

# Quenya Compound Tenses

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## Introduction

Quenya, as attested in its various conceptual stages, is a language with an elaborated verbal structure, as we can see in various grammars, conjugation tables, notes, and examples written by J.R.R. Tolkien through the years. Part of such elaboration is a system of compound tenses that was fully described in two different periods of time: first in the *Early Qenya Grammar* written in the 1920s, and later on in the texts about the *Quenya Verb Structure* that he composed in the late 1940s.

This article analyzes and compares those descriptions, as well as the information that can be found or inferred about them in various notes that Tolkien wrote in later years. This analysis will demonstrate some ideas and changes in Tolkien's conceptions of the elements that are used in the formation of compound tenses, such as the system of basic tenses and participles in Quenya.

## Compound tenses in the *Early Qenya Grammar*

The so-called *Early Qenya Grammar* (EQG) is the earliest extant comprehensive grammatical description of the Quenya language (at that time spelt *Qenya*), which Tolkien wrote between 1920 and 1925 during his time at Leeds (PE14:37). It is extant in two versions: an original manuscript, and an unfinished typescript that expands some points.

The section concerning verbs, which only exists in the manuscript version, describes a detailed conjugation of the “regular” verbs exemplified by the “stem verb” *tul-* ‘come’, together with some incomplete examples of *mat-* ‘eat’ (PE14:57).

This description includes a list of nine compound tenses formed by the combination of the active participle of the main verb, which could be inflected in three basic tenses (present, past, and future), and the auxiliary

verb 'be', also conjugated for those three tenses.

The conjugation of the three basic tenses is marked by the suffix that follows the verb stem. The suffix of each tense is the same in all verb forms. The present tense is formed with *-i-* (lowered to *-e* in final position), the past is formed with *-ie* plus some type of stem strengthening, and the future with *-uva*. Thus, the singular present form of *tul-* is *tule*, the past is *túlie*, and the future is *tuluva*. The examples with *mat-* show a different way of strengthening the stem in the past tense, by means of *n*-infixion instead of stem-vowel lengthening.

The conjugation of the verb 'be' follows the same pattern, but is seemingly "stemless", such that the singular forms are: present *e*, past *ie* (or alternatively *ye*, *hye*), and future *va*.

Active participles are formed by addition of the infix *-nd-* to the inflected verb form, reduced to *-n* in final position. Thus for *tul-* we have the present participle *tulin(d-)* 'coming', past participle *túlien(d-)* 'having come', and future participle *tuluvan(d-)* 'going to come'.

The combination of any of the tenses of 'be' and of the active participle of the main verb is a valid compound tense, and it can be formed periphrastically or (more often) using the auxiliary verb as a secondary inflection of the participle. Tolkien gives the example of *e túlien* vs. *tuliende*, both meaning 'is having come', or in more idiomatic English 'has come'.<sup>1</sup>

The nine resulting compound tenses given in EQG are presented in table 1, which displays them in a three-by-three layout that allows a clearer comparison with the forms that are found in later sources. Each entry of the table shows the indicated tense, the example with verb *tul-* in singular form, and its English gloss.

Table 1. Compound tenses in EQG

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
Present participle	pres. imperfect <b>tulinde</b> 'is coming'	past imperfect <b>tulindie</b> 'was coming'	fut. imperfect <b>tulinwa</b> 'will be coming'
Past participle	perfect <b>tuliende</b> 'has come'	pluperfect <b>tuliendie</b> 'had come'	fut. perfect <b>tulienwa</b> 'will have come'
Future participle	fut. imperfect <b>tuluvande</b> 'is going to come'	past future <b>tuluvandie</b> 'was going to come'	fut. future <b>tuluvanwa</b> 'will be going to come'

It may be noted that there is some redundancy between compound tenses. For instance there are two future imperfect tenses, resulting from the combinations of *present participle* + *future* (**tulinwa**), or *future participle* + *present* (**tuluvande**). These competing forms might have some minor difference in meaning, as do their English glosses, or be used in different syntactical contexts; or perhaps not all the forms were normally used, but only given in the list for the sake of completeness.

On the other hand, the auxiliary verb of the periphrastic forms can itself be inflected as a compound tense, and thus yield further compound tenses of the main verb. Tolkien gives the examples **yende tulin** 'has been coming' and **yendie tulin** 'had been come', constructed with the past participle of 'be' (**\*yend-** 'having been') and the present participle of 'come'.<sup>2</sup> The nine compound tenses of the auxiliary verb combined with the three participles of the main verb would produce 27 secondary compound tenses of that type, although Tolkien notes that such forms were only made "occasionally", so many of those forms might be rare or even grammatically awkward.

We may also mention other unattested, but likely, variations of the compound tenses in EQG. For instance, we may safely assume that all the forms given in table 1 would have a plural variant ending in **-l**, which was the regular plural marker of verbs at that time (including the auxiliary verb 'be'). In the forms of the first column, the final **-e** would be raised back to the original **-i** before the consonant, so they would be **\*tulindil**, **\*tuliendil**,<sup>3</sup> and **\*tuluvandil**. All the other cases would be identical to the forms given in the

table plus *-l*.

In addition, although the past in *-ie* is said to be “the commonest” (PE14:56), many verbs also have a past form ending in *-ne* (without stem strengthening), like the stem verb *kar-* ‘make’ (past *karne*) and most “non-stem” or derivative verbs like *tanga-* ‘beat’ (*tangane*), *tantila-* ‘hop’ (*tantilane*), etc. (PE14:58). We may expect that the past active participle of those verbs would also contain *-ne-*, such that their corresponding compound tenses would be perfect *\*karnende*, pluperfect *\*karnendie*, future perfect *\*karnenduva*, etc.

The present of such derivative verbs is in most cases the bare stem (normally ending in *-a*), and their future forms might also show some variant endings like *-uva*, *-va* or *-wa*. But it would be phonologically acceptable to create active participles for those verbs in the “regular” fashion of *tul-* and *mat-*, by addition of *-nd-*, like *\*tangan(d-)* ‘beating’, or *\*lokatwan(d-)* ‘going to sprout’ (PE14:58; PE12:55 s.v. LOHO-). Since the inflections of verbs are said to be “always pretty regular” (PE14:56), it is possible that many derivative verbs form compound tenses in that way.

## Compound tenses in the Quenya Verbal System

In the 1940s, about twenty years after EQG, Tolkien worked on a larger historical and descriptive grammar about the Quendian languages that also contained a long chapter about verbs, published in *Parma Eldalamberon 22* together with other texts under the collective title of *Quenya Verb Structure*. The first version of that chapter contains a section that Tolkien titled “Quenya Verbal System” (QVS), composed around 1948, about the time when he was finishing *The Lord of the Rings* (PE22:85).

QVS covers all the elements of the verbal system that are mentioned in EQG and many more. It also presents a system of compound tenses based on active participles, although they are not given in a compact list of conjugations as in EQG, but explained in descriptive texts. The morphology of those compound tenses is roughly similar: they are formed by adding secondary tense inflections to active participles, which are themselves formed from tense-inflected stems plus a characteristic participial ending (now *-(y)ā* or *-lyā*, instead of *-nd-*). A major difference is the system of basic tenses, which comprises the following:

*Aorist*: this new tense<sup>4</sup> is morphologically identical to the present of EQG (e.g. *tule* ‘come’), but used in “statements true at all times”, or “as an ‘historic present’ for narrative; and for the future when defined by such words as ‘tomorrow’” (PE22:95). The corresponding participle is formed with the suffix *-yā* added to the aorist stem, which produces different results. In “strong” verbs (i.e. those that were called “stem-verbs” in EQG), like *tul-* or *kar-*, with

aorist stem **tuli-**, **kari-**, etc., the ending is reduced from **\*-iyā** to **\*-īā**, thus the suffix is seemingly reduced to **-ā**, which was eventually shortened, yielding **tulia** ‘coming’, **karia** ‘making’, etc. (PE22:106). In some classes of weak verbs like **ist(ā)** ‘know’ or **talta-** ‘slip down’, the ending **-ayā** gave **-ea** (**istea**, **taltea**; cf. PE22:114).<sup>5</sup>

*Present*, specifically a “continuous or imperfect” tense that “can only be used of what is happening ‘now’”, implying a continued action “that began before the immediate moment and is likely to continue for some time” (PE22:95). The present tense in strong verbs is typically formed by stem vowel lengthening plus suffixed **-ā**, like **kára** ‘is making’ or **túla** ‘is coming’. Some classes of weak verbs cannot form a present distinct from the aorist, so they use other verb forms for that function, as will be explained later on. The present imperfect participle is formed by appending the suffix **-lyā** to the verb stem. In strong verbs the stem vowel is not lengthened, but repeated between the stem and the suffix, e.g. **karalya** ‘making [now]’. The suffix is dissimilated to **-rya** for stems ending in **l**, e.g. **tulurya** ‘coming [now]’ (PE22:107).

*Past & Perfect*. The two characteristic endings of the past tense in EQG, **-ne** and **-ie**, have in QVS specialized grammatical functions, for the simple past (referring to “an action thought of as over”) and perfect (referring to “an action that was completed in the immediate past, but the effects of which are still present”), respectively (PE22:95–96). The suffix **-ne** is considered the “weak” past inflexion, since it appears regularly in the past form of many derivative verbs (e.g. **ortane** ‘raised’ from **ortá-**, PE22:114, 117). In strong monosyllabic verbs, the past tense is typically marked by final **-e**, without **n** but normally accompanied by **n**-infixion or another type of stem strengthening, e.g. **tulle** ‘came’ from **tul-**, **mante** ‘ate’ from **mat-**, **tyambe** or **tyáve** ‘tasted’ from **tyav-**, etc. (PE22:102–104). Strong perfects are regularly formed by lengthening and prefixion of the stem vowel, like **utúlie** ‘has come’ or **akárie** ‘has made’ (PE22:103); whereas not all weak verbs are capable of producing such perfect forms, and some present other types of stem strengthening like **ortanie** ‘has raised’. Early classical Quenya had both past and perfect active participles, but the distinction between them was eventually lost. The resulting mixed “past-perfect” participle is formed by adding the suffix **-lya** to the stem, either inflected for past or perfect (without augment), e.g. **karnelya** ‘having made’ or **túlielya** ‘having come’; the preferred tense seems to be influenced by phonology, for instance it could be the one that least obscures the verbal stem (PE22:101, 108).

*Future*. The basic inflection of future forms is basically the same as in EQG, marked by the suffix **-uva**, or only **-va** in some weak verbs like **ortáva** \*‘will raise’ (PE22:117). The corresponding participle is regularly formed by adding the suffix **-lya** to the future stem, e.g. **karuvalya** ‘about to make’, **tuluvalya**

‘about to come’, etc. (PE22:109).

QVS provides descriptions and examples of compound tenses based on some of those participles, but not all. In fact the aorist participle is qualified as “just an ordinary substantival adjective ... treated as a noun” (PE22:106). On the other hand the present is “the most used active participial form, often employed adjectivally as well as verbally” (PE22:108), and QVS gives examples in which it is used verbally, with present, past and future secondary inflections (PE22:101, 115, 117). There are also examples of the past-perfect participle being used with present and past inflections (PE22:104, 108, 117). Table 2 shows the structure of such compound participial tenses, with the labels that Tolkien gives them, where the forms based on the future participle have been added for the sake of completeness and to facilitate the comparison with EQG. That includes new types of compound tenses, including “long” variants of basic tenses like present imperfect or perfect, and “consuetudinal” tenses, i.e. denoting habitual action. The examples are given for the strong verbs *tul-* ‘come’ and *kar-* ‘make’, which are also present in many of Tolkien’s own examples, and for the weak verb *ortá-* ‘raise’.

Table 2. Compound participial tenses in QVS

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
		consuetudinal	
Present participle	long imperfect <i>*tulurye</i> 'is coming'	past <i>tuluryane</i> 'used to come'	consuetudinal/imperfect future <i>*tuluryuva</i> 'shall be/go on coming'
	<i>*karalye</i> 'is making'	<i>karalyane</i> 'used to make'	<i>karalyuva</i> 'shall be/go on making'
	<i>ortalye</i> 'is raising'	<i>*ortalyane</i> 'used to raise'	<i>*ortalyuva</i> 'shall be/go on raising'
Past- perfect participle	long perfect <i>*túlielye</i> 'has come'	pluperfect <i>túlielyane</i> 'had come'	— <i>*túlielyuva</i>
	<i>*karnelye</i> 'has made'	<i>karnelyane</i> 'had made'	<i>*karnelyuva</i>
	<i>ortanelye</i> 'has raised'	<i>*ortanelyane</i> 'had raised'	<i>*ortanelyuva</i>
Future participle	— <i>*tuluvalye</i>	— <i>*tuluvalyane</i>	— <i>*tuluvalyuva</i>
	<i>*karuvalye</i>	<i>*karuvalyane</i>	<i>*karuvalyuva</i>
	<i>*ortávalye</i>	<i>*ortávalyane</i>	<i>*ortávalyuva</i>

It may be noted that many of the examples in table 2 are not actually attested in QVS (those marked with an asterisk). In fact there is no compound tense that contains attested forms for both strong and weak verbs. The reason is that the full description of the verbal conjugation is only given for strong verbs, and weak verbs are explained in a section that basically comments on the points where they differed from the strong conjugation.

Thus, past and future secondary inflections are only attested for the strong verbs *tul-* and *kar-*, whereas the “long (present) imperfect” and “long perfect” are only attested for *ortá-*, since they are presented in QVS as a specific resource of some weak verbs that did not have proper present or perfect forms. There is one reference to the long perfect of strong verbs, but

only as a poetic device using *kar-* as example (PE22:104), and even in that case the given forms (*akárielye*, *akärnelye*) differ from the one presented in the table (*\*karnelye*), in using a participle based (fully or partially) on the perfect stem instead of the past.<sup>6</sup>

The etymology of the secondary inflections in QVS is debatable. In one place the long imperfect *ortalye* is given next to the periphrastic form *ye ortalya* (PE22:117), with *ye* being the present inflection of the verb ‘be’ at that time; and the original layer of the section that explained the long perfect also contained phrases like *ni yē nahtalya* ‘I have slain’ and *Orome nahtalya ye* ‘O. has slain’ — with the participle later emended to past-perfect *nahtanelya* (PE22:104 n.25). Thus, it seems that at least initially Tolkien had in mind the same formation of participial compound tenses as in EQG. However, in the revised text he describes the long perfect as originally formed with the bare, uninflected participle — *ni nahtanelya*, *Orome nahtanelya*, such that the final *-e* was a later development on analogy of the normal perfect ending. In other places we can also find the long perfect with uninflected participle *istanelya* ‘have known’, as well as long imperfects in *-a* like *ni taltalya* ‘I am slipping down’ (PE22:115), or *[ni] faralya* ‘I am hunting’ next to *sinar Orome i-tauresse faralye* ‘today O. is hunting in the forest’, without any commentary on the different endings (PE22:116).<sup>7</sup>

That apparent hesitation in the present secondary inflections might be related to a major change in the conception of the verb ‘be’ during the composition of QVS (PE22:122–123). At some point Tolkien found that the root *YE* that originally was the base of that verb was unsuitable, and replaced it by *Ē*, changing also the full forms for the different tenses, thus: aorist-present *yē* > *ëa*, past *yene* > *ëane*, perfect *yénie* > *ëne*, future *yéva* > *ëva* or *ëava*. But those forms became appropriate only when ‘be’ had the sense of ‘exist’, and in other cases (e.g. when used as a copula) it was just omitted or replaced by other verbs with a more physical meaning (cf. PE22:124–126), although the short past *né* and future *vá* of the original version were allowed to stand. Therefore, while the endings of the past and future compound tenses might still be seen as an inflected form of the auxiliary verb with this new conception, the morphology was not so clear for the present tenses. In any case, we do not know if this motivated a conceptual change only for the forms with present secondary inflections, or if the idea of an auxiliary verb in participial compound tenses was fully abandoned.

Besides the participial compound tenses, QVS also presents other “derivative” tenses formed by the direct combination of present, past, and future inflections:

- *Past imperfect*, formed from present imperfect + past inflections, e.g. *kárane* ‘was making’ or *túlane* ‘was coming’ (PE22:100–101).
- *Past future*, formed from future + past, e.g. *karuváne* ‘was going to

make', in later classical and spoken Q. accented as *karúvane*, after the shape of weak *ortávane* \*'was going to raise', etc. (PE22:105)

- *Future perfect*, formed from perfect + future, e.g. *akáriéva* 'shall have made', *utúliéva* \*'shall have come', etc. (PE22:105). Tolkien added that "the augment is often omitted", i.e. that those examples might be presented as \**káriéva*, \**túliéva*. The loss of the augment could be related to the extension of the verb form with a long and accented suffix, which might have weakened the initial syllable.
- *Past future perfect*, formed from the abovementioned future perfect + past, e.g. *(a)káriévane* 'was going to have made'. (Originally Tolkien also wrote the alternative form *kárielyúvane*, seemingly based on the "long perfect" instead of the regular perfect, but it was eventually rejected, cf. PE22:105, n. 32.)

The combinations of past and future tenses are specially used for conditional tenses, e.g. the past future *tuluváne* \*'would come', and the past future perfect *utúliévane* \*'would have come' or *(a)káriévane* \*'would have made' (PE22:105, 122).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, it may be noted that the Quenya conjugation in QVS also includes plural and dual forms, formed with final *-r* and *-t*, respectively, as well as pronominal objects (PE22:99). This also applied to the compound tenses (PE22:115), so for all the examples mentioned above we can form variants like \**tuluryaner* '[they] used to come', etc.

## Comparison between the *Early Quenya Grammar* and the *Quenya Verbal System*

The compound tenses described in both EQG and QVS are presented side by side in table 3, with examples of the verb *tul-* 'come', which is the one used in EQG for the list of such compound tenses, and also has examples for most tenses in QVS. In a couple of cases the "long" weak forms are also given for the verb *ortá-* 'raise'. All tenses are formed by a participle (present, past, or future, abbreviated as "pr.p", "pa.p", "fut.p", respectively) or a tense stem ("pr.t", "pa.t", "fut.t", or perfect), normally followed by a tense inflection; and the morphology of each case is presented next to the corresponding example.

Table 3. Compound tenses in EQG and QVS

<u>Tense</u>	<u>Example with 'come'</u>	<u>EQG form</u>	<u>QVS form</u>
Present imperfect	is coming [is raising]	<i>tulinde</i> (pr.p. + present)	<i>túla</i> (pr.t) [ <i>ortalye</i> (pr.p + present)]
Past imperfect	was coming	<i>tulindie</i> (pr.p + past)	<i>túlane</i> (pr.t + past)
Consuetudinal past	used to come	---	<i>tuluryane</i> (pr.p + past)
Future imperfect (a)	will be coming	<i>tulinduva</i> (pr.p + future)	* <i>tuluryuva</i> (pr.p + future)
Future imperfect (b)	is going to come	<i>tuluvande</i> (fut.p. + present)	<i>tuluva</i> (fut.t)
Consuetudinal future	shall go on coming	---	* <i>tuluryuva</i> (pr.p + future)
(Present) perfect	has come [has raised]	<i>tuliende</i> (pa.p. + present)	<i>utúlie</i> (perfect) [ <i>ortanelye</i> (pa.p + present)]
Pluperfect	had come	<i>tuliendie</i> (pa.p + past)	<i>túlielyane</i> (pa.p + past)
Future perfect	will have come	<i>tulienduva</i> (pa.p + future)	* <i>(u)túliéva</i> (perfect + future)
Past future perfect	was going to have come	---	* <i>(u)túliévane</i> (perfect)
Past future	was going to come	<i>tuluvandie</i> (fut.p + past)	* <i>tuluváne</i> (fut.t + past)
Future future	will be going to come	<i>tuluvanduva</i> (fut.p + future)	---

Most compound tenses are present in both texts, although their morphology is different in many cases. The language in QVS tends to use the basic tenses more, either alone or in composition, for the same syntactical function as the participial compound tenses of EQG. Moreover, the conjugation of the present participle in QVS is chiefly dedicated to “consuetudinal” tenses that did not

exist in EQG. Only the pluperfect is unequivocally formed the same way in both stages, by composition of past participle + past inflection. In addition the present imperfect and perfect tenses, which in QVS have their own proper inflections for strong verbs, also have “long” forms for some weak verbs and poetic usage, formed as in EQG — by present or past participle, followed by present inflection.

The future imperfect tense has various peculiarities. EQG presents two alternative formations: pr.p + future **tulinduva** ‘will be coming’, or fut.p + present **tuluvande** ‘is going to come’. Both variants refer to a future action with an earlier beginning; but in the latter the focus is rather on the present moment, when the future action is anticipated. QVS also presents a future imperfect formed with pr.p + future, which is also used as “consuetudinal future”; the only example of that compound is given for **kar-**: **karalyuva**, translated (with implicit first person) as either ‘I shall be making’ or ‘I shall go on making, it will be my habit to make’ (PE22:101). That form coincides both in meaning (partially) and morphology with one of the future imperfect tenses of EQG. On the other hand, for the second variant there is no compound tense in QVS, but the “simple” future can also be used with that sense, thus **karuva** ‘[I] am going to make’, as well as ‘shall/will make’ (PE22:105). In fact it seems that the Quenya future inflection **-uva** had originally that specific meaning, derived from the Eldarin root **BĀ-**, **BANA** that meant ‘go, proceed’, and also related to the tense-vowel *u*, naturally produced in “inceptive” verbs with the notion of ‘begin to do something now (completed later)’, like **kelu** ‘begin to flow’ (PE22:97, 114).

## Later developments

There are various texts later than QVS with some details that are relevant for the discussion of Quenya compound tenses and verbal formations based on active participles. One of them is the second version of the *Eldarin Verbal Structure* (EVS), the section that preceded QVS. That version was written soon after finishing the first one, around 1951 or earlier (PE22:91), and although it is limited to the discussion of Common Eldarin verbal features, it also incorporates some ideas that had been developed in QVS. There were, however, some changes that may be noted.

One that directly relates to compound tenses is found in the discussion of the Quenya future suffix **-uva** < **-ubā**, derived in this case from the verbal root **UB** ‘ponder, have in mind’. Although Q. **matuvanye** ‘I shall eat’ < **mat-ubā-njē** originally meant ‘I intend to eat’ (similarly to the conception of QVS),<sup>9</sup> the newer text states that the Quenya inflection “had become an undefined future”, and on the other hand there was an A[ncient] Q[uenya] form for the “future in the past” (i.e. future imperfect) formed with the past tense of **ub-**

(\**umbe*) and the aorist infinitive of the main verb, e.g. *umbeste mate* ‘he was going to eat’ (PE22:132, with *-ste* seemingly being the third person subject pronoun). An apparently earlier, isolated note contains a similar commentary, although the O[ld] Q[uenya] past tense of *ub-* is given there as *umne*, and the “future-past” in that case is not a periphrastic form, but a compound tense made of the basic verb stem followed by *umne*, i.e. *matumne* (VT48:32).<sup>10</sup> In either case it is not clear whether the Ancient/Old Quenya formation was later lost, such that the “undefined future” can also express the notion of future imperfect as in QVS, or if there is another specific tense for that purpose.

Another modification that would have affected the development of Quenya compound tenses is found in the note on the Eldarin suffixes used for the formation of active participles, which in the new text are *-lā*, *-yā*, or combined *-lyā*.<sup>11</sup> They are said to be “adjectival endings” that “were not organized as parts of *conjugation* in Eldarin”, and “merely expressed in adjectival form the sense of the verbal stem” (PE22:136). Similar statements are given in QVS about the aorist participle formed with the suffix *-yá* and the passive participles, which are “not used in the compound expression of verbal notions” (PE22:110), although in QVS those statements exclude the “active or true participles”. The more general statement in the revision of EVS raises the question of whether Tolkien might have fully abandoned the idea of participial compound tenses, but the information that we have at our disposal does not provide a definite answer. In later notes and instances of Quenya participles, they seem to be used exclusively as adjectives and not in verbal forms (cf. Måns Björkman’s examination of that topic, 2013); but the mere absence of such examples does not mean that they could not be formed, and the cited note about the Common Eldarin grammar does not limit the possibility of the development of conjugated participles in later Quenya. In a much later note, dated 1967, Tolkien wrote that “present participles were hardly part of the conjugation”, echoing the previous statements (PE17:68), but the examples that accompany that note are participles ending in *-ya*, as are the aorist participles of which the same was stated in QVS, so it is possible that Tolkien used the term of “present participle” broadly with that sense, not referring to all active participles. In any event, at least non-participial compound tenses were allowed to stand, as seen in an even later text (c. 1969), which contains a reference to “past continuous” like *mātane* ‘was eating’, virtually the same as the past imperfect presented in QVS — although it was originally written with *-nte*, i.e. *mātante*, etc. (PE22:157).

Regarding the participial compound tenses, if they had been kept in later stages, their shape would have definitely changed. The active participles ending in *-lā* could remain, but the combined *-lyā* would eventually be abandoned, as explicitly indicated in another late note where Tolkien wrote

that “*lya* clashes with *-lya*, ‘thine’” (PE22:152). In the same note he emended the (past and future) active participles *kárielya*, *kāruvalya* to *káriéla*, *karuvaila* — the aorist *karil(y)a* was allowed to stand, but possibly he meant to reject the alternative form with *y* as well. In fact, in another text of the same time concerning Quenya verbal adjectives (PE22:153–156) we find the same three participles with *-la*, and no trace of the *-lya* variants.

Yet another interesting point of those late texts is that, unlike in QVS, there are no distinct aorist and present participles in them: only the form based on the aorist stem exists (*karila*), which according to an annotation is also used as present. Tolkien’s commentaries on present/aorist active participles present several variations. We have the two different forms given in QVS (with *-ya/-ia* for aorist, *-lya* for present imperfect), the aforementioned unique late form c. 1969 with *-la*, and the “present” form with *-ya* mentioned in the note from 1967 that seems to be used as aorist too. However that note indicates that such an ending was only used in compounds like *melumatya* ‘honey-eating’ or *saukarya* ‘evil-doing’, so it might coexist with the aorist-present participles ending in *-la* mentioned in the other commentary. Now, while *-ya* was always added to the uninflected stem, the verb form to which *-l(y)a* was added varied over time. In the final text of QVS it is the verb stem followed by its basic vowel, but in a previous, rejected fragment the connecting vowel is always *a*, e.g. *silalya* ‘shining’; in the cited late commentary, *-la* is added to the aorist stem (*karila*); and in the late version of “The Last Ark” (dated “probably from near the end of Tolkien’s lifetime”, PE16:53) we see it added to present stems, e.g. *sisílala* ‘shining’ (MC:222) — or \*‘twinkling, glistening’, cp. *sisilla* in PE22:136.

## Conclusion

Compound tenses increase the possibilities for a language to express actions that take place, start, and end at different times with respect to the moment in which a sentence is made, and whose effects may have different durations. We have seen how Tolkien devised various ways in which Quenya could form such compound tenses, as detailed in two long grammatical descriptions about that language. It is remarkable that outside these texts there is little information about such compound tenses. In fact there is no clear example of them in the poems, excerpts, or phrases in Quenya that have been hitherto published, and there are only some isolated notes that are directly related to this topic in a couple of later texts.

The characteristic way of making compound tenses in EQG, through the aggregation of the verb ‘be’ or tense inflections to active participles, was constrained in later stages, with explicit comments about the exclusive use of such participles, at least some of them, as adjectival forms. However this does

not necessarily mean that Tolkien fully abandoned the idea of compound tenses, but that he had developed other ways of expressing them. As it seems, in later stages Quenya relies more on tense-inflected verb stems, rather than on participles. And in fact the basic tense system incorporates some forms (present imperfect, perfect, future) that could also be used to express some of the compound tenses of EQG.

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## Notes

1. We might have expected *\*e túlien* and *\*túliende*, with lengthened stem vowel as all the past forms of *tul-* in the table of the basic conjugation (including the past participle). But actually the *u* is short in all the examples of the compound tenses. Tolkien makes no comment on this, and while it's possible he simply neglected to mark the vowel length in those examples, we preserve the examples as published throughout this article.

2. The past active participle of 'be' is given only in its full forms *ien*, *yen*, *yenda*, but the stem *\*yend-* can be assumed. *Yendie tulin* is glossed as 'had been come', although taking into account that *tulin* is a present participle, the actual intended meaning might be '\*had been coming'.

3. Or maybe *\*túliendil*, with the expected long stem vowel for the past participle (see note 1).

4. The aorist was not really "new" after EQG. It was already included in the tables of "Qenya Verb Forms" composed about the time of the Qenya Lexicon (PE14:25–34), although the morphology was different at that time. There the aorist was described as "Indefinite or Habitual or *Gnomic*".

5. QVS presents five classes of the so-called "weak" or "derivative" verbs, which are distinguished from the "strong" verbs of simple monosyllabic stems. These five classes differ from each other by the way in which their stems are extended (by addition of consonants or vowels, suffixes, etc.), but in four of them the stems typically end in *-a*. The details of the weak inflections that are discussed in this article normally apply to one or various of the weak verb classes, but not to all.

6. The past-perfect participles chosen for table 2, *túlienya* and *karnelya*, are taken from PE22:108, where they are given as the forms of "later classical" Q[uenya] and TQ (i.e. *Tarquesta*, the spoken variety of Quenya). *Akárielya* (but not *\*akarnelya*) is also given there as the specific perfect participle that existed in "early classical Q."

7. It is possible that when Tolkien wrote the paragraph about the long imperfect in PE22:116 he still had in mind the original idea previously given for the long perfect in PE22:104; in fact the wordings of both explanations are very similar to each other, exchanging the verb *nahta-* 'slay' for *fara-* 'hunt'. *Orome (...) faralye* might be the compact form of

\**Orome (...) faralya ye* — cp. the original *Orome nahtalya ye*; and the uninflected *faralya*, which is given as the form used to express ‘I am (on this occasion engaged in) hunting’, might be part of a complete phrase like \**ni yē faralya*, or using the coalescent form of pronoun + ‘be’ (PE22:123 n.130), \**nie faralya* — cp. *ni yē (nie) nahtalya* in PE22:104 n.25.

8. The conditional glosses of *tuluváne* and *utúliévane* are not provided by Tolkien, but inferred from the context. For (*a*)*kariéváne* Tolkien actually wrote ‘would have gone’; but there *gone* must be a mistake for *made*.

9. The 1st. singular future of *mat-* in QVS, however, would not have been *matuvanye* but \**ni matuva*, with the subject pronoun before the verb. This is a point where Tolkien’s ideas fluctuated over time: in the *Quenya Lexicon* and in conjugation tables written between EQG and QVS, the person is part of the suffix that defines the verb inflection (PE14:23, PE16:116–128), whereas in both EQG and QVS it is expressed by pronouns that precede the verb. In the revised EVS the subject pronoun is again suffixed (as eventually in *The Lord of the Rings* as published, and later texts).

10. The note cited in VT48:32 is “apparently dating to the early 1940s”, thus prior to QVS and the first version of EVS. However the etymology of the future suffix *-uva* and the examples given in that note are very close to the modified explanation that Tolkien wrote in the revision of EVS around 1951. The two alternative past forms of *ub-* are cited as strong past tenses: *umbe* as a basic past form of intransitive stem with suffix *-nē* (PE22:132), and *umne* abbreviated as “str. pat.” (VT48:32). Both show the medial phonological developments of verb stems ending in *-b*, mentioned as “historic forms” of the strong past in QVS (PE22:102). These observations address the question raised by Patrick H. Wynne with respect to the type of past tense represented by *umne* in his commentary to the isolated note.

11. The endings given here as *-yā*, *-lyā* were actually written as *-jā*, *-ljā* in that text. The change of *y* by *j* in that context is just a variation in Tolkien’s orthographical conventions, and here we stick to *y* throughout the article for the sake of simplicity.

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See also the general *Tengwestië* Bibliography.

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