

EDGE OF THE WILD

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FROM THE EDITOR:

Greetings! Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of *Edge of the Wild*!

In keeping with Middle-earth custom—in which the summer solstice marks Midsummer—we hold early February to be the beginning of Spring, even though the weather may still be wintry for many of us!

As this is the time of year in which the chief events of the War of the Ring occurred—"the main action begins in autumn and passes through winter to a brilliant spring: this is basic to the purport and tone of the tale" (Letter 210)—we felt it would be appropriate to take a more martial focus this issue, and explore aspects of life in the southern kingdom of Gondor. We hope you will find the following articles as enjoyable to read as they were for us to produce!

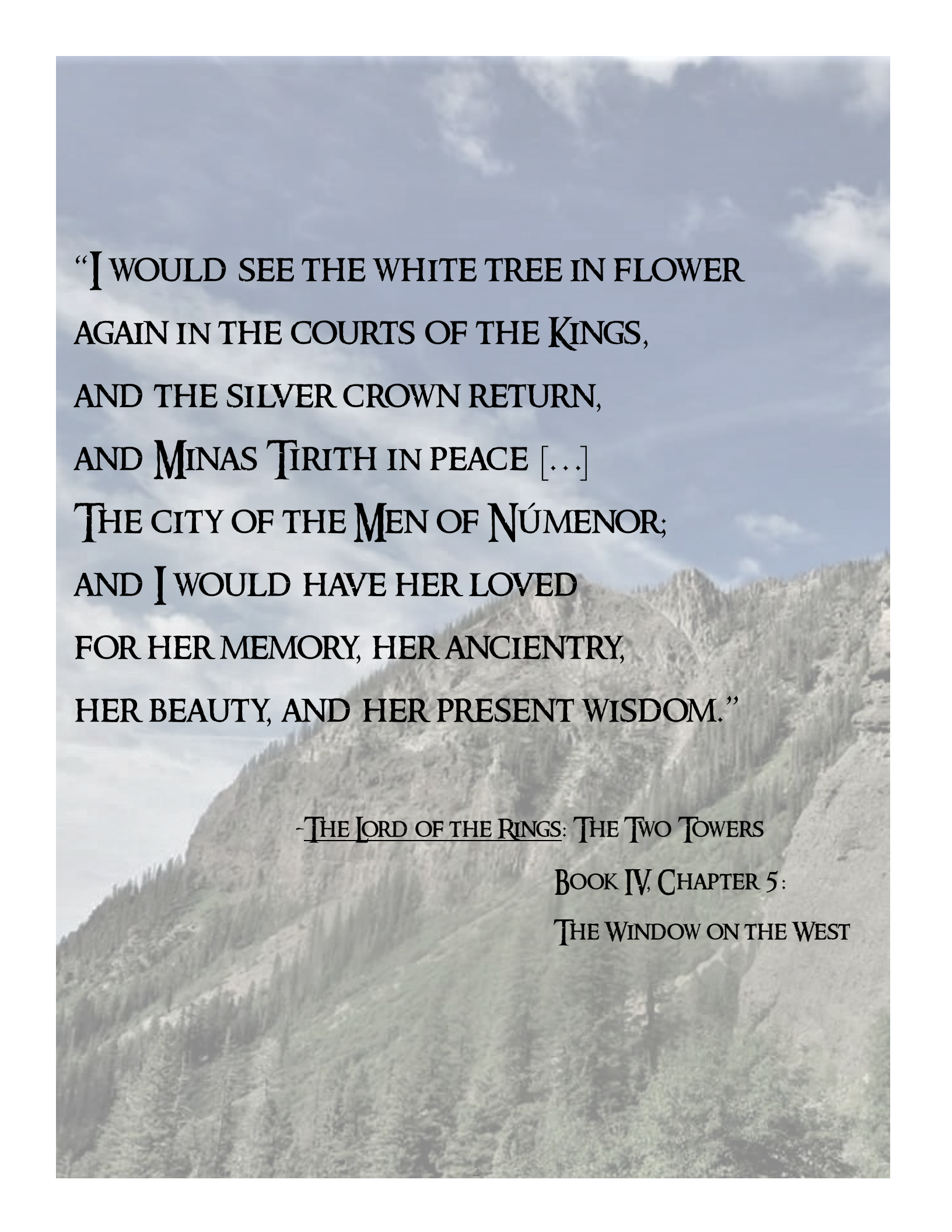
Thank you for reading!

-A. Hollis

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“I WOULD SEE THE WHITE TREE IN FLOWER
AGAIN IN THE COURTS OF THE KINGS,
AND THE SILVER CROWN RETURN,
AND MINAS TIRITH IN PEACE [...]
THE CITY OF THE MEN OF NÚMENOR;
AND I WOULD HAVE HER LOVED
FOR HER MEMORY, HER ANCIENTRY,
HER BEAUTY, AND HER PRESENT WISDOM.”

-THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

BOOK IV, CHAPTER 5:

THE WINDOW ON THE WEST

PICK A PERSONA: GONDOR

A. HOLLIS

In this installment, we shall examine the possible livelihoods and occupational personas available to a Man of the southern kingdom. As was the case with Rohan (see *Edge of the Wild* Volume 2, Issue 2), unfortunately the wartime visit results in a somewhat less-than-complete view of Gondor's economy, but we will do what we can to flesh it out. (All references from The Lord of the Rings Book V:Chapter 1 unless otherwise noted).

-As its name (*Gond+dor*—‘stone-land’) suggests, this realm is known for stonework—not only the seven circles of Minas Tirith, but the Rammas Echor, the Great Bridge of Osgiliath, the Argonath, “the seats of Lhaw and Hen, and the great Stair beside the falls of Rauros” (1); in fact, the Drúedain even call Gondorians “Stonehouse-folk” (2). From this, I believe a Gondorian **Mason** or **Stonecarver** could still find plenty of work, even in its days of decline in the late Third Age.

-The presence of the Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith (3) make quite clear that an **Herbalist** or **Healer** would be able to put practical knowledge to good use, likely not only in the fortress-city but in the Outlands as well.

-On the opposite hand, a more morbid profession suggested by the text is that of an **Embalmer**, whose work does not appear to be limited to the Numenorean period, as Denethor makes a point of *not* sending for them when he makes his pyre (4).

-As a repository of long-held knowledge, Minas Tirith might be a site of ‘pilgrimage’ for “seekers after ancient learning” (5)—those we

might today call **Scholars**, but who Tolkien more often calls **Lore-masters** (6). Perhaps Denethor's hoard of records might even require a dedicated **Archivist**? Another closely-related occupation suggested by the text is that of **Scribe**, such as the King's Writer Findigil, responsible for compiling the various volumes of the Red Book (7).

-As with any center of population, Gondorian towns and cities would likely contain inns for travelers to stay, and therefore **Innkeepers** who would manage them; we know that Dol Amroth had at least one inn (8), and in Minas Tirith was found the ‘Old Guesthouse’.

-Within the first circle of Minas Tirith was found the **Lampwright's** Street, and lamps and lanterns are often referred to while in the city. While no examples are described in detail, this would make an excellent archeological research-based addition to one's personal!

-Among the southern fiefs (at least) common **Fishermen**—working singly or as a crew—were known to operate, specifically near Dol Amroth (9) and the Anduin delta. If you have an interest in boating, angling, or learning net-weaving, this might be the impression for you!

-Given that Gondor is (besides Rohan) the only other culture in the late Third Age with a dedicated military of sorts, it seems entirely logical that it would be home to many **Smiths** or **Armors**; and we are twice told that Rohan's military was supplied with armor from Gondor (10). In addition, archery is widely practiced in the kingdom—witness not only Faramir's few hundred rangers, but the fief of Blackroot sending 500 bowmen to the defense of Minas

Tirith. Surely Gondor has no shortage of **Bowyers** or **Fletchers**!

-Two military-adjacent functions that would be interesting to see interpreted are that of **Errand-rider** and **Beacon-warden** (11), both responsible in their own way for speeding aid from Rohan or the more distant provinces.

-As with the other Mannish cultures, there is always the old standby persona: “**Hunters** and **Herdsmen**”, such as those from the distant Anfalas, or the more alpine White Mountains, where men hike with iron-shod walking sticks (12). For a more cosmopolitan **Farmer** impression, remember that the Pelennor Fields were not the featureless plains of Peter Jackson’s misinterpretation, but were “dotted into the distance with farmsteads and little walls, barns and byres”.

-For those more focused on crafts, several cottage industries are suggested. It seems that utilitarian tableware would include “wooden platters and cups”, “turned box-wood, smooth and clean”, or “of glazed brown clay”, as made by a skilled **Potter** or **Turner** (13). Spoons, at least for commoners, were of wood (14).

-We also know that Gondorian **Woodwrights** were fond of using the black wood of the *lebethron* tree for everything from simple iron-shod walking sticks to the ‘casket’ that held the Crown of Gondor (15). **Basketry** was another basic craft practiced in Gondor, as was, apparently, the making of wagons by **Cartwrights**—not only large, ox- and horse-drawn wains. but also smaller, man-powered handcarts.

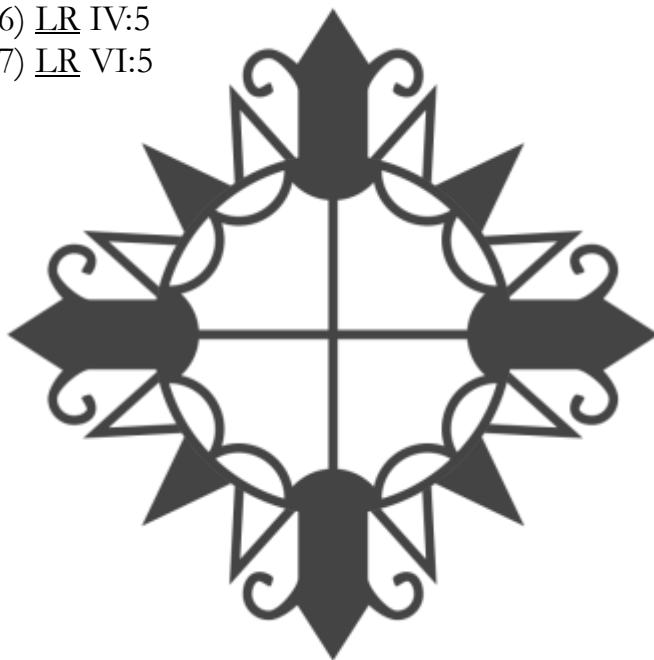
-Some non-ferrous metalwork was also practiced, as bronze, worked by a **Redsmith**, was used to fashion cups and basins, and for upper-tier Gondorians, **Silversmiths** could have been responsible for crafting items such goblets (16), Denethor’s gong, and possibly the trumpets or “horns of silver” which are heard often in

Gondor. Several other **musical instruments** of possible Gondorian make are mentioned, such as viols, flutes, and harps; the latter said to be played most skillfully by those of Dol Amroth (17).



References:

- (1) Lord of the Rings Book II: Chapter 10
- (2) LR V:5
- (3) LR V:8
- (4) LR V:4
- (5) LR IV:5
- (6) LR II:2
- (7) LR Prologue: Note on the Shire Records
- (8) The Adventures of Tom Bombadil #6: *The Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon*
- (9) *ibid*
- (10) LR III:6; Unfinished Tales Part 3, Chapter V: Note 11
- (11) LR V:3; Unfinished Tales III:II:iii
- (12) LR IV:7
- (13) LR IV:5, ATB #6
- (14) ATB #6
- (15) LR VI:5
- (16) LR IV:5
- (17) LR VI:5



BASIC SCABBARD CARVING

G. LAMMERS

In Gondor, we find a surprisingly militaristic, well-equipped city that is clearly under-manned at the time of the siege of Minas Tirith. A well-equipped culture with armories, citadel guards, captains, cavalry...quite an entourage. The mention of scabbards throughout the text at various points helps to corroborate that which we already know, and goes without saying: Have swords? Have scabbards.

There is not, unfortunately, any reference to the making of most crafted items in Middle-earth; chiefly we read of forges, but little else. We are left exclusively to guess at how a scabbard would be crafted. There are various methods known and guessed at from history, including thin layers of wood glued over one another and bound around the blade, steaming and bending the wood, and finally, carving. Carving is the only method that doesn't mold the material to the blade, so the results are adjustable during the process, though ultimately also challenging and easy to mess up. Still, I enjoy the process, and so will walk you through the basic steps of fitting a carved scabbard core to a blade with intended Númenorean/Gondorian roots.

To begin, I use pre-cut milled boards so I have flat surfaces that will glue well. Alternatively, these surfaces could be achieved from split timber with drawknives and sand.

I take the square-cut ends and mark the centers of two ends, to eventually be sandwiched together, and out of each of these ends I hand

-file a space in the eventual shape of the blade's guard:



I cannot carve the relief of the blade into the scabbard itself until I know exactly where the blade will rest, so the guard's shape must come first. Once it is filed accurately into one side, I can trace the shape onto the other board and duplicate the filework, resulting in two matching halves.

Now, the blade can be laid across the board and traced, giving me a guide for carving the space for the blade:



It is easy, with a large gouge, to get too greedy fairly quickly, and carve too deep. After a first

pass, I constantly lay the blade back into the channel and look for the edges to line up with the flat of the board. When I'm getting close, I carve out the other board and begin clamping them together and inserting the blade to test its fit. Early on, it won't go in all the way, but if you're careful, you can get a nice snug fit that won't rattle or bounce in and out.

Completing this fit ends with simply gluing the halves together and letting them sit clamped for a time.



From this point on, the work goes quickly, shaping the exterior of the piece to within relatively close tolerances of the hollow inside. There is always a small bit of luck involved, which again goes hand-in-hand with not rushing and taking off too much.



The exterior work I do with a vintage hand plane, but might also have been done with a drawknife and scrapers.



Further finishing of a scabbard is an intensive process unto itself, but here we have a blade fitted to its own home, able to be stored or carried safely at need. ✨

“The townlands were rich, with wide tilth and many orchards, and homesteads there were with oast and garner, fold and byre, and many rills rippling through the green from the highlands down to Anduin.”

The Lord of the Rings,
Book V: Chapter 1:
Minas Tirith.

The Lore-keepers of Minas Tirith

J. CORCORAN

The shadow of the enemy lengthens, and mankind retreats to the Tower of Guard. Inside the walls, the remnant people of the southern kingdom takes shelter. And with them, they guard a treasure more precious than gold or jewels - the preserved memories of a people.



One would think a man so literary as Professor Tolkien would have lingered with his narrative in the bookish corners of the world. And yet he does not - while he spends long passages in the flowers and fields, he refers to the storehouses of knowledge only in passing.

Nonetheless, we can make quite a few inferences from those few lines!

A Hoard Unnamed

We can of course assume histories made up a large part of the archives. Michael Martinez extrapolates from Tolkien's own framing device of the *Red Book of Westmarch*.¹ Mr. Martinez discerns there the existence of "maps, genealogies, annals, great accounts of ancient wars, and simple scrolls and treatises on matters such as healing, herb-lore, and other mundane areas..."

While less interesting to a storyteller, any city the size of Minas Tirith must necessarily have an archive of laws, tax records, estate ownerships, and so forth. Given the apparently feudal nature of Third Age Gondor, we can likewise assume fealty oaths, family sigils, records

of grants and obligations, and similar records are kept in the archives.

Finally, the makeup of surviving works from elder days in our own real world imply a smattering of legal commentary, biographies, treasured plays, poems, and songs of elder days are preserved. The interested reader may choose to skim the *Loeb Classical Library* for a flavor of what sort of works mankind has treasured enough to preserve through millennia.

A Learned Office

We learn—unsurprisingly—than the Stewards of Minas Tirith are expected to be educated in their people's history. Denethor boasts of his knowledge of the city², and while Boromir seems to have spent little time in study, Faramir is known by the men of the city as a well-read leader.³

Further, we learn the archivists of Minas Tirith are referred to at least colloquially as "lore-masters" - but interestingly that only a handful of them are educated in the ancient language of their Númenorean forefathers- "scripts and tongues have become dark to later men." That

both Denethor and Faramir have at least some understanding of the old tongue seems to be somewhat unusual, even given their station.

Compare this to the medieval era of our own real world, where an educated man until very recently was expected to know Latin, and perhaps Greek. In contrast, even the most learned of Minas Tirith will not necessarily have the tongue of their ancestors.⁴

A Forgotten Tongue

Presumably, those “scripts and tongues” are composed in Adûnaic, the tongue of old Númenor. Adûnaic evolved from the language spoken by men of the House of Hador, allied to the Noldor elves during the War of Wrath. In its earliest days the language was heavily influenced not only by elven tongues, but also that of the dwarves—the latter accounting for its comparatively harsh sounds.

Over the long years of the Third Age, Adûnaic would meld with the tongues of other men in Middle-earth, and by the time of the War of the Ring would have become Westron, the common tongue spoken by the Free Peoples of Middle-earth.

Professor Tolkien spent comparatively little time on Adûnaic, but his son Christopher names this a blessing in disguise, as both history and basic grammar remained fixed in form⁵. Sadly, only a skeleton vocabulary was invented, so the potential for extrapolative works is limited.

Nevertheless, the Professor did compose a verse in Classical Adûnaic which no doubt would have been found in the archives of Minas Tirith: an excerpt from the *Lament of Akallabêth*. Some of Tolkien’s initial work on

the lament can be found as Adûnaic fragments, translated loosely below. Tolkien’s more literal translation is reproduced in the notes section at the end of this article, but for a taste:

adûn izindi batân tâidô ayadda
îdô katha batîna lôkhî
êphalak îdô Yôzâyan
êphal êphalak îdô hi-Akallabêth

Roughly:

*The road west once went straight,
Now all ways are become bent.
Far away now, our gifted land.
Far away now, our fallen land.*

So that is how Adûnaic sounded—what of how it was written? What was this script Denethor spoke of, that had “grown dark” to the eyes of later men?

Hitting the Wall of the Unknown

This is sadly a tricky question, as we must lean heavily on work the Professor did not complete for publication. We have one clue—Pippin’s blade from the Barrow-downs is adorned with “flowing characters of Númenor⁶.” At the least, we have learned that whatever the final vision the Professor held of the Adûnaic characters, they were not the angular Cirth runes.

For quite some time I suspected that the script was a mode of tengwar, perhaps derived from the Beleriand mode of their elven teachers in Middle-earth. As Frodo—a well educated hobbit—could not decipher the Beleriand mode on the Doors of Durin, we could infer that a similar script would have been likewise illegible to speakers of the common tongue in Gondor.

Seeing a reference to “fragments of manuscript written in Númenorean script” in descriptions of the *History of Middle-earth* volume Sauron Defeated I looked for the answer there.

What I found on the listed pages was in fact an early draft of Professor Tolkien’s, in which Old English text is rendered in fairly conventional *Tengwar* characters using rules that would likely be mostly familiar to a Westron reader of the Third Age. Sound values appear generally unchanged from their standard meanings, although the vowel positioning follows the Quenyan mode.

Is this then what the Professor intended when he referred to the ancient script of the Númenoreans in the *Lord of the Rings*? The works were being developed largely contemporaneously, so it is possible.

A detailed reading of Sauron Defeated adds a complication however, as buried in a footnote is the line “*the texts seem to speak of the Adûnaic script as being only invented after they had dwelt some little time in the island.*”⁷

As the *Tengwar* characters long pre-date Númenor in published canon, we have hit an impasse. Did by “invented” the Professor mean merely that the Númenoreans adapted the existing elvish script to the sounds for Adûnaic? Or was it his intention that they have their own script, abandoned without trace sometime in the Third Age, but never found time to develop it? Or perhaps most simply- was his viewpoint character dating the script simply wrong?

Reasoning only from the fact that Adûnaic was not displaced in Eriador but rather evolved into the common tongue, I am inclined to guess that it was the Professor’s last intention that the

same was true of their writing. Thus “Númenorean script” may have been merely a mode of *Tengwar* rather than a unique character set in its own right.

Forced to render something “period” in Adûnaic then, I would choose essentially the Quenya mode, looking to his Old English samples for reference in handling sounds foreign to the elven tongue- but that is a decision I would make with little confidence.

It is an unsatisfying answer, but until and unless more information from the Professor’s notes come to light, we have gone I believe as far as we can on the topic.

The Shape of Memory

Let us then move on to things more concrete: the actual form of the records in the archives of Minas Tirith. Here, at least, we are on firm ground.

Faramir’s quote describing works recorded not only on conventional parchment but graven into stone and precious metals⁸ is particularly interesting, as there are clear historical parallels for these.

Professor Tolkien would naturally have known of Sumerian clay tablets and surviving stone inscriptions of all sorts. The practice of engraving documents into metal was apparently less popularly known of in Tolkien’s time, but even had he not known of archeological finds, such artifacts are referred to in passing in works the Professor would have almost certainly have come across.⁹

These relics of metal and stone seem to have been as exceptional records in Gondor as in our own world however: most records of Minas Tirith appear to be recorded much more conven-

tionally with parchment and ink.

In our own real history, scrolls were the primary means of recording information for most of the Classical era, only giving way to bound books more or less as we know them today around the fourth century AD.

Interestingly, Faramir specifically refers to “parchment” scrolls—not the papyrus of ancient Mediterranean cultures. This does again roughly parallel the historical record: papyrus scrolls were used side by side with those of animal parchment for centuries, but were already being abandoned by the Roman era. Some sources attribute this to its rougher writing surface, others to local extinction in the area where papyrus was commercially harvested. Either way, what scrolls still created in later eras were of parchment.

In Tolkien’s day only a few scraps of papyrus documents were known: more have since been discovered, but they do not seem to have weathered the ages nearly so well as those of parchment. We can likely assume the same of Gondor: perhaps a few papyrus relics of elder days crumble in forgotten corners, but what scrolls remain are of animal material.

The Work of Ages

We can safely assume that transcription formed a part of the lore-masters’ duties: over 3,000 years have passed since the founding of Gondor, and yet we know many records predate even that ancient time, brought by the Faithful fleeing the downfall of Númenor.

In our own world the oldest scrolls known are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which at near 2,000 years old are incredibly fragile. Assuming documents of Middle-earth age similarly, someone must be

preserving their contents before they are lost to time.

What are we to make of the Scroll of Isildur then? Could it be the original, penned by Isildur himself, kept intact by some elder magic? Or perhaps might it be a copy, penned only a few hundred years ago by some long-forgotten scribe?

Without direct evidence, I tend to hold to the “copy” theory. That said, we know Narsil—a relic of the First Age—was still actively being carried by Aragorn thousands of years after its forging, so we cannot categorically rule out the survival of other ancient artifacts across millennia. Perhaps Gandalf did indeed hold in his hands a scroll penned by Isildur himself.

The Gondorian Persona

We can reasonably assume that the average citizen of Minas Tirith would not have access to the archives of the city: even Gandalf finds himself “less welcome” and is permitted access to the materials only “grudgingly.” While it is possible Gandalf has merely worn out his welcome, his account implies the cold reception to his request was more general.

Nonetheless, some few must spend their lives in those archives. A lore-master of Minas Tirith would provide quite an interesting persona option! What better choice for the bookish Tolkien fan with a passion for combing through his more obscure notes and drawings?

... and thankfully perhaps, one needn’t even learn Adûnaic.



Associated Text I:

Gandalf at the Council of Elrond

"In former days the members of my order had been well received there, but Saruman most of all. Often he had been for long the guest of the Lords of the City. Less welcome did the Lord Denethor show me then than of old, and grudgingly he permitted me to search among his hoarded scrolls and books.

"If indeed you look only, as you say, for records of ancient days, and the beginnings of the City, read on!" he said. "For to me what was is less dark than what is to come, and that is my care. But unless you have more skill even than Saruman, who has studied here long, you will find naught that is not well known to me, who am master of the lore of this City."

"So said Denethor. And yet there lie in his hoards many records that few now can read, even of the lore-masters, for their scripts and tongues have become dark to later men. And Boromir, there lies in Minas Tirith still, unread, I guess, by any save Saruman and myself since the kings failed, a scroll that Isildur made himself..."

LR II:2 The Council of Elrond.

Associated Text II:

Faramir on the lore of Gondor

"We in the house of Denethor know much ancient lore by long tradition, and there are moreover in our treasures many things preserved: books and tablets writ on withered parchments, yea, and on stone, and on leaves of silver and of gold, in divers characters. Some none can now read; and for the rest, few ever unlock them."

LR IV:5 The Window on the West

Associated Text III:

Beregond describes Faramir

"...things may change when Faramir returns. He is bold, more bold than many deem; for in these days men are slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as he is, and yet a man of hardihood and swift judgement in

the field. But such is Faramir."

LR V:1 Minas Tirith

Associated Text IV: Adûnaic Fragments:

kadô Zigûrun zabathân unakkha

"and so [Sauron] he came humbled"

Êruhînim dubdam ugru-dalad

"[the Children of Eru] fell under shadow"

Ar-Pharazônun azaggara Avalôiyada

"[Ar-Pharazôn] was warring against [the] Powers"

Bârim an-Adûn yurahtam dâira sâibêth-mâ

Êruvô

"Lords of [the] West, they rent [the] Earth with assent from Eru"

azrîya du-phursâ akhâsada

"that [the] seas should gush into [the] chasm"

Anadûnê zîrân hikalba

"Númenor the beloved she fell (down)"

bawîba dulgî

"winds (were) black"

balîk hazad an-Nimruzîr azûlada

"seven ships of Elendil [went] eastward"

agannâlô burôda nênud

"[the] death-shadow [is] heavy on us"

zâira nênud

"longing (is) on us"

adûn izindi batân tâidô ayadda

"[the] road west once went straight,
(lit.) west straight road once went"

îdô katha batîna lôkhî

"now all ways (are) bent"

êphalak îdô Yôzâyan

"far away now (is) the Land of Gift"

êphal êphalak îdô hi-Akallabêth

"far far away now (is) She-that-hath-fallen"

Sauron Defeated, Part 2, pp 311-312.

Footnotes:

¹ Martinez, Michael. The Lost Books of Arnor and Gondor.

<https://www.xenite.org/special/tolkien/findegil/the-lost-books-of-arnor-and-gondor/>

² *“...you will find naught that is not well known to me, who am master of the lore of this City”*

The Lord of the Rings, Book II Chapter 2: The Council of Elrond.

³ *“...a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as he is..”*

LR, V:1: Minas Tirith.

⁴ *“there lie in his boards many records that few now can read, even of the lore-masters, for their scripts and tongues have become dark to later men.”*

LR II:2: The Council of Elrond.

This is further explained in *The History of Middle-earth* Volume 12: The Peoples of Middle-earth: Part 2, Ch 10, *Of Dwarves and Men*:

“The ancient Adûnaic of Númenor became worn down by time - and by neglect. For owing to the disastrous history of Númenor it was no longer held in honour by the 'Faithful' ... [They], therefore, used Sindarin ... Adûnaic was abandoned to unheeded change and corruption as the language of daily life, and the only tongue of the unlettered...”

This deliberate choice no doubt accounts for the relative rarity of scholars of Adûnaic in Gondor vs. those of Latin and Greek in our own world.

⁵ *“Had he returned to the development of Adûnaic ... [the work] would doubtless have been reduced to a wreck, as new conceptions caused shifts and upheavals in the structure ... 'Incompletion' and unceasing change, often frustrating to those who study these languages, was inherent in this art. But in the case of Adûnaic, as things turned out, a stability was achieved, though incomplete: a substantial account of one of the great languages of Arda.”* Christopher Tolkien, Sauron Defeated, pp 439-440.

⁶ *“...the flowing characters of Númenor glinted like fire upon the blade.”*

LR V:10: The Black Gate Opens.

⁷ Footnote 6, “Lowdham’s Report on the Adunaic Language” - *Sauron Defeated*: Part 3, Ch 6, p. 433.

⁸ *“many things preserved: books and tablets writ on withered parchments, yea, and on stone, and on leaves of silver and of gold, in divers characters.”*

LR IV:5: The Window on the West.

⁹ Plutarch’s account of Alexander mentions a brass plate bearing a prophecy washing forth from a stream, and 1:Maccabees describes a copy of legal declarations engraved onto tablets of bronze and stored in a treasury for safe keeping.

Mormons have understandably gone to great lengths documenting known instances of ancient records kept on metal tablets—a particularly good survey is William J. Hamblin’s article “Sacred Writing on Metal Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean”(<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol19/iss1/8>).

While some of the exemplars were found well after Tolkien’s completing *Return of the King*, enough references predate his writing that we can be confident he was familiar with the practice.

CREATING A CONJECTURAL GONDORIAN BOARDING AXE

E. MEULEMANS OF MEULEURGY

The maritime heritage of Gondor is deep and old, beginning with its founding by Elendil and the Faithful who sailed to its shores in SA 3319, and reaching its peak under the four great Ship-kings, “who built navies and extended the sway of Gondor along the coasts west and south of the Mouths of Anduin” (1). The first of these Ship-kings was Tarannon, the twelfth king of Gondor (TA 830-913), who took the name “Lord of the Coasts.” His nephew, Eärnil I, succeeded him, and it was he who “repaired the ancient haven of Pelargir, and built a great navy. He laid siege by sea and land to Umbar, and took it, and it became a great harbour and fortress of the

power of Gondor” (2). Ciryaher Hyarmendacil I (TA 1015-1149) was the last of the Ship-kings, though a substantial fleet must have been maintained until Eärnur's time (TA 1928-2050), for when he came to the Grey Havens it is said that “so great in draught and so many were his ships that they could scarcely find harbourage” (3). Afterwards, Gondor's naval might diminished, but continued to exist in some state as needed to defend against foes from the sea.

A frequent feature of naval warfare in this age of sail are boarding actions, whereby a vessel is taken through force of arms with one crew directly engaging the other. A great virtue of boarding is





Tuor, who begat Eärendil the Mariner, who in turn begat Elros, the first king of Númenor (5). Correspondingly, this progression represents the transition between the Second and Third Age, highlighting the era of the Ship-Kings and the fullest extent of Gondorian naval power.

This type of construction also permits some musings from a production standpoint. The blades and backspikes can be produced simply, using a minimum of material, then married to the bronze in an expedient fashion, en-masse, suitable for supplying a large navy. While the various materials and processes complicate the supply chain somewhat, this is offset by a large and organized power structure such as Gondor afforded, while the simplification of each step and the conservation of

that it allows for the capture of a ship rather than its destruction, and being as they are of immense value, the taking of a prize is often a desirable outcome! In the hands of both attacking and defending crews, a boarding axe is a valuable tool. Not so large and heavy as a full size axe, but bigger than a hatchet, it is not only a fearsome melee weapon but with its broad blade can sever stout ropes and cleave through obstacles. The backspike can be used to latch onto wooden surfaces or employed as a prybar, while both sides may aid in retrieving lines and other items floating in the water, or clearing the deck of debris.

This particular interpretation of a boarding axe is unorthodox, having a blade and backspike of steel, but cast-in-place to a bronze socket. While bronze is seemingly a scarce word in Tolkien's vocabulary, it has been used here for a few reasons. Firstly, bronze has strong nautical associations due to its corrosion resistance, and as an ancient technology reflects upon the sea-faring traditions of the Númenoreans. The union of these materials symbolizes two of the Seven Gates of Gondolin (4), through which passed

resources - used only where they are most critical – offers advantages in terms procurement and reclamation. Such an arrangement is ideally suited to cottage industries, where component parts may be manufactured far afield or even imported as needed.

What tales may we weave around the journey of a simple axe-head? From whence was its ore mined? Who processed the raw materials? By what means was it transported; overland, or by sea? At the end of its days did it end up in a fisherman's shed, or at the bottom of the Bay of Bel-falas? Just as much as we wonder at the use of a thing, should we consider how it came to be. ✨

References:

- (1-3) Lord of the Rings, Appendix A:I:iv
- (4) Unfinished Tales: Part One: I - *Of Tuor and His Coming to Gondolin*; these Gates were made of wood, stone, bronze, writhen iron, silver, gold, and steel.
- (5) LR, Appendix A:I:I

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ON THE SCOPE OF THE WAR OF THE RING

A. HOLLIS

“But everywhere [Frodo] looked he saw the signs of war. The Misty Mountains were crawling like anthills: orcs were issuing out of a thousand holes. Under the boughs of Mirkwood there was deadly strife of Elves and Men and fell beasts. The land of the Beornings was aflame; a cloud was over Moria; smoke rose on the borders of Lorien.

Horsemen were galloping on the grass of Rohan; wolves poured from Isengard. From the havens of Harad ships of war put out to sea; and out of the East Men were moving endlessly: swordsmen, spearmen, bowmen upon horses, chariots of chieftains and laden wains. All the power of the Dark Lord was in motion.” – The Lord of the Rings, Book II, Chapter 10: *The Breaking of the Fellowship*.

Since this issue goes to press in the early Spring, I felt this would be a good time to touch briefly on the experiences of the Free Peoples in some of the lesser-known battles fought against forces of the Enemy during the War of the Ring. While we of the MERS like to put a focus on believable interpretations of common folk (for whom participation in large-scale armed conflict is generally rare), *if* one has an interest in adding a martial element to their persona, careful reading will show that *all* cultures of the Free People saw battle of one sort or another during the War of the Ring, and so one need not portray an elite Rider of Rohan or swan-knight of Gondor to get a taste of it!

When considering the quote above, it is difficult to say if Frodo is seeing a ‘telescopic’ (or per-

haps more accurately, a *palantír*-ic) view of the present, a foresighted view of the immediate future, or a combination of the two (resulting from the powers of the Seat of Amon Hen, enhanced by the Ring?), it is my belief that Frodo really *is* seeing the state of affairs in Middle-earth on 26 Solmath 3019, as Sauron’s forces muster for his campaigns against both Gondor and Rhovanion.

With this quote—and the full extent of the War and the great diversity of its participants—in mind, it becomes easy to think of it as a kind of ‘World War Zero’, when viewed through the mythic lens of an ancient proto-Europe (this is unsurprising, as Tolkien lived through both the First and Second World Wars).

Consider the following vignettes to illustrate this diversity, yet which have been generally overshadowed by the more cinematic and apocalyptic battles such as the Hornburg or the Pelennor Fields. While we cannot say what Tolkien envisioned, such is the strength of his worldbuilding that we can use such fragments as seeds to deepen our own interpretations.

*The folk of Bree—Big *and* Little—organizing a town guard and defending against emboldened ruffians in the winter of 3018-19 (1).

*Faced with an occupying force of ruffian Men, Fatty Bolger resists and leads a “band of rebels” as part of what we might call *the Hobbit underground* (2).

*Following the Battles of the Fords of Isen, Saruman’s forces scatter southwest and are mopped up by *tribes of cave-men*—surviving Drúedain in the ‘Old Púkel-land’ (3)!

*Levied peasant shepherds and fishermen from

the furthest western reaches of Gondor are called to defend Minas Tirith against an army of orcs, Easterlings, and black-skinned Men from the Far South (4).

*A combined force of Dwarves and Men hold the Gate of Erebor against an army of Easterlings for weeks, losing both of their kings in the process (5).

*The Elves of Lothlorien successfully defend the Golden Wood against three separate invasions from Dol Guldur. When the first attack fails, the orcs pass around Lorien and try to invade northeastern Rohan, only to be defeated by a force of Ents sent from Fangorn and Isengard (6)!

*Frodo's vision also tantalizes us with several possible scenarios in upper Wilderland, ever on the periphery of the narrative. Especially intriguing is the "*deadly strife of Elves and Men and fell beasts*" in Mirkwood, which might refer to: 1) Beornings and Woodmen fighting beasts under the western eaves; 2) Thranduil's elves fighting under the eastern eaves; or perhaps 3) Elves and Men fighting side-by-side? Might Thranduil—after his victory of 15 Rethe—have sent some of his folk west through the forest to reinforce Grimbeorn's side of things?

On the following pages, we have prepared both a table and an eagle's-eye view of Middle-earth to summarize to illustrate the widespread skirmishes and battles that made up the War of the Ring.



References:

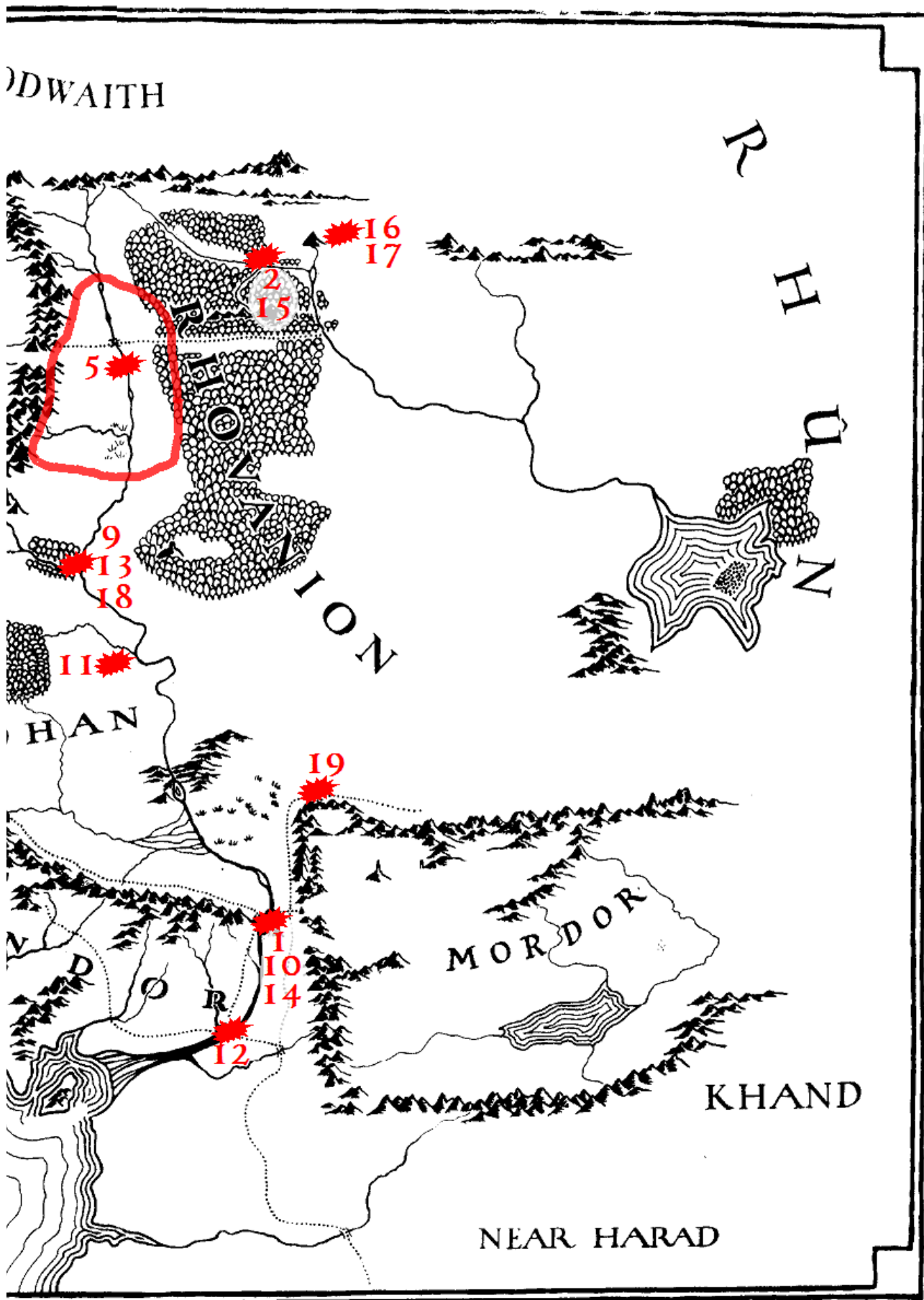
- (1) The Lord of the Rings, Book VI: Chapter 7
- (2) LR VI:8
- (3) Unfinished Tales, The Drúedain, Note 13.
- (4) LR V:1; V:7
- (5) LR Appendix B
- (6) *ibid*; LR V:3



Number on Map	Conflict	Participants, leaders if known	Date: Shire-Reckoning (Gregorian (appx))
1	Fall of Osgiliath	Boromir of Gondor v. Mordor (Nazgul)	20 Forelithe, 3018 (9 June)
2	Attack on Mirkwood	Thranduil of Mirkwood v. Orcs of Wilderland (Gollum's escape)	c. 20 Forelithe, 3018 (9 June)
3	Defense of Bree	Men and Hobbits of Bree v. ruffians	Early 3019
4	1st Fords of Isen	Theodred, Grimbald, Elfhelm of Rohan v. Uruks of Isengard, Dunlendings	25 Solmath, 3019 (14 Feb)
5	Upper vales of Anduin assaulted	Beornings & Woodmen v. mountain orcs, Mirkwood beasts?	C. 26 Solmath-26 Rethe (15 Feb-17 March)
6	2nd Fords of Isen	Grimbold, Elfhelm, Erkenbrand of Rohan v. Uruks of Isengard, Dunlendings	2 Rethe (21 Feb)
7	after Fords of Isen	Drúedain of White Mountains v. retreating Isengarders	c. 26 Solmath (15 Feb), c. 3 Rethe (22 Feb)
8	Battle of the Hornburg	Theoden of Rohan v. Uruks of Isengard; Dunlendings	3-4 Rethe (22-23 Feb)
9	1st assault on Lorien	Galadriel & Celeborn v. orcs of Dol Guldur	11 Rethe (2 March)
10	Siege of Gondor	Minas Tirith and allies v. Mordor	12-15 Rethe (3-6 March)
11	Defense of the Wold	Ents of Fangorn v. routed orcs of Dol Guldur	12 Rethe (3 March)
12	Battle of Pelargir	Dúnedain, Men of Southern Gondor, Army of the Dead v. Corsairs of Umbar and Haradrim.	13 Rethe (4 March)
13	2nd Assault on Lorien	Galadriel & Celeborn v. orcs of Dol Guldur	15 Rethe (6 March)
14	Battle of the Pelennor Fields.	Gondor, Rohan, Dúnedain v. forces of Mordor, Harad, Rhûn	15 Rethe
15	Assault on Mirkwood	Thranduil of Mirkwood v. Dol Guldur	15 Rethe
16	Battle of Dale	Brand of Dale & Dain of Erebor v. Easterlings	15-17 Rethe (6-9 March)
17	Siege of Erebor	Men of Dale & Dwarves of Erebor v. Easterlings	c. 17-30 Rethe (8-21 March)
18	3 rd assault on Lorien	Galadriel & Celeborn v. orcs of Dol Guldur	22 Rethe (13 March)
19	Battle of the Morannon	Host of the West v. Mordor, Harad, Rhûn	25 Rethe (16 March)
20	Battle of Bywater	Hobbits v. Saruman's ruffians	3 Blotmath (23 Oct)







ABOUT US

The Middle-earth Reenactment Society is dedicated to the furthering of J.R.R. Tolkien cultural studies, within the framework of 'historical' reenactment.

We exist to recreate the cultures of Middle-earth in both form and function, and to mold ourselves into peoples fitting to associate with and live as members of these fully-realized cultures.

A part of the middleearthrangers.org Tolkien re-creation community, the Society publishes the online quarterly periodical Edge of the Wild, showcasing new research, methods, materials, and instructional articles, while meeting throughout the year at various sites deemed 'wild' enough to still capture the reality and imagination of the wild lands envisioned within the pages of Tolkien's works.

To subscribe to the newsletter and receive future issues of Edge of the Wild sent directly to your inbox, contact us at Middleearthreenactmentsociety@gmail.com or find us on Facebook as '[Middle-earth Reenactment Society](#)'.

To apply for membership, please send a head-to-toe portrait photo and a detailed description!

At left: an errand-rider of Gondor grooms a fresh mount before setting out again, bringing news to the southern fief of Belfalas.

