

NORTHERN DIALECT OF SINDARIN

BY

RICHARD DERDZIŃSKI

ABSTRACT: A variety of a language distinguished from other varieties by features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary and by its use by a group of speakers set off from others geographically or socially is called *a dialect*. This definition, found in *Webster's Dictionary*¹, explains main features of dialects which are found in every language, also in languages of J.R.R. Tolkien's *legendarium*. In this article I want to explore one of the dialects of Sindarin of the First Age of Middle-earth which was named *North Sindarin* by Tolkien. In two existing Sindarin Dictionaries the matter of the Sindarin dialects was untouched or treated freely, without deeper analysis². I want to bridge the gap with hope that the matter of the Sindarin dialects will find interest among the members of the society of the Tolkienian linguists.

KEYWORDS: *Sindarin, archaic Sindarin, Old Sindarin, Middle Sindarin, Ilkorin, dialect, phonology, tree of languages.*



EXTERNAL HISTORY OF NORTH SINDARIN

North Sindarin or *Mithrim* as a dialect of Grey Elvish (Sindarin) is mentioned for the first time in J. R. R. Tolkien's essay *Quendi and Eldar* from ca. 1959-1960 (see *The War of the Jewels*, p. 400, 414). The term *North Sindarin* occurs also in his essay from ca. 1968 entitled *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* and in another text from this period entitled *The Problem of 'Ros'*. Thanks to publishing efforts of Carl F. Hostetter we know more about phonology of North Sindarin described in the omitted part of the essay *Shibboleth of Fëanor*: in Hostetter's periodical *Vinyar Tengwar* n° 41 this important fragment of the essay was finally published in July 2000. Also in *Vinyar Tengwar* n° 42 (July 2001), in *The Rivers and Beacon-hills of Gondor* by J.R.R. Tolkien from c. 1967-69 we find an entry concerning the differences between Southern dialects of Sindarin (Falathrim and Doriathrim) and North Sindarin.

It is interesting to answer the question why Tolkien created North Sindarin. In my opinion he needed a dialect that could fill a gap in the system of place-names in Beleriand in the First Age. He needed explanation for a couple of names in the *legendarium* that earlier were explained as names in Ilkorin or in another languages of the early version of the linguistic structure of Arda. It is possible that Tolkien invented North Sindarin when writing *Quendi and Eldar*. He needed etymology of *Hithlum* which couldn't be explained as a Sindarin name. Another names like *Celegorm* needed new explanation too (cf. NS *Celegorm* with its possible [Western] Sindarin form **Celegorf*).

Edouard Kloczko in his short essay *Ilkorin and North Sindarin (Mithrim)* published in *Tyalië Tyellessiëva* #9, October 1996 and republished by H. K. Fauskanger in his *Ardalambion: Ilkorin* claimed that Ilkorin of the early linguistic drafts and writings was later transformed into

¹ *Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus*, College Edition, version 1.0.

² WILLIS Didier, *Sindarin Dictionary, Hiswelókë - Le Dragon de Brume* special issue n°1, 2001; DERDZIŃSKI Ryszard, *Gobeth e-Lam Edhellen: dictionary of the language of the Grey Elves as it was presented in the writings of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien*, GooldMaggot Publishers, 2000.

Northern Sindarin. I used this theory when I was collecting entries for my *Gobeth e-Lam Edhellen*. Unfortunately the matter of the *Ilkorin* > *North Sindarin* transformation isn't as easy as it seems to be. As Helge K. Fauskanger writes in his *Ardalambion* there is a great deal of the *Ilkorin* words that cannot be adopted as *dialectal Sindarin* are *alch*, *côm*, *cwess*, *salch* (because *kw* fails to become *p*) and *go* (because primitive *3, H* becomes *g* instead of disappearing). I could add here *usc*

INTERNAL HISTORY OF NORTH SINDARIN

Originally North Sindarin was a tongue of the *Mithrim*. This tribe name means 'The Grey [Elves]³. The northern dialect must have come into existence in isolation from another language-varieties. In *Quendi and Eldar* we can find an entry about the early northward migration of a group of Elves from Beleriand that later were to be named the *Mithrim*. Tolkien wrote:

Mithrim who had gone north from Beleriand and inhabited the regions about the great lake that afterwards bore their name (*The War of the Jewels*, p. 378).

And further:

Mithrim was a name given to them by the southern-dwellers, because of the cooler climate and grayer skies, and the mists of the North. (...) The language of *Mithrim* was also a marked dialect; but none of the dialects of Sindarin differed widely enough to interfere with intercourse. Their divergences were no greater than those that had arisen between the Quenya as spoken by the Vanyar, and as spoken by the Noldor at the time of the exile (*ibidem*, p. 410-411).



BELERIAND IN THE FIRST AGE. DOMAINS OF THE MAIN SINDARIN DIALECTS
(FROM *THE ATLAS OF MIDDLE-EARTH* BY KAREN W. FONSTAD)

We are able to define an approximate date of the northern migration of the *Mithrim* analyzing Sindarin phonology. North Sindarin must have been set off from the main Sindarin-group (called *Southern dialects* in *The Rivers and Beacon-hills of Gondor*) before the Old Sin-

³ It can be derived from ancient Sindarin (Didier Willis' Old Sindarin) **mit^hërimbe* 'grey people'.

darin⁴ \bar{o} became diphthong⁵ *au* and before the intervocalic *m* became fricative *ɱ* transcribed by Tolkien as *mh* or *m̃*, and in the Cirth alphabet as \aleph . Concerning this sound Tolkien wrote in *The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix E: *For (archaic) Sindarin a sign for a spirant m (or nasal v) was required (...)*. This sound regularly became *w* or *u* (when finally) in Sindarin; cf. *paw* 'sickness' MS *pauw* < OS **pōme* < CE **k^wāmē* [$\sqrt{k^wam}$] (*Etymologies*, p. 366).⁶

As we noticed above the diphtongization of \bar{o} and the opening of intervocalic *m* were characteristic of Sindarin in its middle stage (usually we call this stage *Middle Sindarin*, but Tolkien used a term *archaic Sindarin*). Another feature of Middle Sindarin is loss of the final vowels. This characteristic phenomenon must have occurred parallel to or after the intervocalic *m* became fricative (if it happened before this process the *m* wouldn't be intervocalic). If so, the vowel reduction must have occurred parallel in the main Sindarin-group and in North Sindarin, because the northern dialect was already separated from other varieties. We could ask if lack of the *m*-lenition in North Sindarin was the only lack of the intervocalic lenitions in this dialect. Do we find another lenition in North Sindarin? David Salo says that yes⁷. In his opinion the lenition of *m* is a special case and probably occurred separately from the other mutations. A general lack of lenition in North Sindarin would probably have rendered North Sindarin unintelligible to other Sindarin dialects, which was not Tolkien's intention. In any case, the example of the NS *Celegorm* < **Kyelekormo* clearly shows lenition of *k* > *g* (see the glossary below).

When the Noldor returned to Middle-earth in the first year of Sun they adopted North Sindarin as their own language. We read in *The Shibboleth*:

He himself [i.e. Fëanor] perished too early in the war against Morgoth, largely because of his recklessness, to do no more than note the differences between the dialects of North Sindarin (which was the only one he had time to learn) and the Western (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, p. 342).

Sindarin used by the Sons of Fëanor was the Northern dialect, too. North Sindarin must have been in use in *Hithlum* (a North Sindarin place-name being an adaptation of Quenya *Hísilómë*) and in *Dor-lómin*, *Dorthonion* and *Ard-galen*, in *March of Maedhros*, *Estolad* and *Thargelion*. Another place-name defined as North Sindarin is *Novrod* (later *Nogrod*). This Dwarvish stronghold in Ered Luin was neighboring with Thargelion – a realm of Caranthir. Men who settled in the Noldor realms adapted North Sindarin as their second-language. It can be read in *The Problem of 'Ros'* that Beren spoke Sindarin after a fashion derived from North Sindarin. King of Beleriand Thingol had small love for North Sindarin, which for him was a tongue of the Elves who came under the dominion of Morgoth. When the Elvish kingdoms of Beleriand collapsed and when Morgoth's conquest was all but complete, in the havens of refuge in Brithombar and Eglarest not only Sindarin was heard, but also its Northern dialect. As J.R.R. Tolkien wrote in *The Rivers and Beacon-hills of Gondor* North Sindarin perished in the course of the war against Morgoth⁸.

⁴ The nomenclature of this article differs from this used by Tolkien. Tolkien never used the terms *Old Sindarin* and *Middle Sindarin*. His own term was *archaic Sindarin* (Appendix E, p. 128).

⁵ Old Sindarin \bar{o} < Common Eldarin \bar{a} . In Didier Willis' *Sindarin Dictionary* the \bar{o} is transcribed as \hat{a} .

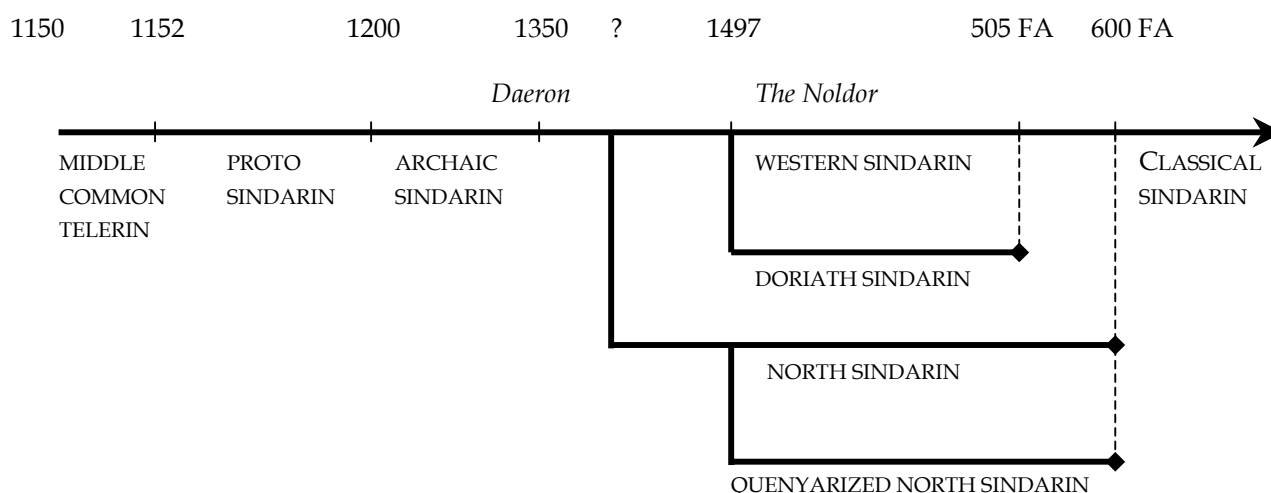
⁶ Didier Willis uses different transcription: S *paw* < MS *pauw* < OS *pāme* < CE *k^wāmê*. Tolkien would write: S *paw* < (Archaic) S *pauw̃* < *pōmæ* < CE *kwāmē*.

⁷ See *Elvish Language List*, Digest Number 274, message 3.

⁸ *Vinyar Tengwar* n^o1, July 2001, p. 27.

FEATURES OF NORTH SINDARIN

I present a different timetable of the Sindarin history than that proposed by another linguists⁹. J.R.R. Tolkien's own term for the older stage of Sindarin is *archaic Sindarin*. The 'modern' stage we can call *classical Sindarin*. In my opinion we shouldn't use the unattested term *Old Sindarin* being a simple calque of the term *Old Noldorin* found in *The Lhammas* and *The Etymologies* (see *The Lost Road*), because the phonological perspective of these texts written in the 1930s is quite different. Below you can see that I divide the Sindarin history in the following way: [*Common Eldarin* > *Common Telerin* >] *Proto Sindarin* > *Archaic Sindarin* > *Classical Sindarin*. The *Archaic Sindarin* (AS) was divided in ancient Beleriand into three dialects: *Iathrim* (of Doriath), *Western* (of the Havens) and *Northern* (of the Mithrim mentioned above, of the northern kingdoms of the Noldor and of the Men who lived in that kingdoms). I suppose that two main dialects of that time were *Iathrim Sindarin* (more archaic) and *North Sindarin* (being influenced by Exilic Quenya and languages of Men). These two dialects disappeared before the end of First Age: *Iathrim Sindarin* at ca. 505 when Doriath collapsed and *North Sindarin* with the fall of the Noldor and their allied in the end of the Elder Days (ca. 600). The dominant dialect in the beginning of the Second Age was *Western Sindarin* which probably was the basis of the Classical Sindarin of the Second and Third Age.



In Tolkien's writings mentioned in the beginning of this study we can find many hints that tell something about the North Sindarin phonological structure. Now I want to analyze these fragments. We know already that North Sindarin preserved the intervocalic *m* and didn't contain the typical Sindarin diphthongization of long *o*. We can see it below (ENS - *Early North Sindarin*):

North Sindarin:	CE * <i>arāmē</i> > PS * <i>arōme</i> > ENS * <i>arōm</i>	>	NS <i>Arum</i>
Sindarin:	CE * <i>arāmē</i> > PS * <i>arōme</i> > AS * <i>araum̃</i>	>	S <i>Araw</i>

Another North Sindarin phenomenon described by Tolkien in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*¹⁰ is the transformation of the CE consonant clusters: *tw*, *dw*, *t^hw* and *nw* into: *b*, *v*, *f* and *m*. This

⁹ See Helge Fauskanger's *Ardalambion: Old Sindarin* and Didier Willis' *Sindarin Dictionary*.

¹⁰ This note is excluded from the published text by Christopher Tolkien. It was published by Carl F. Hostetter in *Vinyar Tengwar* n° 41, July 2000, p. 8-9.

process can be exemplified by attested and reconstructed (with asterisk *) North Sindarin words:

<i>tw</i> > <i>dw</i> > <i>b</i>	CE * <i>katwā</i> > CT * <i>katwe</i> > PS * <i>kadw</i> > NS * <i>cab</i> 'shapely' (S <i>cadu</i>)
<i>dw</i> > <i>ðw</i> > <i>v</i>	CE * <i>nidwō</i> > CT * <i>nidwa</i> > > PS * <i>neðw</i> > NS * <i>nev</i> 'bolster, cushion' (S <i>nedhu</i>)
<i>t^hw</i> > <i>θw</i> > <i>f</i>	CE * <i>k^hit^hwā</i> > CT * <i>k^hit^hwa</i> > PS * <i>heθw</i> > NS * <i>hef</i> 'foggy, obscure' (S <i>hethu</i>)
<i>nw</i> > <i>m</i>	CE * <i>finwē</i> > CT * <i>finwe</i> > PS * <i>finw</i> > NS <i>fin</i> (S <i>finu</i>)

The newest issue of *Vinyar Tengwar* (n°42) brings us another information about the North Sindarin phonology. According to Note 5 to the Appendix: *The Eldarin numerals* (pp. 24-27) primitive *nt*, *ŋk* and *mp* had remained unchanged in North Sindarin. In the Southern dialects when standing medially these sounds became long *nn* and *mm*. Only in the final position they remained unchanged¹¹.

<i>nt</i> > <i>nt</i>	CE * <i>anta-</i> > PS * <i>anta-</i> > NS * <i>anta-</i> 'give' (S <i>anna-</i>)
<i>ŋk</i> > <i>nc</i>	CE * <i>enek</i> + <i>-ōja</i> > PS * <i>enkōja</i> > NS * <i>encui</i> 'sixth' (S <i>enchui</i>)
<i>mp</i> > <i>mp</i>	CE * <i>k^hampata</i> > PS * <i>k^hampat</i> > NS * <i>hampad</i> 'clothing' (S <i>hammad</i>)

North Sindarin Quenyarized names:

- Amrod** [ʰamrɔd] (S ***Amrod**) pers. n. Q *Ambarto* ☉ PM/353, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **amba-arōta* < CE **amba-arātā* ⇐ Q *Ambarto* [√*am* and √*ar¹-ā*].
- Amros** [ʰamrɔs] (S ***Amros**) pers. n. Q *Ambarussa* ☉ PM/353, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **ambarussa* < CE **amba-russa* ⇐ Q *Ambarussa* [√*am* and √*rus*].
- Arum** [ʰarum] (S **Araw**) pers. n. Vala Oromë ☉ WJ/400 ⇐ OS **arōme* < CT *arōmæ* < CE **arāmē* [√*rom* or ⇐ V *Arōmēz*].
- Caranthir** [kʰarənθir] (S ***Caranthir**) pers. n. Q *Carnistir* ☉ PM/353, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **karanē-st^hir* < CE **karani-stir* ⇐ Q *Carnistir* [√*kar²-ān* and √*stir*].
- Celegorm** [kʰɛlɛgɔrm] (S ***Celegorf**) pers. n. Q *Tyelkormo* ☉ LR/353, 366, PM/353, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **keleka-gorme* < CE **kelekā-gormē* [√*kel* and √*gor* ⇐ Q *Tyelkormo*].
- Curufin** [kʰurufin] (S ***Curufinu**, pure NS ***Curufim**) pers. n. Q *Curufinwë* ☉ PM/366, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **kurwe-finwe* ⇐ Q *Curufinwë* [√*kur* and √*fin*].
- Fim** [ʰim] (S **Finu**) pers. n. *Finwë* ☉ PM/344, VT#41/8-9 ⇐ MS **finw* < OS **finwe* < CE **phinwē* [√*phin*].
- Hithlum** [hʰiθlum] geogr. n. Q *Hísilómë* ☉ WJ/400 ⇐ *k^hit^hlōme* < Exil. Q *hísë* 'mist, fog' + *lómë* 'dimness, dusk, twilight' (its Sindarin form would be hypothetical **Hithlaw*).
- Maedros** [mʰɛɔdrɔs] (S ***Maedros**) pers. n. Q *Maitimo Russandol* ☉ PM/366, VT#41/10 ⇐ MS *magitè-russa* < CE **magitì-russa* ⇐ Q *Maitimo Russandol* [√*mag* and √*rus*].
- Maglor** [mʰaglɔr] (S ***Magalor**) pers. n. Q *Macalaurë* ☉ PM/366, VT#41/10 ⇐ OS **makaglaure* < CE *maka-glawarē* ⇐ Q *Macalaurë* [√*mak* and √*g-láwar*].
- Novrod** [nʰɔvrod] geogr. n. *Nogrod* ☉ WJ/414 ⇐ OS *nōv-zrot* < CE *nāba-grota* [√*nab*, √*g-rot*].

¹¹ This late text contains rather unexpected forms, considering what we thought we knew about Sindarin. In this late-sixties document, Tolkien explicitly insists that in the dialect of Sindarin used by the Noldor, primitive *nk* and *nt* had become *nch* and *nth* between vowels.

North Sindarin attested and reconstructed words:

- am*** [l¹am] (S **anu**) *adj.* male ☉ Etymology/360, VT#41/8-9 ⇐ MS **anw* < OS **anwa* < CE **hanwā* [√*han*].
- cab*** [k¹ab] (S **cadu**) *adj.* shaped, formed ☉ Etymology/362-363, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **kadw* < OS **katwe* < CE **katwā* [√*kat*].
- drama-*** [dr¹ama] (S **drava-**) *v.* to hew ☉ Etymology/354 ⇐ OS **drama* < **darama* [√*darām*].
- hef*** [h¹ʒf] (S **hethu**) *adj.* foggy, obscure, vague ☉ Etymology/364, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **xeθw* < OS **k^hit^hwa* < CE **k^hit^hwā* [√*k^hit^h*].
- hif*** [h¹if] (S **hithu**) *n.* fog ☉ Etymology/364, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **hiθw* < OS **k^hit^hwe* < CE **k^hit^hmē* [√*k^hit^h*].
- laman*** [l¹avan] (S **lavan**) *n.* animal, usually applied to four-footed beasts and never to reptiles or birds ☉ WJ/388, 416 ⇐ OS **lamana* [√*lam*].
- nev*** [n¹ʒv] (S **nedhu**) *n.* bolster, cushion ☉ Etymology/378, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **neðw* < OS **nidwa* < CE **nidwō* [√*nid¹*].
- nov** [n¹ɔv] (S **naw** < MS **nauv*) *adj.* hollow ☉ WJ/414 ⇐ OS **nōv* < CE **nābā* [√*nab*].
- paf*** [p¹af] (S **pathu**) *n.* level space, sward ☉ Etymology/380, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **paθw* < OS **pat^hwa* < CE **pat^hmā* [√*pat^h*].
- pum*** [p¹um] (S **paw**) *n.* sickness ☉ Etymology/366, WJ/400 ⇐ OS **pōme* < CE **k^wāmē* [√*k^wam*].
- remia-*** [r¹ʒmi.a] (S **revia-**) *v.* to fly, sail ☉ Etymology/382, X/RH ⇐ OS **ramia* [√*ram*].
- romal*** [r¹umal] (S **roval**) *n.* pinion, great wing (of eagle) ☉ Etymology/382, X/RH ⇐ OS **rōmale* < CE **rāmalē* [√*ram*].

North Sindarin possible words taken from earlier Ilkorin:

- dum** [d¹um] (S **daw**) *Ilkorin adj.* I night time, gloom, II twilight ☉ Etymology/354, WJ/400 ⇐ OS **dōme* < CE **dōmē* [√*do*].
- tim** [t¹im] (S **tinu**) *Ilkorin n.* spark, small star ☉ Etymology/393, VT#41/8-9, X/W ⇐ MS **tinw* < OS **tinwe* < CE **tinmē* [√*tin*].
- tôr** [t¹ɔ:r] (S **taur**) *Ilkorin n.* king (only used of the legitimate kings of whole tribes) ☉ Etymology/391, S/420, 438 ⇐ OS **tōro* < CE **tārō* [√*tar*].