

# On the diphthongs *ei*, *ai* in Noldorin and Sindarin

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**tm, tn > tw (nt) > nt, tt**  
What a muddle.

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VT49:54

## Contents

|          |   |          |
|----------|---|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Mechanisms of creation</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| 1.1      | original diphtongs . . . . .  | 1        |
| 1.2      | vocalization . . . . .  | 1        |
| 1.3      | vowel mutation . . . . .  | 1        |
| 1.4      | contraction <i>ehi</i> > <i>ei</i> . . . . .  | 2        |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Early Noldorin</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| 2.1      | vocalization . . . . .  | 2        |
| 2.2      | mutation of <i>a</i> . . . . .  | 3        |
| 2.3      | mutation of <i>e</i> , <i>e</i> < <i>i</i> . . . . .  | 3        |
| 2.4      | original <i>ei</i> . . . . .  | 4        |
| 2.5      | Discussion . . . . .  | 4        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Noldorin of <i>The Etymologies</i></b>   | <b>4</b> |
| 3.1      | vocalization (60% <i>ei</i> , 30% <i>ei ai</i> , 10% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . .                              | 4        |
| 3.2      | mutation of <i>a</i> (67% <i>ei</i> , 14% <i>ei ai</i> , 19% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . .                      | 5        |
| 3.3      | mutation of <i>e</i> , <i>e</i> < <i>i</i> (92% <i>ei</i> , 8% <i>ei ai</i> , 0% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . .  | 5        |
| 3.4      | mutation of <i>o</i> , <i>o</i> < <i>u</i> (100% <i>ei</i> , 0% <i>ei ai</i> , 0% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . . | 6        |
| 3.5      | contraction <i>ehi</i> > <i>ei</i> (100% <i>ei</i> , 0% <i>ei ai</i> , 0% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . .         | 6        |
| 3.6      | Discussion . . . . .  | 6        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Sindarin</b>   | <b>6</b> |
| 4.1      | vocalization . . . . .  | 7        |
| 4.2      | mutation of <i>a</i> . . . . .  | 7        |
| 4.3      | mutation of <i>e</i> , <i>e</i> < <i>i</i> (25% <i>ei</i> , 67% <i>ei ai</i> , 8% <i>ai</i> ) . . . . . | 8        |
| 4.4      | mutation of <i>o</i> , <i>o</i> < <i>u</i> . . . . .  | 9        |
| 4.5      | Discussion . . . . .  | 9        |

## Introduction

There are some phonological details in Tolkien's languages where we see an apparent hesitation between two possibilities. Sometimes both of them are allowed, sometimes only one is given and conceptions change to and fro in the course of time.

One such detail concerns the diphthongs **ei** and **ai** in Noldorin and its successor Sindarin. This article deals with the oscillation between the two throughout three main stages – Early Noldorin (c.1923), the Noldorin of *The Etymologies* (c.1937 and later) and finally Sindarin (roughly LotR and everything after). Similar variations are **ae/oe** (or **ai/oi**) [1], **œ/e** or **-dl-/-gl-**.

This matter should be of especial interest for regularization attempts of Noldorin vocabulary into Sindarin.

# 1 Mechanisms of creation

At first, one has to determine what to look for. We will only consider cases where both **ei** and **ai** may be yielded. For example, the change **a** > **e** by i-affection (mostly pluralization) is irrelevant here, but an original non-syllabic **ɹ** in the adjacent syllable may cause both **ei** and **ai**. See [3] for a detailed discussion of Noldorin/Sindarin vowels.

## 1.1 original diphtongs

The direct change **ei** > **ai** can be observed in Early Noldorin. Note that the reverse change **ai** > **ei** never occurs (neither in Early Noldorin nor later). Original **ai** remains as such in Early Noldorin, changes > **oe** in the Noldorin of *The Etymologies* and > **ae** in Sindarin. Therefore, it will not be included.

## 1.2 vocalization

Consonants like **k**, **g**, **ɣ**, **gh**, **p** are vocalized to **i** mostly before original **t**, **s**. In Early Noldorin **n** may be vocalized as well. Vocalization is of interest if the preceding vowel is **e** < **e**, **i**, so that **ei** is created. If the preceding vowel is **a**, the change is **aC** > **ai** in Early Noldorin and **aC** > **ae** in the Noldorin of *The Etymologies*, as well as Sindarin.

## 1.3 vowel mutation

The diphtongs **ei**, **ai** may be created from every other vowel by vowel affection (= vowel mutation) and i-infixion in the plural; or often due to the suffix **-yā**. In the case of **u**, **i** it requires the lowering by a-affection yielding **o**, **e** which merge with original **o**, **e** [3]; hence:

- **a** > **ei** | **ai**
- **e** > **ei** (> **ai**)
- **i** > **e** (a-affection) > **ei** (> **ai**)
- **o** > **œi** > **ei**
- **u** > **o** (a-affection) > **œi** > **ei**

## 1.4 contraction *ehi* > *ei*

The combination **-esi** changes > **-ehi** by lenition, which in its turn becomes **-ei** (Noldorin of *The Etymologies*).

# 2 Early Noldorin

Early Noldorin basically includes two wordlists written around 1923, as presented in PE13. Only words with primitive forms that are directly given by Tolkien or deducible from Qenya cognates will be presented below (they form the majority).

## 2.1 vocalization

- **aith** 'thorn, \*spear' < **eith** < **ekta** (PE13:136,158)
- **aithr** (1) 'spearman', (2) 'thorn, \*sword' (PE13:136,158)
- **aithl** 'spring, fount' < **\*ektl-** (PE13:136,158)
- **celaiθ** 'of silver' < **\*kelekw-ta** (PE13:140)
- **glamhaith**, **glabhaith** 'a blaze' < **g'lamektā** (PE13:144)
- **gwaith** 'folk, co[n]str[ued]', coll. pl. < **wiktā** (PE13:146)

- **haith** 'moist' < **heith** < **sikta** (PE13:147,163)
- **helai** 'fence' < **pelesa** (PE13:147)
- **taichr** 'prop, support' < **tank'ró** (PE13:153)
- **glavaith** 'a blaze, burning, blazing light, etc.' < **k'lamektā** (PE13:162)
- **tain** 'aj. straight' < **tegnā** (PE13:165)
- **dain, dein** 'a height, summit – or height, loftiness, sublimity' < **\*deghn** < **dagniu-** (PE13:161)
- **eithin**, pl. of **aith** 'thorn, \*spear' (PE13:136), **eithir** (PE13:158)
- **eitheb** 'thorny' (PE13:136,142,158)
- **eithra-** 'to prick, stab' (PE13:143)
- **eithron** 'warrior' (PE13:143,158)
- **eithlos, eithlios** 'fountain' < **\*ektl-** (PE13:142,158)
- **teiar** 'brick' < **tésare** (PE13:153)
- **eithair**, pl. of **aithr** 'spearman, warrior' (PE13:158)
- **eithlir**, pl. of **aithl** 'spring, fount, source' (PE13:158)
- **glaveithin, gleveithin**, later pl. of **glavaith** 'a blaze, burning, blazing light, etc.' (PE13:162)

## 2.2 mutation of *a*

- **eglair**, pl. of **aglar** 'glory' (PE13:136,158)
- **eithair**, pl. of **aithr** < **ektar-** (PE13:136)
- **ennais**, pl. of **annas** 'face, countenance' (PE13:137,160)
- **baid**, pl. of **bad** 'way' (PE13:137,160)
- **brainn**, pl. of **brann** 'fierce' (PE13:139)
- **glainn**, pl. of **glann** 'clean' (PE13:144)
- **gwain**, pl. of **gwá** 'wind' (PE14:146)
- **gwaidh**, pl. of **gwadh** 'bark, skin, peel' (PE13:146)
- **gwair**, pl. of **gwár** 'town' (PE13:146)
- **rhainc**, pl. of **rhanc** 'corpse, body of one slain in battle' (PE13:152)
- **eglainn**, pl. of **aglann** 'ray of light' (PE13:158)
- **ailt** < **eilt**, pl. of **alt** 'bough, branch' (PE13:159)
- **oerthainc, erthainc**, pl. of **orthanc** 'without break or cleavage, united, continuous, unbroken, etc.' (PE13:164)
- **tainc**, pl. of **tanc** 'firm, steady, steadfast' (PE13:165)
- **thainc**, pl. of **thanc** 'cleft, break, breach' (PE13:165)
- **tlaid**, pl. of **tlad** 'hillside, slope' (PE13:165)
- **airn, ern, ernir**, pl. of **arn** 'child' (PE13:137), also **eirn** (PE13:160)
- **emeirth, emerth**, pl. of **amarth** 'fate' (PE13:137)

- **e(i)rch**, pl. of **arch** 'rough' (PE13:137,160)
- **he(i)rdh**, pl. of **hardh** 'wounded' (PE13:147)
- **teilian** 'sport, jesting, play, mockery' < **t(y)alhānda** (PE13:153)
- **ge(i)rth**, pl. of **garth** 'place' (PE13:161)
- **glebe(i)dion** 'a vain talker' < \***glabad-** (PE13:162)

### 2.3 mutation of *e*, *e* < *i*

- **gair** 'merry', **ger-** (PE13:143)
- **gairwen** 'mirth, fun' (PE13:143)
- **gairion** 'jester' (PE13:143)
- **gairuid** 'funny' (PE13:143)
- **nainn** 'blue' < **neinn** < **nindyá** or **nindyā** (PE13:150)
- **ewaist**, pl. of **awest** 'summer' (PE13:160)
- **elvain(n)** 'adj. indecl. wondrous, marvellous' < **elmendaĵá** (PE13:161)
- **ne(i)rion** 'hero' < **nerĵond-** (PE13:150,164)
- **neibio** 'nearly, almost' (PE13:164)

### 2.4 original *ei*

- **hai** 'scorn' < **peia** (PE13:146)
- **golwai** 'adj. stinking' < **ĵolweĵá** (PE13:162)

### 2.5 Discussion

The pattern in Early Noldorin seems to be very regular and can be easily extrapolated. It appears that at first, **ei** is created by any of the mechanisms. It becomes **ai** in the ultimate syllable and remains **ei** otherwise. So for example **aith** 'thorn, \*spear' < **ekte** shows **ei** > **ai** in the ultimate syllable (which is here the only one), but the plural \***ektin-** becomes **eithin** because **ei** is now non-ultimate. The only case where **ei** is allowed in the ultimate syllable or in monosyllables, is when it appears before **r** by pluralization of **a**, although the variant development **a** > **e** is also possible. Hence **e(i)rch**, **he(i)rdh**, **ge(i)rth**. This is essentially the same system which is found in Welsh.

The only exception is **dain**, **dein**, where **dein** might be an archaic form. Compare also the following Old Noldorin examples all showing the pluralization **a** > **ei** (and subsequent **ei** > **ai/e** in later Noldorin):

- ONo. **geirg**, pl. of **garg** 'throat' (PE13:144)
- ONo. **heirü**, pl. of **harw** 'wound' (PE13:147)
- ONo. **eilt**, pl. of **alt** 'bough, branch' (PE13:159)
- ONo. **deirw**, **deirbh**, pl. of **darw** 'adj. tired' (PE13:161)
- ONo. **heith** > **haith** 'moist, wet' (PE13:163)
- **heirch** > **herch**, pl. of **harch** 'chill, cold' (PE13:163)

Note that **ei/ai** is never created by mutation of **o**, the pattern is rather **o** > **y, i** (e.g. **odog** 'much', pl. **ydig**, **edyg** (PE13:151)).

### 3 Noldorin of *The Etymologies*

The next major stage in the external development of Noldorin is the compilation of *The Etymologies* in 1937 and the following years. It will be seen, however, that the patterns here are not as regular. In fact, *The Etymologies* are probably not a fully consistent source, having been compiled over a significant span of time. Therefore, percentages of the respective occurrences will be given in brackets. References will be made by the roots of the respective entries.

#### 3.1 vocalization (60% *ei*, 30% *ei|ai*, 10% *ai*)

- **breitho** 'break out suddenly' < **b'rekta-** (BERÉK-)
- **eithel** 'spring, issue of water' < **ektelé** (KEL-)
- **lheitho** 'to release, set free' (LEK-)
- **lheithian** 'release, freeing' (LEK-)
- **teitho** 'write' (TEK-)
- **teith** 'mark' (TEK-)
  
- **lhein, lhain** 'free(d)' (LEK-)
- **rhein, rhain, edrein** 'border' (REG-)
- **Forodweith, Forodwaith** 'Northmen' < **weg-tē** (WEG-)
  
- **aith** 'spear-point' (EK-, EKTE-), but altered to **eith** in pencil (VT45:12)

#### 3.2 mutation of *a* (67% *ei*, 14% *ei|ai*, 19% *ai*)

- **edeir**, pl. of **adar** 'father' (ATA-)
- **bein** 'beautiful' < **bányā** (BAN-, cf. GWEN-)
- **celeir** 'brilliant' < **kalaryā** (KAL-)
- **heir** 'left (hand)' (KHYAR-)
- **neweig**, pl. of **nawag** 'dwarf' (NAUK-)
- **Dein**, pl. of **Dân** \*'Nando' (NDAN-)
- **pein**, pl. of **pân** 'plank, fixed board, especially in a floor' (PAN-)
- **hebeid**, pl. of **habad** 'shoe' (SKYAP-)
- **meil**, pl. of **mâl** 'pollen, yellow powder' (SMAL-)
- **fein** 'white' (SPAN-) **teil**, pl. of **tâl** 'foot' (TAL-)
- **teleif**, pl. of **talaf** 'ground, floor' (TAL-)
- **tellein** 'sole of foot' < **talrunya** (TAL-)
- **teilio** < **tyaliā-** 'to play' (TYAL-)
  
- **meið, maið** 'pale, fallow, fawn', **Maidhros** 'pale-glitter' (MAD-)
- **Belein**, pl. of **Balan** 'Power, God' (BAL-), but **Cerch iMbelain** 'Sickle of the Gods' (KIRIK-), also **Ar Nethwelein** '[Day] of the young Gods' << **Nethwelain** (VT45:27)
- **rhain** and probably **rhein, erein** 'free' < **(a)ranjā** (RAN-, VT56:10)
  
- **naith** 'gore' perhaps < **natsai** (SNAS-, SNAT-)
- **gail** 'adj. bright, light' < **galya** (KAL-, VT45:18)
- **erain**, pl. of **aran** 'king' (ĜARA-, VT45:17); on a rejected page
- **newaig** >> **neweig**, see above (VT45:37)

### 3.3 mutation of *e*, *e* < *i* (92% *ei*, 8% *ei|ai*, 0% *ai*)

- **geil** 'star' (GIL-, VT45:15)
- **ceir** 'ship' (KIR-)
- **Emmerein**, **Emerin** 'Middle-earth' < **Ambarenya** (MBAR-)
- **minei** 'single, distinct, unique' < **miniña** (MINI-)
- **feir** 'mortal' (PHIR-) **peich** 'juicy' (PIS-)
- **sein** 'new' (SI-)
- **thlein** 'lean, thin, meagre' < **slinyā** (SLIN-)
- **gwein** 'evening' (WIN-, WIND-)
- **ceif**, pl. of **cef** 'soil' (KEM-)
- **eilian(w)** 'sky-bridge, rainbow' < ON **elyadme** (3EL-)
- **hein**, pl. of **he**, **hen**, **hene** 'she' (S-)
- {**breig**, **braig** 'wild, fierce' < **mrekjā** (MERÉK-, VT45:34)}

### 3.4 mutation of *o*, *o* < *u* (100% *ei*, 0% *ei|ai*, 0% *ai*)

- **berain**, pl. of **bór** 'steadfast, trusty man, faithful vassal' (BOR-)
- **Geleið** or **goeloeidh**, **geleidh**, pl. of **golodh** 'one of the wise folk, Gnome' (MIR-, ÑGOLOD-)
- **ereid**, pl. of **orod** 'mountain' (ÓROT-)
- **foeir**, **feir** 'right (hand)' (PHOR-, VT56:10)
- **rhoein**, **rhein** 'slot, spoor, track, footprint' (RUN-)
- **therein**, pl. of **thoron** 'eagle' (THOR-, THORON-)
- **gwedeir**, pl. of **gwador** 'brother, especially used of those not brothers by blood, but sworn brothers or associates' (TOR-)
- **terein**, pl. of †**tôr** 'brother' (TOR-)
- **oeil**, **eil** 'it is raining' < **ulyā** (UL-)
- {**eveir**, pl. of **Avor** (VT45:5)}

### 3.5 contraction *ehi* > *ei* (100% *ei*, 0% *ei|ai*, 0% *ai*)

- **elei**, pl. of **ól** 'dream' (ÓLOS-)
- **telei**, pl. of **tele** 'end, rear, hindmost part' (TELES-)
- **thelei**, pl. of **thêl** 'sister' (THEL-, THELES-)

### 3.6 Discussion

At first one has to note that the combination **ei** is now more favoured by Tolkien and also appears in the ultimate syllable. In fact, the plural affection **a** > **ei** is a very dominant pattern and similarly **e, o** > **ei** is met in almost all cases only with the exception of deleted **breig, braig**.

There is however a variation between **ei** and **ai** in about one third of the words where vocalization took place. But actually **breitho, eithel, leithio, leithian, teitho** all have **ei** in the non-ultimate syllable. Assuming that **ei** can never change to **ai** in such a position, we are left with one sample of **ei** only, one sample of **ai** only (**aith**, although apparently changed >> **eith**) and three samples with **ei|ai**.

It may be that Tolkien reintroduced the idea of **ei** > **ai** (if not obligatory, perhaps at least an optional development). In fact, Tolkien's way of presenting entries is to give an earlier form, followed by a later form just separated by a comma – and the **ei/ai** variants are presented in just the same way.

It should be also noted that Tolkien apparently considered the idea of assigning the variation **ei|ai** to different dialects. We meet two words mentioned as 'Feanorian', i.e. spoken in the house of Feanor:

- Feanorian dialect **Maiðros** = **Meiðros** (VT45:30)
- Feanorian **nef** = EN **neðw** (VT46:4)

If Feanorian **Maiðros** equals common Noldorin **Meiðros**, then the same distinction is probably already true for **meið** and **maið**, so that this dialect would effectively turn **ei** > **ai**. In fact, the change **-ðw** > **-f** is later part of the Northern dialect of Sindarin, see VT41:8, but there is no similar mention concerning **ei|ai**.

## 4 Sindarin

The Sindarin stage involves material written during the completion of *The Lord of the Rings* and after its publication. This is a time span of more than 15 years and so inconsistencies due to different conceptions are far more likely to occur, but I do not believe that a further splitting does any good because there are no such handy sources as the Noldorin wordlists anymore. We are rather dealing with lots of separate notes and several essays, each contributing a couple of samples.

### 4.1 vocalization

- **neithan** 'one deprived, exile whole rights and goods have been confiscated' < **nehtanō** (PE17:167)
- **teith-**, **teitha-** 'make marks or signs, write, inscribe' < **tekta-** (PE17:43)
- {**reitha** \*'strive' < √RIK- (PE17:167)}
- **eineðel, einar** \*'exiled elf' (?) < **ekne** + **edelō** (PE17:141)
- **-weith, waith** 'often used of regions in proper names or peoples' < √WEŽ- (PE17:190)
- **teith, taith** 'a sign, symbol, mark' < **tek-tā** (PE17:43)
- **raitha** 'strive' < √RIK- (PE17:167) [with e written above]
- **neith, naith** 'angle' < **nek-tē** (PE17:55)
- **cai** 'hedge' < **kegyā** (UT:282)
- **cail** 'a fence or palisade of spikes and sharp stakes' < **keglē** (UT:282)
- **naith** 'applied to any formation or projection tapering to a point' < \***nektē** (UT:282) **belraith** 'mighty' < **mbelektā** (PE17:115)
- **edraith** 'rescue, saving' < **et** + **rekti(e)** (PE17:38)

## 4.2 mutation of *a*

- **Ereinion** 'scion of kings' < **\*aran-ion-** (UT:436)
- **Feiniel** 'White Lady' < **\*phanyel-** (WJ:318, PM:362)
- **einior** 'elder' < **\*anyārā** (PM:358)
- **gleina-** 'bound, enclose, limit' (VT42:8)
- **eilen** hypothetical form < **elyen, alyen** (VT42:19)
- **seidia-** 'set aside, appropriate to a special purpose or owner' (VT42:20)
- **ein-** \*'excellent' < **anya** < **amya** (PE17:163)
- **meiniel** fem. for *Manwe* (?) < **manyel** (PE17:190)
- **eitha-** 'to ease, assist' < **\*apya-** (PE17:148)
- **eilph**, pl. of **alph** 'swan' (UT:265, VT42:7)
- **Edhelvein** < **\*banyā** <  $\sqrt{\text{BAN-}}$  (PE17:56)
- **gweiniedel** \*'fair elf' < **\*wanjā** + **edelō** (PE17:140), also **gweniedel**
  
- **#pain**, pl. of **pân** 'all' (SD:129)
- **#bair**, pl. of **bar** 'home' (SD:129)
- **#lais**, pl. of **las(s)** 'leaf' (PM:135)
- **celerdain**, **#calardain**, pl. of **calardan** 'lampwright' (LotRV, ch.1; WR:287)
- **crebain**, pl. of **#craban** (LotR II, ch.3)
- **#periain**, pl. of **perian** 'halfling' (LotR VI, ch.4)
- **erain**, pl. of **aran** 'king' (LotR VI, ch.7)
- **edain**, pl. of **adan** 'man' (Let:211 etc.)
- **edair**, pl. of **adar** 'father' (MR:373)
- **rhevain** 'the Wild' (WJ:219)
- **eglain**, pl. of **eglan** 'the Forsaken' (WJ:379-380)
- **Evair** < **Abarī** (WJ:380)
- **tad-dail** \*'biped, two-legged animal' < **\*tat-talya** (WJ:388)
- **levain**, pl. of **lavan** 'animal' (WJ:416)
- **mírdain** 'jewel-smiths', pl. of **#mírdan** (*Silm.*index)
- **belain** \*'of the Valar' < **balania** (Let:347)
- **ethraid**, pl. of **athrad** 'ford' (UT:437)
- **Gondraich**, pl. of **#gondrach** 'stonewain' (UT:465)
- **-rain** element from RAN 'wander, stray, go on uncertain course' (VT42:12)
- **said** 'private, separate, not common, excluded' (VT42:20)
- **taid** 'only used in senses 'supporting, second in command', etc.' (VT42:25)
- **edaid** 'double' < **\*atatya** (VT42:26)
- **morchaint** 'dark shapes', pl. of **#morchant** (VT42:9)
- **hain** < **hein** 'those, them, the things previously mentioned', pl. of **han** 'that' (PE17:42)



- **belair** \*'Sinda' < \***balaryā** (PE17:139)
- **gevair**, pl. of **gavar** 'Avar' (PE17:139)
- **fain** 'white and shining' < **phanyā** (PE17:26,174)
- **bair**, pl. of **bar** 'single house or dwelling' (PE17:164)
- **bain** 'beautiful' < **banya** (PE17:150,165)
- **gwain** 'blonde' < √WAN- (PE17:150)
- **hithlain** 'mist thread' < √LAN- (PE17:60)
- {**bainia-**, **benia-**} \*'bless' (?) < √BAN- (PE17:149)
- **ceðaid**, pl. of **caðad** 'dwarf' (PE17:45)
- **Caras** (i)Ngeलाई, pl. of **galað** 'tree' (PE17:60) [actually **Ngeleलाई** which seems to be a slip]
- **gwenai**, pl. of **gwana** < \*'fair one' < **wanasō** (PE17:140)
- **gwain** 'fair' < \***wanjā** (PE17:140)
- **dor-i-ndainn** \*'land of the Nandor', pl. of #**dan(n)** (PE17:141)

#### 4.3 mutation of *e*, *e* < *i* (25% *ei*, 67% *ei|ai*, 8% *ai*)

- **teleir** \*'Teler' or \*'of the Teleri' < **teleryā** (PE17:139)
- **Feir** 'mortal' < **Firya** (WJ:387)
- **elein** \*'Elf' < **elenā** (PE17:139)
- **deil**, **dail** 'delicate, beautiful & fine, slender' < **delya** (PE17:139,151)
- **eir**, **air** \*'lonely' < **eryā** (PE17:28)
- **feir**, **fair** 'quick, ready, prompt' < **pheryā** (PE17:181)
- **geil**, **gail** 'silver spark' < **gilyā** (PE17:30,152)
- **leich**, **laich** 'sweet' < **lisyā** (PE17:148), but also only **leich** (PE17:154)
- **gwein** 'young' < \***g-winyā** < √WIN- (PE17:191), but #**gwain** 'new' (LotR App. D)
- **neil**, **nail** '3rd' (VT42:25)
- **mein**, **main** 'prime, chief, pre-eminent' < **minya** (VT42:25)
- **cair** 'ship' < \***kiryā** (RC:544, LotR App.A, WR:340)

#### 4.4 mutation of *o*, *o* < *u*

- **egl**, **eigl**, **eigil**, pl. of **ogl** \*'wicked, evil' < UK, UKLA (PE17:149)

## 4.5 Discussion

The distribution of **ei/ai** in Sindarin seems to be similar to the Early Noldorin system – **ai** becomes more dominant again. In particular, the dominant pluralization pattern is now **a** > **ai** (attested in a vast amount of examples). An exception is met with **eilph** < **alph**, but considering also **nern** pl. of **narn** 'tale' (MR:373) **sern**, **sairn** pl. of **sarn** 'stone' (TI:366,283, WR:98,132) we may assume that **a** > **e(i)** is a common plural formation before **r** and **l**; and **ei** is retained in such a case as in Early Noldorin.

However, it is quite apparent that words with mutated **e** are mostly given in two variants – one with **ei** and another with **ai** – and only a few examples show either **ei** or **ai** without a mentioned alternative.

As an explanation one could once again assume that there is a later change **ei** > **ai** and the **ei**-forms are perhaps still allowed, albeit probably being archaic. This goes well with the mention of an intermediate form **hein** that further shifted to **hain**. So far the Early Noldorin/Welsh pattern seems to work in Sindarin.

On the other hand two parallel **ei/ai**-forms are never created by mutation of **a**. So if we have e.g. **\*atarī** 'fathers' and **gilyā** 'silver spark' in Common Eldarin; then **\*edeir** and **geil** at some stage in early Sindarin, why is it that the final results are **edair** and **geil**, **gail**, but **\*edeir** does not appear? Perhaps there was another conception with a *direct* change **a** > **ai** and **e** > **ei**; and the latter combination could then optionally merge with **ai**. This, of course, does not go well with **hein** > **hain** anymore; but could explain why **teleir** is mentioned in the same passage with **belair**, **gevair** – the former comes from **e**, the latter from **a**. The same situation is found in 'Quendi & Eldar' (a well-considered essay, not just a collection of notes), where forms like **levain** < **lavan**, **#tail** < **\*talya** are found beside **Feir** < **Firyā**.

A further complication is added by the derivatives of  $\sqrt{\text{RIK}}$ - **\*try**' (PE17:167). At first Tolkien wrote **reitha** **\*strive**' with the apparent past tenses **rithantem** **\*we strived**', **rithantin** **\*I strived**'. These forms can be well understood phonologically: CE **\*riktā** > **\*reχpa** (a-mutation and spirantization) > **reitha** (vocalization of **χ**). The past tense stem would be **\*riktant-** > **\*riχbant-** > **rithant-**, now without a-mutation because it *only operates with final -ā* (PE17:152). But Tolkien then wrote **raitha** which would be a rare example of **ei** > **ai** also in a non-ultimate syllable (another one is deleted  **bainia-** (PE17:149)). Still, an **e** written over the word seems to indicate that the alternative **reitha** is also possible.

Since these notes were *written hastily* and the readings *are not entirely certain* (according to the editors), **raitha** is likely to be an experimental form. There is a number of examples with retained **ei** in a non-ultimate syllable (again according to the Early Noldorin/Welsh pattern) from essays and texts that are not hastily written notes: **Ereinion**, **teithant**, **Neithan**, **gleina-**, **seidia-**.

Another exceptional case, namely **ei** < **a** appearing in the ultimate syllable and not changing to **ai** also occurs once, in the name **Edhelvein**, but it stands against a large amount of examples with **a** > **ai**.

In the case of **o** the dominant mutation pattern is now **o** > **y** (and rarely **o** > **ui**, **o** > **e**) rather than **o** > **œi**, **ei** as in *The Etymologies*. So the only relevant example here is **ogil**, pl. **eigl**. Even within the conception of an overall change **ei** > **ai** this should remain unaltered as it is probably still derived via intermediate **œi**. This means we would have for example **\*œigl**, **eir** at one point in time changing into **eigl**, **air**.

For the 'update' of Noldorin material into Sindarin I would therefore propose the following recipe:

- N. **ei** < **a** in the ultimate syllable becomes S. **ai**
- N. **ei** < **a** in the non-ultimate syllable remains **ei**
- N. **ei** < **e** or by vocalization may become S. **ai**, or remain **ei**; also in the ultimate syllable
- N. **ei** < **o**, **u** may become **ui** (cf. S. **fuir** 'north' (adj.) < **\*phoryā** (VT42:20)) or **ei** (archaic **œi**), but never **ai**

## References

- [1] Helge Fauskanger. Ae or oe? <http://www.uib.no/people/hnohf/oe.htm>
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- [3] Bertrand Bellet. Vowel affection in Noldorin and Sindarin [http://www.tolkiendil.com/langues/english/i-lam\\_arth/vowel\\_affection\\_sindarin\\_noldorin](http://www.tolkiendil.com/langues/english/i-lam_arth/vowel_affection_sindarin_noldorin)

update: Feb 2nd 2008 — discussion of *raitha/reitha* added  
update: Apr 9th 2008 — *eilph*, *Edhelwein* added and discussed  
update: Sep 11th 2008 — *bainia-* added  
update: Jun 5th 2009 — a couple of examples, mostly from PE17:140-141 added