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## Character Biography Celebrimbor

By Dawn Felagund

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Celebrimbor, alone of the characters in the House of Fëanor, first appeared not in *The Silmarillion* but in *The Lord of the Rings*, and his history was developed from there. In *The Lord of the Rings*, he is the artificer of the Rings of Power--save the One created by Sauron--and he drew the inscriptions upon the gates of Moria. In Appendix B of that volume, it is noted that he was "descended from Fëanor," a fact that--though committed to print in a published source--was far from resolved as J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium underwent continued change.

Little is said about Celebrimbor in *The Silmarillion*. He is the son of Curufin and said to share in his father's skills of hand, though he is not even mentioned until Celegorm and Curufin are banished from Nargothrond. Then, it is said that he rejected his allegiance to his father and uncle and chose to remain in Nargothrond. This is the final mention in *The Silmarillion* of Celebrimbor in the First Age. Who was he? Where and when was he born? And most importantly, why did he choose such a vastly different path from his father and the other Fëanorians?

In *The History of Middle-earth* series and *Unfinished Tales*, Celebrimbor's history is presented in some greater detail, though it's fairly clear that J.R.R. Tolkien had yet to fully solidify his views on Celebrimbor's early history and later role in the events of the Second Age. In a footnote to the essay *Of Dwarves and Men* in HoMe 12, it is said that Celebrimbor "was an Elf of wholly different temper" from his father Curufin. His mother, it is told, refused to join Fëanor's rebellion. Her son Celebrimbor went with his father to Middle-earth.

By this account, then, Celebrimbor was born in Aman and was therefore present for all of the events of the First Age. The note goes on to say that Celebrimbor forsook his father in Nargothrond because he had grown to love Finrod Felagund and was disgusted by his father's role in Finrod's death.

But Celebrimbor's heritage--indeed, his place in the House of Fëanor to begin with--was frequently changed as J.R.R. Tolkien continued to work on his stories. By early accounts, Celebrimbor was a relative of Daeron of Doriath or a craftsman of Gondolin. Prior to the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*--where Celebrimbor first appears--Tolkien made note that it was preferable to "make him a descendant of Fëanor." Therefore, the addition was made to Appendix B, and Celebrimbor joined the House of Fëanor.

By some of the accounts given in *Unfinished Tales*, "Concerning Galadriel and Celeborn," Celebrimbor was the creator of the Elessar given to Aragorn at the end of the Third Age. In one version, the original Elessar was a stone made in Gondolin in the First Age by Celebrimbor's friend and rival, a craftsman called *Enerdhil*. But for Enerdhil, Celebrimbor would have been the greatest craftsman of Gondolin. Enerdhil returned over the sea, taking his extraordinary stone with him.

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The Elessar that Celebrimbor made in the Second Age rivaled Enderhil's but for the fact that the light in Middle-earth was diminished due to Morgoth's shadow. The second Elessar he gave to Galadriel so that she could preserve the beauty of her realm.

In later versions of the same story, Celebrimbor displaces Enderhil as the maker of both stones, though the first is said to have "passed away," presumably in the attack on Gondolin.

The Second Age history of Celebrimbor, not surprisingly, is deeply entwined with that of Galadriel and Celeborn. The precise relationship between these characters was ever-changing as the stories evolved. In the accounts of the Elessar, Celebrimbor is even said to have loved Galadriel--although this idea was never repeated elsewhere--and this love is the reason why he crafts for her the Elessar: the means to preserve the lands that she loves in a fashion that he finds befitting of her.

Perhaps in direct contrast to this, in an early version of the story, also given in *Unfinished Tales*, Celebrimbor leads a revolt against the rule of Galadriel and Celeborn in Eregion. This rebellion was encouraged by Sauron, posing as Annatar, and then deep in the confidences of Celebrimbor. As the story developed and changed, however, this element never appeared again.

Indeed, for his seeming lack of consequence in the days of his ancestors, Celebrimbor takes a leading role in the events of the Second Age. When Sauron came to Middle-earth, posing as Annatar, an emissary of the Valar, he was resisted by Gil-galad in Lindon and Galadriel. Celebrimbor, however, was eager for what Annatar was willing to provide, and he was welcomed into Ost-in-Edhil. Celebrimbor, having already ascended to the place of the chief craftsman in Ost-in-Edhil, nonetheless desired more: to rival the skill and fame of his grandfather Fëanor. The secrets necessary for his success, only Annatar could teach him.

And so the misgivings about Annatar that plagued the other leaders of the Eldar failed to impress upon Celebrimbor. Annatar was welcomed into Ost-in-Edhil and, more dangerously still, into the brotherhood of craftsmen Celebrimbor had created there, the Gwaith-i-Mirdain or People of the Jewelsmiths. There, Celebrimbor learned the knowledge he desired, and in secret, he forged the Three Elven Rings of Power.

At the same time, Annatar aided with the crafting of the Seven and the Nine. While the Three were not tainted by the touch of Sauron, they were nonetheless influenced by the One, and when Sauron betrayed the Elves of Eregion and forged the One Ring in an attempt to master them, Celebrimbor knew it immediately sought Galadriel's advice. She counseled him to hide the three Elven rings, so Narya was given to Galadriel, while Narya and Vilya were given to Gil-galad.

Sauron and his army destroyed Ost-in-Edhil in an attempt to regain control of the Gwaith-i-Mirdain and the treasures kept there. Celebrimbor faced Sauron before the doors of the Mirdain, but he was captured and tortured to reveal the location of the other rings. While he would reveal the locations of the Seven and the Nine, he would not tell about the Three. Sauron had him killed and used his tormented body as a banner as his armies marched upon Elrond.

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Both the fictional history and evolution of Celebrimbor's character is a tumultuous one, and he meets a tragic end not unlike those of his brethren. While perhaps the only Elf ever to come close to rivaling the skills of Fëanor, J.R.R. Tolkien is nonetheless careful to set Celebrimbor apart. He is compassionate and thoughtful where his father and grandfather were often ruthless and acted in haste. He alone of the Fëanorians in Middle-earth had the courage to walk away from the oath and the violence that followed in its wake ... but still, he fell for much the same reason as Fëanor, having loved so much the works of his hands that he became blind to all else.

But Celebrimbor serves another purpose in connecting the events of the First Age to those of the Third Age that finally freed Middle-earth from thralldom. Through him, one can see how the deeds of the Fëanorians--even those most awful--did, indeed, lead in the end to freedom for the people of Middle-earth. Without the House of Fëanor, the Noldor might never have come to Beleriand, Celebrimbor never would have forged the Rings of Power, and Sauron might never have concentrated his essence into an object that could be destroyed. And one can imagine the different--and darker--turn the stories would have taken without the Fëanorians.

And so for Fëanor through Celebrimbor--and every character between--it is as Eru explains to his nascent disciples in the *Ainulindalë*,<sup>1</sup> that even the darkest times and most treacherous deeds make the world more beautiful and life worth living to have, in the end, overcome these things to find peace and joy, at last.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea is expressed more fully in *The Music of the Ainur* in *The Book of Lost Tales 1*, on which the published *Ainulindalë* was heavily based.

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## About the Author

Dawn Felagund is the founder and owner of the Silmarillion Writers' Guild and has authored more than thirty stories based on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, some of which have been translated and published in fan magazines around the world. These days, she directs her fannish energies towards research projects and developing the SWG into a fun and valuable group for *Silmarillion* fans. Dawn can be emailed at [DawnFelagund@gmail.com](mailto:DawnFelagund@gmail.com).