

The Quendian (Elven) Calendar and the Six Seasons

The Eldar divided their solar year (or *loa* ‘growth’) into six seasons of unequal¹ length. The lengths are unequal because the Quendi were more sensitive to and concerned with the transition of one season into another and the seasonal changes in vegetation as the wheel of the year turned.

The table below gives the names of these seasons in Quenya and Sindarin, as well as the length of each season in days:

Quenya name:	Sindarin name:	Translation:	Length:
<i>Tuilë</i>	<i>Ethuil</i>	Spring	54 days
<i>Lairë</i>	<i>Laer</i>	Summer	72 days
<i>Yávië</i>	<i>lavas</i>	Autumn (<u>end of growth</u>)	54 days
<i>Quellë</i> (or <i>Lasselanta</i>)	<i>Firith</i> (or <i>Narbeleth</i>)	Fading	54 days
<i>Hrivë</i>	<i>Rhîw</i>	Winter	72 days
<i>Coirë</i>	<i>Echuir</i>	Stirring	54 days

Important Transition dates

1. *Yestarë* (‘First Day’): First day of the *loa*, and the day before Spring (*Tuilë*).
2. *Lairë* 1st
3. *Yavië* 1st
4. The 3 *Enderi* (said to be days of festival); after these, then *Quellë* begins
5. *Hrivë* 1st
6. *Coirë* 1st

(I did not include *Mettarë* because it is the day just before *Yestarë*, and thus is the equivalent of “New Year’s Eve”. It is important as a holiday, but not as a seasonal transition in itself.)

But how do we relate these dates to the solar year as we know it?

When does the *loa* start, and why?

According to Appendix ‘D’ of The Lord of the Rings,

the *loa* began with ‘*yestarë*’, the day immediately before *Tuilë* (Spring) and ended with ‘*mettarë*’, the day immediately after *Coirë* (Stirring). Between *Yavië* and *Quellë* were inserted three *enderi* or ‘middle-days’.

This provided a year of 365 days which was supplemented by doubling the *enderi* (adding 3 days) in every twelfth year.

How any resulting inaccuracy was dealt with is uncertain. If the year was then of the same length as now, the *yén* (a period equaling 144 years) would have been more than a day too long. That there was an inaccuracy is shown by a note in the Calendars of the Red book to the effect that in the ‘Reckoning of Rivendell’ the last year of every third *yén* was shortened by three days: the doubling of the three *enderi* due in that year was omitted ; ‘but that has not happened in our time’. Of the adjustment of any remaining inaccuracy there is no record.

But at exactly what point in the solar year did the *loa* begin?

This is a complex question. Let us look at the evidence:

- I. We know from linguistic evidence that the year began sometime in what we would call Spring.
- II. We also know from Appendix ‘D’ that the date given for *Yestarë* is “Shire April 6th”. However, it is very important to note that this correspondence is to the Shire version of April 6th, **not** April 6th on our modern (Gregorian) calendar.
- III. Additionally, we know from Appendix ‘D’ that, “Mid-year's Day [in the Shire calendar] was intended to correspond as nearly as possible to the summer solstice. In that case the Shire dates were actually in advance of ours by some ten days, and our New Year's Day corresponded more or less to the Shire January 9.”

So, how to solve this puzzle?

Luckily, some Fellow Tolkienists have already done this part of our calendar work for us. I refer to the entry in the [Encyclopedia of Arda](#), which has a JavaScript calculator to calculate any given date: .

As you can see, Shire April 6th (6 *Astron*) is equivalent to the beginning of the Elven year (*loa*); which corresponds to our March 28th. This calculator takes into account fact #3 above, and applies the offset to the dates. (For further confirmation of this fact, I refer interested parties to the notes for this section of their web site.)

Translating the *loa* to the Modern Calendar

The question immediately arises: Why would the Quendi begin their solar year approximately a week after the vernal equinox, and not directly on the equinox itself? The explanation, I think, is that the *loa* was not strictly a [rule based](#) calendar, but neither was it precisely a lunisolar calendar, but something of a combination of both – with a strong stellar-calibration component. As we know, ‘Summer’ and ‘Winter’ each had 72 days, and the remaining seasons 54 each. It is significant that each of these numbers is

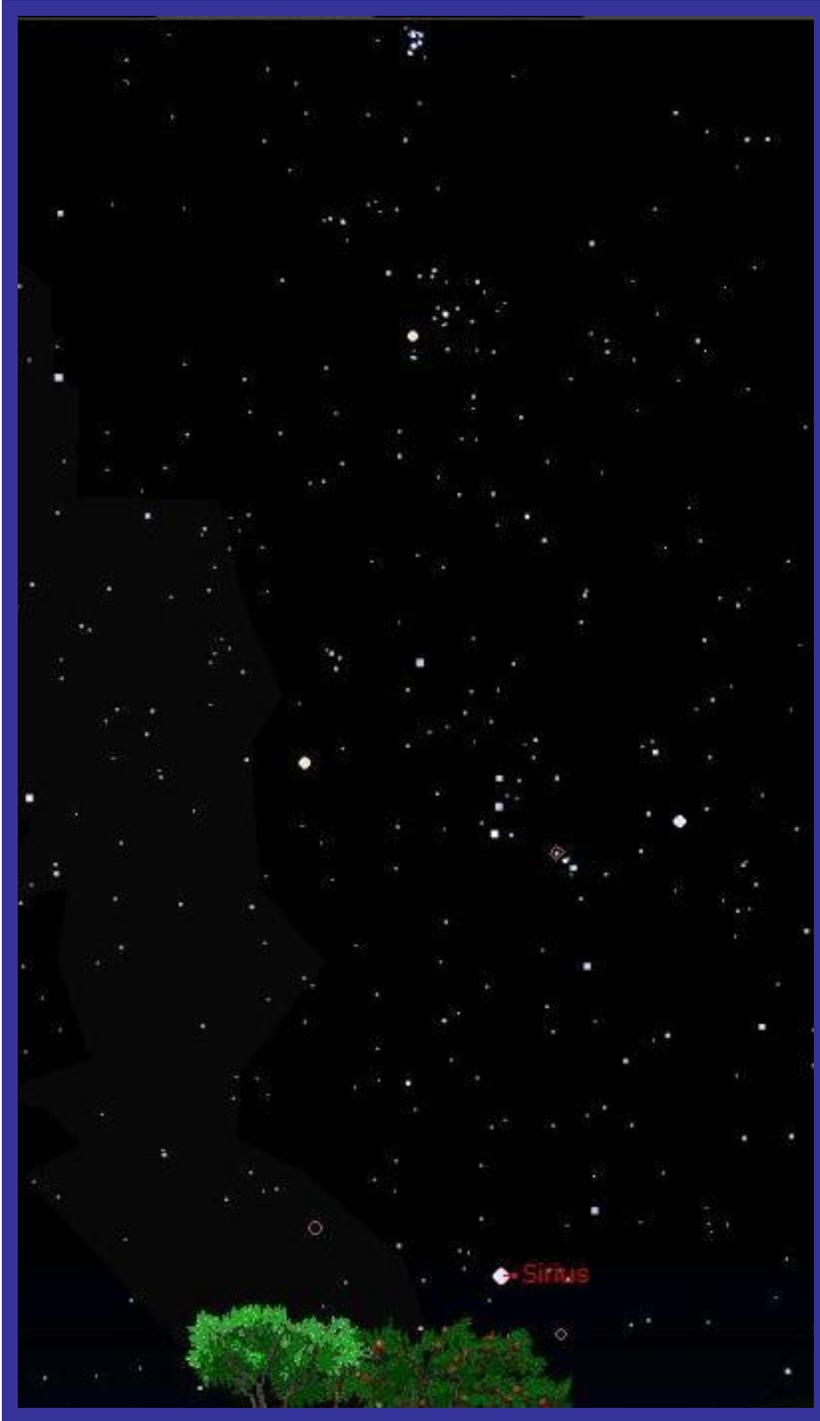
evenly divisible by 6, as the Quendi used a six day ‘week’, which they called an *enquië*. [For much more information on the Elven view of Time, please see this page: [☞](#).]

Additionally, we know (from [linguistic evidence](#) associated with the [Lost Tales](#)), that both the Summer and Winter solstices were celebrated. Given these facts, we now look for evidence that the Quendi used some sort of astronomical calibration² for their calendar, much like the ancient builders of [Stonehenge](#) were said to do, or the ancient [Mayans](#). Whatever the astronomical event was, it must have been something fairly obvious that could be noted and acted upon by a population that was at least semi-nomadic (references to Elvish “wandering”—to say nothing of the Great Journey—are scattered throughout the whole *Legendarium*). This would seem to rule out large edifices such as Stonehenge or pyramidal constructions for the population as a whole, though it is certain that the Noldor, in particular, attained and surpassed such technology. Using either of the solstices as a calibration point doesn’t seem to fit; as each solstice would occur 5 *enquier* after the start (or 7 *enquier* before the end) of ‘Summer’ or ‘Winter’, respectively. This doesn’t seem to make sense given the fact that both ‘Summer’ and ‘Winter’ contained 12 *enquier*, and thus are evenly divisible into two halves of 6 *enquier* each. And, since the seasons are of unequal length and none fall upon an equinoctial boundary, the equinoxes don’t seem to be likely points either.

What’s left?

Surprisingly (and serendipitously) I discovered that the Pleiades, called the *Remmirath* (‘Netted Stars’) by the Elves, appears overhead (culminates) at midnight on November 21st – the beginning of *Hrivë* (Winter). In addition, they rise with the Sun at the beginning of *Lairë* (Summer), which admittedly cannot be seen directly – were it not for the fact that another constellation, which we know as [Corona Borealis](#), culminates at midnight at the beginning of *Lairë*, as it lies exactly opposite the Pleiades in the sky.³ Both of these events are explained more fully in the [The Pawnee Star Calendar](#). Thus, using the date of November 21st on the Gregorian calendar as a calibration date, and applying the length of the seasons forward and around from this date, we arrive at exactly the points determined by calculation using the Encyclopedia of Arda’s calendar⁴.

I should also mention here that the stellar configuration at the end of Varda’s labors in Chapter 3 of the *Silmarillion* matches what is seen at midnight, November 21st; and I here attach an image produced by the astronomical program “Starry Night” to prove it:



“Of the Coming of the Elves” describes Varda’s labours and the resulting sky:

Then Varda went forth from the council, and she looked out from the height of Taniquetil, and beheld the darkness of Middle-earth beneath the innumerable stars, faint and far. Then she began a great labour, greatest of all the works of the Valar since their coming into Arda. She took the silver dew from the vats of Telperion, and therewith she made new stars and

brighter against the coming of the Firstborn; wherefore she whose name out of the deeps of time and the labours of Eä was Tintallë, the Kindler, was called after by the Elves Elentári, Queen of the Stars. Carnil [Mars] and Luinil [Vega*], Nénar [Capella*] and Lumbar [Saturn], Alcarinquë [Jupiter] and Elemmírë [Mercury] she wrought in that time, and many other of the ancient stars she gathered together and set as signs in the heavens of Arda: Wilwarin [Cassiopeia], Telumendil [Gemini?], Soronúmë [Lyra*], and Anarríma [Leo*]; and Menelmacar [Orion] with his shining belt, that forebodes the Last Battle that shall be at the end of days. And high in the north as a challenge to Melkor she set the crown of seven mighty stars to swing, Valacirca, the Sickle of the Valar and sign of doom [Ursa Major—The Big Dipper].

It is told that even as Varda ended her labours, and they were long, when first Menelmacar [Orion] strode up the sky and the blue fire of Helluin [Sirius] flickered in the mists above the borders of the world, in that hour the Children of the Earth awoke, the Firstborn of Ilúvatar. By the starlit mere of Cuiviénen, Water of Awakening, they rose from the sleep of Ilúvatar; and while they dwelt yet silent by Cuiviénen their eyes beheld first of all things the stars of heaven. Therefore they have ever loved the starlight, and have revered Varda Elentári above all the Valar.⁵



The Seasons and their Festivals in Detail

March 28th: *Vinya Loa* ('New Year'). *Yestarë* is the first day of the Elven Year (*loa*) and the eve of Spring (*Tuilë*). Though no specific festival is detailed, this is probably something like [Ostara](#). First Spring flowers (snowdrops and crocuses) are blooming, snow is disappearing, and the new life which appeared in 'Stirring' (*Coirë*) is beginning to burgeon. Also it is the New Year, and so probably had a something of a New Year's feel to it, but probably amplified because of the vernal energies. A possible alternative name for this time is *Gwirth* ('Young, youthful'—this word was certainly also applied to new leaves/plant life).⁶

It is said that Lúthien danced on this day when long ago she first met Beren in the forest of Doriath:

*A night there was when winter died;
then all alone she sang and cried
and danced until the dawn of spring,
and chanted some wild magic thing...⁷*



May 22nd: ***Nost-na-Lothion***, the 'Birth of Flowers' festival. Beginning of Summer (*Lairë*). This festival appears both within the text of "The Fall of Gondolin":

[...] In these ways that bitter winter passed, and the snows lay deeper than ever before on the Encircling Hills; yet in its time a spring of wondrous glory melted the skirts of those white mantles and the valley drank the waters and burst into flowers.

So came and passed with revelry of children the festival of Nost-na-Lothion or the Birth of Flowers, and the hearts of the Gondothlim were uplifted for the good promise of the year...⁸

And in the linguistic information from the "[elfling](#)" Elvish Linguistics List we find:

SPRING - Tuilere, Tuilë
March - Lunde susuulima
April - Tuileris, (month of Vana)
Lunde timpinea
May - Lotession, Kalainis Lunde lootea
Nost-na-Lothion 'Birth of Flowers' a spring festival celebrated in Gondolin.

Interestingly, this meryalë (holiday) also has a parallel theme with May Day, May 1st, because May Day was traditionally celebrated when the hawthorn bloomed, with a May pole and a May Queen, etcetera, and is celebrated by those of Neopagan backgrounds as Beltane.

However, a glance at the Quendian calendar would show that this festival cannot have been celebrated on May 1st as some may suppose, because that date is an uneven fraction of an *enquië* from the beginning of Spring (34 days if the start-date is assumed to be *Yestarë*, 33 days if it is assumed to be the first day of *Tuilë*). So the only possible date for the *Nost-na-Lothion* given the structure of the Quendian calendar and the fact that it is a festival of flowers is May 22nd, the start of Summer (*Lairë*).

The Pleiades rise with the sun on this date.



June 21st (Solstice): The 'Gates of Summer' (***Tarnin Austa***)⁹ festival which starts the following night and anticipates the rising of the sun. The fullest description is from the Lost Tales:

[...] and now at length is that great feast Tarnin Austa or the Gates of Summer near at hand. For know that on a night it was their custom to begin a solemn ceremony at midnight, continuing it even till the dawn of

Tarnin Austa broke, and no voice was uttered in the city from midnight till the break of day, but the dawn they hailed with ancient songs.

For years uncounted had the coming of summer thus been greeted with music of choirs, standing upon their gleaming eastern wall; and now comes even the night of vigil and the city is filled with silver lamps, while in the groves upon the new-leaved trees lights of jewelled colours swing, and low musics go along the ways, but no voice sings until the dawn.

The sun has sunk beyond the hills and folk array them for the festival very gladly and eagerly -- glancing in expectation to the East.¹⁰



August 2nd: Yávië, Elven Lammas (probably with a very similar focus to the current one)¹¹. End of Summer/Beginning of Autumn (First Harvest).

NOTE: It may seem strange to say summer has ended at the beginning of August, but they meant that the time of growth had ended, and the time of maturity was at hand. **Also**, *at first*, I have placed this festival on August 1st rather than the mathematically calculated date of August 2nd, because Lammas is traditionally celebrated on August 1st and it seemed silly to be off by one day. In addition, this day and February 1st are the two dates that coincide with the neo-Pagan cross-Quarter calendar in common use – and I do not think that this is a coincidence. *We later decided to stay true to the Elven calendar.*



September 25-27th: The 3 Middle-Days (Enderi). End of the "warm weather" period. Beginning of later (sometimes called 'Second') Autumn and feeling of yearning/sailing/traveling, falling leaves, waning daylight, etc. Beginning of Fading (Quellë). This season is what everyone thinks of when they hear the word 'Autumn'.

For the description of the festival on these days, we have a slight problem in that all sources I can find mention them as "holidays", but no specific details are given anywhere I can find – either on the 'net or off of it using authentic sources. So, what we have here are 3 days set aside at a time when leaves are falling from the trees, the Harvest Moon shines in the sky, and Elven thought (even in early times) must have turned towards Valinor -- or at least of traveling. I think even this excerpt from the Narn i Hîn Húrin may prove illustrative:

[...] But it chanced in the third summer, when Túrin was twenty years old, that desiring rest and needing smith-work for the repair of his arms he came unlooked for to Menegroth in the evening; and he went into the hall. Thingol was not there, for he was abroad in the greenwood with Melian, as was his delight at times in the high summer. (This was probably sometime after midsummer, probably stretching through First Autumn)

[...] Soon afterwards Thingol and Melian came back to their halls, for the summer was waning; and when the King heard report of what had passed he sat upon his throne in the great hall of Menegroth, and about him were all the lords and counsellors of Doriath. (This had to have been near the time of the *enderi*, as likely Thingol and Melian would be returning from their 'vacation' to attend the festivities.)

It seems reasonable to assume that this festival took the place of [Samhain](#), though being earlier, was probably more associated with the change of the season itself rather than a harvest and without the “thinning of the veil” aspect emphasized by today’s Neo-Pagans. [See also Turuhalmé below for more about this difference.] That Elves were more hunters than agriculturalists is pretty clear; probably their encounter with humans benefited them as much as the humans, as they were then freer to focus upon cultural pursuits.



November 21st: *Cuivérë Quendiva*¹², “The Awakening of the Quendi”. On this night, the Pleiades culminate at midnight and *Hrivë* (Winter) begins. This is the only transition day in the *loa* for which no reference for a festival can be found. Given this fact, and the fact that the night sky on this date resembles that under which the Quendi first awoke in Arda (see picture above), I believe that it was a day for meditation and reflection rather than of festival as such.

It is also quite cold at this time of year, which would tend to discourage large outdoor gatherings. Though, given the importance of the night sky on this date, I am sure that many Quendi did incorporate viewing the stars into their meditations.



December 21st (Solstice): *Turuhalmë*, (“The Logdrawing”). Tale-telling before the Tale-fire. Remembering one's ancestors. Kind of like [Yule](#), but 'deeper'.

While it may be tempting to gloss over this holiday, saying it's like the rebirthing of the sun holiday of Yule celebrations, it's definitely deeper with its tale telling of "war stories." Two different ancient northern cultures have left us Neolithic evidence that they linked the winter solstice with their dead by lighting tomb constructions with the sunrise light of the solstice morning. One is in Ireland and another is in the Orkney Islands off the coast of Scotland:

Newgrange Passage Tomb [↗](#)

Maeshowe chambered cairn [↗](#)

The closest reasoning in current pagan practices that I can see relating to this is in the reference on an Asatru site saying that Winter Solstice is a time,

[...] for contact with those who had gone before. With the dead ancestors of the celebrant. Maybe its extreme length of darkness each night, maybe it's the cold, death-like grip of Winter. Maybe it's the fact that “death” reins supreme at this time of year, as all the plants of summer have either died or become dormant. Whatever the reason, those who follow the old religion know, from personal experience, that it is a time of magic, and contact with the spirits of our ancestors and even the gods and goddesses themselves. It is a good time to cast the runes for the coming year. It is an end, like the end of life. And it is at this same time a beginning, like birth. A magical time!

[from "YULE: The significance of the Yuletide Festival within the Religion of Asatru/Odinism" By Godi Edred Wodanson (E. Max Hyatt) 

The Book of Lost Tales gives this description:

[...] The day of Turuhalme was come, and the company from Mar Vanwa Tyalieva went into the snowy woods to bring back firewood on sleighs. Never was the Tale-fire allowed to go out or to die into grey ash, but on the eve of Turuhalme it sank always to a smaller blaze until Turuhalme itself, when great logs were brought into the Room of the Tale-fire and being blessed by Lindo with ancient magic roared and flared anew upon the hearth. Vaire blessed the door and lintel of the hall and gave the key to Rumil, making him once again the Door-ward, and to Littleheart was given the hammer of his gong. Then Lindo said, as he said each year: ‘Lift up your voices, O Pipers of the Shore, and ye Elves of Kor sing aloud; and all ye Noldoli and hidden fairies of the world dance ye and sing, sing and dance O little children of Men that the House of Memory resound with your voices ...’

Then was sung a song of ancient days that the Eldar made when they dwelt beneath the wing of Manwe and sang on the great road from Kor to the city of the Gods...¹³

So it seems that memories and Tale-telling was a major feature of this holiday. In fact, the *Silmarillion* was designed to be told in just such a fashion—it was this archetypal idea that Tolkien had in mind.



February 1st: Sovalwaris, Beginning of 'Stirring' (*Coirë*) and new Life.

There is rather scant specific information on this holiday, but the reference from the “[elfling](#)” list says:

February - Amillion (month of [Amillo](#)), Sovalwaris

i Sovalle 'the Purification' is some sort of purification ceremony that should involve 'washing' or 'bathing'. I have placed it in February because of the name Sovalwaris.

This leads us to this entry in the Appendix to *The Lost Tales I*:

Amillo This appears in QL but with no indication of meaning; Amillion is Amillo's month, February (one of the most 'primitive' entries). {That is, one of the earliest ever set down by Tolkien; before the narrative Legends were written.}

It seems, given this, that this ceremony had much in common with [Imbolc](#), and is held on the same day.

¹ Why unequal? Well, as all know, the solstices are the times of longest and shortest daylight for a given location, whereas the equinoxes are the two times of the year when the day and night are equally divided. However, what many do not know is that the *rate of change of the daylight* is greatest near the equinoxes, and this is especially noticeable near the autumnal equinox when daylight is *waning*. The Quendi were certainly aware of this, thus the terms of 'Fading' and (especially) *Narbeleth* 'Sun-Waning'. For more information on this, please go here: [↗](#).

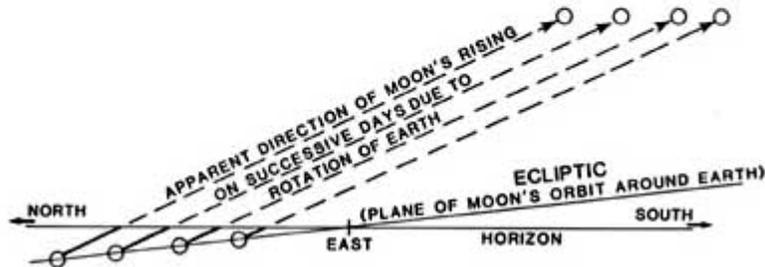
² "I believe that the Elves observe the Sun and stars closely, and make occasional corrections." *Morgoth's Ring* (HOME volume 12), pg. 127.

³ In this case, you may ask, why start the year in the Spring at all?! There are two reasons, I think: one is that near the end of March, new plant and animal life is beginning to appear, and those that have already appeared in 'Stirring' are beginning to grow rapidly. The very essence of new life is in the air.

The second reason, I think, has to do with the lunar phases. As we know, the Elves "were all for Moon and Stars," but they seemed to pay special attention to both the full and crescent phases. In fact, a separate word, *cú*, was used to denote the crescent moon. I have discovered that the full moon is much less likely to be seen near the vernal equinox, and if there is one it will rise much later each night than it would in autumn. Here is the relevant quote:

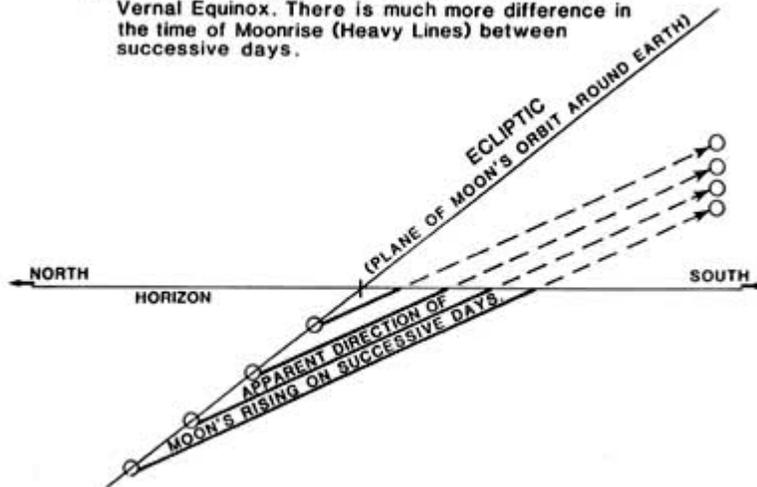
[...] Let's look at what happens. At the equinox itself (September 21), there may or may not be a full moon. It depends on the year. This year the full moon fell on September 18th. When there is a full moon near the equinox, this Harvest Moon rises in the east almost exactly at the same time that the sun sets in the west. After that evening's near perfectly timed moonrise, even though the moon does rise a little later each night, the number of minutes later that it rises is less than at any other time during the year. The "retardation," or delay of moonrise from night to night, averages about 50 minutes over the course of a year. But at full Harvest Moon, the delay is only about 15 minutes at Anchorage and even less at Fairbanks.

HARVEST MOON (Looking East) Nearest Full Moon to Autumnal Equinox. There is little difference in the time of Moonrise (Heavy Lines) between successive days.



These make for great evenings! In autumn, the full moon rises just after sunset and crops are flooded with moonlight. This lasts for days. But as the year moves onward, the angle at which the moon orbits the earth changes so that the angle at which the moon seems to climb up the sky grows steeper. By spring the moon rises so sharply that there is a much longer "waiting period" each successive night before the moon comes over the hill.

SPRING MOON (Looking East) Nearest Full Moon to Vernal Equinox. There is much more difference in the time of Moonrise (Heavy Lines) between successive days.



In spring, around the time of the vernal equinox, the angle at which the moon's orbit intersects the horizon is at its greatest, and you don't see the round, full moon as often. Is it any wonder that Halloween isn't observed in March? 

Usually, the vernal equinox begins on March 21st, whereas (when translated to our calendar) the Elven New Year begins on March 28th. That is, one quarter [orbital period](#) of the moon later -- as near was we can judge given that all days are given as whole number values.

So, if the moon is new on the equinox, one quarter orbital period brings us to a first quarter (half illuminated) moon. Also, at [this time of year](#), "A first-quarter Moon follows a daily path in the sky corresponding to that of the Sun after three months. Hence it comes at the highest [altitude](#) — or "runs high" — at or near the [vernal equinox](#)."

Leaving aside the inherent variability of the moon's orbit now (and evidence from the Sil that it was even more so when it first appeared (according to the myth it rose in the West)), I think what is important here is the archetypal image: a dark sky sprinkled with stars and hosting a half-illuminated or crescent moon.

⁴ Save in the few cases where we in Tië eldaliéva have chosen to shift them by a day to bring them into nodal alignment with the Neo-Pagan Wheel of the Year in common use (i.e. coinciding at some points, but not at every point).

⁵ Those who are non-Tolkienists may be unaware that the assignment of these celestial bodies mentioned in this paragraph was a matter of debate at one time, and the matter was left unresolved. I believe that this was due to many being unfamiliar with the deeper and more obscure material found within the volumes of HOME, and too many modern people being basically unfamiliar with the night sky and astronomical information in general. I am familiar with both: I have studied Tolkien since I was 12 and have been a sky-watcher just as long, so I believe that I am qualified to solve this puzzle.

The names followed by an asterisk are not directly identified by Christopher Tolkien in his analysis of his father's notes. Most of this information is to be found in the prefatory note to the index of *Morgoth's Ring* (HOME volume X). One will note in the description of Varda's Star Making that it is in two parts: the first deals with her making "new stars and brighter". Since planets and bright stars are mentioned in the same category here, we can postulate that it was the relative brightness of the objects that lead to their being important enough to receive names, not whether they moved against the background stars or not. In fact, the only star-like objects that do not fit here with regard to the quality of marked brightness are the assignments that most Tolkien scholars give to *Nénar* and *Luinil* as Uranus and Neptune—an assignment which Christopher Tolkien himself discounts (see the Index to *Morgoth's Ring* for the full discussion).

The second period of Star Making was when Varda formed the constellations: "*many other of the ancient stars she gathered together and set as signs in the heavens of Arda.*" In the names which follow, some clues can be found from the meaning of the Quenya names themselves.

I will now present all of the hitherto unidentified names, and my reasons for making their assignments:

- ❖ *Luinil* [Vega]: The note for *Luinil* says "The name of a bright star". It also contains the element *luin*, meaning blue. Since these Legends are North-centric, this means a bright blue star somewhere on the Northern celestial sphere is a candidate, and that this star should be especially bright to deserve special mention (as explained above and supported by Christopher's interpretation). Now Capella, Vega, and Arcturus are the brightest stars on the Northern celestial sphere.† Of these, only Vega is noticeably blue, so this, and the fact that it is on the opposite side of the celestial sphere from Capella and thus does a sort of 'dance' with it as the seasons turn† was my reason for selecting it.
- ❖ *Nénar* [Capella]: The note for *Nénar* also indicates that this is a bright star. Its name contains the element *nén*, which means "Water". It is also almost directly overhead at the beginning of *Coirë* (Stirring) in the early evening after sunset†. This would be February on our Calendar, and is called *Nénimë* in Quenya. This month-name also contains the "water" element, *nén*, and is indeed very wet in many Northern locations. Hence, my choice.
- ❖ *Soronúmë* [Lyra]: This constellation was not always thought of as a Lyre, but in fact had an ancient association with birds, particularly birds of prey and Eagles.‡ Since its name means something very like "Eagle of the West", and the fact that Lyra is more prominent in the Northern hemisphere than Aquila, the modern Eagle constellation, and rises more truly East (this particular fact has to do with the directional assignments in our Spiritual system, which is not a public matter for now), we have chosen Lyra as the best fit for *Soronúmë*.
- ❖ *Anarríma* [Leo]: The Encyclopedia of Arda says of *Anarríma* "*It has not been certainly identified, but its name apparently means 'Sun-edge' or 'Sun-border', so it perhaps lies to the side of the*

Ecliptic, the Sun's path through the sky."  Given this clue the question then becomes: "What constellation is of a configuration that most of it lies on one side or the other of the ecliptic, with perhaps part of it touching so as to "border" the Sun's path?" The constellation that most nearly fits these requirements is Leo. In fact, its brightest star Regulus lies very near the path of the Sun: "Leo's mane looks like a backward question mark. Regulus, the 'dot' at the bottom of the mark, lies nearly on the ecliptic."  Regarding this, Mrs. Martin says:

The constellation Leo is one of those that the Sun passes through in its apparent annual path across the heavens. The Sun stays in this constellation a little more than five weeks, entering it at the beginning of the second week in August. Two weeks later, the Sun passes Regulus, and as this star lies almost exactly in the path of the Sun, they would seem to an observer on the Earth to almost touch each other. But at this time the light of Regulus is lost in the Sun's rays, and we do not see this interesting meeting.

† See "The Friendly Stars" by Martha Evans Martin. This is a wonderful Naturalistic look at astronomy, and I recommend it to everyone. It is not 'technical' at all. It is no longer in copyright and can be downloaded here. 

‡ "Ancient records tell us that Lyra's association with birds goes back over two thousand years. In ancient India Lyra was seen as a heavenly vulture. And in Babylon as a great mythological storm bird named Urakkhga. Some desert peoples of ancient Arabia saw it as two birds, the desert eagle and would you believe a cosmic goose? Lyra was also once known as an osprey and a wood falcon. [...] At any rate only in the past couple hundred years or so have we in the west seen Lyra exclusively as a lyre. In fact at the time of the American Revolution these stars were still seen as a bird, an eagle but holding a lyre in its beak. But since then the eagle has flown away and only the lyre remains." 

⁶ From the Addendum to *A Gateway To Sindarin* by David Salo.

⁷ The "Lay of Leithian", *The Lays of Beleriand*, lines 717-720

⁸ *The Book of Lost Tales II*, "The Fall of Gondolin".

⁹ From the "elfling" list:

Solstice - austalende '[mid]summer day' < *austakalenda. (The fact that this word includes the element kalenda means that they had a festival. It was probably Tarnin Austa 'Gates of Summer', a festival described for Gondolin with singing all night.)

¹⁰ *The Book of Lost Tales II*, "The Fall of Gondolin".

¹¹ Again, from the "elfling" list:

August - **Lunde sarea `fiery' or **Lunde saiwa `hot' Lammas, said to have been celebrated in Gondolin. This is `formerly in England the festival of the wheat harvest or loaf mass, held on the 1st day of August, when bread baked from the first crop of wheat was consecrated at Mass' according to Webster's dictionary.

¹² Thanks to [Cyllwen](#), for reconstructing this term for me.

¹³ "Gilfanon's Tale", *The Book of Lost Tales I*.