

## Character Biography Makar and Meássë

By Silver Trails

Makar and Meássë were two Valarin warriors and siblings, who were based on Scandinavian gods and goddesses and the legends about endless battles in their halls.<sup>1</sup> According to Norse mythology, Odin chooses the best warriors when they die, and they go to Valhalla where they train and feast, so they are fit to battle along with the gods when the time for Ragnarok comes.<sup>3</sup> As Tolkien's vision about the Valar evolves making them more "angelic", Makar and Meássë did not fit anymore and were taken out of the pantheon. So while they are mentioned and have a role in the story as was told in *The Book of Lost Tales 1*, the warrior siblings don't make it to *The Silmarillion*.

We can read about Makar and Meássë in the Appendix:

**Makar** Given in QL ('God of battle') under root MAKKA, with *mak-* 'slay', *makil* 'sword'. His Gnomish name is *Magron* or *Magorn*, with related words *mactha-* 'slay', *macha* 'slaughter, battle', *magli* 'a great sword'.

In the Valar name-list Makar is called also *Ramandor*... *Ramandor* is translated 'the Shouter, =Makar'.

**Meássë** A late hasty entry in QL adds *Meássë* 'sister of Makar, Amazon with bloody arms' to the root MEHE 'ooze?' whence *meor* 'gore'. In GL she is *Mechos* and *Mechothli* (*mechor* 'gore'), and is also called *Magrintha* 'the red-handed' (*magru*=*macha* 'slaughter, battle', *magrusaig* 'bloodthirsty'). In the Valar name-list she is called *Rávë* or *Ravenni*; in QL the root RAVA has many derivatives, as *rauta-* 'to hunt', *raust* 'hunting, preying', *Raustar* a name of Oromë, *rau* (plural *rávi*) 'lion', *ravennë* 'she-lion', *Rávi* a name of Meássë. Very similar forms are given in GL: *rau* 'lion', *rausta* 'to hunt', *raust* 'hunt'.<sup>3</sup>

Before Makar and Meássë come into Arda, they were already quarrelsome spirits, and even joined Melkor on the discord he created in Eru's Song. They came into Arda with their vassals just before the Maia Omar Amillo, who was the last to arrive:

Yet even as all these (Valar) had crossed the confines of the world and Vilna was in uproar with their passing, there came still hurrying late Makar and his fierce sister Meássë... both were spirits of quarrelsome mood, and with some other lesser ones who came now with them had been the first to join in the discords of Melko and to aid in the spreading of his music.<sup>4</sup>

Makar and Meássë built their own dwelling, unlike the other Valar who let Aulë do it. Their hall was made of iron, and stood near the halls of Mandos:

... But Makar and his fierce sister Meássë built a dwelling for themselves, aided only by their old folk, and a grim hall it was.

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Upon the confines of the Outer Lands did it stand, nor was it very far from Mandos. Of iron was it made and unadorned... But that house was full of weapons of battle in great array, and shields of great size and brightness of polish were on the walls. It was lit with torches.<sup>5</sup>

The siblings were always holding a weapon in their hands:

There [in their halls] sit often Makar and his sister listening to the songs, and Makar has a huge bill across his knees and Meássë holds a spear.<sup>6</sup>

As we said before, they were incessant battles in their halls, but there were also feasts and hunting trips. They also crossed to Middle-earth to hunt before the way was closed:

There fought the vassals of Makar clad in armour, and a clash there was and a shouting and a braying of trumpets, but Meássë fared among the warriors and egged them to more blows, or revived the fainting with strong wine that they might battle still; and her arms were reddened to the elbow dabbling in that welter... Now the battle of the courts of Makar was waged unceasingly save when men gathered in the halls for feasting, or at those times when Makar and Meássë were far abroad hunting together in the black mountains wolves and bears... for they loved the unbridled turmoils which Melko roused throughout the world.<sup>7</sup>

Thanks to these descriptions, we know that there was viticulture in Valinor before the Elves arrived: ...indeed it is said that Nessa wife of Tulkas bore "goblets of the goodliest wine", while Meássë went among the warriors in her house and "revived the fainting with strong wine."<sup>8</sup>

The only Vala who visited them was Tulkas who, in my opinion, liked wrestling with Makar but tried to hide it:

None of the Gods fared ever there, save Tulkas... but Tulkas would at times wrestle there with Makar or deal sledge-blows among the fighters, and this he did that he might not grow soft in his fair living, for he loved not that company nor in sooth did they love him and his great unangered strength.

At the outset of the tale, the Valar and Maiar come into Arda and begin to work on making it a safe place for the Children of Eru. As we know, Melkor destroys his peers' work, turning valleys into mountains and wasting good lands with fire, among other things. Manwë decides to seek Melkor out before he destroys everything. Everyone but Makar agreed, mainly because he liked the earthquakes that Melkor created:

Behold, Valinor is built, and the Gods dwell in peace, for Melko is far in the world delving deep and fortifying himself in iron and cold, but Makar and Meássë ride upon the gales and rejoice in earthquakes and the overmastering furies of the ancient sea.<sup>9</sup>

The rest of the Valar seek Melkor, and when they find him, Tulkas gives him a blow with his fist. In the *Lost Tales*, Melkor doesn't leave after this, but stays and feigns friendship with the other Valar. He even helps them to build pillars for the lamps that will light the island of Almaren, but he makes these pillars of ice. Of course, the ice melts and inundates their dwellings. The Valar go to war then:

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Now as Aulë smithied the Gods arrayed themselves in armour, which they had of Makar, and he was fain to see them putting on weapons and going as to war, how so their wrath be directed against Melko. But when the great Gods and all their folk were armed, then Manwë climbed into his blue chariot whose three horses were the whitest that roamed in Oromë's domain, and his hand bore a great white bow that would shoot an arrowlike a gust of wind across the widest seas.<sup>10</sup>

The Valar decide to deceive Melkor and feign acceptance of his lordship over Arda. They send Nornorë, Manwë's herald in the first versions of the old days, and have him say these words to Melkor:

"Behold," said he, "the Gods be come to ask the pardon of Melko, for seeing his great anger and the rending of the world beneath his rage they have said one to another. 'Lo! wherefore is Melko displeased?' and one to another have answered beholding the tumults of his power: 'Is he not then the greatest among us—why dwells not the mightiest of the Valar in Valinor? ... they come constraining Tulkas with violence to beg thee to pardon them each one and to fare home with them and complete their glory, dwelling, if it be thy pleasure, in the halls of Makar, until such time as Aulë can build thee a great house; and its towers shall overtop Taniquetil.'<sup>11</sup>

The scene that follows is very similar to later versions. Melkor is deceived because of his great pride and demands that Tulkas be expelled from Valinor, and that Manwë kneel before him. Tulkas loses control, springs upon Melkor, followed by Aulë and Oromë:

... Tulkas leapt across the hall at a bound despite Angaino, and Aule was behind him and Orome followed his father and the hall was full of tumult. Then Melko sprang to his feet shouting in a loud voice and his folk came through all those dismal passages to his aid. Then lashed he at Manwe with an iron flail he bore, but Manwe breathed gently upon it and its iron tassels were blown backward, and thereupon Tulkas smote Melko full in his teeth with his fist of iron, and he and Aule grappled with him, and straight he was wrapped thirty times in the fathoms of Angaino.

There is a trial, and though Ossë, Oromë, Ulmo and Vána speak against Melkor, Makar still speaks in his favor, though his words are no longer as warm as before:

'Twere an ill thing if peace were for always: already no blow echoes ever in the eternal quietude of Valinor, wherefore, if one might neither see deed of battle nor riotous joy even in the world without, then 'twould be irksome indeed, and I for one long not for such times!<sup>12</sup>

Yavanna spoke against Melkor, in sorrow for the destruction of her designs, and Aulë backed her. Tulkas spoke in anger, and demanded that Melkor be restrained. So they did for three ages, and decided than once he came out he dwelt in Tulkas' house as servant for four more ages. This part never made it to the last versions of the story of the Valar, which again shows us how Tolkien decided to make his Valar less human-like and more angelic in the Christian sense of the term.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Manwë still had hope that Melkor would one day dwell in peace among the Valar and under the Lights of the Trees. Makar and Meássë agreed with Manwë's decision, while Tulkas and Yavanna believed the doom to be too merciful.

Time passes and the Elves awake in Cuiviénen, and the Valar debate whether they should bring them to Valinor or not. In *The Silmarillion* Ulmo is the leader of those who believe that the Elves should be allowed to stay in Middle-earth and roam freely through the lands.<sup>14</sup> In the *Lost Tales*, it is Makar who is against it, but for different reasons:

Then arose a clamour among the Gods and the most spake for Palúrien and Vána, whereas Makar said that Valinor was builded for the Valar—"and already is it a rose-garden of fair ladies rather than an abode of men. Wherefore do ye desire to fill it with the children of the world?" In this Meássë backed him, and Mandos and Fui were cold to the Eldar as to all else; yet was Varda vehement in support of Yavanna and Tuivána, and indeed her love for the Eldar has ever been the greatest of all the folk of Valinor; and Aulë and Lórien, Oromë and Nessa and Ulmo most mightily proclaimed their desire for the bidding of the Eldar to dwell among the Gods.<sup>15</sup>

Then comes the moment when Melkor is released and starts to weave dissent among the Noldor. Manwë here is harsher to the Elves, not really understanding that Melkor's lies have a grain of truth and that this is the reason why the Noldor heed to him. Melkor then steals part of Oromë's horses, and kills Bruithwir father of Fëanor and steals the Silmarilli. I believe that here is when the Valar lose control of the Elves in Kôr, not realizing that they are not children:

Therefore does Manwe bid them now, and they will, go back to Kôr, and, if they so desire, busy themselves in fashioning gems and fabrics anew, and all things of beauty and cost that they may need in their labour shall be given to them even more lavishly than before.<sup>16</sup>

A few days later, Melkor seeks Ungwë (Ungoliant) and they kill the Trees. The Valar chase him, but he manages to escape. Makar and Meássë join the other Valar, now definitely against Melkor:

Then Makar and Meássë rode in all haste north with their folk, arousing Mandos and ordering the guarding of the mountain paths, but either Makar was too late or Melko's cunning defeated him—and the mind of Makar was not oversubtle, for no glimpse of that Ainu did they see, though assuredly he did escape that way, and worked much evil after in the world, yet none are there whom I have heard tell ever of the manner of his perilous flight back to the ice-kingdoms of the North.<sup>17</sup>

The last we hear of Makar and Meássë is when they return from the hunt of Melkor:

There first came Tulkas weary and dust-covered, for none had leapt about that plain as he... There came Lorien and leaned against the withered bole of Silpion, and wept the wrack of his quiet gardens by the trampling hunt; there too was Meássë and with her Makar, and his hand was red for he had come upon twain of Melko's comrades as they fled, and he slew them as they ran, and he alone had aught of joy in those ill times. Ossë was there and his beard of green was torn and his eyes were dim, and he gasped leaning on a staff and was very much athirst, for mighty as he was about the seas and tireless, such desperate travail on the bosom of Earth spent his vigour utterly.<sup>18</sup>

So, as we can see, both Makar and Meássë were too violent and bloodthirsty for a pantheon of spirits created by a superior being that, no matter what Tolkien said about the tales being "new", as mentioned in footnote 13 above, was more like the One God of Christian mythology. Makar

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and Meássë were among the strongest traces of the Northern paganism, and as Christopher Tolkien explains in *The Coming of the Valar and the Building of Valinor* (see note 1), were part of "a 'Melko-faction' in Valinor that was bound to prove an embarrassment" and could not survive after the last changes J.R.R. Tolkien made to the mythology.

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## Works Cited

1. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Coming of the Valar and the Building of Valinor.*
2. Snorri Sturleson. *The Younger Edda*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14726>
3. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1.* "Appendix: Names in the Lost Tales."
4. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Coming of the Valar and the Building of Valinor.*
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Chaining of Melko.*
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. "In the cosmogony there is a fall; a fall of Angels we should say. Though quite different in form, of course, to that of Christian myth. These tales are 'new', they are not directly derived from other myths and legends, but they must inevitably contain a large measure of ancient-wide spread motives of elements." *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Letter 131. To Milton Waldman.
14. *The Silmarillion*. "Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor."
15. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Coming of the Elves and the Making of Kôr.*
16. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Theft of Melko and the Darkening of Valinor.*
17. Ibid.
18. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales 1. The Tale of the Sun and the Moon.*