
Character Biography

Silmariën

By Oshun

Silmariën was the oldest child of Tar-Elendil, the fourth ruler of the island kingdom of Númenor. Tar-Elendil's two oldest children were daughters. We know less of Tar-Elendil's second daughter Isilmë than we know of Silmariën, which is not a lot. Silmariën's father passed the throne to his only son Írimon, who would rule Númenor as Tar-Meneldur.

Although the first born, Silmariën was unable to become one of the ruling Queens of Númenor because she was born too soon.¹ At the time of her birth, the succession to the throne of Númenor passed from eldest son to eldest son by means of agnatic primogeniture or patrilineal primogeniture, which dictates that the inheritance of the scepter of Númenor passed to the king's eldest son. In cases when there was no male heir, then it would follow the male line, "tracing shared descent from the nearest common ancestor through male ancestors."² This tracing of the patrilineal line becomes important later in relationship to the throne of Númenor.

Through the time of the birth of Silmariën, and for some years thereafter, there was no actual discussion relating to this use of patrilineal primogeniture. The texts imply that practice depended more upon accepted traditions than actual law. There is a fuller and interesting discussion of the customs and/or laws relating to lines of descent in Númenor near the end of *Aldarion and Erendis* in *Unfinished Tales*.³

The Line of Elros

Elros, brother of Elrond, having made the choice to live the life of a mortal Man, was sent to Númenor by Eönwë to be its first ruler⁴: "Thereafter he was known in the Scroll of the Kings by the name of Tar-Minyatur."⁵ Often called the "Land of Gift,"⁶ Númenor had been prepared by the Valar as a reward and a place of safety from the troubles of Middle-earth for the Edain.⁷ "In the Great Battle when at last Morgoth was overthrown and Thangorodrim was broken, the Edain alone of the kindreds of Men fought for the Valar, whereas many others fought for Morgoth."⁸ The *Akallabêth* further describes that the suffering endured by the Edain and their loyalty to the Elves during the Wars of Beleriand caused Eönwë to desire to protect and reward them.⁹ Númenor was, for all practical purposes, intended by the Valar to be a virtual paradise, isolated and protected from strife and the reach of evil forces.

A land was made for the Edain to dwell in, neither part of Middle-earth nor of Valinor, for it was sundered from either by a wide sea; yet it was nearer to Valinor. It was raised by Ossë out of the depths of the Great Water, and it was established by Aulë and enriched by Yavanna; and the Eldar brought thither flowers and fountains out of Tol Eressëa.¹⁰

Interestingly enough, the Valar did not learn from their experience in Valinor with the Noldor, but that is another story. Or believed they could try and again and perhaps the tactic would work better the second time.

Meanwhile, the Númenor into which Silmariën was born was still basking in the full sun of peaceful expansion and extension of its population throughout the star-shaped island. It was only during the reign of her father Tar-Elendil, six hundred years after the beginning of the Second Age and the settlement of Númenor, that Vëantur, serving as Captain of the King's Ships, made the first return voyage to Middle-earth.¹¹

The Lords of Andúnië

Silmariën married a nobleman named Elatan of the city of Andúnië. We know nothing about his background, except for his origins in that city located on the Bay of Andúnië in the Andustar region of the western part of the island of Númenor ("... their son was Valandil, Lord of Andúnië, from whom came long after the lines of the Kings of Gondor and Arnor in Middle-earth"¹²). Subsequently, Elatan's importance lies not in his history, but in the part he played in the future of Númenor through his marriage to Silmariën and the birth of their son Valandil.

Valandil was Tar-Aldarion's cousin, for he was the son of Silmariën daughter of Tar-Elendil and sister of Tar-Meneldur. Valandil, first of the Lords of Andúnië, was the ancestor of Elendil the Tall father of Isildur and Anárion.¹³

Tar-Elendil created the title of the Lords of Andúnië in favor of Valandil. From the foundation of that house, Silmariën became the mother to one of the most important dynasties on the island and later in the history of Middle-earth.

Highest in honour after the house of the kings were the Lords of Andúnië; for they were of the line of Elros, being descended from Silmariën, daughter of Tar-Elendil the fourth king of Númenor. And these lords were loyal to the kings, and revered them; and the Lord of Andúnië was ever among the chief councillors of the Sceptre. Yet also from the beginning they bore especial love to the Eldar and reverence for the Valar; and as the Shadow grew they aided the Faithful as they could. But for long they did not declare themselves openly, and sought rather to amend the hearts of the lords of the Sceptre with wiser counsels.¹⁴

Much of the history of the Second and Third Ages of Middle-earth would depend upon the actions and intervention of the "line of great kings of long life, directly descended from Elros, Eärendil's son, brother of Elrond,"¹⁵ but most especially among those of the line of Elros, the direct descendants of Silmariën, the Lords of the Andúnië, would go down in the history of Middle-earth. The line of the Lords of the Andúnië continued to particularly embody the line of Elros, not simply in blood ties, but by preserving its connection to the history and heritage of the ideals and perspectives of both the original settlers and the creators of Númenor.

Most significantly for the future of Middle-earth, the Lords of the Andúnië were to become known as "the Faithful" and "elf-friends" retaining those early traditions of Númenor, including the use of the Sindarin language, while resisting under the most dangerous of circumstances the forces of Sauron.

When Sauron came as a prisoner to Númenor, he looked upon the land and its inhabitants and was overcome more with envy than with hate. He was clever and bided his time, hoping to deceive and win over the hearts of the men of Númenor.

Yet such was the cunning of his mind and mouth, and the strength of his hidden will, that ere three years had passed he had become closest to the secret counsels of the King; for flattery sweet as honey was ever on his tongue, and knowledge he had of many things yet unrevealed to Men. And seeing the favour that he had of their lord all the councillors began to fawn upon him, 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.¹⁶

Silmariën's descendants and those who followed them, led by Elendil and Isildur, would eventually guide a significant proportion of the Faithful to escape the cataclysmic destruction of Númenor and found and develop the Kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor.

Silmariën's Heirlooms

The Faithful put aboard their wives and their children, and their heirlooms, and great store of goods. Many things there were of beauty and power, such as the Númenóreans had contrived in the days of their wisdom, vessels and jewels, and scrolls of lore written in scarlet and black.¹⁷

The line of the Kings of Númenor had held legendary treasures from the First Age of Beleriand and before, which Elros had brought with him to the Land of Gift as part of his patrimony. But not all of those were in the keeping of the Lord of the Andúnië. The official sword of the Kings of Númenor had belonged to none other than Elu Thingol.

The King's sword was indeed Aranrúth, the sword of Elu Thingol of Doriath in Beleriand, that had descended to Elros from Elwing his mother. Other heirlooms there were beside: the Ring of Barahir; the great Axe of Tuor, father of Eärendil; and the Bow of Bregor of the House of Bëor.¹⁸

Ring of Barahir

But there were historic and key heirlooms dating all the way back to Silmariën herself and before which they did save. The chief among those was the Ring of Barahir. In *Unfinished Tales* one reads that

Only the Ring of Barahir father of Beren One-hand survived the Downfall; for it was given by Tar-Elendil to his daughter Silmariën and was preserved in the House of the Lords of Andúnië, of whom the last was Elendil the Faithful who fled from the wrack of Númenor to Middle-earth.¹⁹

The Ring of Barahir, which Aragon wears in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movie series (facsimiles of which are still available for purchase by movie fans online), is the famous ring given by Finrod Felagund to Barahir father of Beren when he saved the life of the illustrious Elf-lord in the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand the *Dagor Bragollach* (Battle of Sudden Flame). There is no definitive history of the Ring of Barahir prior to the First Age save that it was brought by Finrod from Valinor:

Barahir the brother of Bregolas was in the fighting further westward, near to the Pass of Sirion. There King Finrod Felagund, hastening from the south, was cut off from his people and surrounded with small company in the Fen of Serech; and he would have

been slain or taken, but Barahir came up with the bravest of his men and rescued him, and made a wall of spears about him; and they cut their way out of the battle with great loss. Thus Felagund escaped, and returned to his deep fortress of Nargothrond; but he swore an oath of abiding friendship and aid in every need to Barahir and all his kin, and in token of his vow he gave to Barahir his ring.²⁰

Beren, indeed, brought the ring to Finrod in Nargothrond and sought aid in his seemingly suicidal quest to redeem a Silmaril from the crown of Morgoth in payment of a bride price for Lúthien demanded by Elu Thingol. Finrod, of course, repaid his oath at the cost of his life.²¹

The provenance of the Ring of Barahir is a little cloudy at times, but as nearly as one can reconstruct it, the ring was passed from Beren to his son Dior, and from Dior to Elwing, the mother of Elrond and Elros. Elros apparently took the ring to Númenor, where it remained as an heirloom of the Kings of Númenor, until the fourth King of Númenor and the father of Silmariën, passed it not to the next King, but to his eldest daughter. From Silmariën it entered into the patrimony of the house of the Lords of the Andúnië, until it was brought to Middle-earth by Elendil and was held by the Northern Dúnedain, belong first to the Kings of Arnor and then the Kings of Arthedain.²²

When Arvedui the last of the Kings of Arthedain was forced out of Fornost by the Witch King, he and his forces hid for a time in the tunnels of old Dwarven mines at Ered Luin. Near starvation, they finally sought help from the Lossoth, also called the Snowmen of Forochel. When they left their rescuers Arvedui presented the Ring of Barahir to the Snowmen in return for their succor.²³

He thanked him, and at parting gave him his ring, saying: "This is a thing of worth beyond your reckoning. For its ancients alone. It has no power, save the esteem in which those hold it who love my house. It will not help you, but if ever you are in need, my kin will ransom it with great store of all that you desire."²⁴

But King Arvedui perished in the ship that had been sent to rescue him and he went down with all of his other salvaged artifacts. Only the Ring of Barahir survived. It was in time ransomed by the Rangers of the North and left for safekeeping with Elrond at Rivendell, along with other heirlooms of the Northern Kingdom.

But when Estel was only twenty years of age, it chanced that he returned to Rivendell after great deeds in the company of the sons of Elrond; and Elrond looked at him and was pleased, for he saw that he was fair and noble and was early come to manhood, though he would yet become greater in body and in mind. That day therefore Elrond called him by his true name, and told him who he was and whose son; and he delivered to him the heirlooms of his house.

"Here is the ring of Barahir," he said, "the token of our kinship from afar; and here also are the shards of Narsil. With these you may yet do great deeds; for I foretell that the span of your life shall be greater than the measure of Men, unless evil befalls you or you fail at the test. But the test will be hard and long. The Sceptre of Annúminas I withhold, for you have yet to earn it."²⁵

When Aragorn and Arwen pledged their troth in Lothlórien on the mound of Cerin Amroth, he gave her the Ring of Barahir.²⁶ The texts do not tell us what became of the Ring of Barahir in the

Fourth Age, whether Arwen took it with her when she returned to Lothlórien to die or whether it remained with her descendants.

Star of Elendil or the Elendilmir

The other named artifact which is specifically tracked to Númenor and Silmariën is the jewel called the Star of Elendil or the Elendilmir. This name was given to a star-shaped white jewel set in a mithril fillet (a type of headband or crown-like piece of jewelry worn on the forehead; examples date to classical antiquity). It was associated, as its name indicates, with Elendil and became the version of a crown for the Northern Kingdom of the Dúnedain also sometimes referred to as the Star of the North. Until it is recovered, after Aragorn reunites the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of the Dúnedain, Isildur last wore the original. It was lost when he was killed. A copy of the Elendilmir was then crafted in Rivendell for Vandalil, heir of Isildur, and remained as part of the legacy of Northern Kingdom.²⁷ After the Ring War, Aragorn entered the Tower of Orthanc at Isengard seeking what artifacts might remain there. And he discovered

. . . a treasure without price, long mourned as lost forever: the Elendilmir itself, the white star of Elvish crystal upon a fillet of mithril that had descended from Silmariën to Elendil, and had been taken by him as the token of royalty in the North Kingdom. Every king and the chieftains that followed them in Arnor had borne the Elendilmir down even to Elessar himself; but though it was a jewel of great beauty, made by Elven-smiths in Imladris for Vandalil Isildur's son, it had not the ancientry nor potency of the one that had been lost when Isildur fled into the dark and came back no more.

Elessar took it up with reverence, and when he returned to the North and took up again the full kingship of Arnor Arwen bound it upon his brow, and men were silent in amaze to see its splendour.²⁸

After that time he did not regularly wear it, but saved it for only "high days in the North Kingdom."²⁹ At all other times when in his "kingly raiment he bore the Elendilmir which had descended to him [the second one, the replica]. 'And this also is a thing of reverence,' he said, 'and above my worth; forty heads have worn it before.'³⁰

The account of the legacy of Silmariën reaches both back into the events in First Age Beleriand and forward to find resonance and significance within the tales of the latter days of the history of Middle-earth as recounted in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Works Cited

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5. *Unfinished Tales. The Line of Elros: Kings of Númenor*.

The Silmarillion Writers' Guild Reference Library

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

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 23. Ibid.
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 26. *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King.* Appendix B, "The Tale of the Years," and "The Third Age."
 27. *Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields.*
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 29. Ibid.
 30. Ibid.
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About the Author

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