



AN ATLAS OF
TOLKIEN

DAVID DAY

A MAP OF MIDDLE-EARTH AND THE UNDYING LANDS.



A COMPOSITE STUDY OF THE LANDS OF ARDA THROUGHOUT THE AGES

An Atlas of Tolkien



To my father, Alan Day.

An Atlas of Tolkien



by David Day



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Preface

An *Atlas of Tolkien* has been created as a geographical and chronological guide for readers of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* who wish to know more of the vast imaginary world in which these books are set. It is also meant as a useful compass to encourage those who wish to navigate the somewhat deeper waters of *The Silmarillion* and Tolkien's many other posthumously published texts.

This *Atlas* is a compilation of specially commissioned and created art from some of the most talented fantasy artists of the past four decades. It began with the enormous investment in original full-colour art exclusively commissioned for the publication of *A Tolkien Bestiary* (1979) as the first ever fully-illustrated reference work on JRR Tolkien. Subsequently, new original artwork was created for *Tolkien: the Illustrated Encyclopedia* (1992) and for *The World of Tolkien: the Mythological Sources of Lord of the Rings* (2002).

And now, this new *Atlas* – whose conception is due to the vision and persistence of Bounty's publisher, Samantha Warrington and its project editor, Anna Bowles – brings all this work together.

In *An Atlas of Tolkien*, I am pleased to be able to reveal this treasure trove of art to a new generation of readers. The *Atlas* contains dozens of pages of maps, chronologies, and genealogical charts; and more than 80 pages of full-colour illustrations of landscapes, cities, events, battles and incidents in the evolution of Tolkien's world from its creation until the aftermath of the War of the Rings.

This *Atlas* also concerns itself with the origin of things: the first appearance of the stars, moon and sun in the heavens; the 'awakening' of the races of Elves, Dwarves, Ents and Men; and the breeding of Orcs, Dragons and Balrogs.

The aim of this *Atlas* is to reveal something of the imaginative sweep and splendour of Tolkien's epic world. It is a vehicle of entry into – and travel through – the complex geography and mythology of Middle-earth and the Undying Lands.

Time is as essential to the mapping of Middle-earth as geographic location. This *Atlas* gives a chronological context for events because in Tolkien's world

maps are only valid if they are located in time as well as place. His world of Middle-earth and the Undying Lands constantly evolves through time.

However, let us make clear just what this *Atlas* is – and what it is not.

An atlas, traditionally, is a book of maps, tables, charts, and illustrations about a specific place or subject. Often it is a road map and illustrated guide for anything from the geography of the world to the anatomy of the human body.

This *Atlas* will give a geographic and chronological context for the narratives of *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, but it will not offer the narratives themselves. For that, one must go to the actual novels.

This *Atlas* locates and illustrates the fair Lúthien Tinúviel singing before the iron crown of Morgoth in the Quest of the Silmaril in the First Age. You will discover where and when in the Third Age, Bilbo Baggins encounters Smaug the Dragon in the Quest of Lonely Mountain. During the Quest of the Ring, you will also learn where – and in which crucial battle – the Witch-king and the Shield-maiden are locked in combat.

However, the *Atlas* will not tell you what happened after Lúthien stopped singing, or how Bilbo fared in his contest with the Dragon. Nor does it reveal who won the duel between the Witch-king and the Shield-maiden.

The *Atlas* is intentionally full of cliff-hangers. It is not – nor is it intended to be – a substitute for reading the actual stories in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or *The Silmarillion*. If you haven't already read the books, you will have the pleasure of discovering what happened next when you do read them.





Throughout the *Atlas*, the outcomes of events and battles are only told if their results relate to the geographical evolution of Arda. The reader will find the *Atlas* is a useful compass in the exploration of Tolkien's world, and it will give a sense of the deep history that motivates actions and deeds – for both good and evil – in all his characters.

With this *Atlas*, you won't need to be an expert in Elvish to find your way around Middle-earth and the Undying Lands. It has been written and organized in a way that is both informative and accessible to the general reader. The book is mostly written for those who have read at least one of the books – or have seen the movies, and would wish to read the books. Or, more commonly, for someone who, having read one book, might wish to have a guide to make the transition to the next book.

One reason for the sustained fascination with Tolkien's novels is to be found in the complex and detailed cosmology behind the stories. However, the cosmology is also one of the obstacles to understanding certain basic ideas in his creation of Middle-earth. In fact, many of these obstacles are geographic and cosmological in nature, and our hope is that some obstacles may be resolved by the overall view provided by this *Atlas*.

In the 1950s, in one of his letters, JRR Tolkien acknowledged that the location of his world often confused people, and he stated: 'Many reviewers seem to assume that Middle-earth is another planet!' He found that a perplexing conclusion. In his own mind, he had not the least doubt about its locality: 'Middle-earth is not an imaginary world. The name is the modern form of midden-erd>middle-erd, an ancient name for the oikoumene, the abiding place

of Men, the objectively real world, in use specifically opposed to imaginary worlds (as Fairyland) or unseen worlds (as Heaven and Hell).’

A decade later, Tolkien gave a journalist a more exact location: ‘the action of the story takes place in the North-west of Middle-earth, equivalent in latitude to the coastline of Europe and the north shore of the Mediterranean ... If Hobbiton and Rivendell are taken (as intended) to be about the latitude of Oxford, then Minas Tirith, 600 miles south, is at about the latitude of Florence. The Mouths of the Anduin and the ancient city of Pelargir are at about the latitude of ancient Troy.’

The trick of Tolkien’s world is not so much the *where*, but the *when*: ‘The theatre of my tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary’. And in another letter: ‘I have, I suppose, constructed an imaginary time, but kept my feet on my own mother-earth for place.’

That imaginary time is a mythical one, just before the first recorded human histories and the rise of any recorded historic civilization. It begins with a new creation myth which results in the making of a flat planet within spheres of air and light. It is inhabited by the godlike Valar, and eventually Elves, Dwarves, Ents and Orcs. According to Tolkien’s own reckoning (in his *Earliest Annals of Valimar*), we are 30,000 years into the history of this world before the human race appears. Another 3,900 years pass before the cataclysmic destruction of the Atlantis-like culture of Númenor, resulting in this mythical world’s transformation into the globed world we know today. The events of the remaining 4,000 years of Tolkien’s annals were then intended to lead ‘eventually and inevitably to ordinary history’.

Tolkien was consciously inventing a cosmology comparable to the Norse, Greek, Finnish, German and Celtic traditions. The enormity of this undertaking is staggering. It would be as if Homer, before writing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, had first to invent the whole of Greek mythology and history. What is most remarkable is that Tolkien actually achieved his ambitions to an extraordinary degree.

The mapping of Tolkien’s world through time presents a considerable challenge that is complicated by a number of quite unique problems. Although Arda is almost a biblical creationist world that does not entertain the idea of Darwinian evolution, it is definitely a world that embraces the ideas of Charles Lyle’s geological evolution – and the later theory of continental drift – with a vengeance. The movement of continents in our primary (real) world took place over hundreds of millions of years; in Tolkien’s world their movement takes place in the relatively rapid measure of many thousands of years.

Still, the mapping of Middle-earth and the Undying Lands requires the charting of a shifting geography over tens of thousands of years. Accepting this, the task of this *Atlas* was to discover a way to present the evolution of Tolkien's world coherently in texts, maps and illustrations. This task was not made easier by the fact that there are aspects of Tolkien's world that are incomplete, inconsistent and at times self-contradictory. Indeed, Christopher Tolkien, in his editing of *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, observed that although geographical and chronological concerns became a central preoccupation in his work, his father ultimately 'never achieved a complete and coherent structure'.

However, the incompleteness, inconsistency and self-contradictory aspects of the Norse and Icelandic mythology, for instance, have not been an obstacle to the many speculative reconstructions of the world of the Scandinavian gods. And just as there have been many manuals, guides and maps of ancient Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian cosmologies, so here with *An Atlas of Tolkien* we have created a geographic and chronological guide to Middle-earth and the Undying Lands.



The hill of Cerin Amroth

Any such undertaking, of course, should require a warning that to greater and lesser degrees, there is an aspect of subjective interpretation involved. We are not dealing with the laws of physics here, but an imaginary literary world.

JRR Tolkien gives numerous systems of measuring time and several hand-drawn maps of Arda in the posthumous *The Shaping of Middle-earth* that are not consistent with those in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In this *Atlas*, we have taken as many clues as we can from his writing to give a consistent overview of the geographic and historic evolution from the creation of his world to the time of the War of the Ring.

To clarify, and give a framework for understanding the vast stretches of time that preceded the events of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as giving them a historic and geographic context, I have chosen to adopt a convention not actually used by Tolkien and speak of the 'Ages of the Sun'. This is to differentiate systems of time and place (at times these systems overlap)

before the appearance of the sun in the heavens. These vast passages of time before the rising of the sun, I have similarly called: ‘Ages of Creation’, ‘Ages of the Lamps of the Valar’, ‘Ages of the Trees of Light’, ‘Ages of Darkness’ and ‘Ages of the Stars’.


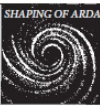
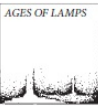

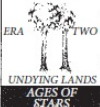


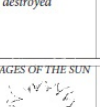

These ages are fairly consistent with Tolkien in his earliest annals account: ‘the First Ages of the World were ended and these are reckoned as 30,000 years or 3,000 years of the Valar.’ And after the rising of the sun, he observes: ‘from this time are reckoned the years of the Sun ... And after came measured time into the World.’

In the years just before the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien wrote that – in his most extravagant imaginings – he hoped others might involve themselves in his world: ‘I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. These cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama.’

Once again, Tolkien achieved those aims to an extraordinary degree: many ‘other minds and hands’ have subsequently been at work. His writing has inspired artists, musicians and dramatic renderings. And as can be observed in this *Atlas*, Tolkien has certainly inspired the artists ‘wielding paint’ who place his tales in a context ‘linked to a majestic whole.’



A CHRONOLOGY OF MIDDLE-EARTH AND THE UNDYING LANDS

CREATION 	Eru the One (‘He that is Alone’)	Timeless Halls fashioned by Atmür create Music of the Atmür	Vision of Ea Creation of the World (Arda)	SHAPING OF ARDA 	YEAR 1 - 1 st VALARIAN AGE Valar and Maiar enter Arda Arda shaped	First War Arda marred Melkor expelled	AGES OF LAMPS 	YEAR 5,000 - 5 th VALARIAN AGE Lamps of the Valar forged Spring of Arda begins	Almaren founded Great Forest of Arda grows	Utumno built Rebel Maiar and demons enter Arda	Lamps and Almaren destroyed Spring of Arda ends
AGES OF TREES ERA ONE 	YEAR 10,000 - 10 th VALARIAN AGE Years of Bliss Valinor founded Trees of the Valar created	Eagles created by Manwë Yavanna visits Middle-earth	Ents conceived by Yavanna Oromë visits Middle-earth	AGES OF TREES ERA TWO 	YEAR 20,000 - 20 th VALARIAN AGE Light for the Stars gathered by Varda	Melían the Maia departs for Middle-earth with other Maiar Spirits	Oromë discovers Elves and brings news to Valar	Valar depart for War of Powers	Chaining of Melkor Peace of Arda begins Summonings of the Valar	Vanyar and Noldor arrive in Eldamar	Tirion founded
AGES OF DARKNESS MIDDLE-EARTH 	Melkor’s dominion over Middle-earth begins Sleep of Yavanna begins Angband built	Balrogs, Vampires, Winged Beasts, Serpents, Great Spiders, Werewolves appear	Dwarves conceived by Aule the Smith	AGES OF STARS MIDDLE-EARTH 	Stars rekindled Elves awakened	Ents awakened Dwarves awakened	Orcs bred Trolls bred Khazad-dûm founded	War of Powers Utumno destroyed	Great Journey of Elves begins	Melían the Maia appears Great Journey ends	Nogrod and Belegost founded Doriath founded by Sindar
Teleri arrive on Tol Eressea	Teleri build first ships and sail to Eldamar	Alqualonde founded	Tengwar alphabet devised by Noldor	Noldor makes first Elven Jewels	Silmariils made Melkor released	Peace of Arda ends Formenos built	Trees of the Valar destroyed First Kinslaying Flight of the Noldor	AGES OF THE SUN UNDYING LANDS 	YEAR 30,000 - 30 th VALARIAN AGE Moon and Sun fashioned by Valar Melían the Maia returns to Valinor	Valar depart for War of Wrath Melkor expelled	
Falathrim ally with Sindar	Dwarves enter Beleriand	Menegroth founded	Orcs driven out of Beleriand	Laiquendi enter Ossiriand	Cirth alphabet devised by Sindar	Cirth Runes adopted by the Dwarves	Melkor and Ungoliant return Sleep of Yavanna ends	AGES OF THE SUN MIDDLE-EARTH 	FIRST AGE OF THE SUN Men awakened War of the Jewels begins	Dragons bred Noldor and Sindar kingdoms destroyed	War of Wrath Angband destroyed War of the Jewels ends
YEAR 31,000 - 31 st VALARIAN AGE Avallone founded Valar create Númenor	Ban of the Valar	Elves of Avallone trade with Númenor	Elves of Avallone bring the Palantiri to Númenor	Númenórean Invasion Change of the World	YEAR 34,000 - 34 th VALARIAN AGE The Long Peace of Valinor begins	Istari chosen from among Maiar Spirits	Istari depart for Middle-earth	Elder ships from Lathlórien and Dol Amroth arrive	Valar reject Sauron’s spirit	YEAR 37,000 - 37 th VALARIAN AGE Ringbearers’ ship arrives Last Elder ship	arrives
SECOND AGE OF THE SUN Lindon and Grey Havens founded by Elves Edain arrive in Númenor	Mordor built by Sauron Elven-smiths found Ereinion	The One Ring made War of Sauron and the Elves Ereinion destroyed and Rivendell founded	Nazgûl appear Númenóreans capture Sauron	Downfall of Númenor First fall of Mordor and Sauron	THIRD AGE OF THE SUN The One Ring lost Easterling invasion begins	Ship-Kings of Gondor conquer Harad Sauron reappears Hobbits appear	Witch-king in Angmar Great Plague Fall of Arnor Balrog in Moria	The One Ring found Uruk-hai and Olog-hai bred Dragons reappear	War of Dwarves and Orcs War of the Ring Final fall of Mordor and Sauron	Ringbearers’ ship departs Dominion of Men begins	Last Elder ship departs

THE ORDER OF EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE AGES

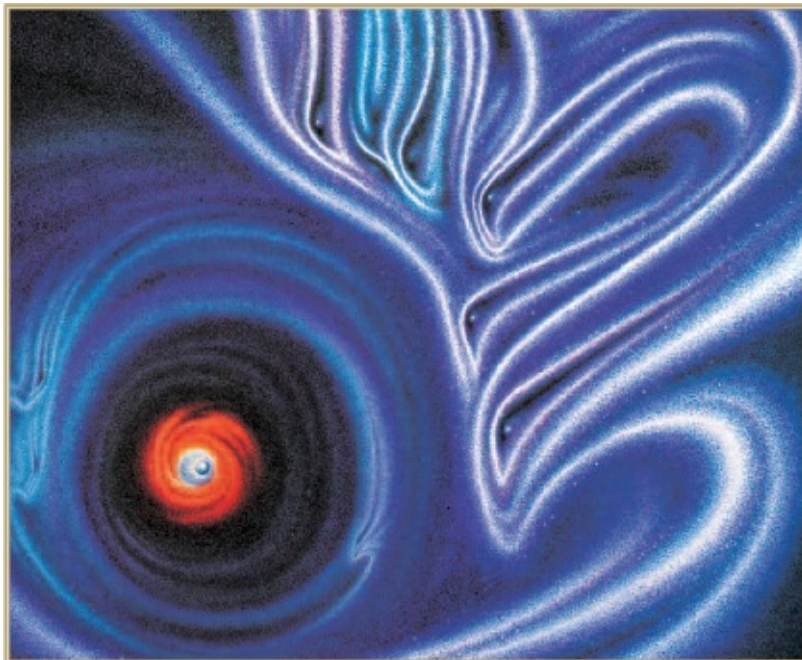


THE CREATION OF ARDA

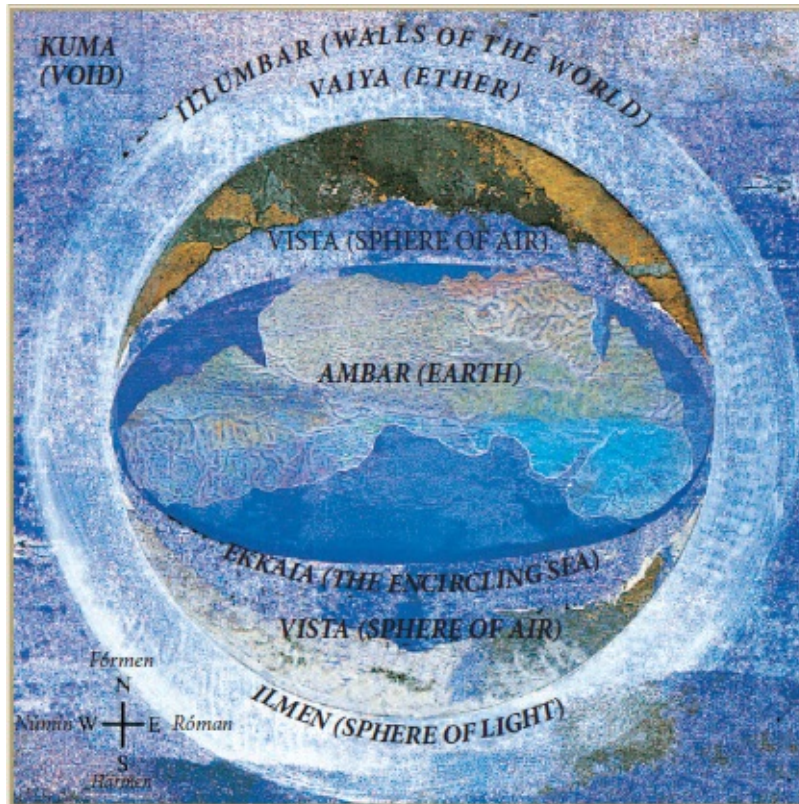


The Vision and Creation of Arda

In the beginning, the great spirits called the Ainur were bidden by Eru, the One, to create a Great Music, and out of the music came a vision like a globed light in the Void. Eru Ilúvatar gave this vision life, and it became Eä, the 'World That Is'. The Ainur looked on it and were amazed and many, for love of this new place, entered it. They became the powers that were named the Valar and the Maiar; Men later thought of them as gods. These were the beings that shaped the World, which was called Arda. Into Arda the Valar and Maiar brought many things of beauty, but also there was strife: one of the mightiest among them rebelled against Ilúvatar and his brethren and there was war.



Arda is formed amid the Timeless Halls



Years 1–5,000

The Beginning of the World

When Arda was first created, the earth was a flat disc enclosed within spheres of air, light and ether. These spheres were sealed within the invisible Walls of the World, and set in the infinite Void. There was one vast supercontinent upon which the Valar, or Powers of Arda, continued the shaping of the world. But one of the Valar revolted and this led to the First War. In the conflict the ideal symmetry of Arda was ruined, and the continent was broken apart.



The Ainur

When all was darkness and a great void, according to the ‘Ainulindalë’, that first book of *The Silmarillion*, there was an omniscient Being who lived alone in the vast emptiness. He was called Eru, the One, or as the Elves would later name him, Ilúvatar.

This was the Being that Tolkien conceived as the source of all creation. Through the ‘Ainulindalë’, Tolkien tells us how the elemental thoughts of Ilúvatar became the race of gods called the Ainur (the ‘Holy Ones’), and through the power of His spirit – the ‘Flame Imperishable’ – Ilúvatar gave the Ainur eternal life.

For this race of gods, Ilúvatar built a dwelling place in the Void, called the Timeless Halls. Here, the Ainur were taught to sing by Ilúvatar and became a vast heavenly choir. Out of the music of these god-like spirits came a holy vision that was a globed world whirling in the Void.

Tolkien’s world of Arda was literally sung into being, and each of the heavenly hosts had a part in its conception, even that one mighty satanic spirit called Melkor who sang of strife and discord. However, the Music of the Ainur simply created a vision; it took the power of the Flame Imperishable to make Eä, the World That Is. Thus, the vision was given substance and reality. And into that world descended those of the Ainur who had the greatest part in its conception and who wished to take a further part in its shaping.





The Timeless Halls were the dwelling place of the Ainur in the Void

This was how Tolkien chronicled the creation of Arda. It is both strangely ethereal and vastly operatic in its conception. Also, it is a kind of double creation, for when the Ainur arrived on Arda, they found it was up to them to shape it.

Although Tolkien tells us that the majority of the Ainur remained with Ilúvatar in the Timeless Halls, he tells us nothing more of them. His histories deal only with those who entered the spheres of the world. Here these godly, bodiless spirits take on more physical manifestations. They become the elements and the powers of nature, but like the Greek or Norse gods they have physical form, personality, gender and kinship with one another. The Ainur who entered Arda are divided into two orders: the Valar and the Maiar – the gods and the demigods.

The Valar numbered fifteen: Manwë, King of the Winds; Varda, Queen of the Stars; Ulmo, Lord of the Oceans; Nienna, the Weeper; Yavanna, the Fruitful; Aulë, the Smith; Oromë, Lord of Forests; Vána, the Youthful; Mandos, Keeper of the Dead; Vairë, the Weaver; Lórien, Master of Dreams; Estë, the Healer; Tulkas, the Wrestler; Nessa, the Dancer; and Melkor, who was later named Morgoth, the Dark Enemy.

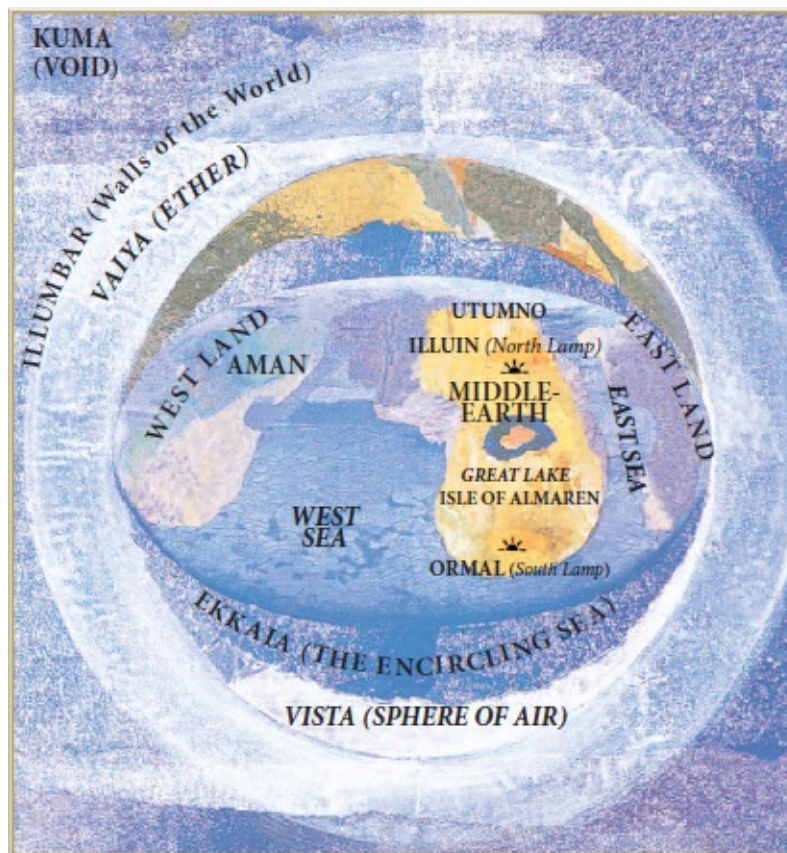
Of the Maiar, there were a multitude, but only a few of these immortals are named in Tolkien's chronicles. Eönwë, Herald of Manwë; Ilmarë, Maid of Varda; Ossë of the Waves; Uinen of the Calm Seas; Melian, Queen of the Sindar; Arien, the Sun; Tilion, the Moon; Sauron, the Ring Lord; Gothmog, Lord of the Balrogs; Thuringwethil, the Vampire; Ungoliant, the Spider; Draugluin, the Werewolf; Goldberry, the River-daughter; Iarwain Ben-adar (Tom Bombadil); and the five wizards – Olórin (Gandalf); Curunír (Saruman); Aiwendil (Radagast); Alatar; and Pallando.

It is only after the world came into being and the Ainur enter into it that the count of time upon Arda begins. For the greater part of Arda's history there was no sun or moon by which to measure time, so Tolkien gives us the chronological measure of Valarian Years, and Valarian Ages. Each Valarian Year, Tolkien tells us, is equivalent to ten years as we know them. And as each Valarian Age contains a hundred Valarian Years, each Age is equivalent to one thousand mortal years. Although there are many overlapping systems and variations in events and dates in Tolkien's writings, there is enough consistency to estimate with some precision that the time elapsing from the Creation of Arda to the end of the Third Age of the Sun (shortly after the War of the Ring) was thirty-seven Valarian Ages, or more exactly 37,063 mortal years.

Within this vast time frame, the first Valarian Ages were spent by the newly arrived powers in the Shaping of Arda. However, even as there was discord in the Music of the Ainur, so when the actual Shaping of Arda began, a host of Maiar spirits, led by that mighty Vala called Melkor, created a great conflict. This was the First War, which led to the natural symmetry and harmony of Arda becoming scarred and torn.

The Great Lamps

In the 'Quenta Silmarillion' we are told that after the First War, the Valar built an idyllic kingdom called Almaren in the Great Lake in the midst of Middle-earth. In the north and the south of Middle-earth they raised two titanic Lamps of Light. However, in the far north, the cruel Vala Melkor raised the Iron Mountains and built his dark kingdom of Utumno. In the ensuing war the Lamps were destroyed, and – in the cataclysm that followed – the Valar fled to the furthest western land of Aman.



Years 5,000–10,000



8



Manwë Sulimo was Lord of the Valar in Arda



The Ages of the Lamps

The 'Quenta Silmarillion' and the later publication of Tolkien's drafts and chronologies in 'The Ambarkanta' and the 'Annals of Valinor' tell us of an idyllic time after the time of Creation and the Shaping of Arda. In the Ages of the Lamps, the Valar filled the world with natural wonders of great beauty and harmony, despite the Marring of Arda during the First War. These Ages were so named because the Valar fashioned two colossal lamps with which to light the world.

It was the Vala called Aulë the Smith who forged these golden vessels, while the Star Queen, Varda, and the Wind King, Manwë, filled them and made them radiant with light. It took the combined powers of the other Valar to raise each up on a mighty pillar, taller by far than any mountain. One lamp was placed in the north of Middle-earth and was called Illuin. It stood in the midst of an encircling inland sea called Helcar. The other was in the south and was called Ormal. It stood in the midst of the inland sea called Ringol.

During the Ages of the Lamps, the First Kingdom of the Valar, on the Isle of Almaren, was built in the Great Lake in the midmost point of Arda. Filled with the beautiful mansions and towers of the Valar and Maiar, it was a wonder to see, and the world was filled with joy and light.

This was an idyllic time that was also called the 'Spring of Arda'. Yavanna the Fruitful brought forth the great forests and the wide meadows, and many gentle and beautiful beasts and creatures of field and stream.

But Almaren was not the only kingdom built in this time. Far to the north, the rebel Maiar spirits once again gathered, and Melkor again entered Arda. In secret, while the Valar rested from their labours, Melkor raised the vast Iron Mountains like a mighty wall across the northlands and built beneath them a dark fortress called Utumno. From that refuge he began to corrupt the work of the Valar, and poisons seeped into the waters and forests. Yavanna's beautiful creatures were twisted and tortured until they became monstrous and filled with a desire for blood.

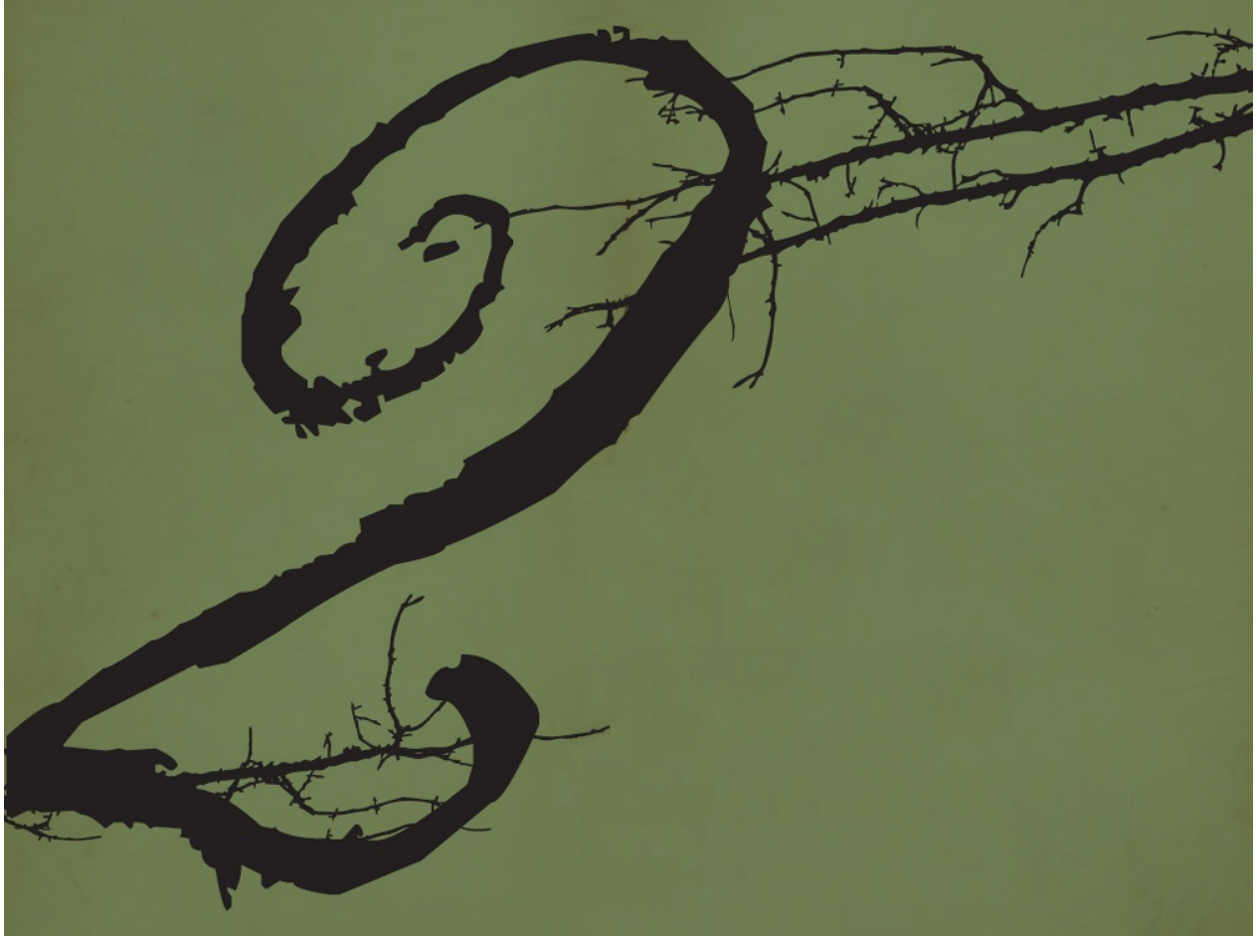
At last when he thought he had grown strong enough, Melkor came forth openly with his wicked host and made war on the Valar. Catching them unprepared, he cast down the mighty pillars of the Great Lamps so the mountains were broken, and the consuming flame of the Lamps spread all over the world. In the tumult, the kingdom of Almaren was totally destroyed.

In this terrible conflict, the Spring of Arda was ended, and the world was once again plunged into darkness, except for the destructive fires of the earth, and the tumult of earthquakes and rushing seas. It required all the strength of the Valar hosts to quell these mighty upheavals, lest the world itself be entirely destroyed. Rather than do battle with Melkor in the midst of such tumult and cause further destruction, the Valar abandoned Almaren and Middle-earth altogether. They went into the furthest west, to the great continent of Aman, which later was called the Undying Lands. So the Ages of the Lamps ended with the Valar making a new kingdom in the West, while all the wrecked lands of Middle-earth were left in thrall to the evil power of Melkor.



The great lamps wrought destruction upon the land as they fell





THE UNDYING LANDS





Years 10,000–20,000

The Ages of the Trees

The Valar built a new kingdom called Valinor on the continent of Aman in the west. Beyond the gates of their city of Valimar they grew the Trees of Light.

These mighty trees filled all the Undying Lands of Aman with a blessed light. Meanwhile, Middle-earth and the rest of Arda was plunged into the Ages of Darkness. Melkor ruled as master of Middle-earth from his heinous realm of Utumno. He also built his second stronghold of Angband, and placed it under the command of his loyal disciple, Sauron.



The trees filled Valinor with radiant light

The Trees of Light

After the destruction of the Great Lamps and the First Kingdom of Almaren, the Valar went west to the continent of Aman, where they built a second kingdom called Valinor, meaning 'Land of the Valar'. There they each took a part of that land and raised mansions and created gardens, but also built Valimar, the 'Home of the Valar', a walled city with domes and spires of gold and silver that was filled with the music of many bells.

On a hill just outside the western golden gates of Valimar, the Valar grew two huge, magical trees. These were the tallest trees that ever grew and were called Laurelin the Golden and Telperion the White. Nearly the size of the Lamps of the Valar, these Trees of Valinor gave off a brilliant glow of gold and silver light. The waxing and waning of each Tree's blossoming gave a means by which the days might be measured, and their light nourished all who lived within the glowing presence.

We learn from Tolkien's early drafts of the chronicles, in the 'Annals of Valinor', that the Ages of the Trees began one thousand Valarian Years after the creation of Arda; that is, the Tenth Valarian Age, or ten thousand mortal years after the Creation. We also learn that the Ages of the Trees were nearly twenty Valarian Ages, or twenty thousand mortal years, in duration.

There is, however, a complicating factor in Tolkien's chronology of Arda because the Ages of the Trees apply only to the Undying Lands. We are told that upon arriving in Aman, the Valar raised up a great wall in the form of the Pélóri Mountains to keep out Morgoth and all his minions. These mountains, the tallest in the world, did indeed protect Valinor from invasion, but they also shut in the Light of the Trees.

Consequently during the Ages of the Trees we are dealing with parallel systems of time. So, while the Undying Lands were basking in the glory of the Trees, Middle-earth underwent two epochs, each lasting ten thousand mortal years: the Ages of Darkness and the Ages of the Stars.

In the Undying Lands, the Ages of the Trees were divided into two eras. The

first ten Valarian Ages, or ten thousand mortal years, of the Ages of the Trees were known as the Years of Bliss in Valinor. During this time the Valar and Maiar prospered. The Eagles were created by Manwë, the Ents were conceived by Yavanna, and the Dwarves were conceived by Aulë. Blissful indeed were the times in Valinor, while beyond the walls of the Pélóri Mountains, Middle-earth endured the terror and evil of Melkor's dominion during the Ages of Darkness.

During the next ten Valarian Ages, we learn much more of events in Valinor and Middle-earth. This second era of the Ages of the Trees was called the Noontide of the Blessed, but upon Middle-earth it was called the Ages of the Stars. This was the time when Varda, the Queen of the Heavens, rekindled the stars above Middle-earth and caused the Awakening of the Elves.

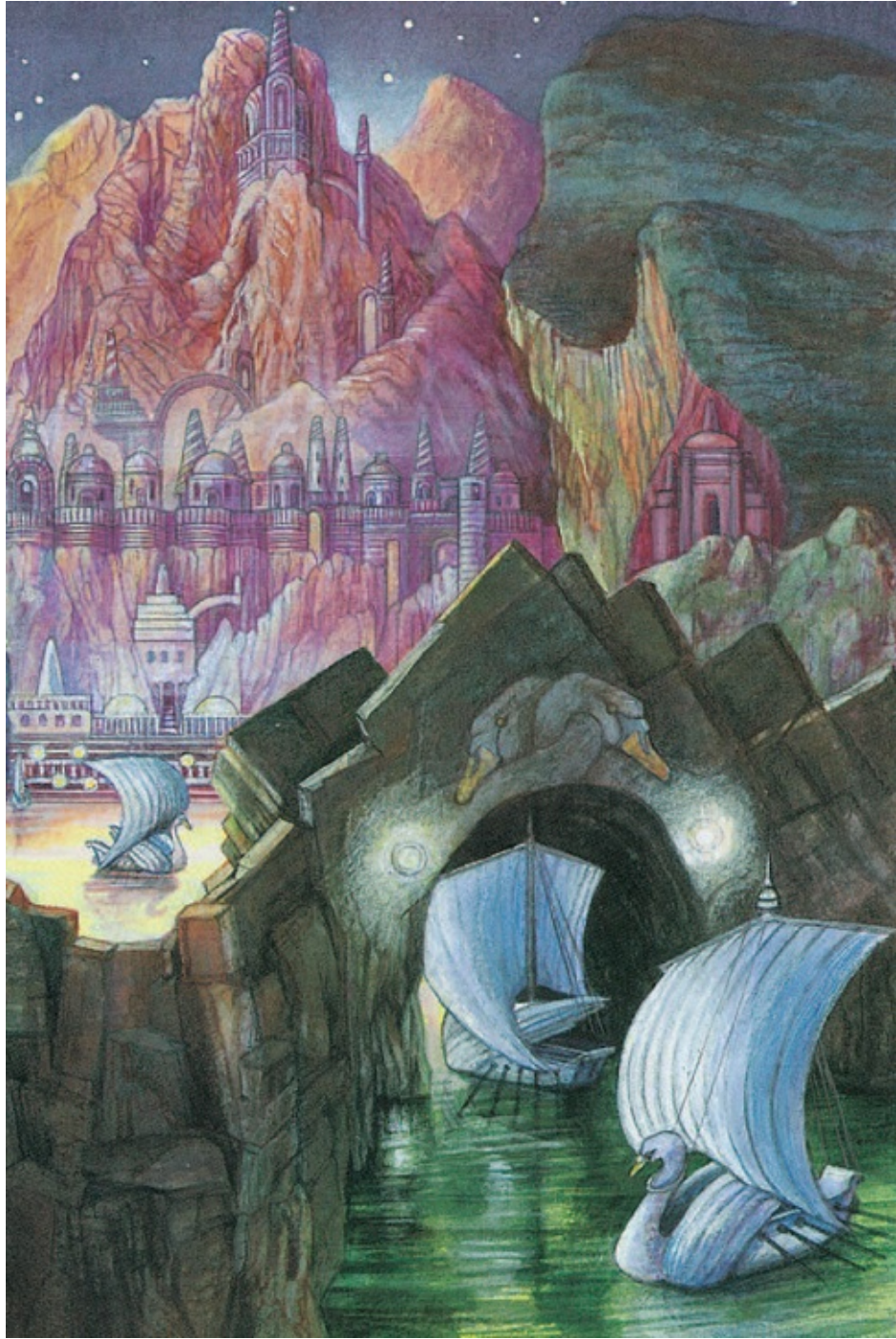
In time, when news reached the Undying Lands of Melkor's attempts to slay and corrupt the Elves, the Valar made a council of war. The Valar and the Maiar came into Middle-earth and drove Melkor's legions wailing before them.

This was called the War of Powers and in that war were many battles and duels wherein the Valar utterly destroyed Utumno. Thereafter, Melkor was held captive in Valinor and bound with unbreakable chains. This time was known as the Peace of Arda, and lasted through most of the remaining Ages of the Trees in Valinor and Ages of Stars on Middle-earth.

These were the great years for the Elven race, for without the hateful wrath of Melkor, these chosen people prospered and grew ever more powerful. After the War of Powers, the Valar summoned the Elves to come and live with them in the Land of Light. This was the mass migration called the Great Journey of the Eldar, those Elves who answered the call of the Valar.

The Great Journey was the theme of many an Elven song, for the time was long, and the Eldar were divided into diverse races. Those who reached the Undying Lands were of three kindreds: the Vanyar, the Noldor and the Teleri. For those chosen people, the Valar gave a part of the Undying Lands called Eldamar, the 'Elven-home', and it was a wonder to behold. Many were its mansions, but the finest were in the Vanyar and Noldor capital of Tirion, and the Teleri cities of Alqualondë on the coast and Avallónë on the Isle of Tol Eressëa.





The Haven of Alqualondë was home to the white ships of the Teleri

The Haven of Alqualondë

On the shores of the Undying Lands the Teleri built Alqualondë, which is ‘haven of swans’, and the ships of these Elves were like swans with eyes and beaks of jet and gold. Beneath the arch of sea-carved stone that is the gate of Alqualondë, the Teleri set sail their swan ships, sing fair songs, and listen to the murmuring sea on the shore.



The fair city of Tirion was home to the Noldor and the Vanyar

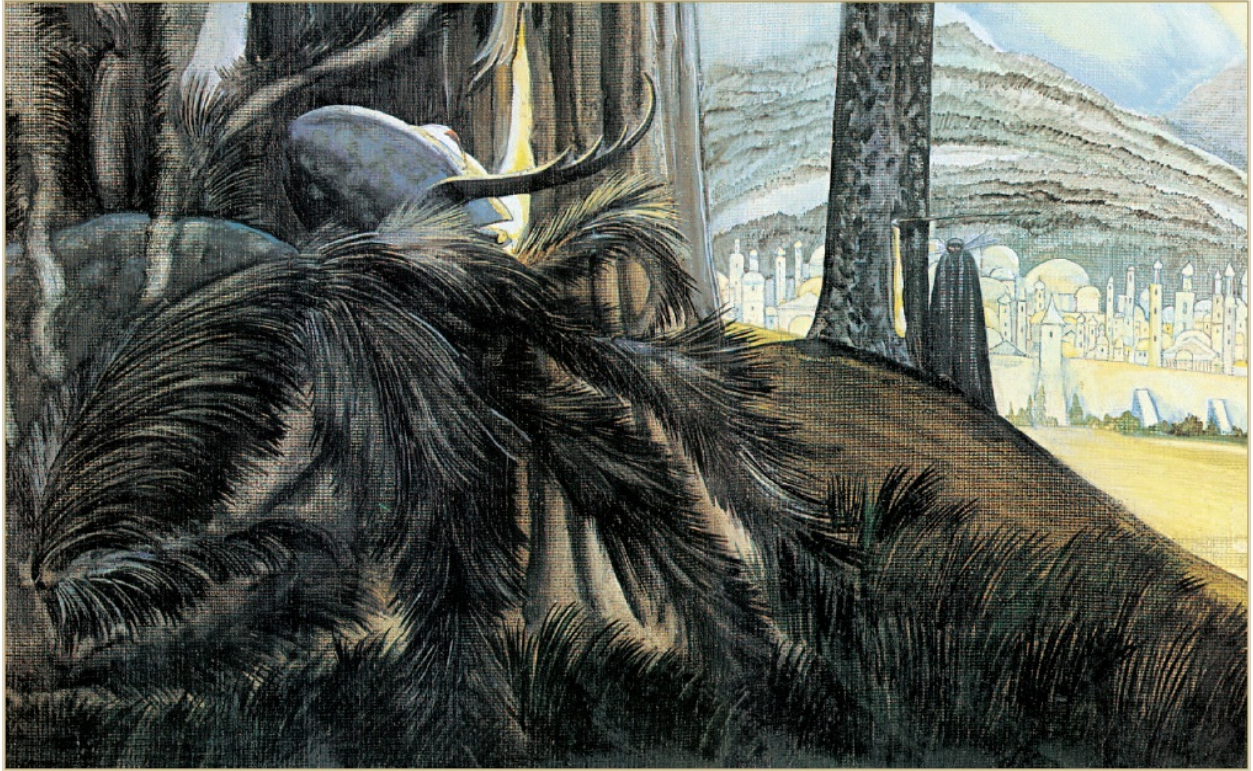
The City of Tirion

In the Undying Lands, the Noldor and Vanyar Elves built the first and greatest city in Eldamar. This was Tirion of the white towers and crystal stair, and it was set on the hill of Túna in Calacirya, the Pass of Light. The city was placed so that not only could the Elves live in the Light of the Trees and look out on the sea, but also, from under the shadow of Túna and the tall towers, could view the glittering stars that are so dear to their hearts.



The Darkening of Valinor

After the Ages of Chaining, Melkor came before the Valar to be judged. He seemed to have changed, and claimed to have repented, so Manwë, the Lord of the Valar, ordered his chains to be removed. But the Valar were deceived for Melkor only *seemed* to be fair and good; in secret he plotted their downfall. First he sowed strife among the Elves, and then in alliance with the Great Spider Ungoliant he made open war on the Valar. He came with Ungoliant to the Trees of the Valar and struck them with a great spear, and the Spider sucked the light and life from the Trees so they withered and died. All of Valinor was made hideously black with the Unlight of Ungoliant, and Melkor laughed with villainous joy because, for a second time, he had put out the great Lights of the World.



Melkor and Ungoliant looked with hatred upon the light of the Valar

The Flight of the Noldor

After the destruction of the Trees of the Valar, Melkor slew Finwë, the Noldor king, and took the Silmarils from him. In great wrath the Noldor pursued the evil Vala, and, despite the warning by the Valar, they made their way back to Middle-earth. Some went in ships, which they took from the Teleri, but a great number, led by Fingolfin, crossed Helcaraxë, the Grinding Ice. This was the northern narrow gap of sea and ice between the Undying Lands and Middle-earth. In that crossing many an Elf lord and lady fell into the sea or perished beneath collapsing towers of ice.





The bitter hardships of crossing the Helcaraxë claimed many Noldor lives



MIDDLE-EARTH





Melkor's hordes bred in the darkness of Utumno

The Ages of Darkness

While Valinor and the Undying Lands were bathed in the Light of the Trees, all the lands of Middle-earth were plunged into gloom. These were the Ages of Darkness on Middle-earth, when Melkor dug the Pits of Utumno ever deeper beneath the Iron Mountains. With evil splendour, he fashioned hellish, subterranean palaces with vast domed halls, labyrinthine tunnels, and fathomless dungeons out of black stone, fire, and ice.

Here the Lord of Darkness gathered all the bad powers of the world. Their numbers seemed without limit, and Melkor never tired of creating new and ever more dreadful forms. Cruel spirits, phantoms, wraiths and vile demons stalked the halls of Utumno. All the serpents of the world were bred in the pits of a dark kingdom that was home to werewolves and vampires and innumerable bloodfeeding monsters, and insects that flew, crawled and slithered. Within Utumno, all were commanded by Melkor's demon disciples, the fiery Maiar spirits called the Balrogs, with their whips of flame and their black maces. Greatest among these was the High Captain of Utumno, Gothmog the Balrog.

Nor was Utumno Melkor's only kingdom. At the beginning of the Ages of Darkness, Melkor rejoiced in his victory over the Valar, and his destruction of Almaren and the Great Lamps of Light. Thereafter, he strove to increase his power, and in the westernmost part of the Iron Mountains he built a second kingdom. This was the great armoury and stronghold called Angband, the 'Iron-Prison'.

Then he proclaimed the mightiest disciple, Sauron the Maia Sorcerer, the Master of Angband. Except for the watchful eye of Manwë the windlord, looking down from the sacred mountain of Taniquetil, and the occasional visitations of Oromë, the Wild Horseman, among all the Valar only Yavanna, the protector of forests and meadows, entered Middle-earth in those days. Upon all the flora and fauna that she created, she cast a protecting spell called the Sleep of Yavanna, so they might survive the darkness and wickedness of Melkor's rule.

And so, for the most part, these were the Ages of Glory for Melkor, the Lord of Darkness. By his destruction of the Lamps of Light, Melkor inherited the whole of the wrecked and darkened lands of Middle-earth. There he held dominion for ten thousand mortal years.

Morgoth

Melkor was one of the greatest of the spirits who dwelt with Eru the One before the creation of Arda. Yet he introduced discord to the Music of the Ainur, and when he entered Arda he worked against the other Valar, creating ruin and chaos. He expended so much of his spirit doing evil and dominating his armies that, unlike the other Valar, he had to take permanent fleshly form. When the Eldar came to Middle-earth and strove against him, they named him Morgoth, the Black Foe of the World.



The Vala Melkor became Morgoth, Lord of Darkness



The Balrogs were the most feared servants of Melkor

Balrogs of Utumno

The Balrog 'demons of might' were the most terrible of the Maiar spirits to become the servants of Melkor, the Dark Enemy. Huge and hulking, Balrogs were massive man-like demons with streaming manes of fire and nostrils that breathed flame. They seemed to move with clouds of black shadows and their limbs had the coiling power of serpents. The chief weapon of the Balrogs was the many-thonged whip of fire, although they were also known to use the mace, the axe and the flaming sword. In each of Melkor's battles, Balrogs were his foremost champions, and so, when the holocaust of the War of Wrath ended Melkor's reign forever, it largely ended the Balrogs as a race. It was said that some fled that last battle and buried themselves deep in the roots of mountains, but after thousands of years nothing more was heard of these demons. However, during the Third Age of the Sun, the deep-delving Dwarves of Moria released by accident an entombed demon. Once unleashed, the Balrog struck down two Dwarf kings; then, gathering legions of Orcs and Trolls to his aid, drove the Dwarves from Moria forever. His dominion remained uncontested for two centuries, until his duel with Gandalf the Grey on the Bridge of Khazad-dûm.

The Ages of Stars

When the Undying Lands entered its second era of the Trees of Light, Middle-earth began its Ages of the Stars. This resulted in the Awakening of the Elves, and eventually the War of Powers, when the Valar destroyed Utumno and took Melkor captive. The Elves began their westward migration and founded kingdoms both in Middle-earth and Eldamar in the Undying Lands. Then the seemingly repentant Melkor revolted once more, destroyed the Trees of Light and stole the Silmaril jewels.



Years 20,000–30,000

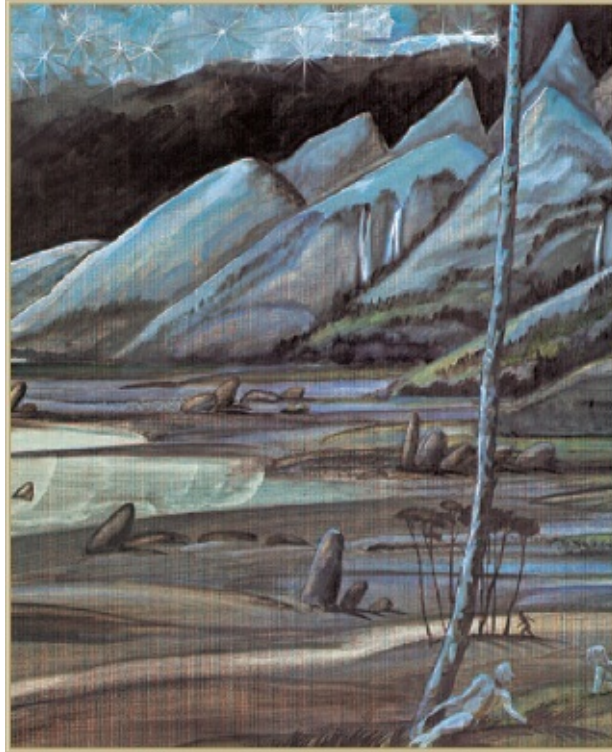
The Rekindling of the Stars

After many Ages of Darkness, Varda, the Lady of the Heavens, took the dew from the Silver Tree of the Valar, and, crossing the skies, rekindled the faint stars which shone down on Middle-earth, so they became brilliant and dazzling in the velvet night. The creatures of Melkor were so unused to light that they screamed in pain when these shafts of starlight pierced their dark souls. In terror, they fled and hid themselves away.

Yet, above all, the Rekindling of the Stars signified the Awakening of the Elves. For when the stars shone down on Middle-earth, the Elves awoke with starlight in their eyes, and something of that light remained there forever after. The place of awakening was the Mere of Cuiviénen by the shores of Helcar, the inland sea beneath the Orocarni, the Red Mountains.

The Ages of the Stars was also the time of the awakening of the two other speaking peoples: the Dwarves, who were conceived by Aulë the Smith, and the Ents, who were conceived by Aulë's spouse, Yavanna the Fruitful. Then, too, in the pits of Utumno, Melkor bred two other races. These were the Orcs and the Trolls, twisted life forms made from tortured Elves and Ents who fell into his hands.

When Oromë the Horseman discovered the Awakening of the Elves, and the Valar learned of the wickedness done to them by Melkor, they held a council of war. The Valar and Maiar came to Middle-earth arrayed for battle against Melkor.



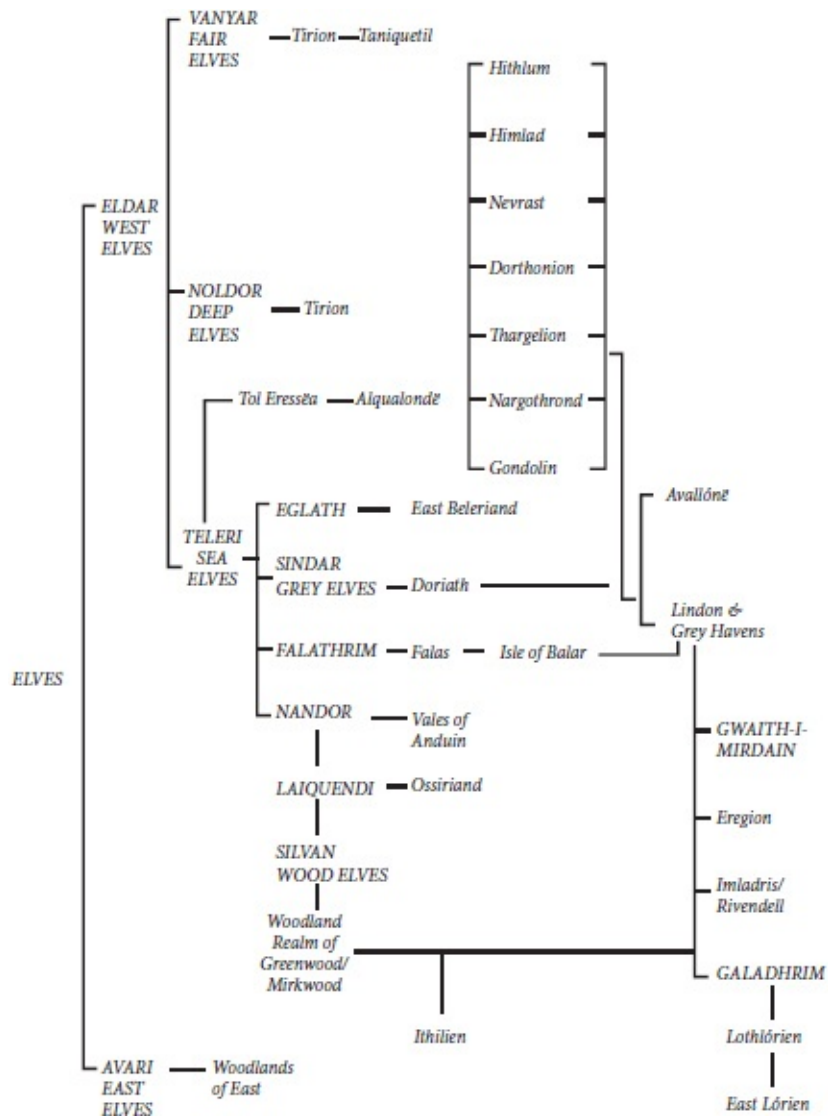
The Elves awoke and wondered at the light of the stars

During this War of Wrath they slew Melkor's evil legions, broke down the great wall of the Iron Mountains, and utterly destroyed Utumno. Melkor's dominion over Middle-earth was ended. He was bound with chains and held prisoner in Valinor for many ages. This was the period known as the Peace of Arda, and was the time of the Great Journey, when the Elves made their mass westward migration to Eldamar, on the shores of the Undying Lands. For the most part these were glorious years for the Elves in both Middle-earth and the Undying Lands.

The High Elves who succeeded in completing the Great Journey and who settled in Eldamar, built the wonderful cities of Tirion, Alqualondë and Avallónë. Yet many others, for love of the lands of Middle-earth, remained behind. They built their kingdom in mortal lands and lived glorious lives.

During the Ages of Stars there was a great kingdom of Elves in Beleriand in the northwest of Middle-earth. These were the Elves of the Teleri kindred who followed King Thingol and Queen Melian the Maia. They were called the Grey Elves, or the Sindar, and their kingdom was the vast forestland of Doriath. Their greatest city was called Menegroth of the Thousand Caves, and the caverns and grottoes of their citadel were one of the wonders of Middle-earth. The lords of the Sindar were the masters of Beleriand and the mightiest Elves upon Middle-earth in the Ages of Stars. Their allies were the Sea Elves of the Falas, the

Laiquendi (or Green Elves) of Ossiriand, and the Dwarves of Belegost and Nogrod in the Blue Mountains. The Ages of Stars lasted ten thousand mortal years, and were ages of discovery and wonder, of glory and magic. Yet, all this was ended when Melkor was at last released from captivity in Valinor. After a time of seeming penance, he rose up in wrath and destroyed the Trees of the Valar. Then he fled into the north of Middle-earth, where he once again inhabited his fortress of Angband in the Iron Mountains. The Peace of Arda ended as the conflict spread to Beleriand, and the Ages of Stars came to an end.



Genealogy of the Races of Elves

The Awakening of the Dwarves

In a great hall under the mountains of Middle-earth, Aulë, the Smith of the Valar, fashioned the Seven Fathers of the Dwarves during the Ages of Darkness.

Ilúvatar was aware of Aulë's presumptuous deed, and would not permit that this race should come forth before his chosen children. Yet he judged that Aulë acted without malice. Therefore he sanctified the Dwarves, and bade Aulë set them to sleep for many ages.

In the years that followed the Awakening of the Elves, the seven Fathers of the Dwarves stirred, and their stone chamber was broken open. They arose and were filled with awe. Each of the Seven Fathers made a great mansion under the mountains of Middle-earth, but the Elven histories of these early years speak only of three. Those were Belegost and Nogrod in the Blue Mountains, and Khazad-dûm in the Misty Mountains.





The Dwarves explored the wondrous caves beneath the mountains





The Ents marched in wrath upon Isengard



The Awakening of the Ents

After the Rekindling of the Stars and the Awakening of the Elves, the Ents also awoke in the great forests of Arda. They came forth from the thoughts of Yavanna, Queen of the Earth. Also known as the Shepherds of Trees, the Ents were giant guardians of the forests. They were half men, half trees in appearance, with skin like rough bark and branchlike arms with seven-fingered hands. They were fourteen feet tall and could stand unmoving for years at a time, or could move swiftly on unbending legs taking giant 'Ent strides' with feet like living roots. The eldest Ents were believed to have inhabited Middle-earth for over nine ages of stars and sun. Although most often patient and wise beings, if roused to anger they could crush stone and steel with their bare hands. During the War of the Ring, the wrath of the Ents was unleashed against Saruman the Wizard of Isengard.



The dread race of Orcs was bred from Elves who were corrupted by Melkor

The Breeding of the Orcs

Within the deepest pits of Utumno, in the First Age of Stars, it is said that Melkor – whom the Elves gave the name Morgoth, meaning the ‘Dark Enemy’ – committed his greatest blasphemy. For in that time he captured many of the newly risen race of Elves and took them to his dungeons, and with vile acts of torture he made ruined and terrible forms of life. From these he bred a goblin race of slaves who were as loathsome as Elves were fair. These were the Orcs, a multitude brought forth in shapes twisted by pain and hate. Their stunted form was hideous: bent, bow-legged and squat. Their arms were as long and strong as apes’. The jagged fangs in their wide mouths were yellow, their tongues red and thick, and their nostrils and faces were broad and flat. Their eyes were crimson gashes, and glowed like hot red coals. Orcs were fierce warriors, for they feared more greatly their master than any enemy, and perhaps death was preferable to the torment of Orkish life. They were flesh-eating cannibals, dwellers of foul pits and tunnels, who hunted by night, and were fearful of light. More quickly than any other beings of Arda their progeny came forth from the spawning pits of the Dark Enemy to fill the ranks of his armies.



BELERIAND KINGDOMS
in the First Age



Beleriand

During the Ages of the Stars, Beleriand became the homeland of the Sindar Grey Elves. Their capital was Menegroth in the forests of Doriath. In the First Age of the Sun, the Noldor Elves returned and founded Nargothrond, Gondolin and many other kingdoms. However, all of these were destroyed, along with Menegroth and Melkor's Angband, in the Wars of Beleriand. At the end of the Age, Beleriand sank beneath the waves.







The halls of Menegroth were filled with wonders

The Thousand Caves of Menegroth

Through the Ages of Stars, while the High Elves of Eldamar flourished in the Light of the Trees, on Middle-earth the Sindar Grey-elves became a great race. Their king was Elu Thingol and their queen was Melian the Maia. The Sindar were lords of all Beleriand and they lived in the citadel of Menegroth, the Thousand Caves. This place was a wonder to all the World because the Sindar loved the forests so greatly. The halls and caverns of Menegroth were carved with trees, birds and animals of stone and filled with fountains and lamps of crystal, and through these halls walked the Sindar lords, the greatest Elves of Middle-earth in the Ages of Stars.

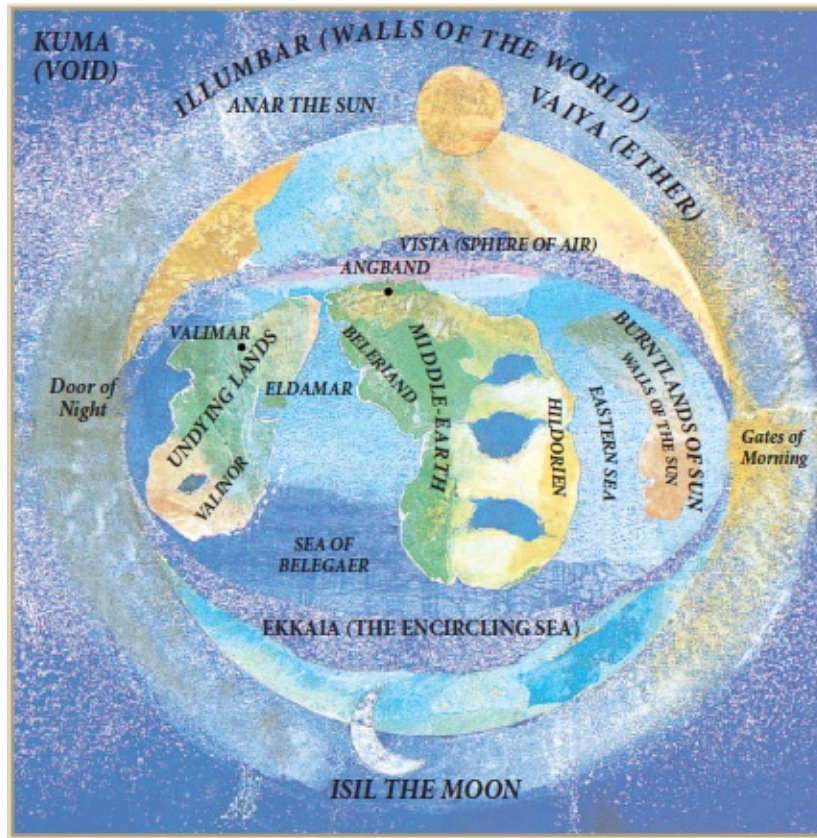


The Awakening of Men

Although the Trees of the Valar had been destroyed, the Valar Yavanna and Nienna coaxed from their scorched ruins a single flower of silver called Isil the Sheen and a single fruit of gold called Anor the Fire-golden. This flower and this fruit were placed in great vessels that became the Moon and the Sun, which were carried across the skies by Maiar spirits. It is said that with the rising of the Sun there came the Awakening of Men in the eastern land of Hildórien on Middle-earth. So began the Ages of the Sun in which the race of mortal Men flourished and spread over all the lands of Middle-earth.



The race of Men awakened at the rising of the Sun



Years 30,000–30,601

The First Age of the Sun

The Valar created the Sun and the Moon. This resulted in the Awakening of Men in Hildórien in the east. The Noldor Elves entered Beleriand in pursuit of Melkor, and laid siege to Angband for the first four centuries of the War of the Jewels. However, in 455 the siege was broken, and Angband's legions destroyed the Elven kingdoms one by one. Finally, the Valar returned and in the War of Wrath, destroyed Angband and cast Melkor out forever into the Void.



The First Dawn

Although the Ages of the Sun are the main focus for virtually all Tolkien's tales, the Sun does not arise in the sky until the Thirtieth Valarian Age, or some 30,000 mortal years after the creation of Arda. And yet, even the time span in Sun years is monumental. By the end of the War of the Ring and the Third Age, no less than 7,063 mortal years had passed.

In the early chronologies of 'The Annals of Valinor', Tolkien tells us that 29,980 mortal years after the creation of Arda, Melkor and the Great Spider Ungoliant ended the Ages of the Trees in Valinor and put out the Trees' light forever. Yet the Valar Yavanna and Nienna saved a single flower of silver from Telperion and a single fruit of gold from Laurelin. These were placed in great vessels forged by Aulë the Smith, and in the 30,000th mortal year since the creation of the world, these glowing vessels were carried up into the heavens. These vessels were the Moon and the Sun, and ever afterwards they lighted all the wide lands of Arda.



Silver trumpets of the Elves greeted the appearance of the Moon. This was followed by the glory of the rising Sun in the world's dawn.



As the Rekindling of the Stars marked the Awakening of the Elves, so the Rising of the Sun signalled the Awakening of Men. When the first light of dawn entered the eyes of Men, they awoke to a new age. For, as Ilúvatar had conceived the race of Elves at the beginning of Time and hid them away in the Meres of Cuiviénen, so he also conceived of the mortal race of Men and hid them in the east of Middle-earth in a place called Hildórien, the 'land of the followers' beyond the Mountains of the Wind.

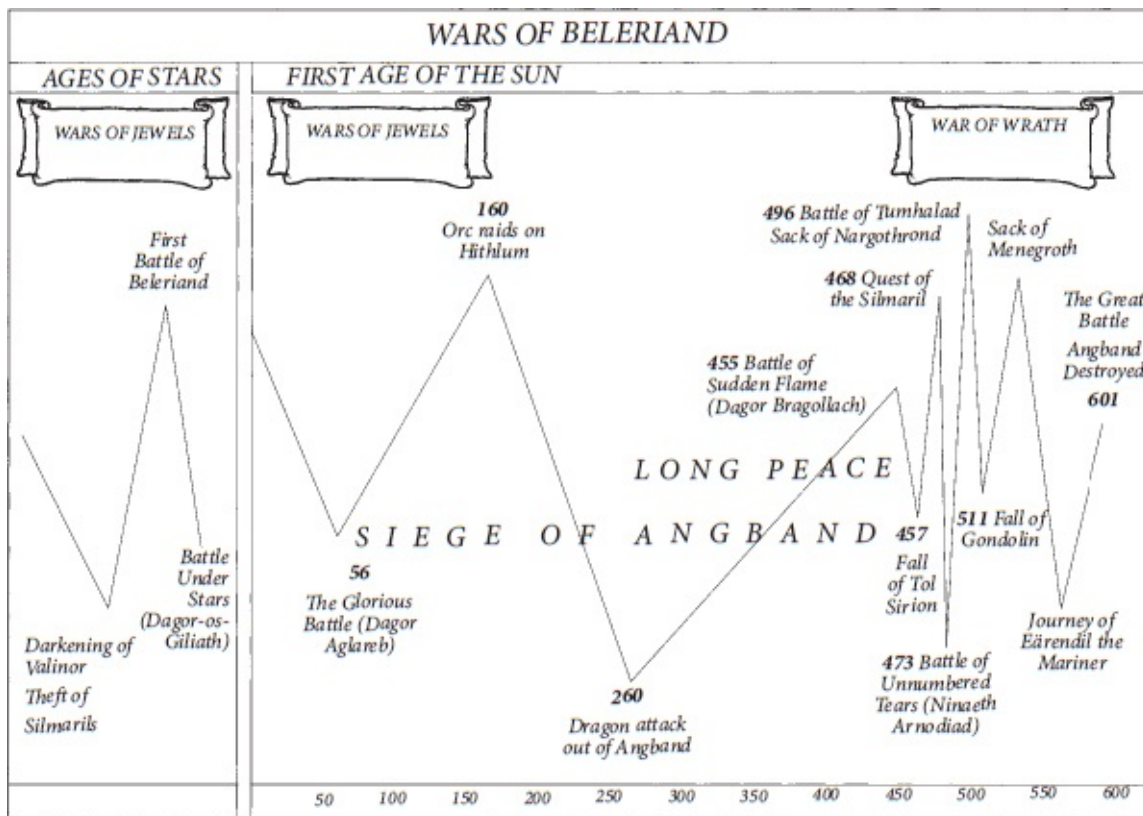
In strength of body and spirit, these new people compared poorly with the Elves. They were mortals and were short-lived even compared to the Dwarves. Out of pity, the Elves taught this sickly people what they could, only to find that in their mortality was a secret strength. For this race proved more adaptable to the demands of a changing world, and although they died easily, and in great numbers, they bred more quickly than any race save the Orcs.

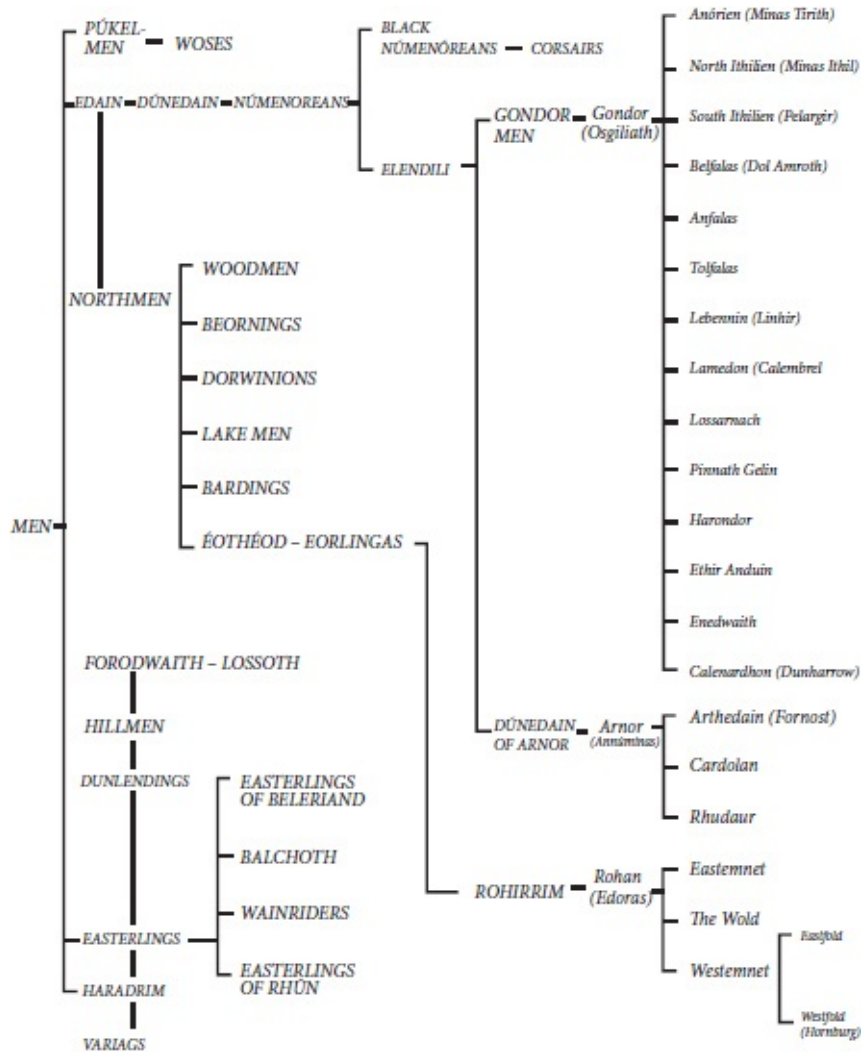
Tribes of these wandering peoples travelled over the lands of Middle-earth. The best and the strongest among them were the Edain, those who first entered the Eldar kingdoms of Beleriand. The First Age of the Sun was the Heroic Age that began with the coming of Noldor High Elves out of Eldamar in pursuit of Melkor, whom they called Morgoth, the Dark Enemy. For not only had Morgoth destroyed the Trees of Light, but he also stormed the Elven fortress of Formenos, slew the High King of the Noldor, and seized the magical jewels called the Silmarils. These three gems were the greatest treasure of the Noldor, for they had been fashioned by them from the light of the Trees of the Valar. It was the struggle for possession of these gems that resulted in the War of the Great Jewels, and gave Tolkien his theme for *The Silmarillion*. It was a conflict lasting six centuries and distinguished by six major battles.

Morgoth extinguished the Trees of Light, seized the Silmarils and fled to Angband some twenty mortal years before the dawning of the First Age of the Sun. The Wars of Beleriand began a decade later, when he sent his Orkish leaders against the Elves of Beleriand. This was the First Battle in which the Orkish hordes were eventually routed and driven back into Angband. The Second Battle was fought four mortal years before the rising of the Sun and was called the Battle Under Stars, Dagor-os Giliath. The forces of Morgoth came against the newly arrived Noldor Elves in north-western Beleriand. Although outnumbered, the Noldor fought ferociously for ten days. They slaughtered all before them and forced the Orcs to retreat to Angband.

In the year 56 of the First Age of the Sun, the forces of Morgoth had regained sufficient strength to send out an army greater than the two previous armies combined. This Third Battle was called the Glorious Battle, Dagor Aglareb, for not only did the Elves overthrow Morgoth's Orc legions, they cut off their retreat and annihilated them. So complete was the victory that for nearly four centuries the Elves kept a close guard on Angband. During this time there were Orc raids on Hithlum, and in 260 Glaurung the Dragon attempted an attack, but for the most part there was peace in Beleriand. Few of Morgoth's servants dared to venture south of the Iron Mountains. However, when Morgoth finally broke the Long Peace, he was truly prepared. In the year 455, his legions of Orcs were led by Balrogs and fire-breathing dragons. This was the Fourth Battle which was called the Battle of Sudden Flame, or Dagor Bragollach. This was followed by the Fifth Battle, the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, or Ninaeth Arnodiad. These two battles resulted in total victory for Morgoth and the eventual destruction of all the Elven kingdoms of Beleriand. In 496, Nargothrond was sacked. Shortly thereafter Menegroth was ruined, and 511 marked the fall of Gondolin, the last of the Elven strongholds.

For nearly a century Morgoth maintained his iron grip over Middle-earth. Finally the Valar and Maiar could no longer tolerate his wickedness, and in the year 601 they came forth a third and final time to make war on the Dark Enemy in the cataclysm called the War of Wrath and the Great Battle. So terrible was this conflict that not only was Angband destroyed, but so too were all the fair lands of Beleriand. And though Morgoth called up all his monsters and demons, and even a legion of fire-breathing dragons, he was overthrown and cast out forever to the Void. Yet, this victory had its price. Beleriand was ruined. The Iron and Blue Mountains were broken apart, and the great waters were let in. All Beleriand was flooded, and eventually sank beneath the Western Sea. So ended the First Age of the Sun.

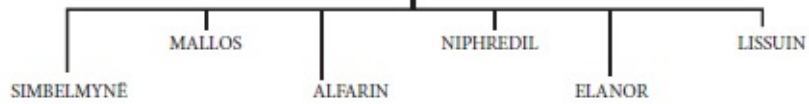




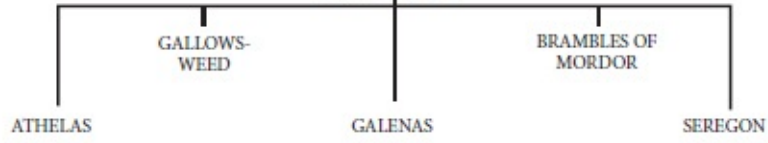
A Genealogy of the Races of Men

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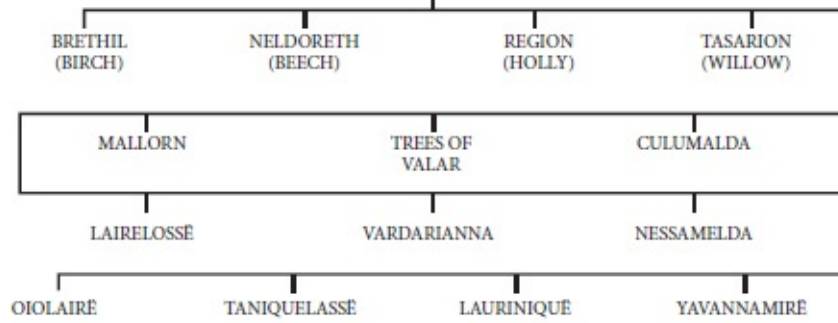
FLOWERS



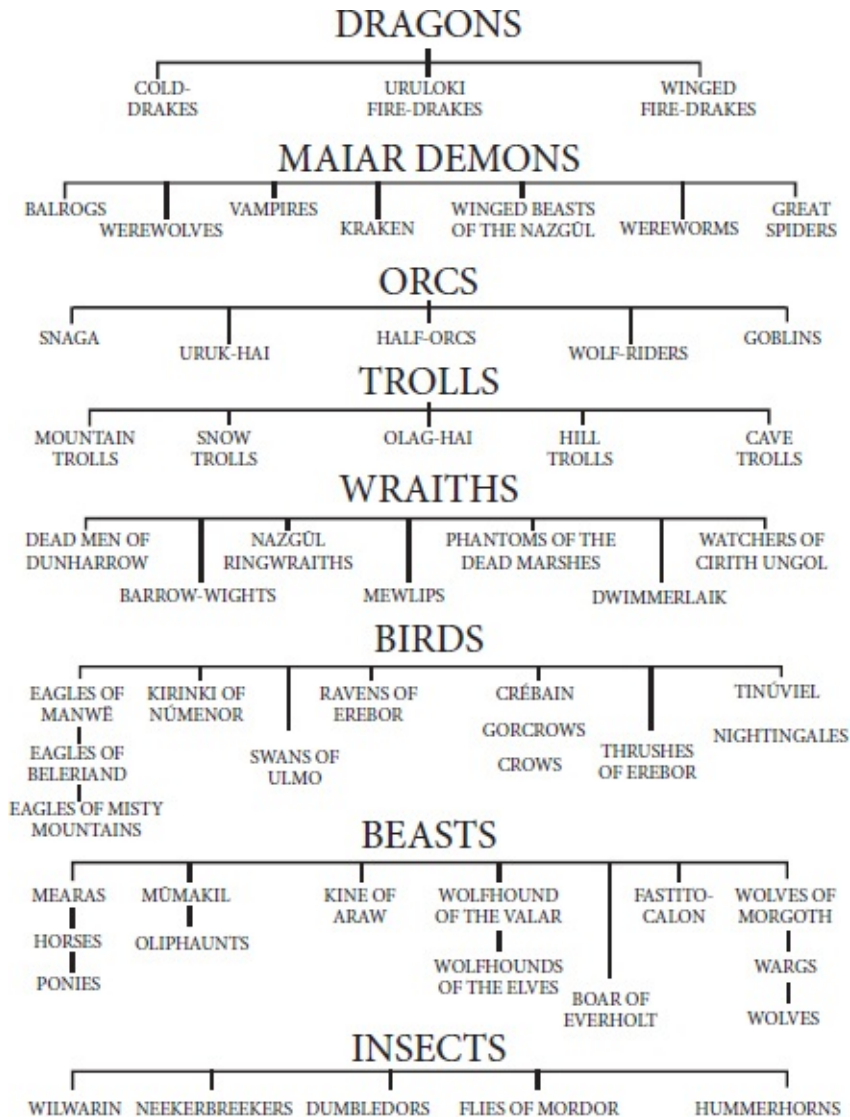
PLANTS



TREES



Olvar: Flora of Arda



Kelvar: Fauna of Arda



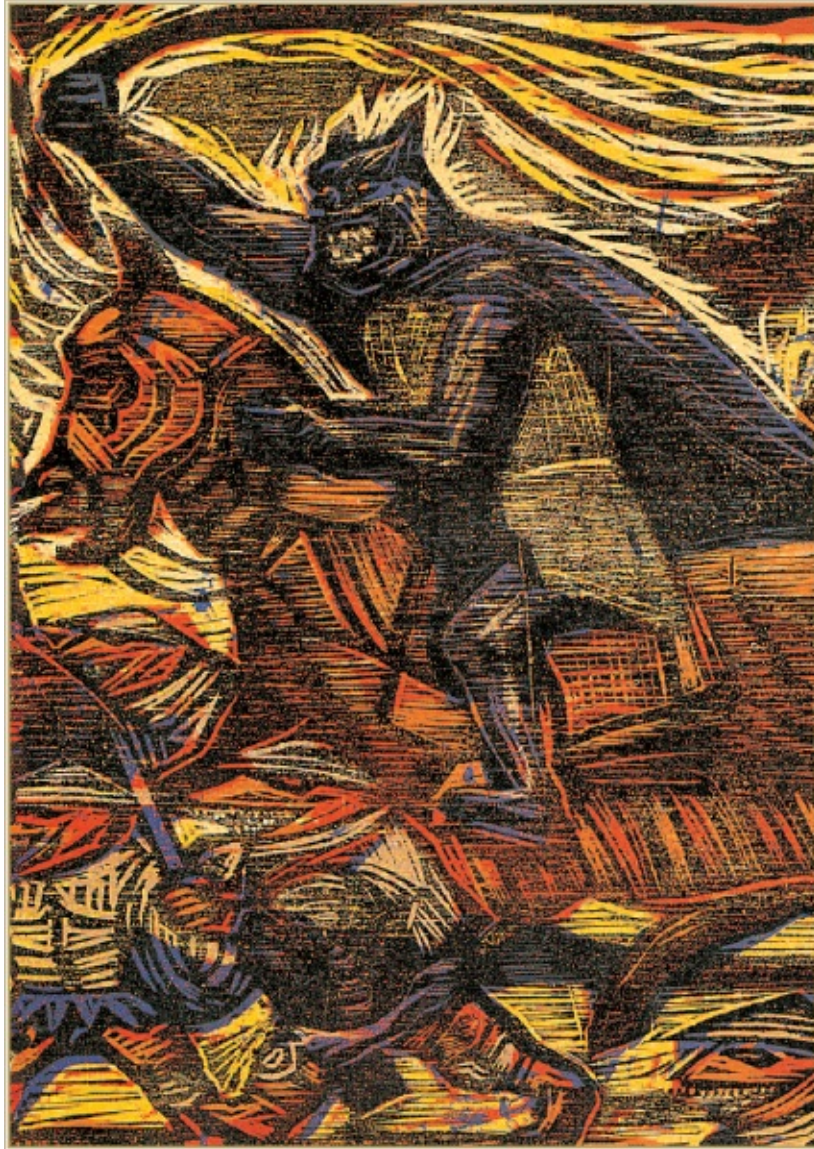
Huan was the mightiest wolfhound in Middle-earth

Huan of Valinor

Huan the mighty wolfhound was given to the Elf Lord Celegorm by the Vala Oromë. He was a tireless hunter, and he never slept. When his master Celegorm of Nargothrond took the princess Lúthien captive, Huan was troubled, feeling that a great wrong had been done. He aided Lúthien in her escape from Nargothrond, and joined her in the Quest of the Silmaril.

The Battle of Sudden Flame

For nearly four centuries the Elves kept a close watch on Angband, and Beleriand enjoyed peace. But Morgoth was not idle, and in the year 455 smoke and fire belched forth from Thangorodrim, and under the cover of darkness and clouds of ash a vast force of Balrogs, Orcs and fire-breathing dragons erupted from Angband. Elves and the Edain fought valiantly side by side, but they were beaten back, relentlessly. Within sixty years, all of the Elven kingdoms of Middle-earth were either destroyed or occupied by hostile forces.



The terrible onslaught of Morgoth's forces



Lúthien sang before Morgoth

Quest of the Silmaril

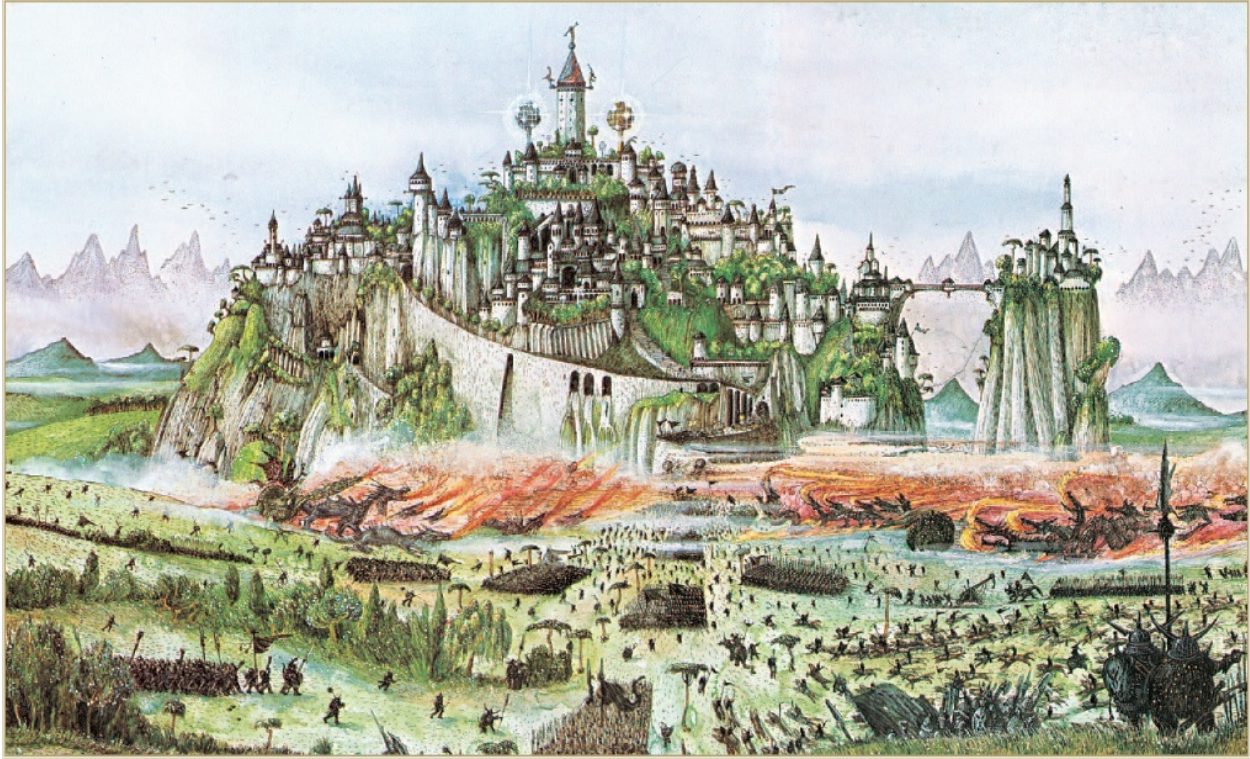
While armies of thousands perished in the long War of the Jewels and the Battle of Sudden Flame, it was only by the efforts of two star-crossed lovers – the mortal Beren and the Elf princess Lúthien – that one of the three stolen Silmarils was won back from the terrible Valarian lord, Morgoth, the Dark Enemy. This was achieved in the Quest of the Silmaril when by the power of the spells of Lúthien, the lovers gained entry into the great armoury and underground fortress of Angband. There in the horror of its nethermost chamber, Lúthien – the most beautiful child of the Elven race – stood before the throne of Morgoth the Dark Enemy, and sang a wondrous song of enchantment.

Gothmog the Balrog

Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs, was one of the greatest and most terrible of the spirits who came to Arda with Melkor. He bore a whip of flame, and sometimes wielded a great black axe. During the wars of Beleriand, he led armies of Balrogs, Orcs and Trolls, and laid waste to many lands of Elves, Dwarves and Men. His greatest challenge came when he faced Ecthelion of Gondolin, during the terrible sack of the Hidden City.



Few could withstand Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs



The hidden city of Gondolin fell to the might of Morgoth, the Dark Enemy

The Fall of Gondolin

The most beautiful Elven city built on Middle-earth was said to be Gondolin, the Hidden Kingdom. This was the last Elf-Kingdom to survive the War of the Jewels. Its king was Turgon, the Noldor lord, who wisely chose to conceal the city in the Encircling Mountains. But in the end the Servants of Morgoth discovered it, and Orc legions appeared before its gates, together with Trolls and fire-breathing dragons driven on by the Balrog demons. Though the Elves battled valiantly Gondolin was sacked, and with its destruction the Elf-realms of Beleriand were brought to an end.



Destruction of Angband

After watching the defeats and sufferings of the Elves and Men of Beleriand, the Valar could no longer tolerate the evil dominion of Morgoth over the lands of Middle-earth. So the Valar and Maiar joined in the War of Wrath against Morgoth's cruel kingdom of Angband. All the world was rent by this great war. The Iron Mountains were broken open, and the dungeons and great chambers of torture were destroyed. Morgoth's dragons and demons came into battle but were slain by the Valarian host. The servants of Morgoth were scattered, and he himself was cast into the Void. So ended the First Age of the Sun, and with it the chief architect of wickedness vanished forever, though much that Morgoth had made remained within the Spheres of the World.



Angband could not withstand the wrath of the Valar



NÚMENÓREAN EMPIRE
in the Second Age





Númenor

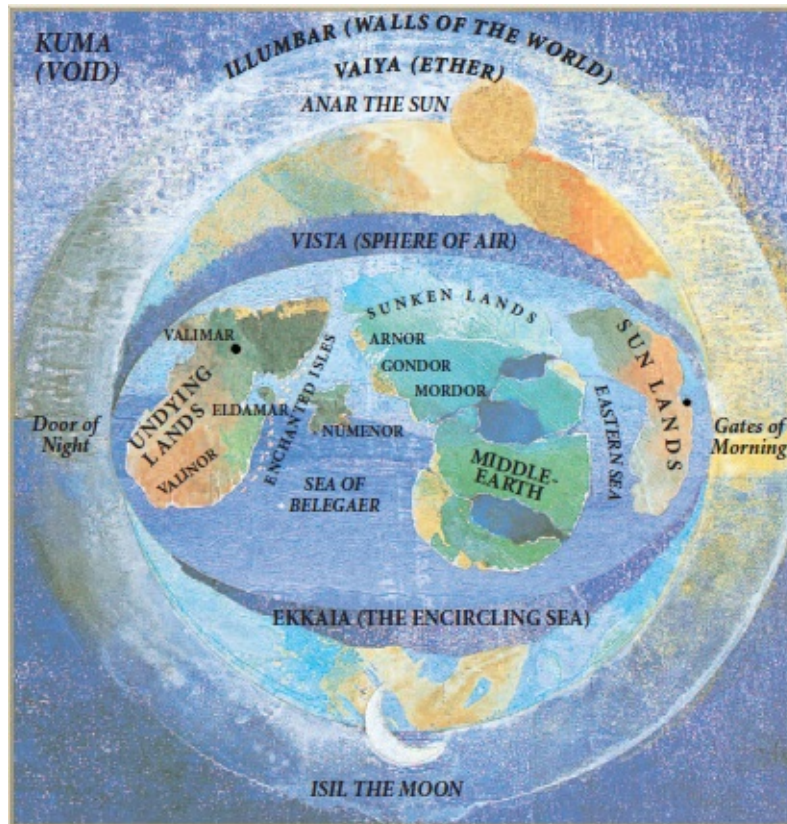
At the beginning of the Second Age of the Sun, the Valar raised a star-shaped island in the Western Sea. This was Númenor, which became the greatest kingdom of Men on Arda. The Númenóreans were granted a span of life far greater than ordinary Men, and through the centuries their strength and wealth increased and their navy sailed over all the seas of the mortal world. Númenor, often translated as Westerness in the language of Men, was also called Andor 'Land of Gift', Elenna-nórë 'Land of the Star' and Atalantë 'The Downfallen'; for it was, in fact, Tolkien's re-invention of the ancient myth of the lost land of Atlantis.

The Second Age of the Sun

The second age was the Age of the Númenóreans. As has been told in the 'Akallabêth' or 'The Downfall of Númenor', these were Men who were descended from the Edain of the First Age and to whom the Valar had given the newly created land in the midst of the wide sea between Middle-earth and the Undying Lands.

Tolkien's Númenor was an island kingdom shaped like a five-pointed star. At its narrowest, it measured two hundred and fifty miles across, and nearly twice that distance from the farthest promontories. It was divided into six regions: one for each peninsula and one for its heartland, where stood the sacred mountains, Meneltarma, or 'pillar of heaven', the tallest mountains on Númenor. On its slopes stood Armenelos, the 'city of kings', where the king and the largest single number of Númenóreans lived. Farther below was the royal port of Rómenna. The other prominent city-ports, Eldalondë and Andúnië, faced west towards the Undying Lands.

The first king of Númenor was Elros, son of Eärendil and the twin brother of Elrond Half-elven. At the end of the First Age, when the Half-elven twins were told by the Valar that they must choose their fate, Elrond chose that of the immortal Elves, while Elros became king of the mortal Edain. However, being Half-elven, he was granted a life-span of five hundred years and he ruled as the king of Númenor until the year 442 of the Second Age.



Years 30,601–34,042

While the Númenóreans prospered on their island, the High Elves of Middle-earth gathered under the banner of Gil-galad, the last High Elf-king in the realm of Lindon. The Sindar Grey Elves established kingdoms among the Silvan Elves in Greenwood the Great and the Golden Wood of Lothlórien in the Vales of the Great River, Anduin. In the eighth century, the Noldor Elves of Celebrimbor established the kingdom of the Elven-smiths of Eregion, just to the west of the Dwarf kingdom of Khazad-dûm in the Misty Mountains. However, another power also prospered in this time, for Sauron the Sorcerer remained in the mortal world and secretly conspired to succeed Melkor as the Dark Lord of Middle-earth.



Númenor was the most splendid realm of Men

In the year 1,000, Sauron secretly began to build his odious realm of Mordor, enslaving the barbarian races of Men of the East and South and gathering Orcs and other beings to his kingdom. He also began building the Dark Tower of Barad-dûr. He assumed the fair form of one named Annatar, meaning 'lord of gifts' in Quenya, and attempted to seduce the Elves with his wisdom and power. Only Celebrimbor and the Elven-smiths of Eregion were deceived. Using the combined powers of magic and metallurgy, Sauron and the Elven-smiths collaborated in the making of many fantastic creations. By the year 1500, they reached the peak of their ability and, under Sauron's instruction, began to forge the Rings of Power. By 1600, all the Rings were completed, and Sauron treacherously returned to Mordor, where he completed the building of the Dark Tower of Barad-dûr and forged the One Ring, thus becoming the Lord of the Rings. When the Elven-smiths realized they had been duped into helping Sauron become the all-powerful Lord of the Rings they rose up against him, and from 1693 to 1701 the bloody War of the Elves and Sauron raged. In that conflict Sauron slew Celebrimbor, destroyed the city of the Elven-smiths, ruined Eregion, and overran nearly all of Eriador. The Dwarves of Khazad-dûm retreated from the conflict and shut their doors on the world. Thereafter, this hidden realm was known as Moria, the 'black chasm' in Sindarin. In the terrible

struggle most of the Elves of Eregion were slain; only a small number survived. These were led by Elrond Half-elven into the foothills of the Misty Mountains, where they founded the colony of Imladris, which Men later called Rivendell.

After his victory over Celebrimbor, Sauron gathered his forces and marched against Gil-galad in Lindon. At the last moment, a mighty fleet of Númenóreans joined the Elvish ranks. Sauron's legions were utterly crushed, and he was forced to retreat to Mordor.

For a thousand years Sauron made no move against the Elves, but worked instead among the barbarian Easterlings and Haradrim tribes. Among their savage kings, he distributed the Nine Rings of Mortal Men. By the twenty-third century they had become the Nazgûl, his chief servants, who Men knew as the Ringwraiths. Meanwhile, the Númenóreans had become the mightiest sea power the world had ever seen. On the coastlands of Middle-earth they created many colonies, as well as the fortress-ports of Umbar and Pelagir.



The arrogant Númenóreans perished when they sought to challenge the Valar

In the year 3261, the Númenóreans landed a huge armada at Umbar and disgorged a massive force that marched on Mordor. When Sauron saw their terrible might, all the peoples of the world were amazed to see the Ring Lord descend from his Dark Tower and surrender himself unto them.

The Númenóreans put Sauron in chains, took him to their own land and imprisoned him in their strongest dungeon. But, by guile, Sauron achieved that which he could not by strength of arms. He falsely counselled the proud Númenórean kings and corrupted them, so they plotted against the Valar

themselves. So successful was this corruption that the Númenóreans dared to raise the greatest fleet of ships that ever was, and sailed into the west to make war on the Powers of Arda. For this act, Ilúvatar caused the fair island of Númenor to burst asunder. The mountains and the cities fell, the sea arose in wrath and all Númenor collapsed into a watery abyss.

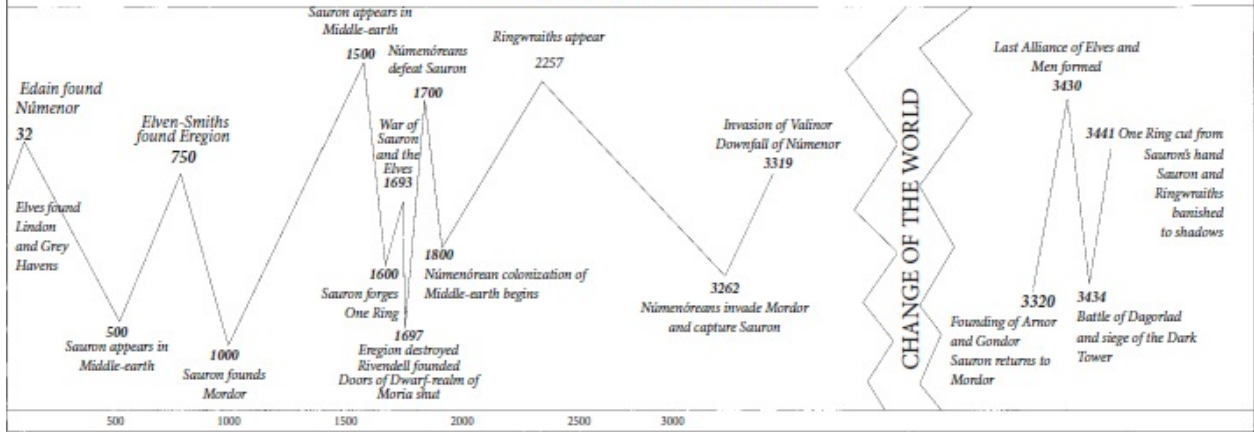
In that cataclysm came the Change of the World. The Undying Lands were set beyond the Spheres of the World and were forever beyond the reach of all but the Chosen, who travelled in Elven ships along the Straight Road. This was the end of the Age of Atlantis as we now know it in myths, and the world turned in on itself. It was no longer a flat world bounded by the Encircling Sea and enclosed within the Sphere of Air and Ether, but became the globed planet that we now know it to be.

But the Second Age did not end with the sinking of Númenor in the year 3319, nor did the heritage of its people vanish. For as the tales of the time tell, there were those among the Númenóreans who were led by the Princes of Andúnië, who called themselves the Faithful and refused to forsake the Valar and the Eldar. Led by Elendil the Tall, they sailed nine ships eastward toward the shores of Middle-earth at the moment of the cataclysm. These were the Dúnedain, the faithful surviving Númenóreans, who established the kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor upon Middle-earth.

Yet soon there was strife and conflict, for, by the power of the One Ring, Sauron also escaped the sinking of Númenor and returned to Mordor, wherein he plotted to destroy all remaining Elvish and Dúnedain kingdoms upon Middle-earth.

In retaliation, the Last Alliance of Elves and Men formed, and Sauron's army was defeated at the Battle of Dagorlad. Entering Mordor itself, the Alliance laid siege to the Dark Tower for seven long years before Sauron was overthrown. In this last struggle, the Dúnedain High King Elendil and his son Anárion, along with the last High King of the Eldar on Middle-earth, Gil-galad, were all slain before the Dúnedain King Isildur at last cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand. With the conquest of Mordor, the destruction of the Dark Tower, the banishment of the Ringwraiths, and the downfall of Sauron, in the year 3441, the Second Age came to an end.

SECOND AGE OF THE SUN



The Black Númenóreans

The port and city of Umbar was the most powerful outpost of the Númenóreans on Middle-earth during the Second Age. Corrupted by Sauron the Ring Lord, they survived the downfall and the Change of the World. Just as the 'Faithful' Númenóreans who founded the Dúnedain kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor among the North Men of Middle-earth, the Black Númenóreans of Umbar formed a powerful alliance with the Men of the South, known as the Haradrim. Throughout the Third Age, powerful armadas of the black ships frequently sailed out of Umbar to join forces with the allies of Mordor against their sworn enemies, the Dúnedain in the north kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor.





Umbar was a colony of Númenor until its capture by the Men of the South



DÚNEDAIN KINGDOMS
in the Third Age





Years 34,042–37,063

The Third Age of the Sun

The globed, mortal world was forever separated from the Undying Lands. Only the ships of the Elves were permitted to sail the Straight Road to reach it. At the end of the Second Age, the Dúnedain – or surviving Númenóreans – founded Arnor and Gondor, and with the Elves destroyed Sauron and Mordor. However, the Ring Lord secretly returned in the Third Age and rebuilt Mordor. Finally, Sauron's plots against the Dúnedain and the Elves culminated in the War of the Ring.



The Dark Tower of Mordor

By the power of the Ruling Ring, Sauron made the foundations of Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower of Mordor. The Last Alliance of Elves and Men laid siege to that Tower for seven years at the end of the Second Age before finally forcing Sauron into open battle. Though many of the greatest Eldar and Dúnedain lords were slain, the Alliance was granted victory and the One Ring was cut from Sauron the Ring Lord's hand.

For more than a thousand years Sauron had no shape and wandered Earth as a powerless shadow. Yet because the One Ring was not destroyed, Sauron and his Tower were not ended. Both he and the tower were to arise in the Third Age, and once again Sauron the Ring Lord would seek to dominate the world.





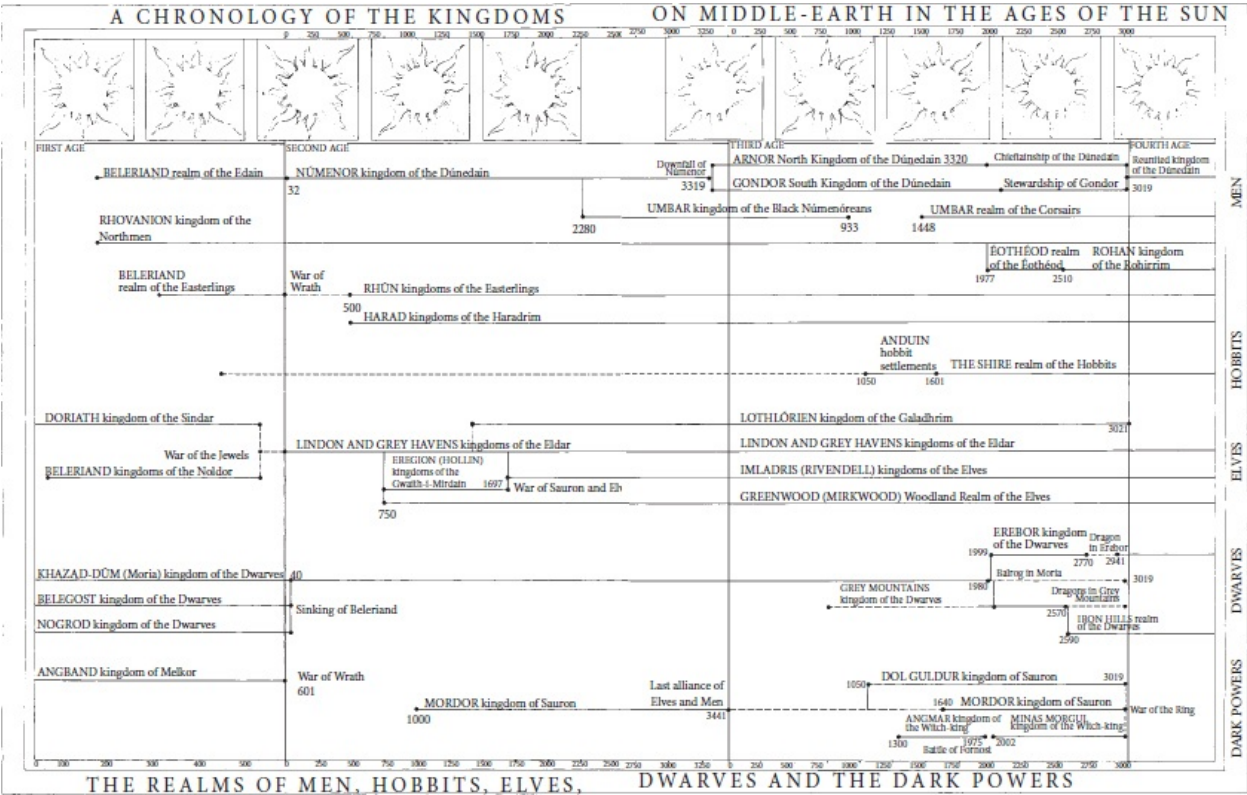
The dreadful tower of Barad-dûr loomed over Mordor



At the end of the Second Age, Sauron battled with the Men of Númenor

Sauron

At first, Sauron was one of the Maiar of Aulë, but he was soon corrupted by Morgoth, and he became the Dark Lord's chief lieutenant. When Morgoth was cast into the Void at the end of the First Age, Sauron returned to Middle-earth, calling himself Annatar, 'giver of gifts', and appearing to offer friendship to the Elves of Eregion and the Men of Númenor. He taught the Elves the art of making Rings of Power, but unknown to them, he forged for himself the One Ring, which controlled all the others. Finally the Númenóreans made war on Sauron, and he fought with their leaders before the gates of Barad-dûr. In the Third Age, he took the form of a great lidless eye, ceaseless in his search for the One Ring, which seemingly had been lost forever.



The Third Age of the Sun

The two dominant concerns of Tolkien's history of the Third Age of the Sun are the survival of the Kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor, and the not unrelated fate of the One Ring of Sauron, the Ring Lord.

At the end of the Second Age, when Sauron the Ring Lord was overthrown, it was Isildur, the High King of the United Kingdom of Gondor and Arnor, who cut the One Ring from his hand.

At the time, this was deemed a righteous act and the only means of destroying the power of the Dark Lord; however, once Isildur himself seized the One Ring, a part of him was corrupted by its evil power. For strong and virtuous though he was, Isildur could not resist its promise of power.

Though he stood on the volcanic slopes of Mount Doom itself, in whose fires the Ring was forged and the only place where it could be unmade, he could not bring himself to destroy it. Isildur succumbed to temptation and took the One Ring as his own, and thus its curse soon fell upon him. In year two of the Third Age, Isildur and his three eldest sons were marching northward through the Vales of Anduin when the entourage was ambushed by Orcs.

This was the Battle of Gladden Fields which resulted in the death of Isildur and his three sons and the loss of the One Ring in the waters of the River Anduin. The disastrous consequences of Gladden Fields took over 3,000 years to right. The loss of the One Ring meant that the wicked spirit of Sauron could not be brought to rest until the Ring was found and destroyed, while the death of the High King of the United Kingdom of the Dúnedain resulted in the splitting of the realm into two separate kingdoms: Arnor and Gondor.

In effect, because Isildur succumbed to the temptation of the One Ring, the curse of the Ring was visited on the whole of the Dúnedain people. This curse of the Ring consumed the whole of the Third Age, for the United Kingdom could not be healed and made whole again until the One Ring was destroyed and a single legitimate heir (who had the strength to resist the temptations of the Ring) was recognized by the whole of the Dúnedain people. Only then could a High

King once again rule in the Reunited Kingdom of the Dúnedain.

Nevertheless, during the first millennium of the Third Age, the power of the South Kingdom of Gondor grew, despite constant conflicts on its borders and the Easterling invasion of the fifth and sixth centuries. By the ninth century, Gondor had built a powerful navy to add to the military might of its army. By the eleventh century, Gondor had reached the height of its power, pushing back the Easterlings to the Sea of Rhûn, making Umbar a fortress of Gondor and subjugating the people of Harad.

Although the North Kingdom of Arnor never expanded its boundaries beyond Eriador, it prospered well enough until the ninth century. At that time internal disputes resulted in its division into three independent states, and these eventually fell to quarrelling among themselves.

By the twelfth century, the spirit of Sauron had secretly returned to Middle-earth in the form of a single eye wreathed in flame. He found refuge in southern Mirkwood in the fortress of Dol Guldur. From this time onward, the forces of darkness grew steadily stronger throughout the lands of Middle-earth.

From the thirteenth century forward, Arnor was steadily diminished by a combination of natural disasters and internal strife. However, the greatest of its curses was Sauron's chief servant, the Lord of the Ringwraiths, who became the Witch-king of Angmar and maintained a state of war for over five centuries against Arnor's kings. Finally, in 1974, the Witch-king stormed the last Arnorian stronghold of Fornost, and Arnor ceased to exist as a kingdom. After the death of Arnor's twenty-third King, the royal bloodline was continued by the tribal Chieftains of the Dúnedain.

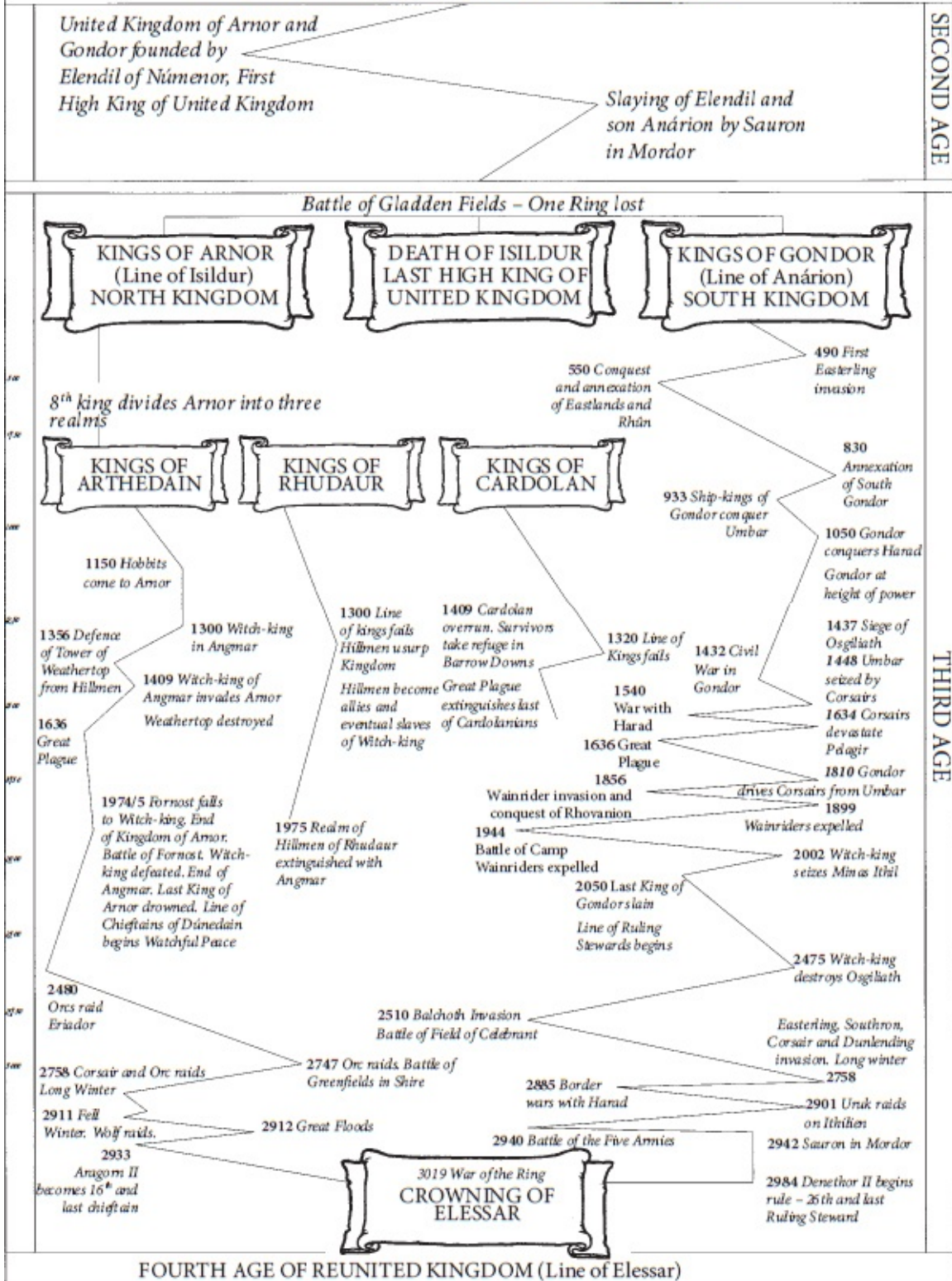
The decline of the South Kingdom of Arnor through the second millennium of the Third Age was attributed to three great curses. The first was the Kinstrife of the fifteenth century. This was a bloody civil war that resulted in thousands of deaths, the destruction of cities, the loss of most of Gondor's navy, and the end of its control of Umbar and Harad.

The second curse was the Great Plague of 1636, which Sauron loosed upon Gondor and Arnor. From this evil the Dúnedain never really recovered, for so many died at that time that parts of their realm remained empty forever after. The third curse was the Wainrider Invasions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These invasions by a confederacy of well-armed Easterling peoples lasted for almost one hundred years. Although the Easterlings were finally driven back and defeated, they critically weakened the already diminished power of Gondor.



The Riders of Rohan allied with the Dúnedain

HISTORY OF THE KINGDOMS OF THE DÚNEDAIN



The Migration of the Hobbits

Nothing is known of the Halfling people, who became known as the Hobbits, before 1050 of the Third Age. These were a burrowing, hole-dwelling people said to be related to Men, yet they were smaller than Dwarves, and the span of their lives was about a hundred years. Their first histories tell us they lived in the Northern Vales of Anduin between the Misty Mountains and Greenwood the Great. In the centuries that followed, they migrated westward and lived peacefully with Elves and Men in the land of Eriador.

All Hobbits measured between two and four feet in height, were long-fingered, possessed of a well-fed countenance, and had curly hair on peculiar shoeless, oversized feet. It is said that Hobbits were of three strains: Harfoots, Fallohides and Stoors. The Harfoots were the smallest and the most numerous, with nut-brown skin and hair. The Fallohides were taller and thinner, fair-haired and the least numerous, while the Stoors were the largest, bulkiest and most Mannish of the strains, and to the amazement of their kin, some could actually grow beards and chose to wear shoes. The Hobbits of Eriador primarily lived in the Mannish lands near the town of Bree until the year 1601. This was Year 1 in the Hobbit calendar of Shire Reckoning, when the greater part of the race marched westward again to the fertile lands beyond the Brandywine River. There, after this great migration, they settled down in the Shire, the land that was recognized always thereafter as the homeland of the Hobbits.



(L-R) Stoor, Fallohide and Harfoot Hobbits



Azog the Uruk exults over the body of a fallen dwarf

The Battle of Azanulbizar

The final battle in the War of the Dwarves and the Orcs took place in Dimrill Dale, before the eastern gates of Moria. The Dwarves triumphed, but they also took heavy losses, including the death of Fundin, the father of Balin and Dwalin, who were to be among the Company of Adventurers that later journeyed to Lonely Mountain, and Náin, the father of Dáin Ironfoot. In this battle, Thorin Oakenshield gained his reputation as a great warrior by seizing a mighty oak branch as a weapon after being disarmed by Orcs. However, it was Dáin who finally slew the Orc chieftain Azog, avenging his fallen father.



The Quest of Lonely Mountain





Thorin and company approach Hobbiton

The Company of Adventurers

In the year 2941 of the Third Age of the Sun a Company of Adventurers entered the quiet lands of the Shire and disturbed the peace of that place. This Dwarf company of Thorin Oakenshield and Gandalf the Wizard were set on the Quest of Lonely Mountain. They had come to compel the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins to join them on their Quest. Thus the Hobbits of the Shire first became enmeshed in the affairs of greater nations in the world. For though the Shire was a peaceful land, it was like an oasis in a desert of war and strife. In the land of Mordor an evil power was growing that sought to crush all the good forces of the world.

Of the affairs of the world, the Hobbits knew very little, nor did they suspect the great part they were destined to play in the histories of Middle-earth. But all had its beginning in the coming of the Adventurers to the Shire and the desire of Thorin Oakenshield to wrest the inheritance of his people from Smaug, Dragon of Lonely Mountain.



The Shire was situated in the peaceful north-west of Middle-earth

Gollum and the Goblin Caves

Among the first great challenges in Bilbo Baggins' quest was his descent into the Goblin caves wherein he escaped a Goblin attack, only to discover an even greater danger in the form of the cannibalistic creature known as Sméagol, or Gollum. In the deepest cavern by a dismal lake, Bilbo became entangled in a deadly riddle game, but also discovered a mysterious gold ring that had the power to make its wearer invisible. This ring eventually proved to be the long lost One Ring of Power that was once forged by Sauron the Ring Lord. It was a ring that carried with it a great curse of corruption, and as the Wizard Gandalf would learn many years later, it would be the spur to an even greater adventure and quest.



Gollum lived in a dark cave under the Misty Mountains



Mirkwood was home to many dreadful creatures

The Forest of Mirkwood

The largest forest in Middle-earth was Greenwood the Great, where Thranduil made the Woodland Realm of the Silvan Elves. In the year 1050 of the Third Age a dark power had entered Greenwood. Great Spiders, Orcs, Wolves and evil spirits had haunted the forest and, though the Silvan Elves had not been driven from their realm, they had not been able to halt the spreading darkness. Thereafter Greenwood was called Mirkwood and few dared to travel along its dark paths.

Mirkwood was among the greatest obstacles standing before the company of Thorin Oakenshield on the road to Lonely Mountain.



Smaug the Golden

When Bilbo Baggins and the Company of Dwarves finally reached Lonely Mountain of Erebor, they discovered the treasure of the King under the Mountain in the possession of the greatest dragon of the Third Age. Known as Smaug the Golden, this huge golden-red fire drake had bat-like wings and a coat of impenetrable iron scales. However, his one vulnerable part, his belly, was protected by a waistcoat of gems that had become embedded there from centuries of lying on jewelled treasure hoards. Although his beginnings are obscure, in the year 2770 of the Third Age, Smaug burned and sacked the city of Dale before entering the Dwarf Kingdom under the Mountain, where he slaughtered or drove out the Dwarves. For two centuries he lay on his hoard within Erebor. Then in 2941, his slumbers were disturbed by the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins and Thorin and Company.



Smaug lay for many years on his hoard

The Destruction of Lake-town

The Lake Men of Esgaroth became complacent as they dwelt in peace in their town that stood above the water on stilts. It had been so long since Smaug had left Lonely Mountain that many people scoffed at the idea that he would ever return to attack them. However, Bilbo's theft of a cup from his hoard aroused the dragon to fury. He smashed the hiding place of the Dwarves high on the flank of Lonely Mountain, then sped above the ruins of Dale, towards Lake-town. Many of the townspeople believed the dragon's fire was the King under the Mountain forging gold. But it was not so, and their wooden town could muster little defence against the fires of an enraged dragon.



2



Once awakened, the Dragon of Erebor rose up in fiery wrath against the Lake Men of Esgaroth

The Battle of the Five Armies

The death of Smaug, the Dragon of Lonely Mountain, freed the treasures of the dragon's hoard from its guardian. The Dwarves of Thorin Oakenshield were soon joined by an army of Men from Lake-town, the army of the Elf-king of Mirkwood and an army of Dwarves from the Iron Hills. Yet another army, greater in number than the other four together, spilled into the valley under Lonely Mountain. It was led by a vast number of heinous Orcs from the Misty Mountains and they, too, came to claim the dragon's wealth. Orcs by the thousand, wolves and Wolf-riders, and clouds of bloodsucking bats fell on the gathered armies.



The Battle of the Five Armies was a bloody and chaotic affair



The Battle of the Five Armies claimed the lives of many Elves, Dwarves and Orcs

The Eagles in the Battle

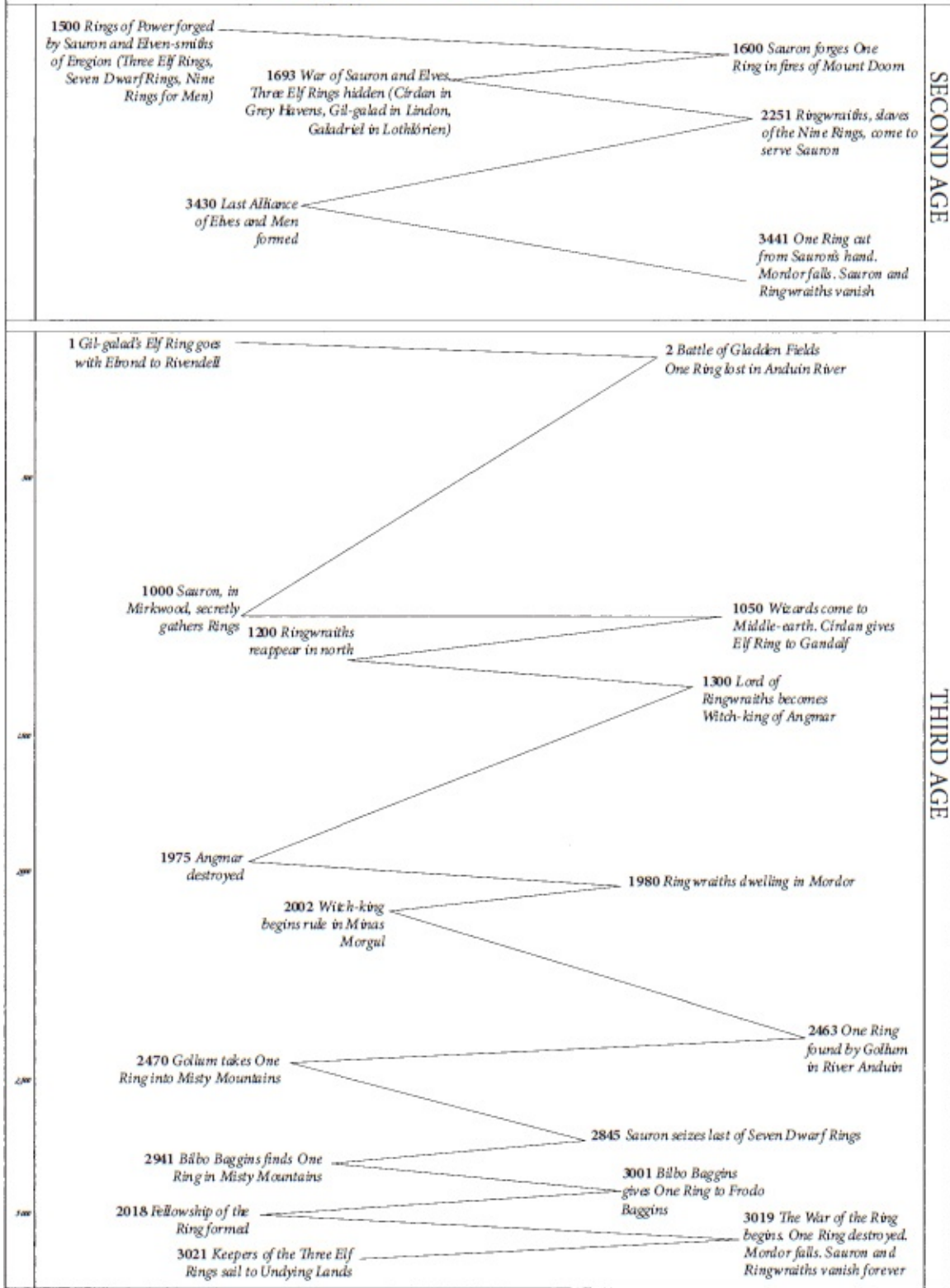
The Great Eagles of the Misty Mountains joined in against the legions of Orcs in the Battle of the Five Armies. These Eagles were of such size that they were capable of carrying Men, Dwarves and Hobbits aloft in their flight. They were the noble descendants of the Eagles of Beleriand, who in the First Age fought in the War of Wrath against the winged fire dragons of Morgoth. During the Quest of Lonely Mountain, Great Eagles inhabited the eastern slopes of the Misty Mountains, near the High Pass leading from Rivendell and not far from Goblin-town. There, they harried the Goblins and their allies, and rescued the Dwarves of the Company of Adventurers from a band of Goblins and Wargs. Later they would become allies and rescuers of members of the Fellowship of the Ring at critical moments of the quest.

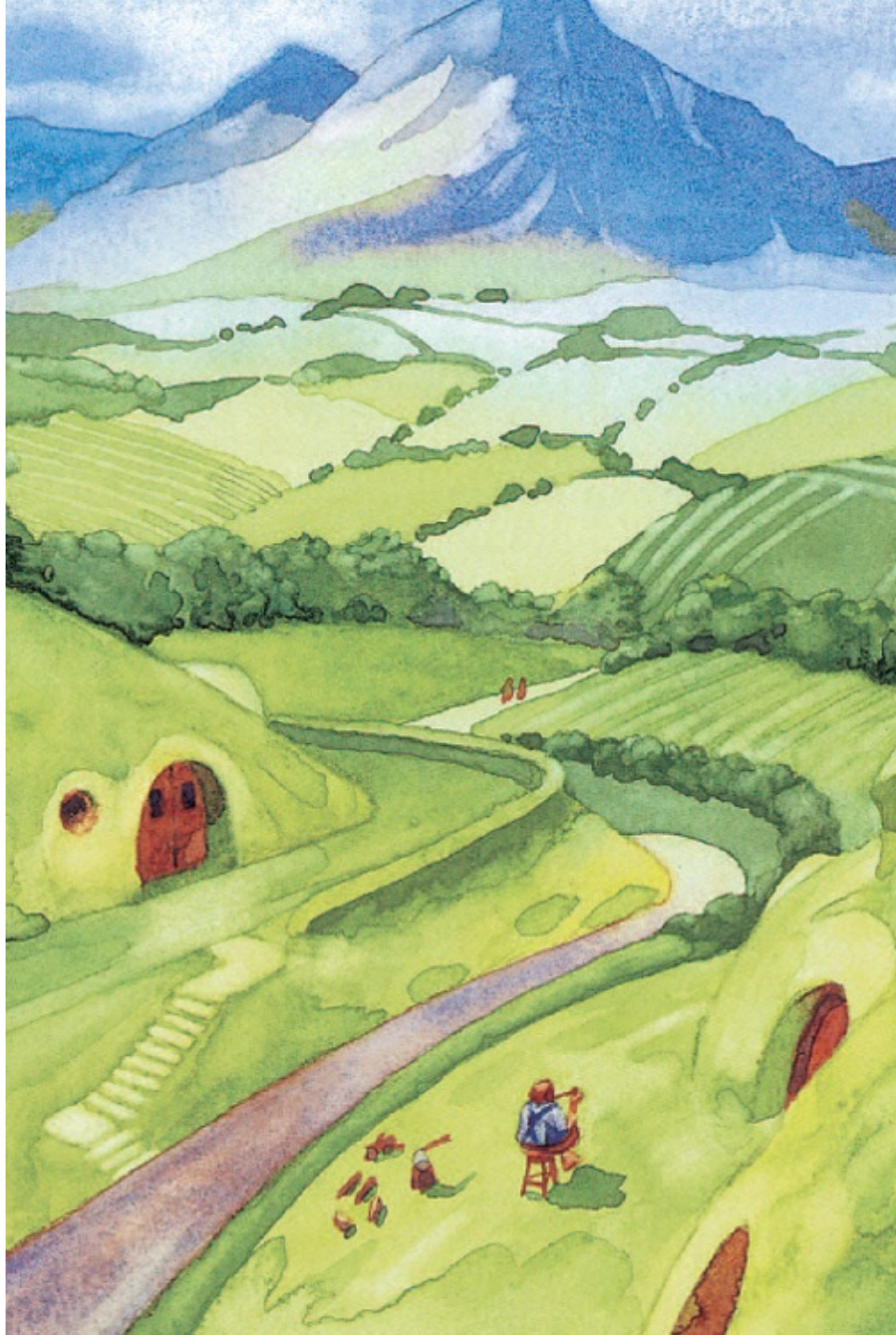


The Quest of the Ring



HISTORY OF THE RINGS OF POWER





Bag End was one of the finest holes in Hobbiton

The Shire

The green and pleasant lands of the Shire had been the homeland of the Hobbits since the seventeenth century of the Third Age of the Sun. Here lived Bilbo Baggins, who joined the Quest of Lonely Mountain and on that adventure acquired a magic Ring. This chance discovery drew Bilbo, his heir Frodo Baggins and all the Hobbits of the Shire into the greatest drama of that Age. So it was that the meekest and least of all peoples came to hold the fate of all the world in their hands.





The Barrow-downs were haunted by evil spirits known as Barrow-wights

The Barrow-downs

To the east of the Shire and the Old Forest lay the Barrow-downs, an ancient burial ground. There were no trees or water on these downlands, only grass covering dome-shaped hills that were ringed and crowned with stone monoliths. Considered by many during the Third Age to be the most ancient burial ground of Men on Middle-earth, these barrow graves of royal ancestors were revered by the Dúnedain of Arnor. By the time of the Ring Quest, these burial chambers were haunted by evil spirits known as Barrow-wights, who had their origin in the Witch-king's realm of Angmar. Passing through this haunted land, the Ringbearer, Frodo Baggins, was drawn into a burial vault and succumbed to the hypnotic spell of these undead phantoms.



The Ford of Bruinen

The Ford of Bruinen was an enchanted river crossing guarded by Elvish powers. For in crossing the river at this ford, one entered the hidden refuge of Imladris. Also known as Rivendell, this was the domain of Elrond Half-elven, who possessed one of the Three Rings of the Elves. It was by the enchantment of Elrond's ring that the Ford was guarded and the refuge of Rivendell remained hidden from the world. During the Quest of Lonely Mountain, after their passage through the Trollshaws, Thorin and Company were permitted to cross the Ford and enter Rivendell. While in the Quest of the Ring, it was at the Ford of Bruinen that Frodo Baggins was attacked by the Nine Black Riders, those terrible undead servants of Sauron also known as the Ringwraiths.



The river rose in wrath against the Black Riders

The Last Homely House East of the Sea

In the wake of the War of Sauron and the Elves during the Second Age, Master Elrond Half-elven led the surviving Elven-smiths of Eriador to the refuge of Rivendell in the steep, hidden valley of Imladris at the foot of the Misty Mountains. Here was hidden the House of Elrond. Known as the 'Last Homely House East of the Sea', it was a house of wisdom and great learning, and served as a refuge for all Elves and Men of goodwill. It was here that Bilbo Baggins found peace after his adventures, and it was here that Frodo Baggins found refuge after the attack of the Ringwraiths at the Ford. It was also in Rivendell where the Fellowship of the Ring was formed, and the Quest of the Ring was planned. After the War of the Ring, Elrond left Rivendell for the Undying Lands, and although many of the other Elves remained for a time, the refuge was finally abandoned in the Fourth Age when the last Elven ship departed from the Grey Havens.



The Last Homely House nestled in its valley



By the Third Age, Khazad-dûm had become the dark and forbidding Mines of Moria

The Mines of Moria

Most ancient and famous of all the Dwarf kingdoms was that realm originally called Khazad-dûm, the ancestral home of Durin the Deathless, the first of the seven Fathers of the Dwarves. Through five Ages of Stars and three Ages of the Sun the Dwarves of Khazad-dûm were prosperous and strong. In the Second Age of the Sun, these were the Dwarves who had a long friendship with the Gwaith-i-Mírdain, the Elven-smiths of Eregion, who forged the Rings of Power. But in the Accursed Years of Sauron's dominion in the Second Age, the Dwarves had closed their great doors to the world. At this time, the mansion was renamed Moria, the 'dark chasm'.

Yet still the Dwarves quarried and worked the forges beneath the Misty Mountains until 1980 of the Third Age of the Sun. In that year the Dwarves delved too deep beneath Mount Barazinbar, and an entombed Balrog was released within the halls of Moria. So terrible was the Balrog's strength and wrath that the Dwarves were either slain or driven from their kingdom.

When the Fellowship of the Ring entered Moria it was therefore a chasm of darkness that had long been abandoned by Dwarves. Its treasures had been stripped by Orkish hordes and through its barren corridors there still walked the Balrog and many bands of Orcs and Trolls.



Zirak-zigil, one of the cruel peaks of the Misty Mountains

Zirak-zigil and Durin's Tower

Among the many snowy peaks in the Misty Mountains stands Zirak-zigil, one of the three great mountains that tower over the Dwarf kingdom of Moria. It was also known as Silvertine by Men, and Celebdil by the Elves. The other two peaks of Moria were named Fanuidhol and Caradhras by the Elves, and were commonly called Cloudyhead and Redhorn. Within the pinnacle of Zirak-zigil – at the top of the winding Endless Stair – was a lookout chamber called Durin's Tower. At the end of the Third Age the Wizard Gandalf did battle with the Balrog of Moria. In this Battle of the Peak, the Endless Stair and Durin's Tower were destroyed.

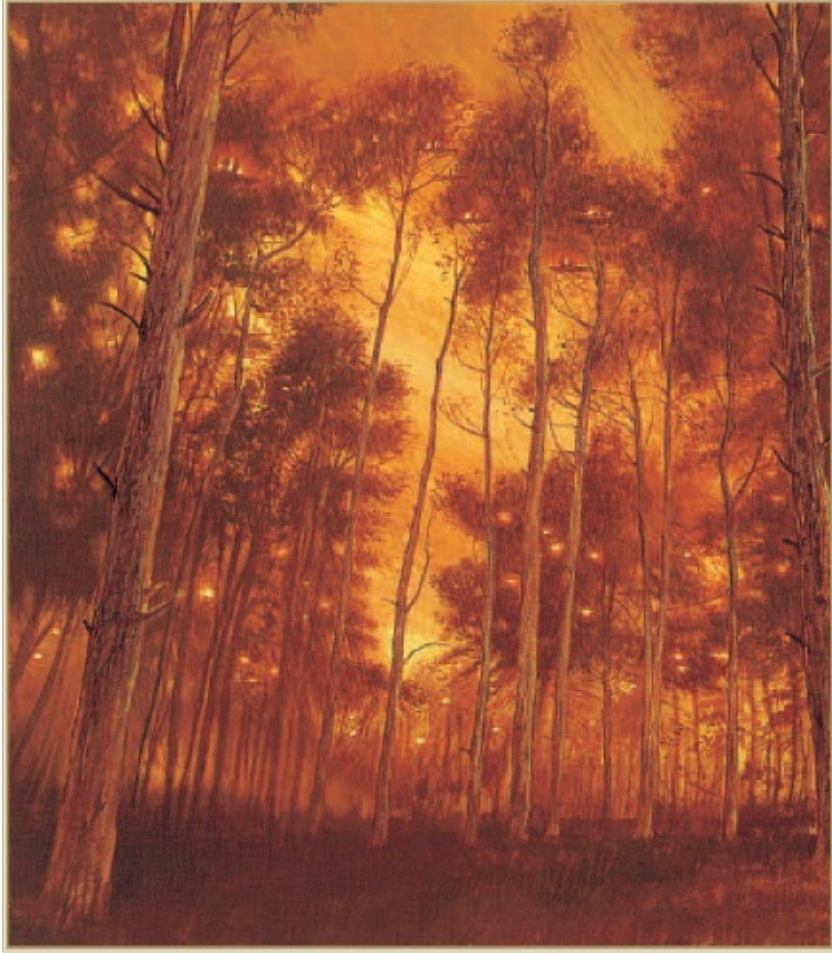
The Golden Forest of Lothlórien

The fairest Elf-kingdom remaining on Middle-earth in the Third Age was Lothlórien, where the Noldor lady Galadriel and the Sindar lord Celeborn ruled. In this wooded realm the tallest and fairest trees of Middle-earth grew, and some part of the brilliance of the Elf-kingdoms of ancient times seemed to glow.

At the very heart of Lothlórien was the hill of Cerin Amroth, where the house of the Elf-king Amroth once stood. It was said to be a fair and enchanted place where the Elf-flowers Elanor and Niphredil constantly bloomed. Here Arwen, daughter of Elrond Half-elven, and Aragorn, son of Arathorn, pledged their love; and to this hill Arwen returned in the Fourth Age to seek her final place of rest.

Into the magical realm of Lothlórien came the Fellowship of the Ring, fleeing the servants of Sauron, and there among these Elves, the Galadhrim, they found shelter and rest.

The Galadhrim were wise in the ways of the forest and they lived almost invisibly on high platforms in the trees. Lothlórien was also protected by the power of Galadriel and the Elf Ring Ninya, the Ring of Adamant.



The Mallorn trees of Lothlórien shimmered gold



The Pillars of the Kings towered over the River Anduin

Argonath, The Gates of Gondor

The Argonath was a pair of massive sculptures cut into the towering cliffs on either side of the river gorge that fed into a lake above the great fall of Rauros on the Anduin River. Argonath means the 'royal stones', but they were also known as the Pillars of the Kings or the Gates of Gondor because the images in stone were of Isildur and Anárion, the first kings of Gondor. These massive figures were carved in the living rock in the year 1340 of the Third Age to mark the northern limit of the kingdom of Gondor. And it was by way of the river and through these gates that Frodo the Ringbearer and the Fellowship of the Ring passed on their quest.

The Rauros Falls

The most spectacular waterfall on Middle-earth in the Third Age was the Rauros Falls on the Great River Anduin on the northern border of Gondor. The name Rauros means ‘roaring foam’ and accurately described the high waterfall as it fell in a shimmering golden haze from the long lake of Nen Hithoel on the heights of Eryn Muil to the marshlands far below. The falls were unnavigable, but a portage route called the North Stair had been cut in the cliffs as a means of bypassing them. During the Quest of the Ring, the funeral boat of Boromir was sent over the Rauros Falls.





The boat bearing Boromir passed unharmed over the Falls of Rauros



The Golden Hall of the Rohirrim was a place of feasting and warmth

The Golden Hall of the Rohirrim

The greatest allies of the Dúnedain in the Third Age were the Rohirrim. These were the finest horsemen of Middle-earth and from Meduseld, the Golden Hall, their kings had ruled Rohan for five hundred years. At the outbreak of the War of the Ring, however, the Rohirrim withheld their aid from the Dúnedain because their king was under the vile influence of the rebel Wizard Saruman. But Gandalf and three others of the Fellowship of the Ring came to the Golden Hall, and because of these emissaries the knights of Rohan cast off their fear. Honouring their old alliance with the Dúnedain of Gondor, the Rohirrim bravely entered the War of the Ring.

Saruman

Curumo, one of the Maiar of Aulë, was the leader of the Istari – the five wizards sent from the Undying Lands to aid the people of Middle-earth. Known as Saruman the White to Men, he was wise and learned, but became so proud that he sought to find the One Ring and wield it himself. Renaming himself Saruman of Many Colours, he commanded armies of Orcs and Men from his stronghold of Isengard.





Saruman the White was at first the leader of the Istari



The Battle of the Hornburg was one of the most decisive in the War of the Ring

The Battle of the Hornburg

Before the Rohirrim could support their allies – the Men of Gondor – in the War of the Ring against the Dark Lord of Mordor, they discovered they must first deal with an enemy that had arisen within their own lands. For the army of the rebel Wizard Saruman, which comprised a multitude of Uruk-hai, Orcs, Half-orcs and fierce Dunlendings, had advanced out of Isengard and had come wrathfully on the Horsemen of Rohan. At great cost, the army of Isengard drove the Rohirrim before them, until the Horsemen were forced to seek refuge in the ancient citadel in Helm's Deep called the Hornburg. Here, three of the Ring Fellowship – Aragorn, the Dwarf Gimli and the Elf-prince Legolas – joined the Rohirrim.

At Hornburg, one of the great battles in the War of the Ring was fought as the enemy stormed the earthwork defences and the high walls, and battered the great gate of the ancient citadel.



The Walls of Isengard

In the War of the Ring, it seemed that the evil allies of Sauron the Ring Lord arose everywhere out of the dark lands. One such mighty ally was the rebel Wizard Saruman who held the tower and citadel of Isengard. Once thought to be a friend of the Men of Gondor and Rohan and therefore granted the keys to Isengard, Saruman later became seduced by the Ring Lord and was drawn into league with him. Thereafter Saruman surrounded himself with Orcs, Uruk-hai, Dunlendings and Half-orcs.

Other beings unexpectedly came into the War because they had been harmed by the servants of Saruman, who had burned and laid waste the forests about Isengard. The mighty giants called Ents came against Saruman. Half-Men, half-trees, these ancient guardians of the forests were the tallest and strongest race on Middle-earth. Rank upon rank of these vengeful giants attacked the very walls of Isengard.





Isengard could not withstand the wrath of the Ents



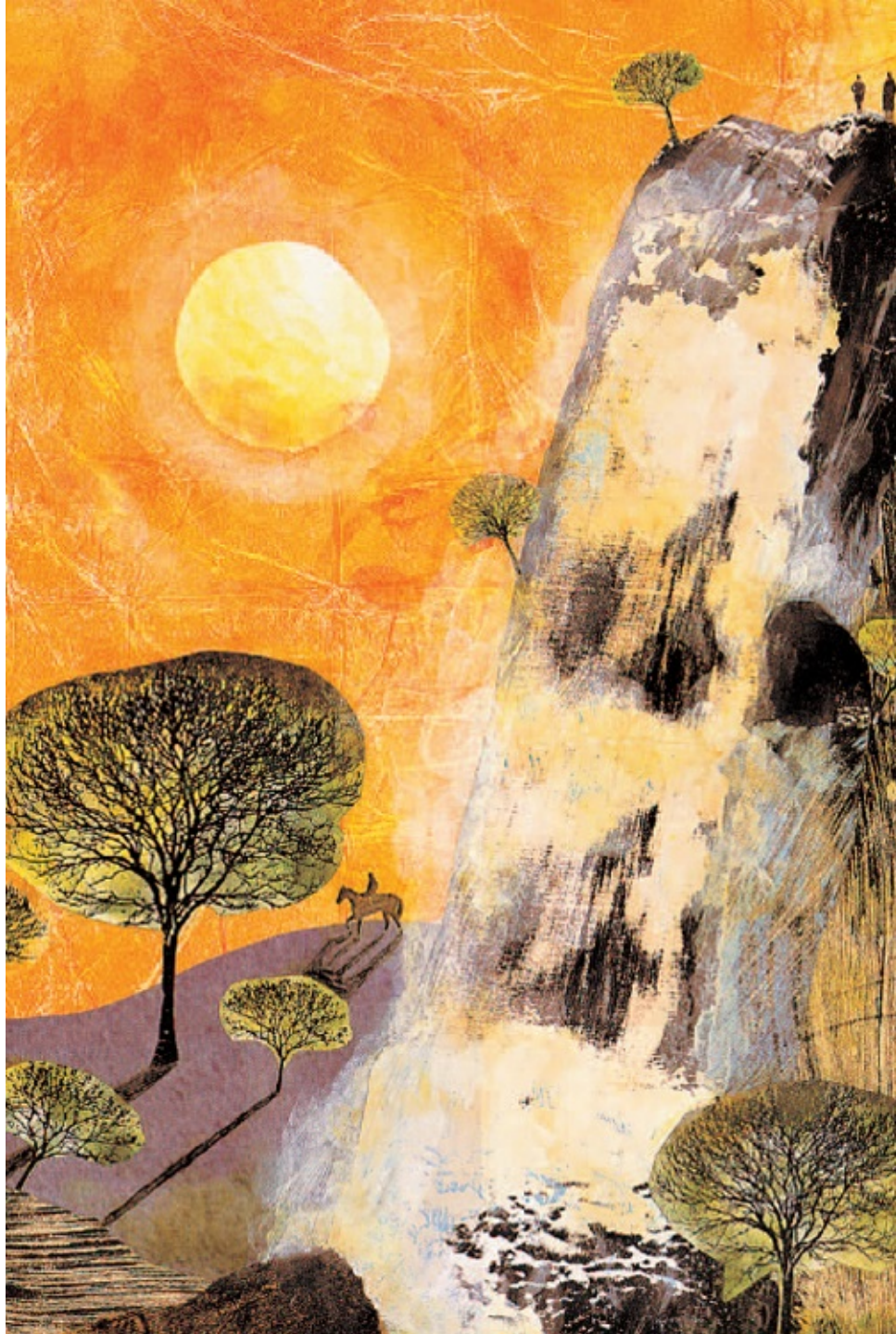
Gollum leads Frodo and Sam through the foul-smelling maze of the marshes

The Dead Marshes

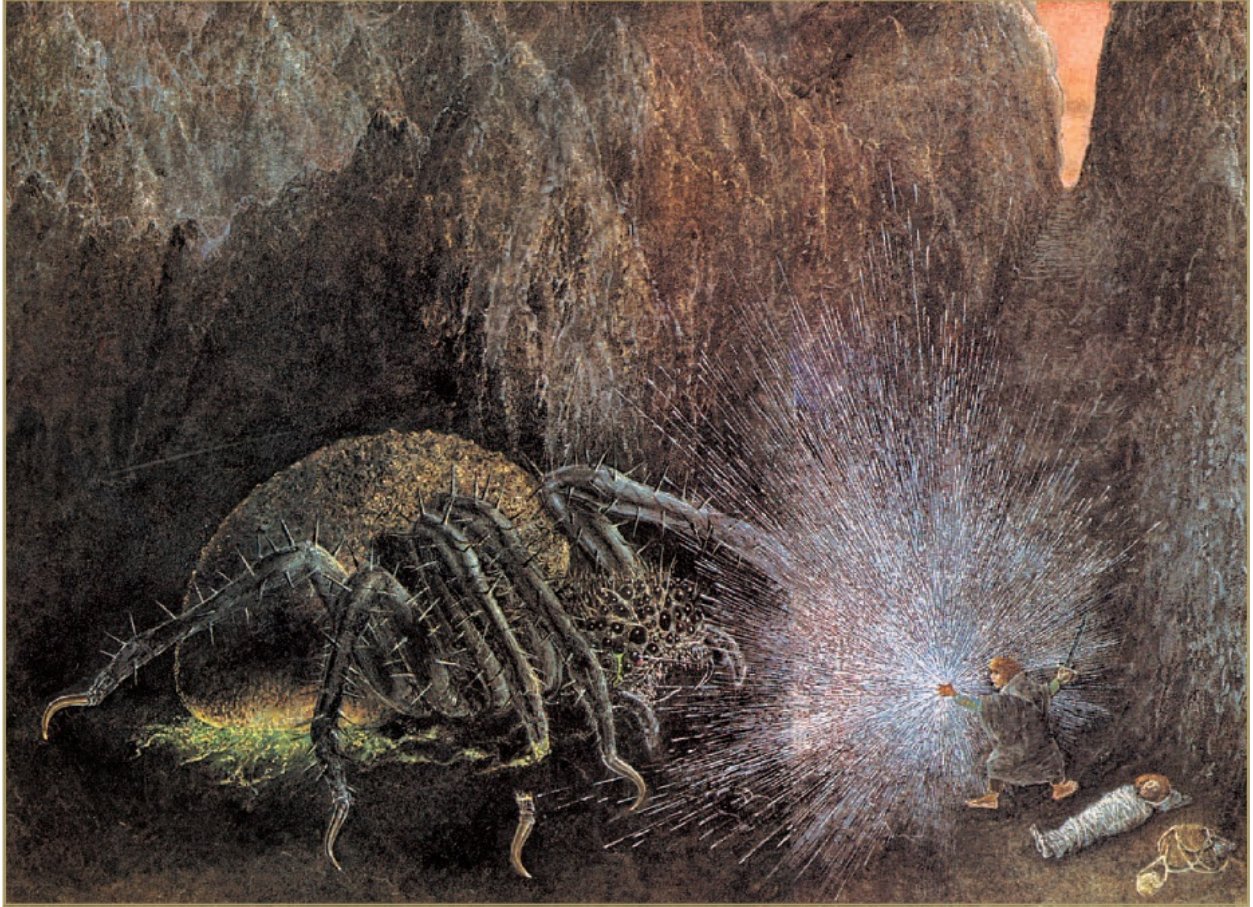
Between the Falls of Rauros on the River Anduin and the mountains of Mordor was the vast fenland called the Dead Marshes. On this foul, trackless wasteland few ever dared to travel, for not only were the Marshes pathless and the waters stagnant and poisoned, but they were also haunted by the phantoms of dead Men, Elves and Orcs. Yet, to achieve his Quest, Frodo the Ringbearer and his companion had to cross the Marshes, so they forced the creature called Gollum to guide them through this vile land.

The Window of the Sunset

Henneth Annun, or the 'Window of the Sunset', was a cavern refuge of the Rangers of Ithilien that was hidden behind the curtain of a spectacular waterfall in the north of Ithilien. Its waters flowed into the River Anduin near the Field of Cormallen and just south of Cair Andros. It was a natural cave formation that was further excavated by Turin of Gondor in 2901 of the Third Age. During the War of the Ring it was often used by Faramir and his Rangers. The Ringbearer, Frodo Baggins, was given shelter in this refuge during the Quest of the Ring.



Henneth Annun was a glorious sight



Shelob was daunted by the light from the Phial of Galadriel



Shelob the Great

In the mountains of Mordor there was one little-used pass called Cirith Ungol. Few ever attempted to enter Mordor this way, for the guardian of the pass was Shelob the Great, last ancient daughter of Ungoliant, the Great Spider that had destroyed the Trees of the Valar.

Dangerous as this pass was, the Ringbearer and his companion dared it, for this was their only chance of entry into Mordor. By the treachery of Gollum and the strength of Shelob, the Ringbearer was struck down and brought near death until his servant, Samwise Gamagee, valiantly leapt to his defence.





The Mountains of Mordor

After their narrow escape from Shelob the Great and the Orcs of the Tower of Cirith Ungol, the Hobbits attempted to climb the Morgai – the ‘Black Fence’ – an eastern ridge in the Ephel Dúath, the ‘Mountains of the Shadows’, that formed the inner wall of Mordor’s western mountains. The edge of the ridge was notched and jagged with fang-like crags, and was separated from the Ephel Dúath by a trough, in which a road lead to the north. From the heights of the Morgai, the two Hobbits looked down onto the dismal barren plateau of Gorgoroth, and beyond; eastward they could spy where their quest must end in the volcanic fires of Mount Doom.





Minas Tirith was an awesome sight

Minas Tirith

Minas Tirith, meaning ‘The Tower of Guard’ in Sindarin, was the capital of Gondor in the second half of the Third Age, after the city of Osgiliath fell into ruin. It was originally named Minas Anor, Sindarin for ‘Tower of the Setting Sun’.

The city was built on seven levels, all except the first of them divided by a huge spur of rock jutting from the mountains behind. The seventh level, at the same height as the top of the spur, contained the Citadel of Gondor with the 300-foot Tower of Ecthelion rising from its centre. In the courtyard in front of the tower grew the White Tree, the symbol of Gondor. In a secret chamber at the top of the tower, the Stewards of Gondor kept the Seeing Stone of Minas Anor.

Minas Tirith was surrounded by the Pelennor Fields, which were peaceful farmland until the great Battle of the Pelennor Fields was fought there at the climax of the War of the Ring.

Dunharrow and the Dwimorberg

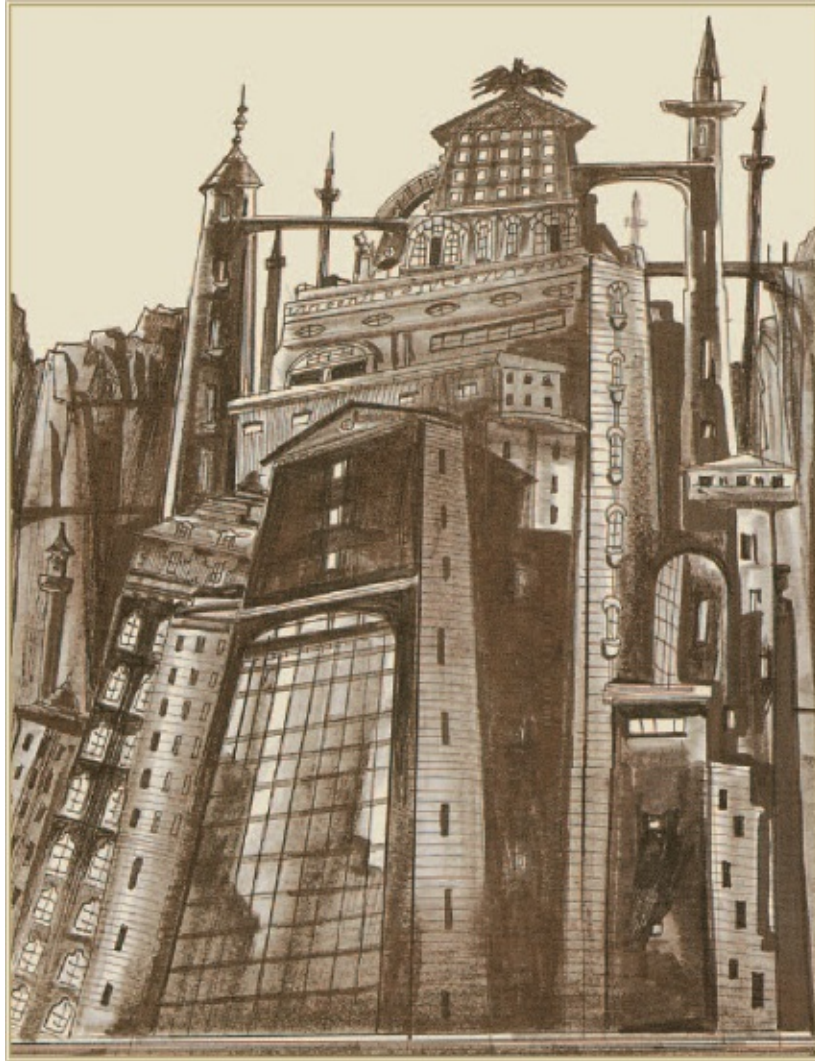
Among the most ancient fortresses upon Middle-earth was Dunharrow in Rohan. This refuge could only be approached by a switchback road up the steep cliffs of the mountains. It was a monumental piece of engineering. The road reached a wall of rock at the top through which a gap was cut, and an incline lead on to the Hold of Dunharrow. This was a high, broad alpine meadow on which thousands could encamp themselves in times of war. Upon this was a great corridor of unshaped, black standing stones which led straight to the Dwimorberg, the 'Haunted Mountain', and a black wall of stone pierced by the 'Dark Door', a massive archway also known as the 'Gate of the Dead'. This led to a secret glen that was haunted by the spirits of the dead who prevented living men from crossing to the far side of the White Mountains by means of this abandoned pass. During the War of the Ring, it was through these Paths of the Dead that Aragorn the future king rode. As heir to the Dúnedain kingdoms, he recruited and commanded a ghostly army of these Dead Men of Dunharrow.



The entrance to Dunharrow led down into darkness

Minas Morgul

In the year 2002 of the Third Age, the fortress-city of Minas Ithil, the ‘Tower of the Moon’, was captured after a two-year siege by the forces of the Nazgûl Witch-king, who renamed it Minas Morgul, the ‘Tower of the Wraiths’. It was also called the Tower of Sorcery and the Dead City. Similar in structure to its great rival, Minas Tirith, it became a haunted and wicked place that shone in the night with a ghostly light. By some magical power or fiendish machinery, the upper rooms of its great tower revolved slowly in constant vigilance. For over a thousand years, Minas Morgul was ruled by the terror of the Ringwraiths, and this resulted in the almost total ruin and depopulation of the fief of Ithilien. In the year 2050 the Witch-king of Morgul slew Eärnur, the last king of Gondor. In 2475 Osgiliath was sacked including its stone bridge, which was broken by the Witch-king’s army of giant Orcs known as Uruk-hai. During the War of the Ring, Minas Morgul played a key role in Sauron’s strategies. The forces out of Morgul were the first to move directly against Gondor and overrun Osgiliath.



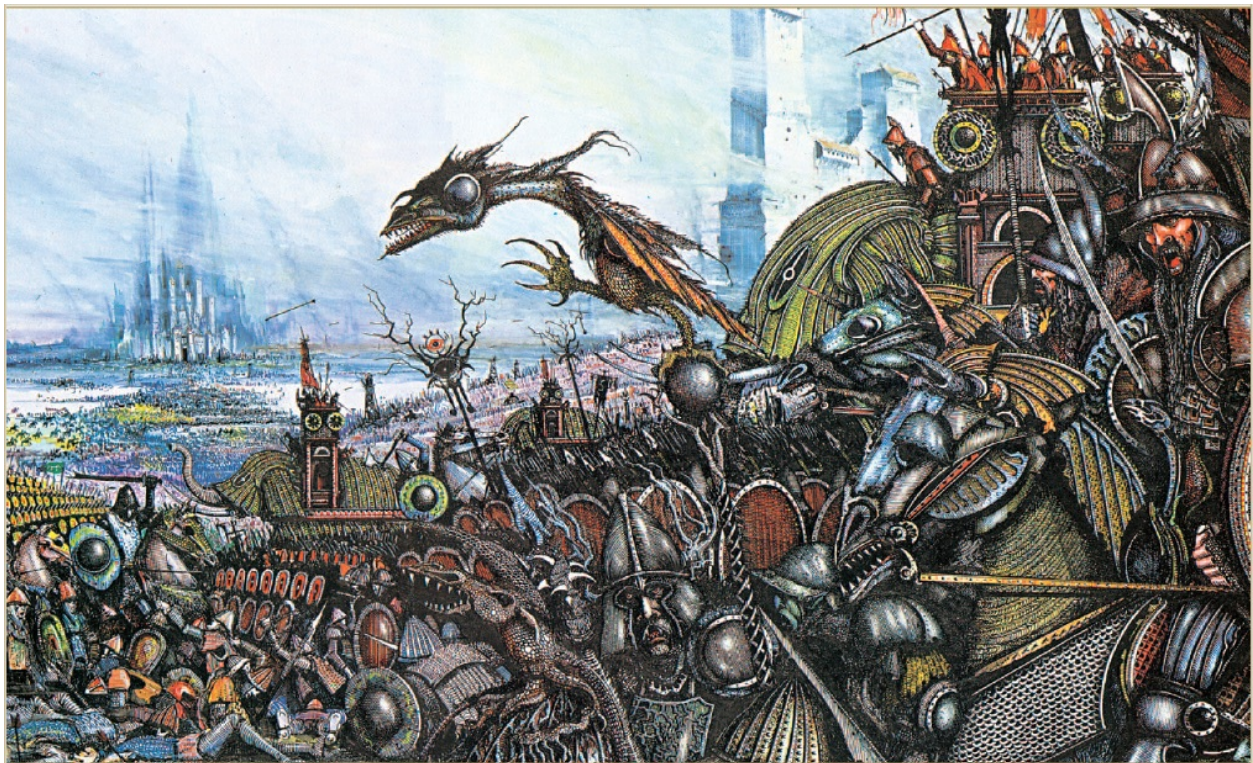
The once-fair Minas Ithil became the black tower of Minas Morgul



The Witch-king of Morgul

The Witch-king

The Witch-king was originally a sorcerer king of the Second Age who was given the first of the Nine Rings of Mortal Men by Sauron the Ring Lord. The Witch-king became the Lord of the Nazgûl Ringwraiths. In 1300 of the Third Age, he rose up in the form of the Witch-king of Angmar, and laid waste to the North-kingdom of the Dúnedain. In the second millennium of the Third Age, he began his attacks on the South-kingdom. As the Witch-king of Morgul, he fought and harried the men of Gondor for a thousand years. He led a mighty army to the Battle of the Pelennor, the decisive conflict of the War of the Ring.



The enemy forces at the Battle of Pelennor Fields included Mûmakil



King Theoden rode into battle with the Rohirrim

The Pelennor Fields

The greatest battle of the War of the Ring was fought on Pelennor Fields before the White Tower of Gondor, which was besieged by the army of the Witch-king of Morgul. Haradrim cavalry and infantry in scarlet and gold marched into battle with elephantine Mûmakil, Variags of Khand and axe-bearing Easterlings. Orcs, Uruk-hai, Olog-hai, Trolls and Half-orcs out of Mordor joined this vast host. Ranged against them were the Captains of the Outlands from Dol Amroth, Lossarnach, Anfalas, Morthond, Ethir and Pinnath Gelin. This army of Gondor was driven back from Osgiliath and Rammas Echor to seek shelter within the citadel of Minas Tirith. For two days and two nights the battle raged. Siege towers, catapults and great arms battered the walls and rained fire and stones on the Men of Gondor. All seemed lost; darkness covered the land, the Morgul hordes swarmed over the Field, and the Witch-king shattered the great gates of the city. Then, unexpectedly, the Rohirrim allies of Gondor rode into the Field to join the fray.



The Witch-king and the Shield-maiden

Eowyn and the Witch-king

The Witch-king believed his moment of ultimate victory had come when he led his vast Morgul army and his Haradrim allies into the Battle of Pelennor Fields. Protected by the prophecy that he could not be slain by the hand of a man, the Witch-king discovered in the midst of the din of battle that the opponent before him was the Shield-maiden, Eowyn of Rohan. She dared to withstand the most terrible of the servants of Sauron and stood firm in the face of the wraith and his monstrous steed.

The Cracks of Doom

The immense volcanic mountain of Mordor, known as Mount Doom, was more properly called Orodruin, meaning ‘mountain of blazing fire’. This was the fire and forge of Sauron who, within the Chambers of Fire and the fissures called the Cracks of Doom within its volcanic cone, made the One Ring in the year 1600 of the Second Age. The existence of the Cracks of Doom was critical to the War of the Ring, for only there could the One Ring be unmade and Sauron’s power destroyed. In the year 3019, Frodo Baggins reached his destination on the edge of the Cracks of Doom, but in a moment of indecision, he hesitated and the One Ring was seized by Gollum.





Gollum falling



The ruin of Mordor

The Destruction of Mordor

For over five millennia, the ‘black land’ of Mordor was Sauron the Ring Lord’s base of power in his quest for dominion over all Middle-earth. Mordor was defended on three sides by mountain ranges. Its central plateau of Gorgoroth was a vast dreary place of slag heaps and Orc pits always under a pall of smoke from the volcanic Mount Doom near its centre. Here, too, was Barad-dûr, Sauron’s Dark Tower of Mordor. Another name for Mount Doom was Amon Amarth, the ‘mountain of fate’, as the fires in its volcanic heart rose at Sauron’s command and in his absence fell and became dormant. At each return, the volcano erupted. As the Quest of the Ring ended – mirroring the fate of the Dark Lord – Amon Amarth burst forth in one last cataclysm that brought ruin to all of Mordor.





Years 37,063–40,000 (Historic Time)

The Fourth Age of the Sun

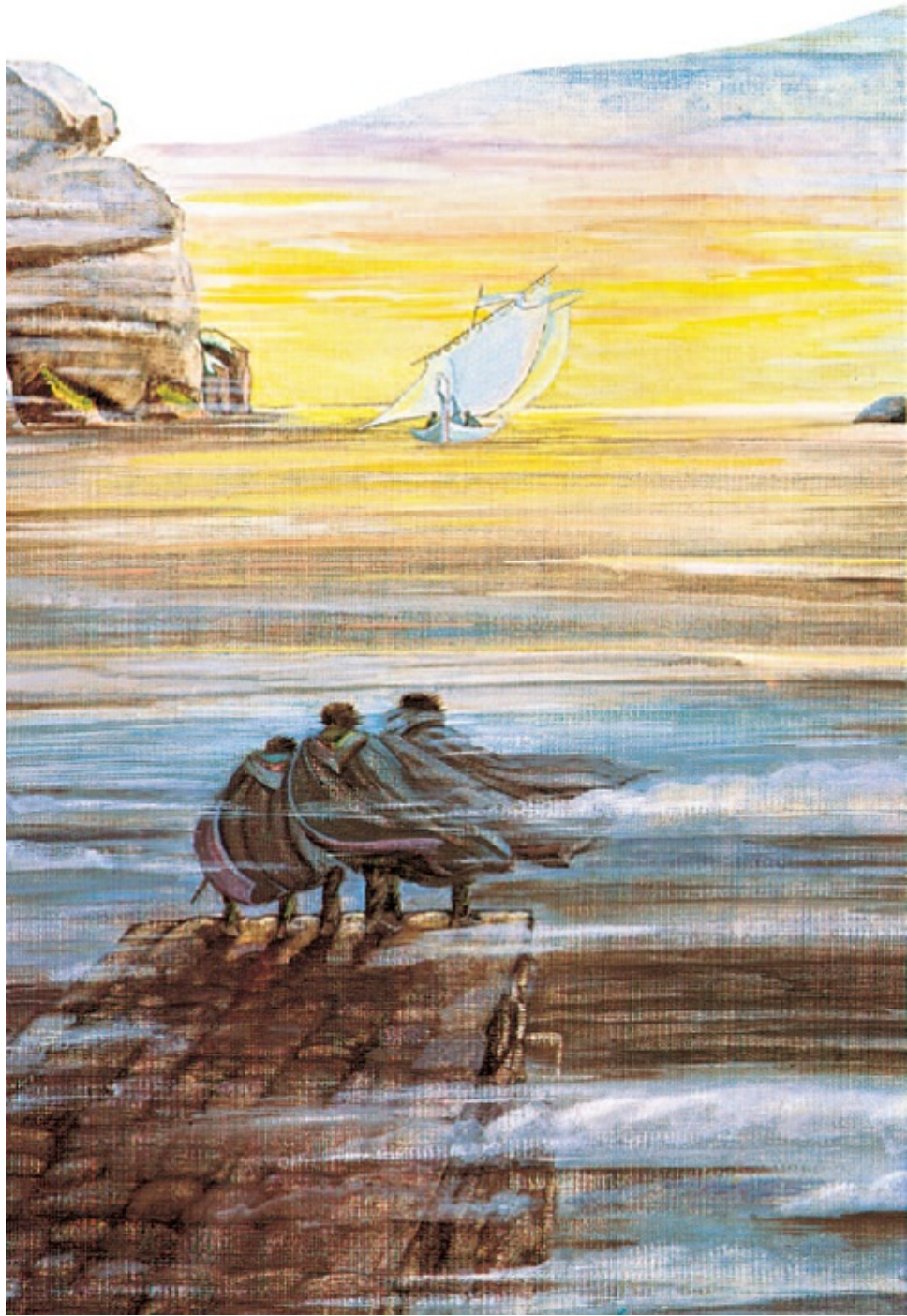
When the last Elven ship finally reached the immortal shores during the Fourth Age, the Undying Lands vanished into another dimension, beyond human understanding. The globed world increasingly evolved into the mortal planet of Earth. The land-masses drifted towards the familiar shapes of our known world. And, as mythic time passed into recorded historic time, the Earth began to orbit the sun in the physical universe.

The High King of the Reunited Kingdom

Aragorn son of Arathorn was also known as Elessar (meaning 'Elfstone'), the Dúnadan and heir of Isildur of Gondor. At the onset of the Quest of the Ring, Aragorn was the sixteenth Chieftain of the Dúnedain of the North, but was known more humbly as Strider the Ranger. As one of the Fellowship of the Ring, he played a major part in the battles at Hornburg, Pelennor Fields and the Black Gate of Mordor. After the end of the War of the Ring, he was crowned King Elessar Telcontar, the first High King of the Reunited Kingdom of Arnor and Gondor. He married the Elven princess Arwen Evenstar, and during the next century of his reign, Elessar extended his kingdom to most of the western lands of Middle-earth. Though he crushed many enemies in war, he made peace with the Easterlings and the Haradrim, and in the Fourth Age of the Sun, which was ordained the Age of the Dominion of Men, there was peace in the Westlands, and also for many years after that time because of the wisdom of Elessar and his heirs.



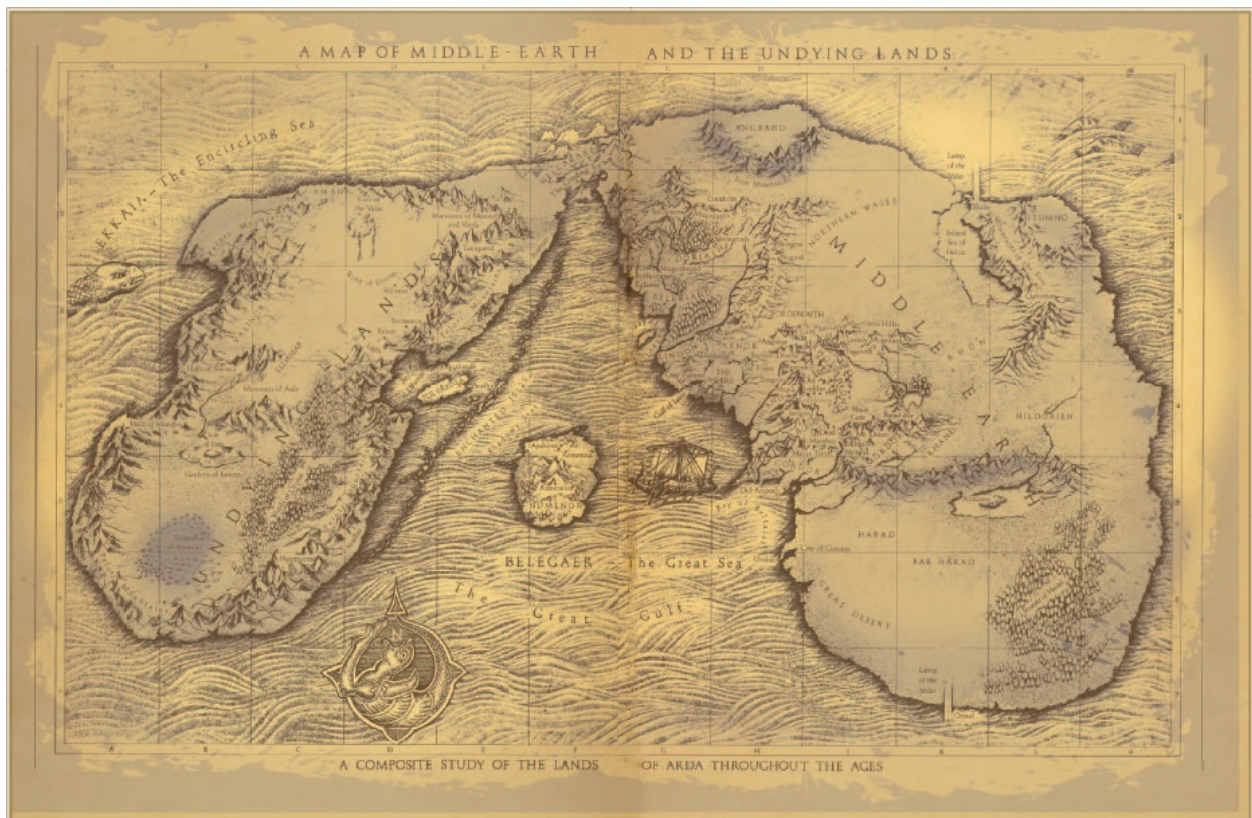
The crowning of the king marked the dawn of the Fourth Age



The Ringbearers departed for the West in an Elven-ship

The Departure of the Ringbearers

When the War of the Ring ended there was peace and prosperity in Middle-earth once again. At that time it was also ordained that the great Elvish powers should pass from Mortal Lands. So it was that Elrond, Galadriel and Gandalf, the keepers of the Three Elf Rings, and Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, two bearers of the Ruling Ring, came to the Grey Havens. In an Elven-ship, they sailed westwards to the Undying Lands.



*This historical map shows an artist's conception of Middle-earth from the 1970s, before the publication of Tolkien's **Unfinished Tales** revealed such geographical details as the star shape of Númenor.*

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3019

THIRD AGE

25 February

First Battle of Fords of Isen

2 March

Second Battle of Fords of Isen

March of Ents on Isengard

3/4 March

Battle of Hornburg

11 March

Invasion of East Rohan

First assault on Lórien

13 March

Battle of Ships at Pelargir

Battle Under the Trees in Mirkwood

Second assault on Lórien

17 March

Battle of Dale

Siege of Erebor

22 March

Third assault on Lórien

25 March

Battle before the Black Gate of Mordor

One Ring destroyed in fires of Mount

Doom

Downfall of Sauron and Mordor

27 March

Siege of Erebor broken

28 March

Destruction of Dol Guldur in Mirkwood

1 May

Crowning of King Elessar

3 November

Battle of By-Water in the Shire

Final downfall of Saruman

END OF THE WAR OF THE RING

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