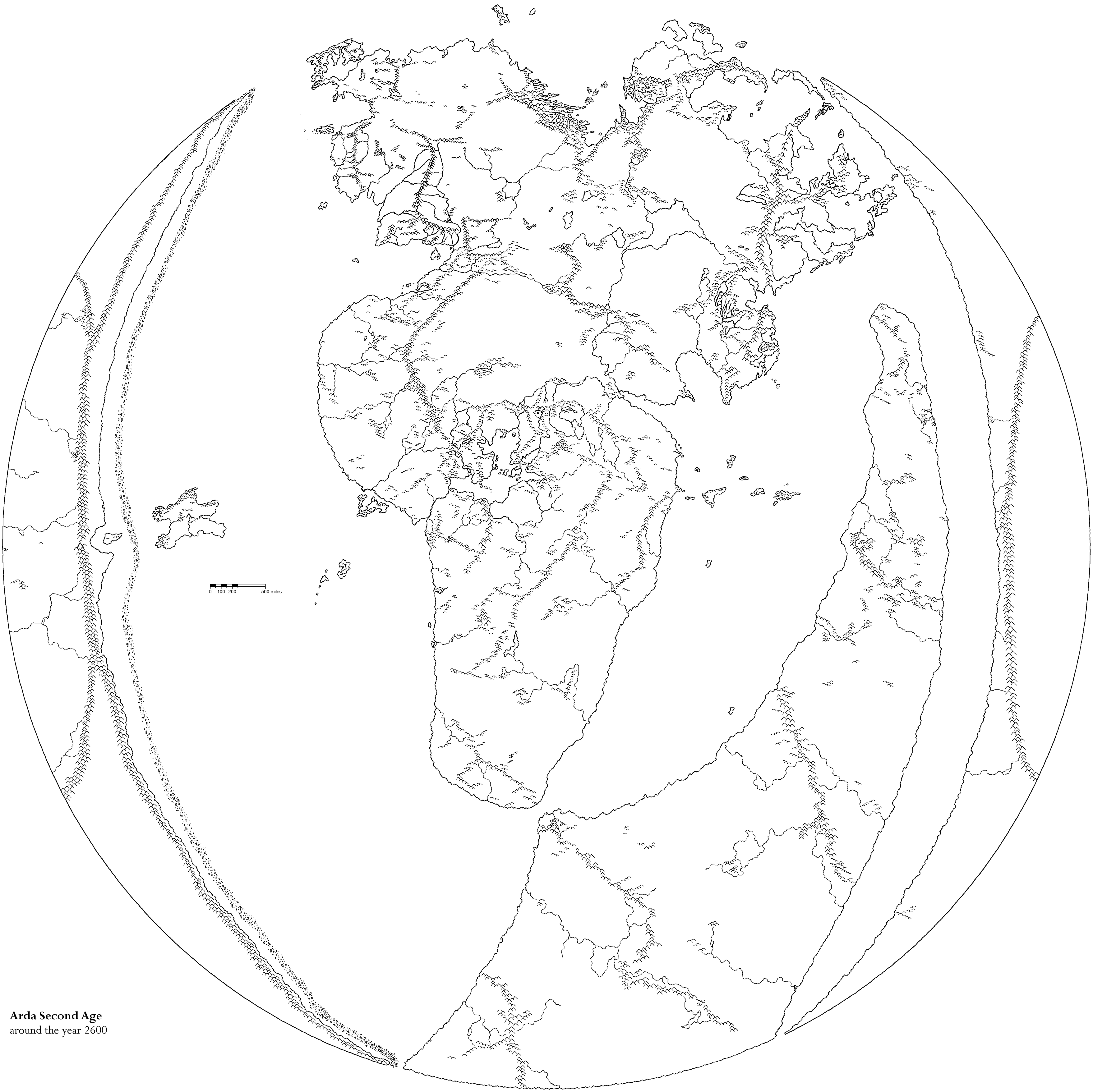


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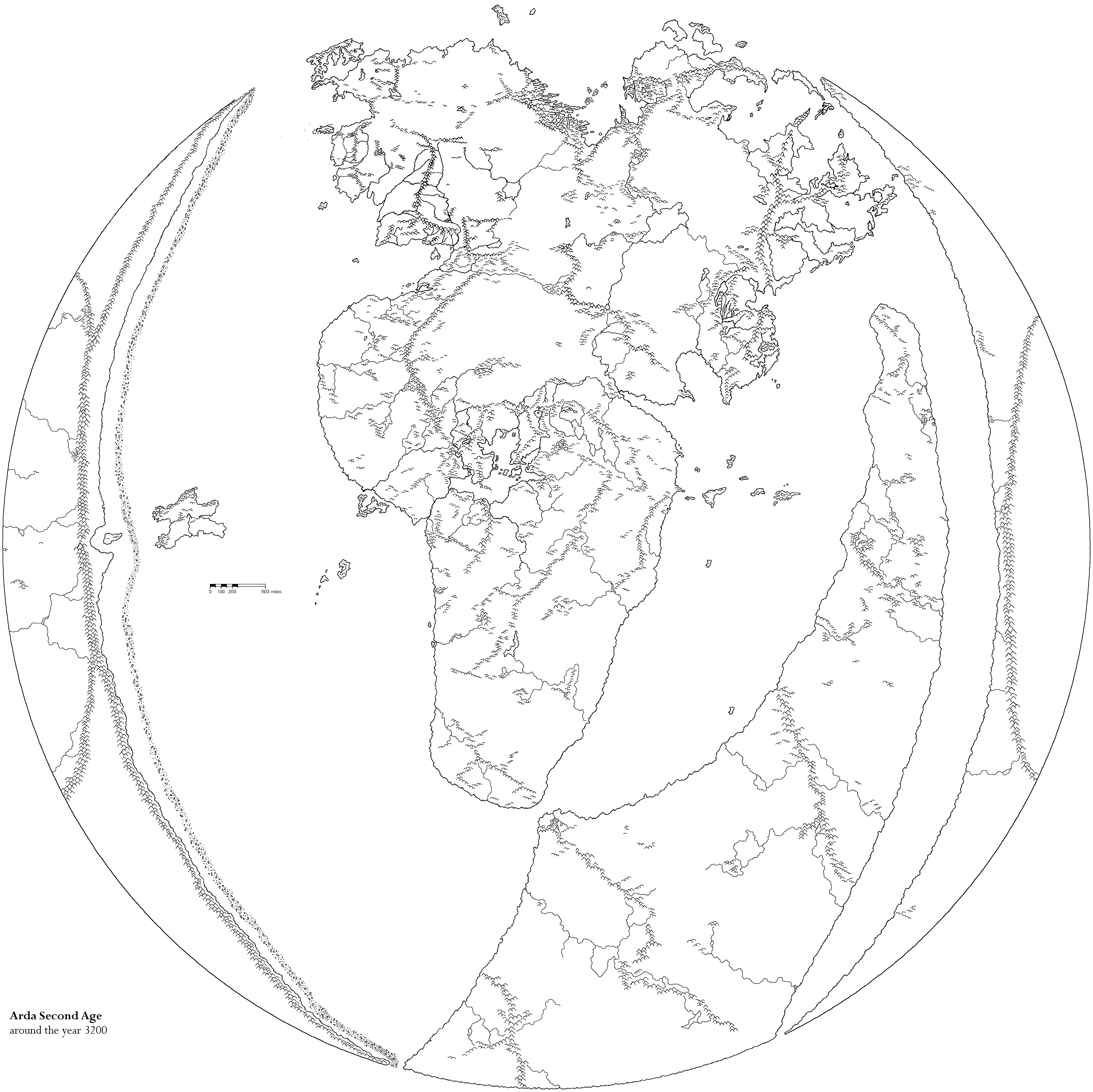
Arda Second Age
around the year 1200



Arda Second Age
around the year 2000



Arda Second Age
around the year 2600



Arda Second Age
around the year 3200



Arda in the Third Age
overlaid with Second Age 3200



0 100 200 500 miles