

Five Shires Gazetteer

Alternate Edition

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Welcome to the Five Shires, Alternate Edition

Why an Alternate Edition?

The standard version of the Five Shires is a fine enough place to come from, but it suffers the problem of not giving adventurers much to do. The folk of the Five Shires are largely happy and content with little internal conflict and not even much external conflict. Its inhabitants live quiet, happy fulfilled lives unless something invades, and even that doesn't happen all that often.

In other words, it's a great place to live, but not a place for adventurers. Even the magical paradise of Alfheim has some conflicts, problems, and dangerous places to form a basis for adventures. The Five Shires deserves the same.

Thus, this edition seeks to make the Five Shires a place to have adventures, as well as a place for bored adventurers to take their leave of to make trouble elsewhere.

The Twin Driving Dynamics of the Alternate Five Shires

The history of the Alternate Five Shires is driven by several interlocking cycles.

Firstly, agricultural countries undergo a boom/bust cycle which is driven by population growth and the limits of the ability of the land to sustain such growth. It begins with a small population farming only the best lands. As the population grows, they spread out to begin farming more marginal lands. Eventually, all the land is taken, and further population growth is only possible if you either conquer more land. This can lead either to bursts of colonization and expansion or else to bloody war as everyone begins killing each other to take control of the best land.

Secondly, this interlocks with the nature of halflings (postulated for this supplement). When food is readily available, halflings eat like pigs and are happy and content and good natured. They become a peaceful folk, able to fight if survival is necessary, but inclined to strongly lawful and good behaviours. However, when starvation sets in, they become increasingly sneaky, cranky, and quarrelsome, as their survival instincts begin to override their good natures. Halfling adventurers tend to be a lot sneakier and dangerous and theft-inclined than normal halflings in part because they don't have time for meals six times a day. Or the money to pay for it. Until they steal it.

Thus, as the Five Shires periodically becomes full of too many people for everyone to have six meals a day, the inhabitants become progressively more suspicious, protective of their relatives over strangers, quarrelsome, sneaky, and even violent. The population pressure must be relieved either by expansion or by civil war which cuts the population down to size.

This interlocks with a third cycle, the cycle of growth and shrinkage of the population of the region of the Shadowdeep located under the Five Shires. Manipulated by the Deep Glaurants, the humanoids and other creatures which dwell below the land periodically erupt upwards, seeking to seize the Crucibles of Blackflame and to rule the land for themselves. While the monsters outstripping their resources follows a cycle similar to that of the Halflings, their cycle is timed differently, and thus has different results, depending on its intersection with the Halfling psychological and agricultural cycles.

It is of course in the nature of things that all three cycles are now starting to peak simultaneously in the year 1000 AC, when the player characters step onto the scene...

The Final Goal of a Five Shires Campaign

The Five Shires are, in a sense, doomed to repeat themselves in an endless cycle of growth, prosperity, overcrowding, and slaughter, unless they break out of this cycle. The ultimate goal of a Five Shires campaign would be to end this repetition and open up new vistas which would enable the Shires to overcome the limits of an agricultural lifestyle in a restricted area. This product proposes several possible methods by which player characters could bring this to pass. And, of course, players being what they are, they no doubt will think of six other solutions, then someone will fumble a crucial roll during the one they choose and everything will go to hell, requiring death-defying improvisation to avert ecological apocalypse.

Or maybe that's just how my plans fail when I'm playing.

The first major possibility is expansion into the Shadowdeep. In the past, the halflings have tended to try to expand on the surface, which has sometimes worked and sometimes not. While halflings do like living semi-underground, they have long forgotten how to live in caverns. Properly instructed and with the major underground menaces defeated, there is room for them to massively expand into the Shadowdeep, relieving population pressures, if only for a time. (After all, the Shadowdeep has its

own limits on population, which is why its inhabitants periodically invade the Shires.) There are those within the shires currently advocating this path.

The second major possibility is perhaps the hardest, the transformation of the Shires into a magical land like that of the Elves, tapping into the power of the Blackflame. It is hardest because the Halflings, with good reason, are not fond of Wizards and Sorcerers, associating them with Glantri and Alphatia. However, it would be possible to combine the powers of the clan Crucibles with the naturally occurring fonts of Blackflame found in the caverns below to massively increase the land's fertility while restraining that of the halflings themselves somewhat. This would be a huge project, requiring the cooperation of many Masters, Clerics, Druids, Wizards, Sorcerers, etc, etc, but would greatly lengthen the cycles and moderate their effects. A few within the shires look to this path, but tend to keep it quiet for fear of being lynched.

The third major possibility may or may not be to the tastes of DMs and players in a game such as this. A commercial and/or industrial revolution would enable the Halflings to become traders and manufacturers, buying raw materials, processing them, and turning them into manufactured goods on a larger scale, then using the profits to import enough food to feed a hungry Halfling population. (And to continue to

improve production.) This would bring about the most changes in the Shires, and may not be to everyone's taste in a fantasy game. It is probably the easiest (at least in some ways) to bring to pass, though the solution most likely to lead to external conflict with new trade rivals. It would also horrify some halflings who are very fond of their traditional ways, despite the problems inherent in them.

The final possibility is the conquest of new surface lands and the planting of colonies. This is a task well suited for wandering heroic adventurers (as players tend to be) who now want to found their own dominion. Fort Doom is ripe for conquest by heroes; other land expansion would have to go further afield, though. The Five Shires is increasingly hemmed in by civilized lands, making this a potentially difficult task, unless one can convince enough halflings to move to Norwold or the Savage Coast or Davania. But then, players specialize in making the impossible happen. A fair number of Shire folk support this solution. Especially if it's other people who will have to do the leaving.

And, of course, the players will no doubt come up with solutions of their own to the problem, once they understand it. No solution should be easy, but in the end, it's the player's job to outsmart the DM, and the DM's job to take it gracefully.

History as the Immortals Know It

Around 1300 BC, the Serpent-Men, created so long ago by the now long imprisoned Carnifex, engaged in their final round of empire building, led by the Lord of the Golden Throne, possessor of an ancient artifact created by a now dead Immortal of Conquest. The Hin of Davania were unable to stop them; some of them formed an army to defend the others as they built a fleet to flee. They succeeded, enabling a third of the population to escape. Another third perished at the hands of the Serpent-Men and the final third were enslaved by them. Many years later they would successfully revolt against the Serpent-Men, but that is a story for another time and place.

And thus it was that the ancestors of the modern Shirefolk left the continent of Davania, seeking a new home. Hin tradition asserts they all came in a single ship, the Dawn Hope, but in actuality, it was a small fleet of ships of various sizes, none of them very well made. Nearly a third never made it, sinking or being destroyed in storms. Arriving in the modern Shires, they found them inhabited only by the Gentle Folk, a clan of Elves the Halflings (who called themselves the Hin) referred to as 'Masters'.

The Gentle Folk had once been enslaved by the Taymoran empire at the height of its evil, many of their number turned into hideous

undead or put to work as slaves. But when Taymor was destroyed by a massive earthquake in 1750 BC, with the help of their Immortal patrons, the Gentle Folk had escaped slavery and purified the forests and hills of the Shires, turning them into a refuge and renouncing violence and force against others. They worked great feats of Arcane and Divine magic, sealing the entrances to the Shadowdeep and keeping out many of the monsters which dwelt in the lands to the north and east of them through great workings empowered by their own purity. Thus, they were willing to share their lands with the Halflings, who came in peace.

For centuries, the two nations dwelt in peace, the Gentle Folk gradually withdrawing into the deep forests as their population boomed. They taught rites to the Clan masters, enabling them to help maintain the land's defences. Unfortunately, because the Hin did not themselves maintain the full standards of purity of the Gentle Folk, these defences began to waver.

Furthermore, the Gentle Folk themselves went into decline. Their long enslavement by the undead had somehow made it harder for them to reproduce and many of them were old and tired of life. They had redeemed their land and found new guardians for it, and most of them were ready to relax and enjoy their last years,

then pass on quietly. Furthermore, their few children oft proved too adventuresome for their own good, growing up bored in a safe land and seeking excitement they proved unable to survive. And increasingly, the land was full of hungry Halflings, and the lands of the Gentle Folk shrunk, leaving little room for population growth.

Finally, the Immortals, fearful they would die out, whisked away the last of them to the Hollow World around 1000 BC. This left only the Halflings to maintain the defences built by the Gentle Folk.

Unfortunately (for the Hin), the Gentle Folk were withdrawn by the Immortals just as the great humanoid tide of 1000 BC swept south. To make matters worse, the huge growth of the halfling population had led it to hit the overcrowding phase of the cycle just as the humanoids arrived. Clans began to quarrel and failed to cooperate to maintain the traditional rites. The defences began to decay and the Orcs poured in.

Hinhome, as the Hin now called it, fell swiftly to the Orcs. Quarrelsome clans failed to cooperate and the Orcs picked off many on their own. In the end, the last clans stood together, but it was not enough. Hinhome now came under the rule of the Orcs.

Othrong, High King of the Orcs, put the Halflings to work, creating

a powerful Orcish kingdom where the halflings were put to work doing all the menial tasks. It was essentially a feudal state with halfling serfs, Orcish nobles, and priests of Karaash blessing the whole affair. (Those who work, those who fight, and those who pray, you see.) Othrong's plans to create a permanent Orcish empire might have worked if he'd chosen to rule over humans.

Unfortunately, one of the side effects of his empire was to slowly drive the halflings more and more towards the feral, sneaky, vicious side of their natures.

Many young halflings fled into the wilderness; many of those died, while others went out into the world and made contact with other halfling settlements. They grew strong in adventures, then returned to lead their people to freedom.

Their chance came in 965, when Othrong died and his less intelligent son Raurgh took the throne. Raurgh's generation had grown up fat and lazy, living off the work of increasingly lean and hungry halflings, halflings who increasingly saw their choice as one of either risking death in revolt or dying of overwork.

That winter, the land froze over, and the Hin seized their chance. Led by returned heroes, they ambushed and slew Raurgh and the other major Orc lords, then led a massive slave break into the forests along with the supplies, then sat back and let the orcs slaughter each other for food

down to the point where the Hin could overcome them, though at grave cost.

By the winter of 964, the Hin were free, but now there were other problems to deal with. Namely, much of the old lore which maintained the Gentle Folk's defences of the land had been lost due to the Orcs slaughtering the lorekeepers. Furthermore, a new government had to be constructed, and all the hostile humanoids of the mountains and the Shadowdeep had to be dealt with.

For two centuries, the Hin struggled to try to build a functional government which could overcome the old quarrels which had opened the land to invasion. But these old quarrels undercut efforts to build a central government ruled by a council of Elders. Furthermore, the Shadowdeep and the mountains continued to periodically gush forth with invasions of humanoids. Many halflings continued to go hungry, keeping them more feral than peaceful.

It was around 750 BC when the Dwarves came, attracted by reports of gold in the land. Led by Loktal Ironshield, the Dwarves carved out a powerful kingdom (The Glittering Land) based in the mountains and highlands, forcing the Hin into submission in the lowlands, required to pay food tribute to the Dwarves and to help work the mines.

What followed was a period of relative peace and quiet, but also of slavery and submission. The Dwarves restored order, rationalized food production, and enabled the Halfling population to begin to recover after centuries of internecine warfare and invasion. Furthermore, the Hin bred faster than the Dwarves, and by the mid-7th century, the Hin were now much more numerous than their masters and ripe for revolt. And revolt they did.

The Dwarves put up far more of a fight than the Orcs had; the Dwarf War lasted from 663 to 638 BC, before finally the remnants of the Dwarven Army fled east, eventually finding refuge with the Dwarves of Highforge in Traladara. The military leaders who emerged in this war became known as the Lords, and they formed a feudal state, creating a military class of permanent warriors to defend the new Kingdom of Shaerdon from invasion.

For a century, things worked well; the Lords drove out the invaders and slowly expanded the dominion of the Hin, pushing beyond the mountains to the north and over the lands of the modern Baron von Hendriks in the east and into the Malpheggi swamp in the west. Unfortunately, the Lords were proud and quarrelsome and prone to violence, and the Ruling Council suffered in effectiveness as each sought to promote his own clan above the others. Many of the old clans ceased to exist,

fusing with others to form the new clans led by the Lords.

Finally, a continuing feud erupted in violence between two major lords. The murder of Lord Blacktoes at a Council meeting marked the beginning of the Kinstrife in 522 BC. For the next ten years, the Lords slaughtered each other and rival clans mercilessly, until finally, in 512 BC, the border defences collapsed and bands of humanoids poured into the land, led by Orc King Thrail. He was joined by bands of humanoids from the Shadowdeep as well. Unable to unite, the Lords fell, and by 503 BC, he ruled unchallenged.

For a century, a series of Orc Kings ruled over the land, some treating the Hin abominably, others easing up on the treatment. The stability of the Kingdom was unusual; only the Immortals know that Thrail sought Immortality on the Path of the Dynast and travelled through time, enabling his kingdom to survive through a series of generations of rule. (He was sponsored by

Thrail might have succeeded in creating a permanent, or at least very long lasting Orcish empire, if not for the intervention of two halflings who would become the first of the High Heroes, the Immortals of the Shires. Gunzuth the Clanless, who would become Brindorhin, and the loremaster Alfron, who would become Coberham Shadowglint, were part of a small band of would-be rebels

who discovered the secret of Blackflame in the Shadowdeep. They created the first Crucibles of Blackflame and used them to make special weapons for the day of liberation to come.

Finally, in memory of the first rising against Orcish rule, they struck in the dead of Winter in 408 BC, assassinating many major Orcish leaders with Blackflame weapons, using Blackflame artifacts to pass as other Orcish leaders, so as to turn them on each other. The Orcs now turned on each other in an orgy of destruction, the Orcstrife, and when the time-travelling Thrail tried to stop this, Gunzuth hacked him into small pieces and Alfron cast his soul into the Nightmare Dimension, where his patron could not even find him to try to bring him back as a Titan.

By 400 BC, the Orcs had been defeated, and Gunzuth emerged as the leader of the Hin, take the title of Sheriff, with Alfron as his main advisor. Alfron trained a new class of halfling loremasters, who would study and master the powers of the Blackflame, as well as gathering what lore of the Gentle Folk still survived, and tasking another group of loremasters, the Masters of the Shires, with perfecting it. Gunzuth set out to design a system of government that would provide strong leadership without it becoming another engine for the Hin to kill each other.

Gunzuth divided the land into five shires, each itself divided into 'townships' (territories surrounding the home of a particular clan). Each clan governed itself as it saw fit, while each township elected two representatives for the Assembly of that shire and one representative for the Assembly of the Shires as a whole. Each Shire's assembly elected a Sheriff for that shire, and the five Sheriffs would rule as an executive council with the Assembly of the Shires serving as a legislature. Each township was required to place a certain number of warriors at the service of its Sheriff in peacetime and to provide a levy of warriors in wartimes. The city of Shireton was now built to serve as the capital of the shires.

Once all was in order, Gunzuth and Alfron descended into the Shadowdeep to begin their quests for Immortality in which they both succeed, Alfron on the Path of the Paragon and Gunzuth on the Path of the Dynast.

Meanwhile, life in the Shires was quiet for several centuries; periodically, creatures erupted out of the Shadowdeep or out of the mountains or oceans or the Malpheggi Swamp or the forests of Traladara, but it was nothing the Shire government couldn't handle. During this time, the population of the Shires remained fairly static, due to steady attrition from humanoid invasions. During this period, the first halfling pirates begin to operate along the waters of the Shires, though there

was not yet a lot of commerce for them to raid.

The crowning of the First Emperor of Thyatis marked a watershed in the life of the Shires. Coastal trade now greatly increased as the Thyatians reached out to trade with the Makai of the Ierendi Isles, with the Atruaghin Clans, Sind, and with the rising communities at the southern end of the Malpheggi Swamp. This led to rising piracy, but also to a growing naval presence of the Hin themselves, who had to ensure that the Hin pirates didn't get out of hand.

Seeing the population rising, the Sheriffs planted colonies in what is now Minrothad and the Ierendi isles. Unfortunately, this led to conflict with Thyatis. The Minrothad colony was conquered and enslaved by the Thyatians in the 4th century AC, while Thyatis took over the Ierendi Isles in the late 6th century AC. This helped to turn the Hin against Thyatis and the Sheriffs began their policy of implicit toleration of piracy against Thyatians.

The Thyatians were not the types to take such things lightly, and in 593, they began the Thirty Years' War against the Shires, a prolonged naval conflict. This proved an expensive mistake. Thyatis was also at war with Alpathia and could only put forth a portion of its strength. The Battle of Hingulf in 599 smashed up the main Thyatian fleet in the area, thanks to a combination of

bad weather, the liberal use of blackflame, and the successful bribing of a Thyatian squadron commander to 'not arrive in time for the battle'. This victory inspired the Ierendi to revolt in 600 AC, and the Thyatians proved unable to put down that revolt, fight the Shires, AND fight Alpathia at the same time. Nevertheless, the war dragged on until 623, when the Thyatian Emperor mysteriously fell down the stairs, onto a pile of knives that someone had left lying around, resulting in 23 stab wounds. Furthermore, some clumsy person had spilled poison all over the knives. The cleaning staff had to be sacked. This resulted in a change of dynasty, and the new ruler made peace with Ierendi and the Five Shires in order to focus on fighting the Alpathians.

A little over a century of relative peace and quiet follow, punctuated only by the occasional Orc invasion. The Shadowdeep was strangely quiet (in part due to a civil war among the Deep Glaurants in their subterranean kingdoms).

The Eighth century, however, is noteworthy for Alpathians going out and trying to colonize various places at the fringes of Thyatian influence, as part of a strategy of encirclement favoured by the Emperor of the time. The Shires were claimed by the subtle and cunning Regia, third cousin to the Emperor of Thyatis. She began working to quietly take control of the government, using charm and

domination magics and doppelgangers to replace key figures.

She might well have gotten away with it if not for the Halfling hero Nob Nar. Nob had fallen in love with Navilstar, the daughter of one of Regia's puppets, the Baron of Halag (now Fort Doom today), a Traladaran noble. Regia had taken control of him so as to ensure the eastern borders of her new colony would be defended by a buffer zone. The Ballad of Nob Nar relates the tragedy which followed when her father tried to marry her off to another western Traladaran noble who Regia hoped to bring under her sway. Navilstar was slain, and Nob Nar slew the Baron in turn. Regia tried to kill him when he took Navilstar to be buried in the legendary caern of Everwake Way. This led him into the tangle of her plots, and finally led to him exposing her conspiracy and slaying her. He went on to follow the Path of the Hero to immortality.

Combined with the rise of Glantri and its wizards mounting raids on the Shires to steal halflings for experiments, the Shires came to take a dim view of wizards from this incident. Any halflings who display any such talents are shunned at best, exiled or even lynched at worst. Only the Blackflame loremasters remained immune to this.

The last few centuries have been a time of peace and prosperity. While there is always naval

skirmishing, the lands around the Shires grow increasingly civilized and the influx of humanoids has been slow. Even raids from the Shadowdeep were low for many years. Trade and commerce has increased, and in Shireton, new methods of manufacture are being pioneered. The result is that the population has boomed and now the lands are growing overcrowded. The Sheriffs begin to look for solutions, for they can see signs of the Shires starting to go sour, as the negative effects of overcrowding impinge upon traditional halfling customs and life. Furthermore, their scouting reports show the Shadowdeep is way overdue for another eruption.

And finally, the Black Eagle Baron is eyeing the Shires and must be dealt with, one way or another. He's mounted two large scale raids (989 and 995), and it's expected he'll seize the chance to invade whenever the Shadowdeep next erupts. And since Stefan Karameikos is too weak or corrupt to stop him, it'll be up to the Hin to take matters into their own hands.

It always is.

It is a time for adventurers, when a peaceful land stands on the knife edge of disaster, when the actions of heroes will determine the future of the shires for centuries to come.

Chronology

1900-1750 BC: The Gentle Folk are slaves in the Taymoran Empire.

1750 BC: An earthquake sinks much of the Taymoran Empire. The Gentle Folk escape, settling in the Shires, which they purify and defend.

1300 BC: The Serpent-Men begin their war on the Hin homeland in Davania.

1298 BC: The Hin build a ramshackle fleet to enable a portion of the population to escape, while the rest remain home to fight off the invaders long enough for the fleet to escape.

1297 BC: The Hin armada lands in the Southwestern shires, near modern Tothmeer.

1296 BC: First Contact with the Gentle Folk

1296-1200 BC: The Gentle Folk help the Hin establish their new homeland.

1200-1000 BC: The Gentle Folk withdraw to the woods and go into decline.

1000 BC: The Immortals take the Gentle Folk to the Hollow World. The Hin are falling out with each other as the land becomes full.

1000 BC: The Beast-Men overrun Traladara and Hinhome.

1000-993 BC: High King Othrong conquers the Shires and founds the Kingdom of Othrong.

965 BC: Othrong dies and Raugh, his son, takes the throne.

965-964 BC: The Hin rise up and destroy the Orcs.

964-750 BC: The Hin clans squabble over the land.

750 BC: Loktal Ironshield and his dwarves arrive in Hinhome.

750-745 BC: Loktal conquers Hinhome.

745-663 BC: Loktal and his descendents rule over The Glittering Land.

663-638 BC: The Hin revolt and crush Loktal in the Dwarf War.

638 BC: The Lords of Shaerdon meet and select the first Decennial King in the new city they build, Shaerdon City.

638-522 BC: The Kingdom of Shaerdon expands to claim Southern Darokin and eastern Karameikos. But the Lords quarrel frequently with each other.

522 BC: Lord Blacktoes is murdered at a Council meeting.

522-512 BC: The Kinstrife. Many clans wipe each other out in bloody war.

512-503 BC: Orc King Thrail overruns the land, crushing the remaining Lords.

503-408 BC: Thrail and his descendents rule over the land; Thrail time travels to help his kingdom survive.

421 BC: Gunzuth the Clanless and Alfron the Loremaster discover the secrets of Blackflame; they are not aware the Deep Glaurants led them to this.

408-400 BC: Gunzuth and Alfron lead the clans in revolt, slaughtering the leaders of the Orcs with Blackflame, then aiding Orcs in killing each other in the ensuing Orcstrife.

406 BC: Gunzuth and Alfron slay Thrail, casting his soul into the Nightmare Dimension.

400 BC: Gunzuth creates the modern system of Shire Government; Alfron begins

further training of Keepers of Blackflame.

378 BC: Gunzuth and Alfron head into the Shadowdeep to begin their Quests for Immortality.

0 AC: Crowning of the First Emperor of Thyatis leads to an increase in trade along the coast and in the ocean.

250 AC: The Sheriffs plant colonies in what is now Minrothad and Ierendi.

Early 4th century AC: The Minrothad colony is enslaved by Thyatians.

Late 6th century AC: Thyatis takes over the Ierendi Islands. Hin pirates unleashed on Thyatians.

593-623 AC: Thirty Year's War

595 AC: Famous Hin Pirate Galassar builds the Money Pit as a defence for his treasure.

599 AC: Thyatian fleet crushed in Battle of Hin Gulf

600 AC: Ierendian Independence Revolt.

608 AC: Hin Pirate Galassar is turned to stone at the Battle of Five Bulls and sinks to the bottom of the ocean, never to be seen again. His stone body now resides

in an underwater art collection of the DM's choice.

623 AC: Thyatian emperor Felonious XI falls down the stairs, lands on knives, takes 23 poisoned stab wounds. New Emperor Marcus III ends the war.

8th century AC: Alphatian wizardess Regia tries to subvert the Shires, but is defeated by Nob Nar.

989 AC: Black Eagle Baron invades the Shires, defeated at Rollstone Keep.

995 AC: Black Eagle Baron invades again, defeated at Fire Rock.

A DM's Shires' Almanac

Climate

The Five Shires tend to be either cool and wet or warm and wet. Winter is fairly moderate, with snow only common in the highlands and the mountains, though it will snow several times a year even in Southshire.

However, it rains like crazy, nearly every day, as wet air blows in from the oceans, hits the mountains, rises, chills, and dumps its load of water. The mountains block cold air from flowing south easily, and thus winter has bursts of freezing/snowy weather, but can't sustain it. Temperatures limp along in the forties with bursts of fifties or thirties or twenties.

Spring and Fall are fairly wet and cool, with average temperatures in the fifties, shading towards the sixties at the start of Fall and the end of Spring. Rain becomes more erratic, though it is still common.

Summer is warm to hot, in the seventies and eighties, and the shires turn hideously humid, with only periodic bursts of rain to knock the humidity out of the air. A few days, the temperatures surge into the nineties and everyone takes the day off if at all possible.

In the Shadowdeep, Zarak Kash tends to remain around 60-65 year

round, though in the depths of winter, it sometimes plunges to the fifties. It is always just a little humid. The Land of Black Flame is chillingly cold, warming up to the fifties in summer, dropping to the thirties in spring and fall, and plunging down into the twenties and tens in winter. Many areas are coated with black ice.

Agriculture

The Five Shires is good for growing anything that doesn't mind humidity or need consistent high heat. In general, the predominant shire food crops are wheat, rye, oats, corn, beans, tomatoes, potatoes, and various kinds of melons. Just about every kind of grain, fruit, or vegetable that will grow in the Shires is probably grown by some clan, however.

Land is held communally by the clans in most of the Shire; this means everyone gets a share of the crop. It has the disadvantage that it tends to slow or prevent any kind of innovation, and people don't work as hard as they would if they personally profited by it directly. Which is fine with most halflings, who aren't fond of workaholics anyway.

Some clans have begun to grow cash crops lately, producing various kinds of spices, cotton,

tobacco, and sugar for sale at market, in order to raise money, whether to make the clan leaders rich, to help pay debts, or to generally improve the wealth of the clan. Urban merchants have encouraged this trend, as it gives them more to sell to foreigners to make a profit thereby; the clans also benefit if the profits are shared fairly, as food can be imported for distribution to the clan members. Unfortunately, the profits are not always shared fairly, leading to conflict...

Everyone in a clan is expected to help work the fields, unless they do other work for the clan--craftwork, taking care of children, etc. No one is unemployed in the countryside, as there's always a need for people to work the fields.

The Five Shires is hitting the limits of its agriculture; increasingly, clans have to cut rations, making everyone increasingly crabby. Wiser clans have begun to find other sources of income, but many traditionalists frown on these expedients, while others are simply jealous. And some clans mismanage their resources and are heading towards disaster.

(Mind you, anyone less ravenous than Halflings would still get by well on what is being grown...)

A Few Notes on Geography

The Shires can be divided into three regions. The highlands are the mountains and hills which run along the northwestern border of the nation. They are full of rich ores and also entrances to the Shadowdeep.

From the highlands, the land slopes downwards to the south east, across a broad area, originally forested, known as the lowlands. At times, the lowland rises in ridges, but for the most part it slopes gently towards the sea. There is not much mineral wealth here, and entrances to the Shadowdeep become rarer.

The coastal plain extends about ten miles inland from the sea; this area is frequently flooded by bad storms and is just barely above sea level in many places, requiring the elevation of coastal villages on artificial mounds. There are very few entrances to the Shadowdeep here, and what few exist are usually flooded often enough to chase away would-be inhabitants.

The Defence of the Shires

The Shires maintains three levels of defence. Each Sheriff maintains a force of 400 full-time professional soldiers known as Krondar. Each clan has the responsibility to supply a certain number of Krondar to their

Sheriff, but they answer to him and him alone once supplied. Krondar man forts and act as police forces in peace time, and act as the core of the army in times of war. Krondar typically wear chainmail and are armed with shortbows or crossbows, axes or swords, and often shields. Most have warponies to ride as well.

The second level is the militia; each clan is required to maintain a militia; in peacetime, most of the militia is demobilized, while small militia groups help to man small defence posts, respond to emergencies, and watch for trouble. In wartime, anyone of military age can be called upon to help defend the Shire, though the sheriffs try to avoid calling out too many people, so as to avoid leaving only the elderly and children at home. In wartime, the Sheriffs group clan militias into units of 10, 100, and 1000, commanded by sergeants, lieutenants, and captains appointed by the Sheriff. Militia are usually armed with leather armour, slings or shortbows, and spears.

Currently, about 1,000 militia men are mobilized around the Shires, some supplementing fort defences, and others positioned to watch for trouble or acting as local police.

In a crisis, the Sheriffs will call out 10-20,000 militia if necessary; they can call on far more if they feel truly desperate, though the more they call out, the more the quality drops. In theory, everyone is supposed to drill on a regular

basis, but in practice, only about 5% of the population is sufficiently well drilled to be useful outside immense crises.

Finally, there are roving bands of adventure-seekers who wander the fringes of the Shire, attacking threats real and imagined. At sea, they become pirates; on land, they are known as Hornets, swarming down on intruders and stinging them to death. Or sometimes dying en masse. As the Shires become overcrowded and the Halflings grow more cranky, increasing numbers of halflings, especially youth, join the Hornets. There are perhaps as many as a thousand of them, raiding everything in sight and generally raising hell against enemies of the Shire. Some of them like to raid into the Shadowdeep. The Sheriffs disavow any official connection to the restless youth, but quietly help direct their activities, or snuff out bands who degenerate into bandits, as sometimes happens.

The Hin maintain a small navy, but mainly rely on pirate activities to shield the coastline; as with the Strikers, pirates are quietly coordinated by the Sheriffs so long as they attack no Hin vessels.

The Pirate Life

As in the canon, Hin pirates are an important safety valve for potential troublemakers whose trouble is directed outwards onto enemies of the Shires. Most pirates operate in tacit alliance

with the Sheriffs, directing their energies at enemies; some, however, are also on the take, and take bribes from various ambassadors to avoid another nations' shipping as well.

The pirates vigorously support the idea of war with Karameikos, as several major pirates have been tossing around a plan to sack Specularum for years now, and would like to test it out.

Relations with Specific Nations and Peoples

Darokin: Darokin is the closest ally the Shires have; trade relations are extensive, and Darokin's existence has helped the Shires to prosper both through trade and by shielding the Shires from the worst threats on its Northern and Western frontiers. Darokin and the Shires have a free trade agreement, and Hin pirates don't raid Darokin ships. A handful of Halfling lunatics wish to restore ancient Shaerdon and reclaim the rest of the Cruth mountains and the vicinity of Athenos, Hinmeet, and Mar. But they have little influence.

Karameikos: Hin opinion increasingly turns against Karameikos. The Hin were cautiously optimistic when Stefan Karameikos stepped in thirty years ago, hoping that he would crush the humanoids who constantly raided from the area into the

Shires and bring the often expansionist Barons of Halag to heel. Now they long for those days.

Instead, Stefan seems to have given his cousin a free hand to harass the Shires. The humanoid raids are more frequent and better organized than before, and the Black Eagle Baron makes the old Barons of Halag look like kindly saints. Stefan's failure to stop this has led many Hin to conclude that he has ambitions of conquest on the Shires and is using his cousin to soften them up for attack, that he and Ludwig are simply doing a good cop, bad cop routine. Stefan is, after all, a Thyatian, and he's demonstrated a willingness to trample the laws and customs of the Traladarans under his armoured heel. So why would he do nothing about Ludwig unless he approves of it?

There is not yet a majority in the Council of Sheriffs or in the Assembly of the Shires for a declaration of war, but matters are tending that direction, though in accordance with the usual practice of the Shires, the Hin continue to chide Stefan, but will not threaten war. Rather, when the time for war comes, they will simply strike and eliminate the Black Eagle like they would a band of orcs.

What comes after that is another question for debate...A growing number of Hin, especially those in Eastshire, wish to see the annexation of western Karameikos and its conversion into another

Shire. If that means full scale war with Karameikos, so be it. This number is still only a subset of those who wish to simply surgically deal with the Baron, but if a full scale war erupts, many Hin will likely swing over to this view.

In the meantime, the Hin continue to trade with Karameikos, supplying the metals which Karameikans need, and cotton to make nicer clothing, and buying food, especially grain and seafood. (Though the Hin do supply Karameikos with coffee and tea also.)

Alfheim: The Hin have a fondness for Elves and while there is little direct trade, the Hin trust Elves more than any other race; more Elves dwell in the Shires than any other non-Hin race. Hin loremasters interested in the old lore of the Gentle Folk have an especial interest in dealing with Elves. Most other trade involves the exchange of metals for rare elven foods or for timber and Elven craft-work.

Ierendi: Halfling relations with Ierendi are mixed. Ierendi needs metal and timber from the Shires. Ierendi can supply food from foreign lands, as well as other products the Shires can't produce itself. However, the pirates of both nations are firm rivals and this leads to constant tensions. Furthermore, the small fringe of Hin who wish to restore 'Ancient Shaerdon' also tend to look at Ierendi as part of the natural

patrimony of Halflingkind. They are only fringe lunatics, but they are sometimes rather...loud.

Minrothad Guilds: The Hin find the Minrothad Guilds to be rather suspicious. Ierendi tends to control the western ocean trade routes and the Hin buy most of their eastern goods through Ierendi. The efforts of the Minrothad Guilds to change this state of affairs tend to involve methods the Sheriffs can't approve of in the hands of non-Hin, and sometimes come at Hin expense. While the Guilds are not so disliked as Glantri or Alpathia, they are seen as not much more trustworthy than the Thyatians. The Sheriffs keep an eye on any Guildsmen in the Shires; nevertheless, the Guilds maintain a trade consulate which can't be infiltrated as all its employees are loyal guildsmen, even the Hin from Minrothad. This strikes the Sheriffs as just a little unnatural...

Glantri: Glantrians are illegal in the Shires. Those who visit must pose as natives of another land. While not formally at war, in practice, both nations periodically raid each other and then disclaim any knowledge or responsibility. In theory, Glantrian presence in the Shires is punished by hacking off the hands of said wizard so as to hamper future spell casting, then shipping him back to Glantri. In practice, a fair number won't live to have their hands hacked off.

Thyatis: Relations with Thyatis are poor, shaped by the Thirty Years' War. Thyatians are seen basically as violent and well-armed monkeys who will steal anything not nailed down, and even then, they may have a claw hammer. The Thyatians return the compliment by viewing the Hin as moronic, lazy children. Trade is minimal in directness; most of it is funnelled through Ierendi. Hin pirates really love sinking Thyatian ships.

Rockhome: Dwarves face lingering prejudices which are gradually fading with time. For all the trouble he caused them, Loktal's kingdoms' eventual failure discouraged dwarves from trying again, and the long distances between the lands has kept contact minimal. As time passes, while Dwarves continue to be seen as greedy and addicted to precious metals, they're also recognized as hard workers, and their merchants are honest. The Shire sells coffee, tea, and spices to Rockhome in order to get high quality metalworking. Individual Dwarves will be kept an eye on, but can usually, with some effort, gain trust from those they deal with.

Emirates of Ylaruam: When dealing with the Ylari, the Hin are torn between a fundamental sympathy for the Ylari dream of making their land green and growing and the fact that the Ylari are very judgmental and try to cram the Nahmeh down everyone's throat. Hin

Loresmasters are in quiet contact with the Council of Preceptors, trading lore and offering council in return for fine Ylari clothwork, art, and architectural assistance. Among wealthy Hin seeking to show off, Ylari style architecture has a great deal of cachet due to its elaborate ornamentation and exoticness. There is little trade otherwise.

Ethengar Khanates: The Hin regard the Ethengars as orcs on horses. There is no direct trade, and not even ambassadors. (Ironically, the current Great Khan has several halflings in his employ and has visited the Shires during his youth and is said to have a taste for Halfling cooking.)

Alphatians: The Hin would like to treat the Alphatians like Glantri, but view Alpathia as simply too potent to provoke. Only Thyatis could save the Shires from Alpathia and that would likely result in falling under Thyatian rule. So there are careful, conciliatory relations with Alpathia. Tiny amounts of trade happen with Strongfellow, the Alpathian kingdom of Dwarves, Halflings, and Gnomes. Eriadna has been wise enough to appoint a Halfling ambassador to the Shires, who has been able to slightly improve relations.

Vestland: The Vestlanders have had relations with the Shire for several centuries, though there is little direct trade. Still, they've gained a reputation for honest dealing and fairness and bravery.

The Vestlanders most commonly come to buy tobacco, tea, and coffee.

Soderfjord Jarldoms: This nation reminds the Hin of the Kinstrife, which the Hin never, ever tire of reminding the Soderfjord merchants and Ambassadors of. After a while, this tends to lead to an increased chance of berserker gang. There is only minor trading at best, though Soderfjord mead is popular in the Shires when they can get it.

Ostland: Ostland has no ambassador and seems to see the Hin as chiefly useful as victims. Thankfully, raids are rare due to the distances involved. Hin pirates love few things more than swarming and destroying Ostland raiders.

Atruaghin Clans: The Hin trade with the Children of the Turtle, supplying them with tools, gems, and metals in return for the produce of the sea. There is little contact with the other groups and no exchange of formal ambassadors.

Wendar: The Hin are aware Wendar exists, but not much else and there is little trade.

Heldann Freeholds: The Heldannic Knights are regarded as a potential major threat to the Shires, as they seem fond of conquering hard-working farmers and turning them into slaves and serfs. There is no real trade, and

the Heldannic ambassador is watched like a hawk.

Sind: The Sindhi are regarded as bizarre, but no threat. Sindhi merchants are honest, but hard to deal with due to their many caste-related practices. They also usually utterly fail to understand the social structure of the Shires. Still, they are a major source of food and clothing; Sindhi clothing styles have some of the same cachet among the wealthy as Ylari architecture and art. In general, Sindhi are regarded like an eccentric uncle--not dangerous, but you need to keep an eye on them to avoid them hurting themselves.

Humanoids: The Hin hate and fear the humanoid races and tend to treat them as SHOOT ON SIGHT.

The Calendar and Hin Customs

The Calendar and holidays given in The Five Shires Gazetteer are just fine for this alternate. Some words are necessary, however, on more localized Hin customs.

Hin culture is marked by a huge number of rituals whose origins are forgotten, and which have become distorted over the years. Once upon a time, these rites and practices purified the Hin and helped to maintain the wards of the Gentle Folk. But with the passage of time, they have been shifted and changed and often

have no particular effect beyond the psychological. A few customs have been quietly spread by the Loremasters so as to heighten the ties between the Hin and their land. And a few have taken on potency of their own in ways not well understood (in part due to the dearth of Hin Wizards and Sorcerers).

The Birth Blessing is common to all the Shires, though its form varies. The Clan Loremaster or a Master of the Shires is summoned when a child is born; he blesses the child in a rite which involves the use of earth, water, blackflame, and perfume (for air), binding the child to the land (in theory. In practice, it ties the child to the power of Blackflame, thus enabling the child to potentially eventually learn to tap its power.) Those Hin who have not undergone the Birth Blessing cannot learn Denial. A variant of this rite is used when Hin are adopted into a clan, whether due to changing clans for some reason or because they came from outside the Shires.

The Rite of Blessing the Ill is used by the Loremasters to speed the recovery of clan members from injury or illness. Said person must be brought within the operational range of the Crucible of Blackflame or else the Loremaster must absorb some into his body to use on the ill or injured target. Properly performed, the rite takes about fifteen minutes, and doubles the recovery rate of the target for a number of days

equal to the Loremaster's level.
(And adds his level to any saving throws against disease.)

Most rites, however, do not have supernatural power, or if they do, only do so in a particular place.

Burning the Wicker Orc is a common ritual, carried out at the beginning of Spring. The Wicker Orc is stuffed full of remnants from last year's harvest, as well as things symbolic of past sins that Hin wish to repent (chosen in consultation with the Clan Loremaster). The burning of the Wicker Orc consumes the sins and asks the immortals to bless this year's harvest. (It is to be noted that in times past, the Hin have sometimes stuffed and burned actual Orcs. But Orcs are not so easily come by these days. Not on a scale of one for each village, anyway.)

A common form of Hin protest is making a mock-up effigy of someone and burning it. This is copied from the Wicker Orc rite. Some clans burn effigies of Glantrians on the annual anniversary of some raid. But it is more commonly used as a political protest.

Hin practice several purification rituals which are the degenerate remains of old Gentle Folk rites. Before a meal, they carefully wash their foreheads and hands whenever possible and mumble a prayer to the immortals. Planned violence has to be preceded with a prayer of apology to the Gentle Folk and the Immortals and when possible, followed by acts of charity. A portion of food is set aside at each meal for the Gentle Folk, "should they come among us"; it is then given to the needy afterwards, or to any unexpected guests.

A small portion of each harvest is set aside for the Gentle Folk as well; it is then distributed to the needy once the ritual week has passed.

Halflings of mystical bent usually refrain from meat consumption, except in certain ritual contexts, though milk is acceptable. (But not eggs). Those Hin who follow this practice gain the ability to open certain hidden Gentlefolk doors and containers, if they hold to it for at least a year.

There are certain places where violence is punished more sternly than others, as these spots are seen as sacred (usually they were meeting sites where the Gentle Folk could be found.)

In Southshire, the arrival of the Hin from Davania is re-enacted on its anniversary; elsewhere, Hin eat sea food and try to go to sea if possible.

It's considered bad luck to cook meat in the same pot as anything else; Hin stews, soups, and gumbos are either meatless or eaten with meat on the side, or cooked meat is added once cooking is done.

Many Hin clans practice several yearly ritual dances. In their original forms, these drew magical energies to the sacred locations, reinforcing the ward network. Now, they generally just are entertaining to watch. Many other local rites of similar provenance from ritual meals to sacred theatre had a similar origin.

The Sacred Mysteries

All of the material from the Five Shires Gazetteer in this section can be used in this alternate Five Shires, but some additional material is added here.

The Origins of Blackflame

As noted in the history section, Blackflame is the Nightmare Dimension equivalent of the Normal Dimension Sphere of Energy. In the current age, it leaks through in various fonts in the deeper regions of the Shadowdeep beneath the Five Shires.

During the time of Blackmoor, the upper caverns were home to ordinary cave creatures, and the lower caverns were largely void of life except for the hardest of creatures, as it was unnaturally cold there. At times, a few creatures slipped through from the dimension of nightmares, for the walls were thin here.

The Rain of Colourless Fire, in addition to the damage it did elsewhere, triggered explosions of Utherite deposits in the area, creating more caverns and ripping the fragile fabric of reality. Tears opened between the Nightmare Dimension and the lower caverns, leading to Blackflame leaking through and the arrival of things from the Nightmare dimensions. However, many of these creatures

could not leave the lower caverns for long, as they were ill-adapted to the Normal Dimension.

One intelligent race came through in large numbers, the Glaurants, an expansionistic race from the Nightmare Dimension. They have repeatedly tried to turn other races into patsies to conquer the surface world for them, and even tried to turn the Halflings into their slaves.

Many Halflings today would find themselves questioning everything they know if they realized that Gunzuth and Alfron were led to the Blackflame by the Glaurants, who hoped to use their mastery of it to control them.

But once again, they overestimated their ability to dominate people, and Gunzuth and Alfron found ways to use the Blackflame with minimal risk of control by the Glaurants. Furthermore, they descended into the depths again and devastated the Glaurant cities with it.

This was thanks, in part, to the intervention of the Immortals of Time and Energy, who backed Gunzuth and Alfron for immortality, then made them the first High Heroes, guardians of the Blackflame.

The continued leaking through of the Blackflame is slowly changing the Five Shires, imbuing it with the powers of Nightmare-Energy.

It has imbued the Hin race with more magical resistance to Normal Dimension Magic; ironically, it makes them more adept at Nightmare Dimension Magic, should they ever have the chance to learn any.

Unknown to almost anyone, the Normal Dimension is also leaking through into the Nightmare Dimension, imbuing the area around the breach with the powers of Normal Energy. The Immortals of both Dimensions are very curious to see what the results will be in each world.

(Some predict the result will be equalization in which both kinds of magic become functional in both worlds, opposed to each other, and probably with a lower overall potency level, but with more breadth. Others think the two will eventually neutralize each other, ending all arcane magic. And some think an oscillating cycle will emerge with eras of Nightmare Magic followed by low-to-no magic, followed by Normal Magic, then back through low-to-no magic to Nightmare Magic again.)

But whatever happens, it looks like it will take a long time. Although some wonder if Delune's project might well accelerate whatever process takes place, due to the need to draw huge amounts of Blackflame to power it.

Halflings, Heroes, and Highwayhin

This section presents the characters within in 3E terms; the OD&D stats from the original Gazetteer can generally be substituted for what is found here, although some new characters are presented. Adapt those however you see fit; I won't cry.

The Government of the Shires

Jaervosz Dustyboots, Sheriff of Seashire (male Halfling Fighter 15, LG)

Jaervosz is probably one of the toughest people in the Shire, known for his abnormally high strength for a Halfling (some of which, unknown to most, is due to a strength-enhancing belt). His personal fighting prowess and his skills at military organization (Profession (General) 13) have led the other Sheriffs to defer to him in organizing the military of the Shires. He views his perpetual efforts to keep the military ready for anything in a time of relative peacefulness as key to avoiding any future disasters of the kind which have often afflicted the Hin when peace lasted too long. Jaervosz has noticed the problems afflicting the Shires, and believes that colonization is the answer. He tends to look towards both the Thanegioth Archipelago and Davania beyond it as potential targets. Surely it's time to check in by now on the old Motherland. He has toyed with the idea of cleaning out and occupying part of the Shadowdeep, but is uncertain whether this can be done without

unacceptable losses. He is currently sponsoring expeditions to map it out and to bring him intelligence on the area, and is collaborating with Multhim Greybeard in this venture. He's also starting to lean towards the idea of pre-emptive war on the Black Eagle Barony being urged by Maeragh. However, he sees this in terms of removing a threat, not in terms of his colonization projects. Should Stefan make enough of an impression on him as a threat to the shires in response to such a war, he is likely to come to see Western Karameikos as a necessary area to form a buffer colony in. He would not support the idea of conquering all of Karameikos unless military necessity seemed to dictate it.

Multhim Greybeard, Sheriff of Highshire (male Halfling Fighter 6 / Expert 6, LG)

Eldest of the Sheriffs, he is in charge of both mining related activities (Craft: Mine Engineering 15) and dealing with the Shadowdeep (Knowledge: Shires Shadowdeep 12). He has devoted many years to these tasks, and has come to understand the mind of Dwarves better as a result. He works quietly against anti-Dwarf sentiments in the Shires.

He's also taken an interest in finding the tomb of Loktal Ironshield, rumoured to hold powerful magical treasures and some source of hidden lore which drew Loktal to the Shires in the first place.

Multhim has, perhaps, become a little too obsessed with Dwarves. He's the leading proponent of conquering the Shadowdeep and using it for further expansion of the population. Just look at how beautiful it is! He has been working with Jaervosz to map out the upper caverns and determine plans for how to potentially colonize it. He rejects the idea of foreign colonization; why send Hin away when they can stay in their homeland and still have room to live properly and still produce enough food? Fungus can be good for you!

Multhim also has an interest in technical innovation born out of his engineering training. He is friendly to the idea of building the technical and craft skills of the shires and shifting over to a more commerce and manufacturing economy. Works for the dwarves, after all.

Multhim is very wary of invading Karameikos because he fears Thyatian intervention, and is well aware the Shires are not nearly up

to the power level of the Thyatians. Unless possible Thyatian intervention is blocked somehow, he be very reluctant to mount any major attack on the Black Eagle.

Maeragh Littlelaughs, Sheriff of Eastshire (female Halfling

Ranger 11, LN. Favoured Enemy +3: Goblinoids, Favoured Enemy +2: Magical Beasts, Favoured Enemy +1: Humans)

Maeragh is the least friendly of the Sheriffs; she acts as the head judge of the Shires in any case where she has no personal interest. She loves the Shires intently and wants to protect them; she has no tolerance for ill behaviour by non-Hin, and will generally, given the choice between blaming a Hin or anything else, blame the other thing unless evidence is strong. She is the most likely of the Sheriffs to direct Hornets or Pirates against outsiders.

(Maeragh was herself a Hornet in her youth for a time, and considered Piracy, only to discover to her embarrassment that she got too easily seasick.)

Maeragh has been calling for an invasion of the Black Eagle Barony ever since the 989 invasion. She wants to wipe out the Black Eagle and claim the whole area for the Shires. The Karameikans have always been trouble for the Shires. Indeed, in her heart, she wouldn't mind simply conquering the whole nation, as centuries of history show the inhabitants of the lands east of the Shires are 1) trouble, 2) incompetent to govern themselves,

3) a breeding ground for vampires and werewolves. They would be better off under Shire rule anyway. Maeragh will not act without solid support from the other Sheriffs, though, as she knows her Shire alone can't handle it. She has been trying to convince Multhim that Thyatis is unlikely to intervene to save an area they neglected for centuries. She's sure that Thincol got what he wanted from Stefan and no longer cares. (She's contemplated finding some way to pay him off, just in case, though.) Maeragh thinks trying to colonize the Shadowdeep is too dangerous and would only force confrontation with nastier things living below. She is open to Jaervosz's colonization proposals, though as a project to be followed AFTER the Karameikan menace is dealt with. The nation will need its full strength to deal with Karameikos. So for now, such things must wait.

Maeragh's deepest secret is that she endorses the Lords of Shaerdon, the Hin irredentist movement. In her case, she comes to it from a viewpoint of military security; these outlying areas must be reclaimed in order to better defend the heartland. She keeps this secret because its exposure would make her political position untenable; even Darokin would not tolerate having one of the Lords of Shaerdon as a leader of the Shires and the Shires cannot afford to have Darokin turn on it. (Though it can be noted that her personal friendship with the Ierendi ambassador has convinced her that Ierendi should be left out

of any irredentist projects, as she has warmed to them due to Leethila's self-sacrificing nature.)

Delune Darkeyes, Sheriff of Heartshire (female Halfling Ranger 9, LG)

Delune Darkeyes takes the roads and forests of the Shires as her special interest, devoting her efforts to preserving the forests and maintaining the roads. She is a very traditional kindly, helpful halfling who wishes to preserve the old ways. (She is a proud member of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, a conservative heritage society, described later in this document). As a result, she is opposed to the sorts of innovations which Sildil and Multhim take an interest in. She doesn't want to see Hin leave the lands and move to the cities or to see the Hin 'turn into dwarves' as she would put it. She also rejects the idea of living in the Shadowdeep; that would definitely turn the Hin into dwarves and force them to leave behind the beauty of things green and growing. She doesn't like colonization, either, as it would require either forcing people to leave or bribing them, and why leave the best land in the world? And who knows what might happen to the colonists once they're too far away to be helped? (Delune would not actually try to stop any colonists leaving; people should be allowed to choose their own path. But she's not willing to use the Shire's government's resources to promote it.)

Delune thus opposes most possible solutions to the Shire's problems;

however, she's one of the largest advocates of transforming the Shires into a Hin equivalent of Alfheim. Surely the old wards can be reactivated for defence and the land made magically bountiful and fertile as in Alfheim. The Hin could then live in greater harmony with nature and have fewer worries. She consults extensively with the loremasters and trades with any Elves she can find for Elven lore she hopes can be adapted. The Blackflame is the key; once it can be tapped more efficiently (200 years for a Web of Shadows? Even Dwarves can do better than that!), then it can be used as a power supply.

Delune opposes any invasion of Karameikos unless the Black Eagle Baron cannot be stopped in any other matter, as she thinks it is wrong to invade other nations, especially one which has mostly tried to be friendly to the Shires, unlike when the Thyatians ruled. Does everyone want to go back to those days? She especially thinks that Maeragh is probably a little cracked, given her fervent advocacy of invasion of the Black Eagle Barony. She would not support an all out conquest of Karameikos unless the Karameikans tried to conquer the Shires (or appeared to try), and maybe not even then.

Sildil Seaeyes, Sheriff of Southshire (female Halfling Fighter 12, LN)

Sildil has a fiery temper and a mountain of energy; she's perhaps the hardest working of the Sheriffs, in part because Jaervosz

is starting to slow down a little. While she spends little time at sea, Sildil oversees the Shire's navy and is the other Sheriff to have major dealings with Hin pirates (besides Maeragh). She also is studying land warfare, as she expects to get Jaervosz's military oversight duties once he retires. Her work leads her to a lot of exposure to outsiders, in the form of traders and visitors from Darokin. Sildil has come to appreciate the role of commerce and manufacturing in building Darokin's power, and wishes to capture that for the Shires. Thus, she actively supports various innovators with Shire funds and has advised her local clans to begin refocusing towards such matters. Southshire has the worst overcrowding problems of the five, but her measures are beginning, slowly, to move towards solutions. However, they're also transforming the Hin way of life, arousing Delune's displeasure and that of the more traditional elders.

Sildil is open to colonization, and finds Jaervosz's ideas to be reasonable. Indeed, creating such colonies could secure valuable resources which could be shipped to the Five Shires and then processed into goods to be sold for a profit. So why aren't we doing this already?

However, this would raise a major problem; how to keep Minrothad and Ierendi pirates from interfering? Ierendi has tended to be friendly, but Minrothad and possibly Thyatis might try to butt

in. She's still contemplating solutions here.

Sildil is also the friendliest to Wizards and Sorcerors of the five Sheriffs; their powers can be useful, and the Shires ought to find a way to tap that power, not waste it.

Sildil is cautiously open to the idea of delving into the Shadowdeep, but believes not many Hin would want to live like Dwarves. However, it might be useful as a military measure for troop training and to perhaps create a buffer against raids from below.

Sildil is divided on invading Karameikos; she'd like to see the Black Eagle Baron taken down, but is more aware than Maeragh that Karameikos has far more people than Maeragh seems to think and is more sanguine about the possibility of victory. Still, it would be useful to create a protective zone. She is likely to waffle until something provides evidence of either easy victory or of the necessity of taking the offensive.

Ambassadors

Ambassador Lord Brin Domthiir (Darokin. Male Noble 4, LG)

He can be treated as in the canon--the original Mr. Nice Guy who likes the Shires because they are a fellow democracy of good-hearted folk. He is friendliest with Sildil,

since she handles naval matters and has an interest like him in commerce and manufacturing. He treats Multhim with a great deal of respect because of Multhim's engineering skills. He gets on well enough with Jaervosz. He thinks Maeragh is likely to lead the Shires to disaster if she gets her way, and he and Delune butt heads because he is everything she doesn't want the Shires to become, though it's a gentle head butting because they are basically both too nice to go for the throat when the other person is so polite, kindly, and generous. But clearly insane.

Sir Guldahan Cordelius

(Karameikos. Male Fighter 3/Noble 1, TN. Change Original Gazetteer Charisma to 8 (the way he is described there, he is clearly a Charisma penalty kind of guy.) Sir Guldahan is what happens when diplomats are not chosen on the basis of interpersonal skills. His real talent is as a soldier, but he's getting too old for the battlefield, and so he was given a well-paying ambassadorship as a reward, so he could take better care of his family. Unfortunately, he's poorly suited for the job (with his 'mighty' Diplomacy of 4, dropped to 3 by his low Charisma.) and faces a difficult situation.

Sheriff Maeragh has been pressuring him to end the Black Eagle's raids. Since Stefan is either unable or unwilling to do anything, all he can do is stall, and so he has virtually no pull in the Shires to secure the favourable trade deals that Karameikos wants.

Jaervosz finds him useless and Delune pities him audibly in a way which tends to make him angry. Multhim is sympathetic to him, as he knows what getting old is like, and Sildil tries to work with the man, but he seems to have a knack for even antagonizing her supporters with his stiffness and general inability to show he likes anyone.

Sire Milaster (Alfheim. Male Elven Dusksblade 4/Bard 4, NG.) Sire Milaster is a friendly, open individual who has very little real work to do, so he spends much of his time partying. Enough so to worry the female Sheriffs about what he might do with the young Hin ladies.

He gets on well with all of the Sheriffs; even Maeragh has not, over time, been immune to his charms, though his relations are cooler with her than the others. He is friendliest with Delune, finding her charming, sharing her love of the forest, and finding her project of enchanting the Five Shires to be an intriguing idea. He has devoted a fair amount of his personal resources to assisting her, whether through providing books or helping her to meet Elven loremasters. He has an interest in the Blackflame, and while Delune won't give away the Shire's secrets, she trusts him enough to have allowed him some chances to observe more than is usually allowed. Fortunately for her, he is worthy of that trust, so long as no one mugs him and beats it out of him, anyway...

Leethilla Barburgh (Ierendi. Female Human Fighter 3/Expert 2, NG.)

Largely as in the canonical supplement. It can be added here that she is friendliest with Sildil due to their mutual interest in naval matters. She has quietly urged the development of tourist facilities as a road to the development of the Shires to Sildil. However, her general kindness and demonstrations of willingness to risk herself to protect Hin despite her own injuries has made her one of the few non-Hin who Maeragh has opened up to. Should Maeragh learn of Leethilla's infatuation with Lord Dom, she will be torn because of her past conflicts with him, but will ultimately support Leethilla in it. (Not that Maeragh is exactly an expert on romance...)

Lord Caine Malaric (Thyatis. Male Human Rogue 8, LE.)

As in the canon, Caine is a nasty piece of work. Part of his job is to sabotage the Shires, which Thyatis does not wish to see grow strong; Thyatis has enough strong rivals already. He has noticed the problems induced by the rising population and has quietly set himself the task of aggravating these problems, using his wealth to try to encourage corruption among clan leaders and discouraging the Sheriffs from seeking solutions he thinks would work (such as more commerce and manufacturing) by making it look like such solutions are things

Thyatis WANTS, as he knows they instinctively distrust anything he says (unless it aligns with their prejudices). His manipulation works best on Maeragh (as he tells her what she wants to hear--that Thyatis won't mind if the Hin invade the Black Eagle Barony or all of Karameikos so long as Thyatis gets a payoff) and on Delune (who distrusts anything he says and thus can sometimes be induced to do the opposite), and least well on Multhim, who understands Thyatians better than the other sheriffs.

It must be noted that Caine does not actually dislike halflings, except in so far as he tends to regard all other living things as existing to do what he wants. Caine views the starvation reflex of the Hin as something that actually makes them more like Thyatians, which is a good thing; their gradual loss of what he sees as false morality reinforces his own conviction of the acceptability of his own actions. He would probably seduce even more Hin women than he does if he only had cheaper access to growth or diminution potions (and his amnesia drug, see the canon Gazetteer). He also has a great deal of empathy for the Hin pirates, some of whom he quietly sponsors, directing them away from Thyatian shipping, especially any venture of his own.

Thrildor Blackhammer
(Rockhome. Male Dwarf Fighter 4/Expert 4, LG.)

He is much as in the canon. Special notes for this version follow.

Thrildor is a member of the Wyrwarf clan, as they have more interest in the Shires than most of the other clans, though it wasn't easy getting him the ambassadorship. (It helped that most Dwarves don't want to go to the Shires, since they'll be kept away from everything they find interesting there.)

Thrildor is closest to Multhrim of the Sheriffs, and spends a fair amount of time discoursing to him on all things Dwarven, the art of stonemasonry, etc. He has strongly urged Multhrim towards the creation of underground Hin cities, as he hopes the experience will make more Hin favourable to Rockhome. He also has some interest in engineering and new ways of making things and has provided some funding to Hin inventors, as he hopes to copy said inventions for the use of Dwarves back home.

His own interest in agricultural matters has made the Shires a very enjoyable place for him to be living in and he's observed some ideas he's sent home for testing; his clear enjoyment of the forests and fields has helped to endear him to Delune, despite his advocacy of Multhrim's plans. Thrildor quietly agrees with Mearagh that the Black Eagle Baron needs to be dealt with, but has carefully avoided any public comments on the issue because he feels it isn't his business and he wants to avoid making the

Rockhome ambassador to Karameikos' life difficult.

Master Tomba Quickfingers

(Minrothad. Male Halfling Merchant Prince 5/Expert 4, TN. Int 17, Cha 16, Appraise 13, Bluff 12, Diplomacy 14. Not in Original Gazetteer)

Master Tomba is a sandy-haired halfling, thinner than the average Shire Hin (i.e., average of build instead of pudgy), blandly average in height, with distinctive violet eyes (the result of a magical backlash some years ago. He has twice the normal low-light vision of a halfling)

Master Tomba has been more successful than past Minrothad ambassadors, which admittedly would not be difficult. Oran Meditor, after having several ambassadors nearly run out of the Shires on rails, and one of them having mysteriously decided to drink a big old glass of tasty cyanide (all evidence pointed to Glantrian agents, no really), decided to appoint a halfling, in hopes he would be better received. And he has been.

While Master Tomba continues to manage the network of spies and agents inherited from past ambassadors, and continues to seek the secrets of Blackflame (lost by his own ancestors after the Thyatians enslaved them), he has toned things down a bit, and tried to focus on mutual interests of the two countries. As the Shires have begun to struggle to feed themselves at the HIGH level to which they are accustomed, he has worked to open the food market to

Minrothad traders. He's also turned his spy network towards learning when Thyatian ships will sale, and tipping off pirates in return for them leaving his ships alone. He can only afford to bribe some pirates, but it helps. Master Tomba has especially worked on trying to sell the Minrothad way of life to Sildil, who he knows has an interest in manufacturing and commerce. In the process, he's earned Delune's hatred, though. He's found Maeragh strangely friendly, and has the feeling she's trying to find out something about him, but can't figure out what. It almost seems like she's trying to seduce him, but he's not arrogant enough to think that could really be the case. (As he's blissfully unaware of her connections to the Lords of Shaerdon, who hope to get the Minrothad halflings to defect to the Shires.) He finds Multhim amusing, while Jaervosz treats him with mild suspicion. When he goes out, he is usually being watched, which he knows, though not as watched as the Thyatian ambassador. He is vaguely working on a plan to discredit the Thyatian ambassador, so as to hurt Thyatian trade and to try to establish his own bona fides as a good guy, as he knows that the Sheriffs are often driven as much by perceived morality as by the actual interests of the Shires in judging ambassadors and their nations.

Lord Asoka Chandragupta
(Sind. Male Human Knight 10, LN. Str 16, Wis 16, Diplomacy

6, Knowledge (Five Shires) 6, Ride 13. Not in Original Gazetteer)

Lord Asoka is the tall, muscular, bald, dark-skinned ambassador from Sind. Lord Asoka was chosen ambassador at his own request, as he had made a hobby of studying the Five Shires and wished to see it first hand. He is a distant relative of the Rajadhiraja. Lord Asoka spends a lot of time struggling to reconcile his own caste practices with his knowledge of Shire customs and lore, though it helps that he can see the Sheriffs and their Kronandar as members of his own caste, thus reducing the amount of inter-caste interaction customs which have to be followed. Nevertheless, he always seems eccentric to the Sheriffs and their agents. (In Asoka's mind, the Kronandar and Sheriffs and Clan Elders are Himaya, the Masters of the Shires are Rishiya, the Clan Loremasters are Jadugerya, the average Hin are Prajaya, and what few Hin act as servants to others are Kuliya.) The Sheriffs have quietly assigned a few agents to follow him around and clean up any social disasters, as he clearly means well.

Lord Asoka wants to ensure the continued flow of goods and food into the Shires and the flow of metals out of it to Sind. He avoids direct interaction in business matters, leaving that to his Prajaya assistant, Mohan, who ends up doing much of the actual ambassadorial work as a result. This leaves him a lot of time to talk military affairs with Sildil and Jaervosz. He has tended to

reinforce Maeragh's irritation with Karameikos by endlessly talking about how such a rebel lord would never be tolerated in his own homeland and how Stefan Karameikos is clearly unfit to rule. The Sindhi hope to make both nations more dependant on trade with Sind if they go to war with each other. He disapproves of Multhim's fascination with mines and engineering (a clear violation of caste!), and finds Delune nearly incomprehensible (as she violates her caste all the time by doing things like stopping in her pursuit of her law-enforcing duties to help someone dig a ditch!!!).

Lord Asoka does not spy on the Shires at all, except to the limited degree that Mohan keeps tabs on mercantile affairs for him. Spying is dishonourable and Lord Asoka tries very hard to meticulously obey all the laws of the Shires, relying simply on studying public news, his own study of lore of the shires, and his personal relations with the Sheriffs to influence events. (This flows in part from a failure to fully appreciate the degree to which the Clan Elders influence events.)

Many of the other ambassadors baffle him, as they're clearly Prajaya (Brin, Tomba, Leethilla all fall in this category) or act in strange ways (A dwarf who likes forests, an Elf whose caste is completely unclear, etc.) Even though he's working against Karameikan interests himself, he personally likes the Karameikan ambassador, who he respects as an old warrior. He does not trust

Caine at all and tries to avoid the man.

Emir Salah Muyyid (Ylari. Male Human Cleric 9, LN. Int 15, Wis 17, Craft (Calligraphy) 11, Diplomacy 9, Knowledge (Nahmeh) 12. Not in Original Gazetteer)

Emir Muyyid is a short, wiry man, with short black hair, a thick black moustache, and sun-darkened skin. He wears bright Ylari robes, and usually a blue turban. Salah is LOUD and likes to TALK. He can be very polite when he remembers to, but usually looks like he's waiting impatiently to talk whenever someone else is speaking.

Much of this talking is comprised of his efforts to apply the Nahmeh to everything. He's diplomatic enough not to directly tell people 'Convert now'; he just tries to do so by showing its wisdom to be applicable to ALL THINGS. This eventually drives many Halflings crazy, though the Clan Elders and Loremasters often enjoy giving him the same treatment with Hin customs and lore. (He actually enjoys a good argument, so the lesson isn't quite sinking in...) Despite the clear need for better organized religion, Salah mostly enjoys the Shires. They are an orderly, good-natured and friendly folk, and he likes people. He is very curious about the lore of the Masters, but his preaching tends to make them crazy quickly, so they avoid him. He and Delune have traded some lore about how to make places more fertile, as they have a mutual interest in making

their nations bloom. Maeragh distrusts him and most other Ylari, fearing they may try to achieve their dream of a green land by taking the Shires by force.

Jaervosz has little interest in parables; he has some dealings with Sildil in the lines of his efforts to protect Ylari mercantile interests. He thinks Multhim is slightly crazy and quietly avoids him when possible.

Salah has a great deal of hate for the Thyatian ambassador and Thyatians in general, and is quietly trying to collect enough dirt to get the man expelled. He tends to assume that Karamaikos is just another Thyatian colony, and thus it must be thwarted also. He finds Asoka fascinating, though he thinks Sindhi religion is completely insane--the man needs to be converted for his own good!

Shire Organizations of Note

Hin love to form clubs, societies, and associations. There are dozens more not listed here as many of them (like the Flagonford Knitting Circle) are of little interest to adventurers.

Adventurer's Society, Halfling Heroes and Wannabes

Status: Minor, Legal

Goal: To talk incessantly about the good old days, to show off one's trophies, and to coordinate and inspire active adventurers

Summary: The Adventurer's society is very old, dating all the way back to the Shaerdon period; it has grown and shrunk in importance over the centuries. In its current form, it's basically a social club for retired adventurers and a place for young Hin seeking adventure to meet and form groups to get in trouble together. Many a band of Hornets formed in the lounge of the local branch. Moon Hill, Tothmeer, Obur's Mimbur, Thantabbar, and Shireton have the five permanent facilities, but many local communities will have a monthly or biweekly meeting of members in some local tavern. The major facilities store trophies, provide short-term housing for members visiting the area, and constantly have lots of food and drink and relaxing space for members to sit around and swap tales and tell lies. There's always a few old Hin ex-dragonslayers (or so they tell it) hanging around the place. Membership is cheap, only a few gold a month, though prominent members are expected to share some of their gains with the society so long as they are active adventurers. In return, one has access to the records, the lounges, and the collective memory of many old Hin who have seen many things. Young Hin need meet no special requirements to join; anyone else must provide some proof of adventure. Many Hin join up before going on Yallara, to find out about places they could go. The Sheriffs provide some funds, in return for being able to tap the

membership for knowledge or for adventurers.

Adventure Hooks: One could spend a lifetime tracking down all the rumours and opportunities that float around a single Adventurer's club meeting. If one is looking to sell off a magical item, this is probably one of the best places in the Shires to try doing it.

Club Club, Ill-Adjusted Violent Halflings

Status: Fringe, Legalish

Goal: To work out their inner violence by beating each other up / to serve as Entropic patsies (Not publicly known)

Summary: As the number of clanless increases, an increasing number of Hin are unsatisfied with their lives and unable to channel their aggression productively. A charismatic Hin named Jac Taylor is the leader of this society, founded in Shireton in the tunnels under the city, but now spread to every major community and some of the growing lesser ones. Groups of mostly male Hin get together to beat each other unconscious with clubs. This physical violence brings them emotional release from their difficult, unrewarding lives. Most of them actually function a little better in normal society with this outlet.

Adventure Hooks: Unknown to most club members, however, Jac is slowly recruiting the craziest and most violent into an inner circle which worships Orcus. He is still trying to decide what to do with his rising cult, but it's likely to be...destructive...when he

finally acts. Set Jac's level as a Cleric to challenge the PCs. His cult may get up to all sorts of trouble which could lead to adventures. The Sheriffs are unaware of the cult, but if alerted to it, they will shut it down with extreme prejudice.

Daughters of the Dawn Hope, Halfling Conservatives

Status: Major, Legal

Goal: To conserve the ways of the Shires and prevent it being contaminated by too many foreign ideas

Summary: The Daughters of the Dawn Hope are a society of Hin who claim to be descended from those who rode on the Dawn Hope, out of Davania, to settle the Shires. In some manner, this gives them the delusion they are more important than anyone else and the conviction that the old ways are best. Not that their picture of the old ways is always all that accurate. (For one thing, it's debatable if any ship by that name was in the ancient fleet of ships which brought the Hin to the Shires, and it was certainly more than one.) At their best, the Daughters of the Dawn Hope have helped to preserve halfling traditions of courtesy, generosity and sharing; they have worked hard to help those Hin who are suffering under current conditions of slowly rising overcrowding and food production difficulties. At worst, they oppose any change in the ways of the Shires and seek always to return to a past which doesn't really offer any answers for the problems of the present.

They also blow a lot of energy on trying to convince Hin to give up foreign fashions, etc, instead of addressing real problems.

Many of the members are Clan Elders or their families, and thus the society wields a great deal of political weight in the Shires. Indeed, Sheriff Delune is an influential member of this organization.

This organization has some sympathy for the goals of the Lords of Shaerdon (and this society forms an important recruiting ground for that society, which has some influence within the Daughters as a result), but in general, opposes its imperialistic tendencies. The Hin should not be conquerors in their view; leave that to Orcs and Dwarves. Sheriff Meargh was a member for a time, but has left the society because it won't support her war aims.

Adventure Hooks: The Daughters of the Dawn Hope are always on the look for what is left of the ancient past, so as to bolster their genealogies and prove their arguments. And in some cases, hiding things which don't fit their claims. This often means tapping adventurers for help.

Five Deep Shadows, Halfling Mafia

Status: Significant, Illegal

Goal: To Expel all Foreign Thieves and Monopolize Crime; to avenge the injustices of the powerful

Summary: The Five Deep Shadows originated as a revolutionary organization during one of the past conquests of the

Shires, probably during the period of Dwarven rule. It has gradually evolved into a combination of crime syndicate and justice for hire. The Sheriffs tolerate it so long as it remains within limits, because it has vigorously pursued and crushed outsider criminal organizations and because it passes any intelligence it finds relevant to national security to the Sheriffs. (Rather like the tolerating of pirates and Hornets) It focuses on 'victimless' criminal activities--loan sharking, smuggling, gambling, prostitution, etc., and punishes those who steal, murder, etc.

It also has an odd role--justice for hire. When the law cannot touch someone, you can turn to the Five Deep Shadows, and they may carry out rough justice for you. This can be rather expensive, though some FDS leaders have been known to do it for free for those who strike them as particularly in need of help. In this capacity, the FDS also can be hired to pursue those who have robbed Hin and escaped the Shire. If rumour can be believed, they've recovered goods all the way from Glantri and the Heldann Freeholds.

Adventure Hooks: Outsider thieves may find themselves in conflict with the Five Deep Shadows, especially if they steal something important and flee the Shires with it. Others may not be so inclined to tolerate a crime syndicate as the Sheriffs are.

Glantri Destruction Society,
Halfling Glantri-Haters

Status: Minor, Legal

Goal: DEATH TO GLANTRI

Summary: In most countries, this group would be Fringe at best.

However, the Shires have built up a lot of Glantri hate over the years, and it's continual open-season on Glantrians. This means that many Hin give a certain amount of backing to this group, even if they don't want to risk THEMSELVES in its efforts to DESTROY GLANTRI.

Most of the members are young Hin who mount crazed raids into Glantri (a difficult proposition, given distances and the Broken Lands), and the rest are groups who prepare for the chance to quick respond to Glantrian raids with lethal force. This group often makes the lives of any visiting wizards difficult.

The Sheriffs try to restrain them from lynching visitors, but really generally approve of killing Glantrians, who are all evil and crazed, in the eyes of the vast majority of Hin.

Adventure Hooks: If you want to raid Glantri and kill Wizards, these are your boys. They're always looking for help with lunatic schemes like replacing Jagger's Crystal Ball with a glass sphere full of magic-triggered explosives...

Highshire Avionics Society,
Halfling Would-Be Fliers

Status: Fringe, Legal

Goal: TO TAKE TO THE SKIES! WHERE A HIN SHOULD BE!!!!

Summary: The Highshire Avionics Society was founded by

Odo Nimblefingers, a Halfling adventurer (Rogue 6/Expert 4), who visited Serraine and decided it was THE BEST THING EVER. He returned to the Shires and began trying to build his own flying machines. He gathered many young, enthusiastic Hin who didn't have anything else to do and they're still working on it.

The Society has managed to build several hot air balloons and is currently trying to build a blimp which doesn't explode or crash into the Fishtickle bridge, levelling it. (They had to spend half a year helping to repair the bridge after that.) (The society was originally the Heartshire Avionics Society; Delune threw them out of Heartshire after that.) Multhim quietly provides them with a small amount of funding, as he finds them intriguing. Several halfling merchants who see a way for the Shire to take the lead in a new area also back the society. The Avionics Society has also taken it upon themselves to watch the skies for unusual flying things, so that flying Glantrians, winged Orcs, or other threats don't sneak in through the air. This would be a more valuable service if they didn't sometimes mistake bird flocks for incoming dragons...

Adventure Hooks: In addition to needing people with engineering skills or who are crazy enough to try piloting one of their vessels, they also have an interest in studying magical flying devices to see if they can use and abuse the principles therein somehow, and have been known to hire adventurers to gain such things for

them. And at times, they have been known to show up in the middle of a flight test gone wrong when one is engaged in other activities--romance, theft, trying to fix the damage from the last time they appeared...

The Lords of Shaerdon, Halfling Irredentists

Status: Fringe, Illegal

Goal: Recovery of 'lost Hin lands'

Summary: The Lords of Shaerdon are a Hin secret society dedicated to the idea of reclaiming the 'lost lands of Shaerdon'. At its height, Shaerdon controlled portions of Darokin (to halfway into the Malpheggi in the west and to the Helleck in the north) and of Karameikos (to the headwaters of the four northwestern Karameikan rivers and eastward from the west Karameikan shore to about 72 miles inland). The Lords of Shaerdon hope to reclaim these areas and work covertly to build support for Hin expansionism. For centuries, they were an illegal fringe society, but now they have a Sheriff for an ally (Maeragh) and many more Hin are open to their claims, due to increasing anger at the Black Eagle Baron and Karameikos.

The Lords are organized in a cell structure and are directed by the Quintet, five Hin, one from each of the contemporary Shires. Maeragh knows one of them, her patron in the Society, Clan Elder Kari Longshadow of the Longshadow clan, who is also a member of the Assembly of the Shires. If Maeragh's connection is found out, Kari will likely be

exposed and the central cell can be destroyed. So the Lords will do their very best to keep this concealed.

Adventure Hooks: The Lords are constantly trying to collect magical items, influence politicians, sponsor pirates, and spread pro-war with Karameikos propaganda. They have agents in Darokin, Karameikos, and Ierendi. Any of these can lead them into conflict with adventurers.

The Shires Delving Society, Halfling Cavers

Status: Minor, Legal

Goal: To explore and map the Shadowdeep

Summary: The Shire Delving Society is made up mainly of Hin adventurers and ex-adventurers who still want a little excitement sometimes. This group wants to explore and map the Shadowdeep, finding all the ways in and out. Multhim sponsors them with a little cash and has provided them with the built up lore of the sheriffs in this area.

Adventure Hooks: They're always looking for people willing to join them on dangerous trips into the Shadowdeep, especially those who bring skills (arcane and divine magics) which the Hin often lack.

The Shires Historical Society, Halfling Scholars

Status: Minor, Legal

Goal: To compile an accurate history of the Shires and to gather all lore possible about Hin origins.

Summary: The Shires Historical Society is a collection of old

scholars and young adventurer-scholars who are trying to compile an accurate history of the Shires and to study the past of the Hin. This is complicated by the repeated conquest of the Shires, usually resulting in loss of records. Furthermore, oddly, surviving ancient lore always seems to be in the middle of some sort of deadly set of traps, monsters, and undead. Or in a Dragon's personal collection. Or concealed under Alphaks' throne. Thus, they are constantly having to hire adventurers to try to break into 1500 year old tombs or to conduct expeditions across the sea to Davania in search of the birthplace of the Hin.

Unknown to its general membership, several members of the Society are Lords of Shaerdon, hoping to use its findings to justify their dream of a return to the days of Shaerdon.

Adventure Hooks: The society has learned to hire adventurers to recover its ancient lore for it, as noted above.

Tothmeer Inventor's Society, Halfling and Gnome Inventors

Status: Fringe, Legal

Goal: To pursue knowledge of improved technologies

Summary: Thirty years ago, a group of gnome and halfling adventurers with a shared interest in technology founded this society. It has received sponsorship from Sildil of late, enabling it to increase its pursuit of technological and scientific knowledge. Its members avidly seek new ways to do things,

usually involving alchemy or engineering. Some projects work; many fail spectacularly, giving it an aura of insanity. But they persist, anyway. A few members have taken an interest in Blackmoorian devices as well.

Adventure Hooks: The society always needs help testing and building things; its alchemy sometimes requires adventures to collect rare ingredients. And the Blackmoor fans in its ranks sometimes mount expeditions to dangerous places which can always use a little more fodder...help.

The Shires Historical Society,
Halfling Scholars

Status:

Goal:

Summary:

Adventure Hooks:

Other People of Note, Hin and Non-Hin Alike

Lathsyr Albrondur (Male Human Wizard 9, LG.)

Mainly as in the canon. He spends a lot of time doing work for various Halfling societies who can use the talents of a Wizard for some task, whenever he needs money. One of his goals is to get accepted into the Adventuring Society, which is, like most Hin societies, rather wary of Wizards. Which, ironically, makes him feel all the better about it after his

experiences in Glantri. He sometimes suffers at the hands of the Glantri Destruction Society, but the Sheriffs have come to trust him enough that they always make the Society back down. Lathsyr is horrified by the rumours of war against Karamaikos, as war leads to death on a large scale, which he hates.

Biss Araum (Male Human Cleric 8, LG.)

Mainly as in the canon. Biss is blissfully unaware that he has been gradually racking up a huge enemy list through his tendency to fink on everyone in sight who doesn't stay home and mind the farm. While this has endeared him to the Daughters of the Dawn Hope and other conservative Hin groups and especially to Clanleaders, Keepers, and the Sheriffs, many Hin youth hate him, the Hornets dislike him, and the Adventuring Society really hates him (though they won't do anything about it). His involvement in exposing past Thyatian plots means that the Thyatian ambassador has him on the list of people to die if it can be done without being caught, and further, the Five Deep Shadows and the Lords of Shaerdon have grudges as well. They're all planning to try to frame each other for the crime, along with the Thyatians. So it's likely to get messy around him one of these days...

Joam Astlar (Male Halfling Fighter 12, LG.)

Mainly as in the canon. Joam is one of the most prominent figures in the Adventurer's Society, and frequently draws on its resources whenever he thinks he'll need help for some venture.

Ulaam Belchiir (Male Halfling Rogue 8, CN.)

Mainly as in the Canon. Ulaam is an agent of the Five Deep Shadows, and mainly directs his activities at foreigners. His actions push the boundaries the Five Deep Shadows set for themselves, but so long as he victimizes foreigners, they accept it in return for the use of his skills and his contact network.

Sintyr Bulorno (Male Human Rogue 11, CE)

Mainly as in the Canon. Sintyr heads the largest gang not controlled by the Five Deep Shadows. As a result, they're always looking for ways to wipe him out, and love to tip off adventurers that he's behind their woes, whether he is or not. The Sheriffs know of his crimes but don't know his name...yet. He'll be in big trouble when they do. (The Five Deep Shadows could tip off the Sheriffs, but they know that if they can't enforce their crime monopoly without help from law enforcement, they'll fall apart.)

Spiira Quickmagic Coppertoos (Female Halfling Rogue 8, TN.)

Mainly as in the canon. She was more of a 'general adventurer' kind of rogue, and thus has no

connection to the organized crime of the Shires. She is a noteworthy, though not very active, member of the Glantri Destruction Society. She is also a member of the Adventurer's Society, though she no longer adventures.

Ammagil Dundershields

(Female Halfling Rogue 7, LG.)

Mainly as the canon. She has recently joined the Adventurer's Society in hopes of finding a group to hook up with. She can often be found in one of their main society halls, exploiting the free food and drink to keep her finances afloat.

Armillian Duirmuir (Female Human Wizard 9, TN.)

Mainly as the canon. Armillian has evaded the notice of the Glantrian Destruction Society so far, but the combination of them and her fear of attack from Glantri has led her to not join the Adventurer's Society for fear it will help her foes find her. She makes a fair amount of money doing jobs for various other societies, which can use her talents.

Irmir Higenblot (Male Human Wizard 15, TN, Sense Motive 18.)

Mainly as the canon. Irmir has affiliated himself with the Shires Delving Society to provide an excuse for his constantly being about the Shires. (Unlike in the canon, Irmir probably could find a Hin or ten who would take a big enough bribe to tell him some of the secrets, but he's too cautious to take the risk of a sting, as he

knows how ruthless the Sheriffs can be. But he hopes he may find something among the caverns below, and if nothing else, it provides him with funds for other experiments as well. And the Hins are decent companions.)

Oglentyr Hillhallow (Male Halfling Rogue 6, TN)

Mainly as the canon. Oglentyr is a travelling agent of the Five Deep Shadows, who will make sure to spring him from jail if he is caught. Aside from fund-raising, he also keeps an eye out for likely recruits.

Meermeera Jollybars (Female Halfling Fighter 4, CG)

Mainly as the canon. She is very typical of the younger members of the Adventurer's Society.

Sperren Jurhindar (Male Human Cleric 5, LN)

Mainly as the canon. It is unfortunate for Sperren that he is in some ways a perfect patsy for the Lords of Shaerdon. They plan to set him up to blow the details of his mission to the Shires before as large an audience as possible, so as to paint him as another form of Karameikan aggression against the Shires. They have done so by creating a proxy society of people 'interested in Karameikan culture', who will reveal themselves to him and hopefully manipulate him into a situation where he will be exposed. Whether he'll fall for it is up to the DM and the PCs, but plans never do survive contact with the Players...

This may also be complicated by the fact that Meargh is certain he's a Karameikan spy and is independently trying to set him up to be exposed.

Shandysar Lollo (Female Halfling Fighter 3, TN)

Mainly as the canon.

Jalassa Longwinkle (Female Halfling Fighter 9, CN)

She has the feats Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, and Improved Critical with the Whip. She also has a feat which allows her to use her whip to grapple without drawing opportunity attacks) Mainly as the canon. She maintains quiet contact with Sildil, but has no interest in Shire politics.

Arcathae Mellothrin (Female Human Druid 11, TN)

As the canon. She has consulted with Delune on the issue of enchanting the Five Shires and has taken an interest in the project. She also has an interest in the Gentle Folk, who she believes to have been potent druids.

Loberlin Mulgor (Female Halfling Fighter 14/Hin Master of the Shires 10, CG)

Mainly as the canon. Loberlin can be noted to be perhaps the most powerful halfling in the Shires and probably one of the most potent on the planet. Her Quest for Immortality, however, has kept her too busy on epic quests for her to focus on the Shire's real problems, though she has consulted some with Delune. She

is not part of the problem, but it also seems likely she won't be part of the solution... (OOC This class level choice is using a 10 level prestige class version of Master of the Shires I found online, written by someone named Beau Yarbrough.)

Beace Nildahar (Male Human Fighter 6)
Mainly as the canon. He has joined the Adventurer's Society in hopes of finding fellows to adventure with before his money runs out.

Mazintor Treeshadow Seashire (Male Halfling Ranger 8/Master of the Shires 7, LG)
Mainly as the canon. Master Mazintor is one of Delune's confidants and is deeply involved in her plans to enchant the Shires.

A DM's Guide to the Five Shires

The canonical Gazetteer presents a lot of information on Shire towns. This seeks to add to those descriptions in light of the changes and additions made here, and to point out some non-town locations.

Highshire



Highshire is the most dangerous Shire, due to raids from the mountains and its plethora of entrances to the Shadowdeep. Multhim's Kronnar are very effective, however, at fighting off most raids. Every hex has at least one entrance to the Shadowdeep, most of which have either been sealed or guarded if possible. Strangely, it never seems to do much good.

The wise traveller is always armed and watches the skies, to avoid any unpleasant surprises, whether it be flying Glantrians or the Highshire Avionics Society. It is

sometimes arguable which is worse.

Ober's Mimbur (Canonical Location)

Ober's Mimbur is the most heavily fortified of the Shire seats. There are several large ex-mines under the town which have been converted into emergency housing and food production facilities by Multhim. Several exit tunnels run miles away to hidden locations; the town is walled, and if it falls, they can withdraw down into the mines, seal them, and hide until help comes, or evacuate by the hidden routes if need be. Up to

40,000 hin, far more than the population of the town, could be hidden below and fed for weeks if necessary. This facility also serves to test various amenities for underground living which Multhim has an interest in. It does NOT connect to the Shadowdeep, as it's intended to be secure. The facility is supposed to be a state secret, but the necessity of training locals to be ready to use it has pretty much blown that, though the precise details of most of it remain secret.

Launchpoint Tower (Non-Canonical Location)

This facility is of recent provenance. Located near the headwaters of the Wardle, the Highshire Avionics Society has built itself a facility which includes a watch tower and a launching field from which flying devices can be sent out across the countryside...or crash into Obur's Mimbur. Unknown to the society members, one of them is an infiltrator from the Glantri Destruction Society, who uses the tower to watch for flying Glantrian raiders. Not that any have shown up yet, but if they do, the semaphore system in the tower will be used to spread the word to members in Obur's Mimbur.

Bridle (Canonical Location)

As the population of the Shires grows, some towns are booming. Bridle has become a focal point for the transfer and distribution of goods and is on its way to becoming the second largest town in Highshire; from here, roads and waterways lead to most of Highshire's towns and into Eastshire. Barges full of ores and metal come down the river here and are moved to caravans or float on down the Wardle to Nob's Boots. As the town grows, buildings have hastily gone up, creating a shantytown around the much nicer inner core of Old Bridle.

The town suffers an increasing crime problem as the Five Deep Shadows have moved in and taken up ore smuggling (and other smuggling) and strongly influence the Town Council. Several

taverns double as gambling dens and brothels.

This has driven Alma Trencherman, Clanmistress of the Trencherman Clan, based here, to the point of despair. She wants someone to come and clean up the town, but the Town Council keeps talking about 'urban growth' and 'rising wealth' and refusing to call in the Sheriff. Perhaps some adventurers could do something...

Aercruth (Canonical Location)

As the need for metals increases and as Hin look for work to get enough food, people have flocked to Aercruth. Where Bridle is suffering from crowding and crime, Aercruth resembles a boom town of the Old West, where everyone is hard working but also pugnacious and sometimes rather violent (if mainly in bar brawls). The two local clans (Swiftfeet and Zursannich) are trying to take control of the town, but since their Clanmasters (Anya Swiftfeet and Odo Zursannich) hate each other, the result is an ongoing feud and intrigue made more complex by the fact that many local miners owe allegiance to merchants who had the capital to open new mines, rather than to the local clans. Of course, opening a mine means convincing a local clan to let you dig, so it gets complicated...

As part of the ongoing rivalry, the two clans have opened rival theatres / taverns and are trying to see who can draw the most patronage, to sway people to their side with a mix of entertainment and propaganda. Bards can earn good money here if they don't

mind a ballad or three about how awful the other clan is...

Cruth Tower (Non-Canonical Location)

Cruth Tower is an ancient watchtower of unknown provenance. Rumours range from a Nithian outpost to some Blackmoorian wizard's home. Whatever its exact origin, it is known to be much larger on the inside than on the outside and to contain many wonders and monstrous guardians. However, it has a quirk which has kept most hin out of it--only left-handed people can enter it; everyone else bounces off the entrances. While there is probably some way to change this, the lack of arcane magic users in the Shires has meant that only a few expeditions have ever gotten inside. Lately, however, strange lights have been seen inside it, and many wonder what has taken up residence...

Ringrise (Canonical Location)

The Ringrise stone circle was one of the crucial components of the Gentle Folk's wards. It still works well enough to repel any Undead which draw too close (It turns any Undead who come within 12 miles of it, as if it was a 15th level cleric. It attempts this once a minute, until the undead leaves or dies.) Its powers are otherwise faded, especially since the mining activities have disrupted the local web of the old wards. The four clans of Ringrise remain well fed, thanks to their metalworking and mining profits.

Visitors will find this a very welcoming location.

Members of the Highshire Avionics Society like to launch from this vicinity, as they believe the stone circle is lucky for them.

Longflask (Canonical Location)

Longflask is everything that Delune fears about converting the Shires into a manufacturing and commercial giant. The three clans of Longflask work their members to the bone, using the threat of being cut off from the clan to keep their noses to the wheel. Since most employment in the Shires is clan-based, this is a serious threat; other clans don't generally hire outsiders unless they have to. The clans do keep their members well fed, but they work them to the point of exhaustion; Multhim had to step in to ensure days of rest to keep people from being worked to collapse at an early age. These clans (Fernshiver, Nixnoddle, Raggedleap) may well be in trouble in the long-term, though, as many of their young are starting to not come back from Yallara. This has made them more open to

adopting the increasing number of hungry halflings which are starting to be seen on the roads of the Shires. Many are desperate enough, they don't mind very hard work in return for steady food and housing.

All three clans support Sheriff Maeragh's call for war on Karameikos, as they expect it will cause demand for weapons and thus for their ores and metalworking. They're also open to Multhim's plans for creating underground refuges and cities; they already virtually live underground anyway.

There is an option for this town in the Adventures section. It's not made standard here so players can't know for sure if you're using it.

Waymeet (Canonical Location)

As Bridle grows wildly, so does Waymeet, favoured by those who wish to avoid diving into the less savoury aspects of Bridle. The town is home to only a few hundred people, but they all provide support services for

travellers, traders, and adventurers. The town is basically a subsidiary of the local Quaeromore clan, who have promoted its growth to bring in wealth to buy more food to keep their booming clan afloat without too much hunger. They strive vigorously to maintain traditional customs and a general aura of polite law-abidingness. Many locals talk loudly and often about how they pity the folk of Longflask, unless they're sure their customer is from Longflask, in which case it's a fine, fine place.

Loktal's Tomb (Non-Canonical, Non-Specific Location)

Somewhere in Highshire, Dwarf King Loktal was buried with a huge pile of grave goods. Anyone who could find the tomb would be filthy, filthy rich. Every so often, maps surface and the Hornets swarm to try to find it, with no luck as of yet. One can expect very hideously nasty traps and automatons as its defences.

Eastshire



Eastshire is the second most dangerous Shire, as the Black Eagle Baron raids it and so do various unaffiliated humanoids, human bandits, commando dwarf squads, etc. Well, not so many dwarves as the locals sometimes think. Visiting non-Hin had better have their papers in order and a good reason to be here, unless they like Hin wave assaults and jail cells. (Or dying if they run into Hornets). Many bands of Hornets use this as a base to raid into Karameikos.

It also doesn't help that the Black Dragons of the Blight Swamp sometimes decide Hin are very tasty. Of course, it doesn't help them that there are so many Krondar and Hornets waiting for

them...Black Dragons are tasty too.

Eastshire is facing an economic crisis; as population grows, people push into the harder to defend areas, forcing a rise in taxes to pay for more defenders for the region. But the marginal areas don't give the same agricultural yields as the areas of old settlement, as they're often rockier. At the same time, trade with Karameikos has plummeted; increasingly trade flows from Shireton Port or Thantabbar to Karameikos and vice versa, though the increasing shipping of metal down the Wardle has helped some. No one wants to get their caravan raided by the Black Eagle.

The populace is increasingly fed up with the Black Eagle; support

for war is very strong here, strong enough that some angry Clanmaster may well just start it himself if things continue.

Wereskalot (Canonical Location)

Wereskalot used to be a major trade centre; now trade has largely bypassed it for the ports, thanks to the Black Eagle Baron and the cheapness of sea travel. The town struggles to stay afloat; much of its wealth comes from adventurers coming to town and spending their loot. This has produced a boom in businesses intended to separate them from their money--casinos, dancing girls, taverns, etc. The Five Deep Shadows have a very strong presence here. As noted in the canon, local homes tend to be

miniature fortresses, for defence purposes.

Rollstone Keep (Canonical Location)

As the Canon.

Mallowfern (Canonical Location)

Mallowfern is a bustling trade town, growing slowly in size as Hin from elsewhere in Eastshire come here seeking work. The local clans (Boldnose, Hoefurrow, Rallytongue) control the town rather thoroughly, but they are fairly benevolent, run by wise Hin who hold to the old ways; while they don't adopt the clanless who come to town, they do try to take care of their clanless employees as best they can. They have successfully kept the Five Deep Shadows presence minimal, and police the town well. Visitors can rest assured that they are safe here. Conversely, not much exciting usually happens here, unless there is a major invasion of Eastshire, at which point this is where the militia units will initially rally. (Or if you want to buy Halfling Arts and Crafts).

Wardlystone (Canonical Location)

Wardlystone is in the process of semi-controlled growth. The local clans have increasingly moved towards processing of goods and craftwork, and so import large amounts of food through Nob's Boots or from Shireton and Thantabbar by road; they then process the food in the local mills. One of the clans, the Alehill, have

built massive breweries, while the Shindlewoods and Quiverjumps run competing mills and restaurants. All three clans are also involved in various kinds of craftwork. However, the more conservative Stoneplow and Tumblebrook clans don't like all these changes and have used their political power to try to slow the town's development. Both clans are headed by members of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, and can call on aid from other clan leaders who belong to it. As their own clans grow too large for the clan resources, they've both turned to Mearagh's idea of expansion into Karameikos; it's not like the Karameikans respect Hin sovereignty, after all...

Most of the time, Wardlystone is a quiet place, but political struggle at times generates its own share of underhandedness and petty local intrigue. To make matters worse, Mina Shindlewood, daughter of Alva Shindlewood, the Clanmistress, is having a covert love affair with Dorvic Tumblebrook, son of Ammagil Tumblebrook, the Keeper of Clan Tumblebrook. If their parents find out, sparks will fly.

Longshadow (Non-Canonical Clan Hold)

The Longshadow clan are an old, prosperous Hin clan of great ancientness. Much of their leadership are members of the Daughters of Dawn Hope, though unlike most members of that society, they have come to embrace the idea of a war on Karameikos. The leader of the

clan's war faction is Clan Elder Kari Longshadow (Ranger 7), who is also secretly one of the Quintet who lead the Lords of Shaerdon. Her clan is likely to get in serious trouble if this ever comes out. The Longshadows have managed to get by in recent years by adding boating and fishing to their normal corn, tomatoes, and bean agriculture, though they're starting to financially struggle; many hope to gain new land and plunder from Karameikos to make up for this.

Nob's Boots (Canonical Location)

Nob's Boots was, for centuries, a sleepy fishing village. But now, as the metal trade flows down the Wardle to the sea, it's turned into a major port for the trade, as well as an inlet for food from Karameikos. The town is a giant mess, though Mearagh has tried to put it into some kind of order as it grows. The result is that as you move from the harbour to the outskirts, it moves from orderly to chaotic then back to order. The Trundlestump clan has made big money from renting out land for houses to be built on, and has built up a much larger fishing fleet. The influx of money has made many of them just a little reckless with their cash, as they spend like there is no tomorrow, following the mad fads and fashions. The result is that many of the Trundlestumps now have Ylari style houses, wear Sindhi style clothing, and eat Vestlander dishes, causing them to look a little ludicrous compared to the rest of the Hin in town. But when

you're loaded, it's just jealousy if people look at you funny. The Clanmaster, who now dubs himself 'Emir' Assal Trundlestump, has been spending a ton of money investing in

genealogical studies, trying to prove he is related to a Dawn Hope descended family, so he can join the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, not that they want him. Any PCs who can bring him

genealogical lore would find themselves well rewarded. And possibly riding a Ylari stallion while dressed like a Sindhi and having a big plate of sausage and sauerkraut as a snack.

Seashire



Seashire is home to nearly half the population of the Shires, making it rather...crowded. However, it also has lots of trade and several major cities, which help somewhat. It is also home to the Shires central government (such as it is), and to a huge amount of farming. Despite its size, it has less entrances to the Shadowdeep than any other Shire, and thus is not very frequently raided. Its pastoral calm is the image many have of the Shires, though there is trouble bubbling under the surface...

Thantabbar (Canonical Location)

Thantabbar is one of the three great cities of the Shires. It has

endured for over a thousand years, and those interested in older styles of Hin architecture often visit it to see examples of how Hin lived long, long ago. The Shires Historical Society has one of its two main chapter houses here, exploiting the chance to have a home as old as what they often study. They are always looking to hire adventurers to go find various old things for them.

Because it is not politically important, it lacks the level of trouble which sometimes infests Shireton; political conflicts among locals just don't have the same weight as the game of nations played in Shireton. Nor does the city get as many non-Hin visitors,

though this city has a higher percentage of non-Hin than most other places in the Shires. The four major clans of the area dominate the city, but can't control it, as the merchants and craftsmen who owe fealty to no clan (or at least no local clan) are too wealthy to be denied a share of political power. Right now, the Leafshine and Quicksilver clans are allied against the Standfast and Stormhin clans. All four, however, would stand united against those within the Shires who oppose increasing commerce and manufacturing, as their home grown rivalries come out of personality and petty local issues, not any strong ideological disagreements. Also, all four have

a strong feud with the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, for these clans are all less than a thousand years old, founded to replace clans devastated by past wars. They strongly back Jaervosz's colonization plans, in hopes of opening new markets for their goods and new sources of raw materials. They don't like pirates and don't really trust Hin pirates any more than any other pirates, so pirates rarely dock here. The Five Deep Shadows have a strong, but not dominant presence here, quietly operating their casinos, brothels, and taverns for the many dockworkers and visitors to the town. Every so often, some other gang will rise to try to challenge them, and then a gang war follows. They have kept the city largely crime-free...if you don't count them.

Shaerdon Ruins (Non-Canonical Location)

It was here that the Lords of Shaerdon once met in assembly, where they elected the Decennial King (Rather than choosing a permanent king, they elected one from their ranks each decade), and here it was that everything came crashing down when the Kinstrife began. Here it was that Orc King Thrail killed the last of the Decennial Kings, Lord Babbas Manytoes, and here it was that the families of the Lords were roasted alive by King Thrail when he burned it. And now it is a ruins, haunted by ghosts and shadows of things past. Every so often, the Sheriffs clean it out, but the dead always return.

And here it is that the Lords of Shaerdon meet in secret once a year to renew their commitment to their cause. They alone can walk unmolested by the dead in this place. They see this as a sign of holy righteousness. Others might ask if the dead hope to soon have company...

Last Refuge (Non-Canonical Location)

Once this was Calamar, the Shining Home of the Gentle Folk, their Capital and home to their Tree of Life. Now its glory has faded and the Gentle Folk long fled. But Aldaron, child of their Tree of Life, still stands sentinel over this beautiful tree city and maintains the local defence wards with the aid of the Refuge Clan, a mixed clan of Elves and Hin who have dwelt here since the Kinstrife. The defence wards, maintained through ritual practices and performances, repel any evil being who enters the hex and anyone who is not a Hin or an Elf. All those effected must make a Will save at difficulty 25 or flee, once every 10 minutes. (In other D&D editions, save vs. spell with a -10 penalty.) Undead who come within a mile of the city will take 1d6 damage every minute. The Refuge Clan has no crucible of Blackflame; Aldaron is their relic. The Hin members are notably tall and slender for halflings and have some elven features. They also tend to be calmer. They are very friendly with Delune and support her project. They also welcome all Hin Masters to visit them. While

they would never advertise it, there are several Hin sorcerors among their ranks and a few wizards also. (In editions other than 3E, the Refuge clan should be treated as essentially short elves in terms of access to classes, level limits, etc.)

The Refuge clan has lost a lot of the Gentle Folk lore, but preserve more of it than almost anyone else in the Shires, and Delune expects them to play a crucial role in her plans. However, they are very pacifistic and thus vulnerable, so she keeps some Kronstar in the area to protect them, in case the wards prove insufficient.

Deepmoss (Canonical Location)

Deepmoss is a flourishing crossroads community next to several clans facing serious problems. The town is dominated by clanless Hin who have more or less formed an unofficial clan and govern themselves; they are flourishing off the trade which rolls through and the services they provide to travellers and traders. Lord Mayor Helga (Expert 9) of the North (originally from Soderfjord of all places!) rules the town with an even hand; she has a knack for soothing irritated tempers and finding compromises (Diplomacy 12). Meanwhile, the Bristlebur, Streamford, and Treeshadow clans have outbred their land's capacity to support themselves, but their leaders are too conservative to move away from their traditional food crop production and so many of their youth drift away (some to Deepmoss, most heading down the

road to Thantabbar or Shireton); this will eventually correct the overpopulation, but may then cause the population to plunge. The clan elders are trying to assert claims to the land on which the town sits, but Sheriff Jaervosz is unfriendly to their efforts and they have failed. It seems likely they may try more desperate measures to increase their clan revenues soon. (Gorgo Treeshadow, Clanmaster of Treeshadow, is beginning to support war with Karameikos in hopes of moving his clan to better or at least LARGER lands there. The Streamford and Bristlebur clans mutter darkly about taking what rightly belongs to them, but are waiting for you, the DM, to come up with a better plan for them.) The Deepdell Inn is a meeting place for local members of the Adventurer's Society; they meet the second night of the week, twice a month, to swap stories and tell lies about their adventures and show off old trophies.

Leafkindle (Canonical Location)

Leafkindle is an unusual town; the local woods is home to a fair number of Elves, and so is the village, which thus has more resemblance to a settlement of the big folk than most Hin communities. The town itself was once used, long ago, as a meeting place to meet with the Gentle Folk, and there are ruins only a few miles away of one of the last Gentle Folk communities. It has largely been picked over by adventurers, but there are rumours

of remaining caches of money, goods, and lore hidden in places where only strong magic can extract it. The rumours are enough to bring a fair number of adventurers through. The three local clans, Belnoise, Mouldwalk, and Proudstride all frequently pick over the ruins in desperate hope of finding some wealth to augment their overstressed income. All three clans have good lands, but they are reluctant to change their ways and shift to cash crops. Mori Proudstride, Keeper of Proudstride, is a proud member of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, and loudly opposes changing their ways. However, he is pragmatic enough to support Jaervosz's colonization project, as he realizes that the clans are getting too big for their lands. He opposes Maeragh's calls for war, however, as he sees self-defence instead of aggression as a key part of Hin heritage. He also thinks Multhim is utterly insane, wanting to make everyone live in caves like Dwarves and Goblins.

Moon Hill (Canonical Location)

Moon Hill is a small community completely controlled by the Adventurer's Society and the Sheriffs. Many of the most powerful members of the Society maintain homes here, and the small group of human and elf wizards called upon by the Sheriffs to provide necessary magical services dwell here as well. You can hardly shake a stick without hitting someone high in level. Even your waitress at the

local tavern can probably take on a troll by herself and win. When the Sheriffs need high firepower, they come here. Conversely, when they need someone's services on a long term basis, they offer them a place here.

Burny (Canonical Location)

From the outside, Burny appears to be a quiet little fishing town with some shipping business. The fields around the town are full of grains and fruit and odd flowers. Lots of ships come here, apparently to avoid the congestion of Shireton.

However, the town is actually totally controlled by the Five Deep Shadows and constitutes one of their major bases. All three local clans--Quizzinglas, Vindlewalk, Woodward--are not just affiliated with the Five Deep Shadows, but have traditionally provided much of its top leadership. The local cliffs are riddled with caves holding stolen and smuggled goods, forging operations, prisoners, etc. Their farms grow a lot of food, but also produce huge amounts of alcohol and drugs and chemicals useful for making poisons and other alchemical concoctions. The town itself is a major centre for smuggling and for those pirates sponsored by the Five Deep Shadows themselves. Outsiders are watched carefully, but only actually harassed if they seem likely to stumble on things they should not. You know the drill.

Stillpool (Canonical Location)

The past and a possible future are in conflict in Stillpool. The four local clans (Battlebur, Brambleshun, Littleglade, Woodgrott) focus on food production and are more conservative, dedicated to the traditional ways of the clans. But they're hitting the limits of their ability to feed themselves, and an increasing number of clan members end up having to work under harsh conditions in the workshops of Stillpool in order to earn extra money for the clan. Meanwhile, the merchants and craftmasters of Stillpool live the high life off their profits, adopting foreign fashions and building elaborate houses that outshine the

old traditional housing. One of the major craftmasters, Corgo Leirshine, is secretly one of the Lords of Shaerdon and runs his enterprises to funnel money to that society. He has tried to blame Karameikan and Darokinian competition for the economic woes of the clans and has had some success, though the Littleglade clan is more enchanted with Multhim's proposals for exploitation of the Shadowdeep. (They fear the human kingdoms are too powerful to fight now, as some members of the clan have returned from yallara with stories of the size of Specularum, Darokin City, etc.)

Wreck of the Grand Fleet (Non-Canonical Location)

During the Thirty Years' War, one of the major Thyatian initiatives was destroyed in 608 by a storm. The Grand Fleet sank in a hideous disaster and took a huge pile of treasure and equipment to the bottom of the ocean. Now an Aboleth has moved into the wreckage, turned various local sea life into his flunkies and is making preparations to use his newfound wealth to begin infiltrating and controlling coastal towns. It may either greatly aid him or be a disaster that his first target is likely to be Burny...

Heartshire



Like its Sheriff, Heartshire is the most conservative part of the Shires. It is home to many farming clans who are struggling

to hold together in the face of the land having filled up, and it has long ago used up most of its mineral resources. The land is

beautiful, the harvests are good, but you can only feed so many Hin at the level to which they are accustomed at this level of

technology, and the shunning of Wizards and Sorcerors means a lack of common magic to meet their needs.

One of the few areas of innovation has been the effort to find any way to increase yields of the traditional crops; there has been some success here in finding better ways to farm and the creation of fertilizers through alchemy.

Sateeka (Canonical Location)

Like Wereskalot, Sateeka combines trade and military defence, not that anything has invaded from Darokin in a long time (beyond some orc raids out of the mountains). Darokinians are a common presence here and welcomed. (Most Heartshire Hin don't want to BE Darokin, but they like Darokinians, who are honest and hard-working.) The amount of trade sustains six local clans (Elintel, Forestfar, Hairytoes, Kittledance, Lamintar, Whisperrun), all of whom are prospering through a mix of traditional handicrafts and agriculture. Their proximity to the Shireseat has made them very influential in the Shire's assembly, and they are content with things the way they are. A fair number of the clansmen belong to the Daughters of the Dawn Hope. Sateeka is politically pretty calm, as the Whisperrun clan have dominated local politics for centuries, and seem unlikely to lose this position so long as trade with Darokin doesn't dry up. (All six clans have way too many members for agriculture alone, but having first crack at Darokinian

goods has enabled them to make a lot of money which keeps them afloat and keeps them from realizing how much trouble the Shires really are in.)

Camp Habit (Non-Canonical Location)

Camp Habit has its name from the fact that over two thousand years of Hin history, would-be bandits have a habit of favouring this excellent camp ground. It is highly defensible with access to water, thanks to some kind past soul who dug a well. It sits up atop a cliff, looking down at the Flur and includes a tunnel escape route through the mountains (with access to the Shadowdeep).

Periodically, the Krondar have to root out monsters, bandits, etc, from this position, another 'habit'.

Fishtickle Bridge (Canonical Location)

The Hin of Fishtickle Bridge have exploited the combination of strategic positioning and the river to keep themselves afloat in this time of difficulty. Most imported goods and food that come to Heartshire from Shireton come up the Ithypool to Fishtickle, then get sold to local merchants here. Furthermore, the river is highly exploited for food processing through mills. The Cindertoes and Deepdell clans have taken up growing coffee and tea as well for export to the rest of the Shires. The more conservative Gullybuck, Ilingall, and Pytchplume clans are slowly sinking further and further

into debt to local merchants and greatly resent the town's prosperity. They have joined the call for a war on Karameikos, hoping to gain new lands, far from the merchants, thereby. The Summergarth clan have become merchants and manufacturers and financiers and have many of the other clans in debt to them; they are also roundly hated because of this.

Delune is deeply unhappy with the current state of affairs, but so long as no one does anything illegal, she is unable to do much other than occasionally fine the Summergarths for excessive loan rates.

Shadowgate (Canonical Location)

In many ways, Shadowgate is a typical Heartshire community. The local clans (Dappleglade, Heartwood, Mistwalker) all engage in agriculture as the heart of their clan economy. The Heartwoods are noted for their woodworking, the Dappleglades are also loggers and the Mistwalkers run several wineries with some success. All three clans also have the same basic problem-too many clan members and no easy way to increase income without abandoning old customs and moving into new areas of business. Each clan is contemplating a different solution. The Mistwalkers are in contact with Sheriff Delune on her enchantment of the Shires project and their Keeper (Anyia) is one of her major allies in that endeavour. The Heartwood Clanmaster

(Kavric) is one of the Lords of Shaerdon and hopes to find new lands for his clan to hold them all. And the Dappleglade Clanmaster (Donora) is contemplating kicking out the least productive members of the clan, though she doesn't realize exactly how huge a firestorm this would kick up, as such a thing is just not done in Heartshire. (Not without better excuses, anyway...)

Brookbank (Canonical Location)

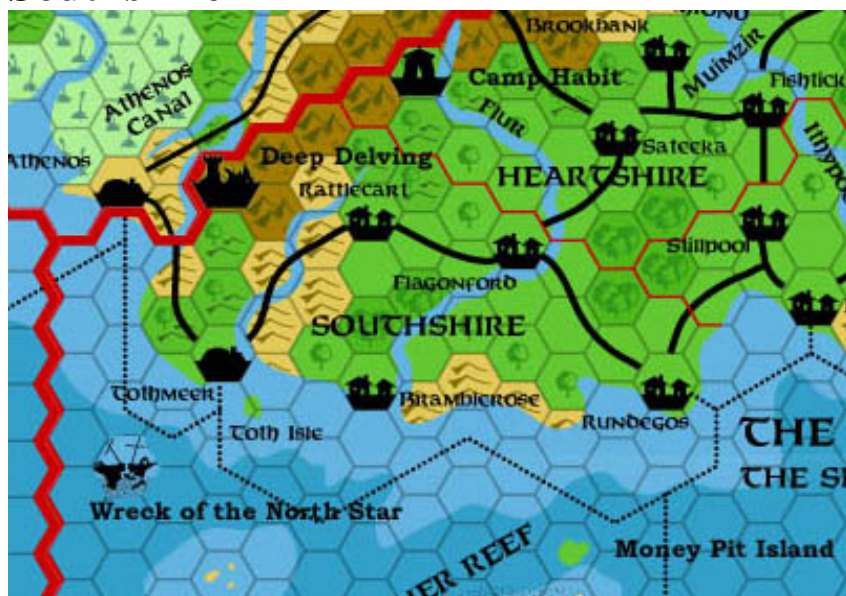
Brookbank is a small farming village dominated by the Barrowhin and Tallthicket clans. They have been engaged in a feud over some of the local land for nearly two centuries, and it's only gotten worse now that both clans

have overgrazed much of their lands (both clans raise sheep and then sell the wool to merchants to get other kinds of food and goods. They do a little clothmaking, but only to meet their own needs.). Delune has been trying to settle the feud, but both clans need the disputed tracts of land enough that the problem always re-arises. A Hin Master of the Shires lives in the area (Brondor Forestfar Heartshire, Ranger 8/Master 3), and is trying to help settle the feud before more damage is done to the local environment from the clans sabotaging each other, but he's much better at talking to trees than humans and could use some help.

Kuurg Haash (Non-Canonical Location)

Orc King Thrail built this fortress long, long ago, and from it, he began his conquest of the shires. When he began his path to immortality, he used hidden delvings beneath it as his base and hid his time-travel artifact there. Now he is long dead and defeated, but his artifact remains there still, waiting to be found. No Hin explorer has found it yet, but it's only a matter of Time... Every would-be Orc conqueror of the Shires comes here before launching his invasion, so the Sheriffs keep an eye on it as an early warning system. And Thrail's long ago sponsor watches over the fortress, so as to ensure his artifact falls into the right hands, when the time is ripe...

Southshire



The past and the future meet in Southshire, leading to increasing social conflict. Some of the most

hardcore conservative Hin in the Shires live in Southshire. Most of them just want nothing more than

to live in quiet rural peace as their ancestors did. But the forces of change are rising, and they feel

they have to resist it, to save the old ways. If the first land of the Hin deserts Hin culture and tradition, where will it possibly survive? Many worry that the choice of Sildil as Sheriff means the beginning of the end for them. Other Hin look to a future of commerce and manufacturing, in which the Shires will stop sending raw materials away for others to make a profit off, and primarily make its own goods, then sell the surplus abroad for a profit. They point to the rising levels of clanless Hin in need of work. The clans are failing, they claim. The Shires must change or die. And the Sheriff is ultimately on their side.

The question, however, is whether or not there's time to make changes before society falls apart, or if what emerges will be recognizable as Hin society at all...

Tothmeer (Canonical Location)

The main city and Shireseat of Southshire exemplifies the conflicts within society. Half the clans (Hardflask, Idelwise, Knackwell, Nimblefoot) play a major role in commerce and shipping and craft manufacturing. (The Knackwells are the finest shipwrights in the Shires, in fact.) They also quietly fence goods brought into the port by Hin pirates. The Nudgestone, Vailswash and Yollersshield clans, on the other hand, provide the city with food; while demand is high, they have grown greatly in size and are beginning to struggle to stay afloat; many of their members have had to take on jobs as

dockworkers, teamsters, etc, which doesn't pay hugely well, but beats starvation. Their leadership has responded to this by playing up their heritage as ancient clans. All three clans contain many members of the Daughters of the New Hope, and the Vailswash Keeper (Bordigo) and the Nudgestone Clanmaster (Brisco) are members of the Lords of Shaerdon. They have grown to hate the Darokin merchants they feel defraud their clans (by not paying obscene prices for their clan produce and charging what the market will bear for goods) and have grand delusions of invading Darokin and claiming the old Hin lands there.

The city is thus racked by constant political conflict between the two factions; at the present, the more successful clans and their allies hold a narrow margin in the town council. The next election is coming soon, and Sildil feels there will be a lot of skulduggery in it, tying up her attention when she has other things to attend to.

Adventurers could come in handy...

Tothmeer is home to the Tothmeer Inventor's Society, a joint gnome and halfling society with a focus on innovation and inventions. When their projects go wrong, the agricultural clans howl to the moon; some of their projects have been of great help to the city. Right now, they are in the process of building various controversial devices to aid in the defence of the harbour. Whether they will work is another question... (They include a giant device which uses

mirrors to focus light, supposedly to set ships on fire (so far it's only caused people to go briefly blind), a giant steam-powered delivery system for Thyatian Fire and other projectiles (so far it's good at producing lots of steam), and giant winches to pluck ships out of the water (needs more range and they can't find a way to let it lift enough force to actually lift anything bigger than, say, a rowboat). But they're still trying and adding more! They'll need help testing them soon...)

Rundegos (Canonical Location)

Rundegos is another quiet fishing and smuggling town, and like many smuggling centres, there is a strong presence of the Five Deep Shadows. However, they have far less control than in Burny. Part of the reason for this is the presence of a fair number of retired adventurers (see the canonical write-up). The town is also a popular place to pick up supplies quickly for pirates.

Flagonford (Canonical Location)

The juncture of three roads and a navigable river have turned Flagonford into a bustling, if not huge town. The Horsetail clan largely dominates the teamster business and is in the pocket of the Five Deep Shadows, helping them to smuggle goods. The Pipesmoke clan are major tobacco producers, which has made their leaders wealthy. They have taken in many clanless Hin and turned them into a labour force for the tobacco fields. The Foxfollow and

Omblestaff clans, traditional conservative Hin pastoralists (sheep, goats, cattle) frown on this, but are themselves struggling to survive, and many of them now have to work for other clans or local merchants in their business enterprises. (The Omblestaff have bent enough to take up the cooeping business and make good money on it, which helps.) This irritates the local Daughters of the Dawn Hope tremendously. They are more mellow about it than in more politically 'hot' areas, however. The Zindlestone clan run mills and process the food grown by other clans and also spin wool into thread. Many clanless Hin work in the meat processing industry dominated by a small group of local merchants. The Fireswords, a band of human and elf adventurers based in Flagonford, remain neutral in political conflicts. They have been known to work with The Shires Delving Society in exploring locations within the Shadowdeep. They're rumoured to have some sort of contract with Sildil, as they seem to come to her assistance when things need more firepower than the Kronstar can easily bring to bear.

Bramblerose (Canonical Location)

Bramblerose is a flourishing small port for those wishing to avoid larger, more congested ones. Goods can be transhipped to barges going up the Flur to Flagonford, from which they go almost anywhere in Heartshire or Southshire with ease. The three

clans here are best described as 'comfortable conservatives'; the Stormweather and Voluteye clans have been able to expand their fishing as their population grows, enabling them to stick to the old ways, while the Darkforest clan has always been more of craftsmen and builders than farmers; they operate all over Southshire as builders and repairers of buildings. However, the Stormweather and Voluteye clans are now starting to face some resistance from other groups of fishermen who have done the same as them, and there may be trouble on the horizon. For now, this is a good place to buy smuggled goods or study genealogy (the Keeper of Voluteye, Harkin, has a huge collection of birth and death records and a volume tracing his clan back to the first Hin to arrive. He is a member of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope and the Shires Historical Society.) As noted in the canon, Bramblerose Forest, to the west, is home to recurring monster infestations. The exact cause remains unclear, though there is an adventure with some suggestions in the Adventure section.

Rattlecart (Canonical Location)

Rattlecart is a small market town, dominated by the Ogglemurk and Wanderfence clans. It is the place where everyone in northern Southshire comes to buy goods and where the produce of the area flows into the hands of merchants for sale elsewhere. The two clans are having an ongoing dispute; the

Ogglemurk raise sheep and cattle, while the Wanderfence clan raises tobacco, grains, and tea. However, the Ogglemurk have, basically, too many cattle and sheep and keep letting them wander into the Wanderfence clan's lands, leading them to get angry. This is necessary for them, from their viewpoint, as they need all these animals to support their overly large clan. The Wanderfences want a stricter enforcement of the land boundaries. It is likely that Sildil will rule in their favour, in which case the Ogglemurks will be in trouble, and things may get messy...

Deep Delving (Non-Canonical Location)

There is a long and honourable Dwarven tradition of digging too deep and unleashing ancient evil upon the world. This old Dwarven hold, originally named Fulbolrast (West Crater Mountain) was carved out of a meteor impact crater up in the mountains, with homes and workshops and mines all commingled in the walls of the crater. Eventually, they dug down below crater level and found several tunnels leading into the Shadowdeep. Creatures from below slaughtered everyone, then fled the cursed LIGHT of the surface back down below. This happened in the first months of the uprising of the Hin against the Dwarves. For a time, the Hin settled the site, only to have the creatures rise up and eat them. It was seen as accursed and sealed as best the Hin could. The Orcs of

King Thrail tried to settle here, only to eventually be eaten. Finally, the site was abandoned, and the Kronдар keep watch here, but whatever eats those who delve too deep, it seems disinclined to risk the light of day...

Wreck of the North Star (Non-Canonical Location)

Though no one knows it is there, many groups would take an

interest in this ancient wreck if they did know. The North Star was one of the three flagships of the rag-tag Hin fleet which founded the Shires; it wrecked in the last days of the trip in a hideous storm, taking hundreds of Hin to the bottom of the ocean and many historical artifacts in sealed containers. It sits there still, now home to (some undersea menace appropriate to your PCs' level), a

huge trove full of the truth about the origins of the Shires. Should someone finally spot it way down below on the ocean floor, the Adventurer's Society, the Lords of Shaerdon, the Daughters of the Dawn Hope, the Shires Historical Society, and probably many others will all want to find it to see 'who is right'.

Shireton

Shireton is the largest city in the Shires and its capital. It is well described in the canonical gazetteer, so only some additional notes relevant to this version of the setting will be made here.

Shireton is constructed atop several layers of ruins, dating all the way back to Blackmoor. For those who know where to look, tunnels into the Shadowdeep itself can be found, though the Sheriffs have tried to find and seal or guard them all (with mixed success). Things lurk in the dark below the city, though anything too dangerous usually ends up being killed by Kronдар or adventurers. Several criminal groups lurk below, hiding from the Five Deep Shadows, who mostly control Shireton Port and watch over Shireton as well, carrying out their duty to squash petty crime. But the Undercity is just too big for them.

The Shires Historical Society has one of its biggest chapterhouses here, including a museum which has relics dating all the way back to Blackmoor. Most are now non-functional. One of the librarians, Yoko Flintfoot (Expert 7) is quietly a member of the Lords of Shaerdon, involved in 'proving' their land claims.

The major clans here are heavily involved in the business of the city and largely open to the idea of further commerce and manufacturing. So instead they squabble over office and petty old feuds so long as no outside threat to their business arises. The Flintfoot and Jantobell clans are heavily involved in trade, while the Longquaffs are teamsters and dockworkers. The Nogknocks are builders of buildings and ships, while the Plodmoot provide high quality servants to the elites of other clans. The Roughleap and Slowleaf clans engage in many forms of craft production. The

city is riddled with foreign fashions and architecture by ambitious Hin who have been exposed to foreign culture.

Most Hin politics here is fairly slow-paced and calm and at times somewhat whimsical; there is a tradition of embarrassing one's enemies more than hurting them. This light heartedness is used as a mask for other activities by those foreigners who engage in heavier intrigues.

The Sailor's Rest, in Shireton Port, is the largest brothel in the Shires, run by the Five Deep Shadows. It definitely provides human, elf, halfling and gnome ladies and gentlemen, and is rumoured to be able to cater to other tastes as well. It also has a stock of devices for making people bigger or smaller to avoid size issues. Rumour has it that a particularly powerful and perverted wizard is 'on staff', providing various magical amenities. If so, he's never been

publicly seen, but who knows when he might be watching...

Shireton is noted for its open parties; most of the nicer portions of the year, there is a party somewhere every night, and

everyone, even Dwarves, is generally welcome if no more misbehaving than the hin guests. (Some nights, the alcohol flows like the wind). These parties are the source and genesis of what cross-species romance flowers in

this town, quite frequently; you never know what you'll wake up with if you're not careful. Especially if Bungo Barrelmore or Jasser Fullbellow crashes the party. (See canon, page 53)

Shire-Related Locations Outside the Shire

Westwatch Tower (Non-Canonical Location. Malpeggi Swamp)

When Shaerdon fell, the Westwatch colony survived for a time, holding out nearly a century before the Lizardmen defeated its forces and forced its evacuation. In recent years, the Lords of Shaerdon have reclaimed it and turned it into their most secret base where all the really dangerous secrets are kept. It is guarded by fanatically loyal members of the society and contains a substantial amount of wealth and valuable historical artifacts. Were it to be exposed, the society would be blown wide open.

Money Pit Island (Non-Canonical Location. Off Fletcher Reef)

Money Pit Island was, once upon a time, known as Saasar Island. But now it is known as the Money Pit. During the Thirty Year's War, the famous Hin Pirate Galassar acquired a huge amount of wealth from the Thyatians. He took much of it and hid it at the bottom of a shaft dug into this island, guarded by dozens, maybe hundreds of traps and layers of

security to make it nigh impossible for anyone to recover who didn't know the secrets.

Then, at the battle of the Five Bulls, he was turned to stone by a beholder and sank to the bottom of the ocean, never to be seen again. Since then, dozens, maybe hundreds of people have tried to defeat all the layers of traps, security, flooding areas, shifting rooms, etc, in order to get his treasure. None have yet succeeded, and some property of the local ores blocks scrying, teleportation, planar shifts, and the like. Instead, people have blown immense amounts of treasure, trying to get to his treasure.

And so it has come to be known as Money Pit island. His treasure yet awaits some clever soul with a truly immense knowledge of engineering and traps. And lots of fools with money to burn.

Hinmeet (Canonical Non-Shires Location. Southern Darokin)

The Lords of Shaerdon have been quietly trying to prompt the Hin of Hinmeet to revolt against Darokin; the local Hin find this utterly ludicrous and take great pleasure

in finding ways to try to embarrass such agitators into leaving.

Koriszegy Keep (Canonical Non-Shires Location. Western Karameikos)

Records in the hands of the Lords of Shaerdon indicate this keep was built on the ruins of an eastern Hin fortress from the Shaerdon era. They hope to delve down and explore these ruins and find confirmation of the right of the Hin to rule western Karameikos. For once, the lords are correct; there is a ruins under it, it does contain evidence of Hin rule, and the evidence is fairly conclusive. However, no one in Karameikos will take this as proof of the right of Hin to rule there now, the ruins of Koriszegy Keep is home to a vampire who the Hin, lacking clerics, probably can't deal with, and the old Hin ruins are themselves full of the restless dead who may well eat any historical or Lords backed expeditions. Local peasants will try to warn any expeditions to stay away, but we all know that ADVENTURERS NEVER LISTEN TO WARNINGS. Ever.

Adventures

The canonical Gazetteer has a good list of appropriate encounters in the wilderness for the Shires. It also has many adventures which should still work.

The White Stag

Adventure Level: Special

Topic: The High Heroes

Interesting Features: A high speed chase across the Shire countryside.

Campaign Hook: Automatically hooks into another adventure

The Adventure: This begins with the PCs in an Adventurer's Society chapterhouse. Whatever they are doing is interrupted by Joam Astlar running at high speed into the building and announcing loudly that the White Stag of the Shires has appeared at (point nearby the town the PCs are in.) The Stag appears erratically in the Shires, always leading heroes to fantastic wealth, but often also fantastic danger. Everyone in the place drops everything and goes after the Stag.

The PCs soon end up part of a high speed chase across the countryside, assuming they actually join in. If not, this adventure ends, but you can reuse a similar hook another time. If the PCs join in, the Stag leads them a merry chase across the Shires until they reach another adventure you intend to run. It then leads them to the location, and if they take the adventure, it blesses them. This provides the benefit of a Bless spell, but it never ends so long as

the PCs pursue what it led them to. This can happen at any level, as you can hook it into an adventure of whatever level you desire.

PCs who complete the adventure will gain the favour of the High Heroes if they act heroically in the interest of the Shires. (The Heroes don't mind if the PCs also profit by what they do, of course.)

Anyone they are testing to see about sponsoring for Immortality will be tested to see if they will follow the Stag. Loberlin Mulgor, if talked to by PCs in some encounter, can tell them about her several encounters with the Stag.

Bad Touch

Adventure Level: 1-3

Topic: Goblin Raids

Interesting Features: The PCs must fight strangely acting goblins

Campaign Hook: PCs who figure out what's going on might actually be able to befriend a goblin tribe. Assuming they WANT to.

The Adventure: The PCs, who need to be up in the mountains or hills, encounter a group of goblin raiders. However, the goblins are armed only with clubs and seem content to whack the PCs once, lightly, then run away. This is part of a manhood test where they must survive with only clubs and touch some foe of goblinkind and live to tell about it. If the PCs

respond with non-lethal force, the Goblins, who are all really rather scared of what they're doing, will assume this is some special test somehow arranged by the elders and will become friendly. Mind you, most PCs won't want to befriend goblins, but there's always some guy who wants funky henchmen... If slain, the goblins have no treasure, unless you count dried fruit and a couple of salted squirrel meat jerky pieces.

Glantri Test

Adventure Level: 1-3, can easily be adjusted higher.

Topic: Anti-Glantri Prejudice

Interesting Features: A chance to meet members of the Glantri Destruction Society

Campaign Hook: A chance to make long-term allies or many enemies or to end up in prison, depending on how they handle things.

The Adventure: The PCs stop at an Inn and have the (mis)fortune to pick one where the Glantri Destruction Society's local chapter is having a meeting. If no one in the group looks like a wizard, they will simply overhear the group talking about how much it HATES GLANTRI and they can be easily approached by anyone willing to share the hate-on. Ironically, the

Glantri Destruction Society likes Dwarves, unlike most Shirefolk, so any Dwarves will be approached by the GDS members and invited to share a drink and food with them, so they can commiserate about how wretched Glantri is.

If anyone does look wizardly to the GDS members, they will begin talking REAL LOUDLY about how terrible Glantri is, and watch for a reaction. If they see any evidence he doesn't like this, they will assume he is Glantrian. They won't actually start anything in the Inn if he doesn't start anything, however. Instead, they will send someone to the local Krondar or Clanmaster to have him arrested. Players who go along peacefully and are not Glantrians will get an apology from the Krondar once this is established and a warning about the society. Glantrians, on the other hand, will be in big trouble, but should be given a chance to escape before they are sent off to have something unfortunate happen to them. If violence breaks out somehow before that, they will attempt to grapple the wizard and beat him to death with improvised weapons. Half the group will be first level commoners and the other half first level warriors (or First level Halflings flat out, in OE). Scale the group to be more than a match for any low-level wizard, but not a match for a full adventuring party. Other Hin present will hastily summon the Krondar, who will probably outmatch the PCs unless this is extremely a backwater.

Meet the Hornets

Adventure Level: 1-3

Topic: Illustrates how many Hornets think and their ideal role in the Shires

Interesting Features: A chance to meet a Hornet band and possibly befriend them and a demonstration of how Hin fight.

Campaign Hook: Making a favourable impression on one Hornet band will tend to help the PCs with others, and the Hornets tend to know what is going down where.

The Adventure: A group of Hornets have decided to test the PCs. One of their number is injured from an animal attack. He will go out in plain sight where the PCs will encounter him, while the rest lurk in the woods to watch. He clearly has no significant wealth beyond a few copper coins and a nice looking axe. If the PCs help him or at least try, the rest of the group will introduce themselves in a friendly manner. If they ignore him, but don't hurt him either, they will follow the group and probably try to rob it that night unless they demonstrate heroic/helpful tendencies in some other manner that day. If they actively hurt the injured Hin, they will begin sniping the PCs with shortbows and slings, focusing first on anyone hurting their fellow, then on anyone who doesn't wear armour. (Assumed to be a wizard.) If the injured Hin is killed, they go berserk and will fight to the death; otherwise, they flee and spread the news the PCs are scum to other Hornet bands if

they lose more than 2 other members.

The group should be sized to be a threat but not an overwhelming one; all members are first level, except for a second level leader.

Sind Me An Angel

Adventure Level: 3-5

Topic: Culture Clash, Sind and Shires contact

Interesting Features: The PCs get to try to deal with culture shock

Campaign Hook: Handled well, the PCs could make a strong ally of the wealthy and powerful Sindhi Ambassador.

The Adventure: Much to his regret, the Sindhi Ambassador is having to play host to his cousin, Amardeep Chandragupta (LN Knight 4). Amardeep, like his cousin, is part of the warrior caste. Unlike his cousin, he has little knowledge of the Shires and is...poor...at adapting himself to realities. He has insisted on a tour of the countryside, since Ambassador Asoka has lots of free time. They show up with followers in some country village or market town the PCs are in. The local Clanmaster(s) wish to meet them, and invite them (and the PCs, as heroes of modest note) to eat with them. What ensues is a collision of cultures, as Amardeep rigidly tries to follow his homeland's customs, complaining about things such as failure of the servers to follow purification rites. He also insists on only eating with fellow warriors. Which excludes one of the Clanmasters, who identified himself as a farmer

(though he has militia experience) and the Keepers. Etc, etc. Amardeep is not evil (he's brave, honest, and generous, but far too lawful for his own good), but he is rigid in his ways, and his behaviour increasingly embarrasses the Sindhi Ambassador and angers the clan leaders. The PCs must step in and settle things. Or perhaps attack Amardeep's ill manners, in which case Asoka won't be happy with them (even if he knows his cousin is being rude and rigid, family matters...) If the PCs can bring everyone around to a happy medium, they can make some valuable allies here.

Also, Amardeep, who has never met real adventurers, may want to go on an adventure with them to see what it's like...which could lead into another adventure.

The Keido Longbottom Memorial Brag

Adventure Level: 3-5, though even level 1 could do this safely.

Topic: Halfling Storytelling and Bragging

Interesting Features: PCs get a chance to win some gold by telling BIG LIES. REALLY BIG LIES.

Campaign Hook: PCs may earn a good reputation as storytellers.

The Adventure: The PCs ride into some village just in time for the annual bragging contest in memory of the village hero, Keido Longbottom, who is said to have once convinced a dragon to kill himself by bragging about how horrible its death would be if it messed with Keido. The PCs are

welcome to join in. There are a half-dozen contestants with a pre-roll Perform total of 4, two contestants with an 8, and one very good storyteller with an 11, who is the one to beat (Olga Longbottom, descendent of Keido. She is a Bard 5 with 8 ranks and a +3 charisma bonus). If one of the PCs tells the best story, he wins 25 gold, a 25 gp pendant of Keido, and free beer and food all night. Second place gets 15 gold and a 5 GP pewter statuette and five free drinks. Third place gets 5 free drinks. Everyone else gets nada, but hopefully has fun.

Tunnels of Tothmeer

Adventure Level: 3-5

Topic: Smuggling and the Five Shires Historical Society

Interesting Features: The PCs begin what they expect to be a tomb delving only to find it's actually a gang of smugglers.

Campaign Hook: Doing a good job will guarantee them future work with the Historians but the enmity of Hin smugglers.

The Adventure: Tori Yollersshield (Expert 4, History (Shires) 10) is a historian for the Yollersshield clan and a Society member. She's also a member of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope. She's found an ancient diary of Mimbo Bigglestoos, who legend indicates was one of the crew of the Dawn Hope. She's also found a map of where he was buried. She wants to dig down and see what historical lore may have been buried with him. Meticulous and careful, she's arranged all the necessary permissions to go down

into Master Oakenshott's Wine Cellar and dig down to the tomb. However, she fears undead, and thus has hired the PCs to protect her crew of diggers.

Unknown to her, sewer construction and smugglers busted the tomb open hundreds of years ago, taking most of its contents, and right now, a gang of smugglers uses it to hide goods. So when they break in, they will find crates full of Ylari perfumes, bolts of silk, and boxes of spices. There is about 300 GP worth of goods per PC. As they look about, the gang shows up. They are first level Halfling Rogues, with a second level leader, and they come in fair numbers. Scale them to give the PCs a stiff but not overwhelming fight. Once they win, Tori will want to turn the goods over to the Kronard; if this is done, they will give each PC a 200 GP reward, and the PCs will earn some credit with the authorities. Or they can try and make off with it themselves. Or throw a wild Ylaruam party with it. Up to them. In whatever case, though, if any smugglers escape or the whole affair goes public, the PCs will face future trouble with smugglers.

Rule the Skies!

Adventure Level: 4-8

Topic: The Highshire Avionics Society--threat or menace?

Interesting Features: A chance to go on an aerial ride over the Shires

Campaign Hook: A good performance will make the society

your allies and possibly please the Sheriffs as well.

The Adventure: The Highshire Avionics Society is looking to hire adventurers for a flight test and aerial hunt. Wyverns have been wrecking havoc in Eastshire, probably sent by Bargle, and the Avionics society wants to test their new Zeppelin and deal with an aerial menace. They will pay adventurers 300 GP each to join their flight crew, to act as the hunting force. (Or whatever sum will entice your PCs into an experimental zeppelin) The Zeppelin drifts along at a speed of one hex per hour from Launchpoint Tower; the guidance is fairly, but not perfectly reliable. Roll a d10 each time it changes hexes; on a 1, it drifts in a random direction. They will find the Wyverns on the road hex between Wereskalot and Mallowfern. There is one Wyvern for every 3 PCs. Anyone able to communicate with animals may be able to find they've been enchanted by Bargle to go rampage in the showers; if they can take one alive back to the Sheriffs with this proof, it will gain them some credit, especially with Meargh. Even just killing them will gain a little credit. The PCs then have to successfully get the blimp back to Launchpoint tower; add random encounters or bad weather as you see fit.

The Rustlers

Adventure Level: 4-6

Topic: Clan Conflict

Interesting Features: PCs get to deal with cattle rustlers and likely make cowhalving jokes

Campaign Hook: PCs can build a friendship with a clan.

The Adventure: This can be used anywhere rural. As the PCs ride or walk or crash into a small village, the word in the town is that someone is stealing cattle; everyone blames goblins, probably coming from some cave network. The PCs look capable, so the Clanmaster of the Cattlechaser clan will try to recruit them to investigate, offering 50 GP per PC, plus 5 gold per cow recovered from the thieves. Staking out the cattle at night, the PCs encounter the cattle thieves--who turn out to be disguised Hin from another nearby clan, the Longwalkers. This is a large group of low level (1-2 level) Hin in disguises that would only work at night, but use special shoes to leave goblin tracks. If the PCs can catch someone, the Sheriff will come down hard on the Longwalkers, who have been stealing cattle to eat because they've outgrown their food supply and are already deep in debt. They will beg for mercy before the PCs take them to the Krondar or the Cattlechasers, pleading hunger. The PCs must decide whether or not to turn them in and what to do if they don't, so the whole clan doesn't end up going bandito.

Knockers

Adventure Level: 6-8

Topic: Forgotten Entrances to the Shadowdeep

Interesting Features: The PCs find a long forgotten entrance to the Shadowdeep and must fight a substantial force of experienced goblins.

Campaign Hook: The Goblins may be an advance force of a fresh invasion; the PCs may take an interest in the Shadowdeep

The Adventure: This works best in Heartshire or Highshire. As the PCs pass through a small village, the locals ask for their aid in dealing with what they fear may be undead. Local tradition claims that an old dwarf mine in the area is sometimes haunted by the ghosts of Dwarven miners, known as knockers. Knockers cannot help but forewarn others of their presence due to compulsive mining, leading to the 'knocking' for which they are named. Now, of late, noises have been coming from the mine.

Investigation eventually leads the PCs to a deep gallery where the wall makes intense knocking noises. In fact, as they arrive, the wall bursts and a force of goblins breaks through, led by a Hobgoblin. The goblins are third level warriors, with a small force of fourth level wolf riders, while their leader is a fifth level fighter. (Those using OD&D and who have Orcs of Thar can use the advancement rules there.) The DM should size the group to give his players a very stiff fight, as this is a one-fight adventure, and they can afford to cut loose with resources. Further investigation leads down into the upper Shadowdeep and eventually leads to a Goblin kingdom, should the

PCs choose to further investigate. Once the menace is ended, it would be wise to alert the local Krondar. Not that PCs are always wise.

Snuff the Fires

Adventure Level: 6-8

Topic: The Lords of Shaerdon and Lord Sulescu of Karameikos

Interesting Features: The PCs must save a nosferatu from being assassinated.

Campaign Hook: The Lords of Shaerdon will hate them if they succeed, but they can stave off war a while longer.

The Adventure: The Sheriffs have gotten wind too late of a plan by the Lords of Shaerdon to assassinate the Count of Sulescu, in hopes of triggering a war with Karameikos. (Sulescu falls just within the old boundaries of Shaerdon.) They send the PCs by swift courier boat to try to save the Count, facing pirates and other sea menaces along the way. If they get there in time, they can fight off the assassins, who are not aware their target is undead... The Count will reward the PCs for their aid as you see appropriate, and cooperate with the Sheriffs in keeping this hush-hush, as he doesn't want a war, either. The assassins are a group of six Hin Rogues 6, who are fanatical but not suicidal, willing to die to kill the count, but not willing to die fighting adventurers if things turn against them. They run if they have to.

The Dragging

Adventure Level: 6-9

Topic: The Dragging Holiday, top layer of the Shadowdeep

Interesting Features: Chasing a band of orcs through the Shadowdeep

Campaign Hook: Any successful rescue will gain you allies and credit with the Sheriffs.

The Adventure: Every year, the Dragging ceremony involves dragging orc corpses across the Shires, then burning them. It's a combination of orc-taunting and sin-scapegoating. This year, however, orcs attacked the burning ceremony in Eastshire and took five Yallaren, one from each Shire, then escaped into the Shadowdeep. The PCs are hired by Sheriff Mearagh to rescue them, as she and her Krondar are busy dealing with a lizardman raid from the Blight Swamp.

The PCs get to take an extended tour of the top layer of the Shadowdeep, trying to catch up to the Orcs, who have decided to conduct their own 'dragging' with Hin bodies, one for each Shire. Add cave encounters, shake, salt to taste. The faster they can catch up to the Orcs, the better.

The Walking Mushroom Walks At Midnight

Adventure Level: 6-9, depending on how big the Myconid clan is and how beefy you make the Clan Elders.

Topic: Illustrates how far some Clan Elders have sunk into corruption and greed as the economy of the Shires tightens in the face of population growth.

Interesting Features: A relatively small scale expedition

into the Shadowdeep and intrigue in a town with a dark secret

Campaign Hook: Exposing this plot will gain the PCs the gratitude of Multhim, and also cause him to take better security measures in his plans for Shadowdeep expansion, so as to avoid repetition of this. The DM could also choose to expand the Elder/Myconid alliance to other villages as well, giving a longer term goal to follow up.

The Adventure: Longflask is not the most pleasant of places to live, unless you enjoy working to the point of exhaustion. What outsiders don't realize is that the local Clan Elders are in cahoots with a tribe of Mushroom-Men (Myconids -- Monster Manual II). The Myconids provide the Elders with life-extending aganathics and various other kind of fungal potations, in return for the Elders providing them with metals and helping to protect their home in the Shadowdeep. Several of the potations provided are used to basically drug the mineworkers so as to be peaceful and pliable. This allows more extraction of labour. This has been going on for a long time, but of course, sooner or later, this sort of thing always comes out, such as when the players visit the town and see things they aren't supposed to. (Seeing things you shouldn't is in the adventurer job contract, after all.)

This was made an optional adventure instead of part of the town write-up so players who read this won't know if you're using it or not.

A Fink Too Far**Adventure Level:** 8-12**Topic:** Biss Araum, wandering clerical busybody**Interesting Features:** PCs face dilemma of whether to save someone who doesn't like people like them.**Campaign Hook:** Biss has many enemies; saving him is likely to gain disfavour from them.**The Adventure:** This can be used almost anywhere in the Shires.

An adventuring party, a mix of Hin and non-Hin, the Blue Blades, has been staying in the town the PCs just arrived at (preferably a small rural one). They've been doing this because their leader, a handsome Elf named Reledas (Wizard 10), has been having an affair with the wife of the local Clanmaster, Yala. Unfortunately, one of their magic-aided trysts was witnessed by Biss, who told the Clanmaster. Now Yala is more or less imprisoned and the Blue Blades are under strong pressure to leave town. Reledas and his allies are angry and basically plan to kidnap Biss, then burn all his possessions, strip him naked, and dump him in the wilderness. 'Let his god save him if he deserves to live'. They then plan to rescue Yala and skip town and probably the Shires.

The PCs stumble upon the kidnapping and/or rescue and must decide whether to interfere or not. If they let Biss be taken, the town will try to hire the PCs to rescue Biss and recover Yala, if they weren't seen to let it happen. If they try to stop it all, they must

fight the Blue Blades, who are equal in power to the PCs. Biss stays out of the fight even when rescued, but will heal anyone fighting to maintain law and order. It would be nice to say he'd be grateful in the future, but that's not too likely. The town, on the other hand, will be.

A Murdered Princess**Adventure Level:** 9-12**Topic:** Spiira Quickmagic Coppertoes, A Murdered Princess Inn, Princess Adrianna of Karameikos, International Relations, Glantrian Wizards**Interesting Features:** PCs must figure out why the heir to Karameikos blew herself up in a Hin inn near Nob's Boots, beyond an overdeveloped sense of irony, anyway.**Campaign Hook:** This could ignite a Karameikos/Shires war or possibly prevent it.

The Adventure: The adventure begins with the PCs in Nob's Boots or near Spiira's inn. It explodes in flames and inside, Spiira can be found, burned and angry, but okay. Her inn, however, is toast. Furthermore, she recognized the woman who did it--Princess Adrianna of Karameikos walked in, ordered food, got angry over its quality, then fireballed the place. A difficulty 10 Knowledge (Karameikos) or 15 Knowledge (Nobility) check reveals Adrianna is not known to have any sorcery ability, nor to blow up restaurants. All that is left behind intact of the Princess, beyond charred flesh and

broken bones is a metal scroll case, which has a map leading off to a point in the western Karameikan wilderness (4 hexes east of Cruth Tower).

Experienced adventurers will realize this is a trap; Spiira, too angry to think, assumes this is her best clue to find those responsible and deal with them. She tries to recruit the PCs to go with her; if they don't go, she ends up dying in the wilderness once she walks into an ambush by 'Lord' Antonius, a Glantrian wizard (Wizard 12) who is the younger brother of 'Lord' Trajanus, who she killed some years ago, earning her nickname. He set this whole thing up, kidnapping Adrianna during one of her trips out into the countryside, then hauling her here and using her as a meat puppet with magic jar to blow up the restaurant. He hopes to not just kill Spiira, but to get all her relatives killed in a war with Karameikos. If the PCs can take him alive, then they can get to the bottom of this before it's too late. (Once they get past his efforts to claim Bargle made him do it, anyway.) He has a force of strong bodyguards with him, including his pet rust monster, who he likes to augment with spells. PCs who can raise Adrianna from the dead earn her family's gratitude and hers, and with her alive, it's a lot easier to avoid a diplomatic incident. The Shires could make an effort to get a cleric to raise her, but Mearagh's influence probably leads to her body being sent back to Karameikos with a warning to 'not do that again',

which could have...adverse diplomatic consequences.

A New Hope

Adventure Level: 9-12, higher if you add more trouble.

Topic: The Daughters of the Dawn Hope, Five Shires Historical Society, Hin history, and SEA MONSTERS

Interesting Features: The PCs get to take a boatful of historians and wealthy conservative hin on an archaic boat across the Sea of Dread to Davania and back, ideally in one piece.

Campaign Hook: The PCs may gain some well-connected allies. Or many enemies if the Hin riding alone die too much. They also may find it interesting to explore Davania some more.

The Adventure: The Daughters of the Dawn Hope have teamed up with the Five Shires Historical Society to recreate the voyage of the Dawn Hope on its 2300th anniversary (or so they think). They have built an exact replica of the ship (they hope), and now plan to sail it to Davania and back to show a single ship could make the voyage alone (or to disprove it, as some theorists in the Historical Society hope.) However, the world has changed in many ways since then, and the PCs, should they choose to join in, will be hired (for whatever fee is appropriate to your game and their power level) to 'deal with any menace not listed in the original records', such as, say, Ierendi or Thyatian pirates. The boat is crewed by a mix of professional sailors, historians, and wealthy

conservative Hin members of the Daughters of the Dawn Hope. On the trip down, all three groups will listen to any reasonable suggestions as they wish to make it to Davania with minimal trouble, so they don't face having to repair it there. The DM may add sources of trouble--weather, monsters, pirates, Glantrians, to taste.

On arrival in Davania, however, things turn more sour. The local Hin have formed an aggressive warrior civilization, following the 'Lord of the Golden Throne', who is a high level priest of...Vanya. He has nothing but contempt for the 'cowards of the Shires', who fled the menace of the Serpent-Men, abandoning many of their kin to die in the Davanian jungles. He will gleefully tell them the story of how the coast-dwelling Hin abandoned their relatives in the interior because they feared the Serpent-Men would overrun their homes before they could build enough boats, and so they took every boat they had and ran for their miserable lives. Then he will tell them to run away home to the Shires like their ancestors.

"But know that one day our vengeance will come, and that day will be sooner than you would wish." Unless they try to fight him and his armies of experienced warrior Hin, he will then help them resupply and send them home. (Though with a sufficiently high level party, they might well be able to take him and his army apart, if you run this with characters more in the 16+ range). The Lord will recognize the valour

of the PCs (assuming your players aren't consistently cowardly), and will offer them the chance to stay and serve him and Vanya, especially if any of them are clerics of Vanya. If they take it, Davanian adventures of your choice, beyond the scope of this gazetteer, await.

Otherwise, they now get to try to shepherd a boat full of cranky Hin back to the Shires. Everyone's tempers will be on edge, and the Daughters will try to insist on precisely following the Dawn Hope's course back home. A string of events will follow which eerily match those of the Dawn Hope's voyage. (Create problems to suit your PC's capacities, from monster attacks to food shortages) However, this culminates in a monster of a storm which requires extremely difficult sailing checks or mad PC ingenuity to avoid sinking, exactly where the North Star sank. The voice of the Lord of the Golden Throne speaks from the storm, informing them that the Serpent-Men made a last effort to wipe out the fleeing Hin with the chair's powers, and now he is 're-enacting' that attack for them. Isn't he so benevolent as to help them with their recreation? "The brave and the strong will live and the weak will die. That is the way of the world. Vanya shine upon you." If the PCs keep the ship together, the storm will churn up some evidence of the presence of the North Star on the ocean bottom, possibly leading to a later adventure if the PCs ever set sail again, anyway.

Once the PCs return home, the two groups will reward them handsomely if they did well. If too many people die, they will find themselves in trouble with many Hin, though Sheriff Sildil will refuse to allow any prosecution unless PCs were clearly negligent--she thought this was crazy from square one. The PCs may wish revenge on the Lord of the Golden Throne. This opens the door for future adventures. His Throne is a powerful artifact of the Sphere of Time, created by a now perished Immortal of Conquest. It has been 'adopted' by Vanya's cult, since its recovery from the Serpent-Men who once used it to crush and rule the Davanian Hin. He has a huge army of well trained warrior Hin but does suffer from having only Bronze Age technology. Good luck!

Galassar's Map

Adventure Level: 9-12

Topic: The Money Pit, Pirate Treasures, and The Five Deep Shadows

Interesting Features: Who doesn't want to follow a pirate map to hidden treasure?

Campaign Hook: The PCs will likely earn the enmity of many pirates.

The Adventure: The adventure begins in a major port. As the PCs walk the streets, a man rounds a corner, crashes into someone, then falls over dead. He drops a folded up map which unfolds as it falls--it claims to be Galassar's Map of how to successfully open the Money Pit and recover his

treasures. Angry Hin pirates round the corner soon after; scale them in numbers enough to be a bit of a workout, but not a major threat. They serve Captain Bari Gutthunder, a Hin Pirate, captain of the Morning Thunder. He will continue to try to recover the map by fair means or foul until the PCs leave the port, then will chase them if he can.

If the PCs pass the map to the Kronardar, they will get a 200 GP reward each and the adventure ends. If they choose to investigate, the word gets out and they will find half a dozen pirate ships converging on Money Pit Island as they arrive. They will have to use their wits to avoid being overrun by jealous pirates. The map is itself accurate, secured long ago by the Five Deep Shadows, who have been trying to find some way to use it without getting overrun by greedy pirates. Once the PCs follow all the instructions, they will recover five chests, each of which contains several thousand copper pieces painted gold and a taunting message about how hollow their success was and how they'll never find the real treasure. PCs who get the hint may find one of the chests has a hollow bottom which contains instructions on how to retrieve the real treasure from Fletcher's Reef, where it is tucked away in a grotto. This likely involves more pirate confrontations.

Once the PCs recover the treasure, if they try to return to the Shires, a squadron of Hin pirates will show up, sponsored by the Five Deep

Shadows, who will give the PCs a very stiff fight. (Adjust size as necessary). If they don't return, the FDS will curse a lot and wait to ambush them if they ever do return.

The Pearl of Great Price

Adventure Level: 9-12

Topic: Tothmeer Inventor's Society, Hin and Thyatian Pirates, and Deep-Sea Diving

Interesting Features: The PCs get to test experimental diving equipment while under attack by sea monsters!

Campaign Hook: The PCs can make an ally of the inventors and possibly find items you want to use to link into other adventures.

The Adventure: The Tothmeer Inventor's Society wants to test some deep-sea diving equipment and try to recover a wrecked ship. A year ago, four Thyatian ships sank in a heavy storm and couldn't be recovered. They're going to try to recover what they can while testing the equipment. The diving suits are modified suits of what looks like platemail (and has its armouring properties). They connect by air tubes to a huge tank with several captive air elementals. The suits reduce dexterity by 4 and halve your base movement.

Once you descend down to the wreck, a group of electrical eels have moved in and will be attracted to your shiny metal suits. Once they're dealt with and any interesting mechanical malfunctions fixed, then you can easily load the many treasures of the wrecks into large buckets to be

winched up. There should be a pearl of substantial size among the treasures in order to justify the adventure name. When the PCs come up, however, rival Thyatian and Hin pirates show up to try to steal everything and the PCs will have to win a three-way fight. Or run really well.

The Unsheathing Day Massacre

Adventure Level: 9-12

Topic: Lord Caine, Thyatian Intrigue, A Hin Holiday, Investigation and Diplomacy

Interesting Features: The PCs must try to solve a case before the Official Scapegoat Krondar Investigator closes his investigation.

Campaign Hook: PCs can gain Thyatian enemies, and...befriend Lord Caine? Perhaps a dangerous reward...

The Adventure: The Unsheathing holiday commemorates the Thyatian seizure of the Ierendi colony from the Shires. It is a day of remembering to hate Thyatians and a day for fighting. This year, however, things have gotten out of hand. Every Thyatian except Lord Caine in Shireton are all murdered the night of the Unsheathing. Lord Caine is understandably outraged and demands an investigation. The Sheriffs are suspicious and think Caine used the night as an excuse to wipe out some set of political rivals, so they don't take this very seriously and assign Barne Fifefellow (Hin Fighter 6) to lead the investigation. Barne is a sturdy, reliable warrior, but not too bright.

The sheriffs always assign him to any investigation where they couldn't care less if the criminal is ever caught. Unless the PCs intervene, Barne eventually concocts a giant conspiracy theory which blames everything on a Dwarf-Glantrian alliance to cause a war between the Shires and Thyatis. The lynchpin proof is a drunken dwarf named Bofur who is mysteriously killed by a mob of angry Hin when charges are about to be brought against him.

(Unless the PCs save him.) The PCs can be hired by any of several forces to investigate, or perhaps may lose a relative or friend to the murder tide--Thrildor has an interest in preventing Dwarves being blamed, the Minrothaddans know they're innocent and want to prove it, Lord Caine himself knows Barne is a moron and may approach the PCs, or Shireton merchants who fear they may be next if the Thyatians were just the first course may hire the PCs. Deeper investigation reveals evidence that the Thyatians died in a bunch of different ways, from accidents to stabbing to poison. Half a dozen come from a Thyatian faction which backs Lord Caine's family, and they all died by poison. (They were killed off by political enemies of his using Hin agents.) The other killings all seem hastier and less well planned. Further investigation may eventually lead the PCs to discover that most of the dead were not robbed, but four were and they may be able to track the loot to a group of smugglers led by mujina in Shireton port. They

conducted revenge killings disguised as theft to get even with merchants who cheated them. With difficulty, the PCs may also be able to determine the rest of the killings were carried out by a street gang of angry Hin youth under the influence of the Lords of Shaerdon, who had learned of the Thyatian murder plot and decided to use it as cover, then prompted the gang to act for them. The gang's Lords contact is a Hin merchant, Anna Bellweather (Expert 5/Rogue 8). The rest of Anna's cell can be exposed and broken up if she is caught; she learned of the Thyatian plot from another cell member, Dora Nimblefingers (Hin Rogue 7), who is also in the employ of the Thyatian faction as a spy.

A Wizard Too Far

Adventure Level: 10-14

Topic: Glantrian Destruction Society and Prince Jaggar

Interesting Features: The PCs must try to help the GDS infiltrate Glantri to rescue two Yallaren held captive by an evil wizard. If they're not careful, said wizard will have a lot more Hin experimental subjects...

Campaign Hook: The PCs may make an enemy of Jaggar, or alternately, impress him by avoiding falling into the trap. The PCs may make a firm ally of the GDS or really, really make it mad. Also, lots of GOLEM SECRETS.
The Adventure: A young hin named Rani Longbottom has returned from Yallara to the Shires to get help. Two of her companions, Tori and Donic

Longbottom, were taken captive by the evil Glantrian wizard Otto von Drachenfels. They need to be rescued, and she thinks the GDS are the people to do it. The GDS, not completely insane, turns to the PCs for help. Together, they can follow her trail back through Darokin and the Broken Lands and into Glantri to finally reach the Principality of Aalban and the golem-filled castle of Otto von Drachenfels. Along the way, some of Thar's legion will try to ambush and destroy them in the Broken Lands, they'll have to evade border security, they'll stumble into the middle of a Belcadizan domestic squabble...with fireballs, and finally reach the castle. If they sneak inside, they will find the two captive Hin...cheerfully assisting Otto in assembling a new golem made out of Platinum. If they're not careful, they'll end up swarmed by powerful golems and captured.

If they are captured, Prince Jaggar will attempt to dominate them all with magics and use them as disposable agents in Ethengar to try to assassinate some of the Great Khan's Hakomon, so he can spy on them with scrying and learn strengths and weaknesses. No one would ever suspect Glantri of using HALFLINGS as agents, after all.

If they evade capture, Jaggar will approach them peacefully and try to recruit them for less suicidal if probably equally nefarious purposes. He'll offer to release the captives and point out that actually they're safer in the castle, helping

Otto, than outside it, where someone might experiment on them. The two will actually want to stay and work with Otto...yes, Yallaren ARE a little crazy... He will promise their safety on his word as a Prince; so long as the PCs keep their word, he will keep his.

At some point, the PCs may discover that Rani is actually a polymorphed human hench wizard/rogue (Wizard 6/Rogue 6) who works for Jaggar and led them into the trap. No hard feelings, right?

Shadow Patriots

Adventure Level: 10-14

Topic: The Five Deep Shadows, The Minrothad Thieves' Guild, Thyatian Spies, and Bargle/The Black Eagle Baron

Interesting Features: The PCs must team up with the Five Deep Shadows to save Sheriff Sildil from assassination.

Campaign Hook: Saving the Sheriff will make the PCs heroes of the Shire and give them ties to the Five Deep Shadows, but also make them many enemies.

The Adventure: The Five Deep Shadows have discovered that the Minrothad Thieves' Guild has hired a Glantrian assassin to slay Sheriff Sildil. Said Assassin, known as The Demonblight, favours the summoning of powerful demonic allies as part of his assassinations. The Five Deep Shadows have thus reluctantly turned to the PCs because they feel demons are out of their league. They fear there may be traitors around Sildil who are in

cahoots with Minrothad, and thus don't want to just tip off the authorities. They'd rather try to take the Demonblight alive, so they can blame Glantri and Minrothad for this. They will back the PCs up with a strong force of Five Deep Shadows members to deal with any allies the Demonblight may have, while the PCs stop the wizard and his demons.

Some of her men do turn out to be traitors; one of them claims he is being blackmailed by a Minrothad merchant over his indiscretions with another man's wife. The PCs will have to chase the merchant out into the ocean as he tries to escape in a boat. If they catch him, he claims a group of Thyatians blackmailed him into organizing this, because they knew of his siphoning off of profits from his home guild's business. This requires going to Shireton to catch the Thyatians. They claim Lord Caine ordered it. Lord Caine claims to have never given those orders...and somehow, lie detection magic shows he's telling the truth!

Lord Caine is actually the victim of Domination by one of Bargle's agents, who had him give the orders, then drink some of his own amnesia poison to forget it! It is likely to be hard to find this out, but high level characters are ingenious. They can track the agent to Shireton port, and if they catch him by surprise, they can haul him in. If not, they may have to chase him at sea, or lose the trail.

The Doom that Came to Sarnhollow

Adventure Level: 13-16

Topic: Barimoor, Blackflame, Immortality, Wiping Out of a Clan

Interesting Features: The PCs must save a crucible of Blackflame from being removed from the Shires by an immortality candidate.

Campaign Hook: Barimoor may become a recurring enemy; this opens a slot for a PC to found a new clan; PCs may earn favour with the High Heroes

The Adventure: As the PCs are camping one night (or perhaps staying in a village inn), the biggest explosion they have probably ever heard in their lives has just gone off nearby.

Investigation shows the nearby Sarnhollow Clan has basically been vaporized. (Spellcraft difficulty 15 shows that simultaneous spells hit the town all at once, all the same fire spell. Spellcraft, difficulty 22, shows that five simultaneous Meteor Swarms of equal potency hit the clanholding from all sides. This was done by Hassan and his apprentices by means of everyone using a scroll he made for them, while he cast on his own.)

Everyone is dead and their clan artifacts have been stolen--blackflame weapons, the Crucible

of Blackflame, a Web of Night, and some Oil as well. Witnesses saw a house fly away from the scene. The PCs must give chase swiftly and follow the house as it flies to Karameikos and then is abandoned; investigation will find horse tracks which can be followed. Eventually, the PCs will catch up to Hassan abd Harid, a 17th level LE wizard from Ylaruam who is one of Barimoor's pawns. Hassan is accompanied by his apprentices (11th level wizards) and bodyguards (11th level fighters). Chose their numbers to make the fight a very nasty one. Hassan will do his best to turn the PCs into dust, but if worse comes to worse, he tries to escape by flight with his *Ring of Flying*. Hassan should be very well equipped with magical items; his flunkies have only average levels for their level. Hassan believes he is being sponsored on the path of the Paragon by Rathanos; he actually is being used as a chump by Barimoor, who wants some blackflame to serve as his impossible component for the new magical item he is building. Hassan thinks he's doing that himself--He hopes to use blackflame's reconstitutive properties to create something that can reconstitute the old fertility of Ylaruam. (Hassan thinks of

himself as a Ylari patriot, though he also has ambitions of ruling. He is LE because he is quite happy to murder and kill and rob in the name of his nation to achieve its dream of the desert garden.) Barimoor will not intervene to save Hassan, but he will put the PCs on his 'kill later when I can't be blamed' list. PCs who recover the Crucible and return it to Shire authorities will gain huge kudos with the Shire authorities and find it easy to get help with almost anything. PCs who keep it for themselves will face everything the Sheriffs can afford to throw at them as they try to recover it. There are many people who would pay the PCs a pretty penny for it. Many of them would also gleefully kill the PCs for it...

The Walking Mushroom Walks At Midnight

Adventure Level:

Topic:

Interesting Features:

Campaign Hook:

The Adventure:

Player's Guide to the Shires

What Everyone Knows About the Shires

Tavern Talk in Other Lands

Halflings: Halflings are stomachs with arms and legs attached. They eat everything in sight and love to basically glut themselves. They'll do anything for food.

ANYTHING. They may look like children, but they eat like giants.

And they love to party wildly, too. Once their bellies are full, they're hard workers and honest dealers.

You can't count on them in a stand up fight, as they like to run and hide and snipe from behind bushes, but you can count on them to do their work, be on time, and pay what they agreed to. So, good business partners, but not very impressive warriors.

Yallaren: Teenage Halflings apparently go completely insane, lose all common sense, and run wild making a mess. Why they tolerate this, I don't understand at all. But if you see a skinny Halfling, you should probably close your shop, lock the doors and hide under the counter. For a few days. Just don't accidentally lock him inside with you. Unless you LIKE pain.

In general, the fatter the halfling, the more trustworthy. Skinny Halflings are either adventurers, thieves, or insane teenagers.

Halfling Clans: I've heard there are Halfling clans, but none of the ones around here seem to belong to any, and the insane teenagers who visit from the Shires all get thrown out of their clans until they sober up after a few decades.

They sound kind of like fiefdoms to me, ruled by a Clanmaster and his wizard advisor, the Keeper. Fine if that's what they want. (Don't the Northlanders have clans too?)

The Shires: From what I hear, it's a feudal state. The Clans are divided into Five Shires, each ruled by a Sheriff who they pledge fealty to, supporting him with troops and money in return for land. The five Sheriffs rule as a council over the land as a whole, but each is fairly independent. It's pretty peaceful, and the Halflings are pretty friendly, so as long as you don't look like a thief, you'll get by okay. Most Halflings are farmers, but you have the usual round of craftsmen and merchants too.

Be careful about showing weapons, though, as they've been conquered so many times that they look at all outsiders a little funny. Which really, is probably sensible, given they don't fight very well. Which is why they keep getting conquered.

Weirdly, there are hardly any churches; I expect one reason they keep getting conquered is their failure to revere the Immortals.

Shireton: It sounds like a fun place to visit and do business, what with all the parties and merriment and the wild architecture and the giant tunnel network. Though I have to wonder how many people get eaten down there, as giant tunnel networks usually are full of monsters, right?

Other Places of Note:

Wereskalot is the big centre for land trade with Karameikos. I hear it's a giant armed camp. Sateeka is the main nexus for land trade with Darokin. Tothmeer and Thantabbar are the two other major ports, where you can go and buy stuff. Thothmeer is especially good for ships. Everything else is pretty much a small village, I think.

How to Get Rich and Famous:

I've heard their original capital is now a ruins full of undead, and that there are old Elf holds hidden in the woods and that the mountains are full of orcs and goblins and old mines. And there's some Dwarf King's treasure horde that everyone is looking for. Also, there's always work for caravan guards and if you're good at sailing, you can go pirate

hunting. You could try robbing the gemstone mines, if you want to get rich quick, but unless you plan to try to flee through orc-infested mountains with your gems, it's a long march to the border and I wouldn't give you very good odds, unless you're secretly a dragon in disguise, anyway.

Hot Tips: If a Halfling wants to eat or drink before doing business, LET HIM. He'll be much more amenable afterwards. They love a good story, so you can soften them up with a few jokes and tales. If you know some actual Halfling stories, they'll usually be stunned, then appreciative. Teenage Halflings are ALL CRAZY. FLEE THEM. If you meet an actual Clanmaster or Keeper, remember to give them the same respect you'd give a Count or a human Wizard. Ditto for Sheriffs and their deputies. And if there's a fight, expect them to all run off and hide, then snipe; if you want to fight something face-to-face, you're on your own, buddy.

From Conversations With a Veteran Adventurer

Halflings: In general, Halflings are open, honest folk who are kind of stuck in a rut. You can trust them to do what they're told and to keep their promises, but don't expect flexible thinking out of them, except for the young ones, who are usually a little too flexible for their own good. Treat them

with respect and be honest and they'll do the same for you. Avoid any references to height if possible.

Yallaren: You can basically group Halflings into two categories. Sensible older adults and wild and crazy youth. Even adventurer Halflings can be divided this way. Young halflings will do anything, try anything, want to be EVERYTHING. I've seen them trying to sneak peeks into a wizard's book, trying to figure out how his spells work. And I've seen a fair number blow up that way. Fighting wise, they tend to favour direct charges at the enemy, though they'll use a bow if they can't catch up with him. Which is often an issue, given their leg size. Just so long as you remember young Hin have no common sense, they can be brave and honest allies. Or useful cannon fodder, if you lean that way. Just don't let word of it get around or you'll have suicide halfling assaults coming at you for months or years.

Halfling Clans: These are basically tribal units, ruled by the Elderly. The result is what you'd expect--a mixture of good common sense and mental inflexibility and rigidity. The clans try to keep living the same, year after year, regardless of what happens in the world. This works well sometimes and sometimes it leads to disaster. Never insult a Halfling's clan to his face unless you like making people angry. Clanmasters and Keepers can often be a good source of work, as they'd rather send an outsider to

his possible death than risk their own people.

The Shires: I still don't quite understand how their government works, other than that you shouldn't mess with Clanmasters, Keepers, Knight-Heroes, Sheriffs, or Kronandar. A lot of the Shires isn't much use for us adventurers; it's very peaceful and quiet. But as I'll tell you later, there is some work for our types.

Just remember the Halflings get nervous about large bodies of armed men roaming the roads, so try to look peaceful so the Kronandar won't constantly hassle you. Also, keep an eye out for the Halfling Thieves' Guild, as it turns up all over the place and may rob you at any time. They like to target foreigners. I think they're called the Shadow Clan.

Also, THEY HATE WIZARDS. Or at least Glantrian ones, and you know Glantri--no matter WHAT you look like, if you're human, you might be from Glantri. The Elves, they get fairer treatment. They're kind of paranoid about Dwarves too, due to a past conquest. So Dwarves have to be on their best behaviour.

Also, when planning a trip, remember that outside the big cities, the buildings are scaled to the Halflings, so you may have problems with finding an inn or a store that can serve you unless you like crawling or hunching over.

Shireton: Shireton is a great place; there's a ton of clubs and societies that want to hire or entertain you, there's ALWAYS a party, there's tunnels to explore, ambassadors to work for or thwart,

and most buildings are scaled to allow humans and elves inside.

Other Places of Note: The Shireseats and the three main ports all have constant work for adventurers and usually have enough buildings you can fit into. Everything else is not too big, though some of the hamlets are starting to get a lot larger. But there's a ton of places to adventure, either freelance or for a society.

How to Get Rich and Famous: Delve into the caverns below the Shire to find monsters and treasure. Dig up old ruins for the Historical Society. Test your luck by raiding old orc holds that empty into cavern networks like Deep Delving and Kuurg Haash. Beat up the undead in the ruins of Shaerdon. Rob pirates, then run away from the Hin navy which mysteriously always shows up and mistakes YOU for pirates. Sell flying machine plans to the Avionics Society. Help mug and rob Glantrians with the Glantri Destruction Society. Find Loktal's tomb--rumour says it is still stuffed full of treasures. Dredge up old treasure wrecks, then run away from Halfling pirates, other pirates, and the Shire navy. If you feel really tough, you can try stealing some Blackflame and taking it to Glantri or Alpathia for sale. But you'd better be pretty good at killing huge numbers of halflings or able to run like the wind, as they will stop at nothing to kill you if you try to make off with it.

Hot Tips: Join the Adventurer's Society. It's cheap and friendly

and you'll make good contacts and have access to people who know more about adventuring in the Shires than you. If you're not a halfling, the Shire navy will almost always do whatever most screws you. Just avoid them period. If the Krondar stop you, don't initiate violence, unless you enjoy being the subject of a manhunt. 95% of the time, they're not after you specifically, they're just a little paranoid. See if the Sheriffs have work that Halflings can't do, especially if you're a wizard. Get in good with them and you can go anywhere and do anything with a lot less hassle. If you hear the words 'Elven Princess' in the distance in Shireton, whatever you are doing has just been SCREWED and you might as well give up on it until tomorrow. Also, remember that Halflings think all outsiders think their women are pretty, no matter what the outsider is, so be careful you don't give the impression of being some kind of rakewell seducer, unless you enjoy crossbow-point weddings.

An Ierendi Merchant in the Shires

Halflings: They're good business partners, honest and hard working. Hin merchants will give you an honest deal and so will their craftsmen. There are some dishonest ones, but if you stick to people who are part of a clan or own their own shop, you'll do alright. Remember they like to party, and you should always

conduct business with them after a meal when they're most mellow. Just expect you'll be getting pretty much the same products from them year after year; they tend to settle down and do the same thing all day, every day, the rest of their lives, once they work off youthful exuberance.

They love to eat, so food is always a good thing to sell in the Shires.

Yallaren: Imagine if you drank 50 cups of coffee a day. That's Yallaren. They will want to do business with you, then not show up because they had to join an impromptu singing contest or had to wrestle an alligator and then spent two weeks recovering from their injuries. So be careful about hiring them or even trying to sell them anything and be really careful about allowing them to set foot on anything you don't want to see on fire. Though I admit I kind of envy their freedom. Just remember, they can say anything they want, so don't get mad if they criticize you. They probably don't know what they're talking about, but if they do, they might point out something you missed.

Halfling Clans: Very reliable customers who buy and sell the same things so consistently you can pretty much plan your business year around them. However, I've noticed they are having a harder time of late meeting payments on a regular basis. Something really needs to be done.

The Shires: Like Darokin, the Shires is a good place to do business, so long as no one kills you on the way there. The

Sheriffs really need to do something about those pirates.

Shireton: Shireton feels like an Ierendi city that got lost and moved to the Shires. Its folk have our same relaxed attitude to life; it feels like home. I can't say anything nicer than that. Just stay out of those tunnels if you value your life. Also, hire a guide or you'll get very, very lost. You wouldn't expect it, but Shireton has some of the best brothels in the world. Part of that being that you can trust a halfling prostitute to not poison you and sell you into slavery, unlike, say, Thyatians.

Other Places of Note:

Thantabbar is a good place to do business, and Nob's Boots is very good for acquiring ores. Stay out of Tothmeer unless you want to

see pirates selling goods they stole from your cousin. I hear land merchants do most of their business in Wereskalot and Sateeka. I've heard that Halflings in Highshire are trying to invent flying machines for trade purposes. That might be worth looking into, especially if they can be kept out of pirate hands. Bridle is an up-and-coming trade town; you may find it useful to sail up the river and do business directly with suppliers there.

How to Get Rich and Famous:

Buy a ton of food and luxury goods--silks, perfumes, spices, fancy foreign craftwork--then sell the food to the commoners and the luxuries to clan elders and rich urban halflings. Use the profits to buy ores and tobacco and ship it

back home. Become a master storyteller and travel the Shires making money off entertaining. **DON'T GET ROBBED BY PIRATES.**

Hot Tips: The Hin navy WANTS pirates to rob you. They're pretty clearly on the take. And if you try to fight the pirates, they'll 'accidentally' lob flaming rocks onto your ship. Accidentally on purpose, for spite. Watch out for thieves; Halfling thieves like to rob non-Halflings by preference. Deal honestly with Halfling businessmen and they'll deal honestly with you. Unlike the Navy, the Krondar are pretty honest, so don't try bribing them; it'll only make things worse.

History as the Hin Know it

Around 1300 BC, the ancestors of the modern Shirefolk left the continent of Davania, seeking fresh lands for settlement, as their homeland grew overcrowded and quarrelsome. Tradition states they sailed in a single vessel, the Dawn Hope, but some historians assert they came in a small fleet led by the Dawn Hope. Arriving in the modern Shires, they found them inhabited only by the Gentle Folk, a clan of Elves the Halflings (who called themselves the Hin) referred to as 'Masters'.

Because the Hin came in peace, the Gentle Folk welcomed them into their lands and taught them how to live in harmony with nature as they did. The Gentle Folk renounced all violence and consumed only plants. But while the early Hin tried to follow their ways, they were not able to entirely renounce their past. And thus it was that evil came into the land.

For centuries, the two nations dwelt in peace, the Gentle Folk gradually withdrawing into the deep forests as their population boomed. They taught rites to the Clan loremasters, who took up the task of maintaining the health and beauty of the land. Unfortunately, because the Hin did not themselves maintain the full standards of purity of the Gentle Folk, their powers were not the equal of the Gentle Folk, and the Forest began to lose its power.

Furthermore, the Gentle Folk themselves went into decline. They were tired out by their long service to the land and the many burdens they had borne. Their children were few and the Hin, not realizing the cost to the

Gentle Folk, overran more and more of the land with towns and cities and farms. The Gentle Folk had to withdraw into the deep woods.

Warned by the Immortals, the Gentle Folk set out on a great ride into the sky from which they never returned around 1000 BC. This left only the Hin to watch over the land.

But the Hin now had filled the land full to bursting, and heedlessly, they cut down too many trees and began to fight among themselves. And the Immortals saw this, and sent a punishment for the sins of the Hin, for their failure to keep up the work passed to them.

Out of the North, the Beastmen came, ravaging and burning and destroying. They slew the clans and burned the towns and smashed the farms and ate the crops. They harvested the Hin like wheat. Hinhome, as the Hin now called it, fell swiftly to the Orcs. Quarrelsome clans failed to cooperate and the Orcs picked off many on their own. In the end, the last clans stood together, but it was not enough. Hinhome now came under the rule of the Orcs.

Othrong, High King of the Orcs, put the Halflings to work, creating a powerful Orcish kingdom where the halflings were put to work doing all the menial tasks. It was essentially a feudal state with halfling serfs, Orcish nobles, and priests of Karaash blessing the whole affair. (Those who work, those who fight, and those who pray, you see.) If he had chosen to conquer Traladara, his descendants might still rule it. But the Hin will bow to no tyrant forever.

Many young halflings fled into the wilderness; many of those died, while others went out into the world and made contact with other halfling settlements. They grew strong in adventures, then returned to lead their people to freedom. Thus began the custom of Yallara

Their chance came in 965, when Othrong died and his less intelligent son Raurgh took the throne. Raurgh's generation had grown up fat and lazy, living off the work of oppressed halflings, halflings who increasingly saw their choice as one of either risking death in revolt or dying of overwork.

That winter, the land froze over, and the Hin seized their chance. Led by returned heroes, they ambushed and slew Raurgh and the other major Orc lords, then led a massive slave break into the forests along with the supplies, then sat back and let the orcs slaughter each other for food down to the point where the Hin could overcome them, though at grave cost.

By the winter of 964, the Hin were free, but now there were other problems to deal with. Namely, much of the old lore of the Forest which preserved the magic and beauty of the land had been lost due to the Orcs slaughtering the lorekeepers. Furthermore, a new government had to be constructed, and all the hostile humanoids of the mountains and the Shadowdeep had to be dealt with.

For two centuries, the Hin struggled to try to build a functional government which could overcome the old quarrels which had opened the land to invasion. But these old quarrels undercut efforts to build a central government ruled by a council of Elders. Furthermore, the Shadowdeep and the mountains continued to periodically gush forth with invasions of humanoids. Many halflings continued to go hungry, and empty bellies lead always to strife, as they say.

It was around 750 BC when the Dwarves came, attracted by reports of gold in the land. Led by Loktal Ironshield, the Dwarves carved out a powerful kingdom (The Glittering Land) based in the mountains and highlands, forcing the Hin into submission in the lowlands, required to pay food tribute to the Dwarves and to help work the mines.

What followed was a period of relative peace and quiet, but also of slavery and submission. The Dwarves restored order, rationalized food production, and enabled the Halfling population to begin to recover after centuries of internecine warfare and invasion. Furthermore, the Hin bred faster than the Dwarves, and by the mid-7th century, the Hin were now much more numerous than their masters and ripe for revolt. And revolt they did.

The Dwarves put up far more of a fight than the Orcs had; the Dwarf War lasted from 663 to 638 BC, before finally the remnants of the Dwarven Army fled east, eventually finding refuge with the Dwarves of Highforge in Traladara. The military leaders who emerged in this war became known as the Lords, and they formed a feudal state, creating a military class of knights to defend the new Kingdom of Shaerdon from invasion, electing one of their number every ten years to lead them, the Decennial King.

For a century, things worked well; the Lords drove out the invaders and slowly expanded the dominion of the Hin, pushing beyond the mountains to the north and over the lands of the modern Baron von Hendriks in the east and into the Malpheggi swamp in the west. Unfortunately, the Lords were proud and quarrelsome and prone to violence, and the Ruling Council suffered in effectiveness as each sought to promote his own clan above the others. Many of the old clans ceased to exist, fusing with others to form the new clans led by the Lords.

Finally, a continuing feud erupted in violence between two major lords. The murder of Lord Blacktoes at a Council meeting marked the beginning of the Kinstrife in 522 BC. For the next ten years, the Lords slaughtered each other and rival clans mercilessly, until finally, in 512 BC, the border defences collapsed and bands of humanoids poured into the land, led by Orc King Thrail. He was joined by bands of humanoids from the Shadowdeep as well. Unable to unite, the Lords fell, and by 503 BC, he ruled unchallenged.

For a century, a series of Orc Kings ruled over the land, some treating the Hin abominably, others easing up on the treatment. It remains a mystery as to how Orcish rule lasted so long; it seemed that every time the Hin were about to be ready to fight the Orcs, an Orcish hero would emerge to crush the conspirators and save the Kingdom. But in the end, the luck of the Orcs ran out.

Gunzuth the Clanless, who would become Brindorhin, and the loremaster Alfron, who would become Coberham Shadowglint, were part of a small band of would-be rebels who discovered the secret of Blackflame in the Shadowdeep. They created the first Crucibles of Blackflame and used them to make special weapons for the day of liberation to come.

Finally, in memory of the first rising against Orcish rule, they struck in the dead of Winter in 408 BC, assassinating many major Orcish leaders with Blackflame weapons, using Blackflame artifacts to pass as other Orcish leaders, so as to turn them on each other. The Orcs now turned on each other in an orgy of destruction, the Orcstrife, and Gunzuth and Alfron led the Hin against them all.

By 400 BC, the Orcs had been defeated, and Gunzuth emerged as the leader of the Hin, take the title of Sheriff, with Alfron as his main advisor. Alfron trained a new class of halfling loremasters, who would study and master the powers of the Blackflame, as well as gathering what lore of the Gentle Folk still survived, and tasking another group of loremasters, the Masters of the Shires, with perfecting it. Gunzuth set out to craft a government which would meet the test of time.

Gunzuth divided the land into five shires, each itself divided into 'townships' (territories surrounding the home of a particular clan). Each clan governed itself as it saw fit, while each township elected two representatives for the Assembly of that shire and one representative for the Assembly of the Shires as a whole. Each Shire's assembly elected a Sheriff for that shire, and the five Sheriffs would rule as an executive council with the Assembly of the Shires serving as a legislature. Each township was required to place a certain number of warriors at the service of its Sheriff in peacetime and to provide a levy of warriors in wartimes. The city of Shireton was now built to serve as the capital of the shires.

Once all was in order, Gunzuth and Alfron descended into the Shadowdeep, promising that the Shires would always have Heroes when they needed them. They were never seen again, but they still watch over the land, until the time when they are needed again.

Meanwhile, life in the Shires was quiet for several centuries; periodically, creatures erupted out of the Shadowdeep or out of the mountains or oceans or the Malpheggi Swamp or the forests of Traladara, but it was nothing the Shire government couldn't handle. During this period, the first halfling pirates begin to operate along the waters of the Shires, though there was not yet a lot of commerce for them to raid.

The crowning of the First Emperor of Thyatis marked a watershed in the life of the Shires. Coastal trade now greatly increased as the Thyatians reached out to trade with the Makai of the Ierendi Isles, with the Atruaghin Clans, Sind, and with the rising communities at the southern end of the Malpheggi Swamp. This led to rising piracy, but also to a growing naval presence of the Hin themselves, who had to ensure that the Hin (and other) pirates didn't get out of hand.

Looking out into the world, the Sheriffs planted colonies in what is now Minrothad and the Ierendi isles. Unfortunately, this led to conflict with Thyatis. The Minrothad colony was conquered and enslaved by the Thyatians in the 4th century AC, while Thyatis took over the Ierendi Isles in the late 6th century AC. This helped to turn the Hin against Thyatis and the Sheriffs began their policy of implicit toleration of piracy against Thyatians.

The Thyatians were not the types to take such things lightly, and in 593, they began the Thirty Years' War against the Shires, a prolonged naval conflict. This proved an expensive mistake. Thyatis was also at war with Alphatia and could only put forth a portion of its strength. The Battle of Hingulf in 599 smashed up the main Thyatian fleet in the area, thanks to a combination of bad weather, the liberal use of blackflame, and the successful bribing of a Thyatian squadron commander to 'not arrive in time for the battle'. This victory inspired the Ierendi to revolt in 600 AC, and the Thyatians proved unable to put down that revolt, fight the Shires, AND fight Alphatia at the same time. Nevertheless, the war dragged on until 623, when the Thyatian Emperor mysteriously fell down the stairs, onto a pile of knives that someone had left lying around, resulting in 23 stab wounds. Furthermore, some clumsy person had spilled poison all over the knives. The cleaning staff had to be sacked. This resulted in a change of dynasty, and the new ruler made peace with Ierendi and the Five Shires in order to focus on fighting the Alphatians.

A little over a century of relative peace and quiet follow, punctuated only by the occasional Orc invasion. The Shadowdeep was strangely quiet, and praise the Immortals for that.

In the Eighth century, the Hero Nob Nar lived out the saga which bears his name, the great tragedy of his love for Navilstar, daughter of the Baron of Halag. The Ballad of Nob Nar relates the tragedy which followed when her father tried to marry her off to the Baron of Koriszegy's son. Navilstar was slain, and Nob Nar slew the Baron in turn. He then took Navilstar to be buried in the legendary caern of Everwake Way, only to end up exposing and slaying the wicked Alphatian sorceress Regia, who sought to conquer the Shires. He rode off out of the Shires in sorrow, and is said to now walk among the Immortals as one of their own, one of the High Heroes, with Brindorhin and Coberham Shadowglint.

Combined with the rise of Glantri and its wizards mounting raids on the Shires to steal halflings for experiments, the Shires came to take a dim view of wizards from this incident. Any halflings who display any such talents are shunned at best, exiled or even lynched at worst. Only the Blackflame loremasters remained immune to this.

The last few centuries have been a time of peace and prosperity. While there is always naval skirmishing, the lands around the Shires grow increasingly civilized and the influx of humanoids has been slow. Even raids from the Shadowdeep were low for many years. Trade and commerce has increased, and in Shireton, new methods of manufacture are being pioneered. The result is that the population has boomed and now the lands are growing overcrowded. Yet much prosperity remains.

And finally, the Black Eagle Baron is eyeing the Shires and must be dealt with, one way or another. He's mounted two large scale raids, and it's expected he'll seize the chance to invade whenever the Shadowdeep next erupts. And since Stefan Karameikos is too weak or corrupt to stop him, it'll be up to the Hin to take matters into their own hands.

It always is.

It is a time for adventurers, when a peaceful land stands on the knife edge of disaster, when the actions of heroes will determine the future of the shires for centuries to come.

Peoples of the Shires

The majority of the Shire populace (96%) are Hin. Another 3% are Elves. The rest are a mix of Gnomes, Dwarves, Humans, and more unusual things, mostly humans. Roughly 400,000 people live in the Shires, so this breaks down to 384,000 Hin, 12,000 Elves, and about 3,000 others. There are 100 Hin Clans, which average out to about 3,000 members each. Somewhere around 80,000 Hin are clanless, which makes their lives much more difficult, unless they are one of the luckier ones who have gotten rich. Which isn't many of them.

Hin Stereotypes

Not all Dwarves are dour, not all Elves are merry, and not all Halflings are clannish or hungry. But in the Shires, there is a common Hin culture to which any individual Hin can be and usually will be compared.

1) Hin naturally associate and are clannish. The Hin are not solitary; they are sociable. Indeed, most Hin don't like to be alone. The Hin like to solve problems by forming clubs, societies, and other organizations and to work together to overcome problems. Few Hin stories revolve around solitary geniuses and their hero stories frequently involve groups (such as Gunzuth and Alfron), though there are such tales as the tragedy of Nob Nar. The negative side of

this is clannishness. Halflings tend to favour their clan over even other Hin, and when times get tough, there's a strong tendency to withdraw in on the clan (or other in-group) and treat any outsiders as rivals or even enemies. This has often hampered efforts at cooperation when they are most needed.

2) A love of food. Halflings love to eat. When times are good, gorging yourself is generally pretty acceptable. Most halflings become fairly portly as they age, often hampering their own functioning. Like Renaissance era humans, though, they find bulk attractive. This love of food can be a problem when food are scarce, as the Hin of the Shires are used to eating 4 or more times a day. Halflings who don't get enough to eat often become somewhat cranky, though ones who don't get enough on a regular basis (pirates, adventurers, etc) seem to eventually adapt. Connected to this is the Hin love of merry-making. They love parties and festivals of every kind and often adopt foreign ones to have another excuse to party. Most Hin keep this in check so they still get enough work done, but some do overdo it, especially the young.

3) Law-abidingness. Halflings tend to like to keep things orderly, and obeying the law is part of that. Halfling life in the Shires is

guided strongly by custom as well as law; violations of custom can lead to shunning; insults to local customs can get you a beating. The combination of this and the security of the clan system tends to keep down crime in the Shires, though there are some outlaw Hin. Most Hin are set in their ways and can be stubborn and hard to persuade, though not so much so as Dwarves often are. The main exception to this is Hin on Yallara (discussed later).

4) Respect for the elderly. In general, except for Hin on Yallara, Hin tend to defer to their elders; the clans are led by the oldest members. This tends to combine with 3 to make change slow and to keep clans governed according to the old customs. (Though ultimately, each clan is free to make changes so long as they don't break Shire law.) Insults to the elderly won't be tolerated. The great flaw here is that the elderly often don't respond flexibly enough to changes in conditions, and thus many Hin crises begin with traditional responses that prove inadequate.

5) Quiet. The Hin enjoy merry-making, but tend to want to otherwise keep things mellow and calm. They don't like trouble-makers and boat-rockers, though you can get away with a lot more if you are clearly just being funny or if you are old and eccentric. Or living in Shireton, which is almost

never quiet. There is a strong separation between work (to be treated seriously) and merry-making (where people get much more drunk and wild).

6) Economic equality. Land is owned communally. Clans, in theory, distribute their wealth fairly evenly. In theory, everyone ought to be roughly equal in wealth and able to live comfortably. In practice, it doesn't

always work this way, and the increasing number of clanless hin may be anywhere from fantastically wealthy (and loving to show it) to miserably poor (and unable to help it.)

7) A love of the land. The Hin love nature in all its forms, from mountains to forests to the wide open ocean. While they have to clear land for agriculture, they try hard to preserve natural beauty.

And their preferred lifestyle as clan farmers is tied in part to this desire to be close to nature. They like to surround themselves with plants and animals. And they especially love their land, the Shires, and most would be reluctant to leave it once they finish yallara. For the most part, this doesn't have too much downside, unless one wants to pave Mystara over, anyway.

Clan Life

About 78% of Hin are clan members currently, and in times past, this was closer to 90-95%. Clans control most of the land of the Shires, especially the land good for agriculture, as that is the main focus of most clans. An average clan has about 3,000 members.

A combination of service to the clan and age determines rank within the clan. Those who serve well eventually rise either to become Clan Elders, who choose a Clanmaster to lead the clan, or else Keepers, who watch over the Clan relic, a Crucible of Blackflame. The system given in the canonical Gazetteer works just fine for this alternate gazetteer.

Non-Hin are typically treated as equivalent to average Member Hin of a clan. The Hin do not respect foreign birth ranks, unless it seems necessary to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and violence. A Duke is the same as a peasant to them, if he inherited his title. However, those with earned positions of rank gain more respect. Foreign soldiers will be given the respect given to an equivalent Halfling military rank, and elderly people will tend to be treated as if they were Seniors. Someone such as a Mayor or a member of an elected position in Darokin's government will likely be treated as an Elder or maybe even a Clanmaster if they seem important enough.

Most foreign ambassadors are given the respect shown a Senior or Elder (depending on age), unless they seem less respectable (such as, say, ever Thyatian ambassador ever.)

This system of government ensures that the leadership of the clans, and thus of the Shires to a large degree, remains fairly conservative and traditional. Halflings on Yallara to some extent serve as a corrective, because they are free to propose radical ideas and to point out when the emperor has no clothing. Some clans are now beginning to innovate in various ways, but this is usually controversial.

In most clans, the clan specializes in a few crops and services, then trades with other clans to obtain other needed services, crops, goods, or raw materials. Most clans require a certain number of days of work per year in the clan fields to receive the basic stipend, or a certain number of days of craftwork for the clan's benefit per year. Most people move into the same line of work as their parents, but there is always some shuffling about. Those who don't want to follow the clan's ways are out of luck--they can either leave and lose the clan's benefits and become clanless or hope another clan will take them in because it needs more people in their chosen line of work. Hin returning from Yallara usually have the best

chance of changing clans to go into something else.

Clan Hin who meet the basic work requirements are free to do whatever they want with the rest of their time, whether it be more work in their field for pay, hobbies, clubs, societies, or even a part-time job in some other field. (Many Hin who are born to, say, sheep-farmers, and want to be, say, cobblers, will take up part-time cobbling work for their clan with their free time.)

In times past, Hin worked fairly short hours for their clans, then were free to use a lot of time for themselves. Longer working hours seem to have become more common in recent years, though no one is entirely sure why. But the Elders must have some good reason for it...

Clans provide security to their members; you are basically set for life so long as you meet your duties and don't violate clan law. Their role in raising troops in war makes them part of the security of the Shires as a whole as well. Clans enforce their own laws on their land, with the Elders and Clanmaster acting as police and judges. And they ensure, at least in theory, that no one ever goes hungry, or at least not any hungrier than everyone else.

The cost is the loss of freedom--you will stay on the same land,

doing the same job for a lifespan which will last for over a hundred years. Ambitious hin sometimes find the rate of slow advancement to Elder status stifling, and it's hard to accumulate wealth, since the really successful tend to be expected to share with the less fortunate.

Thus, some Hin leave their clans voluntarily, others are thrown out because they can't manage to abide by clan laws and duties, and almost all go on Yallara in their youth.

Yallara and Clanless Hin

When Hin become old enough to take care of themselves, they have the right to go on Yallara. Such Hin cut their ties with their clan and go wandering around the shires or even outside it, seeking adventure and trying to find what to do with their lives. About 85% of them eventually return home to their clans, content to take up the life of a normal clan member. Another 10% end up joining another clan which better suits their talents and desired occupation. And about 5% either

never come back, die, become pirates or Hornets or professional adventurers, or end up unable or unwilling to settle down, wandering the Shires or other lands and doing petty labour/theft to survive.

Hin on Yallara may challenge anything, go anywhere not private, and are generally expected to be loud and out of control, so long as they don't actively break the law. Some will join non-Hin adventuring parties for a time, to learn what other species are like, and most will leave the Shires at least for a time. They dabble a little in everything to see what they like and what they don't.

This forms an important release valve for teenage rebelliousness, enabling most to get it out of their system, then return home, ready to take up normal Hin life. It also ensures the real troublemakers generally won't come back.

However, in addition to the Hin on Yallara, there are an increasing number of Hin who are clanless the rest of their lives, either by choice or by being thrown out of their clans. Close to a quarter of the population is clanless, making

up much of the population of the cities and towns. Some of them are people who just couldn't handle following clan law due to being too much of slackers, instinctively rebellious, or not too bright. Others were too ambitious and left to make a brighter future for themselves. An increasing number are being born outside the clans as urban and town Hin form family households and have children. The result is an increasing breakdown of traditional Hin culture in the cities and the rise of a group of Hin who are much more ambitious and radical than their country cousins. (And in some cases, much more starving and disgruntled.)

Most Hin merchants are clanless or have only thin ties to their clans, travelling the roads to buy and sell goods, or living in the cities where much of the populace is clanless. Indeed, the most prosperous Hin are usually either clan leaders or clanless. The poorest Hin are all clanless, working jobs like teamsters, dockworkers, and the like, which don't pay well. But at least they're free (for values of free which incorporate little actual power.)

Shire Government, Law, and Justice

In 400 BC, Gunzuth divided the land into five shires, each itself divided into 'townships' (territories surrounding the home of a particular clan). Each clan governed itself as it saw fit, while each township elected two representatives for the Assembly of that shire and one representative for the Assembly of the Shires as a whole. Each Shire's assembly elected a Sheriff for that shire, and the five Sheriffs would rule as an executive council with the Assembly of the Shires serving as a legislature. Each township was required to place a certain number of warriors at the service of its Sheriff in peacetime and to provide a levy of warriors in wartimes. The city of Shireton was now built to serve as the capital of the shires.

This system still functions today, though it's having problems. When the clans each ruled clearly marked distinct areas and no major settlements arose outside clan lands (or were governed by a group of clans cooperating to exploit a strategic location), the system provided for a straightforward system of representative government. Problems have arisen as an increasing number of Hin are clanless and as the clans have become more territorially tangled together and as more settlements arise which don't belong to any clan. The clanless essentially have no voice in the Shire or National

governments, but clamour for it. Conservative elements resist this, wishing to keep power in the hands of the clans, in accordance with tradition.

Clan governments themselves have often become more authoritarian as the economic crisis builds; more on this below in the discussion of Clan Life.

One solution has been the formation of Town Councils; democratically elected by all adult residents, these essentially form artificial clans or multi-clan assemblies for local communities. Politics is often very heated in these communities, as clans and non-clan Hin compete to determine the future. Such politics can get downright underhanded at times, and some political leaders need special agents of the adventuring type. Though thankfully things haven't degenerated to the Thyatian level.

Yet.

Each clan makes its own internal laws through its Clanmaster and Council of Elders (or whatever governs it), each Shire's Assembly makes laws for it as a whole, and the Assembly of the Shires makes national law and works with the Sheriffs to set national policy.

The Sheriffs act as a ruling executive council and appoint local justices with the consent of

their shire's assembly; they also appoint the small group of National Judges with the consent of the national assembly. National Judges enforce violations of national law and hear appeals from the Justice of the Peace courts.

Justices of the Peace are usually elders or else experienced, wealthy Hin from the various non-clan towns. They deal with offences against each Shire's local laws. Each clan has its own standard for how violations of Clan law are judged; usually the Clanmaster acts as Judge.

The Shires only have juries in civil trials or if clan law demands it.

Clan law is enforced by the clans; the Sheriffs and Krondar enforce their Shire's laws and national law.

Traditionally, Hin politics worked on a basis of consensus building between clans as to a good course of action. Now, there's increasing factionalism and conflict, and in some places, rising levels of underhanded action that make conservatives fear treachery somehow soaks out of Thyatian goods into their purchasers. But it hasn't hit that level yet, really. Not consistently, anyway.

Crimes and Taxation

Every clan has its own laws and regulations, as does each Shire and

the nation as a whole. Most of these laws deal with matters not very important for PC adventurers. Theft is usually punished by return of goods (or forced labour until you produce equivalent value), combined with branding of the thumbs. Repeated theft is punished with increasing amounts of forced labour for the state, usually doubling with each conviction. Most clans expel thieves after the first conviction, unless it was extremely petty.

Rape is punished by clan expulsion and castration. Repeat offences result in forced labour for life.

Killing results in branding of the forehead and a decade of forced labour for murder, five year's service for manslaughter. Repeat offences of murder double the forced labour each time. If your forced labour requirement for murder tops 320 years, you are executed. Repeat manslaughter offences add 10 years each time.

Clan Hin only pay taxes directly if involved in the import/export trade or certain forms of business. Otherwise, taxes are levied on the clans and paid out of the general funds. Clanless Hin are currently largely tax-free except for paying property taxes on any land they own or any ships, along with the

usual business taxes and regulations. As the number of them swells, the Sheriffs and the Assembly of the Shires are contemplating ways to tap the wealth of the more successful ones.

Adventurers are largely free of the fear of taxes.

But...

Adventurers are expected to use their resources to assist the Shires for free when the Sheriffs call upon them. This doesn't happen too often, but you can expect two or three calls a year. And more than that with offers of some payment.

Smuggling

Smuggling is the number one crime in the Shires; most coastal communities are complicit with smugglers to some greater or lesser extent. Even Clanmasters (and in some cases, even Sheriffs. Sheriff Robur Wallpole was notorious for smuggling wine in actual Hin naval vessels back in the 8th century.) may be involved.

The Sheriffs don't try very hard to stop it, unless tax revenues drop too much or if actual illegal goods (such as Glantrians) are being smuggled into the country, so long

as the smugglers are Hin. Non-Hin smugglers will be stopped whenever possible.

The first offence is punished with confiscation of the smuggled goods, a fine of equal value, and branding on one thumb. The same for the second. After that, you get five years forced labour in addition to the confiscation and fines for each offence.

Forced Labour

Slavery is illegal in the Shires, but you can be forced to work for the state as a legal punishment. (Clans can inflict this punishment, but it can be appealed to the Shire or national level if inflicted by a Clanmaster). Workers get three meals a day (that is a punishment in and of itself for any Hin), and work 12 hours a day, six days a week. Most are put to work either in the mines or in public work projects.

The Hin try to avoid corporeal punishment beyond branding, so prisoners who won't work simply don't get any food. This will usually bring them back into line. Also, any day you refuse to work is not counted towards ending your sentence.

Rules and Miscellanea

Denial

Denial is a feat available to any fifth level or higher Halfling who has been initiated into a clan later in life or who was given the **Birth Blessing** as an infant (By default, any Hin born in the Shires can be assumed to have had the Birth Blessing unless he was born into a Clanless family, which is rare but growing more common.) It can be taken multiple times; each time you take it, it can be used once per day, within the boundaries of the Shires.

Denial allows you to attempt to alter the results of a single spell, weakening it, re-directing it, or even turning it back on its creator. The spell need not be directed directly at you but its effects must come within your Intelligence + Wisdom + Level in yards of you.

You and the caster each roll D20, adding each person's level and Intelligence + Wisdom bonuses, respectively. If the Hin loses by 6 to 10 points, the effect loses one round of duration or one die of damage, as he chooses. If he loses by 1 to 5 points, he can either rob it of 3 dice of damage or change its target by 10-30 feet in a random direction. On a tie or if the Hin wins by 1 to 5 points, he can divert the effect 30-70 feet in a random direction, 11-20 feet in a direction of his choice, or rob it of his level in dice of damage. If the Hin wins by 6 to 10 points, it is

reduced vastly in strength.

Damaging effects do the caster's level in damage at most and non-damaging effects add the Hin's victory margin to any saving throws. If the Hin wins by 11 to 15 points, then the effect is snuffed completely. And if he wins by 16 or more, the effect is turned back on the caster and only the caster.

Hin facing artifacts have a -5 penalty. Hin defending someone else gain a +5 modifier. Hin defending clan members gain another +5 on top of that.

Language in the Shires

As noted in the Canon, the Hin mostly speak Common, but some do study Lalor, especially Keepers, loremasters, Masters, historians and the Lords of Shaerdon. Indeed, the Lords of Shaerdon are among the few people who are fully fluent in it, using it as their language of secret communication in conjunction with ciphers.

The canon Gazetteer has useful guidelines on Lalor, names, etc.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a crucial part of Hin culture and entertainment, and is usually loud, boisterous,

exaggerated, and fun. There are Hin tragedies, but they prefer to tell outrageous lies, and to tell stories of love and success. The major Hin tragedies are mostly historical and intended to instil correct moral behaviour.

The canon gazetteer presents a storytelling system; a modified version adapted for 3E is presented below. (I will note that it's extremely hard for an average Hin to tell anything but a fairly lousy story under the Gazetteer system, however...)

Make a Perform check. Most Hin have 2 or 3 ranks of Perform due to the practice of frequent telling of stories.

You can add +2 synergy bonuses for each of the following which apply:

Knowledge (Five Shires or Hin Stories) 5 ranks

Telling a story from personal experience which will have some resonance for the audience

Use of illusions and subtle magics to supplement the tale

Presenting some artifact relevant to it as proof of the tale

Good use of humour

Special: Applying other forms of entertainment as part of it. (This requires a perform check in another form of entertainment.

You may add +1 to the Storytelling check for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) in your total with that other form. So if

you score 23 by accompanying yourself with music, you can add +5 to your storytelling check).

Non-Hin suffer a -2 penalty if they seem respectable, or up to -10 if they heavily violate Hin customs and behaviour or come from somewhere hated.

Results of the Skill Check:

0 or less: You will not just be booed but outright chased out of the place.

1 to 9: Your story falls flat and you get booed some.

10-14: Acceptable, but nothing to write home about.

15-19: Your storytelling is well received and someone will buy you a drink or maybe even a meal if you seem hungry.

20-24: Everyone is wowed by your story and wants to hear another one; you will likely get free drinks and food all night and you can double your charisma bonus on future Perform checks for this audience, as they're open to you. If telling stories to influence a group's decision, you gain a +2 synergy bonus on any diplomacy checks.

25-29: You stun the audience with your skills. Everyone cheers wildly and wants to hear another one. You're set for food and drink for the night and can collect 1d6 * size of your audience in copper pieces. Also, double your charisma bonus on future Perform checks for this audience, as they're open to you. If telling stories to influence a group's decision, you gain a bonus equal to your

Charisma bonus on any diplomacy checks.

30+: The Hin are stunned by your sheer virtuosity. They will beg for more stories and you double your charisma bonus on future Perform checks for this audience, as they're open to you. They will meet all your need for food and drink, and by the end of the evening, you can collect 1d6 Silver pieces * size of your audience. If telling stories to influence a group's decision, you gain a bonus equal to your base Perform ranks to any diplomacy checks.

Music of the Shires

As noted in the canon, the Hin LOVE to sing, contributing to the tendency of almost all of them to have 2 or 3 ranks of Perform. Musical accompaniment is good, but not necessary. As with Hin storytelling, most songs are either romantic or comic in nature, though some deal with famous adventures and others are cautionary tales.

Hin Theatre

Hin like musicals and opera. A lot. Every city has several theatre companies and small towns have amateur companies. A lot of clan theatre is customary in nature, a collection of really old plays about the major historical events of the Shires or else moral cautionary tales. Urban and town theatre, by

contrast, tends to be romance, comedy, and action, with only some drama or tragedy.

One recently popular form in the large cities is so-called 'reversal' theatre, in which Hin play all non-Hin roles and imported non-Hin play the Hin roles. Often this involves parodying some famous story or event. The Hin find this hilarious; outsiders often don't quite get it.

Smoking

Modern Tobacco companies would love the Shires, as almost everyone smokes like a chimney. The Hin might well live even longer if they didn't all smoke so much. Those with a knowledge of Blackflame sometimes wonder if the Hin connection to it creates some predisposition to putting fire and smoke in one's mouth. (It can be noted that the same pinch of tobacco can be smoked over and over again if you have access to Blackflame to reconstitute it...) The Shires produces the best tobacco in the Known World, but most of it ends up being consumed at home.

Homes

As the canon, mostly. Though some Hin are adopting foreign architectural styles these days as a way to flaunt their wealth.

Money and Trade

In times past, the Five Shires were largely self-sufficient. Now, there is a constant need to import food which will likely only grow worse as the population swells. In addition, wealthy Hin import a variety of luxury items--books, fine cloths, spices, the fashions of other lands, magical items, etc.

The Shires produce and export various raw materials and a few kinds of foodstuffs which they still produce more than they need--metals (precious and common), gems, tea, and especially tobacco. Fishing production continues to expand, but most of the seafood floods into the Shires to supplement people's diets.

One area of deficiency is manufacturing; the population is outgrowing the ability of the Hin to process their own raw materials, so there is a fair amount of waste with goods being sent abroad, processed, then sent back to the Shires for purchase, though some Hin are trying to boost the nation's productive capacity.

The Hin follow the Thyatian coinage system, but produce their own coins. Their platinum piece shows a tongue of blackflame on one side, and crossed blades on the other. The gold piece has Gunzuth on one side and Alfron on the other. The silver piece depicts Nob Nar on one side and his beloved Navrilstar on the other. The copper piece has a typical male Hin farmer on one side and a typical Hin craftswoman on the other (a

weaver to be precise). In general, the Hin will accept any land's money which follows the system and weighs in properly for its denomination, though. Karameikan and Darokinian money is fairly common.

Larger scale trade is conducted using Trade-Bars; made of silver, these come in 25, 50, and 100 GP denominations. There are not many banks, but the major cities have banks which will issue letters of credit, which are essentially paper money with an expiration date. Those of sufficient good reputation can also issue letters of draft, which are essentially personal checks on an account at their bank.

Religion

The Hin are not irreligious, but their religious life is largely focused around the Clan. For clan hin, foreign religions have little appeal, because the sacred rituals of the clan fill all the purposes of religion other than spellcasting. And the average foreign believer rarely has much access to the miracle powers of Clerics anyway.

The Hin revere the High Heroes, the Gentle Folk, and their homeland. They are basically nature worshippers, and Hin of a religious bent typically either study with the Keepers, or work to become Masters. (Or Druids if using 3E). Every clan performs about two dozen rituals a year which are religious in nature,

ranging from blessing the fields before planting to thanking the Immortals and the land for the harvest to helping to 'Whistle Up the Sun' on the Winter Solstice.

However, clanless Hin lack this connection to the land built by the sacred rites. Instead, many of them are beginning to turn to foreign religions; churches to Asterius, Ixion, Valerias, Kagyar, Koryis, the Church of Universal Harmony, the Church of Traladara, and the Church of Darokin have all sprouted up in the major cities. Clanless Hin tend to favour churches related to prosperity, peace, craftwork, and love.

Knight-Heroes

Those Hin who reach eighth level can petition to become 'Knight-Heroes of the Shires'. Knight-Heroes must undergo a series of tests of skill (since characters level is not a concept known in game). Knight-Heroes are expected to defend the interests of the Shires and can be called upon by the Sheriffs to perform heroic quests. In return, they receive a stipend of a hundred gold a month, a small tract of land with a house to call their own, and can stay for free in any inn of the Shires and eat and drink free in any tavern. (The bill gets sent to the Sheriffs). Many Knight-Heroes become military officers, and if an opportunity to found a clan opens up, they're at the head of the line.

Hin Masters of the Shires

Hin nature-worship has no formal priests. Keepers and Witnesses lead clan religious ceremonies, but do not themselves directly serve any immortals. Some Hin, however, choose to devote themselves to a deeper study of the lore of the Gentle Folk and of the Shires. They pass into the forests, hills, and mountains, working to preserve nature and help it to flourish.

In many ways, the Hin masters resemble Mystara's seldom-seen druids, and it is possible that both rely on handed-down lore from the now-vanished Gentle Folk elves. Unlike druids, though, the masters

are devoted to one land in particular: The Five Shires.

Their devotion to the Shires is shown in many ways: A new master changes her name from, for instance, "Lidda Heatherfoot" to "Lidda Heatherfoot Highshire," denoting the Shire in which she has lived. Until achieving the rank of Higher Master, a master will not willingly leave the Shires unless called upon to do so by a master tutor, Sheriff, involved in war beyond the nation's borders or a sign from the High Heroes.

Hin masters come from all walks of life, including non-adventuring

classes. They tend to be quiet, soft spoken and seldom seen. They work apart from other hin as much as possible to avoid incurring resentment or making other hin dependent on their aid and abandoning self-reliance.

Masters battle evil humanoids and the evil beings residing in the Shires, they will do whatever is necessary and least harmful to those concerned to protect halflings from the attacks of such creatures.

Masters tend to dress simply, and have no distinctive uniform, speech or rune.

The Master Prestige Class

(by Beau Yarbrough, from the Mystara Mailing List Archives.)

Slightly modified by John Biles)

REQUIREMENTS

Halfling race, resident in the Five Shires Non-evil alignment

Knowledge (local - Five Shires) ranks: 5+ Wilderness Lore ranks: 5+

Feats: Denial

The prospective master must undergo an apprenticeship with another master for at least two seasons.

THE HIN MASTER

Hit dice: d8

Level	Att.	Fort.	Ref.	Will	Special
1	0	+2	0	+2	Improved Denial, Nature Sense, Turn Undead
2	+1	+3	0	+3	Low-Light Vision
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Higher Master

Spells Per Day

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	3	1				
2	4	2				
3	4	2	1			
4	5	3	2			
5	5	3	2	1		
6	5	3	3	2		
7	6	4	3	2	1	
8	6	4	3	3	2	
9	6	4	4	3	2	1
10	6	4	4	3	3	2

Class Skills: Animal Empathy, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Disguise, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local - Five Shires), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (Religion), Move Silently, Speak Language (Elvish), Spellcraft, Swim, Wilderness Lore

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and armour

proficiency: A Hin master is trained in the use of simple weapons, light armour and shields.

Spells: A master can cast divine spells according to the table above and gains and prepares spells in the same way that a cleric does (although she cannot swap spells to cast a cure spell in its place). To prepare or cast a spell, a master must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a master's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the master's Wisdom modifier. Bonus spells for masters are based on Wisdom (see PHB Table 1-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Spells, page 8). For spells that require a divine focus, the master may use either a

representation of a Crucible of Blackflame or actual blackflame, where available. A master cannot regain her spells outside of the Five Shires.

Bonus Language: A master knows Lalor, the ancient and almost extinct language of the halflings. Lalor is typically used in communication with other masters, Keepers and some Clanmasters when they know they are being listened to and do not wish others to know what they are saying. Lalor has its own alphabet. By spending a skill point, a master may also learn Elvish, of the Gentle Folk dialect.

Improved Denial: Masters double their Master levels when using Denial.

Extra Denial: Hin masters may use Denial a number of times per day equal to their Wisdom bonus +1.

Nature sense: A master can identify plants and animals with perfect accuracy and tell if water is safe to drink or dangerous. Masters do not hunt creatures for sport, although they will hunt for food.

Turn Undead: A master can turn undead as per a cleric of her same class level (see PHB page 139).

Extra Turning: As a feat, a master may take Extra Turning. This feat allows the master to turn undead four more times per day than normal. A master may take this feat multiple times, gaining four extra daily turning attempts each time.

Low-Light Vision: Starting at second level, a master gains low-light vision, and can see twice as far in starlight, moonlight, torchlight or similar conditions as an ordinary halfling can.

Higher Master: At 10th level, the master's bond with the land is so now so deep that many of the previous restrictions upon her are lifted, and can freely travel, adventure and regain spells outside of the Five Shires. They

may also use denial outside of the Five Shires.

Ex-Masters: Masters who leave their calling lose all spells and special abilities, such as Improved Denial and low-light vision, but retain their nature sense. Masters who seek to return to their calling must atone (see the atonement spell in the PHB, page 176).

Master Spell List

0th Level (Orisons) -- Create Water, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Flare, Light, Purify Food and Drink, Resistance, Thornspear
1st Level -- Cure Light Wounds, Detect Animals or Plants, Detect Evil, Endure Elements, Magic Stone, Obscuring Mist, Remove Fear, Sleep

2nd Level -- Animal Trance, Detect Thoughts, Find Traps, Hold Person, Produce Flame, See Invisibility, Silence, Speak with Animals, Web

3rd Level -- Bestow Curse, Call Lightning, Fly, Locate Object, Neutralise Poison, Remove Blindness/Deafness, Remove Curse, Remove Disease, Speak with Plants, Water Walk

4th Level -- Charm Monster, Control Plants, Cure Serious Wounds, Dispel Magic, Scrying, Shout, Quench, Restoration

5th Level -- Animal Growth, Control Winds, Feeblemind, Insect Plague, Raise Dead, Tree Stride

SPELLS

Bestow Curse

Transmutation

Level: Brd 3, Clr 3, Hin Master 3, Sor/Wiz 3

As the standard bestow curse, save that Hin masters prefer the following curses, rather than those given on page 178 of the Player's Handbook:

The first blow struck by a cursed creature against a halfling will miss.

Any lie told to a halfling by the cursed creature will immediately be known by the halfling.

Any attempted theft of any halfling property by the cursed creature will immediately be detected.

Any food eaten within the Shires by the cursed creature, for the rest of its life, will taste bad and cause indigestion and embarrassing flatulence.

The curses listed in the Player's Handbook (page 178) are also available, although are less commonly used.

Scrying

Divination

Level: Brd 3, Clr 5, Drd 4, Hin Master 4, Sor/Wiz 4

As per page 247 in the Player's Handbook. Hin Masters, like druids, use a natural pool of water as a focus.

