
Character Biography Anárion Son of Elendil

By Oshun

(This Anárion is not to be confused with another Anárion, the eighth ruler of Númenor, who succeeded his mother Tar-Ancalimë under the name of Tar-Anárion.)

Anárion of Gondor was born in the Second Age 3219 in Númenor, the youngest son of Elendil and grandson of Amandil, the hereditary Lords of Andúnië who were counted among those called the Faithful. (A western seaport of Númenor, Andúnië, which over centuries had hosted visits from the Eldar, continued, despite Sauron's ever-increasing influence, to maintain a position of advocating respect for and obedience to the Valar.) Near the end of the Second Age, the Faithful had been labeled as traitors by the King's Men and were deported across the country to Rómenna. Anárion and his brother Isildur lived at the haven of Rómenna on the east coast of the island of Númenor.¹

Along with his father and his brother, Anárion sailed from Númenor to Middle-earth, barely escaping with their lives. The ships of Elendil landed in the north while those of Isildur and Anárion found safety to the south. Anárion had four children (three are not named in the texts), the youngest of whom was his son and heir, Meneldil, said to have been the last of the Númenórean exiles born in Númenor in the final year before the downfall.² Anárion was slain in the siege of Barad-dûr during the War of the Last Alliance of Elves and Men.

In addition to the usual recitation of his antecedents, birth, death, the number of his children, and his most significant deeds, this biography of Anárion seeks to analyze the importance in Tolkien's legendarium of this Númenórean lord gone from Númenor into exile in Middle-earth. Anárion is one whose family, name, and the history of his heirs and their demise are woven into one of the most important story components in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Yet, Anárion himself warrants but a bare-bones biographical entry in *The Silmarillion* itself: "Younger son of Elendil, who with his father and his brother Isildur escaped from the Drowning of Númenor and founded in Middle-earth the Númenórean realms in exile; lord of Minas Anor; slain in the siege of Barad-dûr."³ He holds an oft-referenced role in the fandom discussions surrounding the restoration of a king to Gondor and the reestablishment of the ancient realm of Arnor in the north. Although Anárion is given no dialogue, and there are the barest references to his deeds, the serious student of how Aragorn comes to fill the long-vacant throne of Gondor will immediately recognize his name.

One of Tolkien's enduring and often revisited themes is that of exile. All of his most significant protagonists are exiles of one type or another. Aficionados of *The Silmarillion*, of course, think first and foremost of the exiled Noldor and their long struggle against the doom levied against them articulated in the Curse of Mandos. Tolkien himself writes of the importance of the leitmotif of exile in his work and of the centrality of this initial "fall" to his many-sided history which begins in *The Silmarillion* and culminates in *The Lord of the Rings*. He explains that

[t]he main body of the tale, the Silmarillion proper, is about the fall of the most gifted kindred of the Elves, their exile from Valinor (a kind of Paradise, the home of the Gods) in the furthest West, their re-entry into Middle-earth, the land of their birth but long under the rule of the Enemy, and their strife with him, the power of Evil still visibly incarnate.⁴

We see the story of exile referred to again and again. For example, in the scene in *The Fellowship of the Rings* when the Hobbits first encounter Elves, Gildor immediately identifies himself and his company as exiles: "We are Exiles, and most of our kindred have long ago departed and we too are now only tarrying here a while, ere we return over the Great Sea."⁵ The exile story as a literary trope may involve the voluntary exile or the banished hero. The tale of the family of Anárion—the returning survivors of the destruction of the island given to the Edain in pity for their suffering endured under the terrors of Morgoth and gratitude for their loyalty and aid to the Eldar—contains elements of both tropes.

The Fall of Númenor and the Return of Its Survivors to Middle-earth

Anárion was the second son born to Elendil, the leader of the Faithful in Númenor, those friends of the Elves and Valar who maintained their loyalty to Aman and rejected—at great cost to themselves and their followers—the dark religion invented by Sauron that lured Men to worship the dark Vala Melkor. Tolkien summarizes the final days of the Edain in the paradise created for them by the Valar in correspondence: "But in a kind of Noachian situation the small party of the Faithful in Númenor, who had refused to take part in the rebellion (though many of them had been sacrificed in the Temple by the Sauronians) escaped . . . under the leadership of Elendil . . . and his sons Isildur and Anárion" rescued a small number of their closest followers and sought to reestablish a home in exile across the sea in the land from whence their ancestors had come.⁶

Now, Elros the son of Elwing and Eärendil, brother of Elrond, had chosen to accept the gift of mortality⁷ urged upon him by the Valar. Elros left his birthplace and led the Edain into exile in this western island paradise created for them, there to found a dynasty of kings. And yet the outcome of this attempt to remove a people from their native land in order to protect them from known dangers and hardship seems uncanny in its resemblance to the Valar's earlier plan to bring the Eldar to Aman the better to look after them there. This second attempt is no more successful than the first.

Similar to the manner in which the Noldor eventually rebelled against their protectors and returned to Middle-earth, after an initial flowering under Elros and his early successors, subsequent generations of the Edain began to chaff under the restrictions of the Valar and succumbed to Sauron's manipulations and scheming. Their rejection of the admonitions of the Valar of Aman resulted in the destruction of the paradisiacal refuge—not to mention collateral damage on a shocking level, not unlike the incalculable casualties suffered by Elves and Men in the Wars of Beleriand in the First Age. (One might be convinced that the Valar show a slow learning curve, i.e., "If it does not work the first time, let's try it again and see how it goes on a second try.")

Ar-Pharazôn the last king of Númenór, arrogant to the end, fell under the sway of Sauron, who appealed to both his vanity and his resentment, and became determined to seize the immortality that he believed the Valar withheld from him. He decided to violate the interdiction against sailing into the uttermost west. He amassed a great armada and launched a doomed attempt to

conquer the land of the gods. Ar-Pharazôn's fleet landed, but was pulled into the giant chasm that opened between Aman and the mortal lands.

. . . and there came a mighty wind and a tumult of the earth, and the sky reeled, and the hills slid, and Númenor went down into the sea, with all its children and its wives and its maidens and its ladies proud; and all its gardens and its balls and its towers, its tombs and its riches, and its jewels and its webs and its things painted and carven, and its lore: they vanished forever.⁸

Elendil, the last of the leader of the Faithful in Númenor, judged they could be exposed to a cataclysmic response when the king declared war upon the Valar and prepared for such eventuality. With a mere nine ships among them, Elendil waited offshore with his sons Isildur and Anárion, and narrowly escaped the apocalyptic destruction of the Isle of Gift.

The chief of these were Elendil the Tall and his sons, Isildur and Anárion. Kinsmen of the King they were, descendants of Elros, but they had been unwilling to listen to Sauron, and had refused to make war on the Lords of the West. Manning their ships with all who remained faithful they forsook the land of Númenor ere ruin came upon it. They were mighty men and their ships were strong and tall, but the tempests overtook them, and they were borne aloft on hills of water even to the clouds, and they descended upon Middle-earth like birds of the storm.⁹

There is an interesting bit of trivia encountered in the notes upon the heirs of Elendil in the *The Peoples of Middle-earth*. Tolkien's notes reveal a breakdown of the ships which left Númenor for Middle-earth. In his original draft he had written, "Twelve ships there were: six for Elendil, and for Isildur four, and for Anárion two." He added a later note changing the number to "nine: four, three, and two."¹⁰ This is of interest to those who are puzzled and/or irritated by fandom online discussions which seek to describe Elendil's sons as co-equals. This concept simply has no basis in the texts. Isildur is always given precedence over Anárion, even down to the detail of how many ships each is allotted on that final journey to safety.

The Blood of Elros

It is tempting to use Elrond's simple summing up here to describe the eventful intervening years: "But in the wearing of the swift years of Middle-earth the line of Meneldil son of Anárion failed, and the Tree withered, and the blood of the Númenóreans became mingled with that of lesser men."¹¹ Mingled indeed but never lost, the line of Elros--the bloodline of Númenórean kings--is cited numerous times throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, referring to its hereditary characteristics reflected in Aragorn, Faramir, and even Denethor the last ruling Steward of Gondor. Tolkien clarifies in a letter that, despite centuries of intermarriage,

some characteristics would appear in pure form in later generations. Aragorn's own longevity was a case in point. Gandalf I think refers to the curious fact that even in the much less well preserved house of the stewards Denethor had come out as almost purely Númenórean.¹²

In *The Return of the King*, Gandalf reflects upon how Denethor manifests signs of a heritage dating to Númenor of old and the lords of the line of Elros. This is described as more than cultural similarities, but seems to be genetic. Gandalf explains, "He is not as other men of this time, Pippin, and whatever be his descent from father to son, by some chance the blood of

Westernesse runs nearly true in him; as it does in his other son, Faramir, and yet did not in Boromir whom he loved best."¹³

Pippin notes, observing Denethor and Gandalf locking horns in Minas Tirith, a refinement and nobility about Denethor, which one who knew what to look for might have considered to be similar to the signs of high Númenórean heritage. A legacy that would be observed in both Aragorn and Faramir as well, "Denethor looked indeed much more like a great wizard than Gandalf did, more kingly, beautiful, and powerful; and older. Yet by a sense other than sight Pippin perceived that Gandalf had the greater power and the deeper wisdom, and a majesty that was veiled."¹⁴ If course, the repeat reader knows, as Pippin could not have, that Denethor by this time was ensnared at the deepest point of his decline, driven into despair and madness, due to his repeated use of the seeing stone and attempts to withstand the continued assaults upon his will and mind by Sauron.

It is Pippin also who describes Faramir for the reader:

Here was one with an air of high nobility such as Aragorn at times revealed, less high perhaps, yet also less incalculable and remote: one of the Kings of Men born into a later time, but touched with the wisdom and sadness of the Elder Race. He knew now why Beregon spoke his name with love. He was a captain that men would follow, that he would follow, even under the shadow of the black wings.¹⁵

Tolkien describes the legacy of Isildur and Anárion, so much closer to the origins of that legendary bloodline than the above-referenced characters from *The Lord of the Rings*, and how they were able to establish and preserve

a kind of diminished memory of Númenor in Exile on the coasts of Middle-earth – inheriting the hatred of Sauron, the friendship of the Elves, the knowledge of the True God, and (less happily) the yearning for longevity, and the habit of embalming and the building of splendid tombs.¹⁶

The Kingdoms of Isildur and Anárion

Backtracking and filling in some significant details, the reader will find that Anárion is mentioned early in the eloquent passages of exposition in Elrond's narrative of the history of the One Ring, early in *The Lord of the Rings*, at the council he called among those gathered in Rivendell.

Of Númenor he spoke, its glory and its fall, and the return of the Kings of Men to Middle-earth out of the deeps of the Sea, borne upon the wings of storm. Then Elendil the Tall and mighty sons, Isildur and Anárion, became great lords; and the North-realm they made in Arnor, and the South-realm in Gondor above the mouths of Anduin.¹⁷

When the ships of the survivors fleeing the destruction of Númenor reached Middle-earth, they were separated by the great winds and waves generated by the destruction of the island: "Elendil was cast up by the waves in the land of Lindon, and he was befriended by Gil-galad. Thence he passed up the River Lhûn, and beyond Ered Luin he established his realm."¹⁸ The people who accompanied him settled throughout Eriador, but his chief city was at Annúminas beside the water of Lake Nenuial. Meanwhile,

Isildur and Anárion were borne away southwards, and at the last they brought their ships up the Great River Anduin, that flows out of Rhovanion into the western sea in the Bay of Belfalas; and they established a realm in those lands that were after called Gondor, whereas the Northern Kingdom was named Arnor. Long before in the days of their power the mariners of Númenor had established a haven and strong places about the mouths of Anduin, in despite of Sauron in the Black Land that lay nigh upon the east. In the later days to this haven came only the Faithful of Númenor, and many therefore of the folk of the coastlands in that region were in whole or in part akin to the Elf-friends and the people of Elendil, and they welcomed his sons.¹⁹

Elendil ruled as their high king from his seat of power in Annúminas. The seat of the high king of the exiled Númenóreans was not in the south in Gondor, but in the north. The true line of Elendil is carried by the heirs of Isildur in north and not the descendants of Anárion, and certainly not by the representatives of that failed line represented in proxy by the Stewards of Gondor.

In Minas Ithil was the house of Isildur, and in Minas Anor the house of Anárion, but they shared the realm between them and their thrones were set side by side in the Great Hall of Osgiliath. These were the chief dwellings of the Númenóreans in Gondor, but other works marvellous and strong they built in the land in the days of their power, at the Argonath, and at Aglarond, and at Erech; and in the circle of Angrenost, which Men called Isengard, they made the Pinnacle of Orthanc of unbreakable stone.²⁰

Elendil, Isildur, and Anárion settled their people in Middle-earth, building fine cities of stone, raising monuments, and attempting preserve and expand upon the arts, crafts, and lore that they had brought with them from Númenor. But they were not left in peace to continue as they began after the destruction of Númenor. The Sauron and his servants harried those kingdoms directly and indirectly until the War of the Last Alliance and beyond through the War of the Rings.

Many Elves and many mighty Men, and many of their friends, had perished in the war. Anárion was slain, and Isildur was slain; and Gil-galad and Elendil were no more. Never again shall there be any such league of Elves and Men; for Men multiply and the Firstborn decrease, and the two kindreds are estranged. And ever since that day the race of Númenor has decayed, and the span of their years has lessened.²¹

Who was the true heir to the throne of Gondor?

An almost entirely facetious discussion is at times entered into within Tolkien fandom circles concerning whether Aragorn is even a legitimate heir to the kingship of Gondor. Well, for starters, it is essential to note that not only both Elrond and Gandalf agreed he was and Tolkien's authorial intent shines throughout *The Lord of the Rings*:

Yet the line of the kings was continued by the Chieftains of the Dúnedain, of whom Aranarth son of Arvedui was the first. Arahael his son was fostered in Rivendell, and so were all the sons of the chieftains after him; and there also were kept the heirlooms of their house: the ring of Barahir, the shards of Narsil, the star of Elendil, and the sceptre of Annúminas.²²

The argument that only a direct heir of Anárion had rights to the throne of Gondor might have more teeth if Anárion had a surviving heir. But he did not. The descents of Anárion in the south

diluted their direct line to Isildur by numerous instances of intermarriage with so-called lesser peoples, but Aragorn is the living representative of a line dating back to Númenor and Elros, which preserved that pure Númenórean blood. Denethor, Steward of Gondor, dismisses the line of Elendil in the north (reactionary, perhaps, but relevant in-universe given the semi-divine origins of the line of Elros). In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Aragorn explains his bloodline to Boromir in Rivendell: "But my home, such as I have, is in the North. For here the heirs of Valandil²³ have ever dwelt in long line unbroken from father unto son for many generations. Our days have darkened, and we have dwindled; but ever the Sword has passed to a new keeper."²⁴

But when Isildur's father and brother were killed in the War of the Last Alliance, it was Isildur who returned first to Gondor to see to the installation of his nephew, Anárion's heir Meneldil, as his representative ruler in Gondor, never relinquishing his claim as high king after the demise of his father.

After the fall of Sauron, Isildur, the son and heir of Elendil, returned to Gondor. There he assumed the Elendilmir as King of Arnor, *and proclaimed his sovereign lordship over all the Dúnedain in the North and in the South* [emphasis added]; for he was a man of great pride and vigour. He remained for a year in Gondor, restoring its order and defining its bounds. . . .²⁵

Denethor, of course, dismisses Aragorn's descent from Elendil out-of-hand, calling the line of the northern heirs of Elendil degenerated beyond his lofty consideration. (One hears the echo of Sauron's machinations of Denethor's mind in his description.) Denethor says to Gandalf,

'And yet in our speech together I have learned the names and purpose of all thy companions. So! With the left hand thou wouldst use me for a little while as a shield against Mordor, and with the right bring up this Ranger of the North to supplant me.

'But I say to thee, Gandalf Mithrandir, I will not be thy tool! I am Steward of the House of Anárion. I will not step down to be the dotard chamberlain of an upstart. Even were his claim proved to me, still he comes but of the line of Isildur. I will not bow to such a one, last of a ragged house long bereft of lordship and dignity.'²⁶

Now the divisions and disputes among the heirs of Isildur and Anárion could be reminiscent to many readers of aspects of English history, not least of which are the disputes relating to succession to the English throne after the death of Edward III in 1377, which culminated in the Wars of the Roses. Where one might look to find the true and rightful heir of Elendil and, therefore, the rightful claimant to the throne of Gondor, depends entirely upon one's perspective and one's choice of arguments. And there is no Elendil to clarify his intention. Tom Shippey makes an interesting point about the utility of discussing sources for Tolkien's inspiration. He notes that

All literary works bear some relation to the milieu in which they are composed and received, but we often do not realize how quickly elements of those milieux are forgotten. One generation's common knowledge becomes a later generation's historical footnote, if it is lucky enough to find a footnoter. But the knowledge may be important, and has a fair chance of being interesting.²⁷

Tolkien certainly found the question of who is the rightful king of Gondor to be a worthy plot point. Conscious or not, the endemic arguments over centuries as to who had the best claim to which medieval throne must have had an influence upon this plot line.

Arvedui's claim of the crown of Gondor is rejected

"On the death of Ondoher and his sons, Arvedui of the North-Kingdom claimed the crown of Gondor, as the direct descendant of Isildur, and as the husband of Fíriel, only surviving child of Ondoher. The claim was rejected.... The crown was claimed by Eärnil, the victorious captain, and it was granted to him with the approval of all the Dúnedain in Gondor, since he was of the royal house.... Arvedui did not press his claim; for he had neither the power nor the will to oppose the choice of the Dúnedain of Gondor"²⁸

Arvedui made the claim, perhaps out of principle and certainly with respect to his wife's claim, but decided not pursue it. He was stretched to guard his already claimed borders. Gondor was a long distance from his daily concerns. Eärnil was the darling of the moment in Gondor having protected the realm against outside dangers. One might see shades of the story of Henry V here—the Yorkist claim upon the throne of England was allowed to lay dormant for a while in light of the triumphant return from Battle of Agincourt of the Lancastrian Henry V. Military success and immediate popularity in both these cases allowed the discussion of the superior line of succession to lapse for a period.

But it is Elrond himself who backs this dark horse—the northern representative of Isildur's line. He tutors and fosters the heirs of Isildur in Rivendell, instructing them in the language, history, and lore of the ancient battles and long history of Middle-earth. Aragorn traveled first to Rohan and then to Gondor to learn more about the world at large. Elrond advised him to keep his identity as Isildur's heir a secret because there were those who might resent his claim, and widespread knowledge of his existence might endanger him as well. By his competence and intelligence, Aragorn won favor with Steward Ecthelion, the father of Denethor: "In much that he [the Steward Ecthelion] did he had the aid and advice of a great captain whom he loved above all . . . but no one knew his true name nor in what land he was born."²⁹ We read that "[h]is true name and lineage were kept secret at the bidding of Elrond; for the Wise then knew that the Enemy was seeking to discover the Heir of Isildur."³⁰

Tolkien notes that

[t]he Númenóreans of Gondor were proud, peculiar, and archaic, and I think they are best pictured in (say) Egyptian terms. In many ways they resembled 'Egyptians'—the love of, and power to construct, the gigantic and massive. And in their great interest in ancestry and in tombs.³¹

These Gondorian defenders of the line of Anárion, as opposed to going back further to the last surviving heir of Elendil, show a greater cultural similarity to Númenóreans in the age of their moral decline, rather than the Númenor defended by the Faithful under the leadership of Elendil. Before Denethor dies he argues with Gandalf, as noted above, accusing the wizard of intending to supplant him with a ragged, unworthy claimant to the throne of Gondor from the north.³²

Meanwhile, Aragorn, this foster son of Elrond—schooled to be a king, long-tutored in the history and lore, not only of his house, but of the preceding struggles against the darkness dating back to the Wars of Beleriand in First Age against Melkor, represented by Sauron in the Third Age—

is far from some unlettered rustic bumpkin. He often refers throughout *The Lord of the Rings* to his forebears and speaks of his close identification not only with Elendil and Isildur, but Anárion as well.

When the Fellowship approaches the Argonath, the tall stone pillars of the ancient kings, "the weatherworn Ranger was no longer there. In the stern sat Aragorn son of Arathorn, proud and erect . . . a king returning from exile to his own land." This is a far cry from the description by Denethor of his house being "long bereft of lordship and dignity." Aragorn says, "Long have I desired to look upon the likenesses of Isildur and Anárion, my sires of old. Under their shadow Elessar, the Elfstone son of Arathorn of the House of Vandalil Isildur's son, heir of Elendil, has naught to dread!"³³

Aragorn remembers his ancestor Anárion with respect. Meanwhile, he and Elrond hold unto his direct right to the kingdoms, both northern and southern, of the high king Elendil, through the lines of both Isildur and Anárion. He accepts the throne of Gondor in the name of Elendil.

Then Aragorn took the crown and held it up and said:

Et Eärello Endoreenna utúlien. Sinome maruvan ar Hildinyar tenn' Ambar-metta!

And those were the words that Elendil spoke when he came up out of the Sea on the wings of the wind: 'Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place will I abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world.'³⁴

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3. *The Silmarillion*, "The Index of Names."
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5. *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*, "Three is Company."
6. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, "156 To Robert Murray, S.J. (draft)."
7. The gift of the Peredhil: "At the end of the First Age the Valar gave to the Half-elven an irrevocable choice to which kindred they would belong. Elrond chose to be of Elven-kind, and became a master of wisdom. To him therefore was granted the same grace as to those of the High Elves that still lingered in Middle-earth." Elros chose mortality and to accept responsibility of leadership of the Edain traveling to the Valar's Land of Gift and became its first king under the name of Tar-Minyatur. *Lord of the Rings, Appendix A, "The Númenórean Kings."*
8. *The Silmarillion, Akallabêth.*
9. *The Silmarillion, Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age.*
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 13. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, "Minas Tirith."
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 21. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, "The Council of Elrond."
 22. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, Appendix A*, "Annals of the Kings and Rulers: Eriador, Arnor, and the Heirs of Isildur."
 23. Valandil is an heir of Isildur. Isildur and his three elder sons all perished in the Disaster of the Gladden Fields and Valandil was his only surviving heir, hence the references in *The Lord of the Rings* to the Dúnedain of the north following their line from Valandil. *Unfinished Tales*, "The Disaster of the Gladden Fields."
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About the Author

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