
Character Biography

Amandil

By Russandol

Amandil, “friend of Aman” in Quenya, was the last Lord of Andúnië in Númenor, descendant of Elros Tar-Minyatur, and father of Elendil the Tall. When Sauron’s betrayal was revealed and Amandil learnt that his king, Ar-Pharazôn, was preparing an attack on the Valar themselves, he feared their wrath would destroy his land and his people, and sailed towards Aman to plead for mercy. His fate is unknown.

The Lords of Andúnië

The description of Andúnië, a location on the Western shore of Númenor, can be found in *Unfinished Tales*:

The Andustar was also rocky in its northern parts, with high firwoods looking out upon the sea. Three small bays it had, facing west, cut back into the highlands; but here the cliffs were in many places not at the sea's edge, and there was a shelving land at their feet. The northmost of these was called the Bay of Andúnië, for there was the great haven of Andúnië (Sunset), with its town beside the shore and many other dwellings climbing up the steep slopes behind. (1)

Interestingly, Andúnië was an area of Númenor where “the Elven-tongue [Sindarin] was spoken by high and low” (2) (as opposed to Adûnaic, the native language elsewhere in the island). Tolkien justifies this peculiarity by making the settlers of the north-west part of the Land of Gift descend from the People of Bëor, who “had in Beleriand early abandoned their own speech and adopted Sindarin” (3).

The first Lord of Andúnië was Valandil, son of Elatan of Andúnië and Silmarien, who was the elder daughter of Tar-Elendil, fourth King of Númenor (4). He was “renowned for their friendship with the Eldar” (5).

The Lords of Andúnië were “highest in honour after the house of the kings”. Also, “these lords were loyal to the kings, and revered them; and the Lord of Andúnië was ever among the chief councillors of the Sceptre.”

The "Council of the Sceptre" was formed by representatives from all regions of Númenor, and provided advice to the King (6), but held no ruling power.

Amandil, youthful friend of Ar-Pharazôn

Amandil, son of Numendil and eighteenth Lord of Andúnië (7), shared his name with the third King of Númenor, Tar-Amandil, grandson of Elros (8). His date of birth is not recorded, but we

are told that, "In the days of their youth together Amandil had been dear to Pharazôn" (9). Which, given that both came from the line of Elros, makes it likely that they were granted a similar lifespan.

The available dates, however, do not quite support the above statement. Ar-Pharazôn was born in the year 3118 of the Second Age (10), while there is an entry in "The Heirs of Elendil" that records the birth of Elendil (11), Amandil's son, in 3119, only one year later. If we accepted this date as canon, it would make Amandil closer in age to Ar-Pharazôn's father than to a youthful friend.

Friend of the Eldar

It was in the times of Ar-Gimilzôr--grandfather of Ar-Pharazôn and the greatest enemy of the Faithful, who punished those that welcomed the ships of Eressëa--that the Eldar began to travel to Númenor in secret, until in the end "the ships of Eressëa came never again out of the sunset, and the havens of Andúnië were forlorn" (12).

Even if Ar-Gimilzôr's son, Tar-Palantír, attempted to undo the damage, he did not succeed, because we are told that "no ship came ever again from the West to Númenor, and Avallónë was veiled in cloud" (13).

Therefore, in all likelihood, the friendship of Amandil with the Elves must have been forged during his travels to Middle-earth (he was "a mighty captain of the sea" [14]), to the kingdom of Gil-galad. His regard for the Eldar was generously rewarded with the gift of the *Palantíri*:

These stones were gifts of the Eldar to Amandil, father of Elendil, for the comfort of the Faithful of Númenor in their dark days, when the Elves might come no longer to that land under the shadow of Sauron. They were called the Palantíri, those that watch from afar; but all those that were brought to Middle-earth long ago were lost.

It seems logical that his Eldarin friends might have told him, at least in part, about the events in Eregion, of the death of Celebrimbor and the forging of the Rings of Power, in an attempt to warn him against Sauron. If Amandil knew of this treachery, and if he told Ar-Pharazôn, his warnings were unheeded.

There is no explicit information in *The Silmarillion* about whether Amandil travelled to Umbar with Ar-Pharazôn during his campaign against Sauron, or whether he might have warned him about the peril of carrying the Dark Lord hostage back to Númenor, in the year 3262 of the Second Age.

Leader of the Faithful

Not surprisingly, once Sauron began to gain the favour of the King, he made sure that Amandil, perhaps the only adversary that could still influence Ar-Pharazôn against his lies, was swiftly removed from the scene:

... all the councillors began to fawn upon him [Sauron], save one alone, Amandil lord of Andúnië. Then slowly a change came over the land, and the hearts of the Elf-friends

were sorely troubled, and many fell away out of fear; and although those that remained still called themselves the Faithful, their enemies named them rebels.

And

Now he [Amandil] was dismissed, for Sauron hated him above all others in Númenor. But he was so noble, and had been so mighty a captain of the sea, that he was still held in honour by many of the people, and neither the King nor Sauron dared to lay hands on him as yet. (14)

And

Therefore Amandil withdrew to Romenna, and all that he trusted still to be faithful he summoned to come thither in secret; for he feared that evil would now grow apace, and all the Elf-friends were in peril. (15)

The King began to worship the Darkness, the old cult of Melkor, and Amandil learnt of Sauron's intention to persuade the king to fell Nimloth, and he spoke to Elendil and to his grandsons about his fears that Ar-Pharazôn would finally give way to Sauron. Isildur risked his life to steal a fruit of Nimloth from the courts of the King in Armenelos.

But Isildur came at last hardly back to Rómenna and delivered the fruit to the hands of Amandil, ere his strength failed him. Then the fruit was planted in secret, and it was blessed by Amandil; and a shoot arose from it and sprouted in the spring. (16)

Those years must have been very dark times in Númenor, and it is remarkable that Amandil and his family survived, when whispers of treason seemed reason enough to be condemned to become a sacrifice victim to Melkor in the temple built by Sauron.

Thereafter the fire and smoke went up without ceasing; for the power of Sauron daily increased, and in that temple, with spilling of blood and torment and great wickedness, men made sacrifice to Melkor that he should release them from Death. And most often from among the Faithful they chose their victims; yet never openly on the charge that they would not worship Melkor, the Giver of Freedom, rather was cause sought against them that they hated the King and were his rebels, or that they plotted against their kin, devising lies and poisons. These charges were for the most part false; yet those were bitter days, and hate brings forth hate. (17)

Except for the mention of some possible plots in the above paragraph, there were no recorded uprisings or armed rebellions to oppose Ar-Pharazôn, or at least, Sauron, the true ruler behind the throne. Perhaps the unquestionable loyalty of the Lords of Andúnië to the King of Númenor prevented Amandil from openly fighting him, or perhaps the Faithful were not strong enough to mount an offensive. Though named rebels, there seems to have been very little or no resistance from the Faithful against the evil darkening their land, except perhaps to ensure self-preservation.

It was almost fifty years since the arrival of Sauron to Númenor when the King, beginning to fear the approach of death, began to prepare for war against the Valar, following Sauron's poisoned

advice to wrest immortality from them. At last Amandil, who must have also been feeling his age, if he was at least as old as the King, decided to act.

And Amandil, becoming aware of the purposes of the King, was dismayed and filled with a great dread, for he knew that Men could not vanquish the Valar in war, and that ruin must come upon the world, if this war were not stayed. Therefore he called his son, Elendil, and he said to him:

'The days are dark, and there is no hope for Men, for the Faithful are few. Therefore I am minded to try that counsel which our forefather Eärendil took of old, to sail into the West, be there ban or no, and to speak to the Valar, even to Manwë himself, if may be, and beseech his aid ere all is lost.'

'Would you then betray the King?' said Elendil. 'For you know well the charge that they make against us, that we are traitors and spies, and that until this day it has been false.'
(18)

Amandil was willing to face the consequences of breaking the Ban of the Valar and sail westwards, in the hope of persuading them to grant their mercy upon those who still remained faithful.

To protect his family, he proposed he would pretend to sail east instead, and then double back towards Aman when no longer in sight from the shores of Númenor. He advised his son to make secret arrangements to sail with all their people and "all such things as your hearts cannot bear to part with," and to hide the fact he would be taking many men with him, because they would be required to join the King's forces against the Valar.

He must have had little hope of returning, or even of succeeding in his mission, because he also said to Elendil:

But it is most like that you shall fly from the Land of the Star with no star to guide you; for that land is defiled. Then you shall lose all that you have loved, foretasting death in life, seeking a land of exile elsewhere. But east or west the Valar alone can say. (19)

Unfortunately, he was right:

It is said that Amandil set sail in a small ship at night, and steered first eastward, and then went about and passed into the west. And he took with him three servants, dear to his heart, and never again were they heard of by word or sign in this world, nor is there any tale or guess of their fate. Men could not a second time be saved by any such embassy, and for the treason of Númenor there was no easy absolving. (20)

Unlike Eärendil's quest, Amandil's sacrifice seemed to end in failure, except perhaps for saving his kin and friends; it certainly brought no mercy to the people who were not aboard the ships that Elendil and his sons managed to sail to Middle-earth.

Thus Elendil held himself in readiness, and did not meddle in the evil deeds of those days; and ever he looked for a sign that did not come. Then he journeyed in secret to the

western shores and gazed out over the sea, for sorrow and yearning were upon him, and he greatly loved his father. But naught could he descry save the fleets of Ar-Pharazôn gathering in the havens of the west. (21)

Númenor sank under the sea, either because that was the wrathful intention of Ilúvatar, to whom it is said the Valar conveniently deferred when Ar-Pharazôn set foot on their lands, or because it merely collapsed into the abyss created by the removal of Aman from the broken world.

And Andor, the Land of Gift, Númenor of the Kings, Elessar of the Star of Eärendil, was utterly destroyed. For it was nigh to the east of the great rift, and its foundations were overturned, and it fell and went down into darkness, and is no more. And there is not now upon Earth any place abiding where the memory of a time without evil is preserved. For Ilúvatar cast back the Great Seas west of Middle-earth, and the Empty Lands east of it, and new lands and new seas were made; and the world was diminished, for Valinor and Eressëa were taken from it into the realm of hidden things. (22)

To say nothing of Númenor.

The evolution of Amandil as a character in Tolkien's works

Tolkien agreed with his friend C.S Lewis that he would write a piece on time-travel (23), and he began a tale that would take his hero to witness the drowning of Atlantis, that he called "Numenor, Land in the West". This seed of an idea evolved into a concept where a series of father-son occurrences would reappear through times in history, as having "memories" or dreams from a distant past, of an original father and son duet (Amandil and Elendil) who had been present at the sinking of the island.

"The Lost Road" was Tolkien's incomplete time-travel story, in which Tolkien created an almost autobiographical character named Alboin (a precursor of Amandil in that stream of father-son duets re-emerging through history).

Alboin's biography sketched in these chapters is in many respects closely modelled on my father's own life - though Alboin was not an orphan, and my father was not a widower. Dates pencilled on the covering page of the manuscript reinforce the strongly biographical element: Alboin was born on February 4, (1891 >) 1890, two years earlier than my father. Audoin was born in September 1918. (24)

Alboin is a professor of history and old languages, who has dreams of what might be a lost past, and remembers words in an unknown language called Eressean. From his childhood he suffers from a constant longing of travelling back in time along "the lost road" to those remote ages,

... to see with eyes and to hear with ears: to see the lie of old and even forgotten lands, to behold ancient men walking, and hear their languages as they spoke them, in the days before the days, when tongues of forgotten lineage were heard in kingdoms long fallen by the shores of the Atlantic. (25)

His wish is granted, shall I dare say it, in true Mary Sue style: a man called Elendil offers him in a vision the choice to “return” if he takes with him his son Audoin (precursor of Elendil). Of course he accepts.

The evolution of Amandil within the story of Númenor, a key element in Tolkien’s mythology, is fascinating too. In the very first drafts, only Elendil was initially mentioned, and then two brothers, Elendil and Valandil, who fled from the destruction and founded the Númenórean kingdoms in Middle-earth.

Then Amandil was introduced, though the names he appeared under are confusing. He was Valandil in some texts and Arbazan (26) (later Aphanuzir in the final version of “The Drowning of Anadune”), and all other familiar characters and places bore earlier versions of their later Adûnaic names:

Of these the chief was one Arbazan, and his son Nimruzan, great captains of ships; and they were of the line of Indilzar Azrabelo, though not of the elder house, to whom belonged the crown and throne in the city of Arminaleth. (27)

Ar-Pharazôn and Arbazan have an interesting debate about the spherical nature of the world, and the implications of such shape on the ban of the Valar:

And on a time Ar-Pharazon sat with his counsellors in his high house, and he debated the words of the messengers, saying that the shape of the Earth was such that a girdle might be set about it. 'For if we shall believe this,' he said, 'that one who goeth west shall return out of the East, then shall it not also be that one who goeth ever east shall come up at last behind the West, and yet break no ban?' (28)

Arbazan argued that even if it was round, the world may be so big that a man would spend his life travelling around it, but Ar-Pharazôn was not convinced and

... he pondered in his secret thought the building of ships of great draught and burden, and the setting up of outposts of his power upon far shores. (29)

At one point Tolkien gave Amandil a brother, Elentir, but he did not make it to the final version of the Akallabêth, as published in *The Silmarillion*. Elentir was in love with Zimrahil, Tar-Palantír’s daughter (and in a further sketch Elentir was the older brother and heir to the lordship of Andúnië, and he was betrothed to Zimrahil), until she set her eyes on Ar-Pharazôn and was besotted by him, and married him willingly. Finally, another key difference, later discarded was that:

Therefore Ar-Pharazon persecuted the Faithful, stripping them of any wealth that they had, and he deprived the heirs of Valandil of their lordship. Andunie he took then and made it a chief haven for the king's ship-building, and Amandil who was now the Lord he commanded to move and dwell also in Romenna.

Questions and Musings

For a “friend of Aman” and of the Eldar, it must have been agonising to watch one’s king and country being slowly corrupted by the lies of Sauron, and one wonders how loyalty or fear prevented Amandil and the Faithful from acting more decisively, and far earlier. If he was prepared to risk his life, would it have not been more worthwhile to do it when he may have had a chance of success, perhaps before Sauron completely ensnared Ar-Pharazôn, or while there was still a sizeable proportion of the population of Númenor not yet turned to the worship of Melkor, and maybe willing to rebel against the Sorcerer?

Did Amandil ever arrive at Aman, or was he lost at sea? Why, oh why, did the Valar, or Ilúvatar, withheld all mercy from the deceived people of Númenor, and yet they let Sauron escape to keep plaguing Middle-earth for another age?

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About the Author

Russandol has quietly suffered under the spell of Middle-earth for over 25 years, from the first time she read *The Lord of the Rings*. Then, as recently as two years ago, while on an Internet quest to learn to write Tengwar, she stumbled upon the world of Tolkien fan fiction. As a result her affliction flared up and became sadly incurable. Russandol lives in Berkshire, England, and every time she goes for a walk or a ride in the woods she hopes to find a mallorn.