

FANTASY ROLE-PLAY FORUM:

MIDDLE EARTH WITH

Middle Earth is thoroughly presented in The Hobbit and in The Lord of the Rings. There is a definite history, and the customs, traditions, societies, geography, monsters, Magick, and even the language are described in detail.

The geography of Middle Earth presents few problems, for the works provide detailed maps easily translatable into campaign maps. I recommend a general map of 1" = 10 to 20 miles. Locations of importance should be on a scale of 1" = 100 to 500 yards. Hex sheets, if available, are particularly useful.

Each region of Middle Earth has its own special character. The campaign designer will have to take such factors into account when determining what type of encounters are likely, who or what might be encountered, and the probability of encountering anything at all. The "Outdoors Adventure" encounters (C&S, p.108) are only a guide; they are not the "law" and should be modified as much as is necessary to reflect the part of the world under consideration. Such things are determined by the particular type of campaign envisioned. For example, in the Shire there will be few chances of encountering anyone or anything except "respectable" citizenry. In Sauron's Dark Tower, however, almost "anything" goes. It's all a question of location.

Magick in Middle Earth is far more restricted than in a full C&S Campaign. Using C&S Magick User classes to interpret the type of mages appearing in Tolkien, I find that only the following types exist: Wood Elves, High Elves, Shamen, Natural Talents (these human-types should be restricted to a maximum of ten spells to reflect the waning of Magick in the world), Necromancers, and Enchanters.

Further, since C&S Magick is systematized with regard to the nature of particular groups of spells (Protection, Detection, Transportation, Communication, Basic Magick, Black Magic, Ancient Lore, Demonology), campaign design involves determining which spells are commonly operational and which are not, according to the types of mages in the campaign. Maximum flexibility exists in this instance; and even where C&S rules call for a particular type of mage knowing a spell, if the fantasy source does not clearly suggest that the spell is known, it may be relegated to the category of Ancient Lore. In Middle Earth, where Magick is a shadow of its former glory, a large number of spells would be known only to a few great Masters. Gandalf, for instance,

Ed Simbalist

"CHIVALRY & SORCERY"

knows an Astral Lock, but who else does? Many spells would have to be rediscovered in some corner of a long forgotten ruin.

Magical devices are rare in Middle Earth. Rings of Power, etc., are very, very rare. Powerful arms and armour are at a real premium, with most magical weapons being +1 to +3 and magical armour being -1 to -3. In short, much of the action would depend upon the cunning and fighting prowess of the parties of adventurers. Quests for magical arms and for scrolls and books of Ancient Lore would be a significant activity.

Turning to particular areas, the Shire is a familiar piece of Old England. The Hobbits are described in the character section (C&S, p.3) and are organized on the Yeoman-Townsmen model (C&S, p.9). Hobbit society is reminiscent of Middle Class Victorianism, with very conservative and "respectable" behaviour being the rule. No bastards would be born in this strait-laced part of the world (C&S, p.8), so treat them as sixth sons or daughters. Being a "Black Sheep" would indicate a most "unrespectable" tendency toward unconventional thinking and wanderlust. Adventurers are not "respectable", while strangers are regarded with active suspicion. Nobility and Chivalry are distant legends, but Elves are regarded with some awe. The whole of the Shire is bounded by what appears to be a "charmed circle" which keeps most monsters out, while Aragorn and his noble company provide a border patrol to keep out undesirable men and monsters which somehow slip through.

Rohan is pure C&S, a land of High Chivalry. Thus all C&S systems of Chivalric conduct, warfare, social organization, etc., apply. The only distinction is that Rohirrim use bow and lasso, a reflection of Tolkien's background as an Anglo-Saxon scholar which marries the "combined arms" approach of the Anglo-Saxon fighting forces with the Chivalric ideal of warfare from horseback. Characters are human if they come from this region.

Minas Tirith is described in detail in The Return of the King. It is a large city-state with government on a feudal model. Gondor is comprised of a number of feudal baronies, each independent from the others but all are loosely allied against external invasion by the Corsairs of Umbar and the Saracen-like raiders from Harad. The whole of this region consists of fortresses in a sea of barbarism. Minas Tirith occupies a place similar to that of Byzantium, a bastion of the former

▷▷▷

glory of past civilizations now cast down. Both Gondor and Minas Tirith are characterized by the honour and loyalty so typical of chivalric societies, and native characters are human only. Thus all C&S systems would apply without modification of a significant nature.

Isengard, Minas Morgul, the Necromancer's Tower in Mirkwood, and the Tower of Sauron in Mordor are essentially places of mystery in the full C&S sense. Here the full talent of the Game Master in dungeon design can be exercised to map and fill these dread locations with every manner of horror consistent with Tolkien's presentation. These are Evil places and the Magick of long dead Masters still lingers. Isengard would be populated chiefly by regiments of the Goblin and Troll races (C&S, p.118-120) because of Saruman's many breeding experiments, but a number of "exotic" monsters could also be introduced to reflect experiments gone awry--perhaps a few D&D monsters adapted to C&S if one really wishes. Minas Morgul is a truly nasty place, with Goblins, Trolls, and men, as well as Nazgul and other Undead. The Necromancer's Tower would likely contain a broad cross-section of the Undead, not to mention numerous traps and enchantments. Lycanthropes and other savage beasts would likely be lurking in the ruins as well, but above-ground as these are not likely to be found in the subterranean world because it is not in their natures. The Dark Tower was obviously created by Jinn, for it immediately crumbles into ruins when Sauron's Ring is destroyed and the enchantment is broken. In such a place of Magick would be found the whole gamut of men and monsters, but many of the monsters would be bound to remain in its vicinity because of their "enchanted" nature.

Much of the world remaining is Wilderland, a vast and unsettled region populated by beasts, Legendary Beasts, Goblins, Trolls, and Giants--the latter seemingly restricted to the heights of the Misty Mountains. A few true Lycanthropes might be encountered, like Beorn the Bear, but these will be rare. Dragons will be uncommon, for most of the Great Worms have perished. Smaug is the Old Dragon (C&S, p.116) of the most fearsome legends, and it is likely modelled on the 60-75 foot Dragon of the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*. He clearly possesses magical talents as well as fang, claw, and fire. C&S systems for pricing items to be used on an expedition, as well as costs for staying at inns (at Bree, etc.) are in place (C&S, p.13-15, p.16 for horses).

Fangorn is more or less a typical Wilderland forest, with the usual animals in it. But the Ents are present. Ents are not included in C&S, but they correspond closely to high level Hill Giants (C&S, p.120) of superior intelligence. They are, of course, highly inflammable. They can command the trees of Fangorn to move and fight, and the trees could be compared to high level Hill Giants without intelligence (they must be directed by Ents) when active.

Lothlorien is a truly enchanted place, inhabited by the High Elf Galadriel, her husband Celeborn, and their band of Wood Elves. Rivendell, Elrond's stronghold, is the last outpost of the High Elves. Like Lorien it is enchanted and is protected by powerful Magicks. The Wood Elves are as given in C&S, but their powers have waned to the point that they would know only the appropriate spells of Detection and those involving Basic Magic as well. Elrond specializes in Water spells and Weatherlore, Gandalf is a Fire Wizard. Galadriel appears to be a remarkable mage, for she has mastered Illusion, Command, and Divination (the mirror of Galadriel, which is a bowl of crystal water, is like a Crystal Ball). All of the High Elves appear to possess True Sight, for none are fooled by appearances.

Mirkwood is a forest characterized by enchantments in certain places, but which is wild and dangerous throughout. The Wood Elves of Mirkwood are generally suspicious of strangers but fair-minded. Their King is hungry for gold, however, a sign of how far the Elvish Race has sunk from their original high-mindedness. Beasts and some legendary monsters abound in the forest. Giant Spiders dominate an entire section of the woods. In the south, the location of the Necromancer's Tower, may be encountered illusion enchantments and creatures of legend.

The Dwarves are centered upon the Iron Hills to the east of the Lonely Mountain and the Desolation of Smaug. The Dwarves are still Weaponsmiths of some note (C&S, p.3, p.78), but suffer from the absence of Alchemetical materials (no Alchemists remain in the world). A highly military race, they are also craftsmen to the man. Their numbers are not large, and only a few small colonies might be found outside the Iron Hills.

In the foothills of Anorien dwell the Wild People of Ghan-buri-Ghan. They are warriors but are primitively armed. Their culture is tribal (warrior, chief, high-chief). Their Magick Users are invariably Shaman-types.

Most activity will be conducted on the personal level, as there are few battles until the time that Sauron and Saruman make their bids for power. When major actions do occur, C&S mass combat systems can be used. It should be noted that Magick is used only in limited form on the battlefield, such matters being decided largely by conventional passage of arms.

I have presented only the broad outlines of how to go about using C&S systems to interpret and recreate in a game a world of fantasy fiction. Where the players go from there is up to them for a campaign is always shaped by the decisions and actions of those involved in it. And they clearly are not obligated to follow the fantasy work in the story line! The world is just the stage for role-play.

