

## THE DUNADANIC EMPIRES IN MIDDLE EARTH

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I thought this paper would be interesting to write because it cuts across our usual thinking about the historical development of Middle-earth. The conventional ("Whig" in Middle-earthly terms) view of Middle-earth's history is of long trends leading up to world wars at more or less regular intervals in which the forces of evil are defeated. The study of the Dunadanic empires does not begin or end with wars, and carries us forward to the Fourth Age.

I use the word "empires" as there were two quite distinct Dunadanic empires separated by 3,000 years. (The definition of empire I have taken when the Dúnedain were said to be ruled by a High King.)

The phases of Dunadanic history in the Westlands of Middle-earth were :-

- S.A. 600 - 1700 : Numenoreans establishing a presence.
- S.A. 1700 - 3320 : Development of Numenorean societies on Middle-earth, without a juridicial (\*) basis.
- S.A. 3320 - T.A.2 : First Empire.
- T.A. 2 - 1974 : Two separate kingdoms.
- T.A. 1974 - 3019 : Gondor alone.
- T.A. 3019 - Fourth : Second Empire.

Age

(\* juridicial - pertaining to the legal basis for political and administrative activity)

In S.A. 1700 a Numenorean expeditionary force defeated Sauron, thus ending the war of Sauron and the Elves (1693 - 1700). The seven years of war had devastated the whole area west of the Misty Mountain, and south of the Limlight, leaving a complete human power vacuum which could only be filled by Numenor. From 1700 - 2251 the Numenoreans steadily expanded their hold on the coast lines of Middle-earth from Lindon to Umbar, with havens being founded at suitable points, but the Grey Havens remained the chief port of entry to Middle-earth.

In 2251 the split between the Faithful and the Unfaithful became open in Numenor. (The Unfaithful wished to break the Ban which forbade them entry to the immortal lands, and hence to immortality as well; in a wider context the Unfaithful wished to reject their Elven cultural and historical heritage and the form of guardianship of the peoples of Middle-earth which it implied.) This split was reflected in Middle-earth, the political divisions reflecting themselves in geographical ones - the Faithful polarising towards the Grey Havens and the Unfaithful towards Umbar. The Numenorean colonists tended to come from divergent areas, the Faithful from Andunië in the West and the Unfaithful from other areas.

In 2280 the Unfaithful fortified Umbar and made it their chief port of entry into Middle-earth. This was a clear move to sever the now irksome connection with the Elves, but it also posed an immediate threat to the Faithful who replied, in 2350, by building and fortifying a southern haven at Pelargir. By this time

it must have been emerging that the patterns of colonisation of the two factions were different; while the Unfaithful were still holding only limited hinterlands from coastal bases, the Faithful were moving into these hinterlands - where they offered suitably defensive terrain, as around the Anduin where it passes the White Mountain - away from the sea altogether in the case of the Upper Anduin. This placed them at a great advantage in the struggle for Middle-earth.

Though by no means a foregone conclusion, this struggle was in fact settled during Numenor's civil war (3175 - 3255). This war was between different factions of the Unfaithful, giving the Faithful a free hand for their imperialism in Middle-earth. By the end of this period the areas, later to be called the Realms in Exile, must have been fully-fledged societies on an efficient military footing. An area of around 20,000 square miles of heartland was linked by a network of roads and fortified giving defense and interior communications which enabled the Dunedain to dominate all of Middle-earth north of the Harren and West of the Anduin.

The term imperialism is used advisedly. The Faithful obviously saw their role in terms of a crusade in which it was their duty to protect the indigenous population of Middle-earth and defend both it and themselves. Their expansion was imperial because it did not allow for the existence of free societies within their orbit (e.g. Bree); it was their self-appointed historical destiny to establish hegemony on Middle-earth. Bree is a significant example because its people were organised, free, and opposed to Sauron but nonetheless, were incorporated into the empire. In the same juridical continuum (please excuse jargon) the Shire was under the rule of the kings of Arnor and forced to pay tribute and send troops to the king's armies.

So coming forward to 3319, the date of Numenor's destruction, we can assess the state of Middle-earth as follows: the (Unfaithful) Numenoreans held Umbar and its adjacent coastline to the Harren, and perhaps dominated the sea pushing the Faithful off the coasts while unable to seriously exploit this advantage because of the Faithful's ability to put superior land forces into the field operating on well protected interior lines of communication. The Faithful's heartlands were expanding from the defensible uplands adjacent to the Lower and Upper Anduin. At that date the northern area of colonisation was larger, more populous and militarily stronger. It was reinforced by the Elves of Lindon and Rivendell. For this reason Annúminas, the High King's capital was built there. The power of Arnor must have been at its greatest between 3255 and 3434 - (the later date being the departure of the army of the Last Alliance from the North) as it was able to hold the West bank of the Anduin safe for the passage of armies - hence also the hypothesised road there.

In 3320 Elendil bought the surviving Faithful from Numenor to Middle-earth and moved straight to Annúminas proclaiming himself and his heirs High Kings of the Dunedain.

(incidentally, this meant that theoretically the Numenoreans left in Umbar when Emenor was destroyed owed allegiance to Elendil - though, of course, they refused to acknowledge it). This accession gave the Núenadic societies a juridicial foundation to add to their political fact.

The political structure of the First Empire was wholly monarchic; the High King's word was law, custom was constitution, and there existed neither opposition nor intermediary bodies in the constitution. The High King's seat was in Annúinas, the crown prince(s) were co-regents in Gondor in constant communication with the High King through the palantiri. This co-regency was almost certainly a measure of military expediency as there was no administrative or political need for it (as Aragorn was to show in the Second Empire). The First Empire must have been on a war footing throughout its 122 years of existence, the division between civil and martial administration must have been minimal if existing at all. Right through to Gondor in the late Third Age the only significant administrative or martial titles used are "Captain" and "Warden", both obviously military. A need for efficiency, spurred on by an omnipresent shortage of manpower kept the administration down to a minimum.

There was no concept of the independent vassal in the Núenadic societies (as there was in the societies of the Northmen), all land was owned directly by the king within his jurisdiction and the title of "lord" was only meaningful in as far as the holder fulfilled some military or administrative function related to the king's jurisdiction. In practice great offices of state and the administration of provinces tended to become hereditary within great families. This tradition can hardly have been evident in the First Empire which existed for only half a contemporary Núenadic life-span, but became more and more pronounced in the societies surviving down the Third Age within its juridicial continuum.

The social structure of this empire was related totally to its racial structure on two if not three levels. This was at once its greatest strength and greatest weakness. The empire consisted of a mass of indigenous peoples with a feudal and urban elite of Dúnedain; only very small areas and a minimal percentage of the population were purely Dúnedain. All the peoples of Middle-earth within the empire's reach, who had survived the 1690's and did not worship Sauron were brought under the empire's jurisdiction. Those who did worship Sauron were exterminated in the process of Núenadic expansion; that was indeed one of the motive forces for their expansion. These peoples must have been living an impoverished and precarious existence without any societal framework. The Dúnedain offered protection, a societal framework for their existence and an assured "Faithful" place in the cosmic order of Middle-earth; in return these peoples were totally subjected to their Núenadic rulers, being denied all access to politics or administration and being consistently second-class citizens. If not immediately

subject to a Dúnadan in a feudal nexus, they were subservient to the Dúnedain in wider political, social, economic and racial relationships. There was no concept of a social contract here, merely of a cosmic destiny for the Dúnedain which involved a racial order of which they were the pre-ordained elite.

The differences between the two races were clear: the Dúnedain tended towards being tall, lightly built, dark-haired and grey-eyed, while the indigenous peoples were shorter and stockier and of no fixed pigmentation. The Dúnedain, as an outward indication of their life-style, tended to dress richly and wear their hair to its natural length, the indigenous peoples by force of practicality would tend towards functional clothing and appearance. Linguistically Westron came to be completely dominant, if indigenous languages survived at all it would be as local patois. One point worthy of note: the Dúnedain do not seem to have favoured beards (unlike the Northmen who invariably grew them). The real difference, however, the one which irrevocably marked a Dúnadan as a man apart from other men, was age span. Elros lived over four hundred years as a mortal, three and a half millenia later Valandil lived for over 250 years; even assuming the kings to be of purer blood and greater longevity the average life span of the Dúnedain during the First Empire can not have been less than 150 years, and near 200 probably. In the two hundred years one Dúnadan land-lord would see four generations of his vassals live and die, the psychological impact of this phenomenon can not be exaggerated, it put the two races in different universes.

The distribution of the races would have been very uneven. In rural lowland areas the ratio of Dúnadan to ordinary men might have fallen to 1:100 or even lower, with the Dúnedain forming no more than a racially distinct aristocracy. Areas of this nature would most probably have been Rhurdaur or Pinnath Gelin. Further into the heartlands, areas such as Lossamach or the North Downs, the ratio would swing in the Dúnedain's favour, while the great cities of Middle-earth were completely Dúnadan. With only a handful of exceptions, the city-dwellers of Middle-earth were the Dúnedain who were thus a double elite; feudal and urban. In terms of socio-economic structure the outlying areas of low Dúnadan population would be organised into large estates, these estates are interesting because particularly (perhaps only) in the North as the society decayed the estate became centred around a castle from which the local population were held under subjection. The heartlands were probably organised into smaller units analagous to farms run by families, one member of each family would be expected to serve in the army. Finally, the cities where there was almost complete racial purity, provided "services", that is armaments, justice and administration, manufacture and industry, and markets.

I said there might be a third racial division; this would have been within the Dúnedain themselves, between the mass who had been colonising Middle-earth for up to a thousand years and the elite or perhaps no more than 1000 people who

arrived on Middle-earth with Elendil in 3320. This elite from Andunië would have been of possibly purer blood than the earlier colonists, and certainly closer to Elendil. It is unlikely that this division would have led to much as the members of this elite surviving the war of the Last Alliance would by and large have been wiped out at Gladden Fields (the Northern Realm being the senior one and more powerful would naturally have been more their home than the Southern Realm).

The disaster of Gladden Fields in Third Age 2, when the whole Northern army was waylaid and destroyed, swept away the First Empire as a juridicial entity - though this was not immediately realised - and its physical entity subsequently destroyed. The royal family in 3340 had consisted of Elendil and his two sons Isildur and Anarion who shared the co-regency of Gondor, Isildur's four sons and Anarion's son Meneldil. Three of Isildur's sons fought with him, the fourth (Valandil) was still a child in Arnor. With Anarion's death in 3340 and Elendil's in 3341 Isildur assumed the High Kingship and his eldest son (un-named) became crown prince. For reasons not given, all three sons returned to Arnor in F.A. 2, and Meneldil was left as co-regent of Gondor on a purely informal basis. With the deaths of Elendil and his sons, Meneldil usurped the sovereignty of Gondor to himself while Valandil was still a minor. When Valandil came of age, the situation remained unchanged.

The immediate effects of the disaster were the loss of an almost complete aristocracy, and the contraction of Arnor into its heartlands, and the loss of influence east of the Misty Mountains, and south of the Greyflood. The deeper effect was an ever-greater strain on the fabric of the state imposed by the contradiction between maintaining a Dúnadan society and the resources available. Under this strain Annúminas was abandoned early in the Third Age, and the Realm fragmented in 861. Outlying areas in both Rhurdaur and Cardolan degenerated into Unfaithfulness. A stable solution was only reached with the complete eradication of Arnor as a physical entity in 1974 and the subsequent re-appraisal which led to the adoption of the "Outward" life-style of nomadic tribesmen while depending on a strong cultural base at Rivendell. The North returned completely to its Elven roots whence it had emerged with Elros some 5,000 years earlier.

The South was largely unaffected by the disaster, but recovery from the war - which had been largely fought in the South - was slow. Only in the 9th century did expansion begin, and imperialism only in the 10th. From 935 (capture of Umbar) to 1146 Gondor annexed virtually the whole known world except the area of Arnor, the Misty Mountains and the Anduin valley, but there was no stable basis for the empire and it suffered a period of decadence 1146 - 1304, and complete collapse 1432 - 2002. In extent it was larger than the First Empire, but its heyday was nearly as brief.

The death-blow to the empire was the civil war of 1432 - 48 known as the Kin-strife, but this dynastic title conceals a war originating in deep-seated internal conflicts. From 830 onwards, to combat Umbar, Tarannon (Falastir) founded a naval establishment which his successor Eärnil I (913 - 936) enlarged and housed in Pelargir which he had rebuilt. The navy attracted the most conservative and racially-minded of the Dúnedain, men prepared to put purity of blood before all other considerations. The strains of maintaining the empire stretched Gondor's resources of manpower up to and beyond their limits; bloated with power and wealth, Gondor was nonetheless unable to expand further and increasingly vulnerable to attack from the East. This situation represented the phase of decadence 1146 - 1304.

Romendacil II (1304 - 1366) recognised the problem and proposed a solution which, in effect, involved inviting the Northmen into the empire to share its burdens. To this end he sent his son to live in Rhovanion. This policy, and the threatened abandonment of racial purity by Valacar, who married his son (Eldacar) to a Rhovanion princess, was intolerable to the naval establishment which was by now a political force embracing all the southern provinces. By the end of Valacar's reign these provinces were in revolt, and at his death in 1432 they declared rebellion and proclaimed Eldacar's cousin Castamir king.

The provinces of Lossarnach, Lebennin and Ithilien were the battle ground for the civil war; we can therefore assume that the provinces to the south were rebel (Belfalas, Harondor and Umbar), those to the north were loyalist (Anorien and Calenardhon), and the battle ground itself divided, polarising towards the rebels in the south and the king in the north. The results of the war were the loss of the navy, of Harondor and Umbar, the loss of irreparable life and massive destruction. The empire never recovered and contraction was steady thereafter, despite frequent infusions of Northmannish blood.

At the end of the Third Age Gondor was a racially mixed state on three levels, Dúnedain, indigenous population and colonists. Just as there had been little or no mixing between populations in the Second Age, so there was not in the Third Age. The races lived in separate spheres, they may even have had separate systems of law and administration; certainly all high offices of state (outside the army) were reserved exclusively to men of Numenorean lineage. This slowly concentrating elite had gathered the reigns of power ever more firmly into his own hands. By the reign of Denethor the Last Steward there was the risk of complete inertia with stability of the Numenorean elite being the paramount consideration in all fields of activity.



It was from this base that Aragorn had to build the Second Empire; looking at his career it is difficult to imagine a man better suited to the task. Raised in the Elven culture at Rivendell he then proceeded to acquaint himself with all the other significant cultures of Middle-earth, being fully acquainted with Gondor before the War of the Ring began.

He deliberately set out to foster a policy of racial integration which would eventually dismantle the now fossilised structure of Gondor. The policy of absolute racial segregation had never been wholly adhered to, and was under attack already at the close of the Third Age when, in 2943 Thengel, king of Rohan, had married Morwen of Lossarnach. The lords of Lossarnach were probably of the great families of Gondor, on a par with the lords of Dol Amroth. (Incidentally, the alliance with Rohan, 2510 onwards, was simply a different version of the alliance a millenium earlier with Rhovanion, and it was differently structured to avoid the pitfalls of the earlier one).

Within months of his accession Aragorn had encouraged Faramir to marry Eowyn, and Eomer married Lothiriel of Dol Amroth a year later. Thus the two greatest families of Gondor were already intermarried with lesser peoples before the close of the Third Age.

The expansion of the empire, given the wholly different attitude, was by federation rather than imperialism. Incidentally, however, Gondor expanded back into land historically hers such as Ithilien and subsequently began to establish a new society in Arnor. The mistake of dividing authority between co-regents, even if there had been any, was not made and when Aragorn left for Annuminas, to found a new court and capital there, he took the palantir of Orthanc with him to ensure communication. Within the sphere of influence of the Empire free and organised societies not opposed to it were placed under no coercion to join. Indeed such societies as Bree or the Shire were not even asked to pay tribute.

The jurisdiction of this empire by the close of Third Age was Gondor as it had been in 3019, Ithilien, the area of Arnor, and Rohan. Its lines of development were to the East and South rather than along the Anduin. The area west of Isengard was probably left to Rohan and the Anduin valley to Dale - both obviously friendly powers. We could think, then, of this empire expanding into a series of federated spheres of interest linked by a common jurisdiction rather than political institutions.

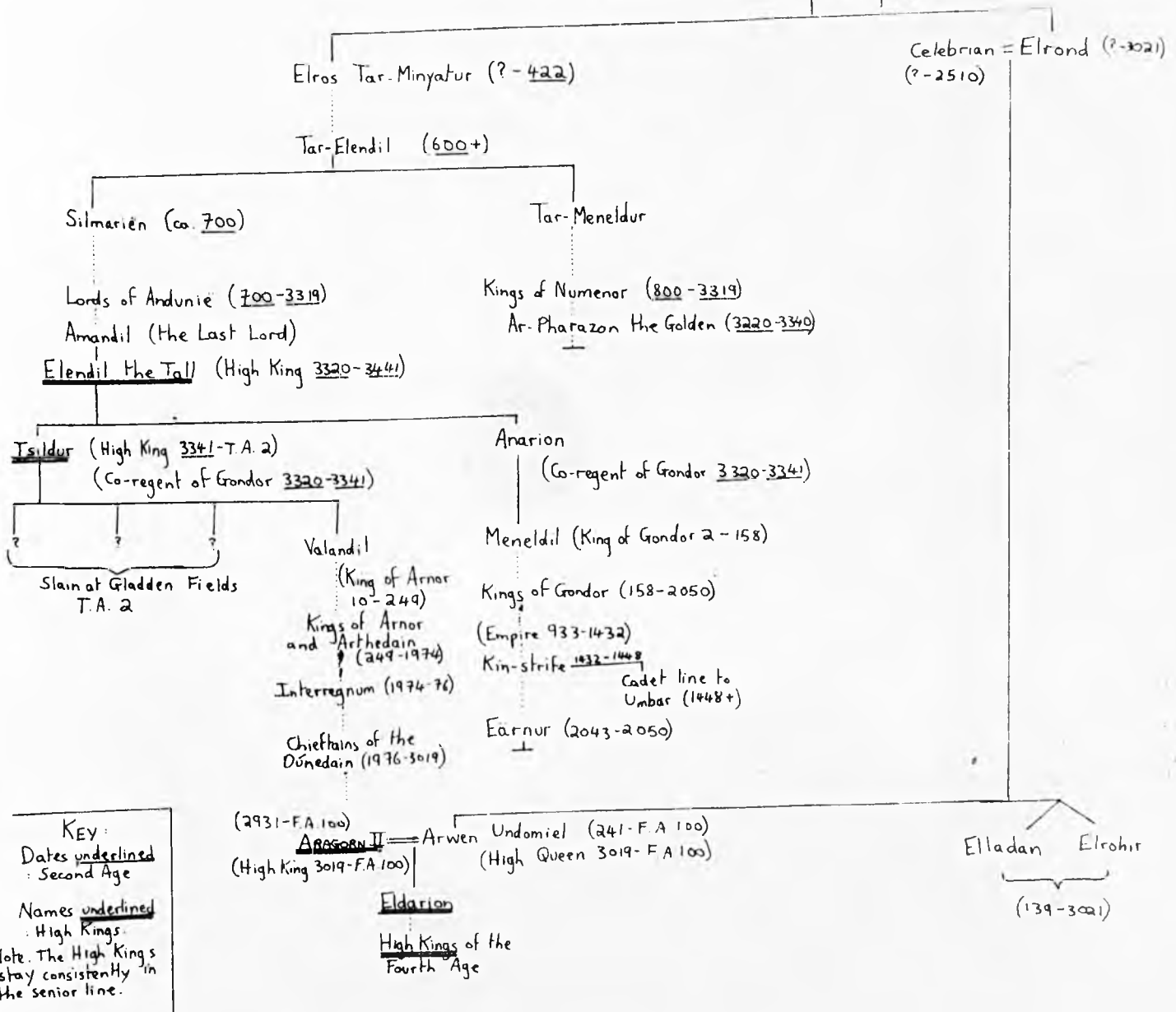
Economically its expansion was rapid, the Dwarves and Elves helping wherever they could (Ithilien, Minas Tirith, Helm's Deep, etc.). Just as the last century of the Second Age must have witnessed a breath-taking amount of activity, so must the first century of the Fourth Age. Although much of the old order based on Elendil's work would survive into the Fourth Age, as time went on its force

(particularly in the racial sphere) would weaken; change, expansion, development would have marked the reigns of Aragorn and Eldarion, and with the racial contradictions and tensions eradicated their work may have been crowned by stability greater than Elendil's.

## Half-Elven Family Trees to show Political Development

MORTAL IMMORTAL

Beren = Lúthien Tinúviel  
Earendil the Mariner = Elwing the Fair



**KEY:**  
 Dates underlined : Second Age  
 Names underlined : High Kings  
 Note: The High Kings stay consistently in the senior line.