

Tolkien's phonetic English tengwar modes

An overview

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1. Introduction

In the published tengwar samples of J.R.R. Tolkien, English is the most important language. According to my counting, the number of samples that contain modern English texts is equal to the number of all samples that contain any Middle-Earth tongue's texts (Sindarin, Quenya and Black Speech): 31 out of the 60 that figure in the *Mellonath Daeron Index of Tengwar Specimina* (DTS) (some samples have texts in different languages). Moreover, the modern English texts definitely excel the Middle-Earth tongue's texts in the number of characters: 4663 compared to 2594 according to my counting (mostly based on the numbers given in the DTS).

Nonetheless, it seems to me that most descriptions of Tolkien's tengwar use concentrate on the Middle Earth tongues. That's not too surprising, as most linguistically interested Tolkien researchers are particularly attracted by his invented languages. Additionally, there's a huge difficulty about English modes: Traditional English spelling. It's ironical that this difficulty increases the more a mode departs from traditional spelling. That's why especially those modes which don't follow traditional spelling – the phonetic modes – are the least researched. As an example, I've never found any mention of Tolkien's phonetic *tehtar* modes.¹ In this document, I'm trying to give an overview of the different phonetic modes I know of (there might be more).

2. What are *Phonetic* English modes?

The different English modes attested by J. R. R. Tolkien can be divided into *orthographic* and *phonetic* ones. What's the difference? Let's have a little look at some tengwar texts in order to illustrate that difference.

There's for an example the 'King's Letter, Third Version' (DTS 49). The right part of it is a 'full writing'² English tengwar text. Let's focus on the use of its *i*-letter, the short carrier with an acute above *ĭ*. It's used where the Traditional English Spelling has the letter *i*. This means that this letter has different pronunciations – as in Traditional Spelling –, cf. the pronunciations of the words *king*, *will* vs. *strider*, *Shire* vs. *Goldilocks* (though some will pronounce the *i* in the name *Goldilocks* the same way as the *i* in the words *king*, *will*). Even where no distinct pronunciation corresponds to the *i* of Traditional Spelling, it's still written, cf. the words *friends*, *especial*.

Now compare this to the text 'So Lúthien' (DTS 23). Here we find the short carrier with a point above *ċ* in the words *in*, *his*, *king*, *will* that also occur in DTS 49. Let's call this the *i*-letter of DTS 23. On one hand, it's used in some words that don't have an *i* in Traditional Spelling, but a *y* (cf. the

¹ A *tehta* mode is a tengwar orthography where the vowels are by *tehtar*, i.e. by accents or curls placed above or below the letters, not by normal letters.

² 'Full writing' refers to tengwar modes that represent all vowels by letters, not by *tehtar*.

words *folly*, *many*, *body*), or an *e* (cf. the first vowels of the words *device*, *she*, *rebellious*, *before* that are all pronounced with an unstressed /i/ in British Received Pronunciation). The one thing these occurrences share with the before mentioned occurrences is the same pronunciation /i/. On the other hand, some words that do have an *i* in Traditional Spelling don't have the *i*-letter, cf. the words *like*, *mind* where *vilya*³ with two dots above **ö** is used, or the words *rebellious*, *remain*, where two dots above **ı** are used. So the use of the *i*-letter in DTS 23 isn't based on Traditional Spelling but on pronunciation.

The best way to find out whether a mode belongs within the Traditional Spelling or within the phonetic modes is to observe the behaviour of the vowels. Of course, a single instance of phonetic vowels doesn't make a text phonetic. That means that The Lord of the Rings Title-page Tengwar (DTS 4, 5) should be considered to be written in a Traditional Spelling mode even though the word *war* is transcribed as if it were *wor*, according to pronunciation. It's because this spelling is exceptional while all other vowels follow traditional spelling.

Those who know about linguistics will have noted that the *phonetic* modes are rather *phonemic*. However, I've chosen the term *phonetic* because it's more common and also because there are some details that I'm not able to describe in terms of phonology/phonemics, especially the behaviour of the 'dropped' *r*.⁴

3. Phonetic 'full writing' modes

There is a couple of different phonetic 'full writing' modes. They differ in the representation of both consonants and of vowels. The following descriptions are ordered by date. Curiously, the earliest mode, i.e. the first described, is as well the best attested. After it's major specimen, the beginning of the poem *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, I'll call it the *Bombadil* mode. The other phonetic modes are only described to the extent they diverge from the *Bombadil* mode. They're called after the names of the specimina taken from the *Mellonath Daeron Index of Tengwar Specimina* (DTS).

The *Bombadil* mode

This mode is attested in DTS 16, 17, 18, and 23.⁵ Judging by number of signs, it's the best attested mode of all known tengwar modes. I don't know for sure the date these specimina were written.

³ For the names of the letter see LR: Appendix E. They can also be found in many sites on the web.

⁴ See below pp. 5, 8.

⁵ cf. P no. 48; LB p. 299.

The transcribed texts, however, were written by J. R. R. Tolkien in the early Thirties,⁶ so it seems to be reasonable to assume that this mode dates from the same time (excuse my unreasonable previous thoughts).













Attested consonant letters of the *Bombadil* mode:

The mapping of the primary letters agrees with the *Westron* use described in Appendix E of *The Lord of the Rings*. The additional letters, however, differ so much that I haven't copied the chart from Appendix E.

	I	II	III	IV
sign sound ex.	Ɔ /t/ ₁₈ toss Ɔoó	Ɔ /p/ ₁₈ pool Ɔoó	Ɔ /tʃ/ ₁₈ chase Ɔčó	Ɔ /k/ ₁₈ coat Ɔoó
sign sound ex.	Ɔ /d/ ₁₈ deep Ɔoó	Ɔ /b/ ₁₈ but Ɔoó	Ɔ /dʒ/ ₂₃ joy Ɔoó	Ɔ /g/ ₁₈ go Ɔoó
sign sound ex.	Ɔ /θ/ ₂₃ throne Ɔoó	Ɔ /f/ ₁₈ fellow Ɔoó	Ɔ /ʃ/ ₂₃ shy Ɔoó	
sign sound ex.	Ɔ /ð/ ₁₈ there Ɔoó	Ɔ /v/ ₂₃ vole Ɔoó		
sign sound ex.	Ɔ /n/ ₂₃ now Ɔoó	Ɔ /m/ ₂₃ meter Ɔoó		Ɔ /ŋ/ ₁₈ hang Ɔoó
sign sound ex.	Ɔ (note 1) /r/ ₁₈ hair Ɔoó	Ɔ (vowel)		Ɔ (vowel)

⁶ cf. LB p. 151; L no. 133; RS V Note on Tom Bombadil.

Additional letters:

sign sound ex.	 (note 2) /r/ ¹⁸ rainy y ^ë ni	 /b/ ²³ lead Tijr	 /s/ said sai	 /z/ ²³ is is
sign sound ex.	 /h/ ¹⁸ house h ^ä	 (vowel)	 (vowel)	 /w/ ¹⁸ was was
sign sound ex.	 /w/ ²³ what w ^ä	 (note c) /j/ ¹⁸ young j ^ä	 (vowel)	 (vowel)

note 1: *Óre* **o** is never used before a vowel. It can be considered a vowel letter because it forms the nucleus of a syllable by itself, i.e. without the point below required by all other syllabic consonants. If final *óre* **o** is followed by another word that begins with a vowel, the letter *rómen* **y** is added after *óre*, no matter whether this word follows in the same line or not, e.g. in ¹⁶*to wander in*, ²³*here of need*.⁷

ro 2o^äny i^ä, li^äny r^ä ni^ä

This reflects the pronunciation in the ‘*r*-dropping’ dialects, like Received Pronunciation, that don’t drop word-final *r* if the next word begins with a vowel, a phenomena called ‘linking *r*’. Note that in *for*, *are*, the letter *rómen* **y** is not added after *óre* **o** but replaces it. However, ¹⁸*are blowing* with *rómen* seems to be mistaken. See also the notes to the vowels.

note 2: *Rómen* **y** isn’t used but before vowels. I believe that the few instances of *rómen* before consonants are mistaken.

⁷ The little numbers before a sample refer to the DTS number of the specimen where the sample’s attested. If it’s attested in several specimina, then I only give the number of the largest one.

Attested vowel signs of the Bombadil mode:

Each series of the following chart corresponds to a vowel letter, each line to a *tehta*. Note that the transcription doesn't follow a specific transcription system of the English vowel phonemes. It's based on the English vowels evidenced in the *Steinborg Drawing Title* (see below) and reflects the added tehtar. The only additional sign is *æ*. Interestingly, the resulting transcription system is very similar to the one proposed by Trager & Smith (1951) who suggest the free (long) vowels to be represented by combinations of the checked (short) vowels with semivowels.¹⁰

		ɪ	ɛ	ɑ	o	ɒ
no <i>tehta</i>	sign sound ex.	ɪ (note 1) /ə/ ₁₈ quiet ḡäɪp	ɛ (note 2) /e/ ₂₃ men mɛn		o /o/ ₂₃ song ŕota	ɒ /u/ ₂₃ should ɔpɒ
single point	sign sound ex.	i (note 3) /i/ ₂₃ king qjɪ		ä /æ/ ₁₈ man mää		
<i>andaith</i>	sign sound ex.			á /a:/ ₂₃ path páb	ó (note 4) /o:/ ₂₃ all óɕ	
following y	sign sound ex.	ï /iy/ ₂₃ keep qjɪp	ë /ey/ ₂₃ way ɹë	ä /ay/ ₂₃ like ɕäq	ö /oy/ ₂₃ joy ɛjö	
following w	sign sound ex.			ā /aw/ ₂₃ now mā	ō /ow/ ₂₃ road γōpɒ	ɔ̄ (note 5) /uw/ ₁₈ pool pɔ̄ɕ

¹⁰ cf. Trager/Smith 1951, p. 15 – 22.

Combinations with *óre*:

+ <i>óre</i>	sign sound ex.	᠋᠋ /ər/ ₂₃ lurk ᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋ /er/ ₂₃ share ᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋ (note 6) /ar/ ₂₃ heart ᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋ /or/ ₂₃ north ᠋᠋᠋᠋	
single point + <i>óre</i>	sign sound ex.	᠋᠋ (note 7) /ir/ ₂₃ here ᠋᠋᠋				
following y + <i>óre</i>	sign sound ex.			᠋᠋ /ayr/ ₂₃ liar ᠋᠋᠋		
following w + <i>óre</i>	sign sound ex.			᠋᠋ /awr/ ₁₈ hour ᠋᠋᠋		

Attested vowel signs that don't fit in the above chart:

sign	᠋ (note 8)	᠋	᠋ (note 9)
sound	/ɪ/ ₂₃ better	/ə/ ₁₈ upon	/ʌ/ ₁₈ but
ex.	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋	᠋᠋᠋᠋

Notes on the vowels:

note 1: There's three different ways to represent the schwa sound: With a short carrier **᠋**, with a short carrier that's connected to the next letter by a stroke **᠋** (similar to those strokes that close the *lúvar* of *quessetéma*), and with a point below. The distribution of these representation differs somewhat from specimen to specimen:

Initial schwa is most of the time expressed by the 'connected' short carrier **᠋**, e.g. in ₁₈about, ₁₈upon, ₁₈of. Generally, it corresponds to *a* in Traditional Spelling. Note that this *a* may constitute a separate word in Traditional Spelling, e.g. ₁₆a load, ₂₃a moment. DTS 16, however, uses a simple short carrier **᠋** in unstressed *of*, so that the 'connected' short carrier is only used where it corresponds to a preceding *a* syllable, e.g. *a passenger*, *across*. The same could be said about DTS 23 that also uses the simple short carrier **᠋** in

unstressed *at* ant in the first three occurrences of *of*, but it ends with another three occurrences of *of* with a connected short carrier.

A schwa that combines with a potentially syllabic consonant the point below $\underset{\cdot}{\text{.}}$ is used, e.g. in $_{18}\text{little}$, $_{18}\text{woodEn}$, $_{18}\text{draggEled}$, $_{23}\text{welcOme}$, $_{23}\text{momEnt}$, and in unstressed $_{18}\text{and}$ (potentially syllabic consonants are *l*, *n*, *m* in an *r*-dropping dialect of English, and in other dialects of English also *r*). This point can be considered to be but an indication of syllabicity, similar to the little vertical stroke in IPA. DTS 18, however, uses a simple short carrier **1** in *frightEning*, while the same word is spelt with a point below in DTS 17 and while the word *tickling* has a point below in DTS 18. $_{16}\text{CardamOn}$, $_{16}\text{marjorAm}$ have simple short carriers **1**. Four samples of syllabic *l* don't have a point below ($_{23}\text{counsel}$, $_{23}\text{humble}$, $_{17}\text{bubble}$, and $_{18}\text{bubble}$), but five do ($_{18}\text{little}$, $_{23}\text{rebel}$, $_{23}\text{minstrels}$, and two times $_{23}\text{little}$). Note that the point below isn't ever used together with *óre* **᠊**.

In medial or final position but not in combination with a potentially syllabic consonant, the simple short carrier **1** is used most of the time, e.g. $_{16}\text{gondOlA}$, $_{18}\text{quiEt}$, $_{23}\text{solAce}$, $_{23}\text{rebelliOU}$ s,¹¹ and unstressed $_{16}\text{that}$. However, DTS 18 uses the connected short carrier **᠊** within the word *Bombadil* in all six occurrences, and in DTS 23 we have the word *was* and the last syllable of *northward* without any vowel at all (the last syllable of *northward* isn't even written with *óre*).

note 2: The sound of *men* is three times written with a point above **ċ**: $_{18}\text{feather}$, $_{18}\text{weather}$ (both words found several times without point in the same specimen) and in $_{23}\text{fresh}$. Especially in that last instance, the point might avoid confusion with the following sign that begins with the same *lúva*:

byċd

However, the word $_{23}\text{wench}$ is written without a point, though there's a *tehta* on the following letter:

2cċ

note 3: The sound of $_{23}\text{king}$ is sometimes written without the point above the short carrier **1**. I believe these are mistakes, because the short carrier with the point **1̇** and without the point **1** represent clearly different sounds.¹²

¹¹ Maybe this isn't true for all dialects of English. According to my dictionary, Messenger/Türck/Willmann 1990, all these words have schwa in Received Pronunciation, the English dialect J. R. R. Tolkien most probably spoke since he was professor in Oxford.

¹² Donald O'Brian seems to be unaware of the use of **1** for schwa when he affirms the following: "No distinction of sound is apparent between the *tengwar* **1** and **1̇**" (O'Brian 1990, p. 11).

- note 4: ¹⁶*Called* has *vilya* with an *andaith* above $\acute{\mathfrak{a}}$. This is most probably mistaken, because all other instances of that sound [ɔ:] have *úre* with an *andaith* above $\acute{\mathfrak{o}}$ cf. ²³*hall*, ²³*call*.
- note 5: In DTS 18, the sound of *pool* is spelled with an *andaith* $\acute{\mathfrak{p}}$ in its first two occurrences, while the other six occurrences have the modified left curl $\bar{\mathfrak{p}}$.
- note 6: Most of the time, *vilya* \mathfrak{a} without any *tehta* doesn't occur but before *óre* \mathfrak{r} , e.g. in ²³*arts*, ²³*hearts*, ¹⁸*are*, ¹⁸*far*, ¹⁶*cargoes* (note that the word *are* is written with *rómen* instead if a vowel follows, cf. DTS 23). There are some other occurrences: two times ¹⁷*Bombadil*, ¹⁷*dabchicks*, ¹⁸*dabchicks*, ¹⁸*draggeled*, ¹⁸*branches*, ²³*cannot*, and ²³*thus*. I believe that these spellings are mistaken in the cases of *dabchicks*, *draggeled*, *cannot* because in all other occurrences this sound /æ/ is spelt with a point above. In the case of *branches* maybe the *andaith* $\acute{\mathfrak{r}}$ is forgotten, because other instances of that sound [ɑ:] (not distinguished in the U.S.) all have *vilya* with an *andaith* above $\acute{\mathfrak{a}}$, e.g. ¹⁸*fast*, ²³*path*, ²³*laughter*. The spelling of *thus* might be a confusion due to the resemblance of the sounds represented by the u-shaped *anna* \mathfrak{u} and by *vilya* \mathfrak{a} .
- note 7: The sound of *here* is sometimes written with no point on the short carrier \mathfrak{r} (two times ²³*here*), sometimes with one $\dot{\mathfrak{r}}$ (¹⁷*beard*, ²³*dear*, and two times ²³*here*), and sometimes with two $\ddot{\mathfrak{r}}$ (¹⁸*beard*, ²³*here*). The first, I believe, are mistaken, because this sign is used for the representation of a clearly different sound. If we consider the two points to be a length mark, then the most frequent version, the one with only one point, is consistent with the representation of the sounds of ²³*share*, ²³*north*, ²³*heart* (see above) that don't ever have a length mark.
- note 8: This letter, *óre* \mathfrak{r} , represents the dropped *r*, which is characteristic for many English dialects such as Received Pronunciation, the dialect J. R. R. Tolkien most probably spoke. A dropped *r* is not a distinct sound. It's most of the time realized as a schwa [ə], but after certain vowels it merely lengthens that vowel, e.g. in words such as ²³*north*, ²³*heart*. *Óre* makes distinctions that aren't made in *r*-dropping speech, notably those between [ɔ:] in *caught* vs. [ɔ:] in *court*, between [ɑ:] in *spa* vs. [ɑ:] in *spar*, and between final [ə] in *Rita* vs. final [ə] in *meter*. Many dialects of English, however, distinguish these sounds and historically all did. See also the notes to the consonants.
- note 9: This letter \mathfrak{u} looks nearly like *anna* \mathfrak{a} , but the upper end of its bow never looks as clearly to the right like the bow of all other letters of the *calmatéma*, the \mathfrak{c} -series, but often to the left. This difference can best be observed in DTS 17. I think this letter can't be identified with *anna* \mathfrak{a} even though the two letters don't contrast since *anna* \mathfrak{a} isn't used.

The Coming of the Eagles title (DTS 28)

This specimen was written before early 1937 and after 1930.¹³ As on *The Treebeard Page* (see below), a short carrier with an *andaith* **í** is used in *eagles*, and extended *ampa* with a bar below **þ** is used for *of the*. So this specimen might well be written in the same mode as *The Treebeard Page*.

The Lonely Mountain Jar Inscription (DTS 1)

This specimen was written in mid-july 1937.¹⁴ As in the *Bombadil* mode, *vilya* **ɑ** is used for *a* in *Thrain*. The use of short carrier with *andaith* **í** in *thief* and of *óre* with *andaith* **ó** in *accurst* goes along with *The Treebeard Page* (see below), and the use of *óre* **ɔ** in *Thrain* with *The Doors of Durin (Inscription Drafts)* (see below). The use of *vilya* **ɑ** for the *a* in *accurst* has no parallel in other phonetic modes.

Ilbereth's Greeting (DTS 22)

This specimen from Christmas 1937¹⁵ uses *yanta* **λ** for consonantal *y* in *you* and the long carrier **ɰ** for the *e* in *very*. The use of *úre* **o** in *to, you* and of *anna* with *andaith* **ɑ** in *all* go along with *The Treebeard Page* (see below). The *a* in *a very, christmas* seem both to be represented by a short carrier connected to the following letter **ɾ**, though the first of them doesn't show up clearly.

The Original Ring-Inscription (DTS 60)

This specimen, dating from 1938,¹⁶ is extremely hard to read, and the second line, a repetition of the first, ends in a scribble. *Rómen* is used **ɣ** for /w/ in *one* and *óre* **ɔ** for the *r* in *ring*, which goes along with *The Doors of Durin (Inscription Drafts)* (see below), as goes the use of *úre* **o** in *all*. However, *úre* **o** seems to be used in *to* as well. I consider this must be a mistake or a misreading, because no other phonetic mode uses the same letter for these sounds. In the first instance of *one*, the vowel seems to be represented with a long carrier **ɰ**, while in the other instances no vowel letter can be made out. It's interesting that one instance of *to* is spelled with an *andaith* on *tinco* **ɰ**.

¹³ cf. AI p. 96, 91.

¹⁴ cf. AI p. 107.

¹⁵ cf. FCL "1937".

¹⁶ cf. RS p. 309, 11.

The Treebeard Page (DTS 24)

This specimen is relatively long and allows a fair reconstruction of the used mode. But for one exception, it covers exactly the same sounds as the *Bombadil* mode. It dates from mid 1939.¹⁷

The following consonant signs diverge from the *Bombadil* mode:

ḍ /ʌ/ düt while

ḍ /w/ ḍiḥ with

Like this, the consonants of this mode match perfectly with the Westron use described in LR, appendix E.

Attested abbreviations and *tehtar*:

ḥ There's an instance of the word *the* represented by extended *anto* ḥ followed by a word that begins with a vowel: *the enemy*.

ḥ The use of extended *ampa* with a point below ḥ for *of* might indicate that the point below isn't used in the same way like in the *Bombadil* mode, even though the other instances don't diverge from the *Bombadil* mode, e.g. *RonAld*, *fragmEnt*, *sequEl*, *giAnt*.

ḥ This sign, extended *ampa* with a bar below, is used for *of the*.

¹⁷ cf. RS p. 382.

Attested vowels:

		ɪ	e	ɘ	ɑ	o	ɹ
simple	sign sound ex.	ɿ (note 1) /i/ chick ɿɿɿ	ɛ /e/ step ɛɛɛ	ɘ (note 2) /e/ bat ɘɘɘ	ɑ /ɑ/ lock ɑɑɑ	o /u/ foot oɔo	
+ y	sign sound ex.			ÿ /ay/ by ɘÿ			
+ w	sign sound ex.				ɑ̄ /ow/ Frodo ɘɑ̄ɘ		
andaith	sign sound ex.	ɿ̄ /i:/ meet ɿ̄ɿ̄			ɑ̄ /o:/ lost ɑ̄ɑ̄	ó /u:/ who óó	ɹ̄ /r:/ search ɹ̄ɹ̄

Attested vowel signs that don't fit in the chart:

sign	ʊ (note 3)	ɿ̄ (note 4)	ɿ̄̄
sound	/ʌ/ but	/ə/ a fragment ¹⁸	/iə/ really
ex.	ʊʊʊ	ɿ̄ɿ̄ɿ̄	ɿ̄̄ɿ̄̄

Notes:

- note 1: Final /i/ is sometimes represented with a long carrier ɿ̄ (*be, enemy*), sometimes with a short carrier ɿ (*he, friendly, really*).
- note 2: The *a* of *fragment* isn't transcribed with a point above. This is the only difference to the *Bombadil* mode that goes beyond simple changing of letters.
- note 3: In this mode the distinction between u-shaped *anna* ʊ and normal *anna* ɘ is significant.
- note 4: The weak *a* of *a sequel* is most probably represented with a long carrier ɿ̄, in *a fragment* with a short carrier ɿ.

¹⁸ Sic, the g is missing.

The Doors of Durin (Inscription Drafts) (DTS 25)

This specimen dates from late 1939.¹⁹ Its vowels are represented the same way as on *The Treebeard Page*. The *r*, however, is always represented with *óre* **᠊** (except for a crossed line). There are no occurrences of *w*, *wh*, but the use of *óre* **᠊** for any *r* might indicate that *rómen* **᠊** would be used for *w* as e.g. in the 'full writing' version of the *Hugh Brogan Letter* (DTS 10)²⁰ or in *The Original Ring-Inscription* (see above p. 11). Note that in this specimen, *óre* with a point below **᠊** is used in *enter*.

The vowel of *drew* which has *úre* with a strongly curled *tehta* above that looks rather like a tilde than like an acute, though I believe this is just another form of the *andaith*.

There's no clear space between words.

Unstressed *of*, written with extended *ampa* **᠊**, and unstressed *and* are smaller and placed above the line. Neither of them has any point below.

Steinborg Drawing Title (DTS 15)

This specimen must have been written after October 1944.²¹ As on *The Treebeard Page*, *o* is represented with *vilya* **᠊** in *Steinborg*. There's a remarkable crossed-out chart of vowel signs and corresponding letters:

a	e	i	o	u	Λ	ə
᠊	᠊	᠊	᠊	᠊	᠊	᠊

This chart doesn't match with any attested specimen, but the represented vowels are exactly the same as the ones we can find throughout all attested specimens of phonetic English modes. This means that we know how J. R. R. Tolkien himself's labeled the phonetic vowels of English.

¹⁹ cf. RS p. 461.

²⁰ cf. L no. 118.



²¹ cf. AI p. 172, 173.

4. Phonetic *tehtar* Modes

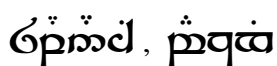
There are only three specimina that show phonetic *tehtar* modes: DTS 39, 41, and 58. They're all significantly later than the phonetic 'full writing' modes.

Doodled Headlines (DTS 39)


This specimen dates from June 18th and 19th of 1960.²²




The letters match with what we know as the Westron use from the appendices, with *calmatéma* used for sounds like English *ch*, *j*, *sh*. The use of *noldo*  for *ny* in the word *new* is remarkable. Consonantal *y* is represented with *anna* , both initially and with a preceding *e* on it.

The vowel *tehtar* are partly placed on the following letter, partly on the preceding, and two times the order's changing within a word, cf. *Spanish, backing*:



Notes on the vowels:

The vowel *tehtar* are the same as the ones known from other English *tehtar* modes, with the exception of the reversed *a-tehta*  used for /æ/ as in *Spanish, nationalist*.

The normal *a-tehta*  is used in the word *backing*, while the other, previous, instances of the same sound show a reversed one , cf. *Spanish, nationalist*. This might indicate that Tolkien wasn't sure whether he should have a distinct sign for the sound /æ/ like in the *Bombadil* mode or whether he should represent this sound with the normal *a-tehta*  like on The Treebeard Page.

The point below is used for the two schwa sounds of *nationalist* as well as for the syllabic *n* of *Britain*.

In relation to the letters, the point below is placed the same way as the *tehtar* above: Where the *tehtar* are placed on the preceding letter, the point below's also placed under the preceding letter, cf. *nationalist*:



²² cf. AI p. 188.

Where the *tehtar* are placed on the following letter, the point below's also placed under the following letter, cf. *Britain*:

𐌒𐌚𐌚𐌚

There's one instance of a doubled left curl *tehta* placed on a short carrier 𐌚 in *new*, next to a single point *tehta* placed on a long carrier 𐌚 in *deal*. This strikes since the other phonetic modes use one procedure of marking long vowels throughout.

Envelope Doodles (DTS 41)

In this specimen, dating from 1964 or 1965,²³ two words show features that aren't found but in phonetic English modes: *Kladiolus*, most probably a misspelling of *gladiolus*, uses the reversed *a-tehta* 𐌚:

𐌚𐌚𐌚𐌚𐌚

Boobles (according to David Salo perhaps a misspelling of *doodles*)²⁴ uses a left curl on a long carrier 𐌚 in an English word:

𐌒𐌚𐌚

In *kladiolus*, the *tehtar* are generally placed on the preceding letters, but there's a remarkable exception: The *o-tehta* isn't placed on a preceding letter, but on the following *w*-letter: 𐌚. This reminds the use of *úre* in the 'classical' Quenya mode. There as well, the letters generally bear the following vowel *tehtar*, except for *úre* 𐌚 and *yanta* 𐌚 that bear the preceding vowel *tehtar*.

There's another even more remarkable thing about the word *kladiolus*: It uses a *tehta* that isn't attested in any published sample but in this word. It's a grave accent placed on *lambe* 𐌚. This *tehta* represents the schwa-sound.

The word *boobles* shows that the left-curl can also be placed on the long carrier 𐌚.

The syllabic *l* of *boobles* is represented by a single *lambe* without a dot below 𐌚. This is remarkable since all phonetic English modes normally mark syllabic consonants with a dot below.

²³ cf. AI p. 190.

²⁴ cf. D. Salo in: *elfling* 26566.

An unpublished specimen reported by Arden R. Smith²⁵

This is "a discussion of how to represent English vowel sounds by means of *tehtar*", dating from circa 1968. It says that "the 'er' sound" (according to Arden R. Smith the sound of *bird*, *stern*, *burn*) is represented by *óre* with a grave accent above *ó*. If we suppose that the grave accent in that document represents a schwa-sound /ə/ as in the *Envelope Doodles*, then we have an interesting parallel to the *Bombadil* mode where "the 'er' sound" is also represented by a combination of schwa-sign and *óre*. It must be noted, however, that the mode discussed in that document isn't really a phonetic mode since it suggests the point below to represent a silent *e* as in *bore*, *bored* (examples by J. R. R. Tolkien).

The Howlett Rivendell Inscriptions (DTS 58)

This letter dates from may 28th of 1969.²⁶ It shows two transcriptions of the word *Rivendell*. One of them places the vowel *tehtar* on the preceding letters, the other on the following. The remarkable thing about them, which by the way makes me assume that it's written in a phonetic mode, is that the syllabic *n* of *Rivendell* doesn't have a dot below in either of the two transcriptions. I think this is more likely to happen in a phonetic mode, even though phonetic modes normally mark syllabic consonants with a dot below. However, the chronologically nearest specimen, the *Envelope Doodles*, also has an instance of a syllabic consonant without dot below.

5. A comparison of the different phonetic modes

In order to provide an overview on the different phonetic modes, I'm giving a chronological chart. It compares only those signs that are not the same in all specimina, almost exclusively the vowel signs. An empty square means that the sound doesn't occur in that specimen. Some signs are accompanied by other signs. These other signs are blue, which means that they don't form a part of the sign in question.

²⁵ cf. A. Smith in: *elfscript* 1875, 1884, and in a personal post reproduced below in the appendix.

²⁶ cf. http://search.sothebys.com/jsps/live/lot/LotDetail.jsp?lot_id=34NDT

‘Full writing’ modes:

	a	æ	e	i	i:	o	u	u:	ʌ	ə-	ə	ɳ	ɜ:	ɹ	ɹ	w	ʌ	j-
Bombadil	ā	ǣ	ē	ī	ī	ō	ū	ū	ʌ	ə	ə	ɳ	ɜ:	ɹ	ɹ	w	ʌ	j-
DTS 28				í				u			ɳ							
DTS 1	ā			í	ō				ʌ			ɳ		ɹ				
DTS 22			ĵ	ī	ó	o			ʌ	ɹ	ɹ					ɳ		λ
DTS 60				ī	ó	o		ĵ		ɹ						ɳ	ɳ	
DTS 24	ǣ	ǣ	ē	ij	í	ā	o	ó	u	ɹ	ɹ	ɳ	ɜ:	ɹ	ɹ	ɳ	ɳ	ɳ
DTS 25	ǣ		ē	ī	í	ā	o	ó				ɳ		ɹ	ɹ			
DTS 15			ē			ā												
DTS 15	o		ǣ	ī		ā	ɹ		λ	ɹ								

Note that ə-, j- refer to initial sounds only.

Tehtar modes:

	a	æ	e	i	i:	o	u	u:	ʌ	-ə-	ɳ	ɜ:	ɹ	-w
DTS 39		ī	ī	ī	ī			ī			ɳ	ɳ	ɹ	
DTS 41		ī		ī		í		ī		ɳ	ɳ			ó
Arden												ɳ		
DTS 58			í	ī							ɳ			

Note that -w refers to a letter that bears the preceding *tehta* in a mode where the letters normally bear the following *tehtar*; -ə- refers to medial schwa (neither initial nor final schwa are attested); the syllabic letters ɳ, ɳ don't have any *tehta* to mark their syllabicity.

6. References and other acknowledgements

Many thanks to Chris McKay for his help.

The tengwar fonts I've used are TengwarSindarin.ttf and TengwarSindarinAlt.ttf (version 1.9e) from Dan Smith.

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7. Author

This document has been written by J. "Mach Hezan" Wust on December 27th of 2003. Its only intention is to spread the knowledge on tengwar. If you have comments, you may contact me at:

machhezan (at) gmx net

8. Appendix

Arden R. Smith sent me the following post on october 21th of 2003 (I've slightly edited the post so that it fits into the lines):

Dear Mach,

You wrote:

```
>I suppose your statement that we normally see this sound
>represented by óre with a subscript dot refers to other unpublished
>writing, right?
```

Not exclusively. I was also thinking of such published texts as the Book of Mazarbul (in Pictures) and the draft of the Moria-gate inscription at VI:450.

```
>The mentioned document seems to show a phonemical mode, because it
>represents the "er" sound with a grave accent and not with the
>vowel tehtar that correspond to Traditional Spelling. Nonetheless,
>you write that there's a sign for 'silent _e_'. Am I right that
>this is not the 'silent _e_' or Traditional Spelling but rather a
>'silent _e_' before syllabic consonants (e.g. in _errAntry, womAn,
>littleE, woodEn, welcOme, momEnt, RonAld_)?
```

The document in question deals with a mixture of phonemic and orthographic representations. Where "silent _e_" is mentioned, it is in fact the purely orthographic creature that is normally referred to as "silent _e_". The words with silent _e_ that Tolkien uses as examples are bore and bored .

Yours,

Arden

--

```
*****
Arden R. Smith                               erilaz@earthlink.net
```

Perilme metto aimaktur perperienta.

--Elvish proverb

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*****
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