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An Introduction to the
WRITING SYSTEMS
of
MIDDLE-EARTH

Combined edition, including
tengwar, runes and numerals

by David Doughan and Julian Bradfield

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Part I: the Fëanorian letters

TENGWAR Ṗ Ṛ Ṙ Ṛ

(Quenya: plural of *tengwa* ‘letter’)

TÎW Ṗ Ṛ

(Sindarin: plural of **têw* ‘sign, letter’)

The writing system originally devised in Valinor by Fëanor to express the High-Elven languages, above all the antique form of Quenya, was brought to Middle-earth by the Exiles. There it was adapted and developed into a variety of forms, depending partly on the scriptorial preferences of the users, but more on the peculiarities of the tongues for which it was used. Four such ‘modes’ are represented in the published works: one ‘full’ mode (i.e. using *tengwar* to represent vowels), called ‘the mode of Beleriand’, which itself has three main variants; and two modes using *tehtar* ‘[diacritic] marks’ over consonants (or ‘carriers’) for vowels, in a manner similar to Arabic or Classical Hebrew, one of which has three significant variants; and the vestigial mode used for ‘Arctic’.

So it is slightly misleading to treat the *tengwar* as if they were an alphabet like our ‘Roman’ one—though it is worth remembering that even in our ‘Roman’ alphabet the value of many letters varies markedly between different languages. For example, the letter *c* before *e* or *i* is pronounced (1) like *s* (in English, French and Dutch); (2) like English *ch* (in Italian and Romanian); (3) like *ts* (in German, Czech and Polish); (4) like *k* (in Welsh, Irish, and Classical Latin); (5) like English *th* in *thin* (in Castilian Spanish).

The tengwar are thus a writing system capable of adaptation to suit any language. Several of these adaptations are shown in the following pages. However, in whatever language, most retained their Quenya names, shown in the table on the next page.

The names of the tengwar.

ƀ	<i>tinco</i> (metal)	Ɔ	<i>parma</i> (book)	Ɔ	<i>calma</i> (lamp)	Ɔ	<i>quesse</i> (feather)
Ɔ	<i>ando</i> (gate)	Ɔ	<i>umbar</i> (fate)	ƆƆ	<i>anga</i> (iron)	Ɔ	<i>ungwe</i> (web)
Ɔ	<i>súle</i> (spirit)	Ɔ	<i>formen</i> (north)	Ɔ	<i>harma/aha</i> (treasure/rage)	Ɔ	<i>hwesta</i> (breeze)
Ɔ	<i>anto</i> (mouth)	Ɔ	<i>ampa</i> (hook)	ƆƆ	<i>anca</i> (jaws)	Ɔ	<i>unque</i> (hollow)
Ɔ	<i>númen</i> (west)	Ɔ	<i>malta</i> (gold)	Ɔ	<i>noldo</i> (Deep-elf)	Ɔ	<i>nwalme</i> (torment)
Ɔ	<i>óre</i> (heart)	Ɔ	<i>vala</i> (‘god’)	Ɔ	<i>anna</i> (gift)	Ɔ	<i>vilya</i> (air, sky)
Ɔ	<i>rómen</i> (east)	Ɔ	<i>arda</i> (realm)	Ɔ	<i>lambe</i> (tongue)	Ɔ	<i>alda</i> (tree)
Ɔ	<i>silme</i> (starlight)	Ɔ	<i>silme nuquerna</i> (‘Ɔ’ reversed)	Ɔ	<i>áre/esse</i> (sunlight/name)	Ɔ	<i>áre/esse nuquerna</i> (‘Ɔ’ reversed)
Ɔ	<i>hyarmen</i> (south)	Ɔ	<i>hwesta sindarinwa</i> (Grey-elven ‘Ɔ’)	Ɔ	<i>yanta</i> (bridge)	Ɔ	<i>úre</i> (heat)
Ɔ	<i>halla</i> (tall)						

A. Mode of Beleriand: values for Sindarin.

ṽ	<i>t</i>	ṽ	<i>p</i>	ṽ	<i>c/k</i>	ṽ	—
ṽ	<i>d</i>	ṽ	<i>b</i>	ṽ	<i>g</i>	ṽ	<i>gw</i>
ṽ	<i>th</i>	ṽ	<i>f (ph)</i>	ṽ	<i>ch¹</i>	ṽ	<i>[chw]</i>
ṽ	<i>dh</i>	ṽ	<i>v</i>	ṽ	—	ṽ	—
ṽ	<i>nn</i>	ṽ	<i>mm</i>	ṽ	<i>ng²</i>	ṽ	<i>ngw</i>
ṽ	<i>n</i>	ṽ	<i>m</i>	ṽ	<i>o</i>	ṽ	<i>w</i>
ṽ	<i>r</i>	ṽ	<i>rh</i>	ṽ	<i>l</i>	ṽ	<i>lh</i>
ṽ	<i>s</i>	ṽ	<i>y³</i>	ṽ	<i>ss</i>	ṽ	—
ṽ	<i>h</i>	ṽ	<i>hw</i>	ṽ	<i>e</i>	ṽ	<i>u</i>
ṽ	<i>a</i>	ṽ	<i>i</i>	ṽ	—	ṽ	—

Notes:

1. *ch* as in Scottish *loch*.
2. *ng* as in *hang* (written phonetically as *ŋ*).
3. the vowel *y* (like French *u* or German *ü*).

The following are used to represent diphthongs:

ṽ *ei* ṽ *ui* ṽ *ai* ṽ *oi* ṽ *au, aw*

The mark $\bar{\quad}$ over a consonant indicates that it is preceded by the corresponding nasal consonant, e.g.:

ṽ *nt* ṽ *mp* ṽ *nc* ṽ *nd* ṽ *mb*

$\underline{\quad}$ below a consonant indicates that the consonant is doubled, e.g. $\underline{\tau}$ *ll*.

$\overset{\sim}{\quad}$ (*andaith*, ‘long mark’) indicates a long vowel, e.g.: \tilde{e} *á* \tilde{i} *í*.

A dot is often written over *c* and *ı* to distinguish them from the following tengwar:

ṽ *nachaered* ṽ *aglar* ṽ *in edhel*

Punctuation: $:$ = full stop $,$ = comma, semi-colon or other pause.

Example:

ṽ *annon edhellen* ṽ *edro hí ammen*;

ṽ *fennas nothrim*, ṽ *lasto beth lammen*;

Annon edhellen, edro hí ammen; fennas nothrim, lasto beth lammen.

(This is the mode used for the Moria-gate inscription in *The Lord of the Rings* and for the hymn to Elbereth in *The Road Goes Ever On*).

B1. Mode of Beleriand: values for Westron (English).

Ṗ	t	Ṗ	p	Ḟ	ch ¹	Ḟ	k
Ṗ	d	Ṗ	b	Ḟ	j ¹	Ḟ	g
Ḃ	th	Ḃ	f	Ḟ	sh	Ḟ	[kh]
Ḃ	dh	Ḃ	v	Ḟ	[zh]	Ḟ	[gh]
Ṗ	n	Ḃ	m	Ḟ	[ny]	Ḟ	ng
Ṗ	r ²	Ḃ	u	Ḟ	a ³	Ḟ	a
Ḟ	r ²	Ḟ	[rh]	Ḟ	l	Ḟ	[ll]
Ḟ	s	Ḟ	w	Ḟ	z	Ḟ	wh
Ḟ	h	Ḟ	—	Ḟ	—	Ḟ	o
Ḟ	e	Ḟ	i	Ḟ	y	Ḟ	ə ⁴

Notes:

1. *ch* as in *church*, *j* as in *judge*.
2. Ṗ is used for *r* (after a vowel) before another consonant or at the end of a word; Ḟ is used for *r* after a consonant and/or before a vowel.
3. the sound of *u* in *cup*.
4. the schwa sound of *a* in *ahead*.

Values in square brackets are conjectural.

Diphthongs, etc.: Ḟ = English *ā*, *ay* Ḟ = English *ow* Ḟ = English *o*, *owe* Ḟ = English *au*, *awe*, or Ḟ = English *ī*, *eye* Ḟ = English *ee*, *ea*
 _´ as p. 3 Ḟ following *s*, e.g. Ḟ = *ls*, Ḟ = *ks* Ḟ below a consonant indicates an ‘obscure’ vowel ə like *e* in *the*, or a ‘mute’ *e*.

Example:

ḞṖ ḞḞḞ, ḞḞ ḞṖḞ ḞḞḞḞ, ḞṖ ḞḞ ḞḞḞḞḞḞḞḞ!
 ṖṖḞ ḞḞḞḞ ḞḞ ḞḞḞḞ, ḞḞḞḞḞ ḞḞḞ ṖḞ ḞḞḞḞ.

Hop along, my little friends, up the Withywindle!

Tom’s going on ahead, candles for to kindle.

(This mode is found in *Pictures by J. R. R. Tolkien* plate 48, and in the illustration of ‘Conversation with Smaug’ in *The Hobbit*.)

B2. Mode of Beleriand:

values for Westron (English): Northern variety.

þ	t	ƿ	p	ç	ch	ƚ	k/c
ƿ	d	ƿ	b	cc	j	ƚ	g
þ	th	ƿ	f (ph)	cl	sh	cl	kh
þ	dh	ƿ	v	cd	zh	cd	gh
þ	n	ƿ	m	cc	ny	cc	ng
þ	r	ƿ	u/w	ca	o	ca	a
Ƴ	w	Ƴ	rh	ç	l	ç	lh/ll
ç	s	ç	s	ç	z	ç	z
λ	h	cl	hw	λ	e	o	o
c	—	ı	i	j	y	ı	—

Diphthongs etc.: \tilde{a} = ow in *sorrow* $\tilde{\lambda}$ = ew in *slew* \tilde{a} = ay in *day*
 \tilde{a} $\tilde{\lambda}$ \tilde{a} as in B1.

Example:

λλ Ƴλƿ ççcaþ Ƴca çcaç ıca çcaçcaçcaç

He went alone to look in Mirrormere.

(This variant is found in Óri's page of the Book of Mazarbul, *Pictures* p. 23.)

C. ‘Tehta’ mode for Quenya.

Ṗ	<i>t</i>	Ṗ	<i>p</i>	ç	<i>c/k</i>	ç	<i>qu</i>
ṖṖ	<i>nd</i>	ṖṖ	<i>mb</i>	çç	<i>ng</i> ¹	çç	<i>ngw</i>
ḃ	<i><s></i>	ḃ	<i>f</i>	ç	<i><h></i>	ç	<i>hw</i>
ḃḃ	<i>nt</i>	ḃḃ	<i>mp</i>	çç	<i>nc/nk</i>	çç	<i>nqu</i>
ṛ	<i>n</i>	ṛ	<i>m</i>	çç	<i><n></i>	çç	<i>nw</i>
ṛ	<i>r</i> ²	ṛ	<i>v</i> ³	ç	<i>y</i> ⁴	ç	<i>w/<v></i>
ḡ	<i>r</i> ²	ḡ	<i>rd</i>	ç	<i>l</i>	ç	<i>ld</i>
ś	<i>s</i>	ś	<i>s</i> ⁵	ç	<i>ss</i> ⁶	ç	<i>ss</i> ^{5,6}
λ	<i>h</i>	ç	—	ç	<i>ř</i>	ç	<i>ř</i>
ç	—	ç	short carrier	ç	long carrier	ç	<i><h></i> ⁷

Notes:

1. *ng* as in *anger*, not as in *hang*.
2. *ḡ* is used before vowels, *ṛ* elsewhere.
3. *lv* is normally written *çṖṖ*.
4. *ç* is used for *y* only at the beginning of a word. Otherwise *y* is represented by two dots beneath the preceding consonant, e.g. *íçç* *elye*.
5. As in many modes, the inverted forms are merely variants, often used when *tehtar* are to be written above the letter.
6. In earlier Quenya, *ç* and *ç* represented *z*.
7. *ç* is used for *h* only in the combinations *ḡç* *hr* and *çç* *hl*.

Values in angle brackets indicate that this is not the normal character for this value, and should only be used in special circumstances, i.e. avoid when writing! A brief summary of when they are appropriate is as follows:

- (i) *ḃ* originally represented *th*, so might be used by the archaically minded when *s* derives from earlier *th*, as in the name of the letter: *súle* was earlier *thúle*.
- (ii) *ç* was originally a strong *kh* sound, and was called *harma*; *kh* weakened at the beginning of a word, so *ç* was renamed *aha*. One view is that *ç*, rather than *λ*, should be used for *h* in the middle of words, e.g. *íçç* *aha*; *ççç* *tehta*.
- (iii) *çç* originally represented the *η* sound, but this became *n*. Again, the archaically inclined might use it in words such as *ççç* (*noldo*, earlier *ηoldo*). Similarly, *çç* originally represented *ηw*.

(iv) *w*, when at the beginning of a word, became *v*; hence *vilya* was earlier *wilya*, spelt $\dot{c}\ddot{t}\ddot{c}$.

(v) | see note 7.

Tehtar: \acute{a} *a* \acute{i} *i* \acute{e} *e* \acute{o} *o* \acute{u} *u*

In Quenya, these vowel signs were normally written above the preceding consonant, e.g.:

\dot{t} *ti* \dot{t} *te* \dot{t} *ta* \dot{t} *to* \dot{t} *tu*

The *tehta* \ddot{c} was sometimes omitted where its presence could be inferred.

If no consonant immediately preceded, the ‘carriers’ ι and \jmath were used: ι for a short vowel, \jmath for a long, e.g.:

$\dot{\iota}\dot{t}$ *ata* $\dot{\jmath}\dot{t}$ *elen* $\dot{\iota}\dot{t}$ *síla* $\dot{\jmath}\dot{t}$ *lúme*

Long vowels could also be written with double *tehtar*, e.g. $\ddot{\jmath}\dot{t}$ *lúme*.

(Note: in some modes, the *tehtar* \acute{e} and \acute{i} were interchanged.)

Diphthongs: $\acute{\lambda}$ *ai* $\acute{\lambda}$ *oi* $\acute{\lambda}$ *ui* \acute{o} *au* \acute{o} *eu*

Note: with diphthongs and long vowels, the *tehta* is often written on the preceding consonant, e.g. *caita* ‘lies’ may be written $\dot{c}\dot{\lambda}\dot{t}$ or $\dot{c}\dot{\lambda}\dot{t}$.

Other *tehtar*: \acute{e} \acute{i} are as in B2.

Punctuation: $\cdot = ,$ $\dot{\cdot} = ;$ $\ddot{\cdot} = .$ $\acute{\cdot} = !$ $\beta = ?$

Example:

$\dot{v}\dot{a}\dot{n}\dot{a}$ $\dot{s}\dot{i}\dot{n}\dot{a}$ $\dot{t}\dot{e}\dot{r}\dot{m}\dot{a}\dot{r}\dot{u}\dot{v}\dot{a}$ $\dot{e}\dot{l}\dot{e}\dot{n}\dot{n}\dot{a}$ $\dot{n}\acute{o}\dot{r}\dot{e}\acute{o}$ $\dot{a}\dot{l}\dot{c}\dot{a}\dot{r}$ $\dot{e}\dot{n}\dot{y}\dot{a}\dot{l}\dot{i}\dot{e}\dot{n}$ $\dot{a}\dot{r}$ $\dot{e}\dot{l}\dot{e}\dot{n}\dot{d}\dot{i}\dot{l}$ $\dot{v}\dot{o}\dot{r}\dot{o}\dot{n}\dot{d}\dot{o}$ $\dot{v}\dot{o}\dot{r}\dot{o}\dot{n}\dot{w}\dot{e}$:

Vanda sína termaruva Elenna-nóreo alcar enyalien ar Elendil Vorondo voronwe.

(This mode is used for all known Quenya writing, most notably the Lament of Galadriel in *The Road Goes Ever On*.)

D. ‘Tehta’ mode for Sindarin.

ᵽ	t	ᵽ	p	ᶑ	k	ᶑ	—
ᵽ	d	ᵽ	b	ᶑ	g	ᶑ	gw
ᵽ	th	ᵽ	f/ph	ᶑ	ch ¹	ᶑ	chw
ᵽ	dh	ᵽ	v	ᶑ	—	ᶑ	—
ᵽ	n/nn	ᵽ	m/mm	ᶑ	ng	ᶑ	ngw
ᵽ	n	ᵽ	m	ᶑ	—	ᶑ	w
ᶑ	r	ᶑ	rh	ᶑ	l	ᶑ	lh
ᶑ	s	ᶑ	—	ᶑ	ss	ᶑ	—
ᶑ	h	ᶑ	hw	ᶑ	ĩ	ᶑ	ũ
ᶑ	—	ᶑ	short carrier	ᶑ	long carrier	ᶑ	—

Vowels, diphthongs and other *tehtar* are as for C, except that the vowel signs are written above the *following* consonant, e.g.

ᶑ it ᶑ et ᶑ at ᶑ ot ᶑ ut

Example:

ᶑᶑ ᶑ ᶑᶑᶑᶑᶑᶑ ᶑᶑᶑᶑ ᶑᶑ ᶑᶑᶑᶑᶑᶑ

annon edhellen, edro hi ammen!

(Although theoretically available for use, no example occurs of this mode.)

E1. ‘Tehta’ mode for Westron and the Black Speech.

ƿ	<i>t</i>	ƿ	<i>p</i>	ç	<i>ch</i>	ƿ	<i>k</i>
ƿᵒ	<i>d</i>	ƿᵇ	<i>b</i>	çç	<i>j</i>	ƿç	<i>g</i>
ᵇ	<i>th</i>	ᵇ	<i>f</i>	ç	<i>sh</i>	ç	<i>kh</i>
ᵇᵒ	<i>dh</i>	ᵇᵇ	<i>v</i>	çç	<i>zh</i>	ƿç	<i>gh</i>
ᵒ	<i>n</i>	ᵇᵇ	<i>m</i>	çç	<i>ny</i>	ƿç	<i>ng</i>
ᵒ	<i>r</i>	ᵇᵇ	<i>w</i>	ç	<i>y</i>	ç	[’]
ƿ	<i>r</i>	ƿ	<i>rh</i>	ç	<i>l</i>	ç	<i>lh</i>
ᵒ	<i>s</i>	ᵒ	<i>s</i>	ç	<i>z</i>	ç	<i>z</i>
λ	<i>h</i>	ç	[<i>hw</i>]	ç	<i>ř</i>	ç	<i>ř</i>
ç	—	ç	short carrier	ç	long carrier	ç	⟨ <i>h</i> ⟩ ⁷

Tehtar: values as for C, position as for D, except that in the Black Speech the *o* and *u* *tehtar* are swapped.

Note: in English, extended tengwar are used as abbreviations, e.g.

ᵇᵒ *the* ᵇᵇ *of* ᵇᵇ *of the* ᵒᵒ *and*

Examples:

ᵇᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵇᵇ ᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒ ᵇᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒ

The Lord of the Rings is one of those things

ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ ᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒᵒ

Uglúk u bagronk sha pushdug Saruman-glob búbhosh skai

E2. ‘Tehta’ mode for English (orthographic).

Ṗ	t	Ṗ	p	ḑ	ch	ḑ	k	ḑ	qu
Ṗṇ	d	Ṗṇ	b	ḑḑ	j	ḑḑ	g		
ḑ	th	ḑ	f	ḑ	sh	ḑ	kh	ḑ	wh
ḑṇ	dh	ḑṇ	v	ḑḑ	[zh]	ḑḑ	[gh]		
ṇ	n	ṇ	m	ḑḑ	[ny]	ḑḑ	ng		
ṇ	r	ṇ	w	ḑ	y	ḑ	—		
ḑ	r	ḑ	[rh]	ḑ	l	ḑ	[lh]		
ḑ	s	ḑ	s	ḑ	[z]	ḑ	[z]		
ḑ	h	ḑ	wh	ḑ	[e]	ḑ	—		
ḑ	s	ḑ	short carrier	ḑ	long carrier	ḑ	h		

Values in square brackets are conjectural.

Tehtar: \acute{e} \acute{i} \acute{o} \acute{u} , mute e (on the following consonant). \bar{e} \bar{i} \bar{o} are as in B2.

Diphthongs include $\acute{\lambda}$ ei in *their* $\acute{\tilde{a}}$ ay in *lay*.

Notes:

This is not really a mode for representing English sounds, as modes B1 and E1 largely are; it is basically a mode for transliterating from English and preserving many of the features of English spelling. Thus *tales* is written *not* as it sounds ($\rho\acute{\lambda}\tau\acute{e}$), but in a letter-for-letter transcription, i.e. $\rho\acute{\tilde{a}}$.

Example:

ḑṇ Ṗḑḑ ḑ ḑḑṖ ḑḑ ḑḑḑ ḑ ḑḑḑṇ ḑḑ ḑḑḑḑ ḑḑḑḑḑḑ ḑḑḑḑḑḑ ḑḑḑḑḑḑ ḑḑḑḑḑḑ

The Book of Lost Tales as written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

(This the mode used by C. R. T. for the title pages of *The Silmarillion* and the several volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*.)

F. Full mode for Arctic.

Only one example of this occurs, and that is of a transliteration of English, in the *Father Christmas Letters*, 1937.

<i>t</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>k</i>		
<i>ə</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>s</i>		

(The unusual shape of these letters may be as much due to Polar Bear's limited writing ability as to any intentional difference between Arctic tengwar and Elvish tengwar.)

Writing English in tengwar.

This can be done in a number of ways.

Using modes B1, B2, E1—B1 is of all the modes that best suited to express the *sounds* of English. B2 represents more of a mode designed for another language (Old Norse?), but adapted to English, with some features reflecting English spelling. The same is true of E1 to an even greater extent. However, all these modes basically represent the *sounds* of English, rather than the spelling.

Using mode E2—This differs markedly from the others, in that it represents the *spelling* (orthography) rather than the sounds. Those wishing to use this mode should make a careful study of the relevant title pages to discover how this is done.

Note: When writing in *tengwar*, choose one convention and stick to it. This makes it much, much easier for people to read than having to wonder whether, for example, this time **᠒** stands for *u*, *w*, *v*, or *m*.

Part II: the Runes

RUNES is the ‘real-world’ name given to the (rudimentary) independent alphabet developed by various Germanic nations. Runes were in use in Scandinavia by the 7th century A.D., and in England not much later. Whether they were an adaptation of the Roman alphabet, or an independent development from the original Phoenician system of much greater age, is the subject of (acrimonious) controversy. Certainly their angular form indicates that they were primarily designed for carving, either on stone, or (more frequently) on wood—the word ‘book’ in most Germanic languages (e.g. English) is etymologically related to ‘beech’ (tree). In a sub-literate society, these strange signs were held to have magical properties, and were often (even mainly) used for writing spells on objects (e.g. swords, spears) to confer magical powers on them.

There were variant modes of runes. The Scandinavian system is known from the first six letters as *futhark*; the equivalent Old English is *futhorc* (*fuborc*). The latter is the form of runes used in *The Hobbit*—Tolkien’s slight adaptation of these is given below, together with the Old English rune names.

ƿ	<i>F</i>	<i>feoh</i>	(cattle)	𐌺	<i>S</i>	<i>sigel</i>	(sun)
Ʊ	<i>U/V</i>	<i>ūr</i>	(aurochs)	ᚏ	<i>T</i>	<i>Tīr</i>	(a Germanic god)
þ	<i>TH</i>	<i>þorn</i>	(thorn)	ᚱ	<i>B</i>	<i>beorc</i>	(birch)
ƿ	<i>O</i>	<i>ōs</i>	(god)	ᚺ	<i>E</i>	<i>eh</i>	(horse)
ᚾ	<i>R</i>	<i>rād</i>	(road)	ᚱ	<i>M</i>	<i>mann</i>	(man, person)
ᚦ	<i>C</i>	<i>cēn</i>	(torch)	ᚦ	<i>L</i>	<i>lagu</i>	(sea)
×	<i>G</i>	<i>gyfu</i>	(gift)	ᚷ	<i>NG</i>	<i>Ing</i>	(Germanic god)
ƿ	<i>W</i>	<i>wyn</i>	(joy)	ᚫ	<i>EE</i>	<i>ēdel</i>	(native land)
ᚼ	<i>H</i>	<i>hægl</i>	(hail)	ᚩ	<i>D</i>	<i>dæg</i>	(day)
ᚰ	<i>N</i>	<i>nied</i>	(necessity)	ᚱ	<i>A</i>	<i>æsc</i>	(ash-tree)
l	<i>I</i>	<i>īs</i>	(ice)	ᚱ	<i>Y</i>	<i>ȳr</i>	(bow)
ƿ	<i>P</i>	<i>peorð</i>	(?)	ᚦ	<i>K</i>	<i>calc</i>	(?)

Note: Tolkien uses these runes in a distinctly ‘orthographic’ fashion, i.e. very much reflecting the spelling of modern English—for example, retaining the mute *e* at the end of words like *stone* 𐌺ᚏᚱᚱᚰᚺ and *keyhole* 𐌺ᚺᚱᚱᚱᚱᚏᚺ—though he is not entirely consistent, e.g. *door* is written 𐌺ᚱᚾ rather than 𐌺ᚱᚱᚾ.

Daeron's Runes.

CERTAR ƵŃƆŃƆ

(Quenya: plural of *certa* '(graven) mark')

CIRTH ƵƆƆ

(Sindarin: plural of **certh* 'graven mark')

CERTHAS DAERON ƵŃƆŃƆ ƆŃŃƆƆƆ

(Sindarin: 'rune-rows of Daeron')

ANGERTHAS ƆƵƵŃƆŃƆ

(Sindarin: 'long rune-rows')

These 'runes' are superficially similar in form to the Germanic ones; however, it will soon become apparent that their values are completely different. This system was originally devised in Doriath by Daeron, inspired by Fëanor's *tengwar*, and used widely by Grey Elves, Wood Elves, Men, and, above all, Dwarves. The usual values are given to the left; variant forms are extant of runes used by the Dwarves of Erebor, as in the Book of Mazarbul (indicated by ¹), and of Moria (²). Archaic values are indicated by (³).

Ƶ	<i>p</i>	Ɔ	<i>nj</i> [<i>x</i> ¹ , <i>z</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>ng</i> [<i>nd</i> ^{1,2}]	Ɔ	<i>á</i>
Ɔ	<i>b</i>	Ƶ	<i>k</i>	Ɔ	<i>s</i> [<i>h</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>o</i>
Ɔ	<i>f</i>	Ƶ	<i>g</i>	Ɔ	<i>s</i> [²]	Ɔ	<i>ó</i>
Ɔ	<i>v</i>	Ƶ	<i>kh</i>	Ɔ	<i>z</i> [<i>ŋ</i> ^{1,2} , <i>ss</i> ⁴]	Ɔ	<i>ö</i>
Ɔ	<i>hw</i> [<i>m</i> ³]	Ƶ	<i>gh</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>ng</i> ^{1,2}]	Ɔ	<i>Y</i> – [<i>n</i> ^{1,2}]
Ɔ	<i>m</i>	Ƶ	<i>ŋ</i> [<i>n</i> ¹ , <i>nn</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>nd</i> [<i>ou</i> ¹ , <i>nj</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>h</i> [<i>s</i> ²]
Ɔ	<i>mb</i> [<i>mh</i> ³]	Ƶ	<i>kw</i>	Ɔ	<i>i</i> [<i>y</i> ⁵]	Ɔ	– [<i>ɔ</i> ^{1,2}]
Ɔ	<i>t</i>	Ƶ	<i>gw</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>y</i> ^{1,2}]	Ɔ	– [<i>a</i> ^{1,2}]
Ɔ	<i>d</i>	Ƶ	<i>khw</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>hy</i> ^{1,2}]	Ɔ	– [<i>ps</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>th</i>	Ƶ	<i>ghw</i> , <i>w</i>	Ɔ	<i>u</i> [<i>w</i> ³]	Ɔ	– [<i>ts</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>dh</i>	Ƶ	<i>ngw</i>	Ɔ	<i>ú</i> [<i>z</i> ¹]	Ɔ	– [<i>ai</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>n</i> [<i>r</i> ^{1,2}]	Ƶ	<i>nw</i>	Ɔ	<i>w</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>ou</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>ch</i> [<i>h</i> ³]	Ƶ	<i>r</i> [<i>g</i> ¹ , <i>j</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>ü</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>ea</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>j</i>	Ƶ	<i>rh</i> [<i>gh</i> ¹ , <i>zh</i> ²]	Ɔ	<i>e</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>ew</i> ¹]
Ɔ	<i>sh</i>	Ƶ	<i>l</i>	Ɔ	<i>é</i>	Ɔ	– [<i>h</i> ^{1,2}]
Ɔ	<i>zh</i>	Ƶ	<i>lh</i>	Ɔ	<i>a</i>		

Notes: 1. Erebor. 2. Moria. 3. Archaic. 4. When writing Quenya or Sindarin. 5. In Elvish use.

Notation: *ch* means the sound in *church*; *kh* is the sound in Scottish *loch*, which is written *ch* in Sindarin. *ng* is as in *anger*; the sound in *hang* is written *ŋ*. *ü* is used for the vowel written *y* in Sindarin; *y* means the consonant *y*. The symbols *a* and *ə* represent the two vowels in *butter*. The mark ' is used for the glottal stop in Khuzdul. ^h means aspiration of a consonant, e.g. 𐌵𐌶𐌵𐌶𐌵 *khazâd*, pronounced *k^hazâd*.

Some variant forms are found: 𐌶 may appear as 𐌶; 𐌶 as 𐌶; 𐌶 as 𐌶; 𐌶 as 𐌶; and the runes 𐌶 and 𐌶 were often reduced to ˘ and ˘ when the vowels were weak.

A few abbreviations are found: 𐌶 for &, 𐌶 for *of* (in English), ˘ for *the*, and 𐌶 for *is* (again in the Ereborian mode used for English). An underbar could be used to mark double consonants or long vowels.

Part III: Numerals

The tengwar numerals were found and presented to *Quettar* by Christopher Tolkien (see *Quettars* 13 and 14). The following is adapted therefrom.

For lists, series and the like, the *tengwar* from 1 to 24 (ρ , ρ , . . . , α) were used, just as we use (a), (b), A sign such as a dot or bar above could be used, e.g. $\bar{\rho}$ or $\dot{\rho}$.

For numbers proper, the Eldar used both a decimal and a duodecimal system, the Dwarves used a duodecimal system, and the Men of the West in the Third Age used mainly a decimal system. The digits used were as follows:

᠎	᠊	᠋	᠌	᠍	᠎	᠏	᠐	᠑	᠒	᠓	᠔	᠕
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	

In all systems the numbers are written with the unit digit at the left. The digits were usually marked, either by a dot over each digit, or by a line drawn above the number, for a decimal system; in a duodecimal system, the dot or line was written below. The mark could be omitted where no confusion would arise. In a duodecimal system, a circle could be used (in place of the dot) to mark the twelves digit; and the symbol ϕ or ϕ could be used for 12 (though how, it is not clear!).

Examples:

(Italic numbers are used for reversed numbers, roman for normal numbers.)

Decimal: $\dot{\rho}\dot{\epsilon} = 01 = 10$; $\dot{\rho}\dot{\eta}\dot{\rho}\dot{\epsilon} = 091 = 190$
 $\overline{\epsilon\eta\rho\eta\epsilon\rho\eta\epsilon} = 1780396 = 6930871$

Duodecimal: $\overline{\epsilon\eta}$ or $\overline{\epsilon\eta}$ = $5\ 3_{12} = 3\ 5_{12} = 41$
 $\overline{\eta\dot{\rho}\epsilon\dot{\rho}\eta\epsilon\epsilon} = 70\ \hat{1}\ 2\ \hat{1}\ 0\ 3\ 2_{12} = 23\ \hat{1}\ 0\ 2\ \hat{1}\ 0\ 7_{12} = 6\ 930\ 871$

The only numerals we have for the runes are three digits found in the Book of Mazarbul in *Pictures by J. R. R. Tolkien*: $\mathfrak{A} = 3$, $\mathfrak{W} = 4$, $\mathfrak{Y} = 5$.

Afterword

This first ‘*Quettar* special publication’ is a simplified, systematized aid for those new to the *tengwar* and the *certar*, and a reference tool for those who are more familiar with them. It is far from the last word on Tolkien’s writing systems—for example, nothing is said of the development (or meta-development) of these systems, nor of such non-‘Middle-earth’ systems as Goblin letters (see *The Father Christmas Letters*) or Tolkien’s ‘New English Alphabet’ (see Stenström, Anders (Beregond) ‘Some notes on the New English Alphabet’, *Tûrîm* 11, June 1986). Also, this pamphlet may contain inaccuracies or areas of less than brilliant clarity. We rely on you to tell us about them.

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DTJD September 1987
JCB

This publication has been re-set for current *Quettar* typography; one or two inessential changes have been made in the course of this.

JCB September 1997

QUETTAR is Quenya, or ‘High-Elven’. It means ‘words’, and is the bulletin of the Linguistic Fellowship of the Tolkien Society, whose members are referred to as **Quendili**, which means ‘lovers of language’ or ‘lovers of Quenya’, (though there are some **Sindarindili** among us). Those who describe themselves as philologists tend to say **Lambendili**. Fëanorian calligraphers are known (perhaps inaccurately) as **Tengwardili**, runemasters as **Certatúri**.

The languages which principally interest us are those sub-created by J. R. R. Tolkien, including:

Quenya	Khuzdul
Qenya	Adûnaic
Sindarin	Rohirric
Nandorin	Wose-speech
Wood-Elven	Arctic
Telerin	Black Speech
Eldarissa	Common Speech / Westron
Goldogrin	Other Mannish languages

This also involves a degree of interest in Finnish, Welsh, Old English and other ‘real world’ languages. We stress ‘interest’. While expertise is welcome, in order to become a Quendil all you need is love. We trust that knowledge will follow.

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