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(te[ngw]ar [kw]enya)

Tengwar Quenya

MS-Windows-Truetype / ATM (Postscript Type-1) Font
version 1.6 - January 1995

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An Introduction to Tengwar:

Decades ago, when J. R. R. Tolkien wrote his fantasy book series: "The Hobbit" and the "Lord of the Rings", he described a race of Elves possessing a rich history, language and culture. Not all Elves spoke the same language. The most important languages were: "Quenya" (the language of the High-Elves) and "Sindarin" (the language of the Grey-Elves). Early in their history they devised an alphabet for writing their language. This alphabet was designed to be an orderly phonetic writing system for use with pen or brush.

Consonant sounds were represented by letters called: "Tengwar". There are 24 primary Tengwar letters. The letters were organized into four series or "Témar" (shown as vertical columns on the next page). Each series was used to represent sounds created by different parts of the mouth. Series I and II were almost always used for Dental and Labial sounds. Series III was generally used for either Palatal or Velar sounds and series IV for either Velar or Labiovelar sounds, depending on the phonology of the language represented. These four series were further broken down into six grades or "Tyeller" (shown as horizontal rows on the next page). Each grade was used to represent sounds created by different ways that air flows through the mouth and nose. Grade 1 and 2 was used for voiceless and voiced Plosives. Grade 3 and 4 was used for voiceless and voiced Fricatives. Grade 5 was used for Nasals. Grade 6 was used for Semi-vowel consonants. Each Tengwar letter was assigned a phonetic value determined by its position in this grid. People speaking different languages would often re-define this grid, so only a few of the letters had a fixed phonetic value. All of these letters are composed of (at least) two elements: a vertical stem or telco (representing air) and a curved bow or "Lúva" (representing voice). There were also numerous additional letters that supplemented the standard Tengwar primary letters. These are shown in the Tengwar charts on the following pages.

Vowel sounds are represented by symbols called: "Tehtar". The Tehtar symbols were placed above and below (and sometimes inside) the Tengwar letters. There were five standard Tehtar symbols, representing the five most commonly used vowel sounds (a, e, i, o & u). They were most frequently placed above the Tengwar letters. But both the number of vowel symbols used, and where they were placed depended on largely on the preferences of the people using this alphabet.

This made Tengwar a very flexible writing system that was easily adapted by many different races to their languages. Unfortunately, Tengwar is so flexible that it's possible to have several different versions of it for each and every language. Also, over the centuries, a great deal of shorthand developed. Since Tengwar can be so easily modified, customized and mutated; most people in Middle-earth devised their own version. Refer to Appendix "E" of the "Return of the King" volume of "Lord of the Rings" for much more detail on Tengwar history, style, and variety.

The "Tengwar Quenya" font is an attempt to bring this elegant alphabet to Personal Computers running Microsoft Windows (or any other computer operating system that can use MS-Windows Truetype or Adobe Type Manager compatible fonts). This font should be compatible with most applications running in these environments such as word processors, databases, and presentation graphics. I hope that this font and this document will spark interest in Tolkien's works, and promote the study of Elvish languages, orthography and calligraphy.

This document is an attempt to explain basic Tengwar and Tehtar usage and is only a tool to simplify the learning of the Tengwar. It will not explain all of the complexities of Tengwar usage, nor will it explain any details of Elvish languages. It should not be viewed as official or authorized by anyone. If you discover any errors, inaccuracies, or problems with this font, or documentation; I encourage you to contact the author and offer any ideas that you might have for improving this font, or documentation. Please refer to the author's postal address at the beginning of this document.

Tengwar (Letters) with consonant values for Quenya:

I		II		III		IV		
1	1	1 - tinco (metal) t	q	2 - parma (book) p	a	3 - calma (lamp) c / k	z	4 - quesse (feather) kw
2	2	5 - ando (gate) nd	w	6 - umbar (fate) mb	s	7 - anga (iron) g	x	8 - ungwe (spider's web) gw
3	3	9 - thúle or súle (spirit or wind) th or s	e	10 - formen (north) f	d	11 - harma/aha (treasure or rage) kh	c	12 - hwesta (breeze) khw
4	4	13 - anto (mouth) nt	r	14 - ampa (hook) mp	f	15 - anca (jaws) k	v	16 - unque (a hollow) kw
5	5	17 - númen (west) n	t	18 - malta (gold) m	g	19 - oldo/noldo (one of the Noldor)	b	20 - walme/nwalme (torment) w
6	6	21 - óre (heart or inner mind) r	y	22 - vala (angelic power) v	h	23 - anna (gift) y*	n	24 - wilya or vilya (air or sky) w or v
7	7	25 - rómen (east) r (trilled)	u	26 - arda (region) rd	j	27 - lambe (tongue) l	m	28 - alda (tree) ld
8	8	29 - silme (starlight) s	i	30 - silme nuq. (silme reversed) s	k	31 - áze/áre/esse (sunlight or name) z, r or ss	,	32 - áre nuquerna (áre reversed) z, r or ss
9	9	33 - hyarmen (south) h	o	34 - hwesta sind. (sindarin hwesta) (not used in Quenya)	l	35 -yanta (bridge) y	.	36 - úre (heat) w

* - Technically, anna does not have the value “y” when used in the Quenya mode; “y” is represented by anna + “following-y” tehta (or h́). Anna is not used by itself in the published Quenya texts.

Tehtar (Signs) with vowel values for Quenya:

`C a as in f^ather (frequently omitted)
 `V e as in w^ere (See Note 1)
 `B i as in machⁱne (See Note 1)
 `N o as in f^or (See Note 2)
 `M u as in br^ute (See Note 2)

`C Short Carrier (Shown with the "a" Tehta)
 ~B Long Carrier (Shown with the "i" Tehta)

Note 1) Sometimes the "e" and "i" Tehta are swapped.

Note 2) Sometimes the "o" and "u" Tehta are swapped.

Writing Quenya with Tengwar:

Writing with Tengwar is relatively easy, just remember that Tengwar is a phonetic alphabet. Words are written exactly as they are spoken. Typically the Tengwar (consonant letters) are written first, then the Tehtar (vowel symbols) are written above the appropriate consonant. In Quenya, and other languages that end most words with vowels, the Tehta is placed above the previous Tengwar letter. To read Quenya/Tengwar script you would read each Tengwar letter, then the Tehtar vowel symbol above it (in an upward motion), before going on to the next Tengwar/Tehtar letter combination. For example:

calma ==> ca + l + ma ==> aE + j + t# ==> aEjt#

If a word starts with a vowel sound (and there is no previous consonant letter in the word) then a "Carrier" symbol can be used. Carrier symbols do not represent a sound, but rather provide a symbol for vowel marks to be placed upon. There are two different standard Carrier symbols; the "Short Carrier" and the "Long Carrier". The Short Carrier looks like the undotted letter "i". The Long Carrier looks like the undotted letter "j". The Long Carrier is used with "long" vowel sounds. If two or more vowel sounds appear consecutively in a word, the Carrier symbol should be used when there is no consonant in the appropriate location. For example:

ando ==> a + ndo ==> `C + 2^ ==> `C2^

Normally, "short" vowels are represented by a single Tehtar symbol above a Tengwar or Carrier symbol. But "long" vowels can be represented several different ways; long vowels can be written as two Tehtar above a single Tengwa, two Tehtar above two Short Carrier symbols, or one Tehta above a single Long Carrier symbol (preferred); as shown below:

tee ==> 1\$F or 1`V`V or 1~V

There are also lots of modifier symbols. The most common modifiers are as follows:

A bar (or tilde) below a Tengwar letter lengthens or doubles the sound of the letter:	4:	or	a'
A bar (or tilde) over a Tengwar letter represents a preceding nasal sound ("n" or "m"):	4{	or	ap
A single underdot below a Tengwar letter represents a following unstressed "e" sound:	4(or	aĚ
Double underdots below a Tengwar letter represents a following "y" sound	4	or	a
A downward hook attached to a Tengwar letter represents a following "s" sound:	4+	or	a

As you can see, it's possible to represent a word with several different combinations of Tengwar letters, Tehtar symbols, and modifiers. This can lead to much confusion when trying to read Tengwar script written by someone else. Think of the modifier symbols as shorthand, and don't expect others to readily understand them. By limiting yourself to the standard Tengwar letters, Tehtar signs and Carrier symbols; you can produce elegant calligraphic inscriptions that can be easily read by other Tengwar-literate people.

Very little punctuation is used with Tengwar. Most punctuation marks seem to be used only to designate the beginning and the ending of sentences and paragraphs. There are five different punctuation marks; the dot "=", the colon "-", the dash "\", the exclamation mark "ú", and the question mark "ú". The dot is more closely the equivalent to the comma, but can also be used to separate words (like a hyphen). The colon is used to separate sentences and seems to be the equivalent to the period. The dash is used to mark the ends of paragraphs.

There are no examples in the books: "The Hobbit" or the "Lord of the Rings" of Quenya written with Tengwar letters. But early in the book "The Fellowship of the Ring" Frodo uses a Quenya phrase to greet Gildor the elf:

"Elen síla lúmenn' omentielvo."

This phrase could be transcribed as:

- `VjR5 8~BjE j~Mt\$5: `Nt\$4T`VjyY -

Notice that in the word "lúmenn'", the under-bar/tilde which is used for the long (or double) "n" consonant sound.

Tengwar (Letters) with consonant values for Sindarin (standard mode):

	I		II		III		IV	
1	1	1 - tinco t	q	2 - parma p	a	3 - calma k	Z	4 - quesse kw
2	2	5 - ando d	w	6 - umbar b	s	7 - anga g	x	8 - ungwe gw
3	3	9 - thúle th	e	10 - formen f	d	11 - harma kh	c	12 - hwesta khw / hw
4	4	13 - anto dh	r	14 - ampa v	f	15 - anca gh	v	16 - unque ghw / w
5	5	17 - númen n	t	18 - malta m	g	19 - oldo or noldo	b	20 - walme or nwalme w
6	6	21 - óre r	y	22 - vala w	h	23 - anna y (consonantal)	n	24 - wilya w
	7	25 - rómén r (trilled)	u	26 - arda rh	j	27 - lambe l	m	28 - alda lh
	8	29 - silme s	i	30 - silme nuq. s	k	31 - áze, áre or esse z or ss	,	32 - áze nuquerna z or ss
	9	33 - hyarmen h	o	34 - hwesta sind. hw	l	35 -yanta y	.	36 - úre w

Tehtar (Signs) with vowel values for Sindarin (standard mode):

- `C a as in father
- `V e as in were (See Note 1)
- `B i as in machine (See Note 1)
- `N o as in for (See Note 2)
- `M u as in brute (See Note 2)
- `X y as in French lyne.

- `C Short Carrier (Shown with the "a" Tehta)
- ~B Long Carrier (Shown with the "i" Tehta)

Note 1) Sometimes the "e" and "i" Tehta are swapped.

Note 2) Sometimes the "o" and "u" Tehta are swapped.

Tengwar (Letters) with consonant and vowel values for Sindarin (mode of Beleriand):

	I		II		III		IV	
1	1	1 - tinco t	q	2 - parma p	a	3 - calma k	Z	4 - quesse kw
2	2	5 - ando d	w	6 - umbar b	s	7 - anga g	x	8 - ungwe gw
3	3	9 - thúle th	e	10 - formen f	d	11 - harma kh	c	12 - hwesta khw / hw
4	4	13 - anto dh	r	14 - ampa v	f	15 - anca gh	v	16 - unque ghw / w
5	5	17 - númen nn	t	18 - malta mm	g	19 - oldo or noldo	b	20 - -walme or nwalme w
6	6	21 - óre n	y	22 - vala m	h	23 - anna o	n	24 - wilya w
	7	25 - rómen r	u	26 - arda rh	j	27 - lambe l	m	28 - alda lh
	8	29 - silme s	i	30 - silme nuq. s	k	31 - áze, áre or esse z or ss	,	32 - áze nuquerna z or ss
	9	33 - hyarmen h	o	34 - hwesta sind. hw	l	35 -yanta e	.	36 - úre u
	`	(short carrier) i	~	(long carrier) i]]	(?) a		

Tehtar (Signs) used with vowels in Sindarin (mode of Beleriand):

Tengwar letters are used to represent the five most common vowel sounds, but some tehtar symbols are used along with these letters to represent complex vowel sounds, or diphthongs. The single over-dot seems to be used only with the “i” tengwar letters. Double over-dots represent an “i” or the semi-vowel “y”, for example:

$$] \tilde{O} = ai \quad l \tilde{O} = ei \quad h \tilde{O} = oi \quad . \tilde{O} = ui$$

The over-bar/tilde represents the semi-vowel “w” and can be used to represent the following sounds:

$$] \acute{e} = aw \quad h \acute{e} = ow$$

Writing Sindarin with Tengwar:

Standard Mode:

There are two ways to write Sindarin with the Tengwar letters, the Standard Mode and the Mode of Beleriand. At first glance the Standard Mode looks similar to the Quenya usage of Tengwar. But although the Sindarin and Quenya languages are related to each other, they often use different Tengwar letters to represent the same sounds. Also, in Sindarin and other languages that end most words with consonants, the Tehtar are placed above the next consecutive Tengwar letter. (Unlike Quenya where vowels are placed above the previous Tengwar letter.) To read Sindarin/Tengwar script you would read each Tehtar vowel symbol, then the Tengwar letter below it (in a downward motion), before going on to the next Tehtar/Tengwar letter combination. For example:

Written in the style of Quenya (vowel over the previous consonant):

calma ==> ca + l + ma ==> aE + j + t# ==> aEjt#

Written in the style of Sindarin Standard Mode (vowel over the next consonant):

calma ==> c + al + m + a ==> a + jE + t + `C ==> ajEt`C

Other than placement of Tehtar, and the different Tengwar phonetic value, this mode follows all of the same rules as Quenya. For example the Sindarin Inscription on the West Gate of Moria:

"Ennyn Durin Aran Moria: pedo mellon a minno."
"Im Narvi hain echant: Celebrimbor o Eregion teithant i thiw hin."

Could be transcribed (using the Sindarin Standard Mode for writing):

- 5\$55Ô 27U5% 7E5# t7Y`B`C - q2\$`N tjRj5^ `C t5%5`N -
- `Bt 57Er`B 9`C5% d\$5#1 - ajRw\$7t%w7Y `N 7Rs\$`B5^ 1`V3G5#1 `B 3nT 95% -

Mode of Beleriand:

The second mode of writing is called the "Mode of Beleriand". The best known example of this mode of writing is the West Gate of Moria inscription. This mode's most unique characteristic is that it doesn't solely use Tehtar to represent vowel sounds. Instead, the Tengwar letters are used to represent both consonant and vowel sounds. From the example given in the book "The Fellowship of the Ring", it appears that the over-dot Tehta is occasionally used to emphasize the "i" Tengwar or to modify other vowel Tengwar letters to create complex vowel sounds. Also note the use of the over-bar/tilde to represent a preceding nasal sound.

So, the Sindarin Inscription on the West Gate of Moria could be transcribed (using the Mode of Beleriand for writing Sindarin):

- l5l6 2.7`6]7]6 yh7`B] ql2h yljh6] y`B5h -
- ~t 6]7r` 9]Õ6 ld]1p - aljlw7`BwPh7 h l7ls`Bh6 l1Õ3]1p `B 3`Bn 9`B6 -

Tengwar (Letters) with possible consonant values for English:

	I		II		III		IV	
1	1	1 - t t as in <u>tie</u>	q	2 - p p as in <u>pie</u>	a	3 - ch ch as in <u>chive</u>	z	4 - k k as in <u>kite</u>
2	2	5 - d d as in <u>die</u>	w	6 - b b as in <u>buy</u>	s	7 - j j as in <u>jive</u>	x	8 - g g as in <u>guy</u>
3	3	9 - th th as in <u>thigh</u>	e	10 - f f as in <u>fight</u>	d	11 - sh sh as in <u>shy</u>	c	12 - kh kh as in <u>loch</u>
4	4	13 - dh dh as in <u>thy</u>	r	14 - v v as in <u>vice</u>	f	15 - zh zh as in <u>beige</u>	v	16 - gh gh as in ??
5	5	17 - n n as in <u>night</u>	t	18 - m m as in <u>might</u>	g	19 - as in <u>sing</u>	b	20 - g g as in <u>finger</u>
6	6	21 - r r as in <u>ripe</u>	y	22 - w (alt of 36) w as in <u>wipe</u>	h	23 - y y as in <u>yipe</u>	n	24 - (not used)
	7	25 - r r (trilled)	u	26 - rh	j	27 - l l as in <u>lie</u>	m	28 - lh
	8	29 - s (alt of 30) s as in <u>sigh</u>	i	30 - s (alt of 29) s as in <u>sigh</u>	k	31 - z (alt of 32) z as in <u>zoo</u>	,	32 - z (alt of 31) z as in <u>zoo</u>
	9	33 - h h as in <u>high</u>	o	34 - hw hw as in <u>whale</u>	l	35 - y y as in <u>yipe</u>	.	36 - w (alt of 22) w as in <u>wipe</u>

Tehtar (Signs) with vowel values for English:

`C	a as in <u>father</u>
`V	e as in <u>were</u> (See Note 1)
`B	i as in <u>machine</u> (See Note 1)
`N	o as in <u>for</u> (See Note 2)
`M	u as in <u>brute</u> (See Note 2)
`U	y as in <u>by</u>

`C	Short Carrier (Shown with the "a" Tehta)
~B	Long Carrier (Shown with the "i" Tehta)

Note 1) Sometimes the "e" and "i" Tehta are swapped.

Note 2) Sometimes the "o" and "u" Tehta are swapped.

Using Tengwar to write English:

In Appendix E of the "Lord of the Rings" Tolkien explains that there is no official mode for using Tengwar with the English language. But on the title page of the same book Tolkien gives an example of an English phrase written with Tengwar. This is the mode that will be discussed here.

It appears that Tolkien adapted the Westron Mode to create a version of Tengwar for use with English. The phonetic values assigned to each Tengwar letter and Tehtar symbol is similar to the Sindarin Standard mode. Also the rules for writing are the same for English as they are in Sindarin, with the Tehtar placed above the next consecutive Tengwar letter. To read English/Tengwar script you would read each Tehtar vowel symbol, then the Tengwar letter below it (in a downward motion), before going on to the next Tehtar/Tengwar letter combination. The primary innovation that Tolkien demonstrates is the use of additional letters to be used as shorthand for commonly used words.

In the "Lord of the Rings" title page inscription the following additional letters are used:

@ = "the"

W = "of"

W" = "of the"

These commonly used words are used several times in the "Lord of the Rings" title page inscription:

W y*V1t6Ea w~Û s95^ 75^jE2 7`V`MjR qjYz`B5\$ - 97RO5% k% 81R e6Y3
 @ 98%17Y~B W" y6Y W" 7b% 2PO @ 71R6U5 W" zb% ,E 8`V`V5 w~Û @ 9w?
 ^1T+ - \

Refer to pages 15 thru 20 for a detailed examination of this and several other Tengwar inscriptions.