

The Role of the Environment in *The Belgariad* Series by David Eddings

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřená na roli prostředí ve fantasy sérii *Belgariad* amerického spisovatele Davida Eddingse. Cílem této práce je analyzovat vliv environmentálních faktorů na kultury vytvořené autorem a do jaké míry bral autor při vytváření svého světa tyto faktory v úvahu pomocí teorie environmentálního determinismu. Bakalářská práce dochází k závěru, že prostředí tvoří významnou součást série a že autor při psaní bral ohled na environmentální faktory.

Klíčová slova: *Belgariad*, David Eddings, environmentální determinismus, quest fantasy, role prostředí, kultura

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the role of the environment in a fantasy series *The Belgariad* written by the American author David Eddings. The aim of the present thesis is to analyze the influence of environmental factors on the cultures created by the author and to what extent the author considered these factors when creating his world by using the theory of environmental determinism. The thesis concludes that the environment has a significant role in the series and that the author did take environmental factors into consideration when creating the story.

Keywords: *The Belgariad*, David Eddings, environmental determinism, quest fantasy, role of the environment, culture

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of my bachelor's thesis is the role of the environment in *The Belgariad* series by David Eddings and its purpose is to evaluate to what degree the author of the selected series takes into consideration environmental factors when constructing the world his story takes place in and whether and in what way these factors influence the imaginary societies inhabiting his world.

Many books of the fantasy genre contain an imaginary world constructed in its entirety by the author. Every one of these worlds is similar to our own world in one way or another. In some works our world and the world in which the story and its characters live can even look almost interchangeable with the world humans inhabit. An example of this is *The Ranger's Apprentice* series written by an Australian author John Flanagan. His world resembles ours in topography and even in toponyms. The perfect example of using only slightly altered toponyms is his *Nihon-Ja*. This name is based on the name of Japan – Nihon (日本).¹ He even uses the cultures of many nations with only slight alterations. Nevertheless, the geography is different enough so the readers are unable to notice the similarities only from looking at the map which is placed at the very first page of the book. But once the readers start reading the similarities are easy to notice.

The world Eddings created for *The Belgariad* series is very different from our own world even though it is still similar enough to allow the readers to make subconscious connections to what they are familiar with which is part of what makes this world believable. The remarks of the characters aimed at different cultures, the random encounters throughout the story that seem to not have any significant impact on the journey of the protagonist and his companions and even the presence of racism makes the world feel alive. Eventually, the readers get to know the world as if they actually lived in it alongside the characters.

The theory of environmental determinism allows us to give meaning to certain aspects of these fictional societies by taking the findings of determinists and applying them to what is known about the world. This can only be achieved if a sufficient amount of information concerning the geography, environment and cultures is supplied. This is the reason why I chose to focus on seven selected nations while omitting several others on which there is

¹ See Susan Fichtelberg, *Encountering Enchantment: A Guide to Speculative Fiction for Teen*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2015), 28.

not enough information. This includes all of the eastern nations that worship the evil god Torak, the villain of this story.

1 ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM

Environmental determinism is a geographical discipline. William Meyer and Dylan Guss define environmental determinism as “treating the environment as a factor influencing human affairs independently and from the outside and as an overriding emphasis on the environmental elements in a situation of nature-society interaction.”² With this definition, the authors point out that environmental determinism can be understood as taking the environment as a sort of influencer or determinant when it comes to human development. However, this does not mean that everything about the differences between humans living in different environments can and be explained by the impact of the location they live in. Neither can be environmental determinism used to state that the environment plays a major part in human decisions. Environmental determinism simply suggests that environment is an outside factor, which influences human culture. As Meyer and Guss stated, it is not a single factor that determines a certain effect and needs to conclude in it.³ Still, David Livingstone sees another problem with the environment itself, stating that “the environment itself is a cultural product inasmuch as it bears the stamp of human action and transformation.”⁴ This suggests that the impact of changes to the environment made by humans should be taken into account as well.

The ideas of environmental influence on human population can be traced back to ancient Greece to a Hippocratic treatise *On Airs, Water, Places* where the idea to connect characteristics of people with environmental factors such as climate and topography appeared for the first time. This idea appeared in works of other authors such as Thucydides, Xenophon or Plato and Aristotle. The idea persisted even during medieval times and renaissance and continued to influence researchers until the present time. At the present environmental determinism is still popular even though it is often subjected to criticism.⁵

There are many viewpoints and forms environmental determinism can take. One of such viewpoints puts an emphasis on the environmental factor. It says that the environment should be given primary consideration when analysing a situation, leaving social factors in

² William B. Meyer and Dylan M. T. Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism: Geographical Critiques* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 5.

³ See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 6.

⁴ See David N. Livingstone, “Environmental Determinism,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, eds. John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (London: SAGE, 2011), 369.

⁵ See Livingstone, “Environmental Determinism,” 369–378.

the background or not including them at all.⁶ Such an approach is plausible in certain situations, but as I pointed out before, excluding the social factor altogether is impossible. Meyer and Guss give an example of a man crouching in a field during a storm. The fact that he was struck by a lightning is indisputably an environmental influence, but the lightning had struck him only because the man was there.⁷

Environmental determinism as Livingstone points out is used to explain many different aspects of human lives. Some authors use it to explain the patterns of human settlements; others have assigned environmental conditions to various medical issues⁸ for example by connecting certain diseases with the animals that can be found only in specific parts of the world as stated by Jared Diamond.⁹ Environmental determinism is also used to explain the rate of economic growth in certain areas. Livingstone lists some other phenomena that are being connected to environmental causes namely: “racial characteristics, cultural collapse, witch-hunting, suicidal behaviour, senses of national identity, legislative systems, business fluctuations, moral standards.”¹⁰

An example of a discrepancy in the role of environmental determinism can be seen in two popular opinions, which contradict each other. One of them states that environment abundant with resources makes the population flourish, while the other opinion suggests the exact opposite. The latter suggests that people living in natural environments with plentiful and easily accessible resources are inclined to rely too much on these resources and do not feel the need to be innovative, find new solutions and effectively stop or at least slow down the process of developing new technologies and approaches to problems, while in poorer environments, the population is more innovative and hardworking and therefore develops more quickly.¹¹ However these contradicting views can be somewhat reconciled by a conclusion, that the optimal environment for human development should not be too challenging, but simultaneously the environment should be challenging enough, to push the people to invent new ways of doing things and thus speeding up the process of development.¹²

⁶ See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 6.

⁷ See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 7.

⁸ See Livingstone, “Environmental Determinism,” 368.

⁹ See Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel the Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 2005), 196–197.

¹⁰ Livingstone, “Environmental Determinism,” 369.

¹¹ See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 7–8.

¹² See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 8.

Neo-environmental determinism tries to work with these issues. It does not keep the opinion of the environment being the single, major factor that determines a certain predetermined outcome. Rather it views the environment as a necessary influence on the outcome, an influence which is fixed even when considering social context and other influencing factors such as time or place.¹³

Jared Diamond claims in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel* that there are four main factors that help explain the effects of the environment on human development. The first one is the availability of domesticable plants and animals. The reason for this is that the presence of domesticated plants and animals allow people to leave the hunter-gatherer lifestyle and instead become sedentary food producers. This is critical in creating a food surplus and therefore allowing positions with responsibilities different than food provision, which is the main responsibility of every hunter-gatherer, to be established. Diamond says that food production is a necessary base for creating well developed “economically complex, socially stratified, politically centralized societies beyond the level of small nascent chiefdoms.”¹⁴

The second factor according to Diamond is connected with migration. Food production, new technologies and political systems emerged only in a few selected places and from there spreading to other locations. Therefore the environments with relatively moderate geographical and ecological barriers gained the advantage of learning from their neighbours. New domesticated animal and plant species thrive in similar environments and latitudes but also new technologies are mostly created for certain conditions. The third factor Diamond mentions is very similar to the second one with the only difference being that unlike migration within the continent which is implied in the second factor, the third factor is a migration between different continents which varied greatly because of the fact that some continents are more isolated and were harder to reach before the development of certain technologies.¹⁵

The last of Diamond’s factors influencing the rate of human development is the difference in the size of a population in certain areas. According to Diamond, places with a denser population simply have “more potential inventors, more competing societies, more innovations available to adopt.”¹⁶ It is also advisable that societies learn from their

¹³ See Meyer and Guss, *Neo-Environmental Determinism*, 9.

¹⁴ Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 406.

¹⁵ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 406–407.

¹⁶ Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 407.

neighbours because those with better ability to use new technologies while still being able to adapt to their environment might eventually replace societies that refuse to accept change.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 407–408.

2 THE BELGARIAD SERIES

The Belgariad is a fantasy series started by the American author David Eddings in 1982. The first two volumes of this pentalogy (*Pawn of Prophecy* and *Queen of Sorcery*) were published in the same year. The third book (*Magician's Gambit*) was published the next year in 1983. The last two books, namely *Castle of Wizardry* and *Enchanters' End Game*, were both published during the following year.

The author of the series was born in 1931 in Spokane, Washington. He studied speech, drama and English at a junior college.¹⁸ After leaving the military service, Eddings used *GI Bill* and enrolled in the University of Washington in Seattle. At the university, the author studied modern American fiction and Middle English. It was his love for Chaucer that later influenced his writing.¹⁹ After finishing college, Eddings spent some time working as a teacher at a college, as well as a buyer for Boeing and few other work positions. His first novel, *High Hunt*, was published in 1973.²⁰ Afterwards, he wrote several other books, including his *Belgariad* and *Malloreon* series, with the help of his wife. David Eddings passed away in June 2009 aged 77.

The story is following an orphaned boy named Garion on his journey to adulthood while simultaneously Garion fulfils a prophecy and saves the world. With a group of friends, Garion follows his grandfather Belgarath and aunt Polgara across many lands to regain the Orb of Aldur and ultimately slay the evil one-eyed god Torak.

At the beginning of the story, Garion is a boy living with his aunt Pol, completely oblivious of his noble heritage or the fact that his aunt is, in fact, Polgara, daughter of Belgarath the sorcerer. On one fateful evening, he is forced to leave the farm he grew up on with his aunt, Belgarath and a blacksmith called Durnik. Later they are joined by Drasnian spy Silk and Cherek warrior Barak. Afterwards, an Algar warrior Hettar, Mimbrate knight Mandorallen, Tolnedran princess Se'Nedra and an Ulgo named Relg join the group as well. Together they pursue Zedar, the disciple of the evil god Torak, who stole the Orb of Aldur, a powerful gem, which he planned to use to awaken his sleeping master. They travel through many countries, including those countries from which the members of the group come from. They cross mountains, sea, valleys and even a jungle in order to complete their goal.

¹⁸ See Eddings and Eddings, *The Rivan Codex*, 9.

¹⁹ See Eddings and Eddings, *The Rivan Codex*, 3.

²⁰ See Eddings and Eddings, *The Rivan Codex*, 10.

According to the chapter “Quest Fantasies” by W. A. Senior from *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, *The Belgariad* has all characteristics of quest fantasy. Some of these characteristics according to Senior are: “the reluctant, average person as hero; the journey to the magical land populated by wizards, gods, demonic creatures, elves, dwarves, etc.; the threat from a Dark Lord; and the need for choice, action and community.”²¹

There is Garion the seemingly average hero and his companions on one side and the evil god Torak the "Dark Lord"²² figure of this story. Garion’s encounters with the enemy slowly graduate from the least dangerous to the ultimate duel between him and Torak. As is usual for the genre the danger comes from the east and the place where the Dark Lord dwells is located in a hostile environment, in this case in a desert. At the beginning of the story Garion lives in a relatively safe place until a wisdom figure, Belgarath the Sorcerer, comes and takes him on a journey across the world. In the chapter “Quest Fantasies” from *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* the author emphasizes the importance of a choice as a theme in quest fantasy and *The Belgariad* meets this requirement as well since the protagonist is more than once faced with a choice that significantly alters the course of the story.²³

At the very beginning of the creation of this series is a map the author created. Eddings went on from that and created cultures and people to populate the world, whilst making sure to follow what the author believes to be “necessities for a good medieval romance,”²⁴ including making the basic characteristics of his hero, villain, wizard, heroine, companions, quest, etc. During this preparation phase, Eddings wrote an outline with detailed descriptions of the world and characters as well as notes concerning the story itself.²⁵

Originally the author wanted the series to be a trilogy, but the publisher decided that it would be better to publish the story in shorter parts as a series in order to achieve better sales as was usual for the period, during which the books were initially published. Another example of the publisher’s influence on the series in the names of the five volumes, which

²¹See William A. Senior, “Quest Fantasies,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, eds. James Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2013), 194.

²²Senior, “Quest Fantasies,” 190.

²³See Senior, “Quest fantasies,” 190.

²⁴David Eddings and Leigh Eddings, *The Rivan Codex: Ancient Texts of the Belgariad and the Malloreon* (New York: Del Rey, 1999), 11.

²⁵See Eddings and Eddings, *The Rivan Codex*, 7–8.

resemble chess moves since the idea to name the volumes using chess terminology came from the publisher as well.²⁶

²⁶See Eddings and Eddings, *The Rivan Codex*, 16.

3 SENDARIA

The first kingdom the readers get to know is the kingdom of Sendaria. It is the place where Garion, the hero of the story, was raised by his aunt Polgara. This fact does have a slight impact on the story since Garion's behaviour and way of thinking, which is typically Sendarian, contrast with his Rivan appearance making him a bit harder to identify for the servants of Torak, who are looking for a typical Rivan boy.

The kingdom of Sendaria is one of the kingdoms of the west. Its neighbouring countries are Cherek in the north and Drasnia and Algaria in the east. Arendia is Sendaria's southern neighbour, though Arendia is not considered as one of the kingdoms of the west thus making Sendaria the southernmost of the kingdoms of the west, politically speaking. Sendaria is surrounded by sea on two sides. The Great Western Sea forms the western coast of the country. The Great Western Sea then connects with The Sea of Winds, which surrounds the north of the country.

Sendaria consists mostly of lowland with rich soil suitable for agriculture. According to the map of Sendaria included in the printed version of the book, there are mountains in the east of the country, but they are not mentioned in the series. It is the rich soil turned into farmland that is more significant in both the story and the culture of the people of Sendaria. If we consider Jared Diamond's theory, their abundance of farmland and developed agriculture should support their development in a certain way. A food surplus and domesticated animals create a base for developing a "settled, politically centralized, socially stratified, economically complex, technologically innovative societies."²⁷ Diamond also claims that these large agricultural societies are capable of sustaining war of conquest by being able to create and maintain an army and mentions that food surplus can also maintain other full-time specialists such as priests, scribes and blacksmiths.²⁸

This might imply that countries with well developed and functioning agriculture are likely to wage a war in order to conquer another country or at least have a certain advantage when attempting to conquer another country. This is true for most of the countries created by Eddings. However, this is not the case with Sendaria. When other kings along with the king of Sendaria held a war council, he is hesitant, claiming that he is obliged to take part in it and that he doesn't have any choice and finally stating that

²⁷ Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 92.

²⁸ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 90.

Sendaria is a peaceful kingdom and that the country is not ready to go to war. “We have a lot of food and very few soldiers.”²⁹ The king states and explains that this is why he believes this to be the reason for being a candidate for an enemy base during the time of war. This proves that Sendaria has little to no ambition of conquering other countries.

The complicated history of different rulers before Sendars elected their first king and Sendaria became an independent kingdom makes many of the people having descended from a mix of other races. This gives the Sendars a certain advantage because of the migration of other nations. This migration allowed the people to learn from each other, adopt new technologies and cultivate new crops that might have been brought to Sendaria from other places as well as take care of new domesticated animal species that came from other countries, the perfect example being horses, a species first domesticated by the Algars and then diffused to the rest of the world.³⁰

In the story, this migration makes it easier for the protagonist's aunt Polgara to hide Garion from their enemies. And she achieves this by living somewhere, where they do not stand out as foreigners even though they are not native Sendars. As mentioned throughout the series Sendars were practical people with little to no interest in foreign politics and events as long as the events did not influence them directly. Silk, one of the main characters in the series, describes Sendars during the initial part of the journey in the following way:

“You were raised as a Sendar, Garion,” he said, “and Sendars are solid, practical men with little patience for such things as sorcery and magic and other things that can't be seen or touched. Your friend, Durnik, is a perfect Sendar. He can mend a shoe or fix a broken wheel or dose a sick horse, but I doubt that he could bring himself to believe in the tiniest bit of magic.”³¹

Sendars do not worship one particular god, but all eight, which is very unusual in the context of the story. The reason for this is the mixed origin of Sendars. As described in the prologue of the first book each of the seven gods chose a nation to look after. The chosen nation than worshipped this one particular god and this tradition persists even in the time of the story thousands of years later when gods are no longer physically present. So considering the fact that the people of Sendaria descend from different other nations it

²⁹ David Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy* (London: Corgi, 2006), 280.

³⁰ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 406–407.

³¹ Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 142.

seems logical that they would adopt and mix the traditions of their ancestors and worship more than one god.

Another reason for this might be the character of this nation. As seen in the example above Silk states that Sendars do not believe in magic, which is a crucial part of religion in this story, since the gods performed magic left and right so to say and the priests more often than not at least pretend to possess some degree of magical skills. The perfect example of this would be Nyissan queen Salmisra, who uses different poisons to influence people to do her bidding under the pretence of using magic. She was able to summon her god Issa though, so it is safe to say that she does possess at least some kind of magical ability.³² In conclusion, the Sendars do perform religious activities but more as a part of other festivities when religion was generally pushed back in importance. But there are of course exceptions as well. I believe that the author sums it up nicely in the first book when the holiday of Erastide took place.

Faldor, though he was a good, simple man, had no illusions about how widely his sentiments were shared by others on the farm. He thought, however, that some outward show of devotional activity was in keeping with the season; and, because he was such a good master, the people on his farm chose to humour him.³³

Sendaria is heavily agriculture-centred country inhabited by a very practical people, who are influenced by the environment in a very direct and simple way as the daily life of most of the population is mostly revolving around tending to agriculture due to the rich soil they live on. Their culture and development are heavily influenced by the migration and eventual settlement of other nations rather than being determined by the environment.

³² See David Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery* (London: Corgi, 2006), 422–25.

³³ Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 70.

4 ARENDIA

The second book *Queen of Sorcery* begins in the kingdom of Arendia. The country is divided into two duchies – Mimbre in the south and Asturia in the north. Originally there were four duchies in total, but the duchy of Erat became a part of Sendaria and the duchy of Wacune was destroyed during a civil war. The country is now ruled by a king, who is also the Duke of Mimbre and a queen, who holds the title Duchess of Asturia, in order to maintain peace between the two remaining duchies. Despite this attempt at peace the Mimbrates refuse to recognize Asturian titles which resulted in tension between the two duchies, riots and occasional coup attempts.

Most part of the north of the kingdom is taken up by the Arendish Forest. The south is mostly flat and suitable for agriculture. The capital city is Vo Mimbre which is located close to the southern border with the Tolnedran Empire. The eastern neighbour of Arendia is the mountainous country Ulgoland. In the north, the kingdom shares its border with Sendaria. In the west of the country is The Great Western Sea.

According to David Landes the Arendish Forest is an advantage for the Arends. The Arends are, as most of the other nations in the series, settled food producers. The idea that Landon presents is that the forest is an important source of food in times of bad harvest due to the edible plants that can be found there.³⁴ But other than possible source of food the forest is important as a source of wood which is used for many purposes such as building houses or firewood.

The Arends are known throughout the world as very honourable and brave albeit not very bright people. Their society is mostly feudal and Arendia is the only country which practices serfdom and the distinction of each social rank is quite pronounced. At the beginning of the second book the protagonist, Garion, discusses the difference between Arendia and Sendaria with his Arendish companion Lelldorin. Lelldorin, an Asturian nobleman, is surprised when Garion tells him that there are no serfs in Sendaria.³⁵ The first of the two extremes the readers encounter is the house of count Reldegen. His home reminds Garion of a fort with tall stone walls, narrow windows and a sturdy wooden gate.³⁶

³⁴ See David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are so Rich and Some so Poor* (New York: W.W. Norton &, 1998), 19.

³⁵ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 41.

³⁶ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 56.

Later the company passes a serf village described by the narrator as “a muddy village, a dozen or so turf roofed huts with walls made of wattles plastered over with mud.”³⁷

This supports Diamond’s idea that settled food producers are able to maintain specialists who are responsible for the completion of other tasks than providing food and shelter. Diamond’s example of maintaining professional soldiers is even more pronounced in Arendia due to the clear distinction of social ranks and the fact that the Arends are never in a state of peace but rather the two duchies are simultaneously trying to conquer one another.³⁸

4.1 The Great Arendish Fair

On their way, the main characters arrive at the Great Arendish Fair. Its first description is as follows:

The Arendish Fair lay at the intersection of the Great West Road and the mountain track leading down out of Ulgoland. It was a vast collection of blue, red and yellow tents and broad-striped pavilions stretching for a league or more in every direction. It appeared like a brightly hued city in the midst of the dun-coloured plain, and its brilliant pennons snapped bravely in the endless wind under a lowering sky.³⁹

The Great Arendish Fair is a giant marketplace located approximately in the middle of Arendia near river Mallerin. There are no actual buildings, just a collection of tents since the merchants come and go and the population is very fluid. Merchants from all neighbouring countries visit the Arendish Fair, creating a multicultural environment in which all kinds of goods can be purchased. This also creates perfect conditions for spies to gather information from other countries, the example of which would be a Drasnian merchant Delvor who serves as a spy for the king of Drasnian and is tasked with helping the protagonist and his company.⁴⁰

The Arends are not influenced by the environment in a significant way. The topography does influence the crops they are able to produce and the animals they are able to keep but this would not change significantly if the Arends lived in a different place with the exception of extreme environments like deserts. Being settled food producers does allow them to form a complex society and food production is determined by the

³⁷ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 69.

³⁸ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 90.

³⁹ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 135.

⁴⁰ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 136–48.

environment. But this is as far as the environment acting as a determinant in the evolution of Arendish society goes.

5 TOLNEDRA

In the second part of the second book, the party moves from Arendia to the Empire of Tolnedra. The first description of Tolnedra the narrator provides is as follows: “Garion looked around, trying to see some difference in terrain or foliage which might distinguish Arendia from Tolnedra, but there seemed to be none. The land, indifferent to human boundaries, flowed unchanged.”⁴¹

Tolnedra is one of the western kingdoms, ruled by an emperor, the current emperor being from the Borune dynasty. Tolnedrans, like the rest of the world, worship one of the seven gods, namely Nedra. As is common for the world in which the story of the *Belgariad* takes place Tolnedra was named by the god Tolnedrans worship. It borders with Arendia in the north, Nyissa in the south and Cthol Murgos in the east. The Tolnedran Empire shares its north-eastern border with Algaria and Ulgoland. The western border is The Great Western Sea. So it is safe to say, that with so many neighbours and being as easily accessible as it is, thanks to the advanced road system, Tolnedra is one of the least separated countries. Due to this road system, a certain similarity between the Tolnedran Empire and ancient Roman Empire is evident and like in the case of Roman Empire as Martin Charlesworth shows it is safe to say that the emperors of Tolnedra support and encourage trade in many different ways.⁴²

Unlike some in other countries, the Tolnedrans live in a wide range of different environments. Mountains occupy almost half of the area. There are two major forests, one of them is in the north, where river Arend makes a natural border between Tolnedra and Arendia. The second forest, the Wood of the Dryads, is located in the south, where River of the Woods makes a natural border between Tolnedra and Nyissa. The Wood of Dryads, although still part of the Empire, is mostly independent, since the dryads have a deal with the current ruling dynasty, which grants them a sovereign rule over the wood. Between the two forests are lands suitable for agriculture and high density of human settlement, with the capital city Tol Honeth placed approximately in the middle of the area between the two forests with a fair distance to the coast of the Great Western Sea.

Tolnedrans as a nation are notoriously money and wealth oriented. These are attributes, which their god, Nedra, apparently instilled into them and most likely cannot be explained entirely as an effect of the environment they live in. Nedra is generally

⁴¹ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 202.

⁴² See M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 228–29.

associated with greed and wealth. This predisposes Tolnedrans to make great, though greedy, merchants. This was proven in the series more than once, by Tolnedran merchants being more successful, when dealing with one of the main characters, Drasnian merchant Silk. In an example from the second volume of the series, when the company stopped at The Great Fair “A fat Tolnedran three tents down the way proved troublesome and succeeded in getting a jewelled dagger away from Silk for only three times what it was worth,”⁴³ while the Arendish Merchant, native to the land, failed miserably.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the environment does have an impact on the success of Tolnedran merchants. As Diamond states the settled way of life which is common throughout *Belgariad* means that a surplus of food and domestic animals and animal produce can be achieved therefore unused and redundant products can be put up for sale.⁴⁴ And since Tolnedra’s diversity in topography, the Tolnedrans are able to supply its neighbours with a large variety of goods which gives them a competitive advantage.

Money is also very important when it comes to Tolnedran politics. Bribery is very common. According to what Silk said, when the company crossed the border from Arendia, it is sort of a custom to bribe officers in Tolnedra. During the time of the story, there is a political turmoil in Tolnedra regarding the succession to the throne, since the current emperor is old and has no sons. The families, competing for the throne, are not afraid to spend an excessive amount of money not only on bribes but also on various, mostly illegal, ways to get rid of competition, including expensive poisons from neighbouring Nyissa.⁴⁵

5.1 Tolnedran road system

Tolnedra manages the most convenient road system, which connects Tolnedra with the rest of the world and is frequently used by traders as well as travellers, because the Tolnedrans frequently patrol the roads, build roadside hostels, and generally keep the roads in good condition. These roads benefit the empire in many ways, but since their culture is heavily trade-oriented, the roads being used by merchants coming in and out of Tolnedra seems to be their biggest asset. As mentioned before a certain similarity between Roman Empire and Tolnedra is apparent in many ways like building the aforementioned roadside hostels and sending soldiers to patrol the roads even outside of the Tolnedran Empire. These are a

⁴³ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 139.

⁴⁴ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 88–89.

⁴⁵ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 204–207.

simple way to support the international trade.⁴⁶ Also, it is because of various trade treaties with neighbouring countries, that Tolnedra is able to keep the administration of the roads. This way, Tolnedra is able to provide safe passage for travellers from north to south and east to west. Although like in ancient Rome as Charlesworth says “the perils of land and sea cannot be entirely overcome.”⁴⁷ The perils in this case being the risk of robbery, pirates or bad weather conditions.

Another advantage of the road system is the ability to speed up communication. The messengers dispatched from one place can travel to their destination faster when using the paved roads instead of paths or cart tracks. The faster communication also benefitted from the roadside hostels conveniently placed alongside the roads.⁴⁸

In context of the story itself this elaborate road system connects the Angaraks, a generally disliked race by the western nations, with the kingdoms of the west, making it easier for followers of both prophecies, the one Garion and his companions are acting on as well as the prophecy of the one-eyed god Torak, to follow their instructions, when it comes to stopping the other group from successfully fulfil theirs.

5.2 The Wood of Dryads

The Wood of the Dryads is a great wood located at the southern border of Tolnedra.

The first description of the wood the readers get is as follows:

The Wood itself was a forest of incredible antiquity. The great oaks spread so broadly that the sky was almost never visible. The forest floor was mossy and cool, and there was very little undergrowth. It seemed to Garion that they were all quite tiny under the vast trees, and there was a strange, hushed quality about the wood. The air was very still, and there was a hum of insects and, from far overhead, a chorus of birdsong.⁴⁹

The Wood is a place where, as the name suggests, the dryads live. Dryads are one of the few nonhuman beings mentioned in the books. They were all female and used human males only to procreate. In the past, they made a deal with the Borune dynasty. As a result of this treaty is that the dryads are allowed to govern themselves in exchange for marrying their princess into the Borune family.

⁴⁶ See Charlesworth, *Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire*, 232.

⁴⁷ Charlesworth, *Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire*, 226.

⁴⁸ See Charlesworth, *Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire*, 229–30.

⁴⁹ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 297–98.

As a consequence of the treaty, Tolnedrans are not allowed to exploit the woods resources and therefore have to rely on other wood sources. Though this never seemed to be an issue due to the vast Forest of Vordue in the north of the country which can be used for logging and Tolnedra's mercantile nature, which enables them to get the necessary resources from other countries, should the need arise.

There is a slight possibility of a lack of resources becoming a problem in the future though. If the population of Tolnedra grows in the future it may conclude in an extreme situation when there will not be enough resources to sustain the population in terms of food production and extracting materials for building and other purposes as well mainly trading. Should such a situation arise there is a possibility that a civil war will follow and the political institutions will be overthrown.⁵⁰ In this case, the Wood of the dryads would no longer be under the protection of the ruling dynasty, therefore, would be most likely logged by the Tolnedrans which might possibly result in a war between the Dryads and the Tolnedrans.

5.3 Maragor

A considerable part of Tolnedra is taken by the plain of Maragor, which used to be an independent country in the past. Tolnedrans annexed Maragor under the pretence of stamping out cannibalism. The truth is that Maragor has vast deposits of gold and this fact seemed to be the main reason for Tolnedran invasion, given their somewhat greedy nature.⁵¹

Maragor is a plateau in the southeast of Tolnedra. Once Maragor was annexed by the Tolnedran Empire the area is officially called the District of the Marags. Even though the Tolnedrans now rule over the district they have no actual use of it. Since the annihilation of Marags, their god Mara stayed in the ruins of the former capital city of Maragor Mar Amon to mourn the deaths of his people. As a result, the whole area is haunted by the ghosts of dead Marags and everyone who entered Maragor since either did not return or went mad.⁵² Because of this, the Tolnedrans are unable to mine the gold that was the reason why they seized Maragor in the first place.

To conclude this chapter, Tolnedra gains a certain advantage due to its topography which provides good accessibility to and from other countries with the exception of Nyissa

⁵⁰ See Jared M. Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 120.

⁵¹ See David Eddings, *Magician's Gambit* (London: Corgi, 2006), 89–90.

⁵² See Eddings, *Magician's Gambit*, 62.

and ability to create a surplus of various kinds of goods. Nevertheless, their mercantile nature, greed and political influence are not a direct result of the environment they live in. Rather the environment only plays a supportive role in Tolneda's development and success.

6 NYISSA

Nyissa is the southernmost neighbour of the Tolnedran Empire. The only other country with which Nyissa shares its border is Cthol Murgon in the east. In the west of Nyissa is the Great Western Sea. As is common in the series Nyissa was also named by the god Issa whom the Nyissans worship. As mentioned previously Nyissa is ruled by a queen and high priestess Salmisra.

The River of the Woods creates a natural border between Tolnedra and Nyissa. Nyissan topography is radically different from the rest of the world since the country is almost completely covered by dense jungle with the River of the Serpent dividing the jungle approximately in the middle. There is also a mention of swamps in the northern part of the jungle. The climate in Nyissa is tropical with high humidity and high temperatures throughout the whole year unlike the tempered climate in other analyzed countries. There is only one known city, the capital city of Sthiss Tor, and the Tolnedran road system does not extend to Nyissa.

Considering the geographical features of the country and the fact that there are no other mentions of settlement except for the capital city it can be assumed that the Nyissans get most of their resources from trade and otherwise practice the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. There is a possibility that like in the example of people living in North America's Pacific Northwest given by Diamond the Nyissans “became sedentary but never became food producers.”⁵³

The jungle environment suggests that there is an abundance of plant and animal species but when it comes to domesticated plants and animals, there is a possibility that no animals suitable for domestication can be found in the jungle when thinking about food production. The swamplands and dense jungle are not suitable for agriculture on a larger scale, though the possibility that the poisonous plants the Nyissans use were domesticated by them and are grown on a scale that their environment would allow or that Nyissans increase the growth of these plants in a similar way as people from New Guinea by getting rid of other competing plants.⁵⁴

David Landes states another reason why the jungle environment is unsuitable for agriculture in his book *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor*. The problem he mentions is the rainfall. Rainfalls in the jungle are “often

⁵³ Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 106.

⁵⁴ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 106–107.

irregular and unpredictable”⁵⁵ and if the forest is cut to make place for crops, the fields are exposed to the sun which dries the unprotected land and when rain finally comes, the fall is heavy and leaches out the soil leaving behind a dried out land unsuitable for large scale agriculture. Therefore the fields need to be watered regularly and that is one of the possible reasons why settlements are found near rivers.⁵⁶ This is the case of the capital city of Nyissa as well since this Nyissan city lies on the bank of the River of the Serpent.

Even though there supposedly are no domesticated animals for the purpose of food production in Nyissa they did tame snakes and often keep them as pets, which according to Diamond is the first stage of domestication.⁵⁷ Still, snakes cannot be effectively used for food production. Instead, an example of using snakes can be found within the series. Queen Salmisra uses snakes for hunting and killing people and even as messengers and servants since snakes from Nyissa are able to speak. The direct example of a snake talking is when a snake agrees to deliver Garion’s aunt Polgara’s message in front of everyone.⁵⁸

The Nyissan culture revolves around snakes. As Belgarath, the sorcerer said “Nyissans admire serpents. If you annoy a snake, he’ll bite you. He’s a simple creature, but very logical. Once he bites you, he doesn’t hold any further grudges.”⁵⁹ This admiration comes not only from the fact that snakes seem to be the most common animal in Nyissa but also because their god Issa takes up the form of a snake. The Nyissans strive to resemble snakes as much as possible by wearing clothes made from fabrics that resemble snake skin as much as possible, men shaving all body hair, and even acting according to characteristics associated with snakes as shown in the example above.

The Nyissans do exploit their resources in a different way than by farming and caring for domesticated animals like other countries do. There are many poisonous plants and plants with hallucinogenic effects that can be found in the jungle and the natives know how to process them. Mentions of Nyissan drugs and poisons can be found across the entire series. Generally, they are viewed as being very efficient albeit very expensive. The Nyissans use their concoctions outside of Nyissa mostly to trade but also to influence foreign politics. The example of such use can be found in the second book when the

⁵⁵ Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, 13.

⁵⁶ See Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, 13–14.

⁵⁷ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 165.

⁵⁸ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 316–17.

⁵⁹ Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 236.

company is held by a Nyissan named Y'diss who manipulates a Tolnedran count Dravor with the use of various drugs.⁶⁰

What has been said above in the case of Nyissa the environment thus plays a significant role in their development by narrowing down the possibilities of food production and thus not being able to maintain a larger population. Even though the Nyissans seem to be still in the hunter-gatherer stage of development when it comes to everything else but the food supply they are not lacking in any way when compared to other nations. The plants that can be found in the jungle are readily used by the people of Nyissa for various purposes including politics. The most common animal species, snakes, are domesticated and kept as pets and even worshipped. So it is safe to say, the environment in which Nyissans live influences many aspects of their culture and daily lives.

⁶⁰ See Eddings, *Queen of Sorcery*, 223–26.

7 ULGOLAND

Ulgoland is a mountainous country lying on the east of Arendia. Its other neighbours are Sendaria in the northwest, Tolnedra in the south and Algaria in the east. The people of Ulgoland, Ulgos, are very religious people with the Gorim being the religious as well as political leader of the country. The inhospitable land is inhabited by monsters that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. One of these monsters species is Hrulgin. Creatures that resemble horses but unlike horses hrulgin are carnivores with claws where horses have hooves and sharp fangs. Another monster the protagonist and his company encounter is an eldrak. The eldrakyn are carnivorous creatures resembling trolls but more intelligent and capable of speech. Due to the dangers of the land, the Ulgos live in the caverns under the mountains.

Since there is no way of maintaining agriculture underground and it is also hard to maintain cattle in such conditions the Ulgos are mostly hunter-gatherers. Or at least they maintain the perception of being of hunter-gatherers because as Gorim states in the example below, the Ulgos are showing the first signs of adopting food production.

“Our gatherers go out of the caves at night,” the Gorim replied. “They tell us that the fruits and grains they bring back with them grow wild in the mountains, but I suspect that they have long since taken up the cultivation of certain fertile valleys. They also maintain that the meat they carry down to us is the flesh of wild cattle, taken in the hunt, but I have my doubts about that as well.” He smiled gently. “I permit them their little deceptions.”⁶¹

The development of agriculture in Ulgoland might be somewhat similar to that mentioned in the case of Nyissa. Though the topography is entirely different the mountain range is similarly unfavourable for a large scale food production. But it is possible that the Ulgos increase production of a certain type of food by helping the selected plants to thrive.⁶² But it is evident that Ulgos adopted food production much later than other nations. As Diamond explains the possible cause for this is their geographical seclusion. Since the Ulgos were probably not able to adopt the farming techniques of their neighbours because of the difference in the environment and different plants as well as the difficulties the people from outside of Ulgoland have to

⁶¹ Eddings, *Magician's Gambit*, 261.

⁶² See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 106–107.

face when travelling there and therefore they were unable to influence the Ulgos in a significant way.⁶³

The same seclusion also has an impact on their relationship with neighbouring countries. As James S. Gardner, Robert E. Rhoades and Christoph Stadel state in their chapter “People in the Mountains” from the book *Mountain Geography - Physical and Human Dimensions* the mountain regions are dangerous for travellers due to the steep terrain, risk of landslides and harsh weather conditions. The travelling in the mountains is especially difficult in winter when deep snow and the risk of avalanches are present.⁶⁴ Therefore people from their neighbouring countries seldom visit Ulgoland and no foreign trade takes place in Ulgoland as well.

Living underground also influences their physiology. The Ulgos are small people with broad shoulders, colourless hair and light skin. Their eyes are large and dark almost black colour with the exception of Gorim whose eyes are “deep, almost violet blue.”⁶⁵ This is how their god UL chooses the next leader of Ulgos, by altering the child’s eye colour. When born all babies have light eyes which eventually darken apart from the baby destined to become new Gorim.⁶⁶ Ulgos are very sensitive to light; their eyes are adapted to the dark caves lit only by a mixture of two different kinds of rock that when grinded and mixed together give off a faint glow. In order to protect their sensitive sight Ulgos cover their faces with a veil made from a filmy cloth.⁶⁷ Some Ulgos are born with an ability to pass through stone and detect hidden caves. Those Ulgos are members of the diviners caste. They use this ability to search for new caves and expand their possible living space. One of Garion’s companions is an Ulgo named Relg who is a diviner.⁶⁸

At first, the people now called Ulgos had no god. They wandered and asked various gods to take them under their protection but none of the seven gods answered their plea. So the first Gorim decided to find the father of gods UL and ask him to become the god of his people. It took him many years to convince UL but eventually, the god relented and became the god of Gorim and his people. This is the story of how

⁶³ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 112–13.

⁶⁴ See James S. Gardner, Robert E. Rhoades and Christoph Stadel, “People in the Mountains,” in *Mountain Geography - Physical and Human Dimensions*, eds. Martin F. Price, Alton C. Byers, Donald A. Friend, Thomas Kohler, and Larry W. Price (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 2013), 275–76.

⁶⁵ Eddings, *Magician’s Gambit*, 259.

⁶⁶ See Eddings, *Magician’s Gambit*, 259.

⁶⁷ See Eddings, *Magician’s Gambit*, 251–54.

⁶⁸ See Eddings, *Magician’s Gambit*, 264–77.

Ulgos found their god. Religion is very important in all countries in the world of *Belgariad*, but when it comes to Ulgos, their whole life revolves around religion. They relentlessly worship their god. A hymn to UL is sung every hour by a male choir. In combination with the echo, it creates a never-ending song that is described by the narrator as "disharmonic and mournful"⁶⁹ but when combined with its echo creating a "final harmonic resolution so profound that Garion felt his entire being moved by it"⁷⁰ and as a result, turning the entire cave system into a kind of a shrine for their god.

The Ulgos are the only nation who physically adapted to the environment they live in. Also, the barriers of food production in the form of Ulgoland and its population being located underground make it impossible for Ulgos to become food producers if we adopt the idea of food producers being farmers living near their fields. But lately, as shown in the example, the Ulgos are beginning to adopt the food producing lifestyle of the rest of the world in their own way of managing the land outside their caves.

⁶⁹ Eddings, *Magician's Gambit*, 253.

⁷⁰ Eddings, *Magician's Gambit*, 253.

8 ALGARIA

Algaria is a kingdom lying in the east of Ulgoland. Its northern neighbour is the kingdom of Drasnia. Algaria shares its southern border with Tolnedra and Mishrak Ac Thull which also take up most of Algaria's eastern border. In the northeast of Algaria lies Gar Og Nadrak. The main feature of Algarian landscape is that it almost entirely consists of plains with mountains along the border as the only exception. There is only one lake, Lake Atun, and the Aldur River which disrupt the vast plains of the country. There are only two cities: Aldurford and Stronghold. Aldurford is a trading post located in the northern part of the country. Stronghold is described in the fourth book of the series as a "vast, towering fortress rearing out of the dun-coloured hills"⁷¹

The Algars are mostly nomadic hunter-gatherers; this means that they did not develop food production. Rather they live in wagons and follow their horse herds. Though there is a possibility that the Algarians are what Diamond calls a "mobile group of food producers"⁷² which would mean that Algars plant their crops then move to different parts of Algaria, following their horses, and return to their fields later to harvest the produce. But due to the description of Algaria given in the books, this version seems unlikely. It is more likely that they use the space on their wagons to store crops they acquired via trade.

The hunter-gatherer lifestyle also affects the average birth rate. As stated by Jared Diamond, the birth interval for settled food producers is half of the birth rate of hunter-gatherers. This is caused by the fact that the child needs to be able to keep up with the rest of the clan on its own before the mother can take care of another infant.⁷³ This claim suggests that the Algar population is much smaller than populations of other countries of the *Belgariad* universe.

The nomadic way of life is closely connected to the fact that the Algars were the first to domesticate horses. According to Diamond's definition horses are a species ideal for domestication because of their social structure. He claims that large domesticated mammals share certain characteristics: "they live in herds; they maintain a well-developed dominance hierarchy among herd members, and the herds occupy overlapping home

⁷¹ Eddings, David. *Castle of Wizardry* (London: Corgi, 2007), 102.

⁷² Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 106.

⁷³ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 89.

ranges rather than mutually exclusive territories.”⁷⁴ Animals with this structure are suitable for taming since humans can take up the position of a leader in their hierarchy.⁷⁵

The Algars are divided into twenty clans with a fixed hierarchy. King is the ruler of the whole country and holds the title of Chief of the Clan Chiefs. Below the king in the hierarchy are the Clan Chiefs with each Clan Chief being a leader of one clan. Then there are the Herd-Masters who are in charge of smaller parts of their respective clans' herd. The Algars are all trained warriors men and women alike. This fact is easily explained due to the position of Algaria. Since Algaria is located approximately in the middle of the continent, the quickest way to get from east to west is by crossing the plains. This makes Algaria susceptible to an attack from the west as well as becoming the battlefield for a war between the nations of the east and west.

Ian Morris suggests that nomadic societies tend to be great warriors and conquerors, but when it comes to technology and organization, they were far behind the settled food producers. Once the nomads conquered another country they encountered difficulties with maintaining political power in the conquered region. The only time they succeeded was when the leader came from a “seminomad”⁷⁶ background. Morris believes that the reason for this is their inability to adapt to the sedentary lifestyle.⁷⁷ The Algars are able to maintain a centralized government in the form of the hierarchy with the king as the ruler of the country and considering Morris' theory the reason for this is the fact that they are seminomadic since small part of the population along with the royal family lives in the two cities Aldurford and Stronghold.

Similarly to Ulgoland's diviners occasionally a person with a special ability is born. These people are called Sha-Dar – Clan-Chiefs of the horses. Sha-Darim are able to telepathically communicate with horses. As Silk explains to Garion, every time a Sha-Dar is discovered, the person instantly becomes a nobleman, all the clans gather and hold a nationwide six weeks long celebration in the honour of the new Sha-Dar. Hettan, an Algerian companion of the protagonist, is one of Sha-Darim.⁷⁸

Algaria is a kingdom that did not develop into a nation of food producers. The reason for this does not seem to be a geographical barrier but rather a conscious choice of the

⁷⁴ Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 172.

⁷⁵ See Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 173.

⁷⁶ Ian Morris, *The Measure of Civilization: How Social Development Decides the Fate of Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 206.

⁷⁷ See Morris, *The Measure of Civilization*, 205–207.

⁷⁸ See Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 319–20.

people to adapt their lifestyle in order to be able to sufficiently breed and maintain their herds. Though the herds themselves being located in this specific area and their suitability for domestication influenced the Algars significantly so it is safe to say that the environment plays a significant role in the way the Algars developed.

9 CHEREK

The Kingdom of Cherek is the northernmost kingdom of *The Belgariad* universe. Cherek is connected to its neighbouring country, Drasnia, through its only land border in the east. Apart from the eastern side of the country, Cherek is completely surrounded by Sea of the Winds. Unlike some other countries that are named after the god that is worshipped there as if often the case, Cherek was named after its first ruler. The capital city of the Kingdom of Cherek is Val Alorn and it is the only place visited in the series when the company stayed in this country.

The area is mostly mountainous terrain with vast forests and a rather cold climate and the human settlements are located mostly near the coast. Iron mines are located in the mountains and supposedly a Land of Trolls – a plain in the north of the country where trolls are said to live.

The quickest way to access the capital city is to travel by ship through the Cherek bore into the Gulf of Cherek. The Cherek bore is described by a Cherek warrior Barak as follows: “It's a passage about a league wide between the northern tip of Sendaria and the southern end of the Cherek peninsula – riptides, whirlpools, that sort of thing.”⁷⁹ A great maelstrom is located in the centre of the bore and when navigated correctly it speeds up the passing ship significantly. In the discussion between characters before passing through the bore, it is mentioned that the bore is what is keeping the Tolnedran navy from entering the Gulf of Cherek thus preventing Tolnedra from trying to conquer the Kingdom of Cherek and Drasnia.⁸⁰

The Chereks are described as being of big stature. They wear their hair braided and their beards long and mostly dress in furs. The people of Cherek are expert sailors and warriors sometimes being viewed as pirates by other countries. The obvious inspiration from this nation came from the Vikings and just like the Vikings the Chereks are farmers and traders as well. They use their easily accessible wood resources for building ships.

The landscape of Cherek is challenging when it comes to large scale agriculture but apparently, the Chereks do manage their land well. Though if we use the model of how agriculture and technology such as wheels and metallurgy spread from the place where it originated and apply it to the world of *Belgariad* we can assume that these innovations reached the Kingdom of Cherek last in the same way that they reached Scandinavia as the

⁷⁹ Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 217.

⁸⁰ See Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 217–19.

last and furthest part of Europe from the “Fertile Crescent” as Diamond calls it. Diamond then continues with stating that Scandinavia was never significantly influenced by the Roman Empire because of the distance and that Roman traders never reached it and that Scandinavia developed more slowly than the rest of Europe.⁸¹ In this case, the Tolnedran Empire can be viewed as a Roman Empire of the series since I have used this analogy before. This might imply that The Kingdom of Cherek is less developed than other nations but as we can see from the descriptions in the books this is not true. The Chereks are pictured as a fully developed society, the people holding high positions are well educated, with the king of the Chereks Anheg being one of the most intelligent characters in the books.

Once again similarly to Scandinavia, most of the human settlements are located near the coastline or large rivers and sea is very important for Chereks. If the supply of food in form of fish is set aside it also provides important routes for transportation, communication and trade as Douglas Price points out in his book *Ancient Scandinavia: An Archaeological History from the First Humans to the Vikings*.⁸²

In the case of the Kingdom of Cherek the environment plays a significant role in the daily lives of its people and their culture and development. Either by the use of available resources in the form of crops and animals with animals as a food supply being mostly fish and wild animals caught in the forests rather than cattle or other animals domesticated purely for the purpose of food production, or by exploiting the resources such as wood or iron in the production of ships or other technological inventions.

⁸¹ See Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 180.

⁸² T. Douglas Price, *Ancient Scandinavia: An Archaeological History from the First Humans to the Vikings* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 6.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the author was inspired by certain cultures in the creation of his world throughout the analysis. All of his nations can be to a certain degree compared to existing nations and societies. And it is this similarity between the fictional world and the real world that enables the theory of environmental determinism to be used when analysing the role of the environment in *The Belgariad* series.

The first analyzed country is Sendaria which is also the place where the story begins. Sendarian culture is based on agriculture, practicality and hard work. The environmental factors seem to play a significant role in the development of the culture if we consider the topography of the country being suitable for food production and the migration of other nations that brought new technologies and procedures as well as new plant and animal species. But other than that the Sendarian culture and way of life does not heavily rely on their environment and it is possible that the Sendarian way of life would not be different if they lived in a moderately different environment.

The second country analyzed is Arendia. Arendia proved to be somewhat similar to Sendaria with the difference being that the Arends are more inclined towards conquering their neighbouring countries and therefore are developed in accordance to Jared Diamond's theory. Otherwise, there are not any direct ways the environment influences the Arends apart from predisposing them to cultivation of certain crops that would not thrive in radically different environments.

In Tolnedra, the third country analyzed in the present thesis, the environment has a similar impact as in the abovementioned countries. Though the success of Tolnedran traders and their ability to gain influence in other countries is supported by the environment in which they live. Still, the environment acts as a supportive element rather than the main determinant.

Nyissa is the first of two analyzed countries where the environment has a large impact on its culture. Its environment is radically different from the environment of other discussed countries. The culture appears to be tailored to fit the environment in which it exists with the use of animals and plants available acting as core elements the culture of Nyissans revolves around.

Ulgoland is the other of the two countries where the environment has a significant role. The Ulgos are the only nation that physically adapted to the environment they live in

so the environmental impact is evidently substantial. But their culture itself is revolving solely around their religion and this religion is what dictates their way of life.

Algaría is the only country in the series where the nomadic way of life is present. This is directly influenced by the environment the Algars live in since they adapted their way of living to the fact that their culture is focused around maintaining the best conditions for their herds as Algars were the first nation that domesticated them and Algarian horses are said to be the best.

The last country explored in my thesis is the Kingdom of Cherek. The development and culture of the Chereks are again heavily influenced by the environment. Due to their environment the Chereks are able to exploit their resources to their full potential either by food production or by creating new technologies and innovations.

Due to the abundance of different cultures *The Belgariad* series is excellent research material for analyzing the role of the environment in the development and creation of fictional societies. Considering the theory of environmental determinism in some cultures created by Eddings for this series the role of environment is apparent but rather insignificant as shown in the example of Sendaria or Arendia. In others, the environmental impact is particularly significant like in the case of Nyissa and Ulgoland.

Therefore I believe that the author did consider the environment in which his characters live most of the time when creating this world even though it is possible that this environmental impact was created by accident when using existing cultures as a base for his own nations. Though it is safe to assume that in some cases the environmental impact was intentional and served as a means to make the nation more believable but still unique. All things considered, the environment indeed does play a major role in *The Belgariad* series and this helps to create a unique experience for the readers.

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