

**A Note on the Geography of the First Age,**  
by Charles Noad, reprinted from *Amon Hen* 38, April 5th, 1979.

A surprising omission in the map of Beleriand accompanying *The Silmarillion* is a scale of miles, surprising not least because the geographical lesson in Chapter 14 furnishes a number of distances, in leagues (1 league = 3 miles), which give some idea of the actual scale involved.

Although about half the stated distances refer to lengths of rivers, which, because of their "wriggliness", are inherently difficult to measure accurately, a consistent scale can nevertheless be found for this map, and also ratioed and applied to others. Hence the four principal maps of Beleriand so far published seem to have scales roughly as follows: -

- (i) *The Silmarillion Calendar* 1978. December: "The Silmarillion Map". 100 miles = 40.3mm or 1.59in.
- (ii) *The Silmarillion*: "Map of Beleriand and the Land to the North" (folded endpaper). 100 miles = 65.5mm or 2.58in.
- (iii) *The Silmarillion*: "The Realms of the Noldor and the Sindar" (between pages 120 and 121). 100 miles = 34.5mm or 1.36in. This is a very approximate scale as this redrawn map lacks much of the details of the original.
- (iv) Map of Beleriand and the Lands to the North (Poster: Allen & Unwin, 1978) 100 miles = 70.6mm or 2.78in.

Given the scale, it becomes possible to replot the Beleriand map on the same scale as a Middle-earth map and then to see if it can be "fitted" onto the latter, thereby showing more exactly the relationship of Beleriand to the coastline of the Third Age. I have attempted to do this, with the accompanying result. On the sketch of the main geographical features of Beleriand I have added the Third-Age coastline and rivers of Middle-earth, a task made fairly uncertain by the fact that the Ered Luin, the Blue Mountains, which are the only features both maps have in common and hence the only means by which any "fitting" can be accomplished, seem to have become much more spread out by the Third Age. I have made the best fit between the two sets of Blue Mountains that I can see, though others may disagree with my choice.

It can be seen that I have drawn in a conjectural course of the River Lhûn in the First Age. We are told that in the geological upheaval accompanying the Great Battle which marked the end of the First Age a great gap was made in the Blue Mountains, and that "(into) that gulf the River Lhûn fell by a new course..." (*TS*, p.285). This implies that the River Lhûn had an existence prior to the Great Battle.

Now the blue Mountains seem to have formed a kind of eastern barrier to Beleriand: there are no records of any folk from the east ever entering Beleriand except through them. If they did not, in the First Age, extend much farther north or south than they did in the Third, then, because their forming such a barrier would necessarily rule out any sizeable tracts of open territory north or south of them (thus permitting easy access), the coastline of Beleriand must, in the south, have approached the southern end of the Blue Mountains, i.e. somewhere in the region of the estuary of the River Baranduin; and if this estuary was indeed there in the First Age, it would have formed the likeliest outlet for the Lhûn also. It may be noted that the gap between the Far Downs and the Tower Hills, where the country of Westmarch is, and where I have placed the course of the river, affords a possible site for a river-valley.

Any reconstruction of the territory north of the Blue Mountains in the first Age is likely to be at least as tentative as the foregoing. We are told that in the north of the World, Melkor had reared the Ered Engrin, the Iron Mountains, which bent in a great curve from west to east. In the west, where they bent back northwards, he had built the fortress of Angband; and on his return to Middle-earth he raised the peaks of Thangorodrim before its gates (*TS*, pp.118, 181). Now Thangorodrim lay only one hundred and fifty leagues (450 miles) away from Menegroth, where Thingol dwelt in Doriath (*TS*, p.96). On any realistic basis, Thangorodrim must lie somewhere to the north of Menegroth. It was principally from Thangorodrim that flames belched forth to cover and burn the plain of Ard-galen, causing it to be renamed Anfauglith, the Gaspung Dust (*TS*, p.151). Thus Thangorodrim should lie beyond neither the eastern nor the western border of Anfauglith as projected northwards. If we place Thangorodrim somewhere about north of the centre of Anfauglith, then it will also be more or less due north of Menegroth. Hence if we consider Thangorodrim to lie 450 miles more or less due north of Menegroth, such an approximation is not likely to be too far out. Now if we take the point thus indicated and draw from it a curve sweeping south and east, but progressively more east than south, to represent the location of the Ered Engrin, and, from the present map, continue that line on to the main map of Middle-earth, then it will be seen that the track seems to pass over the Misty Mountains north of (and including) Mount Gundabad, the Grey Mountains, and the Iron Hills; and since they are in so exactly the appropriate region I submit that these ranges are nothing less than the Middle-earth remnants of the Iron Mountains raised by Melkor at the time he built his stronghold of Utumno. Since it is hardly reasonable to suppose that all the Ered Engrin vanished without trace at the end of the First Age (the Blue Mountains and the Misty Mountains survived well into the Third Age), and since there are no other ranges of any sort in that part of the world, the present conclusion seems inescapable.

It may seem surprising that the published map of Beleriand should stop so abruptly short of the Iron Mountains, but stop it does, and yet the distance must be short because of the given distance from Thangorodrim to Menegroth.

This model, if so far correct, indicates that in the north the Blue Mountains perhaps reached to the Ered Engrin, which would be consistent with the idea of the former range forming an eastern barrier; and, too, it is just conceivable that the ruins of Utumno itself once lay on the area covered by the map of Middle-earth.

Thus far, an uncertain and tentative model has brought us. I have not dealt with such matters as the Ice Bay of Forochel (and its formation), the catastrophic changes made at the end of the Second Age by the World being made round and the inundation of Númenor, and the validity of using the published map of Middle-earth as a basis for the foregoing discussion (i.e. it is not known what type of projection is used to map the curved surface of Third-Age Middle-earth) - all of these things have some bearing on the matters raised in this piece of speculation. I must conclude with the hope that people far better qualified than myself to deal with such matters (Where are you, Dr. Roger Mason? - Drs. Pantin and Best?) will turn their attention to them at some future date.

