
Character Biography

Arakáno

By Oshun

Arakáno is a Noldorin elf, the sibling of some of the best known among his compatriots who left Valinor to pursue their ambitions in the land of their forbearers. He is said to be the youngest child of Finwë's second son Fingolfin and his wife Anairë. Like her son Arakáno, Anairë is not mentioned by name in *The Silmarillion*. She is described in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*, where she is designated as Noldorin: "Fingolfin's wife Anairë refused to leave Aman, largely because of her friendship with Eärwen wife of Arafinwë (though she was a Noldo and not one of the Teleri)" (1).

Arakáno, however, does follow Fingolfin and accompany his older siblings Fingon, Turgon and Aredhel to Middle-earth. In a footnote to *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*, Christopher Tolkien explains:

The third son of Fingolfin, Arakáno (Argon), emerged in the course of the making of the genealogies. A pencilled note on the last of the four tables says that he fell in the fighting at Alqualondë; this was struck out, and my father noted that a preferable story was that he perished in the Ice. It is curious that this third son, of whom there had never before been any mention, entered (as it seems) without a story, and the manner of his death was twice changed before the remarkable appearance here of 'the first battle of Fingolfin's host with the Orks, the Battle of the Lammoth', in which he fell. (2)

Arakáno was a character added late but much pondered, given that Tolkien is reported to have changed his mind at least three times about his final demise within his published notes. He first suggests that Arakáno dies at Alqualondë, later perhaps that he is lost on the crossing of the Grinding Ice, and finally, he is definitively described as dying in the newly inserted Battle of Lammoth. Said battle does not even exist in any of the narratives of the coming of the Noldor into Middle-earth and the accounts of the Battles of Beleriand in the published *Silmarillion*.

An interesting aside is that the text of *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* is a single typewritten document, with handwritten notations, the draft of which he produced after 1968 (3). Much fascinating information about the background, small descriptive details and names of the significant major characters among the Noldor is to be found there. One can only speculate how Tolkien might have incorporated much of the new and altered information into his existing, much older narrative. Despite its lack of smooth insertion, one can only welcome its existence since our knowledge of the exiled Noldor would be far poorer without it.

If the Battle of Lammoth had been inserted into the chronology of the Wars of Beleriand as recounted throughout *The Silmarillion*, it would fit between the Battle under the Stars (*Dagor-Nuin-Giliath*) of Fëanor and company against the advance forces of Morgoth and the arrival of Fingolfin's company at Lake Mithrim. Or, perhaps, the re-write required would have been more extensive and the Battle under the Stars might have been reworked to include the presence of Fingolfin's forces. This, of course, would have caused a need for alteration of a series of other elements in the overall storyline. In *The Silmarillion*, the Battle under the Stars and the death of

The Silmarillion Writers' Guild Reference Library

<http://www.silmarillionwritersguild.org/reference/characterofthemonth/arakano.php>

© Oshun

Fëanor occur some significant period of time before Fingolfin and his host reach that area of North Beleriand.

In the account in the Grey Annals (XI.30) Fingolfin, after the passage of the Helkaraxë, 'marched from the North unopposed through the fastness of the realm of Morgoth, and he passed over Dor-Daedeloth, and his foes hid beneath the earth'; whereas in the present note his host was attacked in Lammoth 'at unawares as they marched southwards' (see the map, XI.182). (4)

As a separate military encounter, it is described as a pitched battle between the Orcs and Fingolfin's host that Fingolfin wins. But not without losses and included among those is the life of his youngest son.

We are not given any hair or eye color for Arakáno, nor do we know if he was single or married. However, we are told that he "was the tallest of the brothers and the most impetuous" (5). The tallest is a common trope in Tolkien's writing. Everybody is tall, taller or tallest. But more impetuous than Fingon, dragon slayer and single-handed rescuer of Maedhros from Morgoth's realm? This reader would like to hear of the exploits which prove that Arakáno is more impetuous. Such over-the-top, bigger-than-life characterizations are probably one small part of the impetus for why some Tolkien's fans adore the Noldor and others cannot stand them. There is a logic among some readers that villains, which is how they choose to see the Noldor, should not be so big, bold and beautiful.

Tolkien did what many good writers before him and since have done: taken flawed, ill-fated characters and invested them with human and, therefore, identifiable weaknesses but undeniably attractive virtues and gifts. He told his history of the Eldar within a universe of not a merciful Christian god or Christ-like figure, but fallible Valar who distinctly lean more in the direction of pagan demi-gods rather than angels of any Judeo-Christian tradition. Tolkien, like many great authors, John Milton among them (6), whether by conscious intent or not, has sparked a debate about the degree to which the history of his anti-heroes is a tragedy or a morality tale. For many readers, the former is more interesting than the latter. Critical readers are often drawn to complexity over simplicity, to shades of grey over black and white, especially when it comes to considering the human condition.

Arakáno becomes a more interesting figure if one is to imagine him as notably impetuous among his immediate family and fellow Noldor. Unfortunately, Tolkien did not live to develop

Arakáno's story and weave it into his more complete narrative, so his story as one receives it now is merely an introduction. Not even Christopher Tolkien is willing to second-guess which alterations to the bigger story might have been made to enable Arakáno's character to fit comfortably within it.

Author's note: Thank you very much, IgnobleBard, for a fast and dirty copy check on short notice.

Works Cited

1. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*. Christopher Tolkien note 40.
2. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
3. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, Late Writings*.
4. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*. Christopher Tolkien note 40.
5. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Shibboleth of Fëanor*.
6. For example, J.K. Rowling in her Harry Potter series, not to be compared to John Milton or Tolkien, often bemoans the fact that her character Draco Malfoy is so fascinating to young readers: "People have been waxing lyrical about Draco Malfoy, and I think that's the only time when it [a view of a character distinct from the one she intended] stopped amusing me and started almost worrying me. I'm trying to clearly distinguish between Tom Felton, who is a good-looking young boy, and Draco, who, whatever he looks like, is not a nice man" ([MuggleNet and The Leaky Cauldron interview Joanne Kathleen Rowling](#), July 16, 2005.) She may be an engaging writer but is clearly not a psychologist. Of course readers will be attracted to a complex young character with gifts and terrible flaws, particularly if those exist within a set of mitigating circumstances and there are choices made by the same character for good as well as evil.

About the Author

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the [SWG archive](#).