



THE WORLD OF PELLINOR

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The *Naraudh Lar-Chanë* (The Riddle of the Treesong), one of the key legends of the lost civilisation of Edil-Amarandh, is here translated in full for the first time. This great classic of Annaren literature deserves, it seems to me, a much wider audience than the academic analysts it has so far attracted.

This is therefore a book directed towards the general reader rather than the scholar. Up until now the *Naraudh Lar-Chanë* has been primarily valued for the illumination it throws on the culture of Edil-Amarandh, but what struck me when I first encountered it was its virtues as a romance. I was overcome by a desire at once humbler and more ambitious than my original intention of writing a dissertation on Annaren society: I wished to capture its vivid drama and unique magic in contemporary English. If my labours have captured a tenth part of the enchantment of the original, I shall be well pleased.

To this end I have eschewed explanatory footnotes, which would have interrupted the flow of the story. Instead, as a courtesy to the reader I have included some general information on the society and history of Edil-Amarandh, as well as notes on the pronunciation of Annaren names, in appendices at the back of the book. However, I hope that the tale stands without these notes, and that the reader who seeks primarily the pleasures of adventure will be satisfied by the narrative alone.

Much has been written elsewhere of the sensational discovery of the Annaren Scripts in a cave revealed by an earthquake in the Atlas Mountains of central Morocco. Since that event in 1991, much more has been said of the dismaying implications for contemporary archaeology, of the riddles of dating, which still

remain stubbornly unsolved, and of the laborious and on-going task of decipherment and translation. For the curious amateur, the most useful sources to begin looking for background on the *Naraudh Lar-Chanë* are *Uncategorical Knowledge: The Three Arts of the Starpeople* by Claudia J. Armstrong and Christiane Armongath's indispensable *L'Histoire de l'Arbre-chant de Annar*.

The Gift consists of the first two books of *Naraudh Lar-Chanë*. The original text, of which there exists a single complete copy, is written in Annaren, the principle language spoken in Annar. In translating from the Annaren I have attempted as my first concern to convey its vitality: if this has led to some unscholarly, or even controversial, decisions, I at once plead the conventional excuse of the translator - that it is sometimes impossible to keep both to the letter and the spirit of another language. Where I have struck an intractable problem, I have chosen to serve the latter rather than the former. Many decisions perhaps require a little explanation, but here I wish to be brief and will examine only the most important, my choice of the word Bard.

I have used Bard to translate *Dhillarearë* from the Speech. It means, literally, Starpeople. With its particular resonances of artistic mastery and spiritual authority, *Dhillarearë* has no real equivalent in our language. I also considered the fact that in the Annaren language *dhillë* was the verb to sing or to chant, and this bilingual pun led to the popular designation of the *Dhillarearë* as Singers. Bard seemed the most transparent and useful word available to me in English, in imputing political, social and cultural status to those whom it describes.

The danger of using the term is, as has been pointed out, its inevitable associations with Irish and Welsh traditions. Bards in Edil-Amarandh held a very different political place and power to the Bards in these later societies, although there is an intriguing foreshadow of their later decadent status as courtly chroniclers and flatterers, in Gilman's employment of the Bard Mirlad at the beginning of the story. In Annaren society this position would have been considered well beneath the dignity of a *Dhillarearën*; and the present-day eclipse of poets, whom we presume to be their contemporary descendants, would have been well nigh unthinkable.

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