

The Economy and Economic History of Gondor

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Reconstructing ancient economies of any kind is an enterprise fraught with difficulty. Firstly (and very importantly) no ancient government had an idea of 'the economy' in the modern sense: the sum of 'economic' activity did add up to a whole, but it was undirected and largely accidental. Those trying to study it are faced with an almost complete absence of statistics, and with a world so different to our own, that many basic ideas are irrelevant (Salway, 1981). Since we have such problems dealing with even relatively well-known periods, what can we say about Gondor where documentation is virtually non-existent and archaeological discovery impossible? I intend to make some suggestions – if only to provoke discussion!

Comparison with real-world events and structures is a time-honoured method of solving problems about Middle-earth: the resulting similarities and differences can be equally instructive. For Gondor's economy and economic history the best comparison is with the classical world. Fortunately this is an area on which a great deal of work has been done and some useful general premises have been established. It is generally accepted that the classical world was basically an agrarian society in which towns were not centres of industrial production and in which notions of 'economics' were comparatively undeveloped though markets and trade had some importance. It is also held that the wealth of the Roman Empire came largely from its land which also provided the bulk of the state's revenues: that the army, or at least the defences generally, constituted by far the biggest part of the state budget; and that other state expenditure was extremely limited by comparison with that of modern states (Cameron, 1993a). How far does this model hold good for Gondor?

Despite the lack of evidence it must be almost certain that the basis of society and wealth in Gondor was the land. The great majority of the population are likely to have been employed in agriculture. This produced not only food but also raw materials for craft production: wool and plant fibres (and also dye plants) for textiles, hides and skins for leather-working and, above all, wood products. Timber was used for houses and ships, bark for tanning leather, wood for a multitude of domestic uses and as fuel for the furnaces and kilns of many other crafts. It is highly unlikely that any type of non-agricultural production in Gondor approached the scale of a true industry in the modern sense in terms of scale and organisation of production. Craft production would typically be a small scale affair restricted by available techniques and markets in a country which even at its richest was unquestionably poor and under-developed by modern standards.

These small scale 'industries' were probably mainly to be found in towns. Some, such as leather tanneries, dye-works and brewhouses, were likely to be found mainly on the outskirts of towns, being malodorous and posing a threat to supplies of clean drinking water. Others such as iron working and potteries might as well be rural as urban, access to resources being vitally important, though they might act as foci for the development of small specialised villages.

Trade was probably more important in Gondor than in the classical world. The relatively small size of the country at most periods, combined with the high environmental diversity suggested by our sources, would encourage regional specialisation and internal trade. Beyond this, Gondor lay astride the lower course of the Anduin, one of the major natural routeways of north-western Middle-earth and

probably a focus of long-distance trade, much like the Rhône in European history. The fact that even orcs understood coinage well enough to use it with deadly accuracy in an insult (Tolkien, 1954 v. 3 pp. 319-324) suggests a fairly high level of trade and monetization of economies in the Anduin valley and related areas, presumably including Gondor.

For its time and place Gondor was a sophisticated state: revenue collection and expenditure would be of vital importance in maintaining the state and its structures. It is very difficult to say quite what these were and how they *were* maintained as the surviving evidence is so slim. From the description of Númenor in *Unfinished Tales* (Tolkien, 1980, pp. 165-172), we may conclude that towns and cities were not important in Númenórean culture. It is likely that towns in Gondor were centres of craft production and distribution of goods, working up the products of the countryside into goods for resale and supplying the country with wares which could not be produced locally. They were important for transport, serving as a link between the local district and the outside world through their merchants and markets, and were also the usual seat of public administration and justice. Towns were not, however, regarded as the centre and summit of civilisation and culture, and the natural focus of politics and loyalty, as in the Hellenistic and, to some extent, the Roman world.

Following on from this, it is likely that the lowest unit of Gondorian local government was a territorial unit similar to the *pagus* of Roman Britain and Gaul. Such units would contain one or more towns but would not necessarily hold or be dependent on a city proper. Their 'capital' would be wherever the local administration happened to be. Tax collection was probably organised at this level, but how much control the central government had over it is doubtful and probably varied widely at different periods in the Kingdom's history. Prior to the Downfall of Númenor, 'Gondor' most likely was a loose federation of Faithful colonies. Parts of that structure persisted until the end of the Third Age causing recurrent social, political and economic problems for the state. Strong rulers could keep the provincial lords in check, ensuring an adequate flow of revenue to the centre and co-

ordinating state expenditure. At other times, most clearly under the later Stewards, Gondor tended to fragment, with effective power (and control of revenues) devolving upon the provincial lords and only lip-service paid to the notional ruler.

Taxes themselves probably followed the Roman model, the possibilities being severely restricted by the administrative capability of the state. District taxation might take the form of a levy on landowners, or a poll tax: indirect taxation might consist of customs dues, inheritance taxes and the like (Grant, 1979). Some revenue might also come from monopolies on certain industries. At the other end of the Eurasian continent, successive Chinese governments found salt and iron monopolies to be highly profitable (Gernet, 1982). If Gondor's government *did* operate a salt monopoly, it may have been one of the rare cases where *external* trade had a major part to play in the economy. We tend to forget how scarce and vitally necessary salt was in pre-modern times, and how important trade in it was. Gondor was well placed to supply salt to the whole Anduin valley, and could have profited considerably by that.

Having gathered in its revenues, what was Gondor doing with them? Major areas of expenditure were probably the upkeep of the Court and the administration of the country. This probably included tax collection, census taking, provision of justice and management of state property. The latter might conceivably include major roads and important constructions such as the seaway through the Ethir Anduin. Extensive archives were maintained, though they have, alas, not survived. There may also have been state involvement in the supply of food and water to some of the major cities such as Osgiliath and Pelargir, though it must be very doubtful that even Osgiliath at its peak was anywhere near the size of classical Rome. Many of the functions such as education, health care and social security which we now associate with government to some extent (though state involvement in them is very recent) would be dealt with at local level by private individuals or groups such as trade guilds.

By far the greatest part of state expenditure would be on the military. For most of its history Gondor appears to have had a standing army and

navy. These are complex and expensive institutions: the men who form them have to be paid and require supplies of all sorts from ships and fortifications to crockery and food. Some things may have been made in state factories, others by contractors. Food would have to be bought from farmers and/or merchants. The presence of troops in an area could indeed be a considerable economic opportunity. They would have cash in their pockets to spend; roads improved for military purposes would also speed civilian transport; they would need to buy food, offering a guaranteed market to local farmers; contracts for other supplies might be awarded locally to cut transport costs (Cameron, 1993a). Important as the military sector was though, it is not likely to have played much part in the economy at large. One area in which the state could have considerable effect on the economy was the coinage. This must certainly have been controlled by the central government and much would depend on their ability to maintain a solid currency which people were confident about. In late Roman times, progressive decline in the quality of the silver coinage led to galloping inflation and near breakdown of the currency and of taxation (Cameron, 1993a and 1993b). Gondor never seems to have suffered from this particular problem. In the later part of the Third Age when the country was under most stress it was also relatively small and so not subject to the difficulties of scale that plagued late Antique rulers. It is reasonable to assume that Gondor maintained a stable currency until the end of the Third Age – it may have been the only central function over which the Stewards kept exclusive control. Its place in the wider economy of north-west Middle-earth had probably long since been taken by coins issued by Dorwinion and by the Dwarves.

If evidence is slim for the role of the state in Gondor's economy, that for the private sector is non-existent. Yet this was probably by far the more important of the two, with most production both in agriculture and crafts lying in private hands (Clarkson, 1971). The structure of land ownership in Gondor is obscure beyond reconstruction and the range of possibilities is too wide for speculation. All that can safely be said is that until well into the last millennium of the Third Age, and perhaps not even then,

Gondor was not a feudal country: land ownership and military service were not connected. As far as craft production goes, there is no direct evidence but it is very likely that trade guild existed. The place name Rath Celerdain (Lampwrights' Street) in Minas Tirith, strongly suggests that tradesmen practising a particular craft were clustered together and such clustering is often associated with the existence of guilds. These were corporations of tradesmen authorised by a charter from the town or from the monarch – possibly also, in Gondor, from the great provincial lords. In the larger towns most crafts would have their own guild but, in smaller places, kindred occupations often shared a common organisation. The guilds regulated all activities relating to their craft or crafts in their area of authority, including supervising standards of workmanship, controlling admissions to the guild and conditions of apprenticeship, and regulating trade in raw materials and finished products. They were strongly monopolistic, preserving trade for themselves, slow to admit new members and quick to harrÿ non-members poaching on their preserve. Guilds also provided social and financial services to their members, supporting schools and hospitals and lending money. This latter was particularly important for guilds of merchants, especially those engaged in long distance trade, providing capital for ventures and voyages which could not be supported by one merchant alone. It is quite possible that there were specialist merchant guilds, Companies of Venturers, dealing in particular aspects of Gondor's external trade, especially the maritime trade to Harad. Guilds were also important in local government; their wealthier members often served on councils, and officials enforcing guild labour statutes and market regulations were appointed from their ranks. Though the basis of wealth was land, that was largely capital rather than working cash. A sizeable fraction of mobile wealth in Gondor probably rested with rich guildsmen.

Within Gondor it is probable that internal trade played a very definite part in the economy. The country encompassed a very wide variety of environments, each with its own set of potential resources (Tolkien, 1954, map). In the relatively developed society established by the

Númenórean colonists, each area probably concentrated on its own specialities, exporting them and importing what it lacked. The hills around Dol Amroth, for example, might be better suited to vine and olive growing, whereas the plains of south Lebennin were perhaps suited to wheat growing and cattle grazing. Other natural resources must have been widely and irregularly scattered, such as iron ore or good potting clay. Every area must have had practitioners of necessary crafts, such as blacksmithing, but there must also have been centres of excellence dictated both by resources and the presence of a clientele. Along the coast anchors must have been a regular part of smithy production, for instance, but only Pelargir might have craftsmen who could make anchors for the biggest warships and transports in the Royal fleet, or for the largest merchantmen. Many of Gondor's rivers could probably be used by barges, and the Dúnedain in general built excellent roads. Such relative ease of transport would certainly facilitate trade. It is impossible to say whether or not the rigid horse-collar was known in Gondor. This would affect haulage but even without it we should not underestimate the possibilities. Oyster shells are found in large quantities on Romano-British sites all over England. They must have been shipped either at very high speed or in heavy barrels of sea water for them to arrive edible. The sites on which the shells are found vary widely from the villas of the wealthy to around town squares. Despite the cost of transport, oysters were not food for the elite only in Roman Britain (Salway, 1981). It is likely that transport of goods in Gondor was at this level of efficiency, giving considerable impetus to internal trade. We should also remember, however, that concepts of free markets and fair or unfair competition were probably quite unknown (Salway, 1981). As in most pre-modern societies, protectionism, restrictive practices and commercial skulduggery would be routine hazards of business.

External trade was probably more important to Gondor than to the Roman Empire due to the location of the country. Sited where it was on the coast of Belfalas yet also extending inland beyond the White Mountains along Anduin, Gondor was well placed to take part in long distance trade in many directions. To the north,

traffic along Anduin was extensive enough for portage-ways to be built around major obstacles, such as Sarn Gebir and Rauros (Tolkien, 1954, v. 1, pp. 396-410), and there was probably also contact with Arnor via Tharbad. Eastward we know that Dorwinion (possibly on the Sea of Rhûn) was active in trade (Tolkien, 1937, pp. 176-194), and it is likely that it had links to Gondor and also to areas further east and south, at least at some periods. South of Gondor possible sea routes led to Umbar and beyond into Far Harad. Patterns of trade around the Mediterranean give some insight into commodities which may have been on the move (Cunliffe, 1988).

Gondor itself was probably a major producer of salt, wine and olive oil, may have had fine woollens (much as Spain developed the Merino sheep – the mainstay of our classy woollens and knits), and perhaps had minerals such as copper and tin from the White Mountains. It was also well placed for its merchants to act as middlemen. From the north may have come furs, honey, wax, amber, woollens and other minerals. There was gold in the Grey Mountains (Tolkien, 1954 v. 3 pp. 319-324) – though the presence of dragons would make mining hazardous – and there must have been deposits of tin, copper and silver at various points in the Grey and Misty Mountains. Jet is another possibility together with precious stones such as beryl and semi-precious ones like rock crystal. North of Gondor also lay Khazad-Dûm which had a monopoly on mithril and was very likely a major producer of jewellery, objets d'art and high quality arms. To the east Dorwinion was a major producer of wine and certainly involved in trade (Tolkien, 1937, pp. 176-207), perhaps on a very large scale at certain periods. It probably had links to Gondor, trading in wine, minerals from the enclosed Sea of Rhûn such as alum (very important in dyeing cloth) and products from further afield. Dorwinion's known trade was with the north but it could well also have been the terminus of a 'Silk Road' leading to the Far East. Along this might come fine silk and cotton cloths, carpets, spices, pottery and thoroughbred horses. Southward we read mostly of conflict with Harad but sanctions are a modern idea. In the ancient world even serious political and religious differences usually failed

to prevent trade (Salway, 1981). Gondor's maritime capacity was such that her merchants could even have bypassed the trouble spots to deal with realms further south and unaffected by the territorial ambitions of the Kings. Likely southern products include gold, ivory, gemstones, pearls, ebony and other exotic timbers, dyes and cotton cloth.

All of this makes enticing reading even as a simple list of possibilities and might have had a special niche in Gondor's culture. Just as the voyages of Muslim merchants to the Indian Ocean and Far East inspired the tales of Sinbad the Sailor, so voyages to Farthest Harad or caravans beyond Dorwinion may have inspired adventure tales in Gondor. The truth is, however, that glamorous as long-distance external trade was, it was insignificant next to internal trade, crafts and agriculture in economic terms.

Having considered the general picture, how is it likely to have changed over time? Can we apply concepts of growth and recession to such a confused and undirected economic scene? Although no commentator at the time would have recognised them for what they were, it is likely that fluctuations in the economy did take place. They may have had some impact on the history of Gondor by affecting state revenues and thus the capacity of the government to deal with external threats. In discussions of the ancient economy of Europe certain factors are considered to have allowed growth. These include an increased amount of land being brought under cultivation; a greater population size, with more division of labour and growth in non-agricultural production; higher productivity per head (including the 'peace dividend' of labour available for other purposes which had been directed to the military in wartime). Further, increased government exactions may (within limits) have stimulated productivity, and government expenditure of the money raised by taxation in turn would benefit the economy (Cameron, 1993a). Equally the reverse of these conditions would lead to economic decline.

Can we trace the operation of any of these factors in Gondor? Here we are hampered not only by the sparseness but also by the nature of our evidence. Most of it consists of chronicles and the small remainder is works of history. These focus on politics, mentioning economic

and social matters only in passing, if at all. Interpretation of events, carried out with all due caution, does suggest that Gondor experienced two periods of definite economic growth and two of decline, one far more serious than the other.

The first possible episode of growth lies in the early period, from the foundation of the colonies to the end of the Second Age. The early colonies of the Faithful in this area were on the previously largely uninhabited coast between the mouth of the Morthond and the Ethir Anduin (Tolkien, 1980, pp. 261-265). Quite why this coast was so barren is not at all obvious. The only native tribe we know anything about is that of the Dead Men of Dunharrow. They appear to have had a broadly Iron Age culture with an agricultural base sufficient to support a warrior class and monarchy, and specialist craftsmen. There appears to be no reason why they could not also have occupied the coast. Perhaps differences in soil type, invisible on our maps, combined with constraints of agricultural technique and available crops, prevented permanent settlement on much of the coast. These same areas attracted incoming Númenóreans. Their agriculture was probably rather more advanced than that of the natives, and they may also have relied more on fishing, coming as they did from a nation with a magnificent maritime tradition. The colonies themselves expanded in both territory and population, and may be said to have experienced economic growth. With the appearance of large towns or cities such as Pelargir, it is likely that the population was still increasing and also that there was more craft production and greater division of labour, further pointers to growth in the economy of the colonists. At the same time it is probable that a transformation was occurring within the economies of the native tribes, from a situation where most economic activity was embedded in the social system to one more market-orientated, where coins were used for economic rather than military or political purposes. There may have been a considerable knock-on effect further into the hinterland as these developments interacted with established patterns of trade along Anduin, much as the establishment of Greek colonies affected the Rhône Corridor during our Iron Age (Cunliffe,

1988). Some native tribes may eventually have been subsumed into the Númenórean economic, cultural and even racial sphere: others, like the Dead Men of Dunharrow, remained independent and probably opposed these developments (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 283-304). By the time of the Downfall of Númenor, it is probable that the 'colonial' economy around Belfalas was no longer based on the coast but inland around centres like Pelargir. The natural disasters associated with the Downfall (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 257-282), though doubtless damaging, were therefore not fatal. Shortly afterward the newly founded Kingdom of Gondor was able to undertake a number of large projects such as the construction of Osgiliath, Minas Anor and Minas Ithil, the construction of the road to Arnor (and probably of a seaway through the Ethir Anduin), and also undertook a major series of exploratory voyages. All of this suggests that the economy was healthy and capable of providing considerable tax returns. The various projects may also have acted as stimuli to internal and external trade, and to craft production. Some degree of economic growth may have continued during this period, being stopped only by the War of the Last Alliance.

That conflict ushered in Gondor's first period of economic decline, and was probably one of its major causes. The rich province of Ithilien was lost to Sauron's forces in the early stages of the war, cutting production and revenues of all sorts, and imposing a burden of refugees on the rest of the country at a time of unprecedented needs for labour and supplies for defence.

In all the War of the Last Alliance lasted for thirteen years (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). Gondor had first to defend itself against Sauron's might and then to supply the Host of the Last Alliance. This, one of the largest war hosts ever seen in Middle-earth, was operating in the barren country of Dagorlad and North Mordor and its supplies had to come from Gondor, other lands being too distant. The enormous effort Gondor made in this war seems to have comprehensively disrupted the country in general and must have done serious damage to the economy largely through state intervention in an unfamiliar and inadequately understood area of life. Stagnation at least, and perhaps

actual decline, would result. In stark contrast to the achievements of the last century of the Second Age, nothing worth recording in the chronicles happened in the first four centuries of the Third Age.

The second period of probable economic growth in Gondor is clearer in its effects than the first but more obscure in its causes. After the four blank centuries, Gondor had regained sufficient strength to weather Easterling invasions between 490 and 667 T.A. (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). About a century later the country began to a period of territorial expansion and military activity under the Ship Kings, who reigned between 748 and 1149 T.A. By the end of this period Gondor was at the zenith of its power and had become fabulously wealthy. How did this come about?

It is likely that Gondor's population had been increasing for some time before the beginning of the Ship-King era, and that this was one reason why expansion was seen as desirable at that point in time. The earliest conquests, especially those west of Anduin, were fully integrated into the Kingdom and settled by people of Gondorian blood. At first the new territories would require economic support, perhaps even state sponsorship, but eventually they would become areas of expanding agricultural and craft production. All these factors would promote economic growth. It is possible that if the population had increased to the point that a need for expansion was felt, certain sections of the people might then have been forced to the margins of the traditional economy, resulting in under-employment, poverty and unrest. This problem would be alleviated not only by the settlement of the new territories but by the expansion of the armed forces and the craft production necessary to support them. The resultant higher productivity would also tend to promote growth in the economy, as would demand for increased state revenues to support expanding state activity, as long as this was kept within reasonable bounds. Even external trade may have increased during this period, despite Gondor's attempts at conquest in Harad. The Southron state of Umbar, like its Númenórean predecessor, appears to have been coastal with strong maritime bias, and regarded Gondor with disfavour. Its break-up

would allow Gondor, in the considerable intervals between campaigns, to extend trade routes to areas probably formerly monopolised by merchants of Umbar.

It will be seen from the foregoing that many of the factors we have described as being likely to promote economic growth were active during the Ship-King era. This growth probably continued beyond the end of the period, perhaps by as much as two and a half centuries. The decline in military activity might actually have stimulated the economy by freeing labour for other purposes. It must be said, however, that the chronicles for the reigns following those of the Ship-Kings are particularly contentious, and the 'peace dividend' may well not have been as large as might be suggested at first reading. Nor was this period of growth destined to continue for Gondor stood on the brink of events which would lead to her second and far more serious decline.

The Kinstrife, Gondor's only civil war, officially lasted from 1432-1448 T.A. but discontent had been increasing for some time before hostilities broke out. This must have affected all sectors of the economy: internal trade would be hit by the growing split between rebel-held and loyal provinces: agriculture would suffer from the uncertainties of internal trade, vital in a situation of high regional specialisation: craft production might well increase as supplies were stockpiled for the impending war but any economic benefit from this would be offset by the decline in other areas and disturbances in the taxation system. External trade would be hurt by the general uncertainty and the consequent reluctance of merchants to undertake ventures they might not benefit from. With the outbreak of war the already damaged economy was most probably shattered. The first phase of the conflict lasted five years and was very hard fought as the rightful King, Eldacar, resisted the rebels 'to the end of his strength' (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 324-337). Large parts of Gondor were probably devastated and their population driven to flee, arriving as penniless refugees to strain as yet untouched areas. Internal trade must have been reduced to a meagre trickle, bringing poverty not only to merchants but also to farmers and craftspeople forced to depend only on the most local of markets. With

the country in such a state there would also be a threat of famine and plague.

It would have been difficult for any economy to recover from such a blow. That of Gondor seems to have suffered further from the disinterest of the usurping King who is not recorded as having done anything to mend matters during his ten year reign. Obviously some rebuilding must have taken place or Gondor would simply not have survived. Restoration does not however appear to have been on the scale required to restore the country to its prewar state, let alone its peak. Even the overthrow of the rebels caused further problems. Forced to flee the country, they escaped in numbers (and with the whole of the navy) and were able to take Umbar and the adjacent conquered areas for themselves. Gondor faced an unprecedented threat from the South at the very time when the country could least afford to increase defence spending. Over the following reigns Gondor regained a good deal of strength but it is likely that economic recovery lagged behind political recovery. It is probable also that the country was in a very fragile state, vulnerable to further blows. There were to be plenty of these in store.

Umbar remained a menace no matter what was done, draining money and manpower as the state fought to destroy the Corsairs – or at least hold them off. The threat to the south coast may have led to an absolute decrease in cultivated land and a still larger drop in agricultural productivity, as land use was altered to reduce the risk of possible loss of life and liberty from pirate attacks. Craft production may also have been affected, particularly in the salt industry while the loss of Gondor's command of the sea would hit both internal and external trade. There was at least one major epidemic, the Great Plague of 1636 TA which must have had a considerable (if perhaps temporary) effect. All of these factors strongly suggest that whatever economic growth had taken place after the Kinstrife would eventually slow, stop, and turn into decline. Whenever it started, this decline lasted for the rest of the Third Age.

During the last millennium of the Third Age, Gondor's population was falling in numbers for reasons now inexplicable (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 324-337), leading to a drop in

productivity, trade and revenues. The country suffered actual losses of territory: Calenardhon was ceded to the Eötheod by treaty in 2510 TA, becoming Rohan, while Ithilien was gradually abandoned (though still officially Gondorian land) in the face of the mounting threat from Mordor (Tolkien, 1954, v. 3, pp. 363-378). External trade probably declined almost to nothing in the face of continued upheavals in the lands beyond Gondor. Internal trade probably fared much better, but must eventually have suffered. The decline also seems to have led to the gradual loss of knowledge in certain areas of craft production as no-one could pay for expensive techniques any more. None of this would do anything but encourage continuing decline. It is very doubtful that the state could have done anything about this at all, but the failure of the Line of Anárion and its replacement by the compromise of the Stewardship may not have helped matters. The effectiveness of the Stewards varied wildly. Under an ever weakening central authority Gondor, while officially one nation, slid towards becoming a federation of provinces whose Lords probably had less understanding of the situation and less ability to do anything about it than their nominal ruler. Though deeply in trouble, Gondor survived to the end of the Third Age, and may

just have begun to recover in the early Fourth. The restoration of the Kingship, the reunification with Arnor and the general political change brought about by Sauron's fall, could have allowed the decline to bottom out and have provided the necessary stimulus to promote growth.

Comparison of what we know of Gondor with the models used for the ancient (or classical period) European economy makes it very probable that Gondor did have an economy of similar type. It also suggests where some differences may lie, relative to the importance of trade in the two situations. The models are moreover useful since they can be applied to known events to produce a picture of Gondor's economic state at one time and can produce reasonable economic explanations for the causes of subsequent events. Economic history does not give us a whole picture, any more than any other kind does, but it gives us a different view of Gondor and takes us a little way behind the chronicles and King-lists into everyday life. My version is plausible but is it accurate? That, alas, we shall never know. Someone else could reconstruct matters a different way – and I would enjoy their article just as much as I hope they have enjoyed this one.

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