

THRESHOLD

Issue # 1

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Welcome to Threshold: The Mystara Magazine

As the editor of this first issue of *Threshold*, it is my pleasure to welcome you, dear reader, to the new magazine for the world of Mystara. Whether you came to Mystara through the Expert Set, the Gazetteers, or the AD&D 2e boxed sets, chances are the Grand Duchy of Karameikos was your gateway to the Known World and beyond -- thus, what better start for a new magazine than Karameikos? A land of adventure, with dangerous borderlands teeming with hostile goblinoids, giants, and dragons but also magical realms, treasures and relics of distant ages, as well as towns and cities posing their own challenges, the Grand Duchy of Karameikos is, after more than 30 years from its original appearance, still the starting point for many adventurers. As such, you will find that this issue contains a mix of new articles and revised “gems” from the Vaults of Pandius, such as the *Return to the Ice Wall*.

We wish especially to underline that the issue of what is “canon” is not relevant and will not be touched upon by *Threshold*. Rather, *Threshold* supports diversity, as shown by the two very different takes on the history of Karameikos presented in this issue: whereas *The Hidden Years* presents Traladara as a Duchy of the Thyatian Empire ruled by the Karameikos dynasty since 900 AC, the *History of Karameikos* assumes that Traladara is, in that time, a Province of the Thyatian Empire

ruled by a series of Imperial Governors not related with the Karameikos family, while the Karameikos family rules the Grand Duchy from 970 AC.

Threshold aims to promote each individual's personal version of Mystara, through the *My Mystara* column. In this issue, we are glad to present *Thorn's Karameikos*. We also aim to enhance community cohesion, and will interview a different member of the community in each issue. For the joy of Mystara fans, we debut with an interview with one of the fathers of the setting, Bruce Heard.

To round out this first issue, we present you with a selection of articles detailing Karameikan non player characters and organizations, as well as geographical essays.

Two very different adventures are also presented: the outline of the mega-dungeon of Koskatop, and city-based whodunit *Guild Wars*. To complement this offering, we have included new maps, art (both original works and appropriate copyright-free works), and the first instalment of a comic strip column, *Mystara 2300 BC: Time's Travels*.

So without further ado, let's plunge into the Borderlands!

Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)
Editor-in-chief, Threshold Issue 1

The aims of *Threshold* magazine:

- to provide a venue for community members to present material
- to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there
- to increase the exposure of existing and new articles
- to encourage authors to revisit and revitalise existing articles
- to motivate interest in Mystara in general

This Issue's Authors

In his house at The Piazza, *Cthulbudrew* (a.k.a. *Andrew Theisen*) waits, dreaming. "That campaign world is not dead, which can eternal lie; and with strange aeons, Mystara shall once again rise."

Demos Sachlas was introduced to Mystara through its original incarnation as the continental setting back in 1981. His hobbies include researching medieval history and compiling the biographies of 13th century crusaders. He dreams of one day writing a 900-page Mitcheneresque novel entitled "Karamaikos" using his article "The Hidden Years" as an outline, watching it ascend the ranks of the New York Times best sellers list, and selling the movie rights to a major Hollywood studio...

Even though *Sturm* (a.k.a. *Francesco Defferrari*) loves any alternate world, he believes Mystara is incomparably the best for its vibrant community endlessly delving into ethnography, linguistics and history just to make a little sense of it. Something like the real world, but with dragons.

Giampaolo Agosta (a.k.a. *Agathokles*) agrees with Schiller that man "is only completely a man when he plays". Therefore, he makes a point of taking gaming seriously, and real life casually. Besides Mystara, his gaming interests include (among others) Dark Sun, Planescape, Ravenloft, Birthright, Call of Cthulhu, and Witchcraft RPG.

Håvard (aka *Håvard Blackmoor*) does not, contrary to popular theory, have six arms. When he is not writing about Mystara at [The Piazza](#) or is working on his [Blackmoor Blog](#), he goes out raiding neighbouring villages like any true Norwegian. He also runs [The Comeback Inn](#), a forum dedicated to Dave Arneson's Blackmoor.

John Calvin (a.k.a. *Chimpman*) was introduced to gaming at a water park, where he received the D&D Red Box set for his eighth birthday. Since then he's been trying (rather unsuccessfully) to include water-slides in all of his adventures. His heroes include Darth Vader, Captain Kirk, and Godzilla.

Niels Just Rasmussen. Long time Mystara fan since I started as a GM in 1990 with B10 Nights Dark Terror. Combined with the Birthright experience from 1995 I have strived to make the role playing experience for my players more "realistic" with a gritty "grey" political world - where the battle of words are as important as the martial one. [Everyone thinks of themselves as "Good" with their enemies being "Evil"] . So from starting in Karamaikos 23 years ago I am happy to return with this my first RPG publication in English where it's up to "you" to stop Black Eagle Barony from being the future "good" of all Karamaikos.

This Issue's Authors

Robert Nuttman (aka *RobJN*) has been a Mystaraphile since before that world even had a name. When he is not busy untangling the skeins of [a certain Traladaran druid](#) or making sense of the cribbed handwriting in the diary of a teenaged wererat, he tries to write [honest-to-goodness adventures](#). This has only met with limited success. He also co-admins at [The Comeback Inn](#), where he hosts a science-fantasy magi-tech play by post set in Blackmoor just before the Great Rain of Fire.

Shawn Stanley is the webmaster of the Vaults of Pandius, <http://pandius.com>, the official website for the Dungeons and Dragons setting of Mystara. Although he makes maps for a living, the altered map here is the first significant one which he has made for recreational purposes for quite a while.

Simone Neri teaches history and philosophy at secondary school in Florence, Italy. He has mastered Mystara campaigns since 1987, his favourite settings being Thyatis, Norwold, Karameikos, and Glantri. He is an active member of The Piazza community with the nickname of Zendrolion - but don't fear backstabbing from him!

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30 Years ANNIVERSARY OF

RED BOX D&D

by Håvard



Sources:

[What is the single best-selling](#)

[D&D product of all time?](#)

at Dragons Foot Forums

[Arneson's legacy in BECM](#)

at Håvard's Blackmoor Blog

[Red Box Basic Set Available!](#)

at Håvard's Blackmoor Blog

[30 Years of Red Box D&D!](#)

at Håvard's Blackmoor Blog

[BECMI PDFS on Drivethru!](#)

at The Piazza forums

It is hard to believe, but 30 years ago the legendary Red Box Basic Set was published. This boxed set, with the iconic Larry Elmore Dragon being challenged by the faceless warrior, was first published in May of 1983. This was also the edition that marked the international launch of D&D, turning the game into a worldwide hobby with the box being translated to 44 different languages. With tens of millions of copies sold, the Red Box basic set marked what was undoubtedly the best-selling product throughout the history of TSR.¹ It is hardly surprising that the design of this basic set was reused with the D&D Essentials line back in 2010.

Written by Frank Mentzer (credited as editor, as policy was back then), this was the edition that included the legendary intro adventure featuring the tragic death of Aleena the Cleric at the hands of the evil Wizard Bargle, an adventure that inspired thousands of gamers and also spawned nostalgic phenomena such as the Kill Bargle t-shirts decades later. The Red Box was the first in a line of five boxes which would take characters from 1st level to 36th - and beyond that into further adventures as Immortals. Known later by devout fans as the BECM (Basic - Expert - Companion - Master - Immortals), this edition took the classic line of D&D (as opposed to the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons line) to its full potential. The first two boxed sets, Basic and Expert, built heavily on the works of Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, John Eric Holmes, Tom Moldvay and David Cook. From the Companion Rules and onwards, the series began to explore unknown territory allowing not only the

¹ [Frank Mentzer - Dragonsfoot Forums](#)

traditional exploration of dungeons and wilderness, but also having your characters become rulers of kingdoms, control armies, explore the Outer Planes and eventually become god-like beings of legend.

Frank Mentzer recalls the following from the design process of BECMI D&D:

“I had to stop reading Dragon magazine during the time that I was writing BECMI. Any & All ideas coming from other sources were forbidden; I had strict instructions to base D&D only on the previously published version (starting with OD&D) and, by immersing myself in that, to do the best I could in building upon that foundation and making an entire structure as close as possible to what Gygax & Arneson might have done had they continued to develop and expand it. [...] While BECMI is a reasonably coherent body of work (all the moreso since it was all from a single author, in stark contrast to TSR's usual design-by-committee approach of the '80s), my own tastes are reflected.”

Sometimes mistakenly believed to be a "kids' version" of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game, the BECMI series in fact created an elegant balance between a ruleset that was easy to get into with the Red Box, but with an increasing complexity to rival that of AD&D as you progressed through the series. The series also offered a return to the Known World, previously introduced in the Moldvay/Cook B/X ruleset of 1981, which would eventually develop into the World of Mystara. In spite of the popularity of the AD&D Game at the time, the BECMI line produced a loyal base of followers who keep playing this edition of the game even to this day.

With the vast number of gamers introduced to the hobby of Roleplaying Games through the Red Box, 1983 was clearly a significant year in the history of gaming. Wizards of the Coast have decided to once again make the Red Box PDF available through their D&D Classics Website. We can only hope that a print version will follow! With so many older editions coming back in print, new generations deserve to have a try at this truly historic game.



The DEMOGRAPHY OF Karameikos

by Simone Neri (Zendrolion)

In this article we provide an overview of the population of Karameikos – how many people inhabit the Grand Duchy, which races, how the population is spread among the country, population density, and so on. First, we will see how Karameikos is described in official supplements, then we will suggest a different approach to the issue of Karameikan population, based on population figures inspired by a comparison with real-world demographic data in the Middle Ages. The goal is to present figures which are more in line with those of European Middle Age countries, while preserving the low-magic, mostly-wilderness character that identifies the Karameikan region.

KARAMEIKAN POPULATION IN OFFICIAL SUPPLEMENTS

The Grand Duchy of Karameikos is perhaps the oldest defined setting of what would have later become the world of Mystara. As such, its description in the official sources has undergone a series of changes, at least one of which was quite thorough.

In early D&D supplements – like 1981's *Expert Rulebook*, 1983's *Expert Set*, adventure modules *B6 – The Veiled Society*, *B10 – Night's Dark Terror*, and *X10 – Red Arrow, Black Shield* – the Grand Duchy was described as a nearly-unsettled land, mostly wilderness, without proper urban

settlements. At this stage, the only town of the country was Specularum (which was said to be inhabited by about 5000 people). Other settlements were village-sized: for example, Threshold and Luln had 500 people each, Rifillian 170, the whole gnome population in the Highforge area was 620, and so on.

Later supplements, starting with *GAZ1 – The Grand Duchy of Karameikos*, increased the urban population of the country tenfold: Specularum became a large city of 50,000 people, Threshold and Luln towns of 5,000, Highforge a gnomish town of 7,500, and so on. Unfortunately, *GAZ1* gave no figures for the country's total population. Subsequent supplements, namely the three books belonging to the *Poor Wizard's Almanac* series, at last gave their own estimates about Karameikos' population, setting it at about 300,000 not counting humanoids - 250,000 humans, 40,000 elves, and 10,000 other demihumans. *TM2 – The Eastern Countries Trail Map* also gave a total population figure of 280,000, without explaining if this number actually included demi-humans or not.

Now, while this 300,000 figure is quite acceptable for a mostly-wilderness country like the Karameikos shown in earlier supplements, it is quite difficult to use it with the tenfold-increased urban population of *GAZ1*. In fact, even considering only settlements with 10,000 people or more (namely Specularum, Kelvin, and Fort Doom), we end up having an urban population which amounts to about 30% of total population – which is not at all in line

with real-world Middle Age known population densities.

Normally, tracing a comparison between high-fantasy, high-magic settings and the real world would be tricky, because things like clerical magic (with *create food and water* spells and the like) and other supernatural ways to feed a large number of people could alter the population figures and the urban-rural population ratio quite a lot. However, Karameikos is quite a low-magic setting - a Medieval-style feudal country where magic does not seem to be a feature of everyday life; thus, real-world demography can indeed be used as inspiration and reference to solve some of the issues to which Karameikan population figures shown in official supplements give birth.

average density of about 100, while Florence's countryside even reached 240 inhabitants per square mile (without counting cities). The eastern and northern regions of Europe were much less populous: the Balkans had about 23 inhabitants per square mile, while Scandinavia had 5.5 and Russia 7.3. Urbanization (cities with 10,000 people or more) was very low: it went from 18% in Italy and the Low Countries, to 12% of Spain, to 5% of France and the Balkans to 0% of places like Scandinavia and Scotland. The urban-rural population ratio of 1:20 was thus exceeded only in very rare cases and even then only in countries (like the Italian peninsula) with a stable and old urban tradition, and/or where cities had become centers of trade and politics.

A LOOK AT MEDIEVAL DEMOGRAPHY

While not an exact science, real-world Medieval demography has brought to light some estimates which help us understand the population levels of Europe during the Middle Ages. Without going into too much detail, and just for the sake of some comparisons, let us consider some data. In the 15th century, France, a country for which many historical sources are available, had an overall density of 80 people per square mile, ranging from 150 in the area surrounding Paris, to 100 in the most settled areas (Normandy, Picardy, Savoy, and Burgundy), to 60 in most of the average-populated country (central France, Provence, Champagne), to less than 40 in scarcely populated areas (like the Pyrenees and Gascony). Tuscany, in the same years, had an

POSSIBLE TAKES ON KARAMEIKAN DEMOGRAPHY

Back to our Grand Duchy; a frontier land like Karameikos, with 300,000 people and an overall density of 7.6 inhabitants per square mile, can hardly justify an urban population of 30% in a Medieval-style setting. This holds true even if the impact of magic in your campaign is considered; to actually justify the above number, the magic theme needs to be pushed well over the limits of the low-magic description of Karameikos given in *GAZI* - incurring the risk of altering too greatly the classic manner of depicting the Grand Duchy. Of course, a high magic variant is possible, but the goal of this article is to provide two additional, different paths to solve these supposed inconsistencies.

A first solution would be altering the country's urban population; better said, bringing it back to the levels at which earlier supplements had put them – with no cities, Specularum set at 5,000 people, Threshold at 500, and so on. This would solve all the problems posed by the urban-rural population ratio, and will allow you to use the canonical population figures of 300,000. However, towns and cities as described in *GAZI* would need to be shrunk (perhaps creating some inconsistencies with *GAZI*'s town and city maps).

A second solution, which this article advocates, is changing the population figures. This will leave intact most of the material featured in *GAZI*, but you will end up having a Grand Duchy with a population increased by about 100% in regard to canonical figures. This is not much of a problem as long as you like *GAZI*'s version of Karameikos – the Grand Duchy continues to be your favorite monster-filled, mostly-wilderness land. Nevertheless, it will now be more in touch with real-world, 15th century Europe from which the Known World is inspired.

Anyway, in case you prefer to keep official population figures, the last section of this

article deals with this issue, suggesting ways to tweak the material presented here toward canonical population figures.

AN OVERALL LOOK AT THE GRAND DUCHY

AREA AND POPULATION

With a surface area of 39,592 square miles, Karameikos is comparable in size to real-world countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, Iceland, and South Korea, or to US states like Kentucky or Indiana. Most of the country (about 35%) is uninhabited by intelligent creatures like humans, demi-humans, or humanoids, while the rest is - at various degrees of control – held by those races. The human government effectively controls about 39% of Karameikos' land area, the demi-human clans about 12%, and the humanoid tribes another 14%.

Overall populaton of the Grand Duchy is about 621,400 people, including 537,800 humans, 41,900 demi-humans, 36,050 humanoids, and 5,650 other creatures (taking into account only the races who are represented by not less than 100 members in the country). Average population density

Table 1: Land area controlled by each Racial Group

Racial group	# of 8-mile hexes controlled	% of total country mileage controlled	Total racial population	Average racial density (people per sq. mile)
Humans	278	0.39	537,800	26
Demihumans	80	12%	41,900	7.7
Elves	74	11%	18,800	4.3
Gnomes	6	1%	16,100	46.4
Humanoids	99	14%	36,050	6.5

MAP OF KARAMEIKOS IN AC 1000

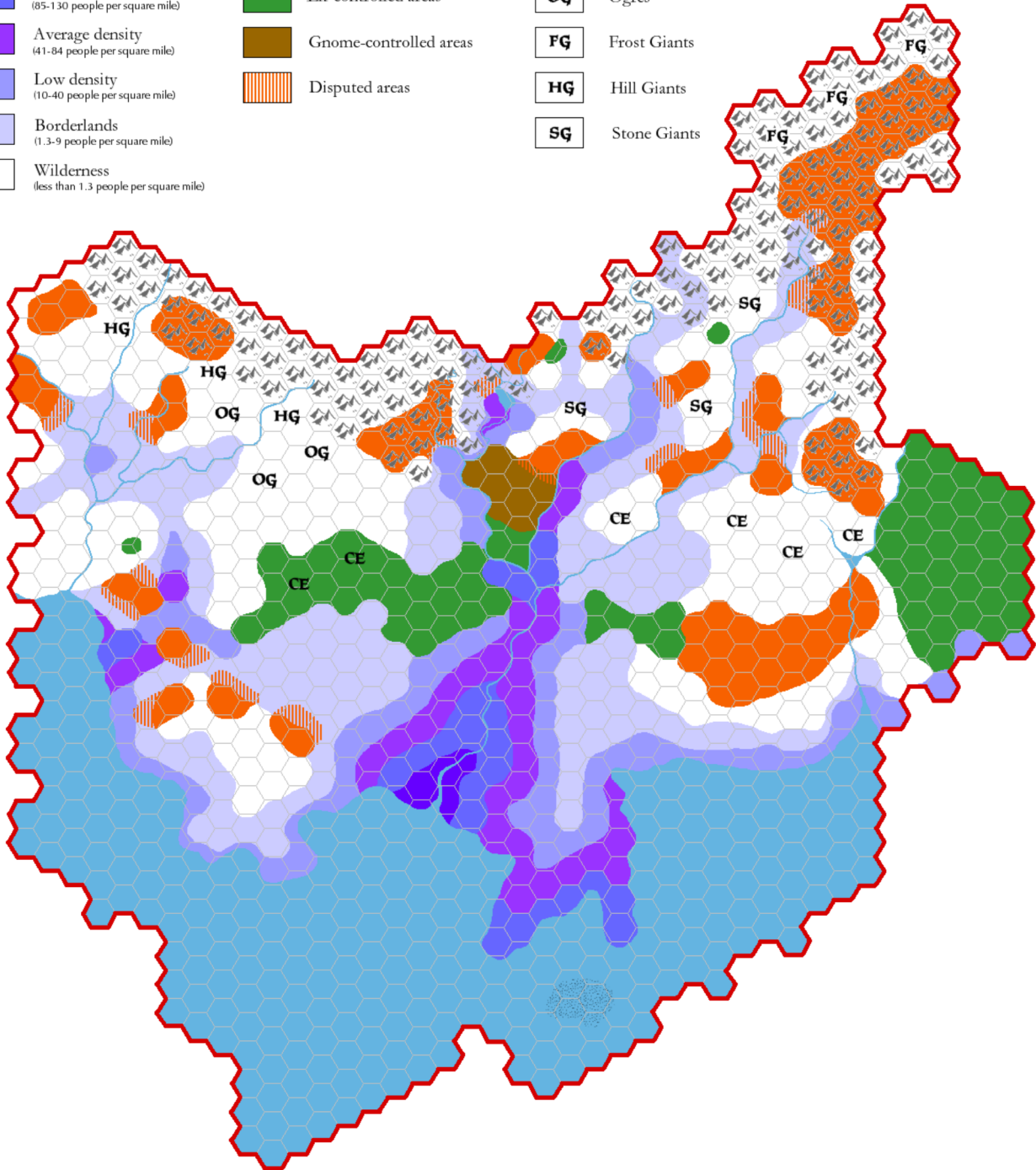
Showing human population spread and density, and areas under non-human control

HUMAN-CONTROLLED AREAS

- Very high density
(over 130 people per square mile)
- High density
(85-130 people per square mile)
- Average density
(41-84 people per square mile)
- Low density
(10-40 people per square mile)
- Borderlands
(1.3-9 people per square mile)
- Wilderness
(less than 1.3 people per square mile)

AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF NON-HUMANS

- Humanoid-controlled areas
- Elf-controlled areas
- Gnome-controlled areas
- Disputed areas
- CE Centaurs
- OG Ogres
- FG Frost Giants
- HG Hill Giants
- SG Stone Giants



for the whole country is about 15.7 people per square mile.

Table 1 shows data about the land each population group controls directly, their total population, and the average population in the lands they control. Note that, while racial population includes all the members of one group who dwell in Karameikos, average density takes into account only members of that group who live in lands directly controlled by their group. For example, average human population density shown in the table doesn't take into account the humans living in the wilderness, which are in fact uncontrolled by the government of the Grand Duchy. The same is true for demi-humans, whose population density in the table doesn't take into account the dwarven and halfling population, who controls no land of their own but lives scattered among the lands of other humans and demi-humans.

LAND CONTROL AND GOVERNMENT

Karameikos is a typical feudal monarchy, where the Grand Duke's absolute rule is effectively balanced by a number of local powers which hold sway over one part or another of the country's population or resources. These powers are: the Thyatian aristocracy (ranging from great feudal nobility like the Kelvins or the von Hendrikses, to the lesser nobility of lords and knights, to important titled landowners); the Traladaran families and clans (among which are the most powerful mercantile patrician families like the Torenescu and the Radu, but also old Traladaran landowning nobility like the Marilenev or the Dromilov, as well a number of lesser noble clans like the Sulescu); the trade guilds (Traladaran- or Thyatian-

controlled and based mostly in Specularum, but whose influence stretches far beyond the city walls); and the churches (foremost among which are the Church of Traladara and the Church of Karameikos, each with its own clerical and military orders, like the Order of the Griffon).

At present, thirty years since the present Grand Duke's rise to the throne, integration between the two main human ethnic groups – Traladarans and Thyatians – still goes on slowly. Resentment and hatred against the Thyatian nobility for events like the Thyatian conquest of one century ago or the crushing of the Marilenev Rebellion thirty years ago still runs high among the Traladaran clans who were defeated. This – fear of another Traladaran uprising shall the government weaken itself - is one of the reasons that mostly keeps the Thyatian aristocracy quite tightly allied with the Grand Duke, and which doesn't allow the formation of a united aristocratic front – regardless of ethnic group – to keep the central power in check, like what happens in most feudal countries of the Known World, like the Empire of Thyatis. On the other hand, the Grand Duke needs the support of the Thyatian aristocracy: Karameikos is still a new land in many aspects, mostly wilderness, a place difficult to control from the capital because of the lack of proper communication routes and of a structured bureaucracy, a country which still needs to be settled and where in the borderlands the civilization still struggles daily against nonhuman creatures and a hostile nature.

In fact, one of the limiting factors of the Grand Duke's power is indeed his lack of control over most of the Grand Duchy's lands. Large regions of Karameikos are

under the control of powerful demi-human clans: the central forests (from the Radlebb Woods, to the westernmost part of the Dymrak Forest, to the half of the same east of Rugalov River) are the hold of the ancient elven Callarii and Vyalia clans; the hill country between Windrush and Hillfollow Rivers, with its rich mineral deposits, is instead the hold of the gnome clans. Demi-human clans are at worst neutral toward the human government of the Grand Duchy, but there is also a large part of the country which is controlled by hostile humanoid tribes: goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, and their kin hold sway over much of the central Dymrak Forest, the south-western woods, the Cruth Lowlands, the central Black Peaks range, part of the Wufwolde Hills and the Altan Tepes range. Beside the areas under humanoid control, there are those which are the hold of other dangerous creatures, like the frost giants of the northern Altan Tepes range, the stone giants of the Wufwolde Hills, and the dragons – a number of these fierce beasts haunts some of the forests, hills and mountains of Karameikos, where even a number of local draconic kingdoms are found.

LAND OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL CLASSES

Most of the Karameikan human population belong to the commoner social class (98%). Among the commoners, however, various degrees of wealth are represented: from the wretched conditions of the lower classes (mostly peasants, but also unskilled agricultural and city labourers, and beggars), to the middle class (city craftsmen, comfortable landowning peasants, traders, professionals in some field – usually law and accountancy, but also culture, military, and clergy), to the high middle class (wealthy

non-noble landowners, and rich merchants, mostly). About 2% of the human population belong to the aristocracy: wealthy landowning families who have been granted large tracts of lands and authority to rule over them; human aristocracy is mostly of Thyatian ethnicity, even if some Traladaran families had their titles somewhat confirmed by the new government of the Grand Duke (like the Marilenev, the Dromilov, and so on).

Among demi-humans, social classes are much more blurred – demi-human societies are characterized by a lesser level of inequality and by a greater application of solidarity between family groups - and tend to keep only the distinction among ruling and non-ruling clans. Humanoids have no proper social classes: existing inequalities are based on the use of force – stronger hordes or clans prevail over the weaker ones, and make decisions.

The human population of Karameikos, contrary to the neighboring Thyatian Empire, enjoys a quite high amount of small land ownership, which is mostly spread in the borderlands and in scarcely-populated areas. More fertile and safer areas tend to be the property of rich landowning families, whose wealth comes from land rented to peasant families, because Grand Duke Stefan has abolished both the practices of slavery and of serfdom; this has led to an improvement of peasant conditions, because they have more freedom to move and thus more bargaining power against the landowners.

Foremost among the rich landowners are the members of the aristocracy who have been granted a fief by the government. Many small- and average-sized fiefdoms are

Table 2: HUMAN POPULATION AND DENSITY OF MAJOR DOMAINS

Domain	Area (square miles)	Human population	Population density (people per sq mile)
BARONIES:			
Black Eagle	622	31,950	51.4
Kelvin	714	44,800	62.8
Threshold	92	10,950	119
Vorloi	947	68,300	72.1
ESTATES:			
Dmitrov	297	33,200	111.8
Marilenev	818	86,400	105.6
Penhaligon	325	7,900	24.3
Rugalov	84	2,950	35.1
Sulescu	100	3,800	38
Vandevic	84	2,100	25
Verge	89	1,850	20.8

found in the more settled areas and in the borderlands they have the duty to defend, while a number of the largest ones are located around important cities or trading towns. Table 2 lists the most important domains of the Grand Duchy, with average area, human population, and density.

Note that the population figures shown above don't take into account the small percentage of demi-human population who may be found within those domains. For example, Threshold has a not-negligible population of halflings, gnomes and dwarves, while the Black Eagle Barony hosts some humanoids.

Many other minor noble estates dot the Grand Duchy's lands: among these are Highdell (north of Threshold), Ourosco, Darinov, and Strolojca (on the coast between the Black Eagle Barony and Sulescu), Brezovo (on the coast between Sulescu and

Marilenev), Bergoi and Veseya (on the Castellan River south of Castellan Keep), Glucynthos and Locrida (on the coast south of the Dymrak Forest). These minor estates usually range from 50 to 100 square miles of land, often including a small keep, castle or manor, and at least a medium-sized village, alongside some additional thorps or hamlets; their population varies according to the type of terrain and region in which they are found, ranging roughly from 500 to 5,000 people.

URBAN POPULATION

Overall, the Grand Duchy has an urban population of 14.5% - "urban population" here meaning only those living in cities with at least 10,000 people (that is the capital, Kelvin, and Fort Doom). If we also consider smaller towns down to 1,000 people, this percentage rises to 20.4%. These

percentages should be taken carefully however, because most of the population of smaller towns is still at least partially employed in agricultural activities which are carried out around the community; this is sometimes also true for larger settlements, like the capital, whose South End is mostly inhabited by agricultural labourers who work in the lands around the city.



Audience at Dorfus Hilltopper's court

Karameikos' urban population is quite high if we consider that a vast part of the country is barely or sparsely settled. Nevertheless, the southern area of the Grand Duchy around Specularum and other towns like Vorloi and Dmitrov is very densely settled: there a combination of fertile lands, coupled with the vicinity of a huge trade center whose population is always in need for food has favored this level of settlement. This has in turn allowed formation of a big metropolis like Specularum. Quite large cities are also found in other areas of the interior, like the confluence of the Windrush, Highreach and Hillfollow Rivers at Kelvin, and the coast of the Gulf of Halag – both regions have been historical settlement areas during the ages. Elsewhere only small towns are found, often at the edges of border areas, born to protect trade routes or to exploit some natural resources.

Here follows a list of known settlements found in the Grand Duchy, along with their population, if it is known.

Cities and large towns: Fort Doom (pop. 10,000), Kelvin (pop. 20,000), Specularum (pop. 59,800, including about 2,500 demihumans – the last city census was made in AC 985 according to *GAZI*, and gave a result of 50,000 city dwellers, but the same

supplement confirms that population as of AC 1000 is certainly greater; the given figure of 59,800 is a realistic estimate which takes into account a stable increase toward the official population of 70,000 reached by Specularum by AC 1013 according to the *Poor Wizard's Almanacs* and *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure* supplements).

Small towns: Dmitrov (pop. 6,500), Highforge (pop. 7,500, all gnomes and dwarves), Luln (pop. 5,000, including about 200 demihumans), Penhaligon (pop. 3,750), Rifillian (pop. 1,700, nearly all Callarii wood elves), Threshold (pop. 5,000, including about 500 demihumans), Vorloi (pop. 7,500).

Villages: Callanya (a Callarii village south-east of the Barony of Kelvin), Eltan's Spring (a small village on the mountain ridge north-east of Threshold), Guido's Fort (a village on the ShriII River, which flows from the southern spur of Altan Tepes into the

Highreach River), Highdell (a mining community north of Threshold), Irenke (a village west of Penhaligon, past the other side of the Hillfollow River), Knosht (in the hill country east of Threshold), Kota-Hutan (a Callarii village in the Hantu Valley, south of the Temple of the Gray Mountain), Marilenev (pop. 900, the village around the old "Castle Marilenev"), Rugalov (pop. 650), Ryania (on the Rugalov River, north of Rugalov), Seragrad (fortified settlement at the confluence of the Castellan and Highreach Rivers), Sisak (pop. 100, a small village on the Westron Road, halfway between Radlebb Keep and Specularum), Stallanford (on the Hillfollow River, north of Penhaligon), Sulescu (pop. 950), Vandevicisny (pop. 100), Verge (pop. 500).

MAIN RACES

The following entries list in order of their number – from the most numerous to the least numerous – the main races who dwell within Karameikos' borders. Each entry gives a brief description of that race's composition (ethnic subgroups, and the like), its holdings in the Grand Duchy, relationships with other races, and some additional information. Note that only races who number at least 100 members within Karameikan territory are described here. Other, less-represented races – alongside unintelligent creatures – are found in the following chapter, *Fauna and Minor Races*.

Humans (pop. 537,800)

Humans constitute the vast majority of the Karameikan population. However, about 90% of Karameikos' human population lives in less than one-fifth of Karameikos' total land. In fact, most of the country is still an almost-unsettled wilderness, and even elven and

gnomish holdings are devoid of human population. Table 3 summarises data relating to human settlement areas.

Suburban areas with a very high population density (over 130 people per square mile) are found only in the immediate countryside around the city of Specularum. Being the third or fourth largest seaport in the Known World, the capital of the Grand Duchy is surrounded by a heavily-farmed area where innumerable villages and hamlets of all sizes are found; most of them work to bring to the city its daily sustenance of food.

High population density areas (85-130 people per square mile) are found in the larger region around Specularum, encompassing the country where the old ruins of Krakatos and the village of Marilenev are located; the southernmost coastal areas of the Vorloi and Dmitrov peninsula are classified as having a high population density, as well as the river plains around Kelvin, and the area immediately around Fort Doom, up to the coast. The larger portion of the country's population lives here, where agriculture is still the main activity, together with herding.

Average-population density areas (41-84 people per square mile) include an even-wider area around the lower flow of the Hillfollow River, both banks of the river up to Kelvin, the Hillfollow's left bank north of the Barony of Kelvin's border, the northern part of Vorloi and Dmitrov's peninsulas, and the northern half of the Black Eagle Barony, and Threshold's and Luln's vicinity. Most people in this area live as farmers, but herding, fishing, and logging are common.

Areas with low population density (10-40 people per square mile) are found around the southern more populated lands, where

Table 3: LAND area controlled by each Racial Group

Settlement	Number of 8-mile hexes	Square mileage	% of total mileage	Population density range (people/sq. mile)	Average population density (people/sq. mile)	Total Population per settlement area (averaged)	% of total population (averaged)
Very high	4	224	0.57	Over 130	155	34,700 (+ 57,300)*	17
High	23	1,288	3.25	85-130	104	133,950 (+ 42,800)*	33
Average	35	1,960	4.95	41-84	65	127,400 (+ 13,050)*	26
Scarce	68	3,808	9.62	Oct-40	21	79,950	15
Borderland	148	8,288	20.93	1.3-9	5	41,450	8
Wilderness	429	24,024	60.68	Below 1.3	0.3	7,200	1
TOTAL	707	39,592	100	**	13.55	424660 (+ 113,150)*	100

* Numbers in parentheses indicate human urban population to be added to population

** Population densities in the country can range from zero (wilderness areas uninhabited by humans) to several thousands (even 20-30,000 in Specularum) people per square mile.

the farming fields leave room to the woods, around the medium course of Hillfollow River, and in the northernmost woods of the Vorloi and Dmitrov peninsula. This level of settlement is found in a tiny strip all around Karameikos' coasts, from Rugalov to the beginning of the Dmitrov and Vorloi peninsula, and from the border of the Estate of Marilenev westward, toward Sulescu, Vandevicisny, and the Black Eagle Barony. Lands between Luln, Radlebb Keep, and Fort Doom belong to this level of settlement, as do the vicinity of Riverfork Keep, the farmlands south of Threshold, the right bank of the Windrush River from Kelvin to Verge, and the left banks of the Hillfollow River from the borders of the Estate of Penhaligon up to Stallanford. A number of activities are found in those areas, from agriculture, fishing, and logging to herding, boating, trapping, hunting, and a little mining.

Borderlands, which constitute the vast majority - in terms of surface areas - of the lands where humanity is spread, are actually almost uninhabited (1.3-9 people per square mile). Tiny villages, hamlets, and huts are separated by miles, with distances becoming longer in areas further away from the settled lands. Most of the woodlands of southern Karameikos are borderlands: the woods south and north of the Westron Road, those between the Highreach River and the Dymrak Forest, and the woods immediately north of the Eastron Road. Borderlands include also the border areas of the Black Eagle Barony, the southern Cruth Lowlands around the local rivers, the plains south of Verge, vales around Threshold and the lands east of the town, up to the Hillfollow River. The eastern half of the Barony of Kelvin, consisting of moors and forests, belongs to the borderlands as well, as do the outlying areas

of the Estate of Penhaligon and the banks of the Hillfollow River past Stallanford, of the Highreach and Castellan rivers. Very few people (less than 10%) live in the borderlands, which are dotted with independent settlements and outposts as well as with keeps of nobles - old Traladaran clans or people entitled by the Grand Duke to control far away areas. In the borderlands, agriculture is supplemented by herding, trapping, hunting, logging, boating, fishing, and mining. In fact, what little mining is carried on by the humans in



Thyatian knights at court.



Traladaran commoners

Karameikos takes mostly place in the borderlands.

And then there is the rest of the country, about 60% of total land area – which is wilderness (less than 1.3 people per square mile in population density). Civilization has not taken hold there, and most of the wilderness is uninhabited by humans. The sparse population which is found in these areas consists of isolated houses of pioneers, bandit hideouts, exiles' or fugitives' shelters, lonely wizard towers, and the like. The government of the Grand Duke only controls this vast part of the country by name – actually most of it is controlled by humanoid tribes, monsters of various types, demihuman clans, and so on.

Karameikos' humans are split into two main ethnic groups – the Thyatians (15% of total human population) and the Traladarans (65%) - alongside which in the last thirty years has appeared a large percentage of half-bloods descended from intermarriages between the two ethnic groups (18%). Moreover, there is a number of foreign immigrants who populate the larger towns and cities (2%, coming especially from Ylaruam and Darokin). The Thyatians, most recent immigrants, tend to be more numerous in larger population centers and constitute a vast percentage of the noble class; the Traladarans are spread equally in all civilized areas, as well as in border areas of the country.

Elves (pop. 18,800)

A number of elves live in Karameikos, divided into two major alliances of clans of different cultures and traditions; both groupings are essentially independent from the government of the Grand Duchy.

The first grouping is that of the wood elves of the **Callarii** clan (58% of total elven population), who inhabit the Radlebb Woods (from the woods east of the cursed lands of Koriszegy to the Windrush River, on whose banks the market town of Rifllian is found), the western areas of the Dymrak Forest (as far as possible from the warlike Dymrak goblins), and the wooded hills south of Highforge. A lonely clan also lives in the forested hills north-east of Threshold, while another in the Hantu Valley, in the forested hills north-east of Penhaligon (near the famous Temple of the Gray Mountain). The wood elves live in small woodland communities of about 100-200 inhabitants each.

The Callarii are in good standing with Karameikos' humans and with the country's government. The clanmasters signed a treaty with the Grand Duke some thirty years ago, in which they agreed to send a number of their warriors to Specularum to serve as the elite Elvenguard of the Grand Duke, while receiving full acknowledgment of their autonomy by Stefan Karameikos. Since then, about two hundred Callarii elves and their immediate relatives now live in Specularum. A number of other Callarii elves also live scattered among human settlements, and elven rangers, adventurers, and sometimes bandits can be found wandering the borderlands of the Grand Duchy.

Of the 10,900 or so Callarii who live in Karameikos, about 7,800 live in the Radlebb Woods, where many of their tree-villages are found. In the eastern half of the woods, elven densities reach an average 7 people per square mile, while in the western half the average lowers from 4 people to 1 people per square mile. The elves avoid entirely the forest near the cursed lands of Koriszegy. About 900 wood elves are found in the westernmost part of the Dymrak Forest, nearer to the Barony of Kelvin; population density there averages 2.5 people per square mile. Elven holdings in the forested hills south of Highforge, where about 650 wood elves live, average 4 people per square mile. Another about 750 wood elves live scattered in small settlements outside the main elven lands – like the Hantu Valley east of the Duke's Road, which houses around 500 of them – or wandering in the wilderness. The remaining 800 or so wood elves live in the human settlements (mainly Threshold, Luln, and Specularum).

A second group is that of the **Vyalia** clans (40% of the total elven population), who belong to the fair elf stock. They inhabit the eastern parts of the Dymrak Forest, beyond the Rugalov River and to the south-east of the Lake of Lost Dreams. There are about 7,500 of them, with an average population density of 3.7 people per square mile – lower in western areas nearer to the Rugalov River, higher in the forest near the Thyatian border. The Karameikans tend to consider the Vyalia a more reserved and mysterious lot than the Callarii, even if it is known that they are in good standing with the Thyatian Empire. All the Vyalia clans pledge fealty to the Greenheight clanmaster, who rules from Greenheight town (in the County of Vyalia, Thyatis) and holds the rank of Count in the imperial hierarchy. The Thyatian County of Vyalia includes only the small eastern part of the forest inhabited by the Vyalia, around the Kerenda River; the rest, up to the Rugalov River, while nominally under the control of Karameikos, is effectively uncontrolled by the Grand Duke. The Vyalia clans consider the whole lands from Rugalov River to Kerenda River theirs, and they roam it freely. The percentage of Vyalia elves shown here only takes into account the clans who inhabit the areas of the Dymrak Forest which are found within the nominal borders of Karameikos – the whole Vyalia population, including the elves who dwell within Thyatian borders, amounts to nearly 20,000 elves.

A lonely clan of fair elves, the Lindenelm, lives in the eastern half of the Achelos Woods (1% of total elven population). Lindenelm elves are the last remnants of the mercenary clans that sided with a Taymoran necromancer-king after civil war erupted in that realm thousands of years ago. The

upper ranks of those mercenaries, who had earlier helped the Taymorans in their wars against the giants, had mixed fully with the decadent Taymor society, adopting the worship of Nyx and committing heinous crimes during the Taymoran age. When the Taymoran civilization collapsed, this elven ruling class was overthrown. The Lindenelm ancestors, while not involved in the worst excesses of their kin, were still ostracized by the Vyalia, and forced to flee the eastern forests. They settled in the Achelos Woods, but their population never grew to a significant extent - the clan nowadays has about 100 members.

Lastly, there is a small number of elven immigrants (1% of the total elven population) who came to Karameikos to trade or travel; these foreigners are mostly Minrothad water elves who live in the Grand Duchy's coastal cities and towns, but some Darokinian, Alfheimer, Glantrian, Ierendian, and Thyatian elves may also be encountered.

Goblins (pop. 16,350)

Common goblins (*Goblinus goblinus*) are a numerous race in Karameikos. Their presence in the region can be traced back to the humanoid invasions that befell Traladara after the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492). The goblins dominate most of the central Dymrak Forest west of the Rugalov River, where more than eight thousand of them are found. Dymrak goblins are split among the larger tribes of Karameikos – like the Dread Horde (which also includes a number of hobgoblins), the Red Blade, and the Vipers – some of which are in league with local powers such as the green dragons or the Witches of Dymrak. Many goblins also live in the Altan Tepes mountains and in the forested hill country east of the Hillfollow

River, their clans often under the control of hobgoblin or orc tribes – with the notable exception of the Yellow Fang tribe. A number of other dangerous goblin tribes are found in the Wufwolde region between the Windrush and Hillfollow Rivers; foremost among them is the Nightstalkers tribe, followed by the mountain clans who live north of Threshold and Verge, in the Black Peaks Mountains. Lastly, some smaller goblin clans live in the southern area of the Black Eagle Barony, where they lend their services as mercenaries to the Black Eagle Baron.

Gnomes (pop. 16,100)

All Karameikan gnomes belong to the earth gnome stock. Their presence in this region can be traced back to BC 100, with a group of gnome clans that survived the onslaught



Highforge Rock Gnome

of their kin at the hands of the kobolds under the Hardanger Mountains. After a long exodus they arrived in the lands between the Windrush and the Highfollow Rivers and settled there.

Most (around 90%) of the gnome population lives in the Kingdom of Highforge; population density here averages 37 people per square mile. About 6,500 gnomes call Highforge town their home; several smaller gnome settlements (population up to 2,500) dot the region around the town. The Kingdom of Highforge – which encompasses the town and the hill country several miles

around it – is ruled by King Dorfus Hilltopper, advised in turn by a Council of Elders with representatives from all the clans; it is an effectively autonomous kingdom within the Grand Duchy. Highforge gnomes preserve their customs and laws independently from those of the human population. They are very good wood and metal craftsmen, but are quite reserved and prefer to be left alone and not deal with the affairs of the outer world. Trade between the Grand Duchy and Highforge is strictly regulated by the traditional gnome caravan which annually leaves the gnome town for Specularum, where it trades the gnomes' goods for a few days. Highforge's gnomes are often involved in skirmishes with the goblins that live to the north-east of the town.

Some gnomish families are also found in other parts of the Grand Duchy. This is due to a local gnomish custom, according to which a clan who cannot peacefully agree with a decision of the Council of Elders must leave the kingdom and settle elsewhere. Though this happens rarely, during the course of the centuries some small gnome clans have indeed left Highforge to resettle in the larger cities of the Grand Duchy or to found mining or crafting settlements in the borderlands or wilderness areas.

Orcs (pop. 10,000)

Orcs are the second most numerous race of humanoids in Karameikos, and their presence in this land is quite old.

About half of the orcs living in Karameikos are found in the western part of the country. They were the first orcs who came to Karameikos; tribes of red orcs and common orcs driven out of the hin lands to the west by the halflings' uprising (BC 744-610). These

orcs settled the Cruth Lowlands region between the Cruth and Achelos Rivers. Modern local orc tribes, like the Jagged Claw and the Blackstone, claim to be descendants of those hordes. Later defeats at the hands of the hin in the following centuries (like those of AC 700 and AC 944) have pushed a stable flow of orcs into the Cruth Lowlands region. These orcs are often in league with groups of ogres and control much of the lands north of Riverfork Keep, representing a real hindrance to the penetration of human presence in that area. Other smaller orc hordes are part of mixed (goblin or gnoll) tribes who are stationed within or around the lands of the Black Eagle Barony (with which they are allied), while several hundred orcs directly serve the Black Eagle Baron as mercenaries in his elite division, the Banner of the Black Eagle. The tribes living in western Karameikos are mostly of common orc (*Orcus porcus*) stock, but a relevant part of them (about 30%) belongs to the red orc (*Orcus rubeus vulgaris*) stock.

Other large orc tribes, who belong entirely to the common orc (*Orcus porcus*) stock, are found in eastern Karameikos, mostly along the Altan Tepes range; among those are orc-only tribes (like the Hairless Dog or the Black Web of the southern Altan Tepes) or mixed tribes (like the Jagged Rocks of the northern range). A couple of smaller tribes are also found around the medium flow of Castellan River, between the Duke's Road and the upper Highreach River flow. All the orcs of eastern Karameikos arrived in this region during the humanoid invasions of the early 5th century BC, after the humanoid defeat at the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492).

Besides these larger tribes, smaller bands of orc raiders, often in the service of human

villains, can be occasionally found also in other parts of northern Karameikos.

Hobgoblins (pop. 4,750)

Hobgoblins of Karameikos belong to the eastern hobgoblin stock (*Goblinus grandis*) and came to this region together with other humanoid hordes after the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492). Hobgoblin-only tribes are quite rare, and their hordes tend to gather together with other humanoids to lead them and to form larger tribes. Hobgoblins are most numerous in the Altan Tepes range, where their most fearsome tribe, the Steelwarriors (which also includes a number of bugbears), is found. Other mixed tribes of the Altan Tepes who include large numbers of hobgoblins are the Chaos Horde, the Bloody Head, and the Jagged Rocks. A hobgoblin-only tribe, the Killer Sands, lives on the side of the Altan Tepes which looks upon Ylaruam. Hobgoblin minorities are also found within some mixed tribes of eastern Karameikos or within some Dymrak goblin tribes (like the Dread Horde). Hobgoblins are not numerous in western Karameikos; a hobgoblin-only tribe, the Roaring Fiends, is found between Luln and the Black Eagle Barony, while a mixed bugbear-hobgoblin tribe, the Bloodbears, threatens the Westron Road from the southern woods.

Dwarves (pop. 4,000)

Only a small number of dwarves lives in Karameikos, most of them belonging to the Stronghollow clan. The Stronghollows came to Karameikos around AC 300 from Rockhome, and mostly settled within the borders of the Kingdom of Highforge, where the gnomes welcomed them. Other smaller groups of dwarven immigrants belonging to other clans arrived in the Grand Duchy in the

course of the following seven centuries, the larger number consisting of those dwarves who fled persecution in the Highlands during the Year of Infamy (AC 828). A thousand dwarves live alongside the gnomes in the town of Highforge, another 500 in other gnomish settlements of the Kingdom of Highforge (these are mostly Stronghollow ones), while the rest (dwarves from other clans, mostly) is spread among the humans' main towns and settlements (more than a thousand live in Specularum). Some of the dwarves live as mining pioneers (sometimes alongside gnomes) in the dangerous borderlands of the Altan Tepes and western Black Peaks mountains.

Halflings (pop. 3,000)

A number of halflings live among the humans in a variety of villages and towns. The hin are all immigrants from the Five Shires, who came there over the course of history. They form a strong presence in the Foreign Quarter of Specularum.

Centaur (pop. 2,000)

Centaur live in the deepest woods and forests of the Grand Duchy, from the Radlebb Woods in the west to the Dymrak Forest – except the areas controlled by the goblins – in the east.

The Radlebb Woods centaurs do not particularly like humans, but are good friends of the woodland races and of the elves, and fearsome enemies of the humanoids. They don't have large tribes, but live scattered in small family groups.

The centaurs living in eastern Karameikos are instead grouped into three major tribes. The Firemane tribe lives in the wooded lands between The Moor and the Lake of the

HALF-ORCS AND HALF-OGRES

The history of Karameikos is one of invasions, conquests, pillages, and wars. As you can read in the section of this article regarding the country's history, the humanoid races – gnolls, goblins, orcs, and the like – were often protagonists of those events; from the Great Beastmen Invasion of two thousands years ago to the more recent skirmishes against the orcs in the Cruth Lowlands. In some areas of the country the human population had to submit to humanoid rule at one time or another, and many humans had to live as their slaves. Still today, sometimes humanoids take prisoners during their raids and keep them as slaves for their own purposes or to sell them later.

All those cases of involuntary interaction between humanoids and human men and women opened the way to innumerable rapes and forced matings. Interfertility is not always possible between humanoid races and humans, but at least between orcs or ogres and humans it is known to be. If a woman becomes pregnant during her captivity with a humanoid tribe, sometimes she is killed outright; if the woman is particularly valuable to the tribe, the baby is killed or abandoned as soon as he or she is born. Otherwise, if the woman is allowed to give birth to the baby and to assist him or her, the child is most often raised to be a slave like his or her mother, unless the child demonstrates some quality or skill much appreciated by the tribe, in which very rare case he or she is tolerated as a near-equal member of the horde.

On the other hand, when a woman becomes pregnant with a humanoid child but not in captivity (most often as the result of a rape during a raid or pillage), the child is doomed to be an outcast in the Karameikan society. Many victims of this misfortune abandon their child, bringing their infants to charitable religious institutions (mostly manned by priests of Valerias, either independently or on the behalf of the Churches of Karameikos or Thyatis) where the priests take care of the baby. This practice is not supported with its own institutions by the Church of Traladara, and is mostly shunned by Traladarans, in particular in the rural or borderland areas; there, a mother pregnant with a humanoid baby usually abandons the child in the wilds (where some lucky babies are picked up by the druids or by other benign beings) or commits suicide before giving birth.

Prejudice and suspicion runs high in rural and borderland areas against anyone looking like an orc or a humanoid (as half-ogres and half-orcs do). Such individuals are not likely to find any acceptance in those places, unless they perform exceptional deeds or services in favor of the community. Most often they are shunned, persecuted, cast out, or hunted down, not much differently than what happens with normal humanoids. Those feelings tend to be weaker near and in larger and more cosmopolitan towns and cities, and where Thyatian presence is stronger. There, even if the half-humanoids are not easily accepted as well, their presence is tolerated and they can earn a living as bodyguards, laborers, mercenaries and, in the worst cases, as thugs and beggars.

Lost Dreams. They are a warlike tribe who is hostile to human presence in the area. The Shurak tribe lives in the woodlands around the Lake of the Lost Dreams, bordering the Vyalia and goblin lands. They are a peaceful tribe who mostly wants to be left alone. Lastly, there is the Stormwind tribe, who controls the north-eastern part of The Moor, outside the borders of the Barony of Kelvin. The Stormwind centaurs dislike outsiders and prefer to stay away from civilization, but have been known to help humans in distress and even accept some of them as members of their tribe.

Another group of individual centaurs (with some chevalls within their ranks) is the Clanless, who consist entirely of bards and druids roaming the wilds of Karameikos and acting as judges, sages, storytellers and healers for all the centaur tribes.

Bugbears (pop. 1,650)

All the bugbears of Karameikos belong to the common bugbear stock (*Ursus bipedis vulgaris*) and arrived in this region during the aftermath of the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492). The bugbear presence in eastern Karameikos is limited to small bands which are part of larger, mixed humanoid tribes (like the Steelwarriors hobgoblins of the Altan Tepes). Bugbears are, however, quite numerous in western Karameikos, where the Vileraiders (a bugbear-only tribe) and the Bloodbears (a mixed bugbear-hobgoblin tribe) are in control of large stretches of the woods south of the Westron Road; another bugbear-only tribe, called Bargle's Bugbears, lives within the border of the Black Eagle Barony and serves the Baron's infamous court magician.

Gnolls (pop. 1,400)

Karameikan gnolls all belong to the laughing gnoll stock (*Canis erectus hilaris*). Today's gnolls are only a pale reflection of the savage gnoll hordes of the ancient age. Their presence in Karameikos dates back to the Great Beastmen Invasion of BC 1000,

As a result, if you allow them in your campaign, a number of half-orcs and half-ogres should be taken into account when examining the Karameikan population as a whole. In the article they have been included in the population figures given for humans. Half-ogres should not exceed one hundred, while half-orcs may be about one thousand, many of whom may be part of those "orcs" serving in the Banner of the Black Eagle elite unit or living in the Black Eagle Barony.

If you want to have other half-breeds in your Karameikan campaign, use this rule of thumb to determine their whole number in the country: on average, the number of half-breeds is equal to 5% of the population figure given for the relative humanoid race in Karameikos. As with half-orcs and half-ogres, the half-breeds should be subtracted from the total human population.

when their ancestors ravaged the Traldar civilization and ultimately contributed to its decline. In the following centuries, gnoll numbers have occasionally been on the rise, but they never managed to overcome the Traladarans again and have been slowly reduced to mere bands and small tribes scattered in Karameikos' northern wilderness, forced to ally with other humanoid (orcs, usually) in order to survive. Gnoll bands, for example, are found in the Horned Heads orc tribe (in the northern Altan Tepes) and in the Rashak's Reavers orc tribe (another orc tribe stationed between Fort Doom and Luln). Exceptions to this rule are the Faceslashers tribe (who serve "Queen" Ilyeana Penhaligon at Haradraith's Keep) and the powerful Death's Head tribe, the last powerful gnoll tribe who controls the upper Foamfire valley and regularly threatens Verge and its surroundings. Individual gnoll mercenaries can also be found in the service of some human (like the Black Eagle Baron) or humanoid villains.

Ogres (pop. 1,400)

Bands of common ogres (*Homo monstrum brutalis*) came to Karameikos in the aftermath of the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492). There are no known ogre tribes, as most of the ogres live in family groups scattered in the Cruth Lowlands region. Some of these groups have allied with local dominant orc tribes (like the Blackstone or the Greyslayers). Elsewhere the ogre presence is scarcer. They are mostly found as mercenaries among other humanoid tribes of the Black Peaks range (like the Death's Head gnolls) and of eastern Karameikos.

Wood Imps (pop. 1,000)

These pesky evil creatures of the forests gradually migrated to Karameikos from Alfheim in the past centuries, spreading in the land's thick forests like the Dymrak Forest and the Radlebb Woods. The wood imp tribes are held at bay by the Vyalia and Callarii elven clans that inhabit the forests and are seldom dangerous, but from time to time the imps manage to forge alliances with the enemies of elves, like the goblin tribes or other monsters – and then they can become a problem.

Lupins (pop. 550)

Small groups of lupins are scattered among Karameikos' southern towns. They are mostly immigrants from other countries (Thyatis in particular, from where most recent immigrants in the Grand Duchy come), who live at the edges of human society. In inland villages lupins often have to face the hatred of local Traladaran peasants, to whom they recall memories of the beastmen of ancient legends or the werewolves. That is why those lupins who live in Karameikos' interior tend to stay alone in the wilderness, away from human presence. However, most lupins in Karameikos prefer to stick to more cosmopolitan settlements, like the cities and towns. Karameikan lupins are mostly mongrels (30%), while represented breeds include the wolvenfolk (20%), who wander the woods and the wilderness, away from curious eyes, and a clan of Cimarron hairless (30%) who lives together with the Hairless Dog orc tribe of the southern Altan Tepes. Minor breeds encountered in Karameikos are the great beagles (10%) and the shagheads (10%).

Giants (pop. 500)

Giants are not a numerous race in Karameikos, but their presence is well-rooted in this land. The hill giants of Karameikos are the last descendants of the ancient giantish Kingdom of Grondheim, while frost and stone giants represent legacies of even more ancient ages.

The most prominent giant population is that of the frost giants (50%) who live around the highest peaks of the Altan Tepes range, in the north-easternmost area of the Grand Duchy, a wild land from whose dwellers Castellan Keep protects the borderlands to the southwest. The frost giants live in clans of 20-30 members each, who often wage war one upon another but who from time to time unite under a charismatic warleader, becoming a serious threat for the civilized lands. They keep a large number (some hundreds) of the snow apes who live in this area of the mountains as servants, and they skirmish against the local humanoid tribes and white dragons as often as with the humans.

While less numerous (25%), the stone giants of the Wufwolde Hills have better relationships with humans. They live peacefully in small family clans scattered between Threshold and the Castellan River, trading occasionally with the local human population and sometimes even paying visits to their settlements.

The giants' presence in western Karameikos is limited to a number of primitive hill giant clans (25%) who live in the Cruth Lowlands area, with one foremost settlement on the upper flow of Achelos River. The hill giants are warlike and in good standing with the Cruth ogres and some of the local orc tribes.

Kobolds (pop. 500)

There are only two known relevant kobold tribes, both small and consisting entirely of mountain kobolds (*Canis minor militaris*). The first is the Brokenshields tribe, descendants of kobolds that migrated from the Darokinian side of the Cruth mountains. The Brokenshields lurk within the ruins of Castle Mistamere, north of Threshold, and have struck a deal with a flock of harpies for mutual defense and harassment of local trade. The second is the Grey Rats, last descendants of the kobolds who arrived in Karameikos after the defeat of Queen Ubdala at the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492). They live in the Caves of Chaos, trying to survive among the fiercer and stronger humanoid races.

Lycanthropes (pop. 500)

A relatively high number of lycanthropes hides in the moors and wilderness of Karameikos, in particular the western half of the region, from the vast area of the Cruth Lowlands to the Black Eagle Barony and to the woods of south-western Karameikos. Lycanthropy here is as old as the land itself. The first lycanthropic bloodlines were created during the Taymoran age; together with a second serious epidemic that happened at the beginning of 5th century AC, this curse has never been lifted from the country.

The Karameikan lycanthropes are mostly werewolves (60%), with a smaller presence of wereboars (24%) and werebears (4%). Some of those werecreatures live in close proximity to human settlements, which they sometimes use as hunting grounds. Rumors hold true that the Black Eagle Baron is in league with the lycanthropic groups hidden to the north of his domain.

Other groups of werecreatures, mostly wererats (12%) and devil swines (2%), tend instead to dwell in the very middle of human settlements. Individuals or small groups of these lycanthropes can be found hiding within the population of the larger or more isolated human settlements.

Fairies (pop. 350)

The members of the Good People are found in the less-populated areas of the Grand Duchy, whose territory includes a handful of hidden gateways to a number of fairy courts (a couple of those are rumored to exist in the woods between Sulescu and Vandevicisny, and in the eastern Achelos Woods). Small groups of sprites live in the narrower vales between the wooded hills of the Cruth Lowlands. They mostly reside within Karameikan territory, but sometimes they foray into the hin Highshire. Pixie clans, on the other hand, live in the most hidden and uninhabited depths of Karameikos' south-eastern forests. In the eastern half of the Dymrak Forest, the domain of the Vyalia elves, occasional encounters with sidhe and other fairies coming from nearby Haven are always a possibility. Lastly, a number of Traladaran villages scattered in the Grand Duchy have plenty of folklore regarding brownies and leprechauns.

Thouls (pop. 250)

Small clans of these creatures (about a hundred of them in total) serve a couple of hobgoblin-led tribes in the Altan Tepes range -- the Bloody Head and the Steelwarriors tribes. Other thouls are scattered among the Grand Duchy's wilderness, usually serving as mercenaries or bodyguard for more powerful villains.

Brutemen (pop. 250)

In the remote eastern reaches of the Grand Duchy also dwell the very last remnants of the almost extinct bruteman race, who struggle to survive against the nearby humanoid tribes.

Faenares (pop. 150)

Small groups of these graceful creatures lead insular lives on the highest peaks of the Cruth mountains, in the desolate and uninhabited region of western Karameikos.

Harpies (pop. 150)

These fearsome creatures are scattered over the whole Karameikan territory, from the rocky peaks in the Cruth and Black Peaks mountains, to the coastal cliffs, to the darker and most tangled depths of the forests. Sometimes a group of harpies forges a league with weak humanoid tribes, like what happened with the Brokenshields kobold tribe, north of Threshold.

FAUNA AND MINOR RACES

The following paragraphs describe which creatures can be found in the lands of Karameikos, including intelligent races whose number don't exceed a hundred individuals in the region. Creatures are grouped according to their monster type (for a definition of monster types, see the *Rules Cyclopedia* or *DMR2 - Creature Catalogue*).

Animals, Giant

The Grand Duchy is the home of many unusual, giant, and dangerous animal species. **Giant rats** are very common; they are found in the countryside and are often

attracted by the dirt toward large cities and towns. **Giant bats** dwell in the Blight Swamp and near undead lairs - like their much more dangerous relatives, the **giant vampire bats** - but sometimes are also found elsewhere.

Giant ferrets are found in forests and woods; often those animals are trained as warding or fighting beasts by the humanoid tribes. **Dire wolves** are found in the Altan Tepes mountains and in the region immediately south of them; they are good neighbors of the goblin tribes, and are often trained as mounts by them.

Giant lizards are quite common. The dangerous **horned chameleon** dwells in the forests, while **geckos** are found in any rocky terrain; the solitary and aggressive **tuatara** is found in the Black Peaks mountain range. Among giant amphibians, the **rock toad** is sometimes found in areas dotted with caves or in the mountains.

Animals, Normal

The Grand Duchy hosts many common farm animals, like **cattle**, **sheep**, **pigs**, and **mules**, but also various wild species: in the hilly and mountainous country live the sturdy **mountain goats**, while **boars** favors southern forests, where game of any kind abounds. Herds of **wild horses** are found in the central regions of the realm, and a valuable breed of white horses is raised by the Callarii elves.

Among flying animals, **ravens** are spread everywhere, while **bats** are mostly found in the Wufwolde region and in the vicinities of Luln.

There are also many predators: **black bears** dwell in every wooded area of the Grand Duchy; **wolves** are common everywhere and

often represent a real danger for lone travelers; **mountain lions** are found in the northern regions of Karameikos.

Snakes of medium and large size are quite common in Karameikos.

The Grand Duchy is the home of two different species of aggressive and savage primates. The first are the **rock baboons**, which dwell in the Wufwolde region and are often trained as pets and fighting beasts by the humanoid tribes (like the Yellow Fang goblin tribe); the second are the larger **snow apes**, which live in the Altan Tepes mountains, where many of them serve the frost giant clans.

The Dymrak Forest hosts a species of constrictor snake similar to the **rock python**, while **giant racers** and **pit vipers** can be found anywhere in the central and northern areas of the Grand Duchy. The **spitting cobra** is quite rare but very dangerous and may be encountered anywhere. **Giant rattlers** are thankfully much rarer, while a species of small rattlesnake called **rock rattler** is commonly found in the Black Peaks.

Regarding fish life, it must be noted that some of the Grand Duchy's ponds are haunted by a very dangerous fish species, the **cold water piranha**.

Animals, Prehistoric

Even if it is not a properly prehistoric animal, a unique species of great bears similar to the ancient **cave bears** dwells in the Wufwolde hills.

Constructs

Though Karameikos is no powerful wizards' land, many constructs are still found in the

Grand Duchy as a legacy of past civilizations which have succeeded one another in the dominion over this land. **Gargoyles** are found all over the country. **Living statues** made of unusual materials (like **silver**, **steel**, or **jade**) were a specialty of hutaakan wizards, and many of these constructs still lay in the ruins left by the Hutaakan civilization; very dangerous is the hutaakan variety of rock living statue (so called **rock/ooze**), filled with gray ooze instead of lava and able to spray it over its opponents. Hutaakans, as well as the wizards who ruled the city of Tuma, also created the varieties of living statues more commonly encountered (**crystal**, **iron**, and **rock**). The Tuman wizards also invented a variety of crystal living statue called **winged warrior**, able to fly. Today, Karameikan magic-users skilled enough to create constructs are few; among them the most commonly built constructs are, besides gargoyles, **wood** and **bone golems**. Some fanciful magic-user is also known to have embarked in the creation of even more unusual constructs (like **caldron magens** and **phase stingers**).

Dragons

A number of dragons have dwelled in Karameikos for a long time. **Black dragons** live in the Blight Swamp, **white dragons** dwell on the peaks of the Altan Tepes, and **green dragons** hide in the depths of the forests. A large area of the Dymrak Forest, a traditional home of green dragons, is today part of Argosyl, a draconic realm ruled by Argos, a cunning green dragon who also controls several goblin tribes. A very old **red dragon** lives in the northern Wufwolde hills – some of his offspring may be found elsewhere in the Grand Duchy. Lastly, a **gold dragon** hides in Threshold posing as a

beggar, but his real intentions are unknown at the moment.

Some specimens of **wyverns** are known to dwell in the most rugged and wild regions.

Humanoids

Besides the more numerous humanoid races described in the main section of this article, Karameikos still hosts some reptilian folks. These are very small families of lizard men and troglodytes, who perhaps migrated here from the Malpheggi Swamp or represent the last degenerate remnants of their lost civilizations. They can be rarely encountered in the middle of the Dymrak Forest or in other areas far away from human settlements (some even in the small mountain swamps which are found near Castellan Keep, in the Altan Tepes range). Quite inexplicably, two small groups of reptilian humanoids native to a very distant region, the westernmost edge of the Savage Coast, are also found in Karameikos: they are a clan of cay-men, who dwell in the Blight Swamp, and a tribe of chameleon men, who live in a mountain forest north-east of Threshold. Perhaps both groups were transplanted to Karameikos as result of a magical event or mishap, but the real reasons for their presence in this land are unknown.

Among the humanoids must also be counted some woodland or fairy races. Dryads have been spotted in the eastern forests which are the home of the Vyalia, but they are extremely rare. Legends tell of a mountain lake in the Black Peaks where nixies dwell.

Very rare as well, but much more dangerous and evil, black hags and crones of chaos lurk in the wilderness, alluring travelers to

devour them or weaving some of the most diabolic plots.

Lastly, very small clans of primitive rock men live scattered among the Cruth and Black Peaks mountains.

Humanoids, Giant

Besides the giants mentioned in the main section above, **trolls** are not unknown to the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy, even if they have been encountered only very rarely so far (they are individual creatures, not families or clans), probably brought here from elsewhere by their underground wanderings.

Lowlife

Many varieties of **insect swarms** and giant insects dwell in the Grand Duchy's wildlands: **giant bees**, **giant centipedes**, **giant fire** and **oil beetles**, **giant ants** and **robber flies**. Among monstrous varieties, both the **rhagodessa** and the common **carrion crawler** are found in the Grand Duchy. Hot underground caves host a strange species of fiery insects known as **steam weevils**.

Giant arachnids are encountered everywhere in Karameikos. Besides more common varieties, the **giant crab spider**, the **giant black widow**, and the **giant tarantella**, the land hosts two additional native species: the **giant sand spider**, which lives in the most barren and rocky spots of the Black Peaks range, and the **giant hunting spider**, which is found in eastern Karameikos and which is sometimes trained by the humanoid tribes that use it as warding animal. Also, the dangerous intelligent arachnid known as the **giant shroud spider** makes its lair on the southern slopes of the Altan Tepes mountains and at the edges of the Dymrak Forest.

Worms are uncommon in this country, though **caeciliae** and the occasional, very rare **purple worm** have been known to appear in farming lands from below the ground and wreak havoc all around. **Red worms** (the *fyrsnaca's* immature larvae) have been spotted in some underground volcanic caves – a fact that has led some to speculate that even *fyrsnacas* may lurk there. Additionally, **giant leeches** are known to periodically infest some of the sweetwater bodies of the interior.

Unintelligent oozes and slimes, like the **ochre jelly** and the **green slime**, can be encountered in many abandoned dungeons, as well as **gray oozes**, many of which are found in ancient *hutaakan* ruins (the *hutaakans* used them to fill their particular variety of rock living statues).

Monstrous plants and fungi thrive here as well. Nasty specimens like **shriekers**, **sirenflowers**, and **yellow molds** plague most underground complexes, while the dangerous aquatic plant known as the **giant serpentweed** is found in the Blight Swamp.

Monsters

A large variety of monsters of all types live in Karameikos. A number of **doppelgangers** hide in the more isolated settlements. Often these shapechangers work as a team, killing whole families and taking the identities of their members. A similar behavior is followed by the much rarer **mujinas**. Solitary **nagpas**, forced to wander by the curse affecting their race, are sometimes encountered in Karameikos; also **tabi** and **gremlins** are rarely encountered, often arrived in the Grand Duchy following a *nagpa* or disembarked from the flying city of Serraine. A handful of solitary **minotaurs** is

scattered in Karameikos, most often in service to some villainous power as bodyguards or mercenaries.

Dangerous beasts, like **griffons**, **hippogriffs**, and **manticores**, are quite rare and only dwell in the Black Peaks and the eastern part of the Cruth range. A very large and fierce species of giant wolf, the **ice wolf**, lives in the Altan Tepes mountains, in the areas where snow and ice last longer. Some of these creatures are trained as pets or mounts by some humanoid tribes or by the frost giant clans. **Owlbears** are found in all wooded areas, from the central forests to the wooded heights of the mountain ranges. **Hellhounds** are found in the Black Peaks, but sometimes foray into southern areas.

A solitary **sphinx** is known to dwell on a rocky reef in the Gulf of Halag; she roars warnings to sailors venturing too close to the hazardous coastlines. Among other intelligent monsters are the friends of the woodland races. Individual **actaeons** and **chevalls**, sent to Karameikos by the Immortal Zirchev himself, watch over the Grand Duchy's fauna and nature; they often cooperate with other woodland lovers, like the elves, the centaurs, and the druids. The same is true for **treants**, which are mostly subject of legends, even if a rumor holds that one of them is asleep in Threshold's city park.

The Black Peaks are the home of a giant lizard species not found elsewhere: the unusual **foot-pad lizard**, able to easily climb the region's rocky slopes and which is trained as mount and beast of burden by the degenerate Traldar of the Lost Valley of Hutaaka. Another very rare lizard, the **lava lizard**, dwells near underground magma flows. As of today it has been seen only in the eastern area

of the Grand Duchy. A **hydra** has recently been spotted in the Blight Swamp.

Two species of dangerous blood-sucking fliers live in Karameikos: the numerous **stirges**, spread everywhere, and the rarer **piranha-birds**, which favor northern forests.

Amorphous monsters like the **black pudding** and the **gelatinous cube** may be found in old abandoned dungeons (the latter in particular in those of hutaakan origin).

Far more worrisome are persistent rumors of a **hivebrood** that has established its lair in the southern Dymrak Forest, not too far from the village of Rugalov.

While almost unknown, individual **beholders** hide in certain underground tunnels which run in the north-eastern part of the Grand Duchy, linking with caves which extend under Rockhome.

Lastly, two strange varieties of incorporeal and seemingly (but not actually) undead monsters are found in Karameikos. The first are **shadows**, which lurk in deep forests, ruins, and dungeons. The other is the **ghostly horde**, which very rarely manifests in places where great battlefield tragedies have happened.

Planar Monsters

Beings of the Elemental Plane of Water, such as **water weirds**, are sometimes encountered within ruins and dungeons which were the home of a wizard in the past. Native **Medusae** can be very rarely encountered in the wilderness as well. Rumors also hold that a **djinni** and a **water elemental** live somewhere in the town of Threshold.

Undead

Given Karameikos' ancient history, it should be no surprise that here the creatures of darkness thrive. Undead like **skeletons** and **zombies** can be found everywhere – near graves, in particular - as the result of dark magics, as well as **ghouls**. Karameikos also hosts a variety of **elder ghouls**, who are detectable by a green eerie glow around their head, able to sap their victims' strength. **Wights** and **spectres** may be found in isolated areas, moors especially; **wraiths** haunt ancient ruins, where old hutaakan **mummies** are sometimes encountered as well. The dread **wyrd**, elven undead spirits, are mainly found in central and eastern Karameikos. The numerous burial mounds and tombs built in the most varied ages and scattered throughout the Grand Duchy are sometimes infested by **apparitions** (a type of

phantom) and haunts – **banshees**, who are found mostly in barren hills and moors, **ghosts**, and **poltergeists**. A variety of nightshade, the **nightwing**, has been spotted in the Blight Swamp, near the border with the Five Shires. The true princes of the undead, the **vampires** and the **nosferatu**, represent one of the reasons that make Karameikos stand out in the Known World; although they are not so numerous, they are spread all across the land, often holding unsuspecting and influential positions in human settlements (like Lord Zemiros Sulescu), or terrorizing isolated communities (like the mad Count of Koriszegy). Lastly, even some very rare **liches** dwell in Karameikos, weaving their dark plots from their hidden lairs (one of those is Oirtulev, whose lair is found in the Altan Tepes region bordering Thyatis).



APPENDIX I: THE LOST VALLEY OF HUTAAKA

The Lost Valley of Hutaaka is a hidden vale surrounded by the highest mountains of the Black Peaks including Mount Pavel. The Valley is inaccessible by means of paths and trails, and its existence is a secret known only to the Immortals. The only way to access the Valley is through the upper Foamfire River valley (the territory of the Death's Head gnolls), where a hidden and very ancient road leads to the Lost Valley's doors. The road can only be detected by means of ancient magical tapestries and needles created by the hutaakans, which now are lost.

The Valley was the power seat of the High Priest of Pflarr during the height of the Hutaakan civilization; here most hutaakans withdrew in secrecy on the eve of the Great Beastmen Invasion (BC 1000), abandoning the Traldar humans to their doom save a handful they brought with them as slaves. In fact, the hutaakans kept to themselves and severed any ties with the outside world. Though this decision saved the hutaakan civilization from the ravages of the Beastmen Invasion, it also triggered its decline. In BC 500, when the Nithian Empire met its doom, the Immortal Pflarr, creator and patron of the hutaakan race, displeased by the isolation of the hutaakan culture, transplanted a random

number of hutaakans to the Hollow World, losing interest in the fate of the outer world ones. The hutaakan rule in the Lost Valley was overturned in BC 100, when the descendants of the Traldar slaves rose against their masters, starting a genocide war that lasted for centuries and nearly caused the extinction of both cultures.

Today the Lost Valley is inhabited by the last remnants of the outer world hutaakans, and by the degenerate descendants of the rebellious Traldar slaves. The war between the two groups, which over centuries has declined to the level to band skirmishes, continues to this day. Meanwhile, darker beings, born out of dark magics or awakened from an even more ancient age, have taken control of the ruins of the Great Temple of Pflarr and now wander freely in the Valley.

There are about five hundred of Hutaakans and degenerate Traldars, evenly split among the two groups. However, their number has not been included in the population figures given in this article, because the Lost Valley is a place apart, without any contact with the outside world.

APPENDIX II: HAVEN

The spur of the Altan Tepes range which stretches southward up to the Dymrak Forest, located between the Highreach River and the Lake of Lost Dreams, is called the Thunder Mountains (in Thyatian) or Zagrash Mountains (in Traladaran). In a secluded valley beyond the southern slopes of these mountains lay the enchanted realm of Haven, a place created, through the patronage of the the Immortal Ordana, by the Immortal Zirchev around BC 875, with the help of his two mortal-life companions – the Immortals Halav and Petra -, as a sort of vacation spot for the most worthy members of the human and demihuman races, where they could live together in harmony and happiness.

Haven actually lies in the Fairy Realm, and it only occasionally appears in this location on the Prime Material Plane, from where it then becomes accessible. Haven's appearance in Karameikos depends on a mysterious series of star alignments which are predictable only by the most learned among Vyalian sages. When Haven is in the Fairy Realm, the area it would otherwise occupy on Mystara becomes an empty land of forests and hills, bathed in mists and fogs. The Immortal patrons of

Haven can lead their chosen in and out of Haven when they wish.

Haven hosts about five thousand inhabitants, mostly Vyalia fair elves (56%), together with minorities of humans (20%), gnomes (6%), dwarves (10%), and halflings (8%) - all of them mostly of Karameikan or Thyatian origin. All of these people are descendants of individuals who were led to Haven by the Immortals over the course of centuries, or discovered it by themselves. An unknown number of members of the Good People also live in the enchanted valley.

Legends abound about the enchanted valley, telling of a marvelous castle made of shining white marble, of a breathtakingly beautiful princess who rules the land, of plentiful harvests and great festivals. A mysterious race of fairy "Protectors", devoted to Haven's Immortal patrons, watches over the valley, shielding it from dangers.

As Haven represents a very special place and it is not part of Karameikos proper, its inhabitants have been left out of the population figures given in this article.

APPENDIX III: PORTRAYING YOUR GRAND DUCHY

As you have seen while reading this article, population figures nearer to their real-world historical counterparts generate a number of inhabitants for the Grand Duchy which is more or less double that indicated in official supplements. As you may have realized, this in no way alters the description and flavor of the Grand Duchy as found in *GAZ1*. Nevertheless, you may find those higher figures uncomfortable, so this last paragraph addresses this issue, suggesting some ways to use the material presented here with official population figures.

First of all let's make a comparison between the population figures given in the *Poor Wizard's Almanac* series supplements and the ones presented in this article (Table 4).

As you see, the main purpose of this article's approach to Karameikan demography is to preserve the 5 official population figures for Karameikos' cities, lowering the percentage of urban population on the total. On the other hand, the elves' and gnomes' figures of the *Poor Wizard's Almanacs* are quite inconsistent, regarding the former, with the

Table 4: COMPARISON Population Figures in PWAs and this article

Race	PWAs	This article
Humans	250,000	537,800
Elves	40,000*	18,800
Gnomes	5,000	16,100
Dwarves	3,000	4,000
Halflings	2,000	3,000
Humanoids	Unknown	36,050
Other	Unknown	5,650
* Divided among 30,000 Callarii and 10,000 Vyalia. According to GAZ1 instead the Callarii were only about 7,500 (even if this figure was considered only a rough estimate from the humans' point of view).		
Totals	PWAs	This article
Total population	300,000*	621,400
Overall population density	7.6*	15.7
Urban population**	29.10%	14.50%
* Excluding humanoids and other races, whose number is unknown.		
** Only considering cities with at least 10,000 inhabitants.		

population of other Known World's elven clans – the Callarii alone would have nearly half the population of whole Alfheim! – and, regarding the latter, with *GAZI* itself, according to which 6,500 gnomes live in Highforge alone. So, the whole *Poor Wizard's Almanacs*' figures seem at least to have been written a little too hastily, without proper consideration of other sources and supplements.

Anyway, how can those figures be preserved? My suggestion is to avoid touching the location and spread of the various levels of settlement, in order to leave unaltered which areas are borderlands, which are wilderness, and so forth, and to work instead on the population densities of each level. In particular, decreasing human population densities of each level of about 40% would generate the following figures:

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, there seems to be no problem... until you take into account the 125,750 people that

represent Karameikos' urban population. As you see, for example, Specularum's huge human population of 57,300 is more than double than the whole number of people who live in the city's suburban countryside. In fact, the figures above can only be kept if you bring back the urban population to pre-*GAZI* level (one-tenth of the official figures, more or less). Thus, two solutions are possible at this point.

First solution: Add the urban population to the figure indicated above. This would generate a total human population of 363,200, which is halfway between the official figures and those presented in this article. Should you adopt this solution, I suggest halving the humanoid population also, bringing it to 18,000. Overall, the Grand Duchy would thus have a population (considering also all other races, and leaving their figures identical to those presented in this article) of 428,750. Note however that in this way the urban population of the Grand Duchy will reach the high pinnacle of

Table 5: Decreased Human Population Levels

Settlement	Average population density (people/sq. mile)	Total Population per settlement area (averaged)	% on total population (averaged)
Very high	93	20,800	8
High	62	79,850	32
Average	39	76,450	31
Scarce	12	45,700	18
Borderland	3	24,850	10
Wilderness	0.1	2,400	1
TOTAL	13.55	250,050	100

21% (29.6% counting all settlements with 1,000 inhabitants or more), which would call for a stable supply of food from overseas and/or the employment of clerical magic to feed part of the population.

Second solution: Lower the urban population to about half the official figures. This way, you will have Specularum at about 30,000 people, Kelvin at 10,000, Fort Doom at 5,000, Threshold and Luln at 2,500, and so on. Specularum will still be a problem (the city would have more people than those of the whole area in which it is found): you could

lower by 50% the humanoid and demihuman population (in the proportion you deem fit), and add the numbers obtained to the population of very high population density areas (in which Specularum is found). This way, the total population of the Grand Duchy would be 313,900 people, with an urban population which will sit at a quite high, but tolerable, rate of about 20% (and to even 12.7% if you consider only cities with 10,000 inhabitants or more, which in this version would be only Specularum and Kelvin).

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Proposal Deadline: September 30th, 2013
Manuscript Deadline: October 31st, 2013

The Threshold editorial team invites all fans of the Mystara setting to submit contributions to the second issue of the magazine.

We are looking especially for contribution fitting the theme of the second issue, Vaults of Pandius Spotlight.

Threshold accepts (and invites) the submission of extended or revised versions of works having appeared on The Piazza or the Vaults of Pandius.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to, articles (short stories, short adventure modules, NPCs, historical treatises and timelines, geographical entries, new monsters and monster ecologies, etc.) and illustrations (portraits, maps, heraldry, illustrations, etc.)

The Threshold editorial team strives for edition neutrality, but edition specific articles (e.g., conversions) are also accepted.

Statistics for new monsters and NPCs may be included in articles (e.g., adventure modules, new monsters or NPCs) in any version of Dungeons & Dragons. The editorial team also offers help in providing conversions to some specific rules set (including BECM/RC, 2nd Edition, 3rd edition/Pathfinder). However, they should be limited to the minimum -- for most NPCs, it is sufficient to mention class, level, and alignment. For important NPCs, a one or two line stat block could be included.

See [inside back cover](#) for submission guidelines.

The HISTORY OF Karameikos

by Simone Neri (Zendrolion)

THE TIME BEFORE THE CATAclySM

In the millennia before the Great Rain of Fire, the land today known as Karameikos sat near the pre-cataclysmic North Pole, in a cold and inhospitable land¹. Some sparse remnants of the Brutemen race still dwelled in this northern land, where the expansion of human civilization had pushed them in the course of the last thousands years²; their country was only travelled, from time to time, by the occasional Oltec or Azcan pioneer, or by Blackmoorian explorers. The true masters of this region were the frost giants, who lived here in great number, and a few dragons – of which the red Yealeletherveri (active around BC 5000) is remembered as one of the most powerful and fearsome wyrms of history³.

¹ This article uses the version of Mystara's history according to which the Known World (Ethengar, in particular) was the North Pole before the Great Rain of Fire (BC 3000); after the cataclysm, Blackmoor becomes the North Pole and the elven homeland of Evergrun the South Pole. This version is found in most supplements of the *Gazetteer* series, as well as in the "Timeline of History" featured in the *Dungeon Master's Sourcebook* part of the *Hollow World campaign set*; the latter's poster *Outer-World, Precataclysmic Map* features instead a differently-rotated globe (with the Known World at about 30°N latitude), and is not used as a source for this article.

² Brutemen, also called Neanderthals or Cavemen in the *D&D Basic Set* and *Rules Cyclopedica*, go extinct in the outer world around BC 10,000 (see *Hollow World campaign set*) and are preserved by the Immortals in the Hollow World; however, some remnants of their race may well survive to these days, as they are featured in some of the adventure modules (like *B5: Horror on the Hill*).

³ The tale of Yealeletherveri is told in the *Son of Dawn* novel (set around AC 1010), where it is narrated by an ancient female blue dragon living in the Altan Tepes mountains, Blethinferelth; according to the story, Yealeletherveri had his lair in the Altan Tepes mountains when the Blackmoor civilization was still young. I've further expanded the setting of Yealeletherveri's and

The Great Rain of Fire changed all this, pushing the Known World from the arctic latitude into the temperate one. Glaciers began to melt, frost giants started a retreat toward the highest mountains of the new arctic lands, and the country was slowly carpeted with forests, springs, and rivers. In this age, the land known today as Karameikos did not border the Sea of Dread; now-submerged lands extended many miles to the south, well beyond the present day archipelagos of Ierendi and Minrothad.

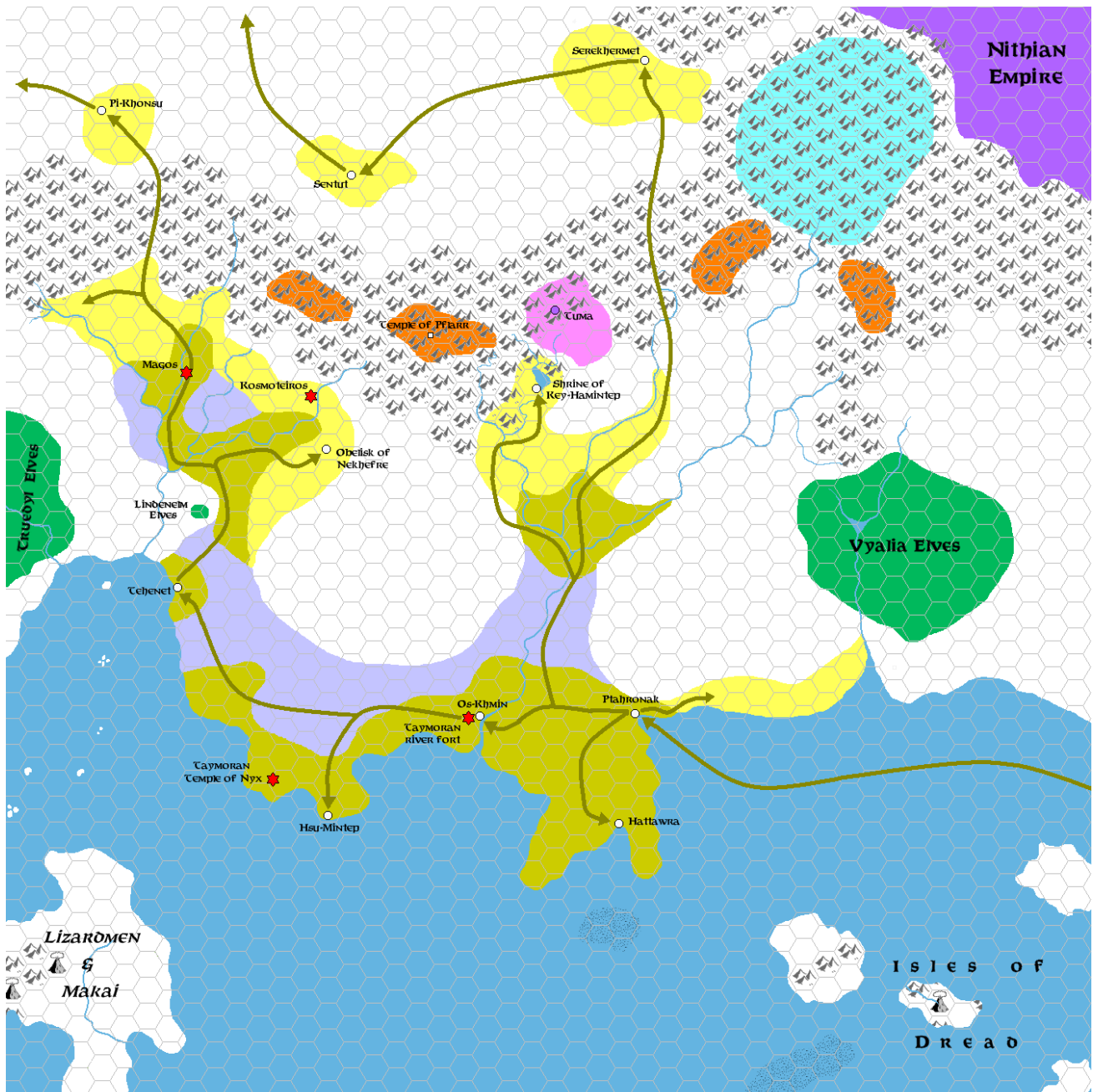
RISE AND FALL OF THE TAYMORAN CIVILIZATION

The first people to set foot in post-cataclysmic Karameikos were humans from central Brun; they crossed modern Darokin and arrived in BC 2500 from the north into the southern Known World. They were the Taymora, who rapidly built an agricultural civilization of bronze-age city-states, mostly located along the southern coast of the Known World (many miles south of modern Karameikos), and of which little is known today⁴.

Blethinferelth's stories in my *MGAZI: The Central Altan Tepes* at [The Vaults of Pandius](#).

⁴ The Taymora were first introduced in *PC3: The Sea People*, according to which they "moved south" and arrived in the "fertile plains surrounding the southern sea", where they "established settlements along the cliffs and on the plains". From sparse elements found in the adventure "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" (included within *PC3*), we may argue that - at least at the beginning - the Taymora were a bronze-age civilization with a love for pastoral life. Likely they had not an empire, as canon sources

Traladara during the middle Nithian age From the cataclysms to the coming of the Ptahr-al-Dar



- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Lands inhabited by Caymora-descended people in BC 1500 | Sites of Interest | Frost Giant-controlled lands |
| Lands with higher Nithian (Ptahr-al-Dar) presence in BC 1450 | Known Caymoran sites in Karamaikos | Elf-controlled lands |
| Nithian (Ptahr-al-Dar) expansion from BC 1500 to BC 1450 | City of CUMA and its domain | Hutaakaan lands in BC 1500 |
| Known Nithian (Ptahr-al-Dar) sites in Karamaikos | Main routes of the Ptahr-al-Dar's expansion | |

Elf travelers and colonists coming from the Serpent Peninsula began arriving from BC 2250 in Taymoran lands⁵. They established friendly relations with the humans, who employed them as mercenary troops in exchange for lands.

Centuries later (BC 2100), a larger group of elves who had split from Ilsundal's migration toward the Sylvan Realm, came to the Taymoran lands; they were mostly divided among two clans: the Verdiers (wood and fair elves⁶) and the Meditors (water elves). The Taymora allowed them to settle in the forests north and east of their city-states, in the areas occupied by modern Karameikos and Minrothad.

In the following decades, the Taymora had to contend with the resurfacing power of Grondheim, a local giantish kingdom⁷ along the northern border. The modern

Karameikos region became a battlefield between the Taymora, with their elven allies, and the giants. The latter were finally defeated, and the kingdom of Grondheim crumbled; many giants were killed in the process, while others were enslaved by the Taymora, who put them to work and began building cities in the modern Karameikos region, to the north of their civilization's heartlands.

It is not known exactly how or when it happened, but before BC 2000 some cities of the Taymora began worshipping the powers of Entropy, and parts of the country slowly became dark places whose rulers were devoted to gruesome bloody and necromantic practices⁸. Undead creatures, such as nosferatu and vampires, made their appearance at this time, as well as the first recorded lycanthropic bloodlines, likely created by Taymoran experiments⁹.

At last (BC 2000), a great civil war between followers of rival entropic Immortals ravaged the country, while at the same time a long period of seismic instability hit the southern Known World, which was shocked by recurrent earthquakes over the course of the next three centuries¹⁰. Many people

refer to Nithia as the first empire on Mystara after the fall of Blackmoor, but were perhaps more like a collection of city-states.

⁵ The elves led by the Sheyallia clan split from Ilsundal's migration and settled in the Serpent Peninsula some time after BC 2250 (around this year Ilsundal's migration crossed the Great Waste; see "The Great Waste - Ancient History" in *Champion of Mystara - Explorer's Manual*). Canon sources (*GAZ9* and *Hollow World campaign setting* among others) tell us that the Verdier and Meditor elven clans only settled in forested area that will become Karameikos in BC 2100. However, fan sources like G. Agosta's [Timeline of the Taymoran Age, 2800-1700 BC](#) and G. Caroletti's [Taymoran timeline](#) have elven settlers reaching Taymoran lands already in BC 2250. In the present history, I preserved this early elven contact with the Taymora, considering it mostly developed by small elven families, clans, and groups coming from the Serpent Peninsula.

⁶ I subdivide the elven race into ethnicities according to the work of Marco Dalmonte, *Razze di Mystara* at [The Vaults of Pandius](#) (the book is in Italian); of them, only the wood and fair elves are of some interest for this history. Wood elves (also called sylvan elves) are a little smaller than humans, with fair skin (which tends to tan under the sun), and blonde, silver, grey or brown hair. Fair elves (also called gold or noon elves) are tall as humans, have a paler skin (but with golden tints in some individuals), and dark (usually black or brown) hairs, with rarer blondes or redheads. This history considers the Meditor elves all belonging to the water elf ethnicity, while the Verdier elves to be evenly divided between fair and wood elves.

⁷ The kingdom of Grondheim is taken from the fan works of John Calvin on "Mystara BC 2300". The story of the giants' struggle against the Taymora is further told in Giampaolo Agosta's supplement *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*.

⁸ Besides a short sentence found in *PC3* ("The shark-kin inhabit many of the ruined settlements, but there are some places where the shark-kin fear to go. These dark and sinister sites harbour malignant entities, beings whose evil has festered for much longer than they have been covered by the sea" – which, however, can be variously interpreted), nothing in canon specifically supports the connection between nosferatu or vampires and the Taymora, fan-created materials (from the works of J. Mishler and G. Agosta to the more recent ones of J. Calvin) have for a long time worked on this connection, producing very interesting ideas. Thus, this history keeps the idea that the Taymora began to worship Entropy at some point in their history, while leaving the details of the introduction of entropic cults in their culture as vague as possible.

⁹ This history assumes that the Alphatian lycanthropy was only one of the strains of this magical disease. Other strains in fact may precede the Alphatians' landfall on Mystara. See [Treatise on Lycanthropy](#) by J. Calvin and [Lukka, the beast-men](#) by G. Agosta.

¹⁰ The exact chronology of seismic events of the BC 2000-1720 period is tricky, because canon sources are not always clear and

perished, and many cities were destroyed by the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, or by the civil war itself. Gradually, many Taymora began to migrate northward hoping to find shelter in the forested country at the mountains' foothills¹¹.

By BC 1750, earthquakes had broken some parts of the Taymoran lands off the coast of the Known World and had plunged many regions beneath the sea. Many vestiges of the Taymoran civilization had already been destroyed by those events, and the last remnants of the southern Taymoran cities and lands disappeared under the waves in the devastating volcanic explosion of BC 1720, which gave the southern coast of the Known World the appearance it has today, with the creation of the modern archipelagos of Ierendi and Minrothad.

In their new lands, north of their lost homeland, the Taymora were unable to rebuild their civilization, and slowly lost most features of their advanced culture in a couple of centuries (BC 1700-1500). Neither were the few surviving giants, freed from Taymoran slavery, able to establish full control over the area, and they retreated into the wilder and more isolated areas.

Elves also survived the catastrophe, but the Meditor water elf clan was stranded alone on one of the recently-formed islands south of the new coastline (the one later called Alfeisle); some time later (BC 1720), the Verdier wood elves, wishing to reunite with

their kin, migrated from the coastal forests to Alfeisle itself. The rest of the Verdier fair elves, instead, preferred to continue to live in their forests, in relative tranquillity; the latter were the ancestors of the Vyalia clan.

In the centuries between BC 1700 and BC 1500, the population continued to decline in the Karameikos region. This was due to the aftereffects of the recent seismic cataclysms, and also to the fearsome explosion of a Blackmoorian device which happened in the Broken Lands in the same BC 1700; debris and dust lifted by the event darkened the skies for years, plunging the Known World into another brief ice age.

THE TRALDAR AGE

Around BC 1500, a Nithian private expedition led by the Ptahr-al-Dar¹² clans came from the sea and began to settle the coasts of the land corresponding to modern Karameikos¹³; inland, they found the descendants of the Taymora, who they called the "People of the Night", and swiftly subdued them¹⁴. The legacy of the ancient

often one conflicts with another. See [BC 1700 Catastrophes](#) by J. Calvin for an overview of sources and a clarification. Basically, a long period of seismic instability begins in BC 2000, detaching a series of vast islands from the southern coast of the Known World in BC 1750, and culminating with the devastating volcanic explosion of the Kikianu Caldera (see [GAZ4](#)) around BC 1720, an event which creates the modern Ierendi and Minrothad archipelagos.

¹¹ See [PC3](#) ("the few surviving Taymora fled the area and settled farther north in the present day lands of Karameikos").

¹² Being "Traldar" the name of the subsequent bronze-age culture that will be later preserved by the Immortals into the Hollow World, and those colonists coming from the Egyptian-like Nithian Empire, I've adopted the name "Ptahr-al-Dar" (originally created by J. Mishler, see his [Ancient Origins of the Traladarans](#) to identify them. Also, I've considered the Ptahr-al-Dar expedition to be a private colonization attempt, as its later failure does not trigger help or aid from the Nithian Empire, and also because the empire's forays in the Sea of Dread happen quite later (BC 1100).

¹³ [GAZ11](#) clarifies the routes that the Nithian colonists took toward modern Karameikos, saying "The Nithian Traldar clans land in Karameikos. As these colonists spread out, they become the first humans to inhabit Darokin". It is quite evident that if the Nithians had come to Karameikos by land, they would have settled part of Darokin first (Selenica region, at least); the additional fact that they **land** in Karameikos further clarifies the issue. Moreover, [GAZ1](#) says that they were "pioneers intent on colonizing distant areas" and that they "settled in the coastal forests in the area now known as Karameikos" – an additional reason to believe that they came from the sea and that there were no Nithian lands nearby.

¹⁴ The name "People of the Night" was devised by F. Defferrari in

The Traibdar Golden Age

FROM THE RISE OF THE TRAIKDARS TO THE GREAT BEASTMEN INVASION



Town names are indicated in Traibdar tongue in the map in some cases they may differ from later, Vandan-influenced names. For example, Hise will become Lavvi, Miteska will become Maritesev, and Otykosa the village of Lenov (and, much later, the town of Lutiv).

- Lands under direct Hutaaka rule in BC 1100
- Traibdar city-states under Hutaaka protection in BC 1100
- Traibdar city-states free from Hutaaka rule in BC 1100
- Main towns and sites of interest
- Frost Giant-controlled lands
- Territory of the city-state of Senekhermet in BC 1100
- Lands under the control of the Nithlan Empire in BC 1100
- Territory of the elves in BC 1100
- Territory of the city-state of Cima in BC 1100
- Main routes of the gnoll migration up to BC 998
- Settlements destroyed by the gnoll migration (up to BC 998)

Taymoran knowledge only survived in the secret society known as the Sons of Night¹⁵, a cadre of sorcerers devoted to darkness which still lives to this day. Subsequent expeditions by the Ptahr-al-Dar also settled part of modern Darokin (the sites of present day Akorros, Selenica, Dolos, and Darokin City); there they were the first human inhabitants to build permanent settlements¹⁶.

At the same time, the Immortal Pflarr created a race of jackal-headed humanoids in his image called the Hutaaka. He put colonies of them to live in the Black Peaks mountains, north of the lands conquered by the Ptahr-al-Dar. The Hutaakan culture borrowed most of its traits from the Nithians, but with a stronger accent put on mysticism and philosophy. They lived as a federation of tribes, tied together by the authority of the High Priest of the Temple of Pflarr, located in a secluded valley in the heart of the Black Peaks mountains.

his [History of Traladara](#). About the Nithian conquest of the descendants of the Taymora, see *PC3* (“They were later absorbed by the Traldars when they arrived in the area”). I have marked a few Nithian settlements on the accompanying map: Os-Khmin (under modern Specularum) was borrowed from the [Fantasy Cities: Specularum](#) project, the Shrine of Key-Hamintep is featured in the adventure *Trouble in Threshold* (part of *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure* supplement), the Obelisk of Nekhefre was described by G. Agosta in his *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands* (I only added the name of the site) supplement; other settlements were created by me.

¹⁵ The Sons of Night were introduced in the adventure *In the Dread of Night*, found in “Dungeon Magazine” no. 24; their link with the Taymora, their background and activities were further explored by G. Agosta in his *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands* supplement. Other known surviving Taymoran sites are marked on the accompanying map: Magos and Kosmoteiros are described in G. Agosta’s *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*, the Taymoran Temple of Nyx in the same’s *Crywolf!* adventure, while the Taymoran River Fort (under modern Specularum) comes from the [Fantasy Cities: Specularum](#) project.

¹⁶ See note 13, above. Note that those settlements of the Ptahr-al-Dar in modern Darokin should have had Egyptian-sounding names at that time, because the change that transforms the Ptahr-al-Dar culture will only happen later, after their blending with the descendants of the Taymora and their resurgence from the “new” stone age in which they have fallen. In the accompanying map I have included three of such settlements: Serekhermet (on the site of modern Selenica), Sentut, and Pi-Khonsu – all three will be wiped out by the gnoll invasion in BC 1000.

The Nithians’ colonizing attempt soon proved a complete failure. Overwhelmed by the climate, plagues, fierce beasts, and the land’s savage conditions, within a century the Ptahr-al-Dar’s ruling aristocracy was decimated. They lost contact with the Nithian Empire and with their sister colonies in modern Darokin and reverted to stone age technologies and a pre-agrarian lifestyle, forgetting any knowledge of metallurgy. In these wretched conditions, the social differences between Nithian conquerors and the “People of the Night” slowly waned, as the two races blended together, giving birth to a new culture that was no longer Nithian.

Seeing the terrible conditions which had befallen the southern humans, the Hutaaka of the Black Peaks decided to help them recover; they also saw the opportunity to establish control over them, in order to gain plenty of servants and workers. Thus, around BC 1400 the Hutaaka slowly began to take under their protection the human settlements nearest to them, reteaching them the agricultural techniques and bronze technologies they had lost. In the process they began to rule them as benevolent masters, but kept from them some advanced technology (like iron smelting) out of fear of an uprising against them¹⁷. Later, local Traldar rulers (oligarchic councils and kings) arose in many areas of the country, always advised (and watched over) by Hutaakan priests and

¹⁷ In spite of a passage in *GAZI* (“They never forgot the scientific secrets the Hutaaka had taught them – the forging of iron [...]”), the Hollow World Traldars are a bronze-age culture; this means that the Hutaaka never taught iron-smelting to the Traldars, or did it only in the eve of the Great Beastmen Invasion. Thus I supposed that the few iron weapons and tools which may exist in the later Traldar age arrived through trade or contacts with iron-age cultures by Traldar kingdoms that had emancipated themselves from Hutaakan tutelage.

sages. Eventually, under the leadership of the Hutaaka, the new bronze-age Traldar culture emerged, characterized by city-states, warrior-kings, and hero-worship.

Thus began the Golden Age of the Traldars (BC 1300-1000), which saw a rapid growth of the population. The region became a patchwork of wilderness areas, Hutaaka-ruled and Traldar-ruled but Hutaaka-advised dominions¹⁸. With the passing of decades, some southern cities even managed to become entirely independent from Hutaakan guardianship¹⁹; they were mostly the coastal settlements, which also developed a seafaring tradition that allowed them to send colonizing expeditions to the southern archipelagos (modern Ierendi and Minrothad), to the coasts of modern Thyatis, and even to the western coast beyond the Hins' land (where they founded the city of Athenos²⁰). (Meanwhile, the older Ptahr-al-Dar colonies in modern Darokin had been

wiped out by humanoid invasions coming from the Atruaghin lands; Akorros, for example, was burned to the ground in BC 1254.²¹)

In the rest of Karameikos, Hutaakan influence was much stronger, in particular in the west, where the powerful Hutaakan dominion centered on the city of Achelos was founded²². Over the centuries tension developed between the Hutaaka and the Traldars, even leading to an open rebellion against the Hutaakan influence, enacted by a King Tahrek 'the Bright' around BC 1280. Tahrek was the ruler of a dominion in central Karameikos who managed to win some victories against the Hutaaka before being abandoned by his allies and crushed²³. This was a singular episode of conflict between the Hutaaka and the Traldars; aside from this, the Hutaaka continued to advise and protect the Traldars, teaching them what technology and magic they deemed wise, in exchange for servile labor.

Near the end of this age the Nithian Empire again began to turn its greedy eyes on the Sea of Dread, conquering the modern Minrothad and Ierendi archipelagos (BC 1100-1000), and thus subjugating and

¹⁸ Of the Traldar settlements featured on the accompanying map, only Hlas (Lavv), Krakatos, and Mirlenos (Marilenev) have some basis in canon sources; the others were created by me (some of the names or locations were borrowed from F. Defferrari's [map of Traladara in BC 1200](#), even if Oyllenos can be linked with Halav's past (see note 24, below), while Dymos could be the site of the ancient tomb found in the dungeon featured in *DDA4: The Dymrak Dread*. Regarding the Hutaaka, besides the Temple of Pflarr only Xitaqa (from *B10*) is mentioned in canon sources; Koxaqa should be the Hutaakan settlement mentioned in *GAZI* under Threshold's description (and found on the site of the subsequent Castle Mistamere), while Achelos is described in G. Agosta's *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*.

¹⁹ The Hollow World Traldars don't have Hutaakan masters – quite the contrary, the Hollow World Hutaaka live far away from the Traldar kingdoms. This means that the Hutaaka did not have complete control over all the Traldar kingdoms, otherwise the Immortals would have chosen to preserve their cultures in close contact in the Hollow World – in other words, in my opinion this means that there was at least a part of the Traldar culture for which the Hutaakan culture was no longer instrumental.

²⁰ Athenos could well have been founded during the Ptahr-al-Dar age; I chose to have it founded during the Traldar age as part of the exploration and colonization effort undertaken by some Traldar kingdoms in this period. After all, the Hollow World Traldars are quite adept seafarers and sea raiders (*Hollow World campaign setting* says that "Their war-galleys [...] once dominated the region of the Sea of Dread"), and their expansion in the southern archipelagos is meant to underline this trait of them.

²¹ The burning of Akorros is mentioned in *GAZI0*. It's quite possible that what the *GAZ* calls "Akorros" had a Nithian name at this time, or that a Nithian-named city had later changed its name into Traldar-sounding "Akorros" due to Traldar influence (brought there through trade along the Streel River from Athenos, for example).

²² The history of the Hutaakan dominion of Achelos is described in greater detail G. Agosta's *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*.

²³ The magic item card "Diadem of the Sun", whose description features King Tahrek, is found in the *Dungeon Master's Survival Kit* supplement. According to it, "Centuries before Halav's mortal reign, central Traladara was ruled by King Tahrek the Bright. [...] The ballad 'The Tragedy of Dymrak' says that Tahrek annihilated his beast-man foes with the *diadem*." Obviously there were no beastmen before Halav's reign in Traladara, so I supposed that the beastmen of the ballad were actually Hutaaka; just like for the rest of Traladara's history, the passage of time blurred the difference between the jackal-headed humanoids and the gnolls.

absorbing the Traldar colonies in those islands. Trade with the Nithian Empire in those years brought iron weapons into the southern lands of the Traldars; leaders, kings, chieftains, and elite guards sported them, but most of the Traldar states continued to lack the knowledge needed to fabricate them.

THE GREAT BEASTMEN INVASION

The Traldars' prosperity came to a sudden end when a huge horde of gnolls – the greater part of those that had fled from the Nithian Empire in BC 1050 – poured beyond Traldar borders from the north-west (BC 1000). The Hutaakans, aware they could not resist the gnolls' savagery, decided to retreat to their most secure mountain shelter, the Valley of Hutaaka (seat of the Temple of Pflar), even abandoning some of their greatest cities like Achelos; they brought with them some Traldar slaves, and disappeared not to be seen again, leaving the Traldars alone to face the fierce enemy.

The terrible Great Beastmen Invasion which followed (BC 1000-992) saw the nearly total extermination of the Traldars. The humans were no match for the gnolls' iron weapons and unheard of ferocity. Many clans and their cities were destroyed, while others fled overseas (like the inhabitants of Mirlenos – a town on the site of modern Marilenev, who were led by King Milen in a long voyage beyond the Nithian dominions, toward Davania). The whole western half of the region was ravaged by the invaders. The Immortals, fearing for the very fate of the Traldar civilization, decided to preserve it by

bringing a number of them into the Hollow World.

In the most tragic hour, however, King Halav of Lavv and Queen Petra of Krakatos, with the aid of the Hutaaka-educated hero Zirchev²⁴, managed to gather together the Traldar forces that were left and stopped the gnolls at the Battle of Volaga (BC 992)²⁵. The battle saw the deaths of both King Halav and of the gnoll chief Flaghr; left without a leader, the gnolls began quarreling amongst themselves and their war effort suffered. United by the memory of King Halav, the Traldars managed to slowly get the upper hand against the gnolls, but another forty years would be needed to see the last gnoll warbands driven out of Traldar lands to the north-west (about BC 950).

The war against the gnolls and the invasion's consequences (famine and

²⁴ Both the *Hollow World* campaign setting and *HWR3: The Milenian Empire* say that Halav was king of Luln, and that he banded his warriors together in a guerrilla defense which slowed the gnolls' advance. Halav's story as told in *GAZI* and *Wrath of the Immortals* instead sees him taking the leadership in Lavv (modern Kelvin) after killing the local king. While mention of Luln in the above-mentioned sources is likely a mistake for Lavv, I think it could be used to further detail Halav's past in the following way. Obviously Luln didn't exist in the Traldar age, but Halav could have well been the king of Oyllenos, a Traldar town found on the site of modern Luln; after a desperate defense of his city, Halav had to flee and abandon it to the gnolls. Oyllenos was destroyed, but he organized a successful guerrilla war against the invaders from the forests, something that began to portray him as a hero before the Traldars. Later, as the gnolls overran the whole western Traldar lands, he tried to convince the king of Lavv to forge alliances with other kings in order to put an united front before the invaders. When the king laughed at him and tried to have him imprisoned, Halav killed him and took the throne of Lavv. The rest of his story is well-known. As a side note, the names Halav, Petra, and Zirchev told by the Traladaran tradition, likely were not the three heroes' original names; probably – given the fact that the ancient Traldar tongue should somewhat resemble the Mycenaean Greek tongue – they sounded more like Halawas, Pyledra, and Zirkeus, or something like that.

²⁵ While most canon timelines, for simplicity's sake, have all the events of the gnoll invasion compressed in BC 1000, from *GAZI* we learn that "fighting was indeed bloody and went on for years". Thus I chose to have the climactic Battle of the Volaga River in BC 992, eight years after the invasion had begun.

THE ANCIENT CITY OF TUMA

WHERE IS TUMA?

Adventure module *B8 – Journey to the Rock*, introduced the ancient city of Tuma and its background. Even though the module had a generic setting, it gave some suggestion on how to include its scenario and background in the Known World setting. Two options were given here: the first was to place Tuma in the mountain or hill region north of Lake Amsorak in Darokin; the second was to place the scenario in the mountain country west of Wereshalot, in the Five Shires, or west of Threshold, in Karameikos. The later adventure module *B1-9 – In Search of Adventure*, supported *B8*'s second choice by placing Tuma in Karameikos' mountains, but had the *Journey to the Rock* adventure start in the area north of Threshold.

Placing Tuma's setting is not so easy, because the area's map featured in *B8* is quite large (about three 8-miles hexes from west to east, and two from north to south) and placing it north of Threshold would alter the terrain featured in *GAZI*'s and other supplements' maps. The best choice seems thus to place *B8*'s map north-east of Threshold – looking at *GAZI*'s 8-miles per hex map of the Grand Duchy, it would be found beyond the mountain hexes that surround Threshold in the north-east, in the hill hexes that border that border the Republic of Darokin. This way, the whole adventure area would be split between Karameikos (where Arkayz' manor, the wooded lands west of it, The Barrens and Barkel Mountains would be found) and

Darokin (where the ancient site of Tuma, Lake Neshonan, and Krayzen Mountains would be located).

The choice to have Tuma in Karameikos seems better, not only because it is supported by a later module (*B1-9*), but also because it is easier to integrate this scenario with the existing setting. The names of ancient Tuman kings featured in *B8* (Alcidaxes, Belkazar, Calobanes, and Delophenes) have a vague Greek or Middle Eastern flavor, and thus can naturally be linked with the ancient Taymora and Traldar cultures which existed in the Karameikan region. The rise and fall of Tuma, moreover, can be merged easily with the history of Karameikos, in particular with the ages before and after the Great Beastmen Invasion, which were left quite vague by official supplements.

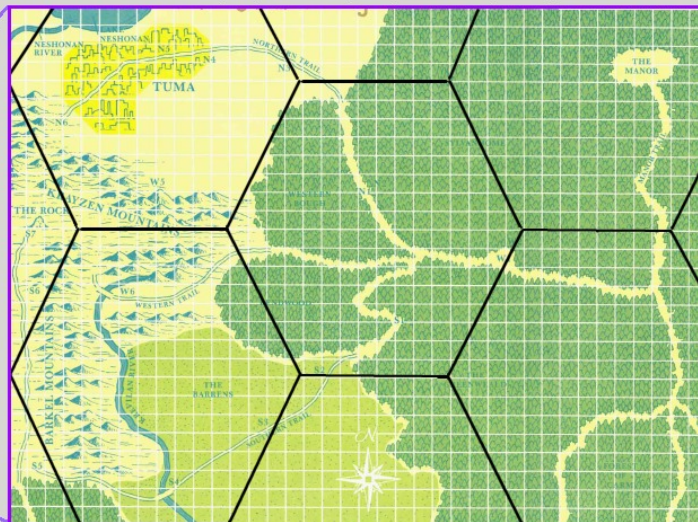
Thus, this article (and also the accompanying article about Karameikos' demography) assumes that Tuma was located in the mountains of Karameikos, suggesting the following way to integrate history of the city in Karameikos' history.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TUMA

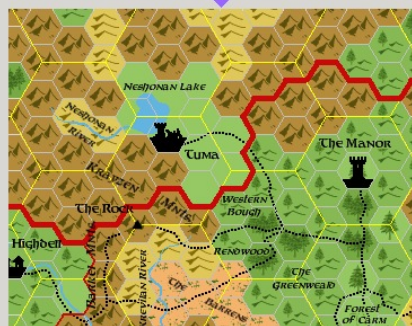
Tuma's origins trace back to the fall of the Taymoran civilization. When the catastrophic civil war and earthquakes that made the southern Taymoran lands sink under the sea, many refugees and survivors from the southern lands sought safety in the northern forests, a small group of them

Placing Tuma and The Rock in Karameikos

Map from *B8 - Journey to the Rock*
(0.5 miles per square, with superimposed 8 miles per hex grid)



Map of Karameikos from
Trail Maps I: The Western Countries
(8-miles per hex)



Reworked map of *The Rock and Surroundings*
(2.7 miles per hex, with superimposed 8 miles per hex grid)

pushed further north well into the mountains, finding shelter in a secluded mountain valley of the Black Peaks. There they founded the settlement called Tuma some time after BC 2000.

In the troubled centuries which followed, Tuma managed to survive the cataclysms that succeeded until BC 1700 unscathed, growing into the main local settlement

through which passed the route that linked the southern lands to the rest of the Known World.

After some centuries, it established regular trade with the Nithian Empire, acquiring the knowledge of iron smelting through it, and then peaceful relationships with the Hutaaka and the Traldar settlers to the south after BC 1500. Tuma was again

substantially unhurt - thanks to its regular links with the Hutaaka and the Nithian Empire - by the hardships that reduced the Traldar settlers to the south to little more than hunter-gatherers savages. With the passing of years its relationship with nearby Hutaaka grew into a strong alliance, which allowed in Tuma the birth of an advanced tradition of arcane studies centered on earth, metal and rock. When the Traldars managed to rise again under the protection of the Hutaaka, Tuma benefited from this fact, establishing a lucrative trade with the Traldar kingdoms – while keeping from them iron technology and the most powerful arcane secrets, like what the Hutaaka did. In this age, Tuma rose to become the foremost power of the region. The town grew into a powerful city, and its domains extended both to the north and to the south of the Black Peaks range.

When the Great Beastmen Invasion hit the Traldar lands, the Tumans were shocked by the Hutaaka's choice to abandon the humans to their fate. At the start of the war the Tumans sent contingents of their soldiers to fight alongside the Traldars, but they preferred to retreat from their southern holds when the fight seemed lost. Only after the worst of the gnolls' invasion was fought back by the Traldars did the Tumans expand again southward, taking advantage of the weakness of the Traldars and taking part to the wars between the gnolls, the Traldars and the Vandars in the 10th century BC.

During this age, Tuma was still a major player of the area, but the decline of the Traldar kingdoms and the disappearance of the Hutaaka deprived the city of a large part

of its wealthy trade. The decline in which the Tuman royal court fell in this century stirred up dissension among the city's populace, who rose against the king around BC 900; the monarchy was overthrown and the powerful magic-users of the city established an oligarchic rule. They used their rock- and metal-melding magic to change the face of the city, which assumed a nearly-alien appearance in regards to other contemporary human settlements - hundreds-of-feet high buildings made of metal were raised, streets were paved with metal as well, filled with magical constructs, and so on. But the wizards' reserved and aloof attitude slowly isolated Tuma from the outer world; the city withdrew from major conflicts, only fighting to defend itself against new enemies, like the Vandars or the humanoid hordes. With time, most of Tuma's outlying possessions were lost. Nevertheless, thanks to the wizards' magic, the population within city walls lived well.

After BC 700 Tuma, left more and more isolated, then become a target of powerful Nithian lords devoted to Entropy, who coveted the ancient arcane secrets the city's wizards kept. They launched a series of attacks on Tuma, supported by their armies of mercenaries, humanoid slaves, and undead. After a century-long and valiant resistance, the Nithians and the dark powers with which they had allied decided that if they were not to grasp those secrets, no one will ever had: they casted a powerful curse on the city, which removed it from the Prime Material Plane and imprisoned it and its inhabitants in another plane. Thus, the city, its people, and its secrets disappeared from the face of the Known World in BC 600.

The magic that kept Tuma imprisoned in another plane has weakened during the course of centuries. Sometimes it happens that the city – but not its inhabitants – temporarily reappears in its ancient site, only to fade some time later. Local adventurers may spot or even enter it, and some tell tales about an alien magical city found in the Black Peaks range. However, today nothing is known about Tuma's fate. Ancient historical records may mention the city as one of the Traldar kingdoms of the ancient age, but not much else can be gathered about its history. Only one man knows the truth: he is Lirdrium Arkayz, one of the last two members of the ruling council of Tuma, who still tries to break the curse which affects its ancient people. Arkayz lives in a manor east of Tuma's ancient site.

plague) reduced the Traldar population to one-fifth of the previous one - many of their most prosperous cities had been destroyed, most of their warriors killed; the wilderness reclaimed a vast part of their lands, as there were no more people living on them. The remnants of this people temporarily stayed allied together under the banner of Halav's and Petra's descendants (who ruled the united central kingdom of Krakatos and Lavv), but the Traldar civilization had definitely fallen into decline. With communications made more difficult by the lack of infrastructure maintenance and the country's depopulation, peripheral communities become more and more independent from the center, while the memory of King Halav's days faded and passed into legend. Thus began the Traldars' Dark Ages.

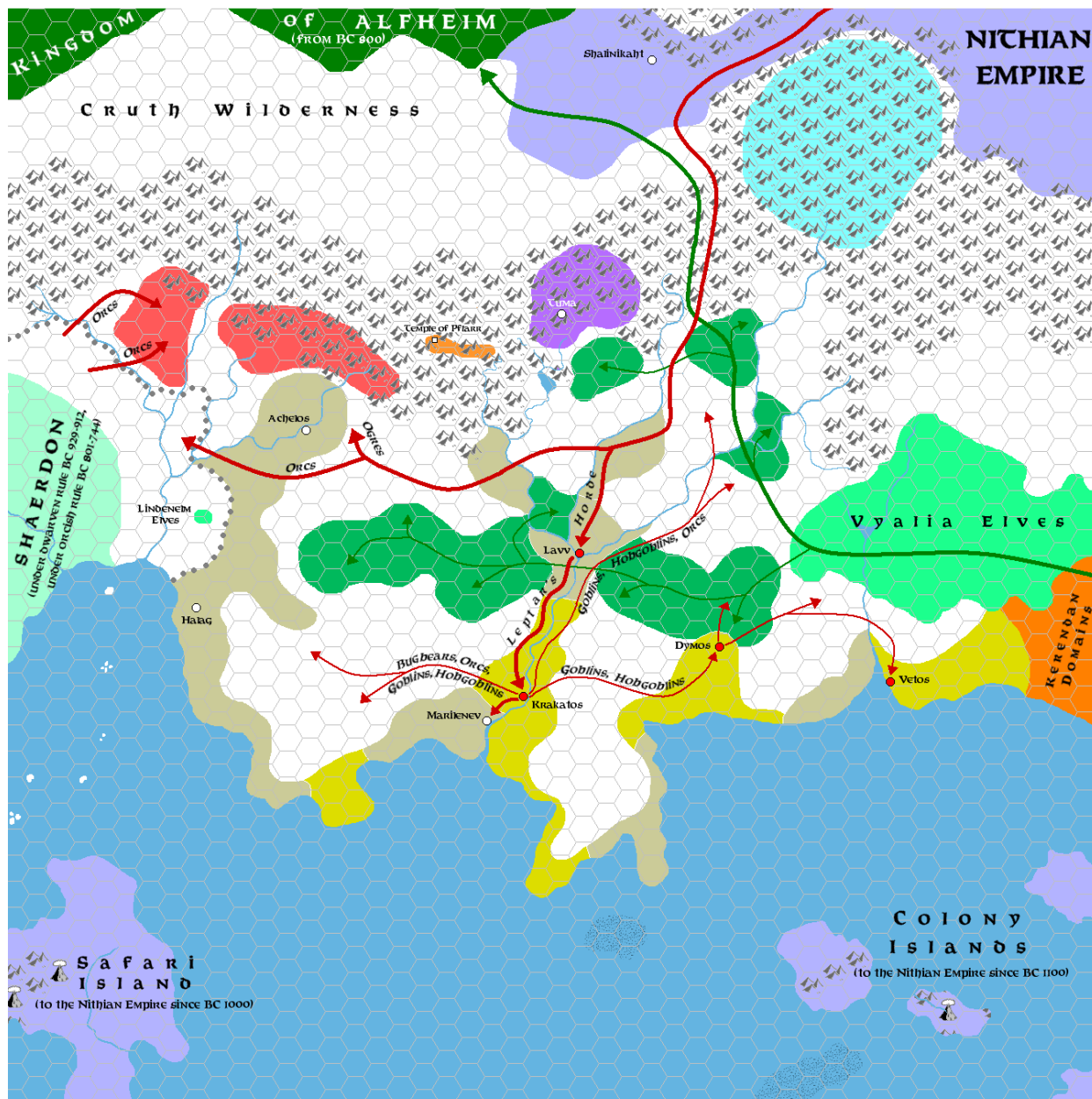
THE DARK AGES AND THE BIRTH OF TRALADARAN CULTURE

Even with the gnolls gone, the land would not know peace. In BC 933 the Vandars invaded the region from the west; they were a northern human warrior-people, who had migrated from Norwold centuries before, and had taken part in the wars between dwarves, halflings and orcs in the modern Five Shires region²⁶. Skilled horsemen, they brought

²⁶ The Vandars are an Antalian-related people native of modern Norwold; they should belong to the same language group of other Slavic-like tongues speaking peoples (see some of the NPCs in *CM4*, and also the Vatski and Yevo of some fan works - [Empire of Zuvevo](#) and [Norwold Region](#)); I included them to explain the passage from the Traldar culture (similar to the Mycenaean Greek one) to the Traladaran one (which is more Slavic-like), and also to establish a link between Slavic-like tongue speaking people of Mystara. The ancestors of the Vandars migrated from Norwold on the eve of the Great Horde's invasion (BC 1722), living first in the Heldann and Northern Reaches area, and then moving to southern Ethengar around BC 1000, pushed away by the Nithian pressure from the south. The Vandars founded the short-lived realm of [Zölaströya](#) in southern Ethengar, before moving south again when tensions with their neighbours became unbearable (BC 950). They crossed the sparsely-populated Darokin lands following rumors of easy and rich takes to be made in the halfling realm of Hindon. The Vandars should be the humans mentioned in these passages of *GAZ8* the Fall of Hindon and the Dark Years: "In the years that followed, human, dwarven, and orc bands roamed the land fighting viciously with each other. [...] Human bands were largely interested

Traladara during the Dark Age

FROM the VANDAR migration to the humanoid INVASIONS of the early 5th century BC



- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Tralabar-ruled areas in BC 700 | Vyalla and Lindeneim elven lands in BC 500 | Humanoid-controlled lands in BC 500 |
| Vandar-ruled areas in BC 700 | Mealben's migration (BC 800) and the split of Callarii groups | Extent of the Nithian Empire in BC 700 |
| Domain of Cuma in BC 700 | Lands settled by Callarii elves within BC 500 | Frost Giant-controlled lands |
| Main towns and sites of interest | Humanoid migrations and invasions (with races) | Maximum extent of Loktal Ironshielb's Kingdom of the Glittering Land (BC 929-912) |
| Lost Valley of Hutaaka | Settlements destroyed by humanoids in BC 493-480 | Domains of the Kerenbans in BC 500 |

further destruction in the already devastated Traldar lands. The Vandars pushed deep into Traldar territory, as more and more tribes migrated there from the Five Shires (up to BC 910), but their cultural influence was greater in the western half of the country. Within a century, the Vandars adopted a sedentary lifestyle, and settled as rulers among many Traldar clans, even founding or re-founding some towns (like Achelos in BC 900, and Halag in BC 800). During this time the knowledge of iron smelting eventually became widespread in the Traldar lands, which definitively entered the iron age. Only around BC 800, when the worst effects of plagues, famines, and wars began to lessen, did the population begin a very slow recovery. For many decades, the political situation continued to be troubled by wars and fights between the Traldars and Vandars, with the latter slowly gaining the upper hand.

After BC 700, when the worst years of the Vandar invasion and dominion had passed, the conquerors began a process of intermarriage into Traldar clans, which ultimately brought about - around BC 500 - the blending of the two cultures into one. The culture of the Vandar masters imposed itself over the declining culture of the Traldar people, even as it adopted many traits of the Traldar culture. The most widely used tongue of the country came to be a Vandar-descended tongue heavily influenced by the Traldar dialects. The merged people gradually became known as Traladarans, and their land as Traladara²⁷. Although the Traladarans were divided into many villages and communities, they were kept united by

in fast and easy plunder but the dwarves and orcs were determined to rule the land as their own." Thus, before the determination of orcs and dwarves, the Vandars eventually left Hindon for the east, invading the beleaguered Traldar lands in BC 933.

²⁷ At this point the old Mycenaean-like Traldar culture has given way to the newer Slavic-like Vandar one.

their faith in their Immortal patrons - Halav, Petra and Zirchev – whose stories were kept alive by the oral tradition of the *Ballad of King Halav*, which told the story of their deeds during the Great Beastmen Invasion; the veneration of Halav, Petra, and Zirchev became widespread across Traladara during this age, slowly replacing that of the old Traldar and Vandar Immortals.

This age also saw the arrival of the elves, who suddenly and mysteriously appeared in the lands to the east of the Traldars (BC 800). They had abandoned their far-away homeland, the Sylvan Realm, through the magical *Rainbow Bridge*, under the leadership of Mealiden Starwatcher. While the main body of the migration passed through Traladara to settle north of the Black Peaks mountains (on the site of the future Canolbarth Forest), one of their clans - the Callarii wood elves - chose to split from the migration and to settle in the central forests of modern Karamaikos – the Radlebb Woods, parts of the Dymrak Forest, and the forested hill country between the Highreach and the Hillfollow Rivers. The Callarii established friendly relations with the more peaceful human clans and fought against the more warlike ones²⁸.

Nevertheless, this age was troubled by recurring humanoid invasions. Since BC 650, the Hins' successful struggle against their orcish masters during the Time of

²⁸ GAZI says that the Callarii migrate from Alfheim around the end of the 1st century BC, and this take is followed by some fan works, like G. Agosta's *A Karamikos Companion*. However, later canon sources, starting with *GAZ5* and *Hollow World campaign setting*, say that the Callarii clans split from Mealiden's migration toward the future site of the Canolbarth Forest and chose to settle in the deep woods of Traladara while their brethren continued north in BC 800. I chose to adopt this second version, also because I could not see why a number of elven clans should have migrated from an idyllic fairy forest to a lands inhabited by humans and threatened by scores of goblin hordes (like Traladara was in the 1st century BC).

Heroes had pushed a significant number of orcs into western Karameikos; many of them - like the Blackstone and the Jagged Claw tribes - settled in the Cruth Lowlands and presented a serious problem for all the western Traladaran clans. Still another wave of invasions and raids descended on the Traladarans in BC 491; hordes of bugbears, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, orcs, and ogres, fleeing the onslaught suffered against the dwarves in the Battle of Sardal Pass (BC 492), poured from the north into Traladara. Some of their tribes, like the Greyslayers orcs and numerous ogre families, settled in the Cruth Mountains and Lowlands area in BC 491, while the rest staged a mass invasion of central Traladara the following year, again bringing death and destruction. Although they were initially attacking without a plan, the humanoid found a new and fierce leader in Leptar²⁹, a brutal hobgoblin chief; they accomplished much devastation, the most infamous of which was the destruction of the cities of Krakatos and Lavv, last legacies of the old Traldar civilization in these lands. The humanoid invasion also brought about a devastating plague which ravaged the whole country. The Traladarans, now strengthened by the Vandar warrior tradition, managed to hold off the humanoids; the hordes of Leptar were defeated in BC 488 and his humanoid army splintered into a number of small hordes, but the war against them continued up until BC 480. At the end of the war, many bands of these creatures had settled in the south-western woods, in the Dymrak Forest, in the mountains, and in the wilds of Traladara, where many of them still live today. The arrival of the humanoids also hit the more

sparsely populated and isolated Callarii settlements which dotted the woodlands; many wood elves decided to retreat to the secure depths of the Radlebb Woods or to the western reaches of the Dymrak Forest (the rest had fallen into the hand of goblin tribes), consolidating their hold on them and abandoning almost all their outlying settlements.

THE REBIRTH AND THE CULTURAL UNIFICATION

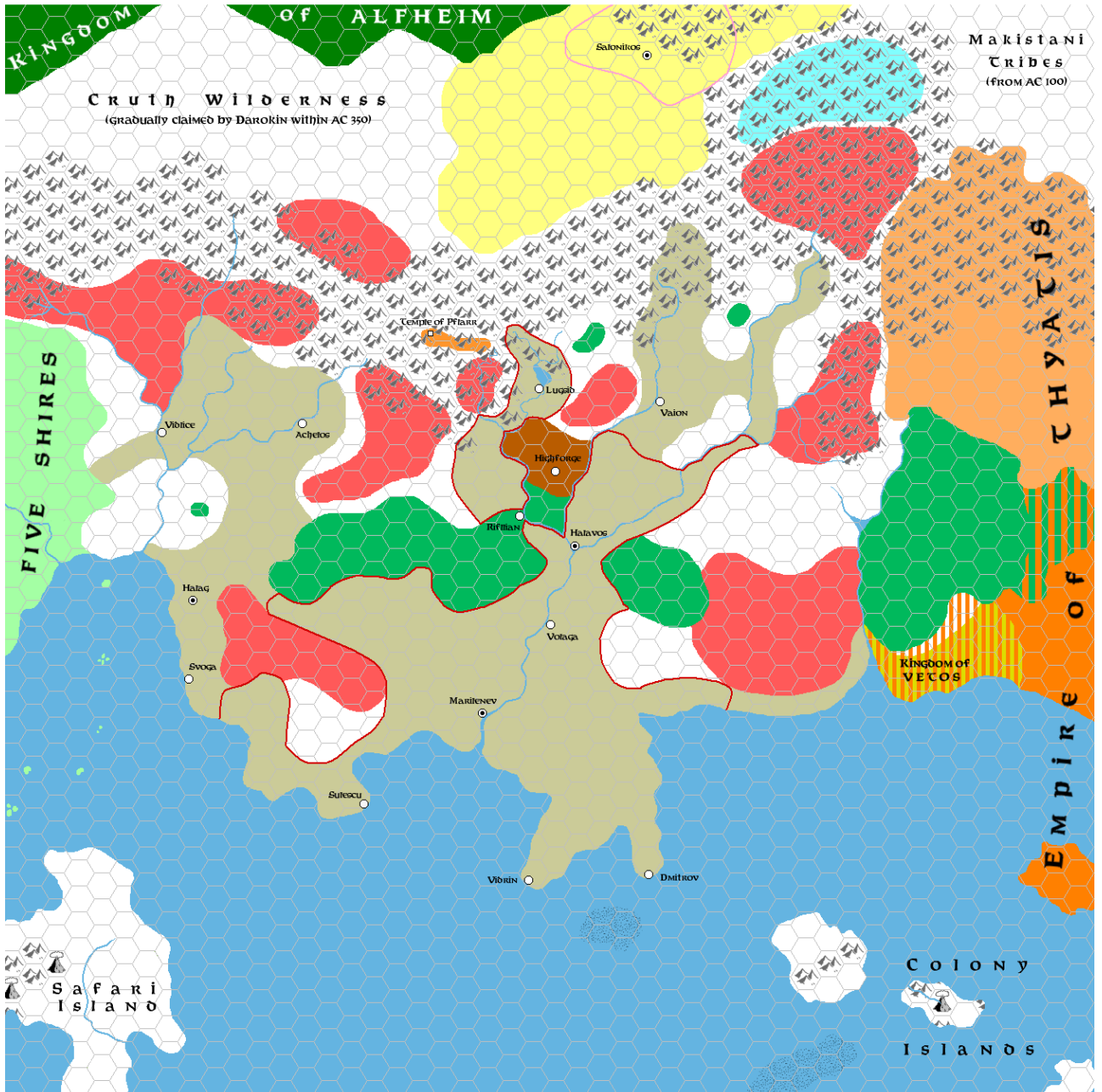
The end of the humanoid invasions also marked the beginning of the late Dark Ages of Traladara. The fall of the Nithian Empire (BC 500) and the disappearance of its culture from the Known World had no relevant consequences for Traladara. After the slow recovery begun in the 9th century BC had been halted by the events of the 6th and 5th centuries BC, the population began growing again, starting from the 4th century BC. Settlements which had been on the verge of collapse began a stable recovery, while new settlements were built and prospered in coastal and riverside areas. The political landscape became more stable, as the main settlements became the seat of small principalities called “banates”. Toward the end of the first millennium BC, Marilenev arose to become the major city of Traladara, followed by Halavos (built near the site of old Lavv), Lugsid (a settlement born of the shore of Lake Windrush), and other towns³⁰.

²⁹ The mortal story of Leptar has been devised by Marco Dalmonte in [Hircismus](#) (at The Vaults of Pandius) and further linked with Traladaran history by G. Agosta in his [A Karameikos Companion](#).

³⁰ Lugsid is a canonic settlement found in the *Hail the Heroes* adventure. The names of most other settlements are borrowed from the fan works of G. Agosta ([A Karameikos Companion](#) and [Lords of the Cruth Lowlands](#)), F. Defferrari ([History of Traladara](#)), J. Guerra ([Traladaran Clans](#)), and J. Mishler ([Thoughts on Darokin](#)).

The Rebirth of Traladara

FROM the reign of Ithron to the 4th century AC



Political borders accurate to the year AC 350

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| Borders of Ithron's kingdom in BC 147 | Lost Valley of Hutaaka | Tralbar Kingdom of Vetos and surroundings annexed by Rerendas in BC 458 | Borders of the city-state of Salonikos in AC 250 |
| Kingdom of Traladara in AC 350 under Bogdan Ivanovitch | GNOME-controlled areas | Vyalia lands which became part of the Chyatian Empire in AC 205 | Territory of the Emirate of al-Zalenikah in AC 350 |
| Main towns, cities, and sites of interest | HUMANOID-controlled areas | Lands conquered by the Chyatian Empire between AC 10 and AC 150 | |
| Elf-controlled areas | Frost Giant-controlled areas | | |

The end of the Dark Age also saw the first successful attempt at uniting the Traladaran communities into one kingdom. On the eve of a war against the humanoid, anticipated by a time of renewed humanoid raids all over Traladara, Ban Ithron Zlatarev³¹ succeeded in BC 195 to the throne of Volaga and managed to unify under his banner some of the other princes, leading them to victory over the humanoids. In the following years, he expanded his domain through force and diplomacy to nearly all of Traladara, and in BC 171 he was crowned in Marilenev by priests of the Traladaran patrons as “King of Traladara” – marking the first use of this title in history. In BC 147 Ithron died, and his kingdom would not outlive him for long; his successors couldn’t manage to keep the quarrelsome clans united, and the kingdom slowly fragmented, until at the half of the 1st century AC the title of king, by then empty, fell into disuse.

Hostile humanoids were not the only ones to migrate in the wild Traladaran lands. A number of rock gnomes led by the Hilltopper clan, survivors of the slaughter of their own race perpetrated centuries before by the kobolds under the Hardanger Mountains, after many wanderings came from the north to Traladara around BC 100, and settled in the lands between the Hillfallow and Windrush Rivers, where they built their own settlements, the largest of which was called Highforge.

The turn of the first millennium AC marked the beginning of an age of rapid demographic growth for Traladara. Both the consolidation of the Thyatian Empire to the east and of the Kingdom of Darokin to the

north-west helped Traladara to enter a more stable age. From the 1st to the 4th century AC, the population began a slow but steady process of resettlement of the wilderness – mostly the woods and the forests. Settlements grew and some of them became prosperous trade cities. Thanks to its plentiful natural resources - such as wood, furs, and precious metals - Traladara began to be frequently traveled by merchants of neighboring countries, mostly Thyatians, Darokinians, and Minrothians. Even a Rockhome dwarven clan, the Stronghollow - following rumors of precious metal veins to be mined below the Altan Tepes - came to Traladara, where it was welcomed by the gnomes in their Kingdom of Highforge; the dwarves settled there around AC 300. The increase of trade and steady passage of people through land routes improved the cultural unification of the Traladarans.

Religion was another powerful factor of unity. Around AC 400, after centuries of cultural contacts, Thyatian missionaries led by Lucor³² - who subsequently was made a saint by the Church of Traladara - translated into Thyatian the *Ballad of King Halav*³³.

³² The character of Lucor is mentioned in *B6*: “Advancing toward the gate is the Procession of Lucor. The procession is a religious celebration honoring a legendary local cleric named Lucor. [...] The festival is of great importance.” The story of Saint Lucor was further developed by G. Agosta as part of the *Fantasy Cities: Specularum* project.

³³ It’s unlikely that literacy was introduced by Thyatians this late. The *Hollow World campaign setting*, under the description of Milenian customs, says: “Milenian is the language of these people. Though it is descended from Traldar, it is not the same language. There is a written form of the language, which is not at all similar to the written form of Traldar.” So the Traldars did have a written language; literacy among the Traldars surely suffered a hard blow during the Dark Age, but some sort of literacy (based on the old Traldar alphabet) may have resurfaced between BC 500 and AC 400. Despite this, it may be that the *Ballad* was kept in oral form only out of some religious tradition. I suppose that the translation of the *Ballad* into Thyatian marks the gradual adoption of the Thyatian alphabet in the religious practices and then in the Traladaran tongue, in place of the old Traldar alphabet.

³¹ Ithron is mentioned in *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure* as one of the leaders that managed to claim the title of King of Traladara; his surname was created by me.



Bogdan Ivanovich as King of Traladara

This event prompted the organization and the consolidation of the churches devoted to the Traladaran patrons, bringing about the formation of the Church of Traladara in Marilenev, as well as of other branches of the faith, called churches of Halav, in the rest of the country.

The Traladaran communities continued to stay divided and independent of one another. Depending upon the era, they waged war or traded amongst each other, allying together only to repel a foreign invader. Some nobles even managed to become quite powerful local lords during those centuries; in reality, their domains and authority only reached as far as their swords. The most important of these petty nobles

was Bogdan Ivanovich³⁴, Ban of Marilenev, who succeeded to the Marilenev throne in AC 301 and began a campaign of unification of other settlements and clans, both by diplomacy and war, which concluded in AC 324 when he was crowned King of Traladara in Marilenev; his son Anton even managed to conquer the Cruth Lowlands and the city of Achelos in AC 327, and to found a vassal banate there. Unfortunately, internal strife erupted at Bogdan's death in AC 356, breaking the recently-formed kingdom apart. In the Cruth Lowlands, the legacy of Anton was preserved after his death in AC 364, and the Ivanovich family kept control of the banate, allying itself with the Hojah family of Halag.

FROM THE LYCANTHROPIC PLAGUE TO THE TRALADARAN LEAGUE

The 5th century AC saw some very important events for Traladara. Around AC 410, merchants coming from the southern isles brought to Traladara the plagues of lycanthropy and vampirism with which they had been infected in the east. This sparsely-populated region of dense woods and small villages was the ideal hideout for a werewolf or a vampire. In the following decades, many communities were terrified by these creatures and Traladara became known as the favourite haven of such horrible monsters. Those years also saw a new emergence of old Taymoran-descended

³⁴ This is another of the short-lived kings of Traladara mentioned in *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure*, where he is featured only as "Ivanovich". Further details on Bogdan's story can be found in G. Agosta's *A Karameikos Companion* and *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*.

The time of the Traladaran League

FROM THE TRALADARAN WARS TO END OF THE 6th CENTURY AC



Political borders accurate to the year AC 400

- | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lands belonging to greater Traladaran clans | Main towns, cities, and sites of interest | Gnome-controlled areas | Frost Giant-controlled areas |
| Lands belonging to lesser Traladaran clans | Settlements destroyed or abandoned within AC 600 | Humanoid-controlled areas | |
| Main Traladaran principalities and their vassals in AC 400 | Elf-controlled areas | Lost Valley of Hutaaka | |



A village burned during the Traladaran Wars

nosferatu. The religious hierarchies gathered forces to counter those evil threats; in Halag, the order of the Knights of Halav was formed to fight vampires and lycanthropes. The demihumans – elves and gnomes, mostly - for whom those curses were deadly, closed their borders and were forced to begin true hunts to eradicate infected humans from their lands. After a phase of dramatic, initial spread, the two curses were contained, but they would again see a rise at the beginning of the 6th century AC and would never completely leave the region.

The 5th century also saw the beginning of the Darokinian attempts to subdue Traladara³⁵.

³⁵ The following part about the Traladaran Wars draws on the works of A. Nowack (*The Kings of Darokin*) and G. Agosta (*A Karameikos Companion*). Demara is the third king of Traladara mentioned by name only in *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure*.

Four wars (called the Traladaran Wars in Darokinian histories: AC 412-17, 444-50, 488, and 490-93) were fought in this century between the Traladarans and the Kingdom of Darokin, which also saw intervention by the insular city-states of Harbortown and New Alphatia in the Minrothad archipelago; most of those conflicts were also internal wars spurred by political and religious differences between various Traladaran clans. Even though Darokin was only successful in holding the northern part of Traladara for a short period of time (the first time directly, the second time through the alliance with the Traladaran Duke Demara of Vaion, who managed to be crowned as King of Traladara), the wars had a series of important consequences.

First of all, cultural influences by Darokin and, to a lesser extent, by Thyatis, led to the abandonment of the old traditional Traladaran noble titles (ban, zhupa) across the country, in favor of imported Darokinian and Thyatian titles (like duke, count, and baron). This process was slower in the western part of the country, where local cultural identity was stronger and less permeable to outside influences³⁶.

Second, the wars changed the political landscape of Traladara, leading to the emergence of newer clans (like the Koriszegy, the Vargos³⁷ of Halag, and the Ivanovich of Achelos, who assumed the ducal title) and to the extinction or the exile of old ones (like the Hojah of Halag, who abandoned Halag with a large number of their followers out of religious differences in AC 450, after their defeat in the Second Traladaran War, migrating to the Gulf of Hule³⁸).

Third, the alliance against the Darokinian threat prompted the formation of the Traladaran League. At first only a military alliance to last until the defeat of Darokin,

the League was confirmed as a permanent institution after the Darokinian defeat in AC 493, with a governing body – the Diet of Marilenev – seated in Marilenev, which had become the most important city of Traladara. For a time it seemed that the Traladaran League could be the unifying factor of the Traladarans, and that the Diet could make the various Traladaran principalities act as a single body – like when they chose the wizard Perrantin as First Speaker to oversee the sending of a Traladaran army to assist the Flaems of the Highlands defend against a feared dragon attack on the Known World, during the Time of the Second Dragonlord (AC 511)³⁹.

THE HOLY WARS

However, hatred continued to run deep between Traladaran clans, and intrigues were frequent and harsh. Rivalries among the clans, and uneasiness against Marilenev's leading position within the League, would have ripped the League apart within AC 600. By this year, many noblemen who ruled peripheral lands acted independently from, and without consulting with, the League's leadership in Marilenev.

Around this year, a newly-risen descendant of Demara claimed the title of King of Vaion, thus marking the first exit from the League. Some years later (AC 612), after the

³⁶ Of the settlements marked on the accompanying map, Gorenenov (seat of the Gorevitch family) was created by J. Guerra (*Traladaran Clans*), the Barony of Ivorga comes from the work of J. Mishler (*Thoughts on Darokin*), while Ourosco comes from *Night of the Vampire* adventure. The village of Lumm is mentioned in *X12: Skarda's Mirror*; G. Agosta (*A Karameikos Companion*) made it an historical Traladaran town, and I'm following his work here (I've only moved the village a little to the south-west, because the module says it is "a few miles northeast of Kelven").

³⁷ The Vargos family was first created by P. Sullivan (*Information on Western Karameikos*); I have adopted the modified story of the family, as told in G. Agosta's *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*, *A Karameikos Companion* and *The Beast of Radlebb*.

³⁸ These Traladarans will found the city-states of the Gulf of Hule – Slagovich, Nova Svoga, Zvornik, and the rest. The story of their flight was created by G. Agosta in his *A Karameikos Companion* and expanded in *Crywolf!*, and draws from the following passage of *Red Steel campaign setting*: "an influx of Traldar arrived, possibly fleeing religious persecution in their homeland". Following the defeat and the exile of the Hojah, the Vargos family took power in Halag, abandoning the old title of "bans" and assuming that of "barons".

³⁹ Mention of the Traladaran League and the character of Perrantin are found in the *Dragonlord Trilogy* novels by T. Gunnarsson. I assumed that the whole story of the trilogy takes place between AC 504 and AC 513. For a more detailed description of the events which invested the Known World during this time, see my *History of Dragonkind*. Together with Solveig White-Gold (alias of Valeria Doranium, scion of the Thyatian Emperor Cornelius Doranium, and one of the characters of the trilogy), Perrantin later discovered the relic known as the *Shield of Halav* around AC 521. The story of their finding, the construction of the Temple of the Shield and of the nearby village of Zadreth on the shores of Lake Windrush are told in *Hail the Heroes* adventure (exact dating was my guess, however).

Marilenev-supported Baron of Halag, Ulstagh Vargos⁴⁰, was killed, the new cadet-branch Vargos ruler of Halag assumed the title of duke. In response, Duke Vasil Ivanovich of Achelos proclaimed himself King of Achelos.

It was the end of the League, which was formally dissolved in the same AC 612, and the beginning of another age of strife. Also, the League's dissolution marked the end of Marilenev's hegemony over Traladara; the weakening of the Duke and of the old landowning aristocracy of the city prompted the new merchant families represented by the trade guilds to take power in the city with a bloody coup, which ousted the old families and reduced the duke to a mere figurehead which now had to rule from Castle Marilenev, in the countryside south-west of the city⁴¹.

Conflicts between the various clans and cities would break out openly in AC 653. Another wave of vampirism and lycanthropy, together with the spread and the increase of activity of entropic cults, marked the beginning of a time of religious wars between the clans, known as the Holy Wars, which would go on until AC 728. Fear of an uncontrolled spread of vampirism exploded when the King of Darokin, Aden III, was discovered to be a member of the undead⁴². This discovery turned into psychosis and war when it

became clear that many Traladaran clans hosted night creatures within their ranks.

This stream of conflicts was terrible and wiped out whole clans, going on intermittently among persecutions, stakings, famines, and plagues. Heroes and villains were raised and perished during this age; one of those was Gygar, the powerful wizard-lord of Mistamere Castle (on Lake Windrush) who managed to carve a vast dominion in the surrounding area⁴³. But this nearly century-long series of wars saw many terrible events, like the rise and fall of the entropic cult of the infamous Monastery on the Hill⁴⁴, the transformation of the Sulescu family head into a nosferatu, a resurgence of orcish and hill giant activity in the Cruth Lowlands (caused by the defeat of orcs in the Shires around AC 700), and the rise and defeat of Queen Elendorath of Vaion, who attempted to expand her domain enlisting humanoid tribes under her banner⁴⁵.

The last years of the wars, known as the Vampire War (AC 720-28) were particularly terrible. The necromancer Morphail Gorevitch-Woszlany, Count of Gorenenov,

⁴⁰ Mention of Baron Ulstagh's death in AC 612 is found in the *Ballad of Nob Nar*, in *GAZ8*.

⁴¹ While this event is borrowed from G. Agosta's *A Karameikos Companion* and from the *Fantasy Cities: Specularum* project, I chose to keep the dukes of Marilenev in existence after AC 612, even if deprived of their control over the city itself; this is due to the fact that a "king" of Marilenev is mentioned in *Poor Wizard's Almanac I*, a Radu (likely his name, not his surname) who happened to be in charge in AC 872.

⁴² The story of King Aden III of Darokin was created by A. Nowack ([The Kings of Darokin](#)) and expanded by G. Agosta (*A Karameikos Companion*).

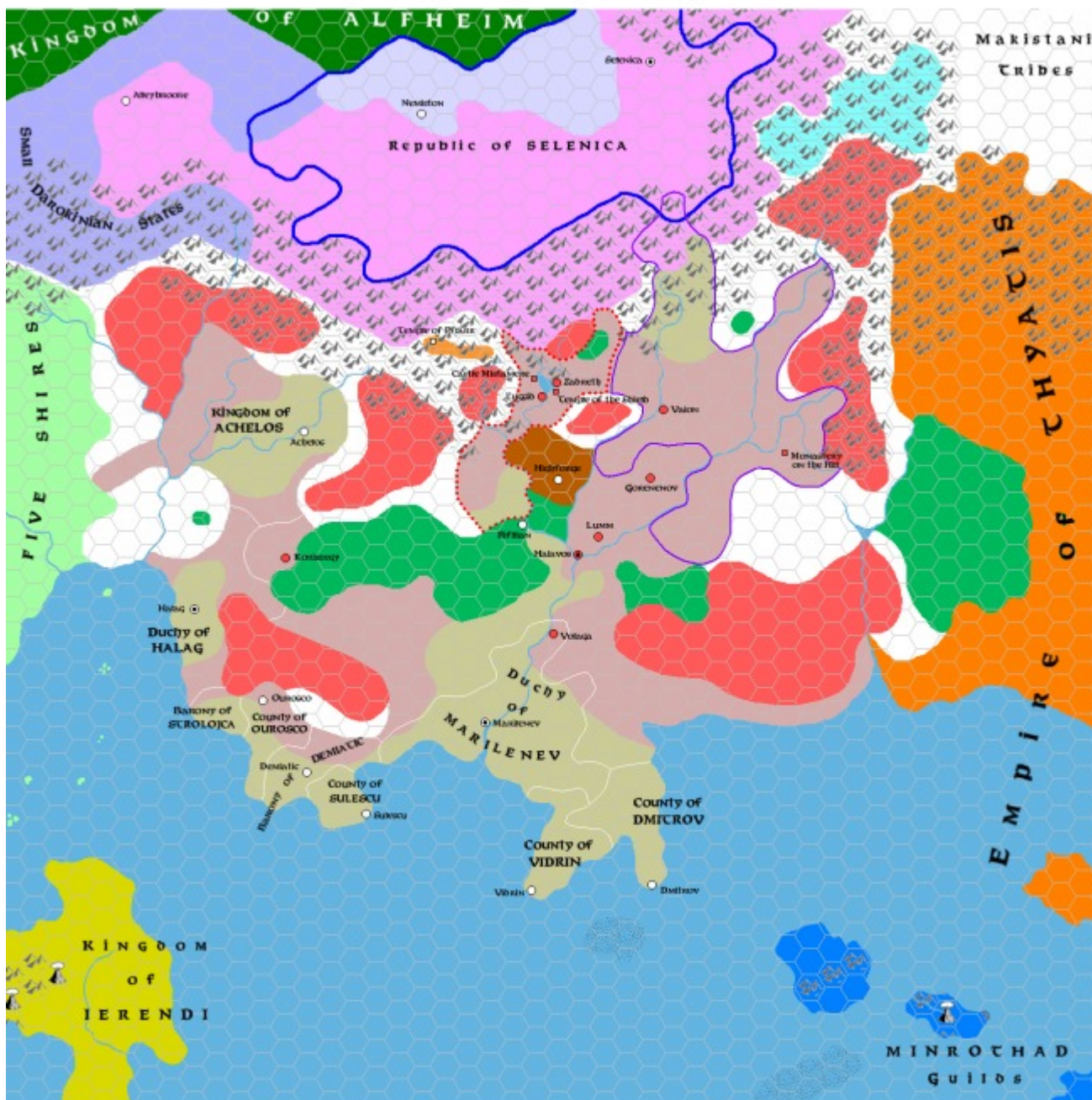
⁴³ What is known about Gygar comes from the background of the group adventure in *D&D Basic Set*: "Many years ago, this part of the Realm of Man was ruled by a magic-user named Gygar, a man of great and mysterious powers. He ruled the lands from his mighty castle Mistamere, [...] Gygar died after a long and peaceful rule, but no successor was named. [...] Now, centuries later, [...]" Gygar's story and some of his creations (mostly weapons like *Comet's Edge* and the *Sword of Gygar*) were detailed by G. Agosta in his works (*A Karameikos Companion* and *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*); according to gim, Gygar should have died at the beginning of the Vampire War (AC 720).

⁴⁴ The Monastery on the Hill was introduced in *B5: Horror on the Hill* adventure. The place's background was further detailed and integrated with Karameikan history by G. Agosta's *A Karameikos Companion* and other works. The Monastery's location on the accompanying map follows the hints found in *B1-9: In Search of Adventure*.

⁴⁵ Queen Elendorath was mentioned in *B12: Queen's Harvest* adventure. Her story was further detailed and integrated with Karameikan history by G. Agosta's *A Karameikos Companion* and other works.

Traladara at the end of the 8th century AC

After the ravages of the Holy and Vampire Wars



Political borders accurate to the year AC 800

- | | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|---|
| Traladaran lands in AC 690 | Settlements destroyed or abandoned within AC 800 | GNOME-controlled areas | Territory of the Duchy of Selenica in AC 700 |
| Areas which suffered a major population loss within AC 800 | Borders of Elenorath's kingdom (AC 702-725) | HUMANOID-controlled areas | Principality of Selban (independent AC 660-740) |
| Borders of main Traladaran principalities in AC 800 | Borders of Gygar's domains (AC 697-720) | Lost Valley of Hutaaka | Lesser independent Danokian states |
| Main towns, cities, and sites of interest | Elf-controlled areas | Frost Giant-controlled areas | Borders of the Republic of Selenica in AC 800 |

called the “Black Count of the Moor”, became a nosferatu after a dark pact with the Immortal Alphaks in AC 720; he began an aggressive expansionist policy against the other clans. Other cities, including Marilenev, Vidrin and even Selenica, allied against him, ultimately defeating Morphail in AC 728 and forcing him into exile⁴⁶. At the end of the war, Gorenenov and Lumm⁴⁷ had been destroyed; a number of clans allied with Morphail chose rather to follow their ruler and migrate to the Highlands than submit or continue fighting (those were the ancestors of the Boldavians of the Highlands).

Diseases, misery, and famines plagued Traladara during the Holy Wars and during the whole 8th century AC. Many settlements had been destroyed, many clans wiped out, many people had died and many others had left for foreign lands. Once proud and wealthy cities and towns, like Vaion, Halavos, and Volaga, lay in ruins; Zadreth had been abandoned at the beginning of the Holy Wars due to a plague; and the survivors of Lugsid had abandoned their town to pillage, seeking refuge on the island of Fogor, in Lake Windrush⁴⁸.

Thus, the wars marked the beginning of another time of demographic loss. Dark forces, who had entered Traladara during

the wars, continued to feed on those fool enough to ally with them – like Count Koriszegy, whose lands were cursed and abandoned after he had signed a pact with Entropic powers (AC 783).

THE THYATIAN CONQUEST

Another two centuries would pass before the Traladarans would recover from this time of wars and misery. In the first half of 9th century AC, dwarves fleeing from persecution in the Highlands region during the Year of Infamy (828 AC) came south; most sailed toward Minrothad, where the local government granted them the opportunity to settle of Fortress Island, but some stayed in Traladara, settling among the human communities. Meanwhile, the main branch of the Marilenev dynasty died out when the last Duke of Marilenev, Radu, perished in AC 872; the ducal title was abolished, and Castle Marilenev was inherited by the cadet branch of the family, while the city also formally became an oligarchic republic⁴⁹.

On the eve of the 10th century AC, Traladaran communities were again in a phase of great economic growth; coastal cities had again entered a time of economic rise, and even some inland settlement was growing again (like Vatresh⁵⁰, built over the ruins of Lugsid). The Thyatian Empire, more than ever interested in the vast wood

⁴⁶ The canonic history of the Traladaran migration toward the Highlands has been expanded by J. Mishler ([Thoughts on Darokin](#)) and G. Agosta ([A Karameikos Companion](#)).

⁴⁷ Lumm should survive as a small farming village after this event, because around AC 980 its inhabitants are kidnapped by the mad wizard Skarda according to *X12: Skarda's Mirror*.

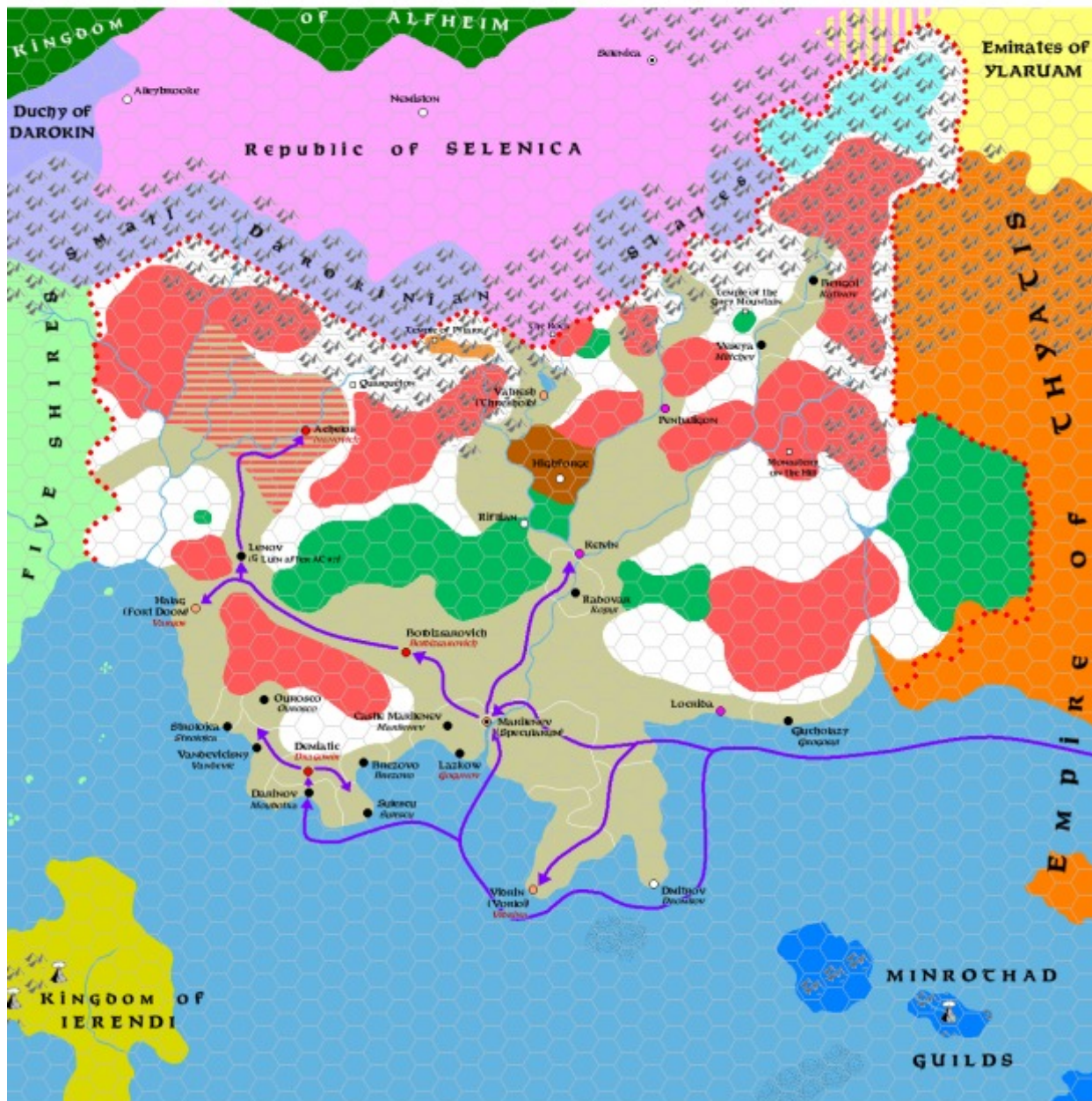
⁴⁸ G. Agosta in his *A Karameikos Companion* has both Lugsid and Zadreth abandoned at the beginning of 10th century AC. However, in the *Hail the Heroes* adventure the location of both towns is nearly unknown to the locals, and it is not unreasonable to think that local folklore had knowledge of their location if they were abandoned only a century ago or so. Thus I found more fitting if the abandonment or destruction of these two towns happened some centuries earlier, and the Holy Wars seemed to me the right time for this to happen.

⁴⁹ See also note 41. *Poor Wizard's Almanac I* says that AC 872 was the fifteenth year of Radu's rule over Marilenev. The cadet branch is the one to which Valor Marilenev (husband of Magda) belongs.



















⁵⁰ The name of Vatresh was borrowed from F. Defferrari's [History of Traladara](#); here, however, the name refers to a much older settlement on the same site.

Traladara in the Tenth Century AC

FROM THE CHYATIEN CONQUEST TO THE GRAND DUCHY OF KARAMEIKOS



Political borders accurate to the year AC 910

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|  | Traladaran settled lands in AC 900 |  | Settlements destroyed during the Chyatian conquest (AC 900-901) |  | Ylarud lands under Selenican and Darokinian dominion between AC 897 and AC 910 |
|  | Borders of main Traladaran holdings after the Chyatian conquest (AC 901) |  | Settlements renamed by the Chyadians (Chyatian name in brackets) from AC 900 to AC 912 |  | Elf-controlled lands |
|  | Cruth Lowlands area gradually depopulated between AC 944 and AC 970 |  | Settlements built by the Chyadians between AC 905 and AC 915 |  | Gnome-controlled lands |
|  | Main towns, cities, villages, and sites of interest |  | Chyatian land and naval military operations during the conquest of Traladara (AC 900-901) |  | Humanoid-controlled lands in AC 900 |
|  | Ruining Traladaran clans after the Chyatian conquest (AC 903) |  | Borders of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos in AC 910 |  | Loth Valley of Hurlaaka |
|  | Traladaran clans ousted, exiled or killed during the Chyatian conquest (AC 900-901) |  | Constitutions of the Republic of Darokin after the Great Menger (AC 921) |  | Frost Giant-controlled lands |

deposits of Traladara, then decided to put its hands on them by conquering the region with the force of arms before the Traladaran states strengthened again or someone else began their conquest.

The campaign was launched in AC 900. The Thyatian armies, led by General Flavian Osteropolus⁵¹, quickly seized control of southern Traladara, conquering Marilenev and declaring the whole country a protectorate of the empire; Marilenev was renamed Specularum and became the seat of the Thyatian governor of the Province of Traladara. Additional campaigns were launched in the following months against the northern and western clans; the north was easily subdued, while the west held for a longer time against the Thyatians. Halag fell quickly to the forces of Legate Alharbius, but the Kingdom of Achelos required greater efforts to be conquered, which happened in AC 901 with the siege and destruction of Achelos town⁵². However, skirmishes in the Cruth Lowlands area would have continued in the following years, up to AC 903. Later governors had to quell the uprising of the northern clans in the following years, and consolidation of Thyatian rule over Traladara could be said complete only by AC 910⁵³.

⁵¹ The name of Flavian is found in *DDAI: Arena of Thyatis*: “The chapel was built by Flavian, grandson of Eusebius and grandfather of Helenites, in AC 901. He built it to honor Vanya for his safety and success in the campaigns of conquest led by Emperor Gabrionus IV against the Traladarans (whose land is now known as the Grand Duchy of Karameikos). Its construction was financed by spoils of the war”. It’s quite likely that Flavian was already back to Thyatis in AC 901 (when an imperial governor may have been sent in his place), or that he sent home his accumulated money and gave instructions to build Villa Osteropolus’ chapel.

⁵² This story was originally created by P. Sullivan ([Information on Western Karameikos](#)), and then revised by G. Agosta (*Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*), whose version I’m following here. Alharbius’ surname betrays his Alasiyan ancestry (the character’s name was Muktar al Harb in Sullivan’s original writeup).

⁵³ Some works – G. Agosta’s *A Karameikos Companion* and J. Guerra’s [Traladaran Clans](#) – have many Traladaran clans and settlements destroyed by the Thyatians during the conquest. However, according to *GAZI* Thyatis’ seizure of Traladara seems to be relatively bloodless, and resistance of the Traladarans to

Despite some damage wrought by the troop movements, for the first time in centuries the Thyatian conquest managed to tie together the main parts of the country. The presence of small Thyatian garrisons helped to make communication routes safer and Traladara’s inclusion within the trade network of the large empire made trading even more lucrative. A number of Thyatians migrated in the following decades to Traladara, mostly settling in the cities and in the southern communities. Lands far from main trade routes and towns were however largely neglected by the Thyatian provincial government, and mostly left to themselves; this fate befell, for example, on the Cruth Lowlands area, depopulated by prolonged skirmishes between Thyatians and local rebel forces, and then invaded by orcs chased again from the Shires in AC 944. Despite the beginning of the construction of Riverfork Keep in that same year, the northern half of this area was gradually abandoned by humans (who resettled to the south, in Luln or Halag) and fell under the control of the orcs within the next twenty years⁵⁴.

conquest scarce as well. So I chose to have only Boldizsarovich (from the work of B. Yarbrough, [Fort Boldizsarovich: Background Information](#)), Demiatic (from G. Agosta’s *Crywolff*), and Achelos (from G. Agosta’s *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands*) destroyed. Likewise, most of the Traladaran clans marked in red on the accompanying map were exiled (like the Gogunov, who went to Ierendi, and the Vidrina) or ousted (Vargos, Ivanovich), rather than killed (something which happened to the Boldizsarovich and, maybe, also to the Dragomir). Besides in the Cruth Lowlands and Halag, the Thyatians encountered some staunch opposition from the lords of south-western Traladara – the Ourosco clan and its allies, the Strolojca, the Dragomir, and the Sulescu. The latter’s defeat opened the road to the reduction of their lands; the Brezovo and the Moubotka, on the other hands, stayed neutral, and saw their possessions untouched or even enlarged.

⁵⁴ See G. Agosta’s *Lords of the Cruth Lowlands* for a more detailed account of those events.

THE TALE OF ROSENTOS' EXPEDITION

The adventure module included in *AC2 – Combat Shield and Mini-Adventure*, titled *The Treasure of the Hideous One*, introduced the story of Colonel Rosentos, sent about a century ago by Duke Stefan ‘the Hermit’ to explore and claim the wild lands west of Luln – that is the Blight Swamp. At that time, the module says, the duke’s land “were very new”. The module features a map, which however is quite difficult to fit within that of *GAZI* – even if *AC2* itself clarifies that the map is left very vague in order to be fitted within whichever setting a DM feels right. This allows a certain freedom of use regarding the map, and the possibility to tweak it to fit with *GAZI*’s map.

As the module’s tale is set a hundred years ago, Colonel Rosentos’ mission was likely part of the events which followed the Thyatian conquest of Traladara. However, Luln didn’t exist at that time, being settled by refugees from the Black Eagle Barony after AC 971 - so you can substitute it with the adjacent village of Lenov. [You may even suppose that Luln was born as a ramshackle village of refugees on the verge of Lenov in AC 971, but later its population swelled so much that eventually it absorbed Lenov itself, which became one of its suburbs.] After the occupation of the village of Lenov, Rosentos and his men were sent to explore

the Blight Swamp area, to chase some Traladaran rebels who had sought shelter there, or simply to take possession of the sparse fishermen villages found there.

Rosentos’ superior, Duke Stefan ‘the Hermit’, could well be Stefan I Karameikos, great-grandfather of present Grand Duke Stefan III Karameikos. Stefan I thus would be the father of Boris Karameikos, who is featured in the Karameikos family tree shown in *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure* supplement. Stefan I, before becoming Duke of Machetos, would have been one of the first Thyatian governors of Traladara, as his lands “were very new” at that time. Perhaps he was the very first governor of Traladara after the conquest, or the second one if Flavian Osteropolus – general of the expeditionary force which completed the conquest – was also the land’s first governor. Within AC 910, Stefan I was likely called back to succeed to his family Duchy of Machetos, but he could also have abdicated the throne to his son Boris before dying if he finished his days as a hermit (like his nickname seems to suggest). So the expedition led by Rosentos should have taken place in the very first years of Stefan I’s rule over Traladara, which could be from AC 901 to AC 903.

STEFAN KARAMEIKOS AND THE CREATION OF THE GRAND DUCHY

In AC 970 the Thyatian Duke of Machetos, Stefan III Karameikos, was granted by Emperor Thincol the title of grand duke and the Traladaran lands, in exchange for his rich ancestral duchy. Thincol, wishing to heal the empire's finances using Machetos' rich assets, was eager to offer Stefan a good deal of autonomy. Thus, the new grand duke, even if ruling over an effectively autonomous realm, benefited from the fact that, apparently, his lands were still part of the Thyatian Empire.

Stefan, who renamed Traladara with his family name, brought with him his most trusted advisors and some of his relatives, to whom he entrusted titles and lands in his new dominion. Some of them took possession of older Traladaran settlements and simply gave them a new Thyatian names (like what happened with Threshold and Vorloi), others established wholly new settlements (like Kelvin, built on the site of ancient Lavv, and Penhaligon, built on the ruins of Vaion). The Thyatian noblemen's settlement was not always peaceful: in many cases they had to impose their authority with force, and in some cases they were responsible for atrocities against the Traladarans, whose rights they didn't acknowledge; the latter was the case of the Grand Duke's cousin, Ludwig von Hendriks, who seized Halag and renamed it the Black Eagle Barony.

The powerful Traladaran families of Specularum, who had until now controlled



Duke Stefan kills a would-be assassin during the Marilenev Rebellion.

the political and economic stage of Traladara and had largely done as they pleased under the Thyatian governors, fearing a change of attitude by Stefan, caught the opportunity to try to recover the control of their country. Their subtle intrigues failed when, in AC 971, clan Marilenev headed an untimely and violent revolt in Specularum and of the surrounding lands, which was brutally crushed by the grand duke; the Marilenev clan was nearly exterminated, while the rebellious forces from surrounding lands were cornered in the ruins of Krakatos and defeated after a brief siege⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ A siege of Krakatos by a Duke Stefan is mentioned in *Bladderwick's Human Catapult's* description in *AC11: Book of Wondrous Inventions*, and I decided to include it in the events of Marilenev Rebellion. Likely the rebellion was something more elaborated than a street riot, and saw the direct or covert participation of some important Traladaran clans besides the

In the following years Stefan called to him many cadet members of Thyatian noble families, men and women gifted with heritage and skills to rule, but not destined to inherit their family titles. Adventurers, nobles, and merchants came to Karameikos and they came to represent the largest immigration ever experimented by this country during its modern history. Inter-marriage between Thyatians and Traladarans became increasingly common after AC 970, giving birth to young people of mixed heritage who more and more tended to see themselves as Karameikans – not as Thyatians or Traladarans anymore. Indeed, in the thirty years after Stefan's seizure of Traladara, Thyatian presence has grown to nearly one-fifth of the human population of Karameikos, with another fifth being people of mixed Thyatian-Traladaran ancestry.

In his first thirty years of rule, the Grand Duke has improved infrastructure, fortified important communities and his realm's borders, built an army to defend it, and created a network of loyalties and alliances with the Traladaran clans and with his Thyatian vassals. Examples of this are the building of Castellán, Rugalov, and Duke's Road Keeps, as well as the construction of paved roads like the Westron and the Duke's Roads.

Marilenev, like the Kopul of Radovar, the Dromilov of Dmitrov, and even the support of the exiled Gogunov from Ierendi. The plan contemplated a rebellion of Specularum while a Traladaran army would have descended upon the city from the north to occupy it. The capital's rebellion failed, however, and the Traladaran army was cornered in the ruins of Krakatos, where it fortified itself. Despite a fierce resistance, the Traladarans were defeated; the Kopul were stripped of their title and lands, many of their members were executed for treason alongside most of the Marilenev clan. The Dromilov's clanhead (who after all had had a limited involvement in the events of the rebellion) chose to reach the Gogunov in their Ierendian exile and thus the family managed to keep their lands – albeit losing the whole northern half of them to the Barony of Vorloi.

Moreover, Stefan supported the Thyatian patriarch Olliver Jowett, who had split from the Church of Thyatis, and his heterodox ideas, financing the creation of the Church of Karameikos to further improve the sense of autonomy of his country from the Thyatian Empire and to weaken the Church of Traladara, which had opposed and still was opposing his rule. The new church had an unexpected success, winning the favor of some young Traladarans and quickly becoming the second faith of the country.

This last migration of Thyatians has had a mostly positive effect on Karameikos from a demographic perspective because, besides generating a notable rise of the population, the Thyatian immigrants have given the country a new expansionist thrust toward the widening of the arable lands and the conquest of the wilderness. Nevertheless, to outside eyes Karameikos appears as a region still extremely wild in most of its lands, where an adventurer or a pioneer willing to risk their life fighting against nature's perils and monstrous enemies will find cheap lands for the grab, and where civilization advances through constant strife against the wilderness and their dangerous residents.

ZELLIGAR 'THE UNKNOWN' AND ROGAHN THE FEARLESS'

QUASQUETON'S DUNGEON

The Caves of Quasqueton were introduced in adventure module *B1 – In Search of the Unknown*. Later the dungeon's location was placed near the source of Achelos River in the map of the Known World included in 1983's *Expert Set*. *B1* told the tale of two adventuring companions, Zelligar the wizard and Rogahn the warrior, who had built a huge underground complex far from civilization; after having saved the civilized lands to the south from a barbarian invasion, the two disappeared altogether during an expedition in the barbarian lands to the north.

You can leave Quasqueton dungeon where it is (at the source of Achelos River), and use the following background.

THE STORY OF QUASQUETON

Zelligar and Rogahn were two powerful adventurers - maybe they were foreigners, or in service of the Thyatian conquerors, as their motives are described as «based on some kind of vague (or chaotic) evil» and their alignments as «questionable». They began construction of Quasqueton after the Thyatian conquest of the Cruth Lowlands (about AC 910), employing powerful magics,

and hundreds of slaves and laborers (humanoids, and perhaps even captured Traladaran rebels); they took advantage of the control that the Thyatian Empire was exerting over this region at the beginning. Construction of Quasqueton took about a decade, and Zelligar and Rogahn used it as the base of their operations for a some time.

Things became increasingly difficult when Thyatian control over the Cruth Lowlands began to wane, isolating their dungeon even more than they wished. At last they were forced to intervene directly when a large orcish horde, defeated by the Hins at the Battle of Fire Rock in the Five Shires (AC 944), poured into the Cruth Lowlands. Before the orcs could reach the southern settlements of the Cruth Lowlands, the two managed to lead them into a narrow pass between two hills and routed them. The Thyatian provincial government and the local population rewarded them for their deeds; after that, they again retreated in Quasqueton.

Zelligar and Rogahn disappeared years later (before AC 970) in the wild orc territory west of Quasqueton, in what was their last adventure. They left their mysterious dungeon abandoned. Today it has been occupied by orcs (some of whom are the descendants of Rogahn's and Zelligar's slaves), troglodytes, and other creatures.

(Continued on [page 70](#))

THE EYES OF TRALDAR AND OTHER STORIES

THE HANTU VALLEY AND THE GREY MOUNTAIN

B7 – Rabasia! adventure module introduced the elven village of Kota-Hutan, located in a forest at the feet of the Gray Mountain. There stood a temple devoted to the elves' philosophy, called the Quiet Way, founded by the elves' ancient spiritual leader, a human sage called Elyas. The followers of the Quiet Way are called the Siswa. While the original module's setting was generic, later *B1-9 – In Search of Adventure* supplement placed Kota-Hutan in an area of enchanted forest in the wooded hills east of the Duke's Road tract which continues north of Penhaligon. The area is known as the Hantu Valley.

TOO MANY EYES, OPALS, AND ORBS!

According to *B7*'s background, Elyas was later killed in a fight against three witches who coveted one of the sage's magical items, the *Black Opal Eye*, but managed to defeat them, imprisoning their souls under a large mountain (the Gray Mountain), on which the elves later built their temple to honor Elyas' memory.

Magic items similar to the *Black Opal Eye* were also introduced in other supplements. The first was the adventure *The Treasure of the Hideous One*, included within *AC2 – Combat Shield and Mini-Adventure* supplement, where the *Essence-Orb of Trinklā the Black Seer*, a powerful and evil magician of ages past, was described. The second was the *Eye of Traldar*, a powerful

divination magical device introduced in the adventure *DDA3 – Eye of Traldar*.

While these items are unrelated in official sources, as they all have divination powers, it seemed interesting to develop a story that linked all of them together. Some contributions by Mystara fans during the course of the years developed the story which identifies the *Black Opal Eye* with the *Essence-Orb of Trinklā the Black Seer*, and which is summed up below.

THE EYES OF TRALDAR

Before the Traldar hero Zirchev became Immortal around BC 870, he trained a mortal apprentice and entrusted him with the protection of the Traldar lands. He gave him two most-powerful magic items with divination powers, two orbs known as the *Eyes of Traldar*: the *Fire Opal Eye* and the *Black Opal Eye*. Zirchev's apprentice took residence in a secluded place near the Lake of Lost Dreams, and became known as a powerful sage and a benevolent magic-user. He was called by the locals the Seer of the Lake of Lost Dreams, the Seer of the Lake of Lost Souls, or the Seer of Traldar. Various magic-users succeeded as Seers in the course of the centuries, each one trained by the previous Seer.

TRINKLA THE BLACK SEER

As the Seer's role became more evident, dark and evil forces began harassing him to eliminate the threat he represented to the fulfillment of their plans, or to steal from him the magic items which made him so powerful. In BC 308, a young Traladaran

magician corrupted by the Immortal Orcus, Trinkla, tricked the Seer into abandoning his hideout and, during his absence, stole the *Black Opal Eye*. She fled to the Blight Swamp, where she hoped to uncover Zirchev's secrets. During her experiments, she created the magical effect known as the *Slough of Despair* in BC 282. However, a few years later (BC 276) she died, being buried in a hidden dungeon-tomb in the Blight Swamp. The *Black Opal Eye* was buried with her.

ELYAS AND THE QUIET WAY

Elyas was born in Alphatian-ruled Thyatis around BC 150. He was one of the first non-Alphatian natives of Thyatis to be trained as a magic-user by the Alphatian wizards because of his arcane potential. He quickly became a powerful wizard, but his studious character kept him away from politics and human intrigues. Years later, tired of the methods of Alphatian government and of the Thyatians' intrigues to regain their freedom, he left his homeland and traveled much, at the end heading for the remote wilderness of Traladara.

There, he became a friend of the forest races and did much to help and defend them from monsters, humanoids, dark forces, and outside dangers. In particular he befriended an isolate elven community whose settlements were found in the small Hantu Valley in the middle of the forested foothills of the Black Peaks range. These wood elves, whose main village was called Kota-Hutan, were Callarii who were left there isolated when many of their kins had retreated in the central forests of Traladara after the arrival of humanoid tribes.

Elyas came to be highly regarded by these elves, and they gave him the opportunity to settle in their valley. The wizard built a large tower north of the village of Kota-Hutan. He even developed a new lawful philosophy of contemplation and meditation, merging his own lore (gathered along his travels in the world) with elven traditions. This philosophy was called the Quiet Way and the elves of the Hantu Valley became its followers (the Siswa, as they were called).

ELYAS' DEATH

Elyas continued to act for the good of the elves and other forest races. During his adventures, he was noticed by the Seer of Traldar and was later trained to succeed him as the new Seer, which happened in BC 7. Some years later (BC 4), he even braved the dangers of Trinkla's Tomb in the Blight Swamp and managed to recover the *Black Opal Eye*. During his time as Seer of Traldar, Elyas divided his time between his tower in the Hantu Valley (where he kept the *Black Opal Eye*) and the Lake of Lost Dreams (where he kept the *Fire Opal Eye*).

Elyas' deeds, however, again attracted the attention of the dark forces. In AC 3, the Immortal Orcus sent three of his most powerful witches, Karelena, Sorolena, and Trilena, to steal the *Black Opal Eye* and kill the Seer. They reached Elyas' tower and used their power to make a huge mountain fall on his tower from the sky; Elyas managed to draw the three witches' souls under his tower, entrapping them, but was crushed under the mountain, and died.

(Continued on [page 70](#))



(Continued from [page 67](#))

HOW MANY YEARS AGO?

BI's background says that the two characters' disappearance happened "some years ago", but the most recent writings in Zelligar's diary (found within the wizard's closet, in the dungeon) are more than thirty years old. Thus, if the adventure takes place in AC 1000, Zelligar's and Rogahn's disappearance should have happened before AC 970. Likely the two experienced increasing difficulties with the Cruth Lowlands' humanoid and giant population, which eventually (after a couple of decades) convinced them that the only solution to save Quasqueton would have been fighting directly against their opponents to destroy them outright. Unfortunately for them, this adventure was far beyond their abilities, and the two never returned from their expedition. When this happened, memory of Quasqueton's precise location had probably already fallen from common knowledge. More than thirty years later, Quasqueton's name is associated with mystery, treasure, and peril - and spun around by bards and storytellers.

(Continued from [page 69](#))

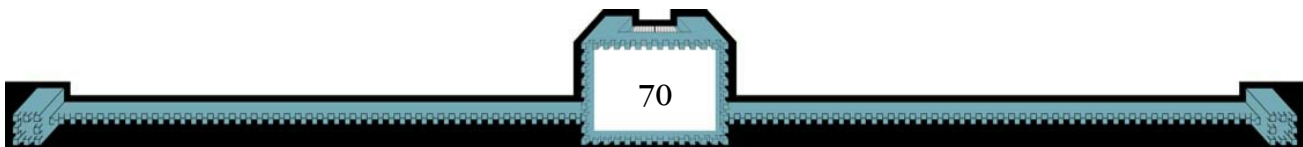
The wood elves of the Hantu Valley honored Elyas' sacrifice building the Temple of the Gray Mountain, devoted to the Quiet Way, on the site of the mountain fall. The three witches' spirits continued to be imprisoned in the ruins of Elyas' tower below the temple, as well as the *Black Opal Eye*. Elyas' sudden death discontinued the tradition of the Seers of Traldar; there were indeed additional Seers after Elyas, but their power never came close to that of the ancient Seers before Elyas, as a part of their ancient lore was lost with Elyas' death.

Today, the *Black Opal Eye* is believed lost or destroyed – actually both it and the three witches' spirits are watched under the Gray Mountain by a powerful snakelike being created by Elyas, called Ular-Taman. The *Fire Opal Eye* – or *Eye of Traldar*, as it is now known – has stayed in possession of the Seers who succeeded Elyas and who live near the Lake of the Lost Dreams.



FROM THE VAULTS OF PANDIUS

A number of features in this issue of Threshold carry a "From the Vaults of Pandius" tagline. As one of our stated aims is "to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there", we hope you will enjoy these revised or extended treasures from that [website](#).





FROM
THE VAULTS
OF PANDIUS

Karameikos

THE HIDDEN YEARS

A historical timeline of the Karameikos family between 901-969 AC by Demetrios J. Sahlas

The official history of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos, as related by Aaron Allston in *GAZ 1: The Grand Duchy of Karameikos*, describes the Thyatian conquest of Traladara in 900 AC, but skims over the events of the decades leading up to the arrival of Duke Stefan Karameikos III in 970 AC. Earlier material relating to the Grand Duchy published in *AC2: The Treasure of the Hideous One* by David Cook clearly indicates a ducal presence dating back to the original conquest. Taken together with a genealogical table for the Karameikos family published in *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure*, a historical timeline may be imagined for the so-called “Hidden Years” preceding the arrival of the Duke who would be King.

THE CONQUEST OF TRALADARA AND REIGN OF DUKE STEFAN “THE HERMIT”

The Thyatian conquest of Traladara in 900 AC occurred during the reign of Emperor Gabronius IV. The general of the campaign may well have been Flavian Osteropolous. Upon his return from Traladara he erected a chapel at his estate in Thyatis dedicated to Vanya, patroness of war and conquest. From *DDA1: Arena of Thyatis* we learn that “Flavian was undoubtedly the Osteropolous most accomplished in the martial arts, as well as, the most pious. He seems to have been



General Flavian Osteropolous negotiates the surrender of the last Duke of Halag

surprisingly honest in his political activities, as well.” The port of Marilenev was renamed Specularum by the military governor installed by the victorious Emperor following the brief but successful campaign.

Several of the Thyatian noblemen who played key roles in the conquest soon began to maneuver for new fiefs. Most notable among these was Stefan Karameikos, a younger son of the Karameikos dynasty that had long ruled the wealthy Duchy of Machetos. With no immediate prospects to

inherit land in Thyatis, Stefan married into the prominent Traladaran family of Marilenev and set about restoring the ancestral estate. It was during the emperor's first official visit to Specularum in 901 AC that Stefan was formally invested as Duke of Marilenev, renewing a historic Traladaran fiefdom. According to *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure*, Jan Vandevic, leader of a band of mercenaries during the conquest, was also rewarded for his loyal service to the Empire with a fief.

Duke Stefan controlled a strong military presence and constantly sought to expand his territory. Soon after consolidating his hold on the Duchy of Marilenev, a Colonel Rosentos was sent to explore and lay claim to the unknown lands to the west, as described in *AC2: The Treasure of the Hideous One*. Only a single soldier, Captain Fondalus, returned from this expedition, later recounting his tale of the doomed mission to a Thyatian scribe. Meanwhile, the provincial governor of Traladara oversaw construction of the fortress of Krakatos to the north of Specularum as a bulwark against invasion from the humanoid tribes who were rumoured to dwell within the interior.

The Duchy of Marilenev soon had cause for celebration, with the birth to the Duke and his wife of a son. However, back in the Duchy of Machetos, Stefan's older brother died suddenly, and his fief passed to a daughter. Her lands did not remain as a dowry for long, and she was soon married to a scion of the Korrigan family. Then, for reasons that remain unclear, Stefan chose to abdicate in 931 AC. He retired to a monastic community, earning him the epithet of Duke Stefan "the Hermit". Fortunately, his son Boris was well

regarded, and his claim to the Duchy was soon approved by the Thyatian Emperor.

DUKE BORIS KARAMEIKOS AND THE HOUSE OF VON HENDRIKS

Duke Boris increased ties with Thyatis by arranging for a strategic marriage with Amelia von Hendriks of Hattias. This triggered a new wave of Thyatian immigrants to the Traladara region, most notably from Hattias but also from throughout the Empire. One of Amelia's relatives was granted the fief of Halag to the west, and began constructing a fortress to safeguard the populace. Others, such as members of the prominent Rodemus family of Thyatis City, settled in and around the town of LuIn.

Boris and Amelia had two sons, naming them Stefan and Victor. The boys grew up speaking both Traladaran and Thyatian, and were equally at ease in both cultures. They were weaned on Traladaran folk tales by their grandmother, but were also educated by the finest tutors from the Thyatian capital. Both underwent the Traladaran custom of shearing, which greatly contributed to popularizing its uptake among the early Thyatian settlers.

Stefan, the eldest, was widely anticipated to become Duke after his father, and spent his youth adventuring throughout the uncharted wilderness of Traladara. That he could pass as a native Traladaran allowed him to gain a familiarity with the common folk, and he often traveled between remote villages and homesteads, becoming a famous and much-loved adventurer.

Victor, on the other hand, developed deep friendships among the demi-human races, most notably the horse-riding Calarii elves. He wished to make his own way in the world and so traveled eastward, eventually becoming a forester in Thyatis. He later married his cousin, Amanda Korrigan, the wealthy heiress of Machetos, and so ultimately brought about a renewal of the Karameikos dynasty.

DUKE STEFAN KARAMEIKOS II

Upon the death of his father, Stefan Karameikos II became the third Duke of Marilenev. During this time, economic ties were being strengthened between the Traladara region and both the Empire of Thyatis and the more distant Emirates of Ylaruam, with the development of a new trade route across a southern spur of the Altan Tepe mountains. Construction was initiated on a fortified keep in the foothills of the mountains to protect and shelter merchant caravans on their way to Specularum from the Barony of Biazzan, and a castellan was installed to oversee its operations.

Unfortunately, the prosperity which followed inevitably triggered an increasing number of humanoid raids, culminating in the siege and destruction of Krakatos in 959 AC. These events coincided with the Alphatian invasion of the Isle of Dawn, limiting what military assistance the Empire could provide. Worse, Duke Stephan Karameikos II was slain, plunging the small Duchy of Marilenev into a succession crisis.

In the chaos which followed, Valor Marilenev, an uncle of Duke Stefan II, successfully

repelled the marauding humanoids, and subsequently sought rulership of the Duchy of Marilenev. His claim was not recognized by Emperor Gabronius V, who was preoccupied with the war. In fact, there was dissent among the powerful Traladaran families, and the Traladara region was torn apart by further conflict.

Andreas von Hendriks, the Baron of Halag, chose to invade the wealthy Duchy of Marilenev. Leading an attack against Valor's forces, a faction of the baron's Traladaran subjects betrayed him and he was captured and executed. His wife Bretonia Korrigan, and their young son Ludwig, were able to escape to seek asylum with relatives in Thyatis.

DUKE STEFAN KARAMEIKOS III

Meanwhile, in the nearby Duchy of Machetos, Victor Karameikos and Amanda Korrigan had given birth to a son in 948, whom they named Stefan after his uncle. Tragically, the young Stefan Karameikos III lost his mother at the age of 9. His aunt Bretonia, wife of the late Baron Andreas von Hendriks, introduced Stefan to his cousin Ludwig when the boys were 14 years-old.

Together with various companions, including those who were to play a role in the history of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos in years to come, the young heir to the Duchy of Machetos came to know former gladiator Thrainkell Thorson, the man destined to become the future emperor Thincol I of Thyatis. Stefan Karameikos III became the Duke of Machetos at the age of 20, upon his father's untimely death. Within two years, however, he traded his ancestral

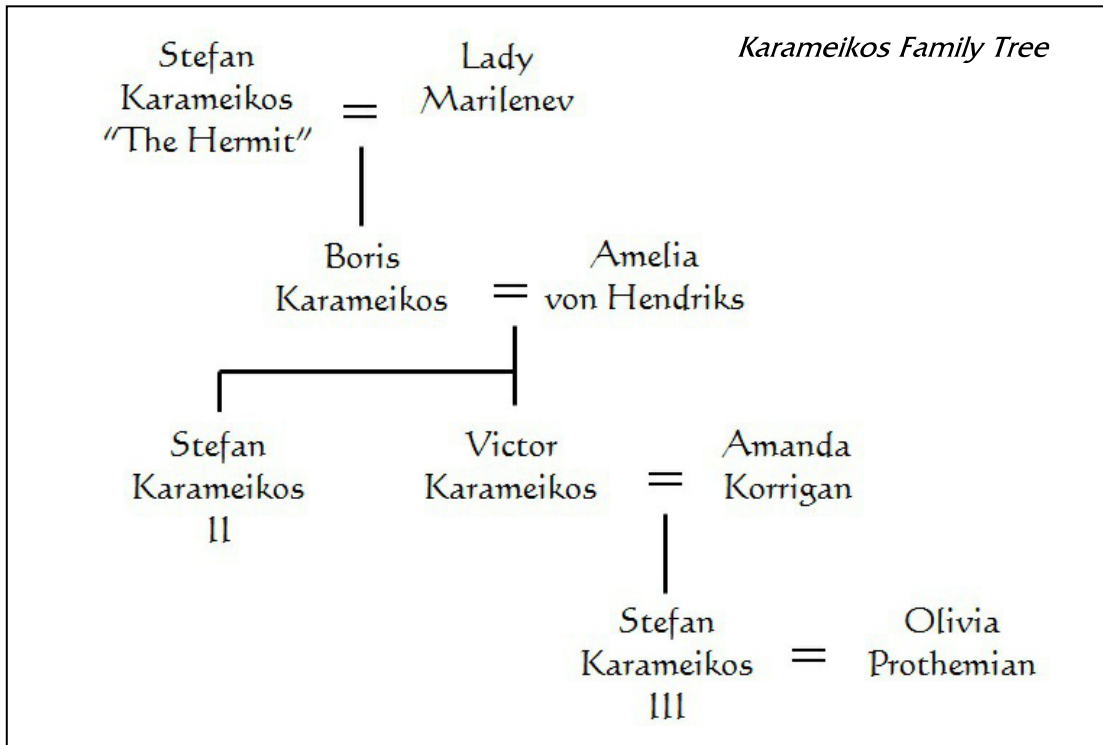
lands to the Emperor in exchange for the entire Traladara region (and autonomy thereafter). Moreover, Stefan possessed a valid claim to the Duchy of Marilenev, and while Machetos was rich, it was a rather dull place by comparison.

The young Duke Stefan led a military force into Specularum and asserted his claim as Duke Stephan III of Karameikos, which included the Estate of Marilenev. He was joined by several of his companions, and also had the support of the Calarii elves, in acknowledgement of the bond forged years ago by his father. Valor Marilenev led the subsequent Traladaran uprising and was killed.

Duke Stefan awarded fiefs to those who had accompanied him to Traladara. His cousin Ludwig was awarded the Barony of Halag, which he renamed the Black Eagle Barony. Ludwig reconquered the town and renamed

it Fort Doom as a stark reminder to those families whose members had betrayed his father. Stefan's Thyatian peers Desmond Kelvin and Philip Vorloi were also granted fiefs. Lord Arturus Penhaligon was among the first of the Thyatian nobles to immigrate to the Grand Duchy. Finally, Merrik Halaran's brother Sherlane agreed to become patriarch of the church in Karameikos. Sherlane later adopted Merrik's daughter Aleena after she was orphaned.

The remainder of the history of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos to the present day is well known. However, the motivations of many, including both the Duke himself and his cousin Ludwig von Hendriks, can perhaps be better understood in light of past events. Knowledge of these "hidden years" is intended to spur additional creativity in constructing the backstory for your own memorable campaign set in Karameikos.





My Mystara is a column outlining the community's changes to the D&D Known World. In each installment, a different take on Mystara will be explored by a different member of the community.

Thorn's Mystara

by Robert Nuttman (RobJN)

MY MYSTARA

— known on the web and the Piazza forums as “**Thorn's Mystara**,” is a spin on the Known World incorporating elements from several d20 products. Thorn's Mystara may not be for everyone. Many of the more “whimsical” features have been ignored (rather, they have yet to be addressed), and the picture that has been developing over the past five years has been one of a much darker world, haunted by the long shadow cast by Blackmoor's ruin. Sorry, no gnomish biplanes, and no tropical resorts on Ierendi.

It began with rethinking the cause of the Great Rain of Fire. Rather than the canonical “Blackmoor devices” exploding, my Mystara's Great Rain of Fire was *started* by Blackmoor devices — one device, in particular, the Planar Disjunction Device, dubbed by the developers as *Andabar's Engine*.

First outlined by David Cook in the 1981 Expert Set and adventure module *X1: Isle of Dread*, the **Known World** was expanded by Frank Mentzer in the 1984 Expert Set's revision. Bruce Heard became the setting's shepherd throughout the late 80s and 90s, overseeing development (and writing a couple) of the **Gazetteer** line, giving readers in-depth view of countries of the Known World. These were followed by the *Dawn of the Emperors* and *Hollow World* boxed sets, expanding from a single continent to the entire planet, inside and out. Bruce also developed Mystara through the *Voyage of the Princess Ark* and *Known World Grimoire* articles published in *Dragon Magazine* between 1990 and 1993. Much of that work was compiled into 1993's *Champions of Mystara* boxed set. The setting was further revised and brought over to AD&D 2nd Edition as the “Mystara” line in 1994. Official TSR support in-print of the setting ended in 1995.

CHERRY PICKING:

Ideas too good to pass up from later editions (or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the d20)

I blame much of this on Keith Baker and his setting-search-winning Eberron Campaign Setting. There was much in that setting that evoked much of the same “pulp and sorcery” feel I get from Mystara. Magewrights and artificers make perfect fits for dwarven or gnomish subclasses, with their penchant for technomagical tinkering.

The rules for demonic possession made for fantastic ideas for villains, as well as a delightfully sinister origin for magical weapons in a world where “Magic” is a lost art. Not only that, I was never satisfied with the “trading in” of weaponry for bigger and better plusses. A demon housed in a blade could be bargained with to provide whichever power might be necessary for a given fight against any manner of foes, making for some fun role-playing opportunities. Or it could be boiled down to a “battle of wills” contest resolved with a few dice rolls.

The following of the Silver Flame was also carried over. It is not “native” to Mystara, having been brought over by the Alphatians.

Magic users took care of the rest.

Reckless summoning by beast men and Afridhi over the course of three wars and two crusades left a plague of demons infesting the planet, their numbers becoming more and more difficult and costly for the Blackmoor Empire to fight off. Blackmoor’s greatest minds at the University devised the Planar Disjunction Device, which would sever the demons’ conduit between the Prime and their home plane, destroying their ability to physically manifest. A second pulse from the Device was supposed to force the demons’ ethereal essences back across the ethereal boundary.

The secondary pulse, a planet-wide tidal wave, not of water, but of pure Radiance, did not burn the demons away, as expected. Rather, it absorbed the demons’ essences, as it would the soul of one failing an attempt to attain Immortality. The increase in volume spilled over into the planet’s natural magical fields, tainting the source for “regular” (non-Radiant) magic as well. The more magic a wizard used, the faster the rot and decay accumulated, eventually driving them mad.

It was in this madness that the magic users brought down mountains, sent seas rushing across the lands, remade continents and coastlines, and wrenched the very stars across the sky.

Magic was not entirely lost, though. Clerical spells still work without any ill effects on its users, and druidic magics have been found to weaken the lingering demons’ hold on the land itself. Magic from the Old World can be made to work, if the user can find the rare, ancient texts. The madness can even be staved off, if the mage is foolish enough to forge a pact with one of the demonic entities suffusing the Radiance, or with one brought over from the Ethereal Plane.

The Radiance is not the only source of magical power on Mystara. It was simply the most

With their connection to several newer strains of lycanthropy, it only seems natural that they would wield a power against it, capable of rooting out shapechangers.

The notion that the world is seeded with magical stones of varying abilities was also too good to pass up. Could they have been scattered in the catastrophe that tilted the very planet on its axis? Do they occur naturally or (like cinnabryl), perhaps unnaturally?

The Alphatian “spell weaving” is inspired by Robert Jordan’s *Wheel of Time* series, and the mechanics are being developed based on those presented in the d20 *Wheel of Time Campaign Setting*.

accessible, and thus, was the most widely used until its corruption. But much like the glare of the sun is made up of many different colors of light, it was discovered that magic itself operated much the same way. The notion that it came exclusively from the Sphere of Energy was erroneous: Energy was simply either the largest part of the pattern, or acted as the “carrier” to bring the magical effect into the Prime.

Small pockets of would-be magic users felt their way through this re-weaving of magic, but it would not be until the arrival of the Alphatians — with their structured and methodical weaving of threads of Power from the Spheres — that its use would flourish.

MY MYSTARA’S GRAND DUCHY OF KARAMEIKOS

The lands of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos were once the seat of a Blackmoor research colony. Specifically, the Black Peaks between the Cruth and Altan Tepes mountain ranges. Belerophon, as it was then known, sat atop great caverns where black dragonstones grew naturally — one of only three places on what was known, in Blackmoor’s day, as the Western Continent.

Left to grow on their own, the dragonstones’ properties were unstable. They had to be harvested and cut precisely to be used to their fullest potential, and this work was not done at the colony’s labs. Lest it fall into enemy hands, the technology of honing the stones into tools and weapons was kept as far away from the source as possible. As such, Belerophon hosted one of the Empire’s most active Lightning Roads, exporting the black dragonstones to Blackmoor University, or to the World Mountain research facility near the planet’s northern polar opening.

When the Great Rain of Fire struck, the colony was shut down, the surviving inhabitants fleeing to the surface, left in the care of the warforged maintenance crews. Twice in the first thousand years of sleep, the colony was breached, first by giants (who had no use for the puny Manlings' petty magics). The second time was by the Troll Queen of Grondheim (not to be confused with her distant descendant, Haa'k Hordar), intrigued by the giants' tales of the 'corridors sheathed in steel' and of vast caverns full of black crystals. Her incursion awoke the colony's master defense program, which triggered the collapse of the bulk of the facility. Only the secondary laboratories survived, mostly intact, to be rediscovered by the hutaaka settlers some thousands of years later. Their culture's advancement is thought to have been the result of discovering the caches of dragonstones untouched by the Troll Queen. Their culture would perish with the coming of the Beast Man hordes. The remaining defenses of the colony were overwhelmed, and it again shut itself down, and its secrets slept beneath the mountains until reawakened by a renegade druid....

The dragonstone caverns served as a magical fallout shelter for the ethereal demons. They survived the Great Rain of Fire, hibernating in the imperfect prisons of uncut black dragonstones. From there, they seeped into the very bones of the land, to be freed accidentally, or by trickery, or, in the case of Ancient Taymora's lycanthrope thralls, by design.

Taymora's breaking up and sinking into the Sea of Dread broke the stranglehold vampires and lycanthropes held over the land, and powerful though they were, their numbers dwindled while the human population only grew. The means and methods of battling the monsters were passed down from family to family, generation after generation, and shaped the Traladaran culture into what seems to outsiders as a superstitious and distrustful nation.

MAGIC USERS

Magic users do not 'technically' exist as a class on Thorn's Mystara. Typically, they are used as villains -- NPCs at best -- and many of their spells are lost, wondrous things. Books and scrolls are extremely rare, as the chaos of the Great Rain of Fire purged most original magical writings. This is not to say that stray, mad wizards do not still research That Which Should Not Be Known, or that the demonic presences do not 'help' with the reconstruction of Old Magic. For clarity, those practicing Old Magic without the 'benefit' of a demonic presence, and thus at risk of going mad, are referred to as "magic users." Those using Old Magic playing host to a demonic essence are referred to as "warlocks." Both are to be feared in equal measure.

Anyone forming a pact with one of the demonic essences gains access to "old magic," multiclassing using the rules set forth in the Hollow World Player's Guide for Warrior-Elven learning magic later in life, p. 7)

Decay, Insanity and Corruption

The rules in the Glantri Gazetteer's section on use of the Radiance are expanded to all magic user spells: there is a 1 percent chance per spell level that the withering, rotting disease takes root, corrupting part of the wizard's body beyond the ability of

mortal magic to heal. This “percentage” also builds up, weighing on the wizard’s mind and sanity. So, a magic user casting a 2nd level spell has a 2 percent chance of becoming afflicted with the rotting disease, and adds 2 percent to his running total of sanity loss. Spells of the Radiance carry double the percentage chance. A wizard opening himself to demonic possession is shielded from the effects of the rot and insanity, but that running total is still kept, applying instead to how much control the demon can exercise over its host, as it gnaws away at its warlock’s soul...

Weavers: Sundsvall Initiates and Ciprian Wilders

Those who follow the “new” or “untainted” method making use of cast-off threads of Spheric Power are known as weavers, as the gestures they use in manipulating the threads look much like those worked at a loom. They also refer to their spells and spell-like effects as ‘weaves.’ Weaves of similar properties are grouped into families called “Talents.”

There are two schools of learning, based on the two ancient Alphatian cultures that have found their way to Mystara. The Alphatian method involves a highly structured and disciplined study of the forces and powers

Every Traladaran home contains at least one implement edged in silver, and even the youngest in the family know better than to go out after sundown without it. If a stranger begs entry, it is best to bar the door. Never open the door in response to three knocks. What seem strange habits to the Thyatian invaders are what has kept the Traladaran people relatively safe from the demons, werewolves, and vampires that haunt the land. None wish to repeat the mistakes of the brothers Koriszegy.

How have the slight changes to the historical canon changed Thorn’s Karameikos?

No Guild of Magic. The Grand Duke has allowed a gray-robed sister from the Alphatian Tower of Lights to remain at court, as both advisor and ambassador. Her retinue of red and blue-robed sisters are allowed within the borders of the Grand Duchy under strict supervision, their rounds to the villages to seek out those with an affinity for magic performed on a rigid schedule. All of those touched with the spark enabling magical ability must receive the permission of their families, and that of the Grand Duke, to leave his lands to study at the Tower in Alphatia. The Tower is also to compensate the families for each year of the novice’s training.

A Fourth Church. Besides the Churches of Traladara and Karameikos (and, though not officially recognized, the Cult of Halav), most towns contain at least a small shrine to the Alphatian Silver Flame, a strange worship brought by the Wandering Exiles to the East. The patriarchs of the Traladaran and Karameikan pantheons both recognize the superior abilities of the Silver Flame in dealing with deceptive and hidden foes, but neither have seen fit to include the alien, anima-spirit into their respective pantheons.

The Eyes of Traldar: Legendary magical stones, said to have been infused with the last of the pure magic of the World That Was. They appear throughout many of the Old Traladaran legends, passed down through the Golden Age by the druids. Some stories claim

there was but one Eye, the Fire Opal used by Queen Petra to foresee the defeat of the Beast Men at the cost of the life of Halav Red Hair. Others claim that there are other Eyes: A Black Opal Eye, said to have bound the souls of the Terrible Sisters Trilena and Karelana; its misuse has also been cited as the cause for the Silent Forest in the middle of Dymrak's Wood, as well as the Silver Princess' curse that claimed Lost Haven. Legends tell of an Azure Eye, said to be the source of All Knowledge, the stone through which Zirchev learned and taught the skills of forging bronze to Halav, and use of the loom and wheel to Petra. The Huntsman's knowledge of the stirrup and laminate bow were also said to have been gleaned from the stone. Some say that his people, the Darine, pay to this very day for Zirchev's mastery of Runic magic, that the price will be met when they find and master the Last Eye, the Viridian Eye of Time.

The White Witches. Historical anomalies, these figures appear over and over again in the tales of the Traladarans, and, in fact, many other cultures throughout the Known World of Thorn's Mystara. Tapestries surviving from the earliest days after the defeat of the Beast Men (such as one recovered from the Temple of the Shield) show them in the company of Halav and Petra. Woodcuts of the earliest Thyatian missionaries' transcriptions of the Song of Halav — even verses of the Song itself — reference the pale golden-haired girls. Are they elves? Faeries? No two sources agree on their origin or purpose, except that they come to the aid of heroes in their darkest hours. Or is it that they lure heroes to their doom?

Zirchev's Folk, and His Gift: One tribe chose to flee Traladara, rather than face the onslaught of the Beast Men, only to return some 400 years later after wandering the Great Waste and the Plain of Fire far to the west. They have never truly been welcomed back, and are regarded with an even deeper

behind the weaves. Because the Tower of Seven Lights is located in the Alphatian capital, those studying methodical, rigid coursework are called Sundsvall Initiates. Their weaves tend to be more powerful when working within their Talents, but they are unable to do much beyond what they haven't yet learned. By contrast, those who forego study at the Tower to learn on their own, or with a non-Tower-trained mentor follow the Ciprian tradition of instinct and trial-and-error. This is the method favored by the Flaemish weavers of Braejr and the Glantrian Alps. While their weaves tend to pack slightly less punch than those of their Alphatian counterparts, Ciprian "Wilders" (as those in Sundsvall refer to them) have a wider breadth of weaves to use within their chosen Talents.

Clerical and druidic magic function just as written in the D&D Rules Cyclopedia.

These changes wrought on the magics of Thorn's Mystara involve significant alterations to the two magical powerhouse nations of Alphatia and Glantri. But we'll have to save those summaries for future issues of *Threshold*....

suspicion by their kinsmen than most foreigners. They are Traldar's lost tribe: the Darine, consisting of three main clans. The largest, and most commonly encountered are the Kaledresh, wanderers with a talent for mending and tinkering. Their presence is tolerated among the outlying farmsteads for as long as they are useful in patching pots and re-shoeing horses. The Marikesh clan keeps sheep, goats, pigs, and horses. Their horses are said to only be matched or bettered in quality by those of the elves. The smallest clan, the Lovani, are said to be of direct lineage with Achelos and Zirchev. Their members are among the wisest of sages and most powerful seers. Their craftsmen make the finest cloth and leather goods.

Members of each clan who take up Zirchev's debt also take up one of his many *marks*. The Kaledreshi gain power over the roads and many means of travel. Those of Marikesh gain an affinity for animals and the wild. Lovani are granted the ability to See over great distances, not only of miles and leagues, but also years and centuries.

CHANGES TO NPCs WITHIN THORN'S MYSTARA

What discussion of Karameikos would be complete without mention of Bargle and Aleena?

Aleena Halaran, 6th Level Human Female Cleric, Knight of the Griffon. First Lieutenant of the 13th Company of the Fourth Division, Castellan's Guard Battalion. Soft-spoken, but no shrinking violet when it comes to engaging the enemy, Aleena leads the small squad of Knights of the Griffon attached to Castellan's Keep. Scuttlebutt amongst the rank and file of the Fourth Division is that she only got placed there because her uncle is a Patriarch within the Church of Karameikos. This is not entirely untrue, as Baron Halaran has placed his niece as far away from

DRAGONSTONES

Initially, Thorn's Mystara was only host to the three varieties of 'dragonstones' outlined in the Eberron Campaign Setting. But the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to make that idea into something uniquely Mystaran. Eberron's "land, sky, and underdark" varieties were all well and good, but I have expanded Mystara's assortment to encompass all the colors of the chromatic dragons. Rather than linking to a "parent" dragon's tropes, though, the dragonstones are tied more closely to the Mystaran cosmology's Spheres of Power.

Red stones allow the control of objects of Matter and Energy. The user can control flames, alter the composition of stone, and gains resistance to heat. They take their power from the users' blood.

Black stones are linked to the Sphere of Entropy, and allow the manipulation of electricity and shadow. They can also be used to control any being with a soul, or bind a spirit or ethereal essence into the matrix of the stone. They take their power from the users' vitality.

White dragonstones are also linked to the Sphere of Entropy, but in a positive manner: they are used for healing and warding. A

the Black Eagle's Barony of Halag as possible, lest she lead another crusade against Von Hendricks' right-hand man.

Bargle "the Infamous" 7th Level Human Thief/2nd Level Warlock*. Scoundrel, trickster, hired hand of the Black Eagle Baron, Bargle is wanted in most townships of the northern baronies for robbery, extortion, theft, and at least one murder. He is known to keep company with hounds of the Iron Ring, and is rumored to have provided them with innumerable opportunities to collect slaves throughout the Black Eagle Barony. He is known to masquerade as a Darokinian spice merchant, a bard from Rugalov, and an itinerant actor from Luln. He was last seen departing the Twelve Roses Inn at Luln, in the company of a young maiden that — as the innkeeper put it — “if she *was* 'is daughter as 'e claimed, then she certainly got all 'er looks from 'er mother. 'Cept'n for those eyes.”

Lord Valen Karameikos, 2nd Level Human Thief. Recently Sheared, the Grand Duke's youngest son has disappeared into the wilds of northern Karameikos, despite Lady Olivia's best efforts, and those of her information network to keep track of him. A report from Townguard Sergeant Arthol indicated Lord Valen made a brief appearance in Threshold, but has not been seen there since shortly before the Festival of Lights, when there was a misunderstanding about a purse, a pendant, and a peace-bond....

white dragonstone's powers are fueled by the life force of the user.

Blue stones are tied to the Sphere of Thought, and are used to imprint information and memories. They allow the control of winds and the weather. Blue dragonstones feed on the memories of their user.

Green stones are bound to the Sphere of Time. They are used to effect drastic change, allowing the manipulation of existing forms and the speeding, slowing, and temporary stalling of time itself. Particularly powerful green dragonstones allow the breaking of the bonds of time itself, making travel to the past or future possible. Users of green dragonstones activate its powers at the cost of their own lifespans.

Thorn's Mystara Linkography:

[Thorn's Chronicle Blog](#)

[Thorn's Chronicle Thread index at the Piazza](#)

(thanks for compiling this, TAD!)

[Magic Items of Thorn's Mystara](#)

[The Mystaran Artificer](#)

[Exorcist of the Silver Flame,](#)

a clerical “prestige” class:



Community Interview

Bruce Heard

The "Community Interviews" column aims at providing insight on the the Mystara community, by interviewing authors and community members.

To start this column, who could be more qualified than Bruce Heard, the man who led the development of the setting that would be later named Mystara? Bruce authored key products in the lines that compose the Mystara setting, including (among many others) two Gazetteers, the Principalities of Glantri and Orcs of Thar, and the well-loved Dragon Magazine series, "*Voyages of the Princess Ark*". Bruce has recently come back to the setting, authoring a blog at <http://bruce-heard.blogspot.it/>. Without further ado, let's read his thoughts on the setting and his plans for the future!



THRESHOLD Magazine: We understand that you were deeply involved in the development of the Known World. Can you explain the origins of the Gazetteer line?

Bruce Heard: That was very straightforward. I didn't like "generic" adventure modules, which formed the backbone of supplements in the D&D Game lineup. I wanted to be able to place them somewhere in a setting. The Expert Set map was great, but too little information was provided about the realms there. Before I came to Lake Geneva, I'd run a 1st Edition AD&D campaign set in Greyhawk for about a year-and-a-half.. This was my original background. No adventure ever went forth without being located specifically, or without some impact on the region. Factors related to the campaign set always influenced adventure plots and the heroes' motivations. Transiting from this to generic modules could only lead me to seek a colorful and detailed development of the Known World, and of Mystara later on. Since Karameikos was the starting point in the Basic D&D Set, so it became the first of the Gazetteers.

You're listed in GAZ1 credits as coordinator. Could you tell us about your role in the creation of the Karameikos Gazetteer?

My previous answer actually starts to illustrate the extent of my role at that time. The function of product manager for game worlds did not yet exist officially at TSR. So

the credit was labeled as “coordinator.” A number of us in the Games Division already acted as lead designers or “proto-line-managers.” We did a lot more than merely “coordinate.” Mine was a sideways entry into that field. I was first hired as a French translator and relocated from France to Lake Geneva in Wisconsin. I was laid-off for a few months and re-hired to “coordinate” freelance contracting for the Games Division—a tip of the hat to Harold Johnson who was instrumental in this decision. After Frank Mentzer’s departure from TSR, there was no one left to steer the Basic D&D line. It probably was a political hot potato that nobody wanted to deal with because of its link to Frank, and therefore Gary Gygax. By then, Lorraine Williams had taken over TSR’s upper management. Besides the political issue, most authors at TSR were more interested in the AD&D game because it had more bells and whistles to play with, and it owned a much greater exposure in the games’ industry based on general sales numbers. Since the vast majority of Basic D&D game supplements had to be farmed out to freelancers, by default, I became the “nanny” for Frank’s baby. This put me in the right place to devise the format for GAZ1, that is, its contents, length of chapters, general idea and goal, and physical components. I worked with the art manager at the time to select an outstanding internal illustrator, Steven Fabian, and with in-house cartographers to develop the hex-map style into a colored, poster-sized version. This was the beginning of a long and successful cooperation with the mapping department, which eventually led to the Mystara Trail Maps, the first in that format at TSR. I also worked with Clyde Caldwell to settle on a concept for the cover art. Finally, I picked

Aaron Allston, with whom I had already cooperated in the past, as the author. Beyond the terms of the contract I issued him, I left Aaron a lot of leeway to further develop the concept and the contents, which resulted in the Karameikos we all know today.

Karameikos evolved quite a lot from the original map in the Expert Set to the Gazetteer. One key evolution was the introduction of the ethnic divide between Traladarans and Thyatians. Was there a specific interest in making the setting more attractive to a more mature audience?

I think the answer to this lies in my gaming style, but also in my choice of freelance authors, who were mature writers—Aaron Allston (Karameikos, Rockhome, to name just these two), Ken Rolston (Ylaruam, Northern Reaches), Steve Perrin (Alfheim), Ed Greenwood (the Shires), etc. I wrote the Gazetteers for Glantri and the Broken Lands, but my light-hearted approach didn’t always please everyone. These last two were nonetheless very successful, and GAZ3 set a new standard for this category of products, not just for Mystara, but other game lines at TSR and elsewhere.

In Wrath of the Immortals we saw Duke Stefan declaring himself King, and this evolution is already hinted at in the Gazetteer. Do you have any thoughts on where this young kingdom would go next?

It’s bound to remain at odds with the empire, which should continually seek to re-attach it to its mainland possessions. Karameikos holds a tricky position. It can’t defeat the empire militarily, therefore it must rely on diplomacy and strong links with internal forces in Thyatis, which would act on its

behalf. Surrounding realms aren't likely to side with Karameikos if a full-blown conflict developed. The solution for Karameikos is to negotiate with imperial circles while cultivating strategic ties, such as marriages and alliances with opposing parties in Thyatis. At worst, Karameikos could deal with Alphatia, but that would be counter-current to the aspirations of its people. It would be an act of desperation that would destroy previous associations with Thyatian parties and Karameikan aristocracy.

Why do you think Karameikos is such a popular gazetteer?

It's the first in a series, it describes the starting point of the Basic D&D game, and it's well done. The product's style is spot on. The format is good. Art and maps are excellent. And the author's concepts and interpretations add yet another level. Therefore, it's natural that this would be a popular title. All that in 64-pages. It was a bit pricey, at \$10.00 retail, compared with "Northern Reaches" which ran 96 pages and was packed with goodies, priced at \$8.95 the following year. Don't ask why—I don't remember how that happened. I surmise that initial sales for Karameikos were seriously underestimated, resulting in a higher sales price. It had to be reprinted a number of times, and by then, the remainder of the Gazetteer series became a lot more credible in the eyes of TSR's upper management. From a financial point of view, GAZ1 proved very profitable for TSR, and an auspicious start which earned upper management's long-lasting support for this product line.

How did you first get into working with Aaron Allston? Do you have any particular

memories of your working together on Mystara?

When I was put in charge of "coordinating" the Games Division's freelance acquisitions, I went through a thorough process of identifying writers and evaluating their talents and experience. Aaron had an established record as a contributor to other publishers. He also came warmly recommended when I asked around. If I recall correctly, I hired him for N4 "Treasure Hunt" in 1986, then "Skarda's Mirror" in 1987. Aaron did well in both cases, so I solicited his services once more that year, for Karameikos, which he executed very well. His reliability at the time was another significant factor that earned him eventually a lead position with the Mystara product line. Aaron was easy to get along with, willing to follow my initial directions, very professional, hard-working, down to Earth, a talented creative, and a reliable partner. I enjoyed his interpretations of the required assignments and had more than my share of chuckles when reading his first drafts. Besides, he has velcro-like hair, so when he sticks to you, you can't get rid of him! Plus he lives in Austin, Texas, which is a cool place. Did I miss anything?

You've made your return to the Mystara community in great style, with the in-depth coverage of Alphatia and the Dog Days of Rougeain in your blog. What are your plans for the future of the blog?

Part of me wants to completely finish the topic of Alphatia, to the degree I've reached with the present chapters (Ar, Ambur, Frisland). This requires substantial writeups for Limn, Stonewall, Stoutfellow, etc. Also originally planned were surrounding colonies, such as Bellissaria, Qeodhar,

Yannivey Islands, Aquas, etc. This is in question now, as the result of WotC's refusal to work with me in reviving the "Adventures of the Princess Ark". I wrote those for Dragon Magazine in the late 80s and early 90s, and therefore they became Dragon Magazine's property. On a higher level, these stories were based on Mystara, which was a D&D Game intellectual property owned by TSR. All of it eventually went to WotC and is now unavailable for the foreseeable future. This situation prompted me to start a separate project with a new world setting, a new ship, and a new crew in the spirit of the Princess Ark and Mystara. At least judging from the amount of material released, the result is a new series of adventures of a much greater scope to see the light both as e-books on Amazon.com and printed versions afterward. This is my present project. Concept work is now complete, graphic contributors have been selected, the logo is ready, maps are well underway, and efforts are in progress to budget the endeavor and prepare a credible Kickstarter campaign slated for later this year. I'll make announcements on the blog about this as the right times come along.

So, what does this really mean for the blog's Mystara content?

You might have noticed a slowdown in the number of posts these past few months. That's because I've been busy working on the new project. I expect to continue contributing Mystara entries, at a reduced pace. Once the new project kicks in, there will inevitably be a growing number of posts about the latter. WotC may object to D&D-related articles because this blog will be promoting my project, rather than just Mystara. If Wizards intervened, I would be

forced either to cease any further support of Mystara (likely), or move Mystara-related materials to a separate blog (maybe). You might also have noticed I removed the term D&D from the blog's header. Eventually, I'll have to change its look as well, replacing Clyde's Glantri artwork (which I believe WotC owns) and using in its place what will be available from the new project. If Wizards does not interfere, I can go on contributing to Mystara on the side, which I would prefer. Mystara is a hard thing to give up.

You recently announced on your blog and elsewhere that you are working on creating a new setting and new stories. What can you tell us about this project? Do you think it will appeal to fans of Mystara and your work on Glantri and the Princess Ark?

The new setting is called Calidar, from the name of its main world. The present series of stories will have the subtitle "In Stranger Skies." This universe is designed to promote airships and their voyages in the skies and through outer space. Major efforts were made during concept stages to create a style and format familiar to fans of Mystara and the Princess Ark. You might have noticed surveys I posted on Facebook concerning Mystara and the Princess Ark. These are tools to help capture the essence of these settings and what made them endearing to their fans. Copyright limitations prevent me entirely from using names, geographical features, or elements particular to Mystara and the Princess Ark; however, general analogies should help maintain a familiar feel and an easy transition. The Calidar series remain non-game-specific to avoid issues with the D&D product in general. The project follows the same approximate structure as the one

from the Princess Ark stories in Dragon Magazine—a narrative followed by a world supplement, maps, and illustrations. The initial release will be a standalone title and provide a great deal more material than the magazine articles ever could. During concept stages, I focused on the rationale for converting characters, not from a game mechanics point of view, but from a plot-driven one. The supernatural directly governs who or what enters this universe, for which reasons, and in what form. It enables characters to remain fully aware of their journey into another reality and the changes that affected them, while other visitors can only sense their transformations (which may be substantial) without remembering their prior existence. Flashbacks help characters piece together some of what happened to them without revealing too much, as needed by circumstances, providing them with the impetus to go on a quest to find out more. Another high point of Calidar is a concept of epic heroes, demigods, and godly pantheons designed to provide a path from mortality to the divine. I can't get into too much detail now, but I'd say that interactions between mortals and their deities are greater and more open than those between peoples of Mystara and their Immortals, yet similar in their intent. The links between people, their

gods, and the worlds from which they all came are a centerpiece of Calidar's universe. Finally, though this is a high-fantasy world, nothing happens there without a good reason, be it from a mechanical sense (laws of physics vs. universal magic) or a plot-driven one (motivations and dark secrets). Certain cosmic forces are at work in the background that explain and justify Calidar's uncanny uniqueness. As the project firms up, more information about its timing and contents, and the upcoming Kickstarter campaign, will be released on my blog, at Bruce-Heard.Blogspot.com. Look for the label "[In Stranger Skies](#)" to locate all related posts.

Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions, Bruce.

Bruce Heard will be guest of honour at [Lucca Comics & Games](#), the major gaming and comics fair in Italy to be held in Lucca (Tuscany) between October 31st and November 3rd. An exhibition about Bruce and his role in the development of the Known World and Mystara, titled "Bruce Heard: il giro del mondo in 36 livelli" ("Bruce Heard: around the world in 36 levels") will also be [part of the fair](#).



Unveiling the Radu Clan



by Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew)

The origins of the Veiled Society go far back in the annals of Karameikos, before the Duke, before imperial occupation, perhaps as far as the Dark Ages of Traladara. It was founded as a loose democracy of powerful Traladaran nobles and mercantile heads; hidden behind elaborate masks and cloaks, each man's purposes could be considered on their own merits, anonymity providing a level playing field. Much later, when the eyes and legions of Thyatis imposed their own interests on the nation, the Veiled Society became more of a cabal, a means for its members to secretly maintain control of their own economic and political goals in the shadow of the empire.

Most recently the Radu clan, always an influential member of the Veiled Society, has turned the cabal into a criminal enterprise. Playing on the fears of the Traladaran families and their hatred of the new Duke, Anton Radu leveraged himself into a position of power over the Society. He and his brother Cartha then flooded its ranks with Radu clan members and allied thugs.

Today, through threats of blackmail, intimidation, and extortion, Anton rules the

Veiled Society with an iron fist, and enjoys unprecedented power under the Duke's very nose. But though outwardly the Radu clan seems a united front, Anton's control may not long outlive the man himself.

The Veiled Society and the Radu family first appeared in module B6: The Veiled Society by David Cook. Anton Radu is detailed in GAZ1: Grand Duchy of Karameikos, and again in Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure.

Cartha Radu, brother of ANTON

History: Anton and his younger brother Cartha were thick as thieves growing up, and thieves is what they eventually became, together transforming the Veiled Society into what it is today. While his brother used his skills to dig up dirt on his foes for blackmail, and fanned the flames of discontent with the ducal uprising to their advantage, Cartha took care of the more physical work. Intimidation, organizing riots, quietly dispatching the more outspoken opponents of the family regime; these were the areas the younger Radu excelled at.

Personality: Alas, the success of the brothers and the corrupting influence that power and wealth have brought to them has driven a wedge between them. Anton is reluctant to give up his control of the Veiled Society, and distrusts Cartha's loyalties, while Cartha resents his brother for usurping what he feels is his equal share of the spoils of their life's labors. The tension between them is slowly but inevitably stirring.

Like Anton, Cartha is a calculating man, though their methods could not be more different. Anton studies his foes and uses their weaknesses to pressure them into cooperation; Cartha uses those same weaknesses to dispatch them, permanently.

Appearance: Tall and athletic, but not overly muscular like his nephew Zweis, with black hair just beginning to go to grey at the sides. A short beard covers a scar on his chin, earned dueling in his youth. Green, piercing eyes, and always impeccably dressed; even the ducally mandated bindings on his ever-present sword are of an elaborate silken cord.

Relations: Cartha would prefer to discredit Anton as opposed to killing him, but he is starting to feel his time to act is running out. His closest ally Pieter has been sent away from the city, and it has not escaped Cartha's notice that Anton is grooming his own grandson Emil as heir. Cartha may use that knowledge, as well as his suspicions about Theodosius' true parentage, against Anton.

ZWEIS, SON OF ANTON

History: Zweis grew up during the period of violence and strife that accompanied Duke Stefan's acquisition of Karameikos. As a youth, he led a gang of toughs in the streets of Specularum, often at odds with the

Thyatian invaders, the Torenescu clan, or hapless citizens. When Zweis came of age, his father enlisted his aid as an enforcer in the Veiled Society in an attempt to turn his few talents to some good for the family name. His brutish ways proved beneficial to Anton in his quest to remake the cabal into a criminal organization.

Personality: Anton's eldest son is a bully and a ruffian. To his father's great dismay, he lacks subtlety, and is rarely trusted with any but the most simple of tasks. Zweis exercises all the power and influence that is his, both as a Radu, and a ranking member of the Veiled Society; alone among men, only Anton can put Zweis in his place. Like most of his family, he is utterly loyal to the Radu clan. Though he has several daughters, Zweis was long frustrated by what he saw as his wife's inability to produce a son for him, and often took it out on her verbally and physically. Since Theodosius' birth, Zweis has doted on the boy endlessly; there is no more precious thing to him than his son. He was also overjoyed when his illegitimate son Pieter turned up a few years ago, although relations between them are not close.

Appearance: Zweis is a ruggedly featured man 40 years of age. He is tall, like his father, but sturdily built, with dark hair and brown eyes. He has a pronounced tendency to glare and stare down anyone he meets. Zweis' clothes are of high quality, but worn carelessly.

Relations: Though keenly aware that Antonito was always the favored son, Zweis is nevertheless a loyal- and often unthinking- lieutenant of his father's. He has no clue that Cartha plots against Anton, and even less suspicion that his own sons, Theodosius and Pieter, are not his trueborn heirs. Should he

ever learn the latter, there is no predicting to what heights his violent temper may take him.

Antonito, Son of Anton

History: Born in 967 AC, the Raðu family had consolidated control of the Veiled Society while he was still a child, and thus Antonito grew up in a wealthy lifestyle. His father favored him greatly, and had him taught in the finest schools, hoping he would become heir to the family leadership. Early in his studies, Antonito demonstrated a knack for spellcraft, and was tutored by a Raðu allied wizard. The lavish lifestyle he lived, coupled with his ability to use magic to manipulate others, caused Antonito to grow up spoiled.

Personality: Antonito is used to getting his way through his natural charm, his family connections, or his enchantment magic. He has never worked a day in his life and feels confident that he will rule the Veiled Society, just as soon as his old man kicks the bucket. He could not be more of a disappointment to Anton, who views his lack of ambition or vision with disdain.

Appearance: He looks much like his father Anton, though slightly shorter, and with brown hair. His looks and ever present grin are legendary among the lords and ladies of Karameikan society. He is clean shaven and always impeccably attired in silken finery and jewels.

Relations: Antonito tolerates his brutish older brother, whom he has always been able to easily manipulate, as well as his uncle Cartha, who is almost as good at manipulating people as himself. He sees the affection his father bestows on his only son, Emil, but does not suspect that Anton would ever consider bypassing him as a choice for

an heir. Should he ever learn of his father's plans, he might resort to charming his own son to gain control of the family.

Emil, Son of Antonito

History: Antonito's only son, Emil, was born well after the Duke finally consolidated his position in Specularum, and has grown up in a world beginning to be marked by inevitable- if grudging- Thyatian and Traladaran integration. He has largely been raised under the thumb of Anton Raðu, as his own father's self-interest and philandering rarely give him leave to spend time at home with his wife and children. For his Shearing, he apprenticed himself to the Merchant's Guild, gaining an education in finance and following in Anton's footsteps. Two years ago he was welcomed back to the family and given a ranking position among the Veiled Society.

Personality: Though he yet lacks a wider sense of the world outside of the city, Emil has demonstrated all the markings of a true successor to Anton's carefully crafted empire. He is educated, ambitious, and a shrewd judge of character. His only shortcoming, in Anton's eyes, is his timid approach to dealing with the Society's enemies; however, Anton is confident time will drum this reluctance out of Emil.

Appearance: Emil looks like a younger version of his father, though he bears a casual confidence in contrast to Antonito's exuberant flamboyance. He wears his hair short, like his beard.

Relations: Emil genuinely regards his grandfather more highly than his own father, whom he resents for his philandering and neglect. He is the closest thing to a friend

that his cousin, Theodosius, allows in his life. Suspicious of Cartha's loyalties, Emil recently convinced Anton to maneuver Pieter out of Specularum to the Veiled Society's new operations in Kelvin.

Theodosius, SON OF ZWEIS

History: Zweis Radu despaired of ever siring a male heir, and took his frustrations out on his wife and four daughters. Needless to say he was overjoyed when, 15 years ago, she gave birth to little Theodosius. The boy grew up sullen and quiet, despite his father's best efforts to draw him out. Zweis dotes on him nonetheless, and was proud when Theodosius recently informed him of his intent to join the Veiled Society when he is sheared in a few short months.

Personality: Theodosius is quiet and reserved, unlike his father, but nevertheless bears a similar air of danger. Though Zweis never once raised a hand to the boy, the abuses suffered by his mother and sisters left him with a cold sense of detachment towards the suffering of others. He has recently found a clinical amusement in killing and dissecting small rodents and livestock.

Appearance: Lean of build and red haired, Theodosius looks nothing like Zweis. Fortunately for him, he resembles his mother's side of the family instead of that of his true father- Vasile Torenescu. He rarely smiles, his expression dark behind his gray eyes.

Relations: None but his mother know that Theodosius is the product of an affair between her and a member of the hated Torenescu clan, although Cartha and Pieter quietly seek confirmation of their suspicions. Emil Radu is the closest thing Theodosius has

to a real friend, and will make him a deadly lieutenant one day. Pieter and Theodosius, despite being "brothers," are not close.

Pieter, SON OF ZWEIS

History: As a youth, Zweis Radu fell deeply in love with a peasant girl, Marika Petrescu. Theirs was a doomed affair, though, for Anton Radu had already betrothed his son to a more influential Traladaran family while building his power base. When Marika turned up, pregnant, Anton had no choice but to quietly relocate the young woman to a convent far outside of Specularum. The fact that her child was actually Cartha's (with whom she had been having an affair), and not Zweis', made it all the more imperative. The object of that birth, bright-eyed Pieter, was thus raised within the Church of Traladara. Following his Shearing ceremony, he immediately took his vows to become ordained a cleric in its hierarchy.

A few years ago, Pieter- now a ranking priest in the church hierarchy- showed up at the Radu family estate, revealing his parentage as the son of Zweis and Marika. After confirmation of his "true" lineage by both Anton and Cartha, Zweis welcomed him with open arms and he was instated as a lieutenant in the Society.

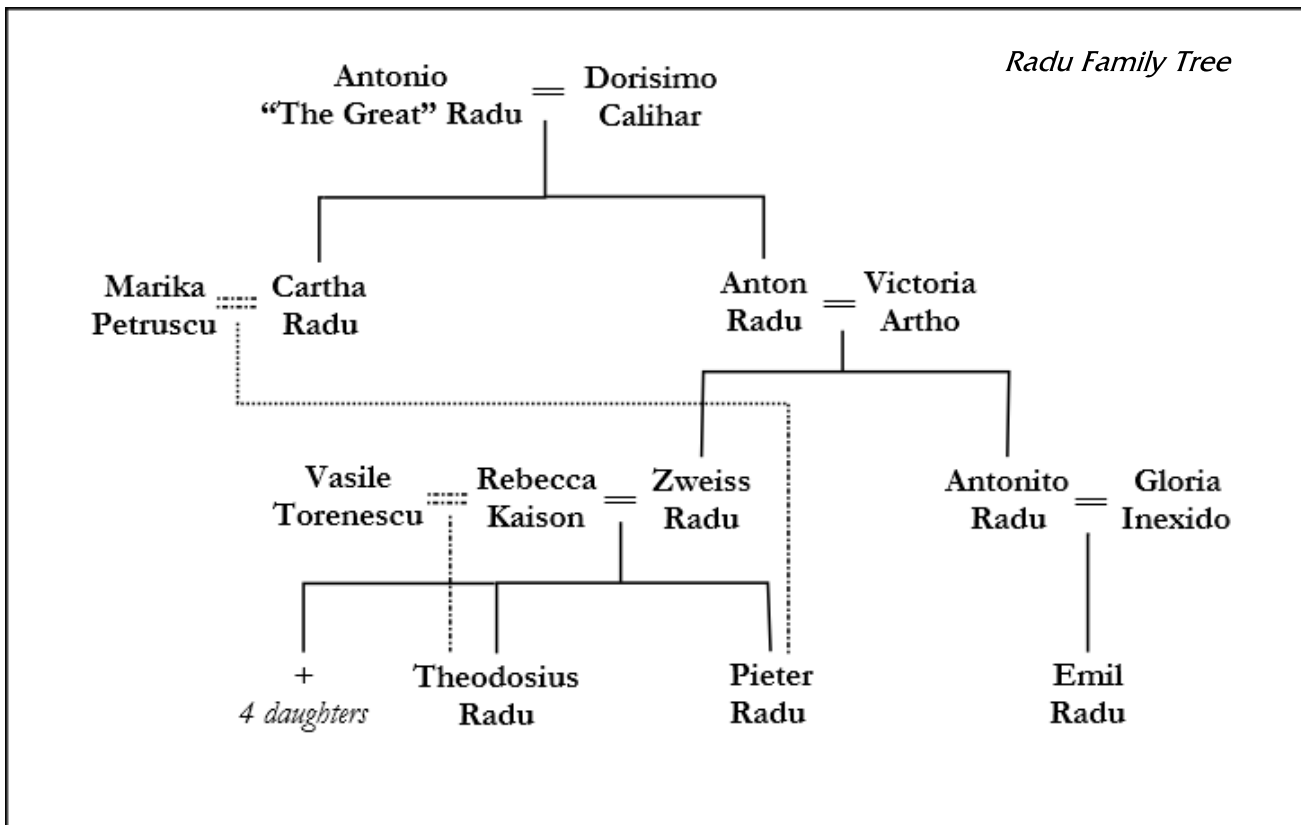
Most recently, he was sent away to the city of Kelvin, under the auspices of his priestly role, but secretly to oversee the installation of a fledgling branch of the Veiled Society there.

Personality: Pieter takes his priestly duties very seriously. He detests the Thyatian occupation and the efforts of the Church of Thyatis to convert his Traladaran people. Incredibly, he sees no hypocrisy in also

directing the efforts of the Veiled Society, which he views as a tool to help undermine Thyatian interests in his homeland. While his outlook on the function of the Society may differ from that of Cartha, one opinion both men share is that the Veiled Society- and the Radu clan- are better off in the hands of their side of the family than in Anton's.

Appearance: Pieter is short, even by Traladaran standards. Though barely 26, the ease of his station has caused his formerly wiry build to turn to pudginess. That, combined with his soft features and smile, give him an almost fatherly appeal. He is never seen in public without his robes of office.

Relations: Pieter and Cartha are thoroughly complicit in their plots to take over the Veiled Society, which is perhaps why Anton had him stationed in Kelvin. Though he is determined to establish control over the city, he is well aware that it is a fool's errand; the lack of any real criminal underground and Baron Kelvin's militant followers make any such plans all but impossible. He knows that Cartha is his true father, and works with the man to undermine Anton's authority while still manipulating his ties to Zweis, but he feels little affection towards any member of the Radu clan.





FROM
THE VAULTS
OF PANDIUS

Noble Houses of Karamaikos

by Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)
and Simone Neri (Zendrolion)

Strolojca and Draconius

The government of Karamaikos relies on a social class of aristocrats who, having been invested with fiefs by the Duke, perform the role of local administration in remote regions, helping in the task of moving the Grand Duchy from a sparsely populated wilderness to a modern nation state.

While the grand vassals, such as the Barons, enjoy most of the spotlight at court, there are many other noble families, both Thyatian and Traladaran in ethnicity.

In this article, we introduce the noble houses of Strolojca and Draconius. The former is a long-standing Traladaran clan from the south-western coast, whereas the latter is a Thyatian clan that was recently given lands along the Eastron Road.

HOUSE STROLOJCA, LANDED LORDS OF STROLOJCA

The Strolojca family rose to prominence during the Rebirth of Traladara, the time after the Vandar invasion and settlement, when the Banates assumed a stable form under a feudal organization.

The first known ancestor, whose records date to the first Traladaran written documents after the introduction of literacy by Thyatian missionaries, is *Boris iz Strolojca*. He appears to have lived in the V century, when he was lord (*Zbupa*) of the village of Strolojca and a vassal of the Veliki Zhupa (Count, in Thyatian terms) of Svoga, who in turn was a vassal of the *Banate of Halag*, the regional power that held at that time on the western coast of Traladara. Boris is mentioned in a list of captains of the Halag army at the end of the First Traladaran War.

The Strolojca family's claim to historical fame however, dates thirty years later when Boris' grandson, Vassily Strolojca, took part in the Second Traladaran War. Where the First War was a defensive battle against the invading armies of the neighbouring Kingdom of Darokin, the Second Traladaran War was a civil war, caused by the consolidation of Traladaran religious hierarchies in the area. This war was sparked by quarrels that ensued between the Church of Traladara, which dominated the central and south-eastern regions of the country, and "heretical" cults fostered by the nobles of Halag to the west and Vaion to the north-east. While the north-eastern heresies were mostly inspired by Entropic Immortals of the Dark Triad -- and primarily Orcus -- the western cults were centered on the same Traldar hero-worship

tradition that informed the beliefs of the Church of Traladara, but were also influenced by the patriarchal Vandar customs -- the Vandar influence was much stronger in the west, since Halag had been the first and foremost Vandar settlement -- and thus focused on the worship of Halav as the god-king, relegating Petra and Zirchev to lesser roles. The Church of Halav, centered in Halag, was also more militant than the Church of Traladara, with its Knights forming the élite ranks of the western armies, and therefore wielded significant political power. This led to increasing frictions with the central states, which resented the missionary attempts of the Church of Halav at a time when they were confronted with the growing cults of Orcus. The political rivalries in the region pushed things to overt war, culminating in the Battle of Stolos Ford, when the forces of the Ban of Halag tried a last-ditch defense against those of Marilenev.

During the Battle of Stolos' Ford, Vassily Strolojca and his followers, all vassals of Halag, passed to Marilenev's side, leading to the defeat of the "heretics", and the destruction of Old Svoga. Thanks to his key role in the war, Vassily widely improved the family fortunes, gaining his successors a seat at the Diet of Marilenev and allowing them to take part in the Traladaran League as autonomous lords.

Strolojca lords such as Anton I and Vassily II fought in two successive wars. Later members of the dynasty increased the political relevance of the family, culminating in the historical speech by Boris III at the Diet of Marilenev which led the lord of Strolojca to be selected as the League's ambassador in a mission to Harbortown to solicit help against the Darokinian-backed King Demara.

With the dissolution of the League at the beginning of the VII century, the lords of Strolojca were once more reduced to vassals of the Duchy of Halag, with the rank of Barons, which they held until the defeat of the army of the Duke of Halag at the hands of the Imperial Legate, Stefan Karameikos I (Stefan the

Genealogy of the House of Strolojca

Boris I ???-416 First known Zhupa of Strolojca, died in battle in the First Traladaran War.

Vlastimir 416-439 Killed by a werewolf while travelling to the marriage of the son of the Zhupa of Ourosco.

Vassily I 439-465 Fought in the Second Traladaran War, switching sides to Marilenev in the Battle of Stolos Ford.

Boris II 465-487 Known only from documents regarding his son Anton.

Anton I 487-493 Died in battle against Mithras V of Darokin in the Third Traladaran War.

Vassily II 493-502 Killed by a wereboar during a hunting party.

Anton II 502-549 "Anton II the Young", succeeded his father at age 15.

Boris III 549-581 "Boris III Chrysostomos", great politician and orator at the Diet of Marilenev, is considered the most prominent member of the family.

Spassoje I 581-613 First Baron of Strolojca.

Viacheslav 613-635

Petr I 635-677 "Petr I the Elder", Viacheslav's brother, died at the age of 88.



Traladaran knights at the Battle of Stolos' Ford

Hermit, the great-grandfather of the current Duke) in 900 AC.

The coastal nobles, under the lead of Petros, Count of Ourosco, tried a last ditch defense, but were finally defeated, and forced to surrender, by auxiliary troops under the leadership of Jan Vandevic, a mercenary captain of Glantrian origins who took a large part of the lands that once were part of the Barony of Strolojca and the County of Ourosco. With Traladara reduced to a Thyatian province, the local nobles were summarily demoted to the rank of landed lords -- the lowest rank in the Thyatian system, though they were allowed to retain part of their ancestral lands. In the ensuing chaos, the firstborn line of the Strolojca clan was severely weakened, leading to its extinction in 952 with the death of Lord Barris. Following the extinction of the firstborn branch,

Spassoje II 677-685 Murdered by a vampire.

Petr II 685-710 "Petr II the Avenger", led a vampire hunt to avenge his father.

Marek I 710-755 Succeeded to his father while a child, was under the regency of his mother Roxana until 724 AC.

Boris IV 755-783 Died during the destruction of Castle Koriszegy.

Vladimir 783-806 Second son of Boris, inherited the family lands when several of his relatives died in Castle Koriszegy. Had three sons, Iovan, Boris, and Petr. All living Strolojca male-line descendants are members of cadet branches descended from Boris (Borisian branch) and Petr (Petrine branch), as the senior line was extinguished with Barris Strolojca in 952.

Iovan 806-813 A retainer of the Duke of Halag, Uidar the Quick, disappeared mysteriously with his liege during a hunting trip in the Cruth Lowlands.

Petr III 813-885 "Petr III the Long-lived", was one year old when his father Iovan disappeared, and remained under the regency of his uncle Boris "the Seneschal" up to 828 AC.

Vladislav 885-900 Died in battle against Stefan Karameikos I, without issue.

the cadet Borisian branch, descended from a son of Vladimir Strolojca who had been Seneschal to his nephew Lord Petr III in the IX century, took over the title and lands.

As Stefan Karameikos III took over Traladara, the noble houses of Halag and Demiatic were destroyed, but the leaders of the Strolojca, Ourosco, and Moubotka clans swore fealty to the new ruler, maintaining their rank and lands. In the case of House Strolojca, this event was facilitated by the transition to the Borisian branch under Marek III, which was considered nearer to the Thyatian interests, as Marek's father, Anton, had served in the Thyatian military.

Lord Marius Strolojca,
landed lord of Strolojca (NM, L).

Marius is slightly over 60 years old. He is a typical Traladaran gentleman, pale and gaunt, and very soft-spoken -- the elderly people in Strolojca say he and his brother, Anton, both bear a great resemblance to their late father, Marek the Meek, both in visage and bearing. Marius was trained as an administrator rather than a warrior, and is relatively competent at managing his fief. He was married early in his life to a noblewoman of House Moubotka -- Marek III was trying to strengthen his family ties with the other major clans of the area -- but his wife died in childbirth, and Marius never remarried. Marius is a bit of a recluse -- most visitors to Strolojca, except nobles, will more likely meet his nephew and heir, Lord Marek.

Lord Anton Strolojca,
court lord (NM, L).

Almost a younger twin of Marius, Anton sought employment in the Karameikan government, since he had similar inclinations to Marius but no chance of inheriting the fief. He therefore moved to Specularum with his wife Avdotya, a member of the

Anton III 900-900 Vladislav's brother, last Baron of Strolojca, died in battle against Jan Vandevic's mercenaries.

Marek II 900-937 Lord of Strolojca, murdered by unknown hand at age 46; was under the regency of his mother Katerina up to 906 AC.

Barris 937-945 Marek II's younger brother, was of feeble health and had no offsprings. He abdicated in favor of his nearest heir, Marek III, the senior member of the Borisian cadet branch. Died in 952 of natural causes.

Marek III 945-961 "Marek III the Meek". Son of Sir Anton Strolojca, Knight of the Thyatian Empire (b. 885 d. 944). A descendant of Boris "the Seneschal", through his son Vladimir (d. 865), his grandson Spassoje (d. 889) and his great-grandson Marek (d. 904), Anton's father.

Marius 961-current Son of Marek III, has no offsprings. Has designated his nephew Marek as his heir.

Ourosco clan. He is currently an intendant of the Ministry of Trade, working with Minister Bartran Cordelius. Anton tries to advance the interests of the south-eastern fiefs, but has not yet managed to obtain funding for the project he champions, the construction of a paved coastal road from Specularum to Vandevic and Strolojca. Anton and Avdotya have four sons and one daughter. Anton is a meek but determined bureaucrat, and can be easily met by characters interested in developing trade with the south-eastern fiefs.

Lord Marek Strolojca,
court lord & Seneschal of Strolojca (NM, L).



Marek is a man in his thirties, thin and somewhat sickly. Like his father and uncle, he favors intellectual pursuits and is a competent administrator, trained at the Scriveners' Guild. He currently resides in Strolojca, where he has all but taken over

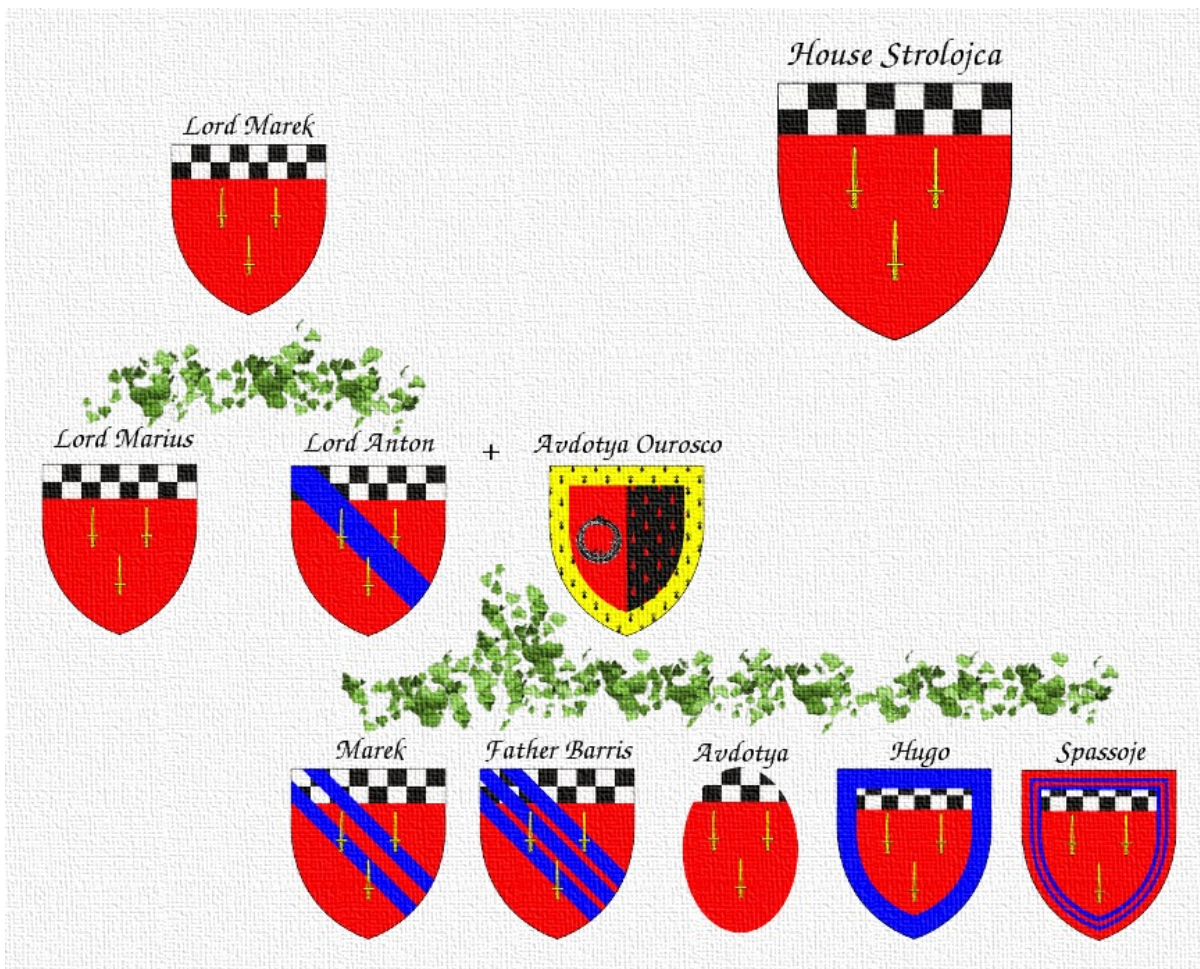
the day-to-day rulership of the fief from his aging uncle. He is as of yet unmarried, but is considering several prospective brides -- however, he has procrastinated marrying until now because he aims at unifying the Strolojca lands with those of the Vandevic clan by marrying the Vandevic heir, who is still an infant. Lord Marek is the most likely person to be met by those interested in the government of Strolojca. His demeanor is polite, but business-like.

Father Barris Strolojca, priest of the Church of Traladara (C5, L). Where Marek continues the family looks, Barris is often thought of as "more an Ourosco than a Strolojca", for his jolly, rubicund face and chubby physique take more after his maternal side. Not aiming at a political career, but still more at ease with intellectual than martial pursuits, Barris entered the priesthood of the Church of Traladara. He is currently the assistant librarian of the patriarchate of Marilenev. Thus, he lives in Specularum, taking advantage of his father's mansion. Barris is a friendly and outgoing sort, and is likely to be encountered by Traladarans looking for information on the history of Traladara or the Church itself. Barris is unmarried and, not being expected to inherit the family fortune, uninterested in getting married. He does, however, have numerous female friends -- the Church of Traladara takes a very relaxed stance on personal relations, and Barris takes maximum advantage of this, which does not make him very popular with the prudish scholars of the Church of Karameikos he sometimes deals with professionally.

Lady Avdotya Strolojca, court lady (MU 1, L). The only daughter of Anton Strolojca, this thirty-year old woman served as a lady in waiting to Lady Selena Vandevic for several years, a typical occupation for young noblewomen who are not Sheared. She picked up some passing knowledge of arcane magic from Lord Gustav and his apprentices, until Lady Selena discovered it, had a furious quarrel with her husband for teaching dangerous and unladylike magics to her lady-in-waiting, and finally sent Avdotya back to her family in Specularum.

She now lives with her family in Specularum. She is considering asking to be Sheared, although it is rather late at this point in her life, and joining the Magicians' Guild. However, she lacks experience of the outside world and her reclusive temper, not unlike that of her uncle Marius, has prevented her from actually making any step in this direction. Her parents are considering trying to marry her off to some nobleman -- although she is a bit old by now (by their standards), a middle-aged widower like Sir Ulric Brezovo could be a good match for her.

Sir Hugo Strolojca, Knight of Karameikos (F9, N). This scion of the Strolojca line is an arrogant nobleman in his late twenties. A good swordsman and duelist (*Expert* in the long sword), Strolojca figures himself a dashing figure and a ladies' man -- though he rarely wins any favor due to his arrogance and outright brutality. Sir Hugo gained his title after a short but brilliant service in the military at Rugalov Keep. While a lieutenant, and a promising candidate for a captaincy, he made an enemy of the Minister of War, Admiral Lucius Hyraksos, and was forced to resign his commission -- although he was



Coats of Arms of House Strolojca

awarded the knightly title. He stands no chance to be named for a fief, so he is looking for an advantageous marriage which will enable him to inherit one. Hugo usually resides in the Specularum mansion his father owns, since it allows him to take part to the social life of the Traladaran aristocracy. He is likely to be met at parties, where his arrogant demeanor may lead to altercations or even a duel.

Lord Spassoje Strolojca, court lord (F5, N). The youngest son of Anton Strolojca, Spassoje is a successful adventurer in his mid twenties. With no chance to inherit the family fortune, no interest in a clerical career, and little aptitude except for the sword and shield, Spassoje looks to build a reputation with the Church and the government as a reliable troubleshooter and a loyal Karamaikan. He plans to obtain a knightly title and a fief from Duke Stefan.

HISTORY OF HOUSE DRACONIUS

FAMILY HISTORY IN THYATIS

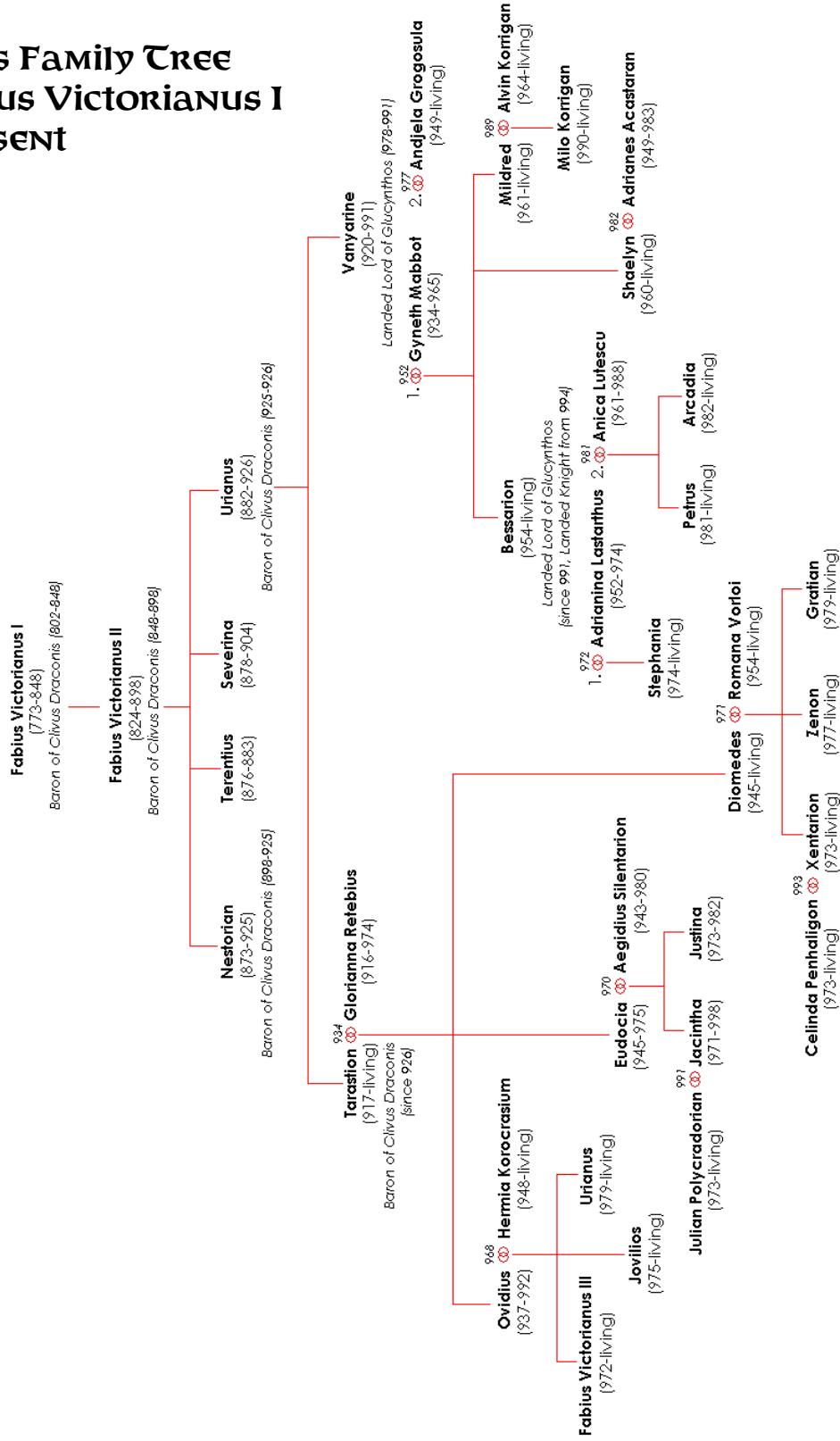
The Draconius family is a quite old Thyatian *gens* which has been traditionally associated with the Empire's airborne military orders, the Retebius Air Fleet and the Knights of the Air. Family history holds that the original family head, Jovilius, was a simple mountain boy born in a village in the Altan Tepes range, an orphan who had lived in the company of a blue dragon cub he had found in the wilderness. According to this story, Jovilius was noticed by Retebius, the founder of the Thyatian Air Corps, and later trained by him to become the first Thyatian blue dragonrider. Since then, Jovilius' descendants adopted the family name of *Draconius* (*Draconia* for females).

In the following centuries members of the Draconius family held important military positions and were often soldiers and officers in the Retebius Air Fleet. Among the most famous is Xentarion (AC 119-184), who took part as blue dragonrider to the Empire's Alasyian campaigns of AC 148-150 and whose blue dragon Savirariash is said to have been

the offspring of Jovilius' blue dragon. Savirariash continued to be the dragon mount of Xentarion's descendants, many of whom won the title of Lord or Knight, and who were all members of the Knights of the Air. After serving five Draconius riders, Savirariash died together with the last descendant of the Draconius' main branch, Dracolytus (AC 278-316), in battle against the Alphatians on the Isle of Dawn during the Thyatian Civil War (AC 313-320), by crashing – on the verge of death - against the enemy's flying airship and destroying it.

The family's two minor branches, descended from Xentarion's lesser brothers, followed two different paths. The junior branch, which later (around the beginning of the 5th century AC) changed their family name to Drakonion, settled in the countryside of Thyatis City, followed a more canonical military path (in the imperial navy and army, even if some of them indeed became Knights of the Air), became quite wealthy landowners, and had even some of its members elected to the Senate.

Draconius Family Tree FROM Fabius Victorianus I to the present



The senior branch instead, kept the old family name. Having acquired lands in the region of Retebius and settled down there, they continued the family airborne military tradition. It is from this branch of the family that the Karameikan Draconius descend. Among the foremost members of the old Thyatian Draconius are: Hypatius (AC 496-578), who – after a successful career in the Retebius Air Fleet as white dragonrider - was professor at the Retebius Air Academy; Urianus (AC 589-661), who was Minister of War under Empress Valeria II of the Monomachos dynasty; Polydorus (grandson of Urianus, AC 646-712), unsuccessful general of the Thyatian army during the war against Alpathia at the end of the 6th century AC; Victoriana (AC 651-739, cousin of Polydorus), a magic-user Knight of the Air who was also the family's first gold dragonrider. Victoriana and her gold dragon, Yskuomar, became famous thanks to their aerial assaults against the Alpathian forces, which slowed down their invasion of the Thyatian mainland from Alasyia in AC 728. Victoriana married Flavian III, Duke of Retebius at the end of the war (AC 732). In AC 802, the great-grandson of Polydorus, Fabius Victorianus (AC 773-848), another blue dragonrider of the Retebius Air Fleet, received from the Duke of Retebius the title of Baron of Clivus Draconis (“Dragonhill”), located on the banks of the upper Mesonian River. Since then, the baronial title has passed from father to son; family tradition has always required that the first male son of the family had to become a member of the Retebius Air Fleet or of the Knights of the Air in order to inherit the barony. After Fabius Victorianus I's death, the barony passed to his son Fabius Victorianus II (AC 824-898), to the latter's son Nestorian (AC 873-925), then briefly to

Nestorian's lesser brother Urianus (AC 882-926), and finally to Urianus' son Tarastion (born in AC 917 and still living).

Urianus was a pious adventuring cleric of the Church of Thyatis; he had not been trained to become a member of the Retebius Air Fleet because it was not expected that he, third son of Fabius Victorianus II, could have a chance to inherit the barony. Thus with him the airborne tradition of the Draconius family was broken. Moreover, his premature death in AC 926, during one of his adventures, left his wife Regula in charge of his sons Tarastion and Vanyarine (both younger than ten years at the time), and she didn't enforce the family tradition. Nevertheless, Tarastion was raised to become a proper nobleman, and served for years as advisor to the present Duke of Retebius' father; Vanyarine, instead, chose the military path, enlisting in the imperial army. He served on the Isle of Dawn (Redstone and Westrouрке) during the peaceful reign of Emperor Gabrionius V, then in 952 was chosen as legate to the next Governor General of Traladara, and moved there with his recently-married wife Gyneth Mabbot, a Westrourkian woman he had met while he was stationed at Newkirk.

TARASTION'S FAMILY

Tarastion married a cousin of the Duke of Retebius, Glorianna, who bore him three children: Ovidius, Eudocia, and Diomedes.

Ovidius, an enthusiastic admirer of the family's past heroes, insisted he be trained as an air-knight, and managed to become a griffon-rider in the Retebius Air Fleet. Upon the end of his service, he entered the Knights of the Air, and prepared to succeed his father as baron, but didn't outlive him,

dying in AC 992. Nevertheless, his marriage with a woman of senatorial rank, Hermia Korocrasium, produced the next heir of Clivus Draconis, Fabius Victorianus III – who already rules the barony, but will inherit it formally only after his grandfather Tarastion's death - and his younger brothers Jovilius and Urianus.

Eudocia died at only thirty years; her first daughter Jacintha was married but died at age 27 before giving birth to any children, while her second daughter Justina died at age 9.

Diomedes, the third son, enlisted in the imperial army very young, being attached as aide to the command staff of one of the legions during the final stages of Emperor Thincol's reconquest of the Isle of Dawn (AC 962). His fighting experience was almost non-existent, but he made a good impression on his superiors. In the following years he ascended quickly through the army ranks, distinguishing himself in fights against local humanoid tribes in Redstone and in the Dust Reaches, and becoming a tribune in AC 968; in those years he also befriended other young noblemen and important characters, like Stefan Karameikos. In fact, when Stefan received the land of Traladara with the title of Grand Duke, Diomedes was asked to follow him and help him organize his army.

FAMILY HISTORY IN KARAMEIKOS

In his capacity of legate to the Governor General of Traladara, Vanyarine distinguished himself in various actions against Traladaran brigands and humanoid bands. His wife Gyneth had three children by him: one son, Bessarion (born in AC 954), and two daughters, Shaelyn (born in AC 960) and Mildred (born in AC 961; the names of the

two daughters were chosen by their mother, and follow Westrourkian usage). Despite his will to contribute to help his motherland against the Alphatians in the war of AC 959-962, Vanyarine was ordered to stay in Traladara, where he helped the Governor General to keep the province under control and avoid anti-Thyatian uprisings, which were expected in the aftermath of the dramatic moments of the Alphatian Spike Assault on Thyatis City in AC 960.

During his stay in Traladara, Vanyarine managed to acquire a great deal of knowledge about that province and continued to serve under the next Governor General, this time sent by the new Emperor Thincol. During this time, he was mainly stationed in Specularum, where his children grew up. Meanwhile, his wife Gyneth had died in AC 965.

When Duke Stephan Karameikos of Machetos was gifted by the Emperor with permission to take the Province of Traladara as Grand Duke in AC 970, Vanyarine was a natural choice as one of Karameikos' military experts. However, many of Stefan's relatives came with him as well, trusted friends and advisors from Thyatis – men like Desmond Kelvin, and Lucius Hyraksos – and the highest ranks, titles, and positions were assigned to those men, leaving Vanyarine to serve under them. Most of them were young men, belonging to the same generation as Stefan Karameikos, they shared his enthusiasm, were eager to prove themselves in this new land, and had little love for older and more experienced men – like Vanyarine - who could tell them how to do things better.

One of the men arriving in Traladara with Stefan was indeed Vanyarine's nephew, Diomedes who, despite being much

younger than Vanyarine, was given the rank of General by Stefan and put in charge of organizing an unit of his new army. Vanyarine was asked by Diomedes to help him; resentful with the younger Diomedes for the higher position he held, Vanyarine did so with scarce enthusiasm. Despite this the two did a good job organizing the fledgeling recruits and the mercenary companies into a proper and disciplined army.

In the meantime, Diomedes managed to secure a profitable marriage soon after his arrival in Traladara, marrying in AC 971 Romana Vorloi, one of the sisters of Philip Vorloi, the wealthy merchant who was financing Stefan Karameikos' takeover of Traladara. While he and his cousin were in the town of Vorloi attending the celebrations for the marriage, the Marilenev Rebellion broke out in Specularum, only to be quickly crushed by the Grand Duke, with the instrumental aid of Desmond Kelvin. Even as Diomedes and Vanyarine rushed to their liege's side as soon as possible, the hotter fights of the rebellion had already taken place, and they could only contribute to put down some additional uprisings which had taken place in the capital's countryside. Desmond Kelvin never passes up the opportunity to remark on Diomedes' absence from the battlefield that day.

In the following years, while Diomedes was busy maintaining control over western Karameikos, and building or improving the Grand Duchy's fortifications on that border (Radlebb Keep and Riverfork Keep), Vanyarine left active military service and entered the Ministry of War under Lucius Hyraksos; he was charged with patrolling the eastern coast of Karameikos, south of the Dymrak Forest, and overseeing the building

works of the Eastron Road to protect them against bandit and goblin attacks.

While Diomedes' marriage with Romana Vorloi produced three sons in a row (Xentarion in AC 973, Zenon in AC 977, and Gratian in AC 979), Vanyarine tried to improve his social standing through marriage as well. In AC 977 he married the much-younger last heir of a dying Traladaran family, Andjela Grogosula, who brought as a dowry her family lands, located on the eastern coast of the Grand Duchy, west of Rugalov. Vanyarine named these lands Glucynthos and received from the Grand Duke the Landed Lord title for them, in reward for his past services, in AC 978. This unexpected gift by the Grand Duke lessened his resentment toward Stefan Karameikos, and also his nephew, who now was a step behind him in the social ladder.

VANYARINE'S CHILDREN

Meanwhile, Vanyarine's first son, Bessarion, married a Thyatian adventurer and priestess of Valerias, Adrianina Lastarthus, in AC 972. Along with her brother Demetitus, also a cleric, she had followed Olliver Jowett's ideas to found a new church in a new land, and had come to Traladara. Unfortunately, this great love of Bessarion died during childbirth two years later, leaving him with a daughter, Stephania. For a time, Bessarion tried to take care of Stephania himself, but the pain evoked by the memory of Adrianina was too much, and he began leaving Glucynthos for longer periods of time, adventuring in the Grand Duchy. During those years he perfected his martial skills, helping both the ducal forces and the population in many areas of the country.

Seeing that his new marriage with Andjela wouldn't produce additional children, Vanyarine began to build political alliances for his chosen heir Bessarion by marrying him, and his sisters, to prominent noble families of Karameikos.

For Bessarion, Vanyarine chose a Traladaran wife, Anica Lutescu, nine years younger than him, belonging to a Traladaran clan of landowners who held the nearby coastal lands west of Rugalov River. Anica gave Bessarion a son, Petrus (born in AC 981), and a daughter, Arcadia (born in AC 982). Bessarion's favoured child however, continued to be Stephania, who he considered the last legacy of his true love Adrianina.

Bessarion's sisters, both of them praised for their beauty or intelligence, were married to Thyatian noblemen instead: Shaelyn married Adrianes Acastaran - a fighter who had recently earned knightly rank - in AC 982, and

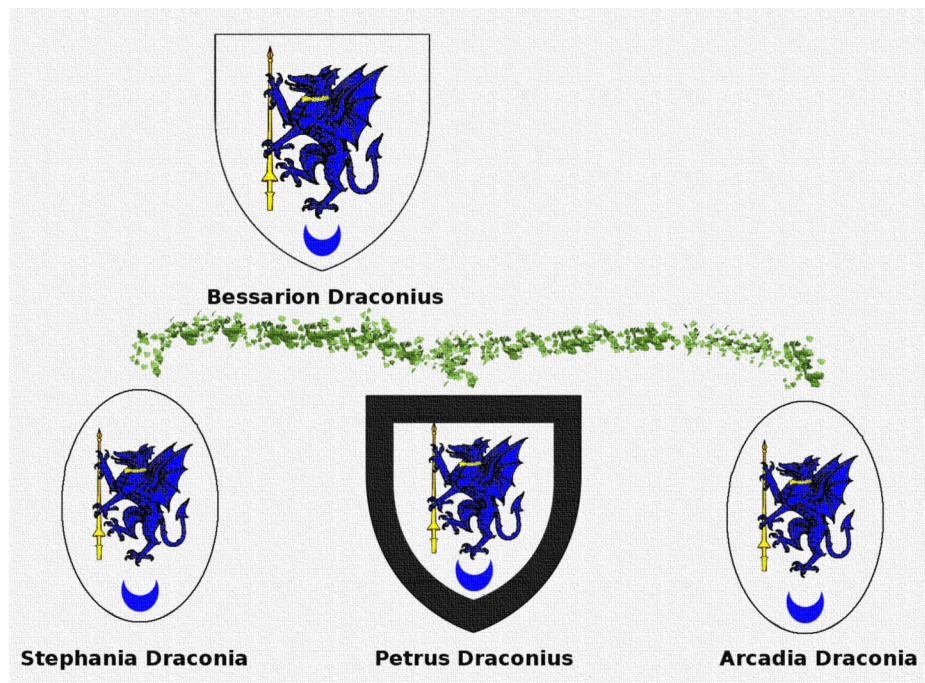
Mildred married Alvin Korrigan - lesser brother of the Ducal Seneschal Alexius - in AC 989.

Not everything was happy, however. In AC 983, just one year after they married and after many months of violent quarrelling, Shaelyn poisoned her husband Adrianes. Evidence of her crime was never found - Vanyarine's influence ensured all traces were eradicated, and that Shaelyn was spared from magical examination - but the Acastaran family has been enemy of the Draconius ever since. Even though he protected her from a public trial (which would have damaged the whole family), Vanyarine refused to meet or speak to Shaelyn again, and she went to live in Dmitrov.

In AC 988, the second wife of Bessarion, Anica, died of a fatal brain disease. Even their son Petrus was endangered, but the clerics of the Church of Traladara managed

to save him through their magic. Thereafter Bessarion fell into a deep depression, the grief caused by the loss of his second wife was too much for him to bear. His pain was further augmented by his father Vanyarine's death in AC 991.

But then he began to re-emerge from his melancholy, a stronger man than before. He had suffered so much for the loss of his beloved wives, and the pain had been nearly unbearable - but



Members of the Family - Bessarion Branch

now he had emerged from it with a much stronger will, and a much more complete comprehension of one's path through his life. He left his two last sons with their aunt Mildred at Specularum, asked his father-in-law Ionut Lutescu (the father of his deceased second wife) to watch over Glucynthos, and took Stephania on many voyages. He was away with her for two years, during which they adventured in the Known World – Ierendi islands, the Darokinian cities, Alfheim Town, the dwarven kingdom of Rockhome, and then the Empire of Thyatis, from the mainland to the Isle of Dawn and Ochalea: Bessarion wanted to show her as much of the world as possible, before she grew too much and took her part of adult responsibilities. He was partly successful, because Stephania decided to embark on the path of arcane magic, even if she took a more studious than adventuring life. He also tried to teach her what he himself had understood after those tragic events, and let her see what in the world made life worth living, despite losses and painful happenings.

Bessarion's other two children had longed for the return of their father. While Petrus was happy when his father and half-sister returned in AC 994, Arcadia was angered: her father had been away with Stephania for two years and had left them alone. She couldn't stand this, and began to feel a deep hatred for Stephania, which she – rightly – saw as her father's favourite daughter; she vowed to avenge herself.

When Bessarion returned, he devoted his time to the rule of Glucynthos. He took a more active role in his children's education, and in the Grand Duchy's politics. When Bessarion's father-in-law, Ionut Lutescu, passed away in AC 998, he did much to have

Lutescu's son, Vlad (a stern priest of the Church of Traladara; the two had become good friends after Bessarion's return), named Landed Lord of the nearby village of Rugalov, which in the years had grown from a small hamlet to a sizeable village and trade post – and succeeded. Thanks to their alliance, the Draconius' and the Lutescu's family lands, together with Rugalov Keep, represent today the backbone of the Grand Duke's control over his easternmost border.

DIOMEDES AND HIS CHILDREN

Once the construction of Stefan's army was complete, Diomedes was appointed General of the 5th Division, in charge of the western keeps he had contributed to build and improve. His duties often kept him away from Specularum, where his wife and children lived. As Diomedes was often away carrying out his duties as General, their mother, Romana, brought their children to the Vorloi family mansion in Specularum, or to the court of his brother Philip in Vorloi town itself. There, the three sons have grown up good-natured but a little spoiled, surrounded by all sort of commodities, most of their wishes being fulfilled immediately. To his disappointment, Diomedes could do little to avoid this; whenever he chose private tutors for his sons, upon his return from his duties away from the capital, he systematically found that Romana had dismissed them for one futile reason or another – and so he gave up.

Add still to his disappointment, that he didn't manage to secure advantageous marriages – those which could bring them titles or wealth - for his sons. His firstborn, Xentarion, became a source of constant

embarrassment for his bad-tempered (toward men) and lecherous (toward women) behavior; Diomedes had him married with Celinda Penhaligon, the younger daughter of Lord Arturus, but this proved a disaster for Diomedes' relations with the Penhaligon family when Xentarion's many sexual escapades became known. Zenon insisted on undergoing the Shearing Ceremony at age 17 and went to sea, but lost an eye during a battle against pirates and was back home three years later. Gratian, a sickly boy, was forbidden by his mother to undergo the Shearing, and doesn't show any interest in women.

MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY - BESSARION'S BRANCH

Andjela Grogosula (Neutral Normal Woman) is Vanyarine's second wife. Andjela is the last scion of the Grogosul clan, a Traladaran family who ruled the communities in the narrow coastal strip west of Rugalov. The Grogosul were already a clan in decline when the Thyatians conquered Traladara in AC 900, and the family slowly died out in the next few decades. Her father and elder brother went into the Dymrak Forest with a company of soldiers to retaliate against the goblins after their family lands had been raided – but they were ambushed and killed by the goblins in AC 975. Andjela was left alone trying keep together the pieces of her family fortunes; a very beautiful woman, she refused many suitors because initially she only wished to avenge her family, and began a short training as a warrior. Soon, she realized that her efforts could only at best result in her death, and that the best way to ensure the safety of the people living in her lands was to marry someone able to defend them. She chose to accept the marriage offer

of Vanyarine Draconius, a Thyatian military man who was nearly thirty years older than her. Vanyarine already had three children, and no need to produce an heir; if Andjela's marriage was to be a loveless one, it was better to chose a man that didn't have the need to pursue an intimate relationship with her. Andjela became a sort of second mother for Bessarion's last two children, Petrus and Arcadia, when their mother died in AC 988, and the two became quite fond of her, especially in the years in which their father was away with Stephania. Today Andjela spends her time in Glucynthos, taking care of the Draconius' family mansion and organizing the tasks of the servants. She is quite an intelligent and cultured woman, well-versed in many languages, who has the uncomfortable habit to speak the truth even in the most untimely circumstances.

Arcadia (Neutral 2nd-level Magic-User) is Bessarion's second daughter from his Lutescu wife, born in AC 982. As Petrus, Arcadia has almost no talent at magic, but managed to learn a little arcane lore from her aunt. Arcadia hates her half-sister because she is the favourite of their father, because she is so beautiful, because she learnt magic much better than her, because she stays at Specularum's court and not in far-away Glucynthos, because she is allowed to marry who she wishes while Arcadia must marry who her father commands: in a word, Arcadia broods a hate as deep as possible for Stephania, and for their father Bessarion as well. Of all her family, Arcadia only admires her aunt Shaelyn, and loves her acquired grandmother Andjela. Almost driven mad by her hate, she plans to poison Stephania as the first step of her revenge.

Bessarion (Lawful 9th-level Fighter, Str 16, Wis 18) is the first son of Vanyarine Draconius. He is a solidly built man, 5'10" tall for 165 lbs. of weight, who doesn't show at all his 48 years of age: his hair is a full light brown colour, lacking any sign of age, and his body is a warrior's, well-toned and muscled. His clean shaven face always has an authoritative – if tired – air, and his blue eyes seem to look deep into one's soul.

Although the deaths of his two wives haunted his early adulthood, Bessarion has risen as a much stronger man. During his travels with his daughter Stephania in AC 991-994, he managed to trace the activities of a group of slavers who were smuggling slaves into and out of Karameikos, and his deeds earned him the title of Knight from the Grand Duke. He would have liked then to take paladin vows and go wandering in the name of the Church of Karameikos, but his family and political duties prevented this.

Returning home, he assumed the rule of Glucynthos, securing it against goblins and bandits, improving villages and roads, building bridges, and ploughing new lands to settle and farm. He also built a chapel in his castle, devoted both to the Church of Traladara (Traladaran clerics saved his son Petrus from a fatal disease in AC 988), and to the Church of Karameikos. Near his chamber, he erected a shrine to the Immortal Valerias, in front of which he prays every night for the soul of his beloved Adrianina.

In the years since his return, he has also tried (or is trying) to put his children on their respective roads: a life to be enjoyed for Stephania, an advantageous marriage for Arcadia, and the role of his heir for Petrus.

Bessarion grew up in the Thyatian Province of Traladara, among Traladaran relatives, and as a result he doesn't feel any real difference between Thyatians and Traladarans; he feels that the Immortals have led the Thyatians to Traladara for a purpose: bringing the Thyatian efficiency and organisation and merging it with the Traladarans' traditions and identity to create a new, prosperous culture. Bessarion is deeply convinced that the Karameikos family will succeed in giving his new people a bright future, in spite of any difficulty ahead.

Bessarion knows he has not been the best of fathers, and knows that Arcadia wishes him ill for the time he spent away with Stephania. Because of this, lately he has tried to spend more time in Glucynthos with Petrus and Arcadia, than in Specularum at the Grand Duke's court.

At court, Bessarion supports Stefan's policy of a future of integration between the Grand Duchy's two cultures. He is one of the more respected Thyatian aristocrats, both because of the wisdom he always shows in his words, because of the tragedies he had to bear in his family life, and because of his unquestionable martial prowess. There Bessarion strongly represents the New Karameikan nobility, born from mixed blood families, and indifferent to ethnic and religious differences in favour of a common Karameikan future. Bessarion is also a strong supporter of the Karameikos family, and he is also on very good terms with the Korrigan, Prothemian, and Hyraksos families. He has gone so far as to betrothing his son Petrus with a scion of the Prothemian house, the young Lady Selina (niece of the Duchess); the two should marry soon. Despite the resentment his father felt toward his cousin

Diomedes, now the two branches of the family are in good standing.

Mildred (Neutral 4th-level Magic-User, Int 18) is the younger daughter of Vanyarine, born in AC 961. She's quite a plain woman when compared to her sister, and has always lived in the shadow of Shaelyn's rebelliousness. Mildred had a short arcane apprenticeship under Teldon at the Magicians' Guild Hall of Specularum, but she had not enough will nor interest to pursue the boring path of the magic-user any further; Mildred would have been a very able magic-user, if only she had had the will to apply her otherwise high intelligence to arcane studies. Nevertheless, she's a very cultured woman whose interests range from natural sciences to literature, and who often sponsors important artists and scholars. Her father arranged for her the most important marriage of the Draconius family, that with Alvin Korrigan, brother to the Ducal Seneschal Alexius. After marrying and giving birth to his son Milo (born in AC 990), she mostly lives with her family in Specularum; Mildred puts her great wit to use by counselling her husband and her brother.

Petrus (Lawful 1st-level Magic-User) is Bessarion's first son from his second wife. Like his sister Arcadia, Petrus learnt magic while spending time with his aunt Mildred, despite having very little talent for it. He's sincerely attached to his father and half-sister Stephania, and doesn't share Arcadia's hatred toward them, but is much more interested in courtly feasts, balls, and pastimes than in ruling a goblin-endangered dominion. He's currently betrothed to the Duchess' niece, Selina Prothemian, and their wedding is planned for the next year.

Shaelyn (Chaotic 1st-level Rake) is the attractive, older sister of Bessarion, the

middle child born in AC 960. Unlike Mildred, who was obedient and did what her father Vanyarine ordered her to do, Shaelyn developed a rebellious character. She refused to study arcane magic like her sister, and was thus forced to stay in Glucynthos under a private tutor, constantly angering her father for her unruly behavior. When one day she came to his father claiming that her old tutor had tried to use violence on her, she wasn't believed, and her situation even worsened.

At last, when her character seemed to have been subdued, Vanyarine married her to Adrianes Acastaran, a Thyatian adventurer who had recently earned the title of Knight and acquired some properties in the countryside of the capital – and who was over ten years older than she was. After one year of life with this detested man, she could not bear anything more, and poisoned her husband, killing him in AC 983. Then she fled from home as Vanyarine, while sparing her a public trial, didn't allow her to return with his pardon. Only after her father's death did Shaelyn once again see her sister and brother, though she continued to live a separate life in Dmitrov.

Shaelyn is a passionate and unpredictable person. She tends to follow her own whims without much thought for what others might think or want. Perhaps because of the events of her youth, she doesn't like or trust men at all. Currently, at Dmitrov, she lives with a Makai girl, Ulani, who is nearly twenty years younger than her. Shaelyn doesn't hide her love for the young woman, and her conduct is becoming the source of a local scandal in Dmitrov, despite Bessarion's best efforts at keeping things quiet.

Stephania (Lawful 6th-level Magic-User) is the first daughter of Bessarion Draconius and Adrianina Lastarthus. She was born in AC 974, and her mother died while giving birth to her. Her father has always loved her more than his other children because she is the only legacy of his first wife - his one true love. Stephania has been doted upon by her father, and has grown a little spoiled as a result; she is always used to the best standards, but not overly haughty or arrogant. In fact, she loves her father as much as he loves her.

After returning with her father from their journeys through the Known World, Stephania chose to learn arcane magic at her aunt Mildred's suggestion. She soon discovered she had some talent for it – and she is much more studious than her aunt – becoming with time more accomplished than Mildred herself. Stephania's arcane interests mostly head toward divination and detection spells; she studied under the tutoring of the Traladaran mage Claransa Tyrevic, known as 'the Seer' (and a few years her elder).

Stephania is very beautiful, with dark brown hair, and green eyes like her mother's; poets and courtiers claim that her beauty is rivalled only by that of Marianna Vorloi, the daughter of Baron Philip Vorloi. She has received many marriage proposals, but her father wants to let her decide who her husband will be, and she still awaits her love despite being well into marriage age (besides, this is another ground of anger her half-sister Arcadia has with her, because Bessarion instead plans a political marriage for her).

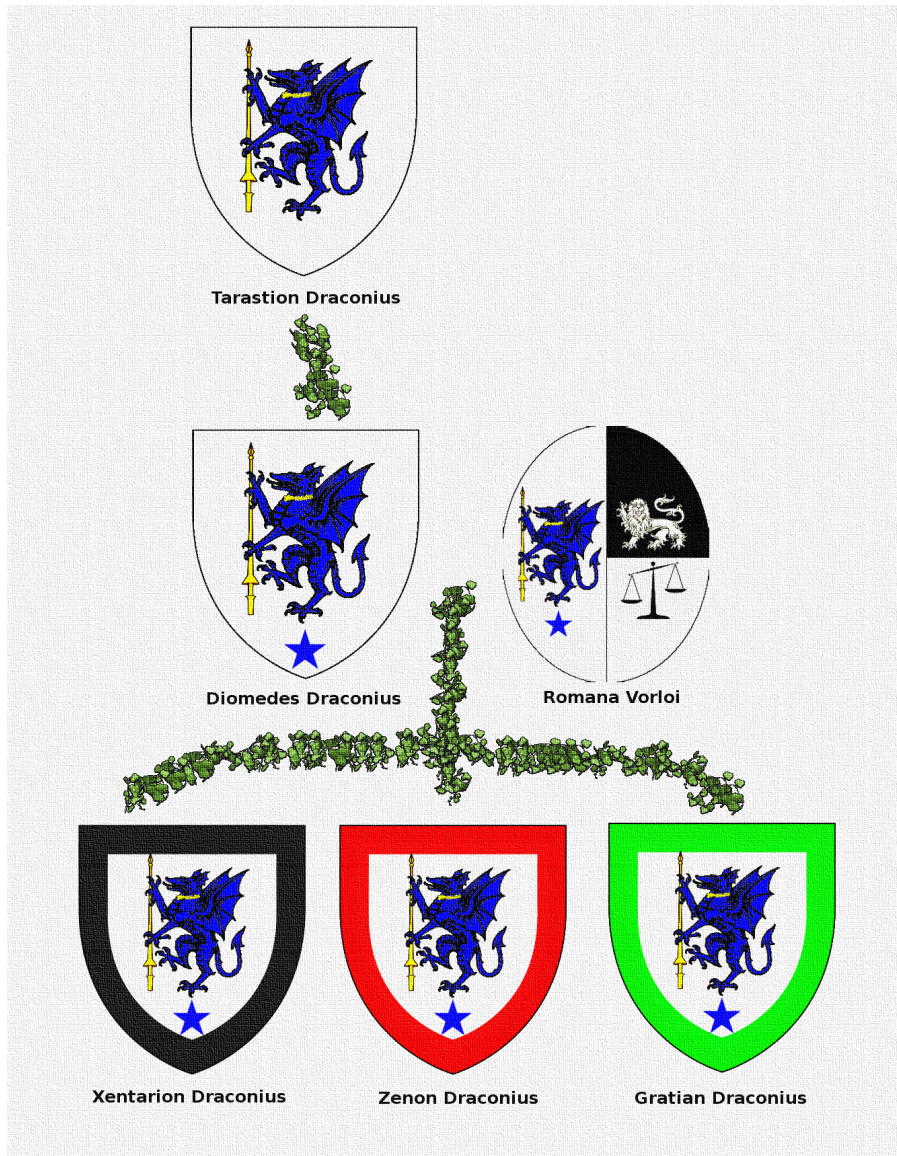
Currently, Stephania acts as one of the Duchess' ladies-in-waiting. She is rarely seen at the Magicians' Guildhall of Specularum, even if she studied there, but often pays visits to her father in Glucynthos or is visited by

him in Specularum. Stephania has had a couple of semi-secret love affairs in the last few years, but has since ended them both. She's still awaiting for her true love – a knight or a noble adventurer who performed some spectacular deed for her might even manage to win her heart.

MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY - DIOMEDES' BRANCH

Diomedes (Neutral 10th-level Fighter, *Expert* with normal sword) is the third child of the Draconius family branch who ruled the Barony of Clivus Draconis, in the Duchy of Retebius, Thyatis. A short man with thinning dark hair and a hawkish nose, Diomedes is one of the members of the lesser Thyatian aristocracy who answered Stefan Karameikos' call in AC 970 for the colonization of Traladara. A tribune with a limited but successful military experience on the Isle of Dawn, Diomedes was put in charge of the new units of Stefan's army, a light infantry force – while Desmond Kelvin was in command of the cavalry, Lucius Hyraksos of the navy, and finally Arturus Penhaligon in command of the Duke's Guard, a heavy infantry unit. Diomedes could not take full part in the fights against Traladaran rebels during the Marilenev Rebellion – he was celebrating his marriage with Romana in Vorloi at the time – but quelled the last uprisings in the countryside, and some time later contributed to the defeat of the humanoid tribes in northern Karameikos.

After those events, while his fellows earned better positions and titles – Kelvin and Penhaligon received their own fiefs, Hyraksos became Minister of War -



Members of the Family - Diomedes Branch

Diomedes was put in charge of the western division of the Karameikan army, with the rank of General. He was unsatisfied with this ‘honor’, feeling he deserved at least as much recognition as Kelvin and Penhaligon, who had had the opportunity to work with better equipped and trained units. Diomedes suspected that Desmond Kelvin, who had always remarked on his absence from the fight against the Marilenev rebels in AC 971,

was behind his unjust treatment by Stefan.

In the following years, Diomedes drove the improvement of the fortifications at Riverfork Keep first, and then supervised the construction of Radlebb Keep. Initially skeptical about the need to build a fort in the middle of the Radlebb Woods, Diomedes soon realized that the Radlebb Keep was key to the survival of the Karameikan control over western Traladara – without its presence, the sheer number of humanoid tribes in the southern Radlebb Woods and in the Cruth Lowlands, combined with Baron von Hendriks’ obvious ambitions, would have led to the loss of Riverfork Keep and almost the entire western part of Karameikos.

Nowadays, Diomedes spends most of his time in Specularum, lobbying for additional funds for the 5th Division without much success. He pays a yearly visit to both forts under his supervision, usually in late spring. Once every five years, he journeys to his father’s estate in the Duchy of Retebius (or is visited by members of his family in Specularum); the last of these family meetings, that had in the past seen the participation of the

Karameikan Retebius family branch along with Diomedes' cousin's family, happened about four years ago.

In AC 971 Diomedes married the sister of Philip Vorloi, Romana, who had three sons by him in the next ten years. The children however, were mostly raised by their mother and close to the rest of the Vorloi family, because Diomedes was often away for military duties. Diomedes' had always been proud of the fact that he held a higher office than his uncle Vanyarine, despite the latter's longer military experience, and this gave birth to some resentment between Vanyarine and his nephew. In AC 978, however, when Vanyarine received the title of Landed Lord of Glucynthos, it was Diomedes' turn to feel envy for his uncle's noble status. Even if their relationship appeared to be cordial, Diomedes often complained about this situation in private. After Vanyarine's death in AC 991, Diomedes' coldness towards his cousin Bessarion's family has indeed thawed, and the two are good allies at court, even if Diomedes is not as staunch as his cousin in the support of a Karameikan nation – he still feels the need for the Thyatians to keep exclusive control of Karameikos' key positions, and his loyalty lies with the Thyatian Empire (where his father and brother live).

Today, General Diomedes is quite disillusioned with Grand Duke Stefan's ability in judging people and, more in general, in governing a nation. While he disliked – and was disliked in turn by – the first Baron Kelvin, after the death of Desmond I in a duel in AC 996, he has stayed on good terms with the current Baron Desmond II, a man who understands the need for a strong military better than the Grand Duke. He is also on

good terms with Lord Retebius of Locrida, an estate found west of his cousin Bessarion's lands. Diomedes, together with his cousin, is one of the foremost opponents of the Black Eagle Baron at court. He was in good standing with his brother-in-law, Baron Philip Vorloi, but after his son Xentarion's illicit sexual affair with the Baron's niece, Lucia, Philip has become colder toward him. Xentarion's behavior has also been the cause of a recent grudge between Diomedes and the Cordelius, Antonic, and Penhaligon families: the general consensus is that if he can't control his son, he can't be trusted, and so Diomedes' image in front of them has suffered because of this. He cooperates with other members of the military, though he doesn't trust the Traladaran officers – especially people like Captain Arkan Sulanov who fought in the Marilenev Rebellion.

The PCs can meet Diomedes if they enlist in the army – new recruits reach their posts in Riverfork or Radlebb Keeps when the General visits the fort. General Diomedes tends to make quick judgments over people, so this first contact could be very important for their careers – quick thinking and strong action in any unexpected encounter while on the route to the forts is going to put them on Diomedes' shortlist for promotion.

Diomedes is also experimenting with a new idea to extend the Karameikan control around Riverfork and Radlebb Keeps – an unit of scouts acting as explorers and police force in the wilderness around the two forts. Unfortunately, he doesn't have the funds for his project, so he is instead considering the possibility of letting the scouts keep a portion of smuggled or stolen goods they find as pay. If the PCs look like they could

handle themselves well in the wilderness, he may propose this kind of deal.

Gratian (Lawful Normal Man) is Diomedes' youngest son. A sickly boy since birth, he was forbidden by his mother Romana to undergo the Shearing Ceremony after what happened to his brother Zenon. Lazy, fearful, and skittish, he has settled for the life of a courtier at Vorloi and Specularum, much to the disappointment of his father, who doesn't see in him any real quality. Gratian has cultivated a somewhat artistic taste, becoming fond of poetry and drama; he's often seen in the company of Specularum bards and companies of actors, and would like to write plays and poetry himself. Despite his father's urge to marry him, Gratian has shown no enthusiasm about marriage – he much prefers the company of young and beautiful courtiers and valets.

Romana Vorloi (Lawful Norman Woman) is one of Baron Vorloi's sisters and the wife of Diomedes Draconius since AC 971, when their marriage was arranged to strengthen the alliance between families who had followed Stefan Karameikos in Traladara. Despite her 46 years of age, Romana still looks like the beautiful lady she was twenty years ago, with her dark brown hair, azure eyes, and healthy body. In fact, she spends quite a lot of time taking care of her appearance, never sparing money when makeup, clothings, body care, and jewelry are involved. Romana likes to be in the company of younger ladies, and to be looked upon by younger nobles – even though she would never betray her marriage vows. Quite lazy where her duties as head of the house are concerned, she has overly worried about her children in the past, and her behavior has somewhat spoiled them. Today, Romana lives mostly in company of

her sons Gratian and Zenon in Vorloi and in Specularum; she insist that Diomedes should leave the military duties which worry him so much to someone else, and instead focus on their courtly life in Specularum.

Xentarion (Lawful 3rd-level “Cleric” – see below -, Str 16, Wis 16) is Diomedes' and Romana's eldest son. He is of medium-height and good-looking, with a robust and muscular body, dark brown hair and blue eyes. Raised by his mother in the shadow of the Vorloi family, Xentarion has enjoyed all the trappings of a courtly education. While adolescent, he became a source of trouble at Vorloi's court when his affairs with some of the girls there were discovered, but his lecherous behavior could not be restrained over the years, helped by his attractiveness and by his unusual skills (see below).



In AC 993

Diomedes arranged for him a marriage with Lord Arturus Penhaligon's daughter Celinda – after failing to secure the hand of her elder sister Arteris - in the hope this would stop Xentarion's love escapades. But Diomedes' purpose failed spectacularly, and his son's affairs didn't cease. A scandal and serious grudge between Diomedes and the Cordelius' family exploded in AC 998 when Xentarion was found entertaining an affair with both Fabiana Antonic – younger sister of Sir Retameron and wife to the much-older Guldahan Cordelius, Karameikan ambassador to the Five Shires – and her

half-sister Chrysantha. The Penhaligon and Cordelius families required an official public apology by Xentarion, which he gave, trying afterwards to keep quiet for some months. Since then, he has tried to limit himself to non-noble damsels, but the risk of him stumbling into the bed of some lady still lurks behind every corner.

Xentarion is used to doing as he pleases, fulfilling his wishes, be listened to and fawned over by others. He is quick to take offense when contradicted or criticized, and his quarrels, fist-fights, and occasional duels (not always won by him) with other noblemen have become a matter for gossip. Xentarion is good-natured and won't do anything that seriously harmed a person (at least consciously) – but this doesn't include embarrassing his family or those of the ladies he has affairs with. He is an intelligent, orderly, and tidy person, and would make his father proud of him if only he could restrain his lecherousness and bad-temper.

Unknown to him and to his family, Xentarion possess a special gift. He was conceived during Kaldmont 28th of the year AC 972, a day full of mystical meanings and arcane effects. As a consequence, he developed over the years a set of unusual abilities which allow him to read and influence other people's minds, penetrate into their dreams, and the like. With time, he could even be able to contact the Spirit World if he managed to direct and train his abilities. Xentarion's skills are controlled by his innermost wishes, which up until now mostly revolve around women: he's likely to read the mind of a girl he wants to seduce, influence her feelings toward him, or penetrate into the dreams of a woman he desires – but all of this happens without his

conscious control. Sometimes, his abilities could even be of some use in tense or dangerous situations.

In game terms, consider Xentarion a 3rd-level cleric, without clerical weapon restrictions. He advances as a cleric, and has two “open” first-level spell slots (no need to memorize spells) which he can use to “cast” (he doesn't do any casting actually, these effects take just place) the following spells: *remove fear* (and its reverse *cause fear*), *ESP*, *command word* and *fellowship* (the last two are found in *GAZ12 – The Golden Khan of Etbengar*). Used slots are refreshed after Xentarion has had a night's sleep. Instead of the turn undead ability, Xentarion can use one of the following powers with a successful Wisdom check:

Read a person's mind - after “reading” or talking to her for a couple of minutes – to know what skills a person possess or what her profession is, what she has done in the last hour or so, and – if the check succeeds by more than 5 points, even what diseases that person has had in the past, what her alignment is, and what special abilities she has.

Penetrate into a person's dreams by accessing the “dreamlands” (Wisdom check is at –2 penalty, or at –4 if the sleeping target is not within 50' of Xentarion). This power only manifests itself while Xentarion is asleep, and only once per day. A second Wisdom check at –4 is needed to locate the target's dream. If the second roll is a 20, Xentarion will be lost within a nightmare and, once awake, will not be able to rest again for the next day.

Within dreams, game rules apply as they do in the real world – if one is killed in the dreamlands, they immediately get up traumatized and lose 1d4 Wisdom points temporarily (they're recovered at the rate of one per day).

If he managed to understand and perfect his powers, Xentarion could rise in level, acquiring additional spells or abilities at the DM's discretion. The discovery of the Spirit World could also have an unexpected effect on his personality.

Zenon (Neutral 5th-level Thief, Dex 16) is Diomedes' second son. Lean and frail, he possess none of his father's or older brother's build and health. In AC 994 he insisted on being Sheared, and went to sea – or so he said. In truth he got in touch with the Kingdom of Thieves in Specularum, and for three years he performed quite well as a burglar – one time even sneaking into the

Vorloi family mansion in the capital! Once however, by chance, he witnessed one of the heads of the Veiled Society while he was unmasking himself, and discovered that it was Cartha Radu. Zenon was taken and tortured by the thugs of the Veiled Society, but managed to escape before they could kill him, but not before they had gouged out his left eye. Zenon fled the capital and stayed in hiding for several months. In the end, in AC 998, scared and impoverished, he returned to his family saying he had decided to quit his Shearing time after an unfortunate encounter with pirates at sea, which had cost him his eye. Since then, he has lived in fear at the court of Baron Vorloi, hoping that the Radu could not reach him there and refusing any offer for offices in Specularum. Out of fear of being killed, Zenon never revealed what he saw, but Cartha Radu has not forgotten him, and plans to strike at Zenon very soon.



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FROM
THE VAULTS
OF PANDIUS

Yuri Molotov -Death Knight

by John Calvin (Chimpman)

Once held up as the shining paragon of Traladaran culture, the name Yuri Molotov now serves to send frightened children under their bed covers at night, and evokes signs against evil from all adults who hear it.

"How can you be sure it was him?" Gregor asked his sister.

"It was him," Mila replied. "A fortnight ago someone attacked the caravan from Hattias, and none of the soldiers sent from Halag ever returned. And," Mila continued before her brother could interrupt her, "you heard the fisherman as well as I. He saw the white drake in the sky."

"Tales told by fisherfolk... that's what we're risking our necks over?" Gregor did little to hide the contempt from his voice, but still he followed his sister into the dark woods.

"Bargle thinks it's him as well..." Mila said into the dark. The moon was new and little light shown through forest canopy to begin with. "I've overheard him twice now cursing Yuri's name."

The two continued their journey in silence for most of the night. There was no turning back now however, since Mila had stolen several of their supplies from her erstwhile master. "Stop. We're near now," she said and found a patch of leaves to sit down on. Reaching into a black pouch at her side the Traladaran woman took out several rune-covered bones and threw them to the ground.

Gregor could hear his own breathing. The forest was still. Too still. It was an unnatural silence. He tried to calm himself, tried to control the heavy breaths that escaped his mouth, but the burning in his lungs made that impossible.

Then they were there, standing in front of them, almost as if they materialised just as the first rays of the morning sun penetrated the shadows. Two figures, their armour chipped and dented, their mail rusty, bones clearly visible underneath their helms. Mila continued to sit in the leaves, her legs crossed, and chanted softly under her breath. The two figures advanced. In unison they drew swords. Mila continued her chanting.

Suddenly she stopped and lurched to her feet. The two figures halted and lowered their swords. "Take me to Yuri," Mila commanded.

All of those years of seething hatred had led Mila and her brother to this place. At last the means to avenge their parents was within their grasp. Dozens of men, or at least what appeared to have been men at one time, mull'd silently around the campsite. Mila ignored them as they looked up, revealing dead eyes and yellowing bones. She focused her attention on the



Death knight Yuri Molotov astride Bruhminghet

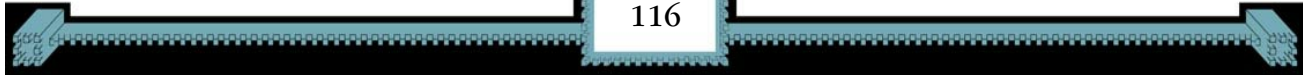


figure seated in the makeshift throne in the centre of the camp.

Mia dropped to one knee. "My lord, we have travelled far to seek your guidance. We pledge ourselves to you and your cause," she declared. "All we ask is the chance to avenge ourselves upon the hated Thyatians."

The thing that was Yuri stood up. Red flares of light flickered in the darkness that once held his eyes. "I will grant your wish," his hollow voice rang out.

Mila cringed, nearly screaming out in pain as cold hands gripped her shoulders. Behind her Gregor did let out a gasp. Their former guides seized them and forced them to the ground on their knees. Yuri's sword rasped as he drew it from its rusty scabbard.

"No my lord!" Mila gasped. "We offer ourselves freely to your cause. We pledge our lives to you." The sweat was beading down her face. "We will serve you!"

"Yes," Yuri's hollow voice echoed through the camp as he brought down his sword. "I know you will..."

Yuri's Background

Yuri grew up in a small nameless village under the shadows of the Dymrak Forest in eastern Traladara. Working on his father's farm from a very young age, he mucked out stables and tended fields of stunted grains. Yuri spent his free time with the animals, which he considered more his friends than any of his peers. He could do little but silently seethe when the Thyatians came to collect their taxes, and found himself watching helplessly as they slowly but steadily siphoned away what little vitality was left of

their small community. Not wanting to see his father's farm wither away into nothingness, Yuri decided to leave. At twelve years of age he snuck off, determined to make a better life for himself, and followed the coast westward until arriving at Specularum.

Yet the city proved a disappointment to Yuri, who found little more to support himself than the same type of stable work he had left behind on the farm. Still, his affinity for animals served him well when happenstance favored him with the care of Sir Valdri Tescu's hunting falcon. Impressed with the boy's skills, Tescu took him on as a squire and began teaching Yuri the art of knighthood.

Yuri's Rise

Valdri was a member of the Order of the White Drake – elite soldiers trained in the Thyatian arts of aerial combat, each swearing a personal oath of service to the Emperor of Thyatis himself. Despite his misgivings for the Thyatian order, Yuri accepted Tescu's tutelage and prospered, quickly attaining knighthood alongside his mentor. He was inducted into the Order of the White Drake in AC 937, at the age of 18. During his time as a knight he repulsed humanoid raiders from Radlebb, hunted rogue wyverns over Kelvin, and even led several strikes against the frost giants of the Altan Tepes. On one such raid Yuri returned with the white dragon Bruhminghet (Hoarfrost) in tow, subdued and submissive to Yuri's commands.

Like Valdri Tescu before him, Yuri actively sought out others disenfranchised by the Thyatians to fill out the membership of the Order, slowly replacing the aging Thyatian

elite. The local Traladaran populace nearly worshipped him, proclaiming him to be one of the Traldar heroes of old, returned to free their people. With all of his skills and charisma, it was little wonder that Yuri quickly ascended to be Master of the Order.

Yuri's Downfall and Fate

When the Alphatians began their Spike Assault in AC 960, Yuri saw his chance. He deployed those of his order still loyal to Thyatis to the far corners of Traladara. The rest – those loyal to himself – he held back in reserve, and watched as skyships bombarded Thyatian cities. When Thincol Torion's rebellion succeeded, however, Yuri's hopes were dashed. The new Emperor of Thyatis branded Yuri and his followers as traitors, and sent the legions to Traladara to quell all unrest and reinstate Thyatian law.

Those who once extolled Yuri as a hero now shunned him for fear of Thyatian retribution. Emperor Thincol sent the court wizard Demetron and his pet dragon Hytiliaph to bring Yuri to justice, but Yuri would not go down without a fight. High over the dark pines of Dymrak the pair battled atop their dragon mounts, but Bruhminghet was no match for the gold dragon. Yuri and his dragon fell to their deaths in a blaze of flame and ice... and blood.

Yuri's spirit, however, would not slumber in peace.

Yuri Molotov (Death Knight)

Yuri's skin is stretched thin across his face, every inch of it desiccated and blackened by frost. The bronze armor he wears is permeated with magic from another age. His sword *Unifier*, gifted to him by Valdri Tescu,

is an heirloom of Traladaran heroes passed down throughout the ages.

Yuri Molotov (Death Knight): AC 1; HD 14; hp 80; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1; D 1-4 cold touch, or by weapon; Save as F14; ML 10; AL C. Yuri also wears magical armor (banded +2, protection from cold, and a shield), and carries *Unifier* (short sword +2, +3 vs. gnolls).

Bruhminghet (Undead Dragon)

Once a powerful and vibrant large white dragon, Bruhminghet's rotting remains are animated by the same malignant force that brought Yuri back from the dead. She serves Yuri in death, even as she did in life, acting as his mount and closest ally. Despite being imbued with a dark intelligence all her own, the once white dragon is completely devoted to her master.

Bruhminghet (Undead White Dragon): AC 1; HD 9; hp 65; MV 120' (40'), Fly 300' (100'); #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Airborne up to 6; D 2d8+4 (bite or crush), 1d6+1 (claws, kicks, wings, tail); Save as F18; ML 12; AL c.

DMing Notes

Frost giants both fear and hate Yuri, remembering the time he once hunted them. Many of their dead have joined his ranks. In addition to the undead foot soldiers who serve him, former members of the order have also joined his ranks – most riding undead versions of the white wyverns they rode in life. Despite this, Yuri's own allegiances have changed since he was living. As a Death Knight he no longer cares about the petty politics of the world. Instead his wrath drives Yuri to bring pain and anguish to the living... and to extinguish such life

when he can. He may be courted by other dark organizations in the world and on occasion even see fit to lend them support, but ultimately Yuri owes allegiance to himself alone.

Yuri's camp moves constantly and ranges throughout the Dymrak from the Barony of Vorloi to the peaks of the Altan Tepes. Wherever he goes freezing winds follows him, and locals curse his name during every early frost or late winter.

Even in death Yuri is drawn toward his childhood home, and camps often near Rugalov Keep. His true goal is to retake the keep with his undead army and unleash the power locked deep inside the former Aerodrome where a secret portal to the Plane of Air awaits. Once used by the Order of the White Drake to control the winds of Traladara, Yuri plans to corrupt the portal for his own ends. He will unleash an endless, freezing zephyr that will cover his former homeland in a deep and everlasting ice.

Adventure Ideas

- 1) The armor Yuri wears once belonged to the First King of Traladara, Ithron Ivanov, crafted for the king shortly before he unified the Traladaran clans in BC 171, and the Seers say he desecrates it with his presence. They have put a call out to end Yuri's evil and return his sword and armor to the Traladaran church.
- 2) Undead giants infused with the cold of winter have begun pouring out of the Altan Tepes Mountains, threatening nearby settlements. Hushed whispers name Yuri Molotov as the power behind these horrors. Despite the peril, these attacks in the north are mere feints designed to draw his opponents astray, as Yuri's attention lies further south.
- 3) Rugalov Keep, once the famed Aerodrome of the Order of the White Drake, has fallen on dark times. Sentries disappear, silent creatures roam the countryside, and a frost laden wind blows down from the north. Yuri knows the secret passageways within the keep and plans to take it from within. He will then use it as a base of operations to spread his cold death both into Thyatis and Karamaikos.

Sources:

[Yuri Molotov - Death Knight](#) by John Calvin

[Hytiliaph](#) by John Calvin

[The Order of the White Drake - A History](#) by Geoff Gander, with special thanks to James Ruhland, Tharquil, and Jamuga Khan

[History of Traladara](#)
by Francesco Defferrari



FROM THE VAULTS OF PANDIUS



View of the entrance to the underground goblin city in the Wufwolde hills

Dhrom Dhum was born several years ago in a small village in the Dymrak forest that was embroiled in continuous fights with humans and elves. When he was still a young goblin, two accidental encounters changed his life forever. The first one was with a young female Callarii elf, the second with an old, persecuted, wandering goblin shaman of Hela. In the following years Dhrom Dhum became a shaman of the goddess himself and, with the help of his elven friend, tried to convince his tribe and the surrounding ones to change their ways, pressing for a diplomatic solution to stop the wars and the human encroachment into goblin's land. His efforts were not rewarded, as his friend was killed by humans and goblins were framed for

her murder. The more radical elements soon prevailed among elves, humans and goblins, and Dhrom Dhum was almost killed himself and had to escape the forest. Forced to hide in the Wufwolde hills, he met the Nightstalkers, a goblin tribe beset by enemies, that he led to victory after victory, making them a regional power and converting most of the goblins to the cult of Hela (even if he did not ban the traditional cult of Wogar).

Driven by a powerful vision from his goddess, the goal of Dhrom Dhum is nothing less than uniting all the non-human races of Karameikos against what he sees as the common threat: men.

Dhrom Dhum
speaks:

I am Dbrom Dbum, shaman of Hela. I speak to all the humanoids in Tra Gar and to all the humanoids in the world. I had a vision from my goddess. I saw many wolves scattered around a big forest. Hunters came to kill them. Many hunters with long bows. They came and killed the wolves, because every wolf was alone. The hunters killed the big wolves then, laughing, they killed the whelps. And I knew the wolves were us. Killed by our enemies, the humans, one by one, tribe by tribe, because we were scattered in the world like the wolves of my vision were in the forest. I speak to goblins and kobolds, to trolls, orcs and ogres, to gnolls and bugbears. Our enemies will kill us all. Our enemies are not the elves. Our enemies are not the giants, not the dwarves, nor gnomes or halflings. Our enemies are the humans. They are as numberless as lice, and they breed like rats, stealing our lands and killing us all. They enter our caves and kill warriors and females and whelps. They search for us in the forest, ten one day, a hundred the next day, a thousand the next day. They search for us in the tallest and loneliest mountain and come to kill us. They want to steal the land of all the other races, and they will kill us all. We have to forget hatred between tribes. We have to forget enmity with elves and dwarves. Humans have forced elves to hide in the forest, dwarves to hide in the mountains. Many moons ago we were numberless, and here in the world there were only us and the elves and the dwarves and halflings and giants. Then humans came, and easily defeated us all, because we were fighting each other. Now there are humans everywhere, and they spread in the world like a pestilence. Their cities are bigger every moon, and every moon they want more land.

They want all the world, and they will kill us all.

THE NIGHTSTALKERS

Led by the visionary shaman Dhrom Dhum (Goblin 7/Shaman 6), the Nightstalkers are a typical Goblin tribe, worshippers of Wogar, but also of Hel; the chief himself is a shaman of this northern Immortal.

Dhrom Dhum controls five hordes of goblin wolfriders in the area between Highforge and Penhaligon, north of the Faz-Plak territory.

The shaman has a powerful vision of a united Goblinoid nation, and is trying to bring the northern tribes and those of the Dymrak to his side, but he is opposed by the Witches of Dymrak and, indirectly, by the green dragon Argos.

The Nightstalkers favour the use of hand axes, maces and short bows. They use grey-green cloaks and their shamans carry war drums in battle.

A PLEA FOR AID

*To His Highness King Stephan Karameikos and the royal court
To the Lords of Penbaligon and Threshold and their courts
To the Lord commander of the Duke's road keep*

A very urgent request of aid from the towns of Irenke and Knosht

Your Graces,

We have sent several petitions already to anyone who could help us. We are just two small towns in the wilderlands that have fared well for some years being on a trade road between Threshold and Penbaligon, and being somehow favorite places for young wizards and adventurers. We have had our share of troubles with goblinoids and such lot in the past, but never before has the situation been so bad as it is now.

The Nightstalkers goblins have always been a threat here in the Wufwolde hills, yet many young adventurers from our towns or from many other places in Karameikos and other lands have several times aided us against them, keeping their strength and raids in check. But in the last year things have changed for the worse. At least three different groups of adventurers never returned from the wilds, many caravans and merchants have been robbed by goblins and just a few days ago goblin emissaries came to both our towns with a white flag, but they had no intention of surrender, my lords. They demanded our surrender, meaning that our towns should from now on be under the rule of the goblin kingdom of Wufwolde, or else.

I well know we are free towns, we are not part of the dominions of Threshold or Penbaligon, yet we are part of the Kingdom of Karameikos, so we ask for help from any one of your high lords willing to aid us, because we fear the goblins are growing stronger and stronger, and we will not be able to resist them.

What this means

Dhrom Dhum is now ready to go to the next level and declare unilateral independence from the Kingdom of Karameikos, thus ratifying the de facto situation of the Wufwolde hills, that humans have never been able to colonize in all the history of Karameikos and even Traladara.

Yet obviously the King will not accept this and will probably send adventurers, at the least, or even a full army, to deal with the goblins. But Dhrom Dhum is smart and will avoid any wanton slaughter, trying instead to demonstrate to anyone sent against him that the Wufwolde hills have always been goblin territory and the humans have no right to claim them.

He is right, and he even collected several documents to support this - very old human and elven chronicles that describe the hills as inhabited by goblins from many centuries ago. He is also ready to address his petition to the Western Defense League and any foreign ambassador in Karameikos, with the goal of embarrassing the King or exposing his hypocrisy if he refuses without grounds the goblins' claim for independence. If PCs are involved, they should resort to diplomacy rather than violence, as Dhrom Dhum has many warriors that know the hills very well, and could be rather difficult to defeat. Indeed the underground areas under the Wufwolde are so extensive that even the task of simply finding Dhrom Dhum would be really daunting.

ARGOS' WILL

"You will do as commanded," said the dark green robed figure.

The big goblin shifted on his feet, troubled.

"But the runt has always been our enemy," he said, disgruntled. "We exiled him".

Because my stupid minions failed to kill him, he also thought.

It's the will of the Green Lord and you will obey," said the figure in her quiet voice, with just a slight note of irritation.

Kosivikh shivered. In his life he had survived much and feared very little. Indeed, he feared only the Green Lord and the witches in all the world. And one of the witches was now standing quietly before him. He almost hadn't the strength to reply again, but then somehow managed to speak.



The entrance is lit by fires during the night.

"He worships another immortal. The shamans of all the hordes will be displeased."

The figure made a sound. It sounded almost like a laughter, but it terrified him.

Your immortals are not here. I am here. And the Green Lord is near," she said.

As a whelp, Kosivikh was taught it was foolish to defy immortals and shamans, unless you were powerful enough to do it. He bowed before the dark green figure.

We will ask Dhrom Dhum to join the goblin kingdom as his loyal subjects," he said. He almost choked on the words and felt sick. He didn't look up, but he knew the witch was smiling.

What this means

In the past, the green dragon Argos has actively tried to kill Dhrom Dhum, as the only goblin leader unwilling to bow before him. But the idea of creating a goblin kingdom amuses him so much he has decided to join it. Not overtly, obviously, but he is sure the event could only be advantageous to him.

If the goblin succeeds, Argos could one day replace him with a more suitable ruler; i.e. one he can better control. If the goblin fails, he could use the event to unleash an humanoid war upon all Karamaikos. In either case, Argos will win.

NIGHT'S DARK ENCOUNTER

She was not cloaked in a black cloak, or cape, or anything like that. She had a simple and modest brown dress, with only small silver linings as decorations on the sleeves. Not in any way a concession to vanity, but a reminder of the Lady to herself. She wasn't dark of hair or eyes either, even if the Lady was always pictured thus in classic iconographies. She was blonde, and had green eyes. None of this mattered to the goblin, to whom she was just a human, a potentially useful one. Some humans said that Dhrom Dhum was a bloodthirsty savage like any goblin, and wanted only to slaughter every man and woman alive and eat their babies. That wasn't true. He was there because he was willing to ally with some humans to stop those who were encroaching on goblins land. He wouldn't eat babies either, he wouldn't even enslave them. He strongly believed cruelty was stupid, and it was far more useful to adopt enemy prisoners into the tribe rather than exterminate them. Humans said humanoids are bloodthirsty savages, but they committed the worst wars of extermination.

"And so are you sure there will not be religious conflicts between us?" the woman asked, interrupting his thoughts.

Why should there be?" he asked. "Our immortal Ladies have similar philosophies. Some say my Lady spawned yours," he added, smiling.

"It could be," the woman shrugged, earning more points in Dhrom Dhum's opinion. "Yet we believe in undeath. Will your people accept it? Will you?" the woman asked, looking at him with her intense green eyes.

Even Dhrom Dhum found the eyes charming, and he imagined they would appeal greatly to a human male. "I think your 'undeath-for-all' is something of a long term plan," he said. "First of all we should gain independence for my people and yours. Independence and recognition, forcing the king and all the other rulers to accept and respect our existence. Don't you think that would be enough for a start?"

The woman smiled, too. "I suppose it would be," she said. "Yet you and I will have to face this religious debate sooner or later, don't you think?"

"I look forward to it," he replied.

The woman kept on smiling and nodded. Dhrom Dhum made a little bow before her. And so the alliance between the Nightstalkers and the Darkers was done.

What this means

The Darkers, a secret organization of followers of Nyx (see the [article on Koskatep](#)), has waited centuries to openly practice their religion. The new goblin kingdom could give them that chance. And Dhrom Dhum could use their magical expertise and, - if necessary - their ability in creating powerful undead.

INTEGRATING THIS SCENARIO WITH OTHER MYSTARA MODULES

The “Mystara modules and placement”¹ article by Andrew Theisen in the Vaults of Pandius provides useful information to integrate Dhrom Dhum and the Nightstalkers in Karameikos.

B8: Journey to the Rock. The placement of this module is not very consistent with Karameikos geography, but if the DM has already used it in the area north of Threshold, as shown in this map by Simone Neri in the article [Detail of the Threshold Region](#), the Nightstalkers goblins could have relations with some of the people mentioned here. In the module this area is inhabited by the wizard Lirdrium Arkayz and his champion Jenlar Temlin and many other people: gnomes, a tribe of dwarves, the elves of Sylvanhome, a camp of ogres, bugbears, sprites, many harpies, some human goat herders, a hidden city of chameleon men, rock men, rock baboons, and the Singing Skulls goblins. There is also a Crone of Chaos in the Hall of the Rock and the lost city of Tuma, moved to another plane. Many things can change if the Crone is defeated and the talisman is retrieved, or if Tuma returns. The city, as a beacon of law, would certainly oppose a shaman of Hel like Dhrom Dhum, but other inhabitants of the area could ally with him.

B9 Castle Caldwell and beyond: The Sanctuary of Elwyn the Ardent is right in the centre of the area controlled by Dhrom Dhum. Elwyn should be a cleric of Chardastes

¹ [Mystara Modules and Placement](#) at The Vaults of Pandius

that stole the sacred bell and turned to Leptar. She has orc allies and a black dragon. If she was defeated by adventurers the complex could be now empty and Dhrom Dhum would probably take it.

B10 Night's Dark Terror: If PC's have already defeated or killed some goblin chiefs of the Dymrak woods they could be weaker, thus falling more easily under Dhrom Dhum's influence.

B11 and B12: If Ilyana Penhaligon is still alive and in control of Haradraith's keep she is unlikely to ally with Dhrom Dhum and will probably be a very dangerous enemy for him. If she is dead the goblins could have taken control of the keep and of several former minions of Ilyana's. The Dark Web orcs, followers of Nyx enslaved by Ilyana, could become willing allies of Dhrom Dhum. The Faceslashers gnolls would be less willing, but the goblin's strength could force them to escape into the mountains.

GAZ1: One very old Red Dragon is mentioned in the northern Wufwolde Hills. Could he be an ally of Dhrom Dhum, or even the real power behind him, the rise of the goblin shaman just his plot to replace Argos as the dragon ruler of Karameikos? Could the gold dragon posing as a beggar in Threshold also be involved?

DDA4 The Dymrak Dread: If the PCs have killed Kosivikh he will not be the leader of the Dymrak goblin horde anymore, but as above that would just make things easier for Dhrom Dhum. According to the module there are also lizardmen in the forest. Lord Roderick the Forester could be the Karameikan official in charge of the unsettled lands, thus being a likely delegate to parley with the goblins.

The Sound of Madness (From Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure): Around Eltan's Spring, there is a hag that leads some goblins. She could have become an ally of the Nightstalkers, or her former goblin band could if she has been killed. There are also stone giant clans east of Threshold. If the goblins respect their lands they could be persuaded to join Dhrom Dhum's kingdom.

Hail the Heroes: There are goblins and ogres around the ruins of Zadreth. If Dhrom Dhum's goblins have taken control of the place, the quest to retrieve the Shield of Halav could become much more demanding.

GOBLIN POPULATION AND MILITARY STRENGTH

By the lowest estimate, the Nightstalkers should number around 2,000 between goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears and others, and have a number of possible warriors between 1,000 and 1,500. In this case they should control only an area of 16x24 miles or less in the forested hills between Threshold, Penhaligon, Highforge and Irenke².

If the DM would like the Nightstalkers to be stronger, they could have expanded through the hills all the way up to the border with Darokin, effectively surrounding the human villages of Irenke and Knosht, controlling a total territory of approximately 24x40 miles.

² For more detail, see the map of Goblinoid tribes and the small-scale map of Karameikos by Agathokles at the Vaults of Pandius: [Map of the Tribes of Karameikos](#) and [3.2 miles/hex map of Karameikos](#)

That's the scenario supposed in this article, and therefore the Nightstalker population could have grown up to 7,000 humanoids in recent years, with a number of warriors between 3,500 and 5,000.

The Dymrak Dread goblins (and other humanoids) should number between 10,000 and 20,000, depending on the extent of the forest area the DM would like them to control, with 50 to 75% as warriors.

All these calculations assume a basic humanoid density of 6.5 per square mile as in the "*Demography of Mystara: Karameikos*" article by Simone Neri (see page 5 of this issue). Read it for more accurate numbers about the estimated humanoid population in the nation.

If the DM plans a population explosion or if the goblins have gained access to more resources (for example they are using herding, horticulture or magic to have more food available) their numbers could be even higher, as the basic density could easily be doubled.

In any case, the goblins' strength should make them a very serious threat for Karameikos, one that PCs should face with stealth and diplomacy rather than brute force.



FROM THE VAULTS OF PANDIUS

The Dangers of the Dymrak Wilds

by Håvard

The lands of Men have their kings and nobles. So too does the wilderness of Karameikos have its hierarchy of lords and minions, power and intrigue. Dating back to the Beastman Invasions and the age of King Halav, the Dymrak Forest has always been a haven to the evils of Karameikos. These forces are ever seeking to expand their influence north into the Kelvin Moors and beyond. At the same time, there are forces of good within the wilderness trying to forge alliances against these evils, hoping perhaps that the wilderness itself can stand against the darkness instead of depending on heroes from the so-called civilized parts of the Grand Duchy. These conflicts go back to the ancient history of the Traladaran Lands and wars between enemies have been fought in the wilderness without civilized men even knowing about it.

ARGOS THE WORRIER

The True Master of the Dymrak Forest is Mighty Argos, the green Dragon. The entrance to his lair is reached through the Lake of Lost Dreams, but Argos rarely leaves his den -- in draconic form, that is. Once, he was almost bound to servitude by the dragon queen Attura, and he vowed never to be so powerless. This led him to make a pact with the Immortal Orcus. He became a Cleric of Orcus, thus enabling him to cast both clerical and arcane spells. However, an alliance with a Demon Prince cannot become known

among other dragons or Argos will become an outcast from Draconic society.

Another gift from the Demon Prince was the power to take on humanoid shape. This ability was also passed on to Argos three children. One of these children, the Dragon Verdilith was even able to infiltrate the court at Penhaligon and is working his way into Karameikan politics by using this ability (See the Penhaligon Trilogy for more details).

Allies: Argos has also been able to dominate most of the goblin tribes of Dymrak Forest, on both sides of the Rugalov River. This he has achieved by forging a magical weapon -- the Blood Blade -- a sword made of rare Red Steel. Through the aid of his Immortal Patron, Orcus, Argos was able to empower the weapon with intelligence of its own. Argos gave the sword to Ghnass, the leader of a goblin tribe. The goblin chieftain quickly fell under the Blood Blade's domination. With the aid of this blade the goblins forming the Red Blade Tribe were able to subjugate several other Wolf Riding tribes, all of whom now serve Argos and revere the dragon as a god. Orcus in return provides clerical spells for the goblin shamans.

Some of the goblin tribes still resist domination by the dragon and have allied themselves with other powers of Dymrak, such as the Witches who live there, but it is only a matter of time before Argos decides to deal with this problem.

Enemies: Among dragons, Argos' main rival is Attura, a powerful dragon whom he once tried to mate. The Witches of Dymrak contest with Argos for the domination of the goblin tribes, but Argos feels confident that he can deal with them. Since Argos made the pact with Orcus, his main enemy has become the Seer of the Lake of Lost Dreams. The Seer is an agent of the forces who seek to protect Karameikos against the likes of Argos and his masters and this has actually made it more difficult for Argos to move around.

Game Statistics: See [Who's Who Among Dragons](#). Has the ability to take human form.

THE WITCHES OF DYMRAK

Another powerful force of evil lurking in the Dymrak Forest are the The Witches of Dymrak. These powerful Crone of Chaos are sometimes rivals and sometimes allies of Argos. This ancient circle of nine Witches dates many centuries back. The Witches have divided the forest between them and usually prefer to work on their own individual schemes. However, they are the most dangerous when they join forces. The Crone, who refer to each other as "sisters", see themselves as the representatives of the Dark Fey Court of Karameikos. They hate each other, but will always come to the aid of another if one is in trouble. If all nine Witches are gathered, they are able to weave powerful magic.

Best known is the Witch Grizzelda (powerful Crone of Chaos, HD8** Hp 60, Wokan 6, AL C). She has had some dealings with the various Centaur tribes of the Kelvin Moors. Grizzelda is allied with the Firemane Centaurs, who have provided various services

for her. It is not known which services she has given the Firemanes in return, but the Firemanes rivals the Stormwinds have theories of their own. Magical weapons in the hands of the Firemanes is at least one of the gifts that they must have received. Grizzelda has been harassing nearby families of forest gnomes (Earth Gnomes) living in her area, and these gnomes fear the Witch greatly. In spite of her malicious nature, Grizzelda has surprisingly managed to stay on relatively friendly terms with the Seer of the Lake of Lost Dreams. It has even been speculated that she has aided the Seer in his battles against evil in the past. Grizzelda lives in the northern edge of the forest in a small grove of dead trees. The trees are actually undead Treants who guard her cottage. Grizzelda is closest to her sister Esmeralda (Crone of Chaos, HD 6*, Hp 55, Wokan 3, AL C) who is allied with the Dymrak Horde, a goblin tribe in the western parts of the forest. A third Witch, Gelphora (HD6*, AL C) is among those witches most closely devout to Orcus.

THE SEER OF THE LAKE OF LOST DREAMS

When Halav and his companions were fighting the Beastmen, Halav sought out Oberon of the Fey Realm for help. Oberon agreed, but at a price. The pact between Halav and Oberon involved the fate of Haven and is still honored to this day. The keeper of the Pact is known only as the Seer.

This old hermit lives in a small wooden cottage on the coast of the Lake of Lost Dreams in eastern Karameikos. The Seer is known for his great wisdom and knowledge of the lands of Karameikos and its history

and legends. Also, he is known to have powers of divination. The origin of his powers is not known to the common man. Some say he was trained by the Witches of Dymrak. Others say that he is a demigod and the son of King Halav himself. That he has some connection with the Traladaran Three is undisputed. The Seer seems to see himself as a protector of the Traladaran lands. He shows little interest in mortal affairs in general, but when the land itself is threatened -- such as when the servants of Arik attempt to free their master -- the Seer always intervenes if he can. He has very few dealings with the nobility and other high ranking members of Karameikan society, but

The Seer is a popular figure among the Traladaran commoners, especially the rural population. While he lives in a remote location, the Seer often travels the countryside, giving aid to common Traladarans.

The Seer is a friend of the people of Haven. He is also on friendly terms with the Three Sidhe Priestesses of Halav who reside on the Island in the middle of the Lake of Lost Dreams. While Sidhe cannot normally become Clerics, it is believed that these Three serve the Pact just like the Seer does. It is said that it was the Sidhe Priestesses who gave the Seer his most valued possession, the Eye of Traldar.

The Eye of Traldar is actually one of two such magical gemstones. The one in the possession of the Seer is known as the White Diamond Eye while another, the Black Opal Eye, is found somewhere in the Radlebb Woods. The two eyes were created by a Nithian Wizard called Traldar. According to some legends, he was the one who originally led the Traldar from Nithia to their current

homelands. Some say that the Eyes of Traldar were actually Traldar's own eyes, which had become gemstones after the Wizard had died and still contained his magical powers.

Appearance: The Seer is an old man, yet physically he is in a better shape than many youngsters. His skin is tanned from the sun and his grey hair is set in a ponytail. The Seer has a trimmed grey moustache and beard. He wears old grey robes, held together by a rope belt. From the belt hang numerous items of mystical significance such as a bird's leg, a bag of coloured sand and the fingerbone of a goblin.

Game Statistics: 11th level Magic-user. St: 14, Dx 15, Co 17, In 18, Wi 18, Ch 16. AL: N.

Possessions: Wooden staff, robes, the Eye of Traldar (a magical artifact with several divining and detection magic spells. It also functions as a Crystal Ball, but only areas within Karameikos and Haven [from module B3] can be scried.)

Notes: The Seer of the Lake of Lost Dreams was originally mentioned in DDA1 Eye of Traldar. There he was referred to as the Seer of the Lake of Lost Souls.

THE CENTAURS

The lands north of the Dymrak Forest are home to a large number of Centaur Clans. These are of a barbaric and warlike race, placing great value on physical strength, courage and honour. They are a proud race and often show a hostile attitude towards non centaurs. The Centaurs often wear their hair Mohawk-style or spiked. They cover their upper (human) body with runic tattoos and in times of war use blue war paint. The



Centaur in the Dymrak Wilds

Centaurians worship spirits of nature and ancestors as well as the Immortals of Nature (Terra, Ordana, Djaea and Faunus). They speak a form of archaic Traladaran resembling the old Vandar tongue.

The clans are divided into two major tribes; the Firemane Tribe and the Stormwind Tribe. The Firemane Tribe is a chaotic and wild bunch. They tend to have red hair and gold-brown eyes. This tribe is known to be the most aggressive and warlike. They are rumoured to occasionally sell human captives to the Iron Ring, and have had an alliance with Grizzelda, one of the Witches of Dymrak

(See the Witches of Dymrak) in the past. The Firemanes live in the lands between the Kelvin Moors and the Lake of Lost Dreams. Fire is holy to the Firemane Tribe. Their leader is Rathanuk Flamehoof, a powerful warrior easily recognised by his flaming red lion-like hair and a scar below his left eye. He wields a powerful scimitar, said to burst into flames when engaged in combat. (Centaur 7, HD7 Hp 56, St 14, Dx 13, In 11, Wis 10, Co 12, Cha 12, Al C, Sword of Flaming),

The other clan, the Stormwinds, is considered to be more reliable. Still, the Stormwinds dislike outsiders and prefer to stay away from civilisation. However, someone meeting with the Stormwinds will notice that they have many humans living among them. These humans find acceptance by the centaurs, in spite of the usual resentment most of that race have for humans. The Stormwinds live on the Kelvin Moors. They have black hair and deep blue eyes. Stormy weather is considered a blessing by the Stormwinds. Their leader is Arthane Stormchild (Centaur 6, HD7 Hp 56, St 17, Dx 12, In 10, Wis 15, Co 13, Cha 14, AL N) an aging, yet powerful centaur warrior, with greying black hair worn in a ponytail, who is never seen without his great spear and a rune carved hunting horn hanging from a leather string around his neck.

There is a third group of centaurs also living in these lands. These are the Clanless, a group consisting entirely of centaurs and chevalls many of whom are druids (See Monster Spellcaster Rules). These centaurs act as judges, sages, storytellers and healers and enjoy great respect from all centaurs.

The most powerful of all the Clanless is the chevall druid Loshad (see B10). He was trained by a treant druid (Treant 10, Druid 7, HD 10, Hp 79 St 15, Dx 12, In 13, Wis 18, Co 13, Cha 14, AL N) known as Master Temor. Loshad works to protect horses, and preserve the peace between the centaurs. He hates the werewolves of the realm with a passion and has sometimes allied himself with werewolf hunters from Kelvin in order to destroy this evil.

Notes

- Argos the Worrier and Attura originally appeared in [Who's Who Among Dragons](#) by Bruce Heard.
- Gelphora was created by Agathokles and first appeared in his adventure [Dymrak Dread](#).
- Loshad the Chevall originally appeared in module *B10 Dark Night's Terror*.
- The Seer and the Eye of Traldar first appeared in the module *DDA3 Eye of Traldar*.

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Fort Doom

by Niels Just Rasmussen

Before the Thyatian invasion the westernmost Traladaran people used to keep to themselves, as they were isolated from other Traladaran settlements by ominous forests full of humanoids and other dangerous creatures. The small fishing village of "Old Halag" had both daring fishermen that sailed into the Gulf of Halag catching big game with long lines and coastal fishermen using nets. In the flat lands around Old Halag you could find some excellent farmland where thousands of farmers made their living. All of these people had together built a walled inland town - "New Halag" - which was protected both from pirate attacks from the sea and from humanoid attacks from the forests. There, fishermen and farmers could exchange goods under the jurisdiction of a Mayor appointed by all the male elders of the region -- all free men of 40 years of age and older could vote. The Mayor was appointed for life (or until his wits failed him) and he sat in the council with an elder fisherman and an elder farmer that together had the power to veto the Mayor's decisions or remove him from office if they agreed he was unable to lead.

When the Thyatians invaded in 900 AC and took over Marilenev (renaming it Specularum) the Halag region was mostly unaffected, since it was far away and not in any way a trade center that was tax worthy. The Halag Traladarans were very superstitious and regarded halflings, elves and dwarves as tricksters to be avoided. So



Traladarans fleeing Halag during Baron Von Hendricks' "conquest".

they kept to themselves as they had done for centuries, not even trading with the halflings in the Five Shires just across the Gulf of Halag.

Their age-old isolation was brutally broken in 970 AC when the Ludwig von Hendriks and his Hattian cavalry suddenly came crashing out of the woods into the plains with far greater speed and coordination than any humanoid raid. The Traladaran swere overwhelmed and many farmers could not flee in time to safety behind the walls of New Halag. The attacking Hattians had taken many farmers hostage and threatened to kill them before the walls unless Halag opened its gates. The horrified populace was at first indecisive, but the elders bade them stand firm. But after the displays of cruelty before the walls, many farmers faltered, fearing that their family members were the next to be killed, and

they opened the gates. The Hattians poured in; von Hendriks and his men confiscated all property and rounded up all the leaders and their families and executed them in the main square as punishment. Those who had opened the gates for the Thyatians were spared and allowed to keep some of their property.

Over the last 30 years the Traladaran population has been reduced to slavery, working at strengthening the fortifications of

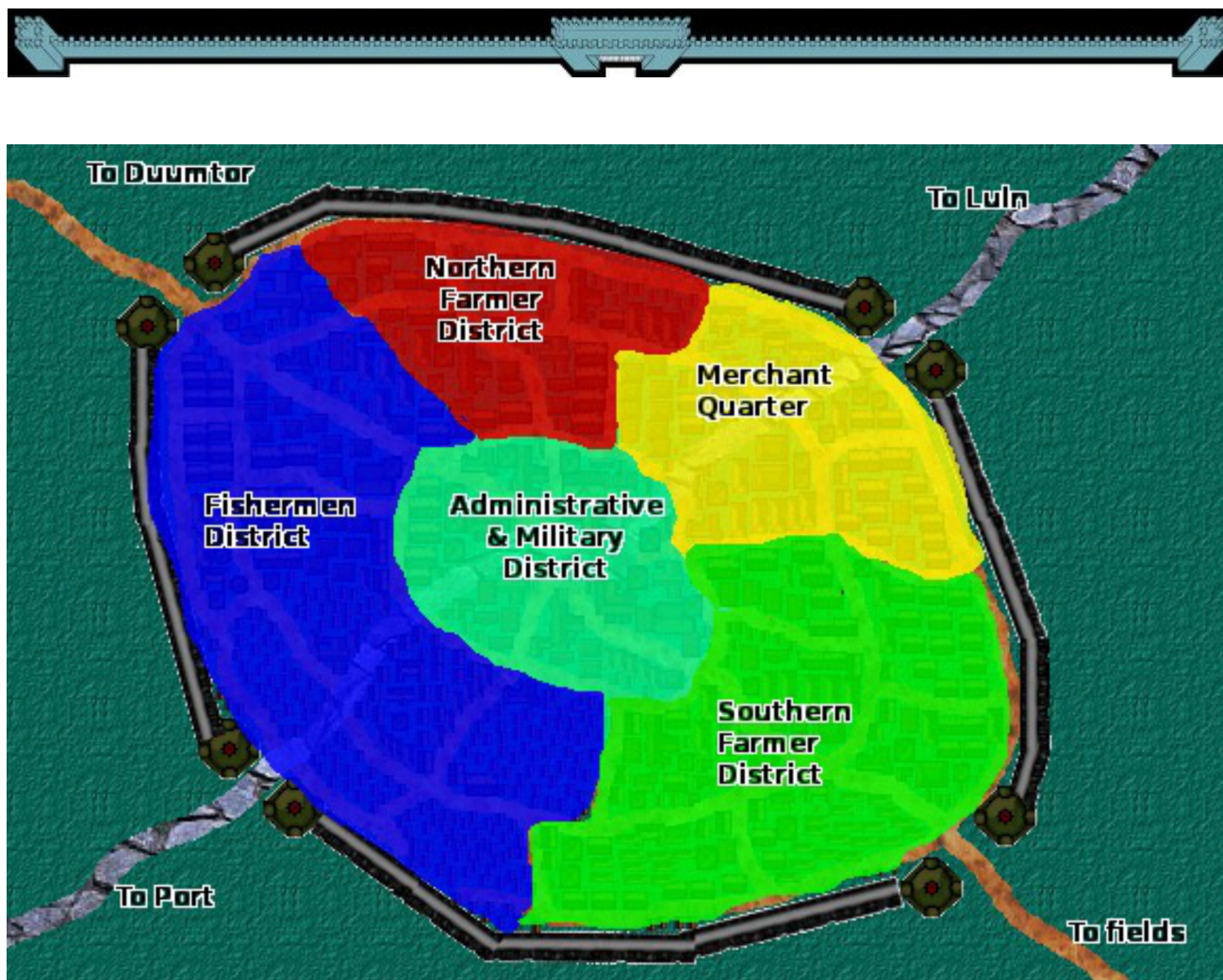
the town and building castles and manors for the Thyatian elite led by von Hendriks. The entire Traladaran population, with the exception of the few traitors who had turned to work for the Thyatians, has been relocated to New Halag, now known as Fort Doom (or, as the Hattians call it, "Festung Verhängnis"). The new town is much larger than the old one -- 10,000 people now live there.



LAYOUT OF THE TOWN

The buildings around the market square, which was the original center of the town, have been confiscated and repurposed into army barracks, bureaucratic offices and food storage. Goods and produce brought in from the surrounding farmlands and fish caught by the fishermen are registered, labelled, and stored here, mostly for use of the Thyatian élite.

The city is protected by walls, and four gates allow entrance to the town. The Northeastern gate is the largest and controls a paved road leading to Luln. The road is sufficiently well kept as to allow wagons to pass. The Southwestern gate is the second largest. It leads to the harbour, which lies around five miles away. The road here is also paved, but it is narrower than the Luln road.



Fort Doom City Districts

The Northern and Southern gates have gravel roads leading out to the surrounding farms. These two gates are a lot narrower and not well suited for large wagons, although carts can negotiate them.

The city walls are five meters high, and guards patrol the parapets (4 meters up). Fortified guard houses protect the gates, overseeing the raising and lowering of double iron gates. All gates are down during the night. Guards also control every movement in and out of the town asking for papers and searching all belongings and goods thoroughly.

The town is bureaucratically split into 5 different districts:

1. Center District is the smallest district and is for the soldiers, bureaucrats and their families, and other dignitaries either local or visiting. This district is exclusively inhabited by Thyatians (or foreigners supporting the regime).
2. Western District is the home of the Traladaran fishermen. It is the largest district spanning the northwest all to the southwest of the town.

3. Northern District is the second smallest district and is for the farmers tending the farms which lay to the north of the town.
4. Northeast District is a medium-sized district and is home to Thyatian merchants as well as Traladaran prisoners working on the gigantic Black Eagle Castle being built to the Northeast of the town.
5. Southern District is the second largest and is for the farming families working to the east and south of the town.

The buildings in town are mostly close-standing, single-storied cottages for the fishing and farming families. Buildings around the center square have several stories. Also, some of the houses in the Northeast district along the road leading from the town center to Luln are multi-storied.

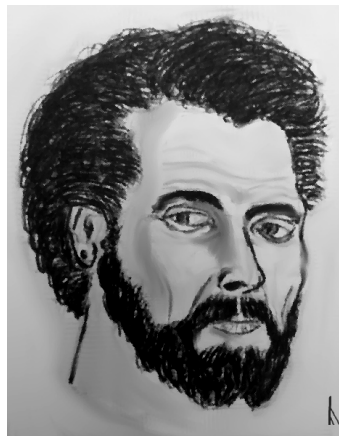
While Fort Doom is an inland town, the western road leads to a harbour area a few miles away. Many fishing boats and the great ship "Eisen Flotte" lies here, but few live here permanently. Guards are stationed to patrol it, but the Traladaran fishermen are forced to live inside of Fort Doom itself. The harbour has a pier and several small warehouses, as well as a large guardhouse. The barracks of the 6th Fähnlein, one of the units of the Baron's army, are located here as well.

Half a mile north of the harbour, a tower is under construction for the use of the Baron's magist, Bargle. So far only three underground levels and the base level are completed. The tower also has its own small harbour.

A couple of miles northeast of Fort Doom, along the road to Luln, Ludwig von Hendriks is building an enormous castle on an artificial hill. Traladaran prisoners work themselves to death on this immense building project¹. The Baron has had the castle designed on a grand scale, to rival the largest fortifications in the Known World.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS OF THE REALM

Freiherr (Baron)



LUDWIG VON HENDRIKS

A first cousin of Duke Stefan Karameikos, Ludwig von Hendriks is half Hattian (through his father) and half Kerendan, but he strongly identifies as a

Hattian conservative, to the point that he employs the traditional Hattian title "Freiherr", rather than his actual Thyatian title of Baron. He hates both his cousins, Stefan Karameikos and Alexius Korrigan, for being both more popular and lucky than himself in their youth.

Ludwig is a pathological liar and a psychopath, who utterly believes he is always right². He can be very charming

¹ The end layout will be something like the crusader castle "Krac de Chevaliers" in modern day Syria.

² A *detect lie* spell will not work on him, since he is

towards people when he wants to, as when receiving guests or when he wants to achieve some political goal or favour, but his charm is only skin-deep.

From an outside point of view, Ludwig is an evil, totally self-centered man, utterly uncaring for anyone but himself. In his own perspective, however, he is the good guy -- Ludwig sees himself as a protector of the true "Thyatianism" in its purest form, as held by the Hattian conservative ideology. In fact, Ludwig believes that Duke Stefan Karameikos is a very dangerous man -- a traitor to the Thyatians. The Duke, indeed, is building a country that supports equality between Thyatians, Traladarans and even mixed "bastards", as von Hendriks would call them. "*What's next? The Duke wants to mix Thyatians with goblins and orcs*", is a common quote -- quite ironic, since the Baron routinely employs goblinoids. The Duke, in Ludwig's eyes, is clearly both too weak to support the Thyatian ideals, and pursuing evil goals.

Ludwig knows that to demonstrate the errors of the Duke's rulership and win the hearts of the more conservative Thyatians, he needs to prove his point in practice. Thus, his plan is to portray the old Traladaran town of Halag as a perfect example of cleanliness and order, where Thyatian superiority keeps control over conquered lesser people. Visitors are told that Freiherr von Hendriks is "educating" and "correcting" the Traladaran people to the "light of culture and civilisation", but since many of them tend to retain their antiquated, superstitious ways, they need to be "ruled by a firm hand for their own good".

fully convinced whatever comes out of his mouth is the truth.

Freiherr von Hendriks is formally a follower of Vanya. He surrounds himself with fanatical followers of that Immortal, primarily Hattians. Von Hendriks appreciates these kind of people since they are easy to understand and control. In contrast, he is deeply suspicious of people with personal ethics or that question orders, as he expects blind obedience from his followers. In truth, Ludwig von Hendriks only follows Vanya because he likes war and hates peace. He has no personal reverence for Vanya³. War is the way to achieve glory and recognition and to keep the Thyatian spirit strong and feared among other nations -- "*War is character-building,*" as Ludwig likes to say.

His other prestige project is the immense castle he is building northeast of Fort Doom. Its gates and castle are to project an image of martial power and ordered cleanliness in contrast to Traladaran provincialism, and demonstrate all the signs that Hattian culture is holding true to Thyatian principles. He has commissioned immense marble statues, one of Vanya as the triumphant goddess, and an equestrian one of himself, in field plate with shield and raised sword.

Duke Stefan Karameikos is yet unaware that his cousin Ludwig has been plotting his demise since childhood. Thus far the Duke has been lucky to survive several attempts on his life from both his cousin Ludwig and from Traladarans. The Duke is still convinced his cousin Ludwig is a lawful and faithful follower and that he is being wrongfully accused by political opponents as a result of the initial Traladaran rebellion.

³ Vanya does not seem to mind, though.

Traladaran refugees in both Luln and Specularum have told stories about the evils going on in Fort Doom. Townmistress Sascia of Luln, in particular, has been very vocal about Baron von Hendriks in her reports to Specularum. Even one powerful Thyatian, Lord Alexius Korrigan, the Duke's Seneschal, has voiced concern about continuing crimes being committed against the Traladaran population. The Duke is caught in a difficult position, as he is pressed to believe one of his cousins over the other. Thus, he has acted indecisively up to now.

Meanwhile, Freiherr von Hendriks has started agitating among the Thyatians against the accusations. In Ludwig von Hendriks' own view he *is* the good guy and the efforts done by Lord Alexius Korrigan in spreading these lies are essentially the spreading of evil. If other Thyatians start to listen to these lies, they could destroy years of work in bringing prosperity to Karameikos, and they could even lead to a new Traladaran uprising.

The key concept in his campaign is the following, as stated at political meetings by Ludwig himself: *"Rebellious forces of the Traladaran resistance try to remove me and spread discord among the Thyatians. But should I fall, the Duke will be next and all Thyatian holdings will be in jeopardy"*. Whether this is true or not, most Thyatians believe it.

Thus removing his cousin could spark a Traladaran uprising, since these horrors will have to be formally admitted, instead of remaining rumours. The Duke also knows that hardline Thyatians might take the side of "cousin Ludwig" and lead to a civil war among the Thyatians, another event that could easily spark a Traladaran uprising. His political advisors tell him to remain ignorant and naive in the matter, so that is his policy towards his cousin unless he goes into open rebellion: *"See nothing, bear nothing, say nothing."*

New spell:

Vanya's Battlefield

6th level clerical spell.

Range: 500 yards in radius from a War Banner of Vanya.

Duration: Until battle has ended

Effect: All sentient creatures within range

The caster establishes a center point on the consecrated battlefield, which must be a banner of Vanya. The caster must hold the banner when casting the spell, but can then give it to another person. Around this banner, the power of Vanya ensures that "proper" fighting takes place, making it impossible for casters on both sides to concentrate on their spells or for items to be activated. This is a kind of internal anti-magic shell. Magic bonuses to items will still function normally.

Any creatures arriving to fight voluntarily get no saving throw, but creatures caught in range of the spell that had no intent to fight get a save. If they miss, they will flee the battlefield for the duration of the battle. If they succeed, they can observe the battle unaffected, but should they join the fight they will be affected by the spell and be unable to cast spells or use magical items. It also makes people dispel any magic cast on themselves or the area, because they get in a fighting mood. Only

unaffected non-combatants can have spells active.

All armies (both friends and foes of the caster) fighting in this zone will never retreat, surrender or show mercy. The caster's army gets a +10 bonus to Morale and ignores any Fatigue if using War Machine. Enemy armies don't receive a Morale bonus, but will not be subject to fatigue either. The spell remains in effect until one side is annihilated.

New spell: *Puppet-Master*

7th level magic user spell.

Range: Touch (victims mind has to be broken down first).

Duration: Permanent.

Effect: One living human, demihuman, or humanoid.

The victim has first to be mentally broken down until it is lethargic and in a state of total apathy. Then the caster imprints his mind on the "tabula rasa" - the blank slate. The victim gets no saving throw, since it is already broken mentally.

The victim is then convinced that he is the caster (it is after all the only "mind" in its skull now), but being controlled by some supreme being. The victim is utterly loyal to this supreme being and will not act on its own accord. The caster can control the puppet through his own thoughts

Ritter Konrad von Messerfeld, High priest of Vanya

Freiherr Ludwig von Hendriks has a trusted "lieutenant" (as much as it is possible for him to trust anyone), Ritter Konrad von Messerfeld (C12). Von Messerfeld is the high priest of Vanya in the Barony and is an utterly fanatical Hattian conservative. He is most grateful that Vanya has such a warmongering benefactor. In case of a civil war with the Duke, the high priest will order his followers to side with Ludwig von Hendriks against the Duke. Konrad von Messerfeld and his men are ready for war and has personally been blessed by Vanya with a new spell recently, *Vanya's Battlefield*.

Bargle the Sybarite⁴

Spionagechef (Spymaster) **Bargle** (MU15) is a much less trusted "lieutenant". Bargle is head of the "Iron Ring" network. He is not its creator, but has taken control of it, which makes him able to provide Ludwig von Hendriks with intelligence from the underworld outside his realm. Not that the Baron fully trusts this intelligence -- he has numerous Thyatian informers of his own across both Karameikos and Thyatis. Bargle, however, gives him enough information to remain important and the two men have an uneasy truce. So long as Bargle knows his place, the status quo is preserved.

Bargle appears to Freiherr von Hendriks as a flashy, 30 year old dandy magician interested in sophistication and fine dining. He tries to appear much less powerful and ambitious than he actually is, though he suspects that the paranoid Freiherr is not easily fooled. For now Bargle is not interested in rulership, since he is quite bored by politics. Being a crime kingpin is much more fun.

⁴ Sybaris was an ancient Thyatian town known for its hedonist population, which caused its fall as the population grew weak.

Ludwig von Hendriks has commissioned a Wizard's Keep for Bargle, to compensate him for his services. Spies and prisoners can be shipped in and out of this tower through the "Eisen Flotte" fairly unnoticed. The tower is distant enough from the town to allow the wizard to conduct his experiments without causing undue disturbances. Indeed Bargle, both out of scientific curiosity and being a psychopath, has a keen interest in testing the limits of human, demihuman and humanoid endurance to different types of pain, as well as the use of pain for indoctrination and information gathering.

No one is known to have seen Bargle's true form and survived. The wizard is always in disguise and has a number of doubles. These doubles are the highest measure of his powers as well as the focus of his current magical studies. Each double looks exactly like Bargle's public persona, thanks to extensive magical transformation. Each double's mind has been completely shattered, and each believes themselves to be Bargle, but in the service of an unknown master that reports to them telepathically and in dreams. With their minds disrupted to this extent, however, the doubles are quite helpless, unless closely directed by Bargle himself. He can use them to cast spells, although he can manage only low level magics. Every report of Bargle being killed is likely to be a double and it only increases the fear when he seems to come back again and again.

Bargle has so far made four doubles, three of which are still alive⁵, and is working on creating more. The first double remains at Ludwig von Hendriks' court in his castle. Bargle uses this double to mask his activities, and appear less ambitious and far reaching than he really is. The second is stationed in Specularum -- Bargle uses it to control the Iron Ring there. The third remains in the Wizard Keep, from where it controls the Iron Ring operations in the

⁵ The last double was killed while trying to capture Aleena Halaran.

telepathically - so long as they are on the same plane - since there is a shared mental link between them.

The puppets have limited magical capabilities. They can cast 1st and 2nd level spells memorized by the puppetmaster at the point of their creation, but are themselves incapable of learning new spells. The puppets are immune to all mind-affecting spells since they are already mind-controlled. The puppets have no idea other puppets exist and will never believe it even if shown the evidence.

The caster can have 1 puppet for every 2 levels of experience, but no more than their Intelligence ability score. A 36th level Magic User with 18 Intelligence can thus control 18 puppets.

harbour. The real Bargle is down in the dungeons in disguise as "Chief Torturer Gelbar" (an anagram of Bargle) or travelling incognito around the world to increase his knowledge and power. If anyone goes after him, they will likely kill the *wrong* Bargle.

ARMY OF THE BLACK EAGLE BARONY

Freiherr (Baron) *Ludwig von Hendriks* is the overall commander (General) of the army if he takes to the field.

Ritter (Knight) and High Priest of Vanya *Konrad von Messerfeld* is the "**Oberst**" (Colonel) of "**Der Schwarze Adler Schwere Bataillon**" (The Black Eagle Heavy Battalion), which is composed of 200 Hattian heavy cavalry. This unit patrols the north and northeastern part of the Barony, especially along the Luln road⁶. Von Messerfeld is in command of the whole army when Freiherr Ludwig von Hendriks is not present. He carries a Banner of Vanya (see sidebar for spell description) into battles as the Hattian Warriors are clerics or followers of her.

The nickname of the unit is "**Verhängnislanze**" (Lance of Doom) and doom is certainly what they have brought to the many Traladarans trying to escape towards Luln or humanoids trying to attack. The men are equipped with field plate, lances, long swords and kite shields and the horses have plate armour.

Von Messerfeld is assisted by two "**Rittmeister**" (Captains), who are regarded

⁶ The flat farmlands surrounding Fort Doom are ideal for horseback fighting.

as "**Edler**" (Landed Lords). They each control one hundred cavalymen of the Black Eagle Heavy Battalion. Each of these subdivisions are called "*Schwadron*" (squadron). The two Rittmeister are *Adelbert von Lindenhof* and *Gerhardt von Schmeissen*. Both are followers of Vanya, but they are ordinary fighters, not clerics. The two sub-units are known as "*Schwadron von Lindenhof*" and "*Schwadron von Schmeissen*".

Six "**Leutnants**" (Lieutenants) are regarded as "**Junkers**" (Court Lords), which allows them to include a "von" in their names. This rank does not exist in the Black Eagle Heavy Battalion -- Officers of this rank commands auxiliary non-Hattian platoons called "**Fähnlein**".

Five of the Leutnants are appointed and promoted from a Black Eagle Heavy Battalion "*Feldwebel*" (sergeants) to lead a platoon, except for the 1st Fähnlein that (as a Thyatian mercenary unit) is allowed to promote its leader from their own ranks. There are 6 platoons, numbered Fähnlein 1-6. The leader of the 6th Fähnlein is called "**Kommandant**" instead. The Leutnants can then later get promoted back into the Black Eagle Heavy Battalion as Rittmeister.

Several "**Feldwebel**" (Sergeants) leads 10 men in the Black Eagle Division or 5 men in the Fähnleins. A Hattian/Thyatian general soldier is called a "**Landsknecht**" (rank as corporal) while the Traladarans and Humanoid are called "**Schlägerkopf(e)**" - meaning "Clubhead(s)" - which is the lowest rank (private).

1st Fähnlein: 50 Kerendian-Thyatian Mercenaries. The "*Equitum Honoris*" (Honour Cavalry) is the most prestigious of

the six platoons. It is also the only platoon where non-Hattians are allowed officer rank, so they have a Kerendian "*Leutnant*" (Lieutenant). They guard the gates and patrol the walls. Ten men are assigned to each gate, with the remaining held as reserve. They also act as a mounted fighting force when needed. They are regarded as medium cavalry, more mobile and faster than the Black Eagle Heavy Battalion. The mercenaries are equipped with chain mail armor, long sword and spear, while the horses are unarmoured.

2nd Fähnlein: 50 Hattian, Thyatian or mixed heritage young Skirmishers and Scouts "*Die Jungen Wölfe*". This unit also enjoys some prestige, but is not regarded as an élite unit -- it is primarily the training ground for the sons of veteran soldiers. Here they can learn before being moved to the élite Black Eagle Heavy Battalion or the 1st Fähnlein. These skirmishers are footmen in charge of the hostages brought into the city center and also take part in the hunt for fleeing Traladarans beyond the town walls. Each is equipped with leather armour and a long sword.

3rd Fähnlein: 50 Traladaran Criminals. "*Pumnale Sängeroase*" (Bloody daggers). This is the dirty jobs platoon, used to keep the population in fear. It is regarded with utter contempt by the Thyatians, but the members are secured a much better life in it than out of it. The members have no alternatives, as they are wanted criminals elsewhere, so they are very loyal. They are only patrolling inside Fort Doom. They carry clubs and serrated daggers, but have no armour.

4th Fähnlein: 50 Orc warriors. "*Die Schweine-Hunde*" (The Pig-Dogs). These

unusually loyal raiders can avoid being noisy and overly smelly compared to other orcs. They are mostly sent on missions towards Luln. They have mixed equipment of all kinds, mostly of poor quality and they are on foot.

5th Fähnlein: 50 Elite Goblinoids (bugbear, hobgoblin) from the woods south of Fort Doom. "*Die Nachtschatten-Jäger*" (Nightshade Hunters). The strongest warriors of the tribes from the southern woods join this force. They are employed to harass food transports to Radlebb Keep and keep the garrison there spread out patrolling, as well as to keep other humanoids from entering Black Eagle territory. They have mixed equipment of all kinds, mostly of poor quality and they are on foot.

6th Fähnlein: 92 Mercenary naval personnel of mixed background (including many foreigners). "*Die Eisen Flotte*" (The Iron Fleet). With a somewhat exaggerated name, the "Iron Fleet" is just a Troop Transport armed with 2 light catapults. Its crew includes the "**Kommandant**" (equivalent to a Lieutenant), 20 sailors, 12 light catapult operators and 30 marines. It is mainly used to capture people along the coast and hold them in the cargo deck until sold as slaves (or given to Bargle for his experiments for instance). It is also used in trade, as it is strong enough to avoid most pirate attacks.

Thirty more marines guard the harbour, register catches and escort fishermen to and from Fort Doom. The crew on the boat are called 6th Fähnlein A and the crew on land are called 6th Fähnlein B, though the marines rotate their duties from A to B

every month. Equipment consists of leather armour, crossbows and short swords.

Serving in the 3rd or 6th Fähnlein is a way for Traladarans to escape the Baron's oppression, although it comes at a terrible cost. Veterans from these units can receive as compensation farms that are more distant from Fort Doom. These Traladaran families still have to have all their grain and animals registered, but are allowed to keep more for a better lifestyle. They can live on their farm and do not have to rapport back in town or send hostages.

The 3rd Fähnlein members are the worst of all - even worse than the humanoids. They prove themselves "eager" by performing truly horrendous acts. While the Hattians are mostly cold, fanatical combat machines, these traitors love what they are doing, and they are rewarded for their sadism. The humanoids have orders to hold back and are selected for their (relative) discipline, whereas these Traladarans are chosen for their cruelty.

LAWS OF FORT DOOM

The law in Fort Doom is based on the Thyatian attitude of "*Vae Victis*" ("woe to the conquered"). If you are weak enough to let yourself be conquered, then you cannot expect any rights. Only "Might makes Right" and Vanya blesses the stronger warriors. The Traladarans were easily vanquished and thus are beneath contempt. They are rightly slaves and have no rights. Even more, their pathetic immortals and their superstitions make them hardly more sophisticated than humanoids.

To keep the Traladarans where they belong a system of patrolling and personal

identification and registration (through identification papers) is employed. Street patrolling is done by the 3rd, 4th and 5th Fähnlein in Fort Doom, and 6th Fähnlein B at the harbour, since it is not considered a job suitable for Thyatians. Identification papers also report infractions and crimes ("disobediences") committed by the holder, allowing the patrols to keep track of wrongdoers. Copies of the personal papers are kept by the bureaucracy at the center square.

The troops are allowed to harass the local population, although the extent of such harassment depends on the victim's worth to the Baron's regime. Traladarans with no disobediences are only to be asked for papers and inspected - but not otherwise mistreated. Traladarans with one disobedience should not be killed, but can be otherwise mistreated. Traladarans with two disobediences are imprisoned in the special camps in the NorthEast District to work on the Black Eagle Castle. They can be killed if they cause any disturbance or do not work fast enough. Three disobediences lead to execution on the town square.

Guidelines for the patrol

1) Traladarans are expected to carry their personal papers on them at all time, even when at home. Forgetting to have papers on the person when inspected will result in one disobedience. Guards will follow the person home to wherever he say he has forgotten the papers. Loss of papers will warrant a further disobedience. Traladarans are only allowed to move within their own district and center square. Catching a person in an illegal district gives one disobedience.

2) Traladarans can be inspected and searched anywhere by any Black Eagle soldier or Schlägerkopf, even within their own homes and at any hour. Traladarans do not own anything so any item can be taken. Beware not to take materials essential to their profession (fishermen and farmers need their tools).

3) Traladarans not showing proper respect (for instance looking a soldier in the eyes) will get one disobedience. Showing open contempt by gestures or words gives two disobediences. Physically attacking a soldier gives three disobediences. Such offenders are to be captured and brought in.

4) Every family that has members that works outside of the walls (fishermen, farmers, workers at the castle) must each morning before work escort a family member to the center square where he/she will be a hostage until the worker returns to Fort Doom. They have to be back within 24 hours or they will be regarded as trying to escape. People with "special remarks" can stay away up to 48 or even 72 hours before being regarded as escaping -- this allows for higher sea fishing, but is allowed only to known collaborators. The hostages will be provided food and water to survive at the guardhouses, but are otherwise treated according to their number of disobediences.

5) Traladarans caught trying to flee Fort Doom are executed at the town square, together with the hostage. If the person is not caught, then all his immediate relatives are executed.

6) It is illegal to even mention the names of Halav, Petra and Zirchev. It will cost one disobedience. Being a priest of these immortals will bring death by execution on

the town square and two disobediences for all the family members for not having reported it. If the family reports the priest, they will get a special remark instead.

7) A Traladaran can receive a special remark that will subtract disobedience (though they are never deleted from the papers). Informing on a person talking about Halav, Petra and Zirchev, on people trying to escape, or people talking negatively about the regime will give a special remark (if true), that can negate one disobedience. If the accusations turn out to be false, nothing will happen at first, but after three false accusations (for instance reporting that a family has escaped at night, when they clearly are still present the next day) the informer will be given a disobedience for wasting the bureaucracy's time.

8) A Traladaran town is unkempt, but it shall not be so under Thyatian leadership. Any family that has members not working outside or being hostages have to work keeping the streets clean. Families with no disobedience are not harassed, but it is typical for guards to soil the streets to make the Traladarans clean all over again if they have disobediences in their papers. Failure to clean streets on demand will cost one disobedience.

9) The Baron wants to keep his men on their toes so each morning a special law is put on the town square. It is the duty of everyone (soldiers and Traladarans) to know this law. These laws provide entertainment for the Baron, and teach flexibility to soldiers and bureaucrats all.

10) Guardsmen have to keep an eye out for Traladarans with fire in their eyes. Open provocation (typically mistreatment of

relatives who cannot defend themselves) is a typical technique adopted to root out Traladarans that hide some will to fight the conquerors.

But they also are to look out for assets -- Traladarans that can be of use for the regime, like the members of the 3rd Fähnlein. Traladarans eager to help are to be tested -- if they are true to their intentions, greater rewards will await them the more they prove themselves.

Wise Traladaran rules of survival

“We Traladarans are constantly harassed by the guards for the slightest imagined insult. You have to have eyes and ears open constantly to avoid the patrols. Learn their routines, so you can avoid meeting them. If you run into them, you have to learn to stand passively with eyes on the ground accepting any insult, pushing and inspection.

They want to have the Traladaran people totally broken, so the guards especially look for people that have "fire" in their eyes. Learn to ignore the horrors around you.

Many are forced to spy on relatives, though some do it willingly. The bureaucracy will often encourage such behavior from hostages or when a Traladaran gets their first disobedience. So keep your thoughts to yourself. Trust no one, not even your own family.

Beware the “special” laws, which the Baron makes up daily to entertain his troops and cause misery to the Traladarans. They are put up on the main square, when people arrive to deliver their hostages. Not knowing today's law, because you haven't seen it is no

excuse. Be up early to learn it yourself, as some could lie about it to you.

You must always carry your personal papers on you; they state your name, physical description, family members, address and occupation. Any kind of disobedience will be stamped on the papers. If your papers get to many disobediences, you'll be put to work at Freiherr von Hendrick's monstrous castle -- but many don't last long since the hard work kills them. If you end here all hope is lost. The work sites of the castle is called "Knochenmühle" - the bone-grinder - by the Hattians.

Many desperate families try to escape but they are almost always hunted down and tortured and executed in public. Often only single young men or the occasional brave woman are able to escape, though it means death for the rest of the family.

The city is extraordinarily clean and a great showcase when foreign dignitaries are allowed to visit. Then everyone has to stand outside our homes and smile and act happy. Guards will severely punish anyone not putting up a good show. Guests are only allowed into town by invitation from the Freiherr von Hendriks.

Traladarans have to keep the streets around their home perfectly clean, so it amuses the guards to mess it up right after cleaning and laughing at them when they have to start over. Don't get upset over this.

The harbour lies a few miles from the walled city and is patrolled by guards. All Traladarans have to unload their catch to these guards, who register everything. They

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MIRROR of the ETERNAL NIGHT

Secrets of Koskatep by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)



Nyx, Lady of the Night

Koskatep... *the mountain of bones* in Traladaran, is a strange shaped hill on the upper course of Achelos river, filled with high stones that look like bones in the light of the moon. The name changed its meaning over time but the original Azcan one was very similar, Koskatepetl, the gem of the mountains, a bustling mining city before the Great Rain of Fire. In the depths under the city there was a shrine sacred to Ixion, protected by priests who, according to local lore, were not human and guarded an ancient, dangerous secret. When, at the height of Blackmoor times, technology and rationalism started to prevail all over the world, the ruling council of Koskatepetl tried to force the priests of Ixion to reveal their secret, and the priests sealed the entrance of the shrine with a terrible earthquake.

After the disaster the city was abandoned and became infested with many kinds of monsters, but rumors that the ruins contained treasures and secrets, and the Immortals schemes, made it a contested ground for several regional powers. For some times after the Great Rain of Fire, Koskatep was occupied by a band of beastmen, primitive bugbears that were soon displaced by lizardmen and troglodytes sent by the realm of Mogreth. The rule of the lizardfolk was short lived too, as an Inti expedition conquered Koskatep, led by priests of the Sun lords. After some time, they too were supplanted by fairies and giants that controlled the place for a long time under the rule of the troll queen of Grondheim.

At last as Taymora became more and more powerful, the Church of Nyx conquered Koskatep and chose the place to build a great temple that soon enough attracted pilgrims and colonists, but not too many, because its true purpose had to remain secret. The goddess of the Night found it amusing and fitting to no end that her temple was built over a place once sacred to the Lord of the Light, and she chose the city to hide a very powerful artifact - a constellation map whose purpose was to slowly absorb magical power and bring eternal night to the world.

In Taymoran the city was named Kosmoteiros, *signs of the universe*. But in time of Taymoran decadence, when the fight between followers of Nyx and Thanatos was at its height, a powerful army in service of the Dark Lord conquered the city with the ultimate goal of stealing the artifact, so the priests of Nyx destroyed the temple, opening a chasm to the depths of the earth. The struggle for the artifact would have continued, but the destruction of Taymora also destroyed any memory of the city and its secret. The Tal people of the area, and later the Traldars too, considered the place cursed and never went to live there. Others tried to reconquer the ruins - orcs, gnolls, fairy folk, bandits, dwarves, and ogres. Many of these groups were inspired by the immortals, because obviously Nyx and Thanatos had not forgotten what was hidden below, and neither had Ixion. Many times during the centuries the three immortals have sent priests and adventurers to Koskatep, to retrieve the artifact or to prevent the others from obtaining it or, in the case of Ixion, to protect his ancient secrets. Yet none of the immortals was able to conquer the ruins once and for all... at least until a few years ago.

THE PEOPLE OF THE NIGHT

In the History of Traladara "People of the Night" was the name that the first Traldars gave to the Tal people, the descendants of northern Taymorans surviving in the area after the destruction of their empire. During the centuries they were absorbed in the general traldar population, but not completely.

Some of the Tals didn't integrate because they had very different traditions, the most important of which was the cult of Nyx. When the Traldars arrived there was a centuries old bitter struggle going on between the cult of Nyx and Thanatos, with Hel also involved occasionally on one side or the other. Initially the Traldars aided the cult of Nyx and the neutral oriented nosferatus against the evil vampires and followers of Thanatos. There was also a short time of nosferatu kings that ended when Tarku Radu, the last nosferatu king, turned from Nyx to Thanatos and unleashed the three years of winter on Traladara before his ultimate destruction...

From this moment on vampires and nosferatus were lumped as "evil beings" in the minds of the Traldars, and the followers of Nyx were often persecuted along with the followers of Thanatos... A succession of crusades were unleashed by Traldar clans and kings against undead, the first in 1423 BC, then in 1147 BC and 343 BC. In 342 BC queen Irina Lutescu concluded the Peace of the night with the still unintegrated Tal people. The queen agreed to stop persecuting nosferatu and the followers of Nyx.

Yet another persecution ensued in 445 AC during the Silver Purge. By this time the Sulescu family was the only major clan protecting the Tal people, and indeed in this year Ion Sulescu left the council of nobles in protest. But despite this in 450 AC king Boris Achelos Halarov massacred the last of the free Tals in central Traladara. That was indeed the end of the People of the Night as a distinct culture.

Nevertheless, a major centre of the cult of Nyx survived to these days in Sulescu. During another persecution by the king Arku Marilenev in 703 AC, the current Lord Sulescu, recently turned into a Nosferatu, was able to defeat the king's troops, establishing a de facto independent territory. Sulescu bowed to the Thyatians in 900 and 970 AC in exchange for the unwritten agreement that foreign religions would not come to bother his land.

THE CHURCH OF NYX IN KARAMEIKOS

Sulescu however is not the only centre of the church in the nation. A centuries old cabal of wizards, The Sons of Night, has preserved the traditions and the knowledge of Nyx secretly in Karameikos, and much, much more. Only a handful of people in Karameikos know anything about them. Even the very efficient spies of Duchess Olivia have heard only that these wizards are headed by a "Fraternity of the Grand Darkers", and have caused some troubles in western Karameikos, in their mad, impossible plan to bring forth what they call the "Dread Night".

The Sons of Night are in truth an organization much more powerful than anyone knows. Throughout the centuries Nyx and her priests

stored in several locations of Karameikos' underdeep, in ancient tombs and lost cities, not only a vast supply of magical objects and power, but also many faithful followers turned into two new kind of undead developed by the Church. The Undecayed appear as normal, slightly pale people, yet they are dead and can potentially live forever. (Statistics for zombies can be used, but their appearance is normal and they retain memories and intelligence). The Uncorporeal are ghosts who can possess the bodies of any Undecayed or of living people (an unwilling victim will obviously be allowed a saving throw). Beyond their army of Undecayed and Uncorporeal, the Sons of Night have also many living followers, mostly wizards and priests but also warriors, thieves and common people, hiding in the general population - and now they are almost ready to reclaim their rightful place in the nation.

In 998 AC the Sons of Night have indeed established their main fraternity among the ruins of Koskatep... they have currently retrieved the artifact but so far haven't found a way to use it... yet. It will probably take several years to perfectionate their plan, but eventually they'll proclaim a new independent theocracy of the Lady of the Night in all the Cruth mountains and surrounding hills. And they will be ready to resist any attempt by the King's troops to deny their rights.

Note: If the DM wants to use Dhrom Dhum in their campaign (see [page 119](#)) the Darkers will engineer their declaration of independence at the same time as the goblin, trying to win the support of the Cruth ogres and Traladaran freedom fighters in the area too. (see Agathokles' excellent [Lords of the Cruth Lowlands](#) campaign.

TIMELINE OF KOSKATEPETL

In the Dawn of time: Ashira betrays Ixion and creates The Dream of Fire. Ixion cannot bear to destroy his beloved daughter and puts her in stasis along with the powerful artifact she created. A chosen corp of Sollux priests, wizards and warriors is put in charge of guarding the temple. Groups of dragons, giants and fairies discover the existence of the place several times during the millennia, but the church of Ixion always manages to stop them before The Dream of Fire can become common knowledge.

11.000 BC: A brutemen shaman tries to use The Dream but the sollux convince him to stop, and Ahyar and his tribe become additional guardians of the temple.

10.000 BC: Oltec men are drawn to the area and began to worship the place, building a temple above ground. Ixion intends to use them as more guardians, as the existence of The Dream is no longer a secret among Immortals.

5.100 BC: Precious and semi-precious gems are found in the area and the local people, ancestors of the Azcan, build some mines nearby. Slowly the temple becomes a town, and later a city, that falls under the influence of the Oltec empire and is named Koskatepetl, the gem of the mountains.

3.525 BC: The Azcan empire is formed and Koskatepetl becomes not only a source of gems but also of metals, to build new lethal weapons for the war.

3.057 BC: The Azcan emperor declares that the underground, secret, temple of Ixion has to be opened to share its secret with the people. The priests refuse and destroy the city to seal the temple. A revolt of the Church

of Ixion throws the empire into civil war and chaos; the site of Koskatepetl is abandoned and for several years infested by bandits and monsters that try in vain to occupy the place.

2.998 BC: Human refugees hide from the Great Rain of Fire in the ruins of Koskatepetl, but are soon slaughtered by a group of beastmen that take residence among the ruins. The inner temple survives the cataclysm and the invasions unscathed.

2.504 BC: The Inti, lead by the church of Ixion, occupy the ruins and rebuild the city of Koskatepetl.

2.379 BC: The Queen of Grondheim conquers the city, renaming it Krystallac. Just a few years later sidhe priests discover the existence of the inner temple and begin a century long negotiation with the Sollux and the Brutemen below to gain access to the artifact.

2.282 BC: As the Queen grows impatient about the unwillingness of Ixion to compromise, she sends her best troops to open the temple. Inti troops soon attack the place, and Taymora intervenes shortly thereafter. This is the beginning of the War of the Empires, or the War of Southern Grondheim, that will last decades and will devastate the region. Mogreth intervenes as well a few years later.

2.080 BC: In a time of crisis in Grondheim, Taymora, and Intua, lizardmen and troglodytes escaped from Mogreth occupy Krystallac and keep it for a hundred years.

1.976 BC: After a long siege Taymora conquers Krystallac and renames it Kosmoteiros. Nyx knows about Ixion's artifact but rather than try to steal or destroy it she decides to exploit the magical aura of

the place to build her own strongest artifact that will bring fulfillment of her Dream.

1.777 BC: To prevent Kosmoteiros from falling into the hands of Thanatos, the priests of Nyx destroy the city with a terrible earthquake. Thousands die and the place is abandoned for many years as seismic activity increases in the area.

1.664 BC: After the destruction of Taymora, fairies of the Unseelie court take possession of the place and try to use the Starlake, but do not know of the hidden temple of Ixion below.

1.597 BC: Lord Keiros, a Tal nosferatu and follower of Nyx, conquers Koskatep from the dark fairies. Vampiric followers of Thanatos attack several times but are defeated.

1.412 BC: Hutaakans conquer the site for Ixion and Pflarr, a seriously wounded Lord Keiros is forced to hide, and his followers are exterminated.

1.021 BC: Orcs sacks Koskatep, some hutaakan priests survive hiding in the lower levels, and will become more guardians for the hidden temple of Ixion.

954 BC: After several battles a dwarven army defeats the orcs and conquers Koskatep, but are soon in constant warfare with the gnolls that rule over the region.

912 BC: The dwarves are finally defeated by the gnolls, who build their own city over the ruins. Shamans of Ranivorus and Thanatos begin to study the Starlake.

841 BC: Followers of Nyx, aided by ogres and giants, attack Koskatep but are unable to conquer it from the gnolls. Yet they succeed in killing the most powerful shamans of Thanatos and burning their notes.

603 BC: The ogre king Kulfan conquers Koskatep in the name of Nyx and ogres rule over the area for centuries. Human priests of the Lady of the Night live in the city along with them.

95 AC: The Darkers almost complete the ritual to use the Starlake and bring forth the Eternal Night, but are stopped at the last moment by priests of Ixion, who drive out the ogres and occupy Koskatep for years.

227 AC: The priests of Ixion have repelled several attempts by ogres, giants and followers of Nyx trying to reclaim the ruins, but are destroyed at last by a very powerful and ancient vampire sent by Thanatos, The Last One. Some of them escape to the lowest level and become defenders of the inner temple. In the following centuries ogres, giants, followers of Nyx and even adventurers sent by Ixion try to reclaim Koskatep, but The Last One destroys them all.

912 AC: Traladaran freedom fighters hide in the ruins for some time, but are destroyed by the Thyatian army. The Thyatians soon leave the place.

998 AC (or later if the DM prefers): Lady Sonya, the Grand Daughter of the Night, a powerful priestess of Nyx, and her followers, are able to defeat The Last One and reclaim Koskatep.

1031 AC: The next alignment. On this date the Starlake could be used to bring forth The Eternal Night.



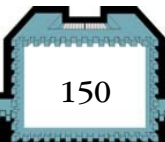
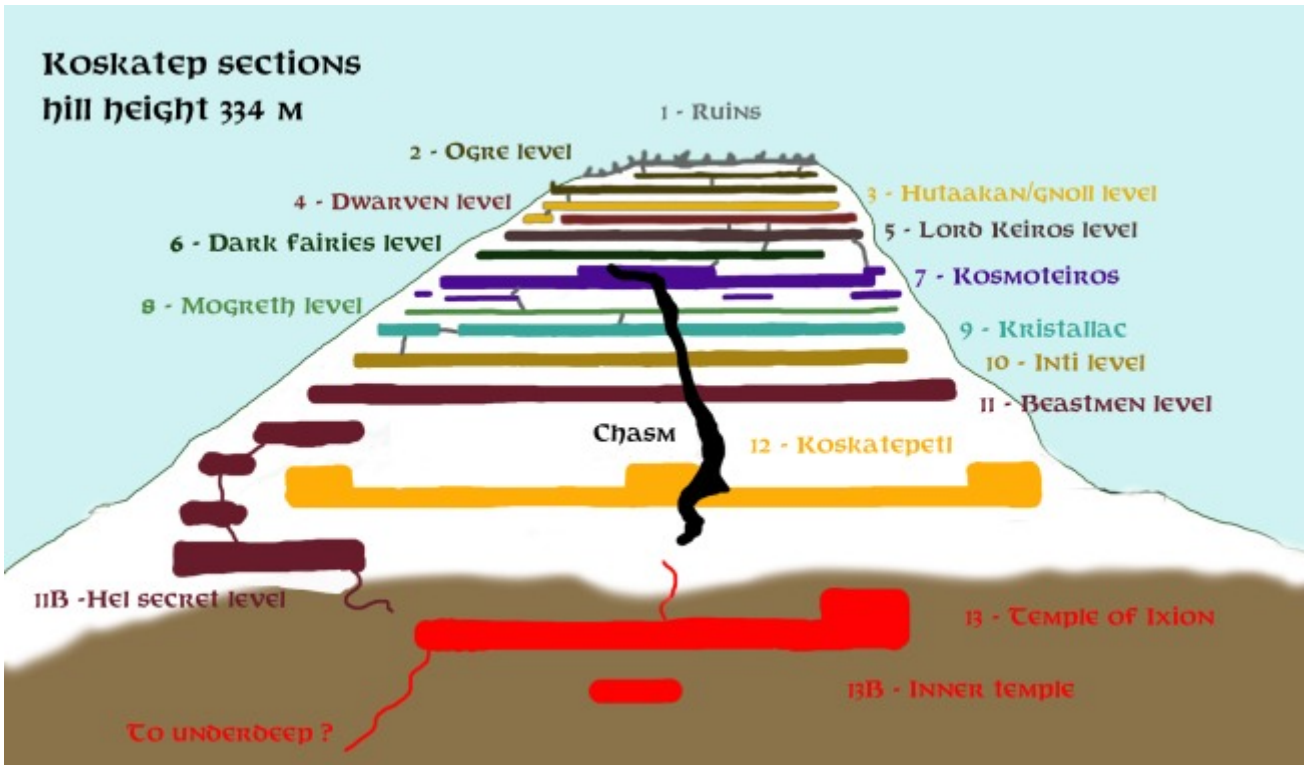
LEVELS OF KOSKATEP

Even if from the outside the “mountain of bones” doesn’t seem a very big place, the truth is that Koskatep is not a simple dungeon and not even a simple city. It’s several cities built one upon another, with 13 main levels. For this reason it’s almost impossible to include a full map of the place, but the location may be detailed in the next issues of Threshold magazine.

Note that at the centre of Koskatep from the seventh level there is an open, windy, and dark chasm that goes all the way down to the twelfth level, a result of the two earthquakes provoked by the churches of Ixion and Nyx during Blackmoorian and Taymoran times. Note also that all the levels are broken, interrupted, and rugged in many places, so that full exploration of the ruins should be very difficult.

The PCs could even be themselves agents of the Sons of Night sent to explore the place or agents of a rival organization (probably the Church of Ixion) sent to stop the Darkers. The ruins are apparently less inhabited before the Darkers take them, but they aren’t less dangerous, as a great evil lurks in the deep levels, giving even the upper levels an inexplicable disquieting mood.

When the Sons of Night have taken control of the place the location is well organized and guarded, and that means that PCs should explore the place with stealth and/or diplomacy, or be quickly destroyed. If the DM would like to have them explore Koskatep after the Sons of Night take control, use this text, marked in light purple.



Level ONE, the DEBRIS

This level, partially in the open, is composed of the upper remains of the ogre's city (see below) and has been inhabited by bandits and Traladaran freedom fighters in past centuries, and recently used only as a shelter by little bands of ogres and hill giants. These folks may or may not be hostile depending on PCs actions, but they know something only about the first two levels. They do know however, that the dungeon goes deeper and deeper. This level doesn't contain much except for the weapons and possessions of the ogres and the giants.

The secret of this level: In a forgotten and closed room there is still the tomb of a Traladaran knight who died in 900 AC fighting the Thyatians, with his magical armor and sword.

After the Darkers take control, many ogres and hill giants live here (at least more than 20), well paid by the Darkers to keep intruders away. These folks are organized and finely equipped so trying to avoid them rather than fight them all would be much wiser.

Level TWO, the OGRE KING

Kulfan, an ogre king, established his throne hall on this level five centuries ago. No one remembers how his once powerful kingdom came to an end; the ogres say it was a human attack, but it could have been a war between ogres and giants, or the wrath of a dragon. This level is indeed partially burned and much of what was once contained within was destroyed or pillaged long ago. The walls and the rooms were built by giants and ogres with surprisingly good craftsmanship, and there may still be undiscovered rooms or tombs that contains the treasures of the ogres

kingdom. This level is empty except for some random dungeon critters such as oozes, giant insects, and worms.

The secret: Kulfan occupied the ruins in the name of Nyx but was destroyed by powerful clerics of Ixion, that were soon destroyed themselves by an ancient evil sent by Thanatos. Nothing is left of their bones and items, but the worn out diary of the main cleric of Ixion is still hidden in a crack of the throne room.

After the Darkers take control, some female ogres and female giants with children, wives of the ones above, live here and are slowly cleaning and rebuilding the place. They will obviously be hostile if intruders have killed their husbands and either way they will immediately try to warn the Darkers in the levels below.

Level THREE, GNOLLS WERE HERE

This level was a powerful gnoll city during the time of their invasion of Traladara and the following centuries (900 - 600 BC). The many treasures gnolls amassed in centuries of war and pillaging have been taken long ago by ogres and giants and now only some stone statues resembling gnolls remain.

This level is inhabited by several dangerous ghosts.

The secret: This level was really a Hutaakan city before the gnolls arrived, hence the statues. The ghosts are Hutaakan priests and gnoll shamans that The Last One below awakened as guardians. There is still a sub-level with the ghost of a powerful Hutaakan priest guarding his still intact tomb and willing to help any group aligned with Ixion, the Traldar immortals, or Pflarr.

After the Darkers take control, there are sometimes small groups of Sons of Night (3-5 wizards and priests) who check on the ogres and giants above.

Level FOUR, DWARVEN GOLD

Dwarves occupied the place for a short time around 950 BC, taking it from the orcs but quickly losing it to the gnolls. Their gold and crafts were also taken long ago, leaving behind only some good stonemasonry here and there. This level was also part of the Hutaakan settlement before, in particular the temple of Pflarr, of which very small traces are left. It is inhabited by a strong and dangerous undead dwarf.

The secret: A well hidden stash of dwarven gold (and Hutaakan gold) lie under the floor of the biggest hall in this level. Buried with it there is the dwarf ruler of the time, who will awaken from death as a powerful mummy to defend his treasure.

After the Darkers destroyed the undead dwarf they create five guardian golems, once old dwarven statues, that will attack anyone who doesn't know the passing words.

Level FIVE, ORCS AND NOSFERATU

This level was a short living orc city around 1000 BC. What's left of it now are some scratches and signs crudely drawn on the walls. Before that, it was part of the hutaakan settlement, mostly cellars, and before that it was a city built by followers of Nyx and nosferatu. A small host of undead orcs infest the level.

The secret: Under an altar in this level there is a sleeping nosferatu, Lord Keiros, more than 2500 years old. When the hutaakans seized the place he was wounded and forced to

hide. He will not automatically be hostile and knows much about this level and the others below, yet he is aligned with Nyx and wants the place for his goddess. Lord Keiros is very powerful and could be the only one strong enough to confront the ancient evil hidden in level 10 (see below)

Two Darker priests of Nyx, Lord Kivid and Lady Ilena - husband and wife from Specularum - will free Keiros if PCs do not do it before, and will later inhabit this level with him and five apprentices, two male and three female

Level SIX, FAIRY AND DARK

After the destruction of Taymora, and before Lord Keiros came here, the ruins were inhabited for a short time by some dark fairies aligned with no one. Keiros was able to banish them at the time, but the ancient evil that occupies the ruins awakened them again. They are basically powerful ghosts of several fairy folk, malevolent and mischievous, that will try to hurt anyone passing by in the most creative and funny (to them) possible way.

The secrets: There is a shortcut to avoid this level entirely both in the seventh and in the fifth levels, but it's hid by secret doors very difficult to spot.

The Darkers were not really able to defeat the fairies but appeased them, granting them again a corporeal form and the rule of this level. Now the place seems like a twisted, dark forest where dozens of dark fairies live, from sidhe to satyrs to pookas. The dark fairies are really just biding their time to avenge themselves on Lord Keiros, who banished them so long ago. They are willing to ally with anyone willing to promise them revenge.

Level SEVEN, SIGNS OF THE UNIVERSE

This level was the Taymoran city of Kosmoteiros, that the Church of Nyx herself partially destroyed to prevent from falling into the hands of Thanatos' followers. The holiest room is the great cave containing the Starlake, a great pool that mysteriously reflect stars and constellations. The artifact, being a small lake, cannot be obviously removed from here. "Night is truth, Light is lie" says the silver engraved inscription, in old Taymoran, on the walls of the cave.

Here resides The Last One, a vampire follower of Thanatos, immensely powerful, last surviving member of The Death Hand, a group of vampires that terrorized old Traladara 2500 years ago. He has magic and undead minions in large supply and only very powerful PCs, or PCs with very powerful allies, should be able to defeat him. Even if they can, he will not die but will escape to level TEN.

The secret: The Last One has defiled the Starlake. The waters will now slowly (3-12 years) kill any living being touching them and slowly corrupt any undead creature. The effect is so slow that it cannot be easily detected and indeed Nyx herself isn't yet aware of it.

If several spells are cast on the lake during a particular cosmic alignment happening once every 936 years, a permanent gate to Nyx's home plane will be opened, the Sun will be extinguished, and the True Life of Nyx (Undeath for all) will triumph. Her followers could not complete the ritual in 1777 BC because the city was assaulted by Thanatos' followers. Neither could they in 841 BC as gnolls had occupied the city and could not be

defeated. In 95 AC the Darkers almost succeeded, but were killed at the last moment by priests of Ixion. The next alignment is in 1031 AC, and they will not miss it. Obviously Ixion will do almost anything to avoid this and Thanatos will do almost anything to use the event for his own ends. If the defilement of The Last One is not discovered in time, the rite will open a permanent gate to the home plane of Thanatos, and not to the one of Nyx as intended.

The Darkers will think, wrongly, to have destroyed The Last One along with his minions and will transform the level into the main headquarters of the Sons of Night in Karameikos. At least a hundred people will live here permanently, with more coming and going. Among them there will be several powerful wizards and priests, like Mogren, the Grand Darker and most powerful wizard, and the Grand Daughter of the Night, Lady Sonya, the most powerful priestess of Nyx. The followers of Nyx will be here studying the place day and night.

In the year 1031 AC at the very last, every plan should come to fruition and if any side manages to use the artifact, the fate of Karameikos could change forever. The PC's actions should decide the outcome of the millennia old fight for Koskatep.

Level EIGHT, SERPENT EYE

Lizardmen and troglodytes lived here for a century in ancient times, and they made scaly decorations, serpent heads, and eyes drawn and sculpted on the walls, giving this level a slightly disquieting look. Gems were inlaid everywhere, but were long ago plundered by Taymorans and only empty sockets remains now. Just for fun, The Last

One has awakened a hundred remains of ancient lizardmen and troglodytes to infest this level. Most of them are zombies, many of them are mummies, and some are vampires with magical abilities. They would gladly turn against him if given the chance.

The secret: One of the lizardmen, once a shaman, knows how to open a portal to the Blight Swamp. He would like to search for the descendants of his people there, and proposes an alliance to anyone working against The Last One.

When the Darkers arrive, they will strike a bargain with the lizardman shaman, so this level will be full of lizardmen and troglodytes alive and undead, busy opening portals to contact all of their kind living in western Karameikos in order to win them over to the cause of Nyx.

Level NINE, CRYSTAL HEART

This level was Krystallac, a holy place of the fairy and giant realm of Grondheim. The walls of this levels are heavily decorated with magically enlightened, coloured crystals and beautiful natural designs. This level is empty, apparently everything of value was plundered when the city fell to the lizardmen many centuries ago.

The secrets: Even though fairy folk were driven away from the city so many years ago, they have always maintained a hidden magical gate in a small, unassuming room. Now sidhe lords from across the Known World, Oberon's court, and Storm Giants are gathering their strength to reconquer Krystallac. Unknown to the Darkers, at the time of Grondheim, sidhe priests discovered the Starlake could indeed be used to open any permanent gate to any other plane, and

the fairies would like to open one to the Dreamlands. Yet, as the Starlake is defiled, the gate would now open to the Unseelie court, unless it is first purified.

Before the Darkers arrive, this level is empty, and afterwards it still is, even though the Darkers are slowly exploring it, hoping to find some lost fairy folk artifact.

Level TEN, GEM OF THE SUN

This level was the Inti city 3500 years ago. Not much is left of that time except for some decorations of the sun that have been defiled by The Last One. He found some Inti mummies on this level and animated them. The mummies were priests of Ixion and so despise him so much that they are slowly breaking away from his control, and one day soon they will be able to rebel.

The secrets: Quehuar, the most ancient mummy and shaman, has a useful weapon hidden in a secret compartment in his old sepulchral room, the Gem of the Sun, an enchanted item that can turn undead as a 36th level Lawful Cleric. Once he gains his freedom from The Last One's control, he will use it.

After the Darkers take control, The Last One hides here, commanding the Inti mummies to hide as well, and casting a powerful illusion to make this level look empty. The Darkers fall for it, but sooner or later they will make plans to use this level and The Last One will be forced to fight them again. To prepare himself he is arranging the summoning of several demons and vampires faithful to the Most Dark One.

What he does not know is that Quehuar is planning his revolt, and when the time is right he will receive huge support from the

thirteenth level. Once Ixion's followers have destroyed The Last One and his minions, they will destroy Nyx's followers as well. After that, Ixion's plan is to bring Koskatap into the world as his most important temple, making it a centre of learning for his clerics, fully integrated in the young nation of Karamaikos. He now believes it is worthless to try to keep it a secret any longer.

Level ELEVEN, THE BLACK HEARTH

Beastmen followers of Hel, primitive bugbears, occupied this level for many years after the Great Rain of Fire. Massacred by the Inti, they have left no apparent trace whatsoever, as the new masters of Koskatap considered them unclean, so they cleared the level of any trace of their presence to use it as storerooms. As the fairies of Grondheim never bothered to clear it up, old Inti crates and goods, most all completely decayed, still litter these rooms. Searching for many hours, it is still possible to find several ancient Inti magical weapons, as well as precious and semi-precious stones.

The secrets: Hel wanted to know what Ixion hid here and even though the Sun lord's followers reconquered the place some centuries after, before her followers were able to break into the inner temple, she had foreseen that and made preparations. She inspired some beastmen to secretly create a very big parallel level next to this one, where whole families moved before the Inti attack. They have lived in this system of great caverns ever since, with radiance items, adequate water and food (mostly mushrooms and insects), and magical light, growing and preparing their invasion. They have dug more tunnels toward level Thirteen and now they

are almost ready to strike. Out of nowhere thousands of ancient Beastmen will attack the Inner Temple and conquer The Dream of Fire, and Hel, Lady of Death, will forever rule over the infinite worlds.

After the Darkers take control, The Last One - now hiding in the level above - has animated some ancient beastmen as ghosts, who now roam this level. Questioning one of them, he, and consequently Thanatos, has learned of Hel's plan. He just loves it: he will take control of the beastmen with his undead minions, make them undead, and then will use all to storm the Inner temple of Ixion. He just has to decide if it's better to massacre Nyx's puny followers before or after that...

Level TWELVE, GEM OF THE MOUNTAINS

Koskatapetl, the original Azcan city before the Great Rain of Fire, was once here. As it was purposely destroyed by the priests of Ixion from the level below, just a mass of debris and corpses - long ago turned to dust, is all of what's left of the once proud and great city. Yet, as the beastmen did not explore it much, and the Inti found it impractical to try to clear, almost all the content of the city at the time is still here, buried in the ruins. That means here is one of the greatest treasure troves of the world and one of the most intact archeological sites of Blackmoorian times. At first look the city is just a maze of fallen tunnels full of rubble, difficult to cross, with some partially crumbled skeleton or skull around, but it is sufficient to have the patience to dig a little to find metals, gems, gold, clothes, furniture, blades, treasures, ancient codes

and spells, and very dangerous items such as radiance machinery and weapons.

The secrets: The DM should point out to over enthusiastic PC's that randomly pillaging the ruins is a major archeological crime. While PCs probably will not care about this, all the items found in Koskatepetl are still infected with the Wasting, the terrible disease that killed millions after the Great Rain of Fire - so foolish PCs will soon learn the error of their ways.

No undead inhabit old Koskatepetl nor do any lifeforms - not even oozes or small insects. That should give PCs a clue about the dangers of the place.

Nothing changes here after the Darkers take control. During the centuries The Last One has explored the city extensively but, much to his frustration, found it impossible to animate the dead here (an effect of the Temple), found the radiance items quite useless, and no passage whatsoever to the Inner temple he knows to lie below. Should he find himself in serious danger on Level Ten he might try to escape here, and be quite hard to find in the huge maze of rubble.

Level THIRTEEN, THE DREAM OF FIRE

It is impossible to reach the Inner Temple of Ixion, except as a consequence of the actions of Hel's beastmen (see Level Eleven), or if the Temple is voluntarily opened from below by Ixion's followers -- which may happen if Quehwar revolts against The Last One or to attack the Darkers before their ceremony in 1031 AC. Attempts to reach the Inner Temple with gates, teleport, or other magical means will fail, even if the PC's somehow know about it -- note that only a few powerful

individuals from the levels above are aware of the Temple's existence at all and none of them would willingly share this information.

This level is a huge compound dedicated to Ixion, and is home to thousands of people who have chosen to become its guardians over the millennia. There are Sollux, brutemen, Hutaakan and human priests, and warriors living here under the earth from innumerable generations.

Obviously If the PCs have arrived here as enemies they will be fought to the bitter end, but a small group of people will never be able to conquer the temple, as it's heavily guarded and there are very powerful priests among the guardians. Only an organized army of Hel's, Nyx's or Thanatos' followers could do it, or a large number of fairies and giants. If the PCs arrived here as followers or allies of Ixion, however, they will be welcomed as the temple is preparing to reveal itself to the world and the inhabitants very much need information about the land in which they will emerge - and they could use the PC's as emissaries and ambassadors to the Karameikan court. The priests will not hide the fact that they guard a powerful artifact, but will not explain the details of its nature and powers.

The secrets: The most sacred place is indeed the Inner Temple. Here is a huge chamber with a crystalline sarcophagus where Ashira, daughter of the Sun, has slept since the dawn of Time with the Dream of Fire. The artifact appears as a bronze box she keeps at her side, with her left hand over it. Several Sollux priests and warriors are always here, guarding her resting place, and the Dream. If the PC's have managed to arrive here, either by stealth or by violence, Ishan, the highest priest, will not immediately attack

them, but will warn them against the dangers of the artifact and will beg them to renounce the idea of using it.

Even if PC's are able to defeat the guardians, "only someone willing to forfeit her life to avenge a great wrong" will be able to break the sarcophagus. That's also written on the base of Ashira's resting place, but in a language so ancient only an Immortal could read it. Only a woman, or a female being of any other race could open the sarcophagus, and only if she is willing to die to avenge a great wrong done to her people. Such a woman would be able to awake Ashira, and the Daughter of the Sun would grant her desire, and literally change the world. Thus, if Lady Sonya of the Darkers ever manages to arrive at The Dream, she would be able to undo the destruction of Taymora. If a Traladaran freedom fighter makes their way here, she would be able to undo the Thyatian invasion. If a Sidhe priestess could do it, she would be able to bring back the Fairy Golden Age, and so on, effectively erasing the existing timeline and supplanting it with another one.

If anyone ever manages to penetrate this far and is ready to awaken Ashira, Ixion himself will appear in his corporeal form of a sollux with burning hair. He cannot prevent the willing sacrifice of someone who wants to awake his daughter, but he will plead for them not to do it.

"Everyone would like to live forever. Everyone would like his or her family, his or her people, to live forever. This place could do it, it could give eternal life to you and your people. Have not the fairy folk who once ruled the world the right to bring back their days of glory? Have not the massacred Tal people the right to be avenged? Have not the Traladarans the right to be free? And the

dragons, the giants, the brutemen, the lizard men? All were once proud and strong people that time devoured and other people conquered and destroyed. They all have the right to return and live forever, but should that happen, the future will never come to be. That is why we guarded this place and that is why we tried to prevent anyone from using its power".

If the PC's ignore Ixion's plea and do it anyway he will not attack them, he will try to integrate the temple into the rest of the world anyway - whatever world it has now become. He will also ask his daughter to come with him, but she will refuse to stay on the prime plane. PC's will have to live in a new world and will have to choose whether or not to help Ashira. Ixion will not persecute them. The Dream of Fire will become only a normal bronze box, its power forever expired.

After the Darkers take control, the danger for the temple increases considerably as The Last One has learned of Hel's plan and would like to use it for his own ends. Ixion and his priests do not know yet about this, but they wish to destroy The Last One anyway, and they will try to do so with the aid of Quehwar's rebellion. Even if they manage to destroy The Last One before he can enslave Hel's beastmen, they would still risk a fight on two sides at once -- with Nyx's followers above and Hel's beastmen below, which could lead to their defeat. If PCs are not aligned with Hel or Nyx and are willing to help the Church of Ixion, they could be a decisive element in the oncoming struggle for control of Koskatap.

For the DM there are several possible events and consequences to consider: The Last One could be defeated but not killed, and could

then hide in Level Twelve. Fairies and giants could intervene in the struggle. And obviously, PCs, or any of the several sides involved in this struggle, could manage to awaken Ashira, using the Dream of Fire to change reality according to their own wishes.

CONSEQUENCES

Koskatep contains two powerful artifacts, the *Starlake* and the *Dream of Fire*. Their potential effects are similar but not at all the same. The *Starlake* “only” opens a permanent gate to an Outer Plane, thus allowing the inhabitants of that plane to come freely to the Prime Material. Any side able to use the *Starlake* would probably be able to take control of Karamaikos within a few years. Followers of Nyx would bring to the nation many intelligent undead, therefore creating a new Taymora. Yet the effects of the *Starlake* are reversible as someone might be able to close the gate and destroy the artifact, even if doing so would require a long and difficult task.

The *Dream of Fire* is much more powerful. It can change the reality of the entire world of Mystara, resurrecting a dead timeline from centuries or even millennia ago. The farther from the present such a timeline is, the more changes would appear in the present time. So undoing the Thyatian invasion of Traladara would probably change things mostly in just one nation, but undoing the destruction of Taymora would change things in all the Known World, and undoing the fall of the Fairy Courts would change things on the entire planet. PCs and the DM should be aware that use of The Dream of Fire would radically change the current campaign.



Ashira, Daughter of the Sun

FORT DOOM

Continued from page [144](#)

are only allowed to bring home what they can survive on. All Traladarans are forced to live in the town. They same goes for the farmers. They are given enough food to survive, but all production is registered and confiscated.

Producing too little or catching too few fish can be seen as disobedience, if it is recurrent, and you can risk being transferred to working on the castle.”



FROM THE VAULTS OF PANDIUS



A view of the Altan Tepes foothills from Castellan's Keep

"We were out beyond Lake Ludaš, past the territory of the Jagged Rocks, when we entered a strange, icy world. Even though it was early Fyrmont the ground was covered in a thin layer of ice and the plants were frozen and brittle and similarly covered in ice; it looked like a winter wonderland. The creatures in the area were also affected; we noticed giant spiders weaving icy webs. Overnight we were attacked by strange bluish-coloured wolves that emitted a dangerous frosty blast. After we dispatched the beast, later in the early morning when it

was Pyotr's watch, we were attacked by a frost giant. He never alerted us, it attacked us without warning; we were unprepared and we suffered serious losses. Afterwards we never found Pyotr or even his body; we don't know what happened to him. We escaped back here, we only have some of the spider webs to show for our journey - see, I have some of it here - they haven't even melted, whatever good they are. It's a dangerous place, I will never return."

- Heard from Yuri Golitsyn, an adventurer, in an alehouse in Novaci

HISTORY

Over the centuries gnomes have been moved - and moved on - around southeastern Brun as various humanoid hordes were raised and rampaged through the area. The gnomes always moved and rebuilt, sometimes even allying with humans. One such group of gnomes was a mix of refugees from those relocated from the Cruth and Altan Tepes Mountains by the Horde of Queen Udbala in 492 BC and those relocated from the Falun Caverns in the Northern Reaches by rampaging kobolds in 490 BC. Some of these displaced gnomes had found each other and allied with the human Cynidicean Empire, the heart of which is in present day Ylaruam. Over the years the gnomes lost close contact with the Cynidiceans through increasing distaste over the growing Church of Zargon. After a couple of hundred years of relative stability for the gnomes - if not for their human allies - the human city of Cynidicea was itself attacked by an Antalian horde from the north, in 98 BC. The gnomes were again relocated by the Antalian horde and, while fleeing, the Cynidiceans and gnomes again found themselves working together against the common threat. The gnomes helped the Cynidiceans find an underground city but, uneasy with the clerics of Zargon and the influence it had gained over the remnants of the Cynidicean Empire, the gnomes quickly moved on.

Fleeing southwest from the underground city the gnomes headed towards their ancestral homes in the Altan Tepes. At this time the immortal Brandan, patron immortal of the gnomes of Snarta, was expanding his sights - ultimately he was hoping to find new followers beyond the Vulcanian gnomes.

Brandan had been following the plight of the gnomes of southeastern Brun and decided that now was the time to act, although he was wary of acting too overtly. Brandan had observed the human Traladara and considered them to be a healthier group of humans - compared to the Cynidiceans - for the gnomes to associate themselves with. Brandan sent dreams to some of the gnomes fleeing towards the Altan Tepes, guiding them to the overland route through the narrow pass in the Altan Tepes now known as the Gap of Yebedeska, and from there into the Traladaran lands. However, Brandan was wary of the possibility of renewed contact between the gnomes and the Cynidiceans, and so decided to implement the most overt part of his plan - while also satisfying his urge to create new and fantastic things. Brandan - also known as Brandan Earth-Mover, Brandan Earthshaker and Brandan the Builder - decided to create a great wall to protect the fleeing gnomes; a wall of ice.

Brandan chose the narrowest place in the Gap of Yebedeska for his construction. Unfortunately, this was also the place where, a millennium beforehand, the Nithians had engaged in their own attempt at terraforming. Nithians had been fighting Beastmen in their own territories, forcing them to flee through the Altan Tepes to Traldar lands. In order to ensure that they did not return, a council of powerful Nithian wizards raised the land in a part of the gap that effectively destroyed the natural passageway. Afterwards, once the landscape settled, and the avalanches and landslides has dissipated, a much narrower pass still existed; however the beastmen never returned. It was in this narrow pass that Brandan constructed his wall.

THE ICE BOX

The Ice Box appears to be a small mechanical device contained snugly in a small box-like object about 45 cm long, 10 cm high and 15 cm deep. The Box is made of thin sheets of translucent mica, which make the device difficult to examine in detail, although it looks like a mechanical construction with several cogs, wheels, pistons and belts in evidence. The Ice Box is a Greater Artifact with 450 power points. Brandan programmed the Ice Box with a simple set of instructions and with the details for the maximum dimensions of the intended wall. The device follows these instructions in order to build and maintain the structural integrity of the Wall. In the first hour of a day the Ice Box uses its *locate object* power to identify areas within the dimensions of the intended Wall where there is no ice. If there are gaps, in the next hour the Box activates its *ice wall* and *permanence* powers; in the next hour, it activates its *control temperature* and *permanence* powers; then, in the next hour, it activates *create water* which quickly freezes in the sub-zero temperatures, helping to cement everything together. If the Ice Box has detected no areas without ice, or once it has completed its ice

construction, it then activates its defensive powers which Brandan included to ensure that nobody comes to tamper with the Wall. It activates its *sense life* power and then either *feblemind* or *mass charm* powers depending upon the number of creatures identified which might want to harm the Wall.

Attacks: *feblemind* (40), *mass charm* (75)
Information and Movement: *locate object* (20), *sense life** (20)

Transformations: *control temperature* (35), *create water* (20), *permanence* (90)

Defences: *ice wall* (25)

Handicaps: Magic Error, Memory Penalty, Polymorph.

Penalties: Alignment Change (to Lawful), Forgetfulness, Obsession, Paranoia, Weak Magic.

* *Sense Life* is a first level spell from 3.5E, a similar spell has probably been created for Mystara at some stage. I gave it a slightly higher power point cost than similar detection spells as it is slightly more powerful/useful than those.

THE WALL

Brandan has always been an inventor and a tinker; he wanted to create a permanent barrier, but he didn't want to create just a simple wall. Instead, he created something which could itself create and maintain a huge wall of ice - the Ice Box. Once Brandan had set the Ice Box in place and noted that it seemed to be working, he turned his

attentions back to the gnomes who were now resettling at Highforge.

The resultant Wall is constructed on a narrow, half-mile, winding trail through the high mountains. The Wall itself rises up to a height of 50 feet from the ground and extends across the mountain trail and through the impassable slopes on either side to a maximum length of 2 miles. It has a thickness of 10 feet. The base of the Wall

follows the sloping topography perfectly, creating an impregnable barrier to overland movement.

The area where the Ice Box functions still has a remnant magic about it, left over from the great spell which the Nithian wizards worked a thousand years beforehand. The magic of the area interacted with the device, and vice versa, and it started to affect how its handicaps and penalties acted on creatures, so that they now act upon creatures in the immediate vicinity of the Wall which the Ice Box creates instead of just upon mortal users of the Ice Box. Some of these effects were also altered as described below. In addition, certain cold-related creatures such as white dragons and frost giants seem to be attracted to the Wall.

Simple non-humanoid creatures that remain in the immediate vicinity of the Wall (that is creatures with less than 6 hit dice or levels) have a 35% chance plus 10% per continuous day of remaining in the immediate vicinity of the wall to be *polymorphed* into ice variants of their base forms; see the Ice Creatures sidebar. More powerful non-humanoid creatures that remain in the immediate vicinity of the Wall (that is creatures with 6 or more hit dice or levels) may be similarly polymorphed into ice variants of their base forms but also have a 25% chance plus 10% per continuous day of remaining in the immediate vicinity of the wall of being affected by a combination of the *memory loss* and *feblemind* effects of the Ice Box, effectively leaving the creatures with 8 less intelligence, with a minimum intelligence of 2, and no memory of what led them to the place. It should be noted that these effects are in addition to the active *feblemind*-ing which the Box itself continues to do to any creatures in the immediate vicinity.

Humanoid creatures that remain in the immediate vicinity of the Wall have a 35% chance plus 10% per continuous day of remaining in the immediate vicinity of the wall to be *polymorphed* into an ice-variant frost giant with Hit Dice equal to the level of the humanoid creature. Humanoid creatures have the

ICE CREATURES

Creatures affected by the Ice Box, as described above, gain the following abilities which may be treated as a template in a non-BECMI system. The creatures gain a bluish-white tinge and seem to exude an aura of coldness, with their normal breath coming out in cold clouds and their skin being freezing to the touch. In BECMI terms the creature is hardier, gaining +2 hit points per hit die of the normal creature. The creature also gains the ability to emit an icy blast at a single target within 15 feet. The attack does 1d4 points of damage per hit die, or level, of the normal creature. The target may make a saving throw vs. dragon breath to take half damage. Ice creatures are immune to normal cold damage and take half damage from magical cold effects, taking only one-quarter damage if any allowed saving throw is made. Conversely, they are vulnerable to fire, taking +1 point per die of damage from normal fire effects and double damage from magical fire effects, taking only normal damage if any allowed saving throw is made. The experience value of the new creature should be amended accordingly, including the special abilities gained which are treated as two additional asterisks to the base creature.

same chance of being affected by intelligence and memory loss as described above for powerful non-humanoid creatures.

TALFRIS

Three hundred years ago the Traladaran magic-user Talfris found the Wall while he was flying through the area. He was intrigued by the palpable magical aura which emanated from the Wall and, having an obsession towards cold-related magics, he was also attracted to the Wall itself. Talfris noticed this pull, which he correctly surmised as an unnatural attraction coming from something related to the Wall. Talfris was a magic-user of some power and as a result had gained a healthy cautious attitude towards powerful unknown objects. So, over the following months he travelled to the area regularly for hours, and then a day, and then a couple of days, conducting research and experiments.

Talfris realised that an item of great power was associated with the Wall, but with time he grew increasingly annoyed by his lack of progress in discovering how it came about. He had also noticed the unusual propensity of particularly dim-witted young frost giants and white dragons to congregate in the vicinity of the Wall, as well as otherwise regular creatures with peculiar abilities. Correctly surmising that this was somehow related to the Wall itself, Talfris tested his theories by introducing and penning in normal creatures in the vicinity of the Wall. By this means, Talfris deduced the *polymorphing* effects of the Wall, and so obtained magical items for protection. Properly equipped, he decided to build a tower and relocate himself to the area so that he could continue his research and experimentation.

Talfris built a tower out of a spike of ice which he *conjured* about a mile away from the Wall; he infused the ice with protective spells and wards, particularly to keep him safe from the *polymorphing* and stupefying effects of the Wall. From his new base he worked with a particular obsession, continuing his research into cold-related magics and learning what he could about the Wall, and ultimately he gleaned some knowledge about the device contained inside. Through these studies Talfris learned a little about immortality and ultimately started his own journey.

Unfortunately for Talfris, while on this journey he encountered a powerful fire mage, Barimoor, who lived under the desert of Ylaruam to the northeast. He became unnaturally paranoid of Barimoor and saw him as a direct threat which needed to be dealt with. Despite his researches on the Ice Box, Talfris never appreciated that his obsession and paranoia were being caused by the Ice Box itself. On the day on which Talfris directly confronted Barimoor he also never appreciated that he was under the effect of the magic error, forgetfulness and weak magic effects from the Ice Box. As a result, Barimoor was a little bit more powerful than Talfris expected. In the ensuing battle Barimoor drew Talfris away from his mountainous home and away from the Wall; Barimoor had also noticed the magical aura coming from the Wall, although he was wholly uninterested in it - he just wanted to draw Talfris away from a possible source of personal power. Barimoor lured Talfris to Thirst Hollow near the ruins of Iunyt and there slew his challenger.

THE LEGACY OF TALFRIS

Although Talfris was slain many years ago - about 820 AC - he has left behind some treasures for erstwhile adventurers, and a terrible legacy for everyone. Talfris' Tower has remained undiscovered since his passing and contains his research into cold-related magics as well as scribblings from his research on the Wall (which in some writings Talfris purports to have created himself) and the Ice Box. Of course, as this is the tower of a reclusive, obsessed and paranoid magic-user, there are protections; the careless should beware.

Through his studies Talfris had also identified the residual magic in the area left behind by the great working of the ancient Nithians, although despite his researches he never identified the source of the great working. Although he knew that the two effects had become intertwined somehow, he never truly appreciated all of the intricacies of how the residual magic was interacting with the Ice Box; and yet he tampered and tinkered with his magic. The tampering of Talfris has left behind a legacy, which he himself had not identified when he died.

About 745 AC, a magical experiment which Talfris was conducting in the vicinity of the Wall went awry. It linked itself with the *control temperature* effect which the Ice Box was at that time manifesting and amplified and extended it. From that day forth, the Ice Box has been dropping the temperature in an ever-widening sphere around itself to sub-freezing temperatures. Additionally, the *polymorphing* effects of the Wall occur within this spherical area of effect, not just in the immediate vicinity of the Wall. Vegetable matter in the area freezes in the form which it

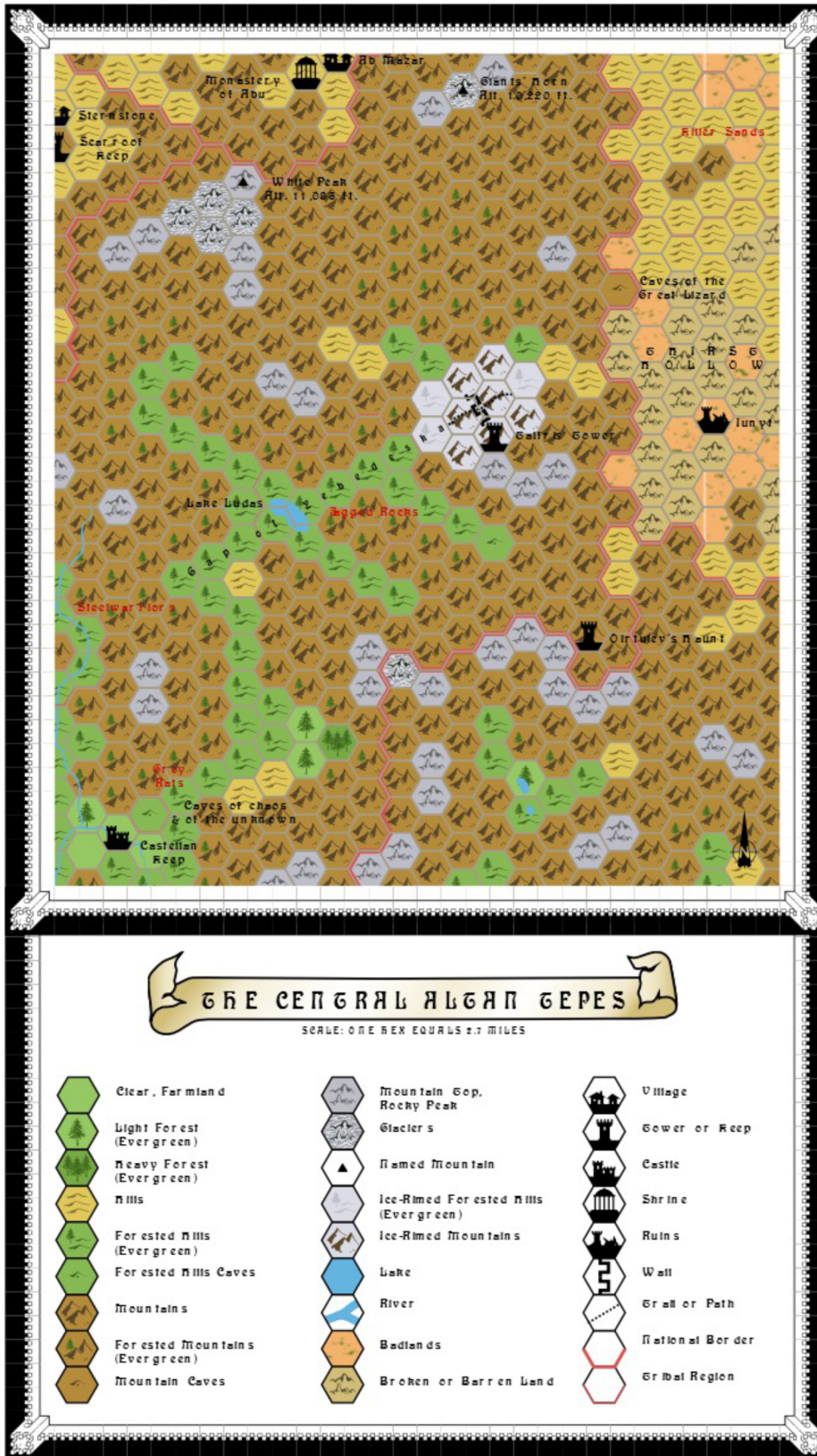
was in, while the land itself becomes similarly cold and ice-rimed. The area affected has been growing each year, and not only that the rate of growth has been increasing.

ICE-RIME

As noted, the area affected by the ice-rime has been growing exponentially, and while the growth has not yet been noticed, that is about to change... perhaps for everyone. Once Talfris conducted his spell, almost overnight an area within a 100-foot radius around the Ice Box became ice-rimed. Over the next 128 years this slowly grew until an area double the size was covered; at this time the rate of growth changed, so that it took half the amount of time for twice the amount of area to be affected. Consequently, by 873 AC the area within just over 200 feet was ice-rimed, and as of 1 Nuwmont 1000 AC a spherical area within 5 miles around the Ice Box has been affected. In only three more months it will cover 10 miles. By 25 Klarmont Specularum itself will be affected, and within a few days the Outer and Hollow Worlds will similarly be under an icy grasp.

GOING TO THE WALL

How player characters may become involved in dealing with the ice-rime depends upon where in Karameikos or the surrounding area that the player characters are; characters who are too far afield may not be able to reach the area in time before the whole planet is affected. Characters in Castellan Keep will be alerted around late-Yarthmont - early-Klarmont when the ice-rime will be approaching; the keep itself is



expected to be ice-rimed on 8 Klarmont and at this stage the ice-rime is advancing at about 1 mile per day; as the ice-rime reaches Castellán Keep the ice-rime will again accelerate to 4 miles per day (for the next 10 days, etc). Once word of the ice-riming reaches the keep the news will quickly spread around Karameikos and eventually to Specularum and erstwhile adventurers will come to the area to investigate.

Once the ice-riming nears Highforge Brandan also starts to take notice and alerts any followers in the community; he also starts his own investigation as he has a nagging thought that it might involve something which he did in the past. As he investigates he quickly finds that his device might somehow be involved in the current predicament. However, he also realises that something went awry and he is unwilling to get directly involved unless he has to. As he continues his investigations he sends messages to his clerics in the area to alert them to specific details – namely that there is a device within a wall of ice which is involved with causing the predicament. He also eventually alerts them to Talfris' Tower.

Once player characters arrive in the region they will hopefully do an aerial reconnaissance of the area and identify that it is expanding in a spherical manner from a central point. Pinpointing that area will bring the characters to the Wall and the nearby tower. Although the investigations at the Wall will prove fruitless at this time, a further investigation of the tower will move the characters to the next step. If necessary, gnomes from Highforge could arrive at any time to help the characters towards the Talfris' Tower, or the Wall itself if required.

Talfris' Tower, being the retreat of a powerful, paranoid, magic-user still has a number of

magical traps to be overcome, but once inside, the protections against the *polymorphing* and stupefying effects of the Ice Box are also still in place and the tower can make a good base for the characters to use while they investigate the Wall. The characters will have to go through the works of Talfris, and piece together what he learned to try and work out a safe way to access the Ice Box and undo the ice-rime.

It is only through the relocation, destruction, or reprogramming of the Ice Box that the ice-rime will be stopped. To relocate or destroy the Ice Box, it must first be reached through the Wall. The Ice Box is located on a stone plinth about two feet off the ground in the centre of the Wall. The DM is encouraged to be inventive in the amount of effort required to deal with the Ice Box.

DEALING WITH THE ICE BOX

Reprogramming the Ice Box would be simplest method of dealing with it, as it does not require directly accessing it, although it can only be done through thought control within about 1 mile of the Ice Box. The studies of Talfris provide the greatest insights on the techniques about how it can be done. The more time which is spent studying Talfris' papers will ultimately lead characters to a method to turn the Ice Box off, although if time is a factor then reprogramming it - most efficiently by resetting the *control temperature* setting - would halt the ice-rime.

If characters are not inclined, or do not think about reprogramming the Ice Box then they need to access it so that they can relocate or destroy it.

Talfris' studies showed that the Wall was vulnerable to certain frequencies of sound. Sphinxes from the nearby Iunyt region could be enticed to try and crack the Wall; the concentrated blast from a number of sphinxes should be sufficient to crack the Wall. Unless inappropriate for the party, the application of a device like a *horn of blasting* seems to create sound at an appropriate frequency.

Alternatively, the application of a powerful flame such as the breath weapon of a red or gold dragon, could be employed. Conversely, unless appropriate, lobbing *fireballs* at the Wall doesn't seem to create sufficient heat to melt the Wall.

Once accessed, the Ice Box could be relocated. Simply moving the Ice Box away from the area affected residually by the Nithian magic would be insufficient as the two have become too closely linked. Instead, the Ice Box would need to be relocated to another plane. If this were an option, Brandan himself could be convinced to take the Ice Box away. Alternatively if the characters wish to attempt to destroy the artifact then some suitably difficult, but readily achievable - given the time constraints at this stage - scheme would need to be considered.

From the Vaults

The Return to the Ice Wall was inspired by Gordon McCormick's article introducing the [Ice Wall](#). For more information on the immortal Brandan see Marco Dalmonte's article [Brandan Earthshaker](#). Elements of the history were taken from Joaquin Menchaca's article on the [Highforge Gnomes](#) and the [Dungeon Master's Guide to Cynidicea](#) edited by Geoff Gander. The map was recreated, with some significant amendments from Simone Neri's map in the [Central Altan Tepes mini-Gazetteer](#), thanks are offered to Simone who agreed to its use and modification. Additional information for the region is available in the mini-Gazetteer and in Giampaolo Agosta's [A Karameikan Companion](#).

Before we crossed the
Threshold
there was the...

TOME OF MYSTARA




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Guild Wars

by Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)

This adventure is a sort of urban side-trek, taking the form of a classical whodunit. It is suitable for basic level adventurers -- access to spells like "Speak with Dead" or powerful divinations would allow the characters to bypass most of the investigation.

The adventure takes advantage of the complex world of Specularum guild politics. Infighting is rampant within the Apothecaries' Guild, and members of the Torenescu faction try to frame the Guildmaster, Dimitri Levinik, for the murder of a political rival, a crime he did not commit. The PCs are called to investigate, and may find out that Levinik, while innocent of this specific crime, is linked to the Veiled Society. They must decide whether to let Levinik be sentenced for a crime he didn't commit, or to let him use the Guild to support the Veiled Society.

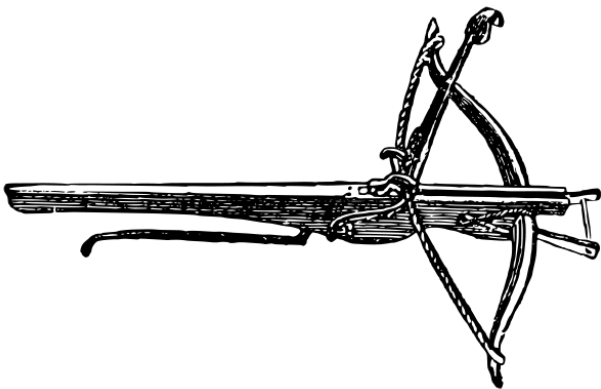
The plot of this adventure is based Italian mystery novel "Cosa è successo alla signora perbene" by Lorian Machiavelli (not translated in English, a French edition is available under the title "Bologne ville a vendre").

BACKGROUND

The adventure starts after one of the Traladaran riots in Specularum, near the Magicians' Guildhall. The precise nature of the riot is not critical, but it should be politically motivated. If it fits the campaign, this riot could be part of the events following "Davinos' Complaint", otherwise it could be a riot motivated by a perceived pro-Thyatian bias in the Magicians' Guild itself, which is accused of refusing aid to the Traladaran population of the ward.

A man, Iosif Gogean, is killed by a crossbow bolt during the riot. By itself, this kind of incident would usually be written off as the act of Traladaran extremists, and a few such figures, in this case two Traladaran students, would be summarily tried and sentenced.

However, the victim, Iosif Gogean was a second tier politician -- a Consul of the Apothecaries' Guild in charge of collaborating with the Magicians' in defeating the "atabe plague" in the Specularum Series adventure [Omens and Portents](#), so an investigation is required, as involvement of organized crime is suspected.



INVOLVING THE PARTY

There are several ways for the Player Characters to be involved in the investigation.

- One or more PCs are members of the Phorsis Guard¹ or a unit of the Second Division. In the latter case, the Phorsis Guards are exonerated from the investigation due to the accusation of being involved in the murder, and the PCs' unit is assigned the case instead.
- The party is already known to Specularum government agents (Zogref Yarol, Lucas Tormandros, captain Mikel, Aloysius Vandevic or a member of the ruling family).
- One or more PCs are members of the Magicians' Guild or the Apothecaries' Guild, or another party involved in the matter (this may change depending on the setting).
- One or more PCs are friends of the two Traladaran suspects, Daniel and Mihail. Their friends ask the PCs to save them from a certain death at the hands of Karameikos' judiciary system.

THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation itself is rather free-form, and takes the better part of the adventure. Its actual play depends heavily on player choices -- it is up to them who to question and which actions to undertake. This section provides information useful to run the investigation, but the DM will need to present it in a way that fits the events triggered by the PCs.

Murder scene: The killing bolt was shot from a building near the Magicians' Guildhall, apparently one occupied by Traladaran insurgents Daniel Dodrescu and Mihail Hagi. However, neither of the two is an especially good shot with a crossbow, and

¹ See [The Specularum City Guard](#) at The Vaults of Pandius

Tracking the TORENESCU

The adventure, as written, assumes that the Torenescu infiltrator who cannot be tracked down or otherwise detected by the PCs. However, skilled, inventive, or well-connected PCs may try to follow this route -- most likely after the main part of the adventure is completed. The infiltrator, Malora Cooper (female Forest Elf 5, N), is a member of the Minrothaddan Thieves' Guild, contracted by the Torenescu through their contacts with the Ebonov family. She will leave Specularum on the first ship bound to Minrothad, and this may be a good opportunity to lead the party to the Minrothad Guilds, and involve them in a deadlier type of city adventure.



silver bolt found in the office of Guildmaster Levink

the distance was considerable (over the range for a Basic Mastery shot). The killing bolt itself is also peculiar, as it is a silver bolt. Investigation on the deceased body, however (short of infecting another person with Iosif's blood), will not result in any trait that could lead to think to lycanthropy (e.g., unusual hairiness or the like).

Political intrigue: As the characters investigate, they discover that both the deceased (a member of the Torenescu faction) and the Guildmaster (Dimitri Levinik, a supporter of the Radu faction) have lots of shady dealings to hide -- the Consul was diverting funds to a person or group identified only as "V."² in his documents, while the Guildmaster is involved in drug trafficking -- forged records of sale of restricted alchemical substances imported from Ylaruam, Ierendi, and Sind were used to hide the sale of drugs to the Veiled Society. Moreover, Consul Gogean was known to be going to run for the Guildmaster position on the next term, and was the most prominent opposition to the Guildmaster within the guild.

Guildmaster Levinik is totally uninvolved in the crime -- it was merely a lucky break for him that his primary rival was killed -- but his political enemies in the Apothecaries' Guild want to take advantage of Consul Gogean's death and the suspicions falling on Levinik to turn the advantage to their own faction. They do so by planting two false clues. The first clue is rather straightforward: thieves hired by the Torenescu faction plant a silver-tipped bolt in Levinik's office. If the party searches the room, the bolt is easily found (no need to

roll skill checks). The bolt is superficially similar to the one used in the crime, but an expert weaponsmith will notice subtle differences in the workmanship. This second bolt is professionally manufactured by a specialist -- most likely one of the many weaponsmiths in Specularum, whereas the bolt used in the murder seems to have been produced by an amateur. The second clue is more subtle. Characters investigating Levinik will soon characterize him as a lecherous old man. A good contact in the Specularum underground will be able to put the characters in contact with a hooker who, apparently, saw Levinik talk with a man who resembled Gogean. The hooker has truly seen Levinik (several times), but not Gogean. She has been magically persuaded to lie by a Torenescu magician. The magician was disguised, and his identity cannot be ascertained (unless the DM wants to extend the adventure in this direction), but the tampering with the hooker's mind can be detected by the usual means (for example, as an enchanted being, she is affected by Protection from Evil spells).

Family matters: To further complicate things, the victim had a complex family story, and several of his relatives saw Iosif the day he died or somewhat earlier, so the investigators may want to hear them.

Iosif was a widower, and had recently remarried. His second wife, Otilia, married him out of interest, and the two had rapidly fallen out, but were keeping their marriage for the sake of appearances -- Iosif even had a mistress, though he kept this a guarded secret. Gossipers also talk of a possible love affair between Otilia and Iosif's son, Simion. Simion is a student at the Scrivener's Guild, and is only a few years younger than Otilia.

² "V." is actually the Minister of Finances, Valdo Tisza. See the Gazetteer for more details of Valdo and his secrets.

Several witnesses, including the servants of Gogean House, will be able to report that Simion was on bad terms with his father, and that the two had a loud quarrel just before Iosif went out of his house to a meeting at the Magicians' Guild. While these clues may point towards Simion, none of them are decisive -- in particular, Simion and Otilia deny any affair, and there is no proof of it beyond gossip, and Simion went to meet other students at the Priest and Jug tavern, and would not have had the time to procure a crossbow and a silver bolt, reach the building near the Magicians' Guild, kill his father and then dispose of the weapon and reach the tavern.

The last member of the Gogean family is Iosif's cousin, Aurel, who lives in the outskirts of the village of Marilenev, but had visited Iosif the week before. According to the other relatives and to Iosif's colleagues, the two were on good, if rather distant, terms, and visited each other only rarely. Investigating Aurel will reveal he is a former guild hunter and a remarkably good shot with a crossbow. If an identikit of Aurel is given to the guards on duty at the city gates on the road to Marilenev on the day of the murder, they will identify Aurel as having entered Specularum early in the morning.

Iosif Gogean's mistress is a tougher nut to crack. Her identity is known only to Simion, although Otilia is aware of her. This woman, Mirela Prunea, knows Iosif was working to bring down Guildmaster Levinik and had collected proof of disappearances of restricted alchemical substances, as well as of manipulation of the related records in the guild archives.

RESOLUTION

The truth is quite different from the initial appearances. Iosif had contracted wererat lycanthropy, and, with no cure likely to come from his church, had asked his cousin, Aurel Gogean, to kill him using a silver-headed crossbow bolt. Aurel had fashioned the bolt himself, using silver from an old chandelier, and had killed Iosif on a random day -- Iosif did not want to know when he was going to die exactly. Aurel is a tough old man, but may be coerced (e.g., magically) or persuaded to talk, especially if the characters point out that an innocent is going to pay for Iosif's death.

A second moral dilemma will be offered to the PCs in the form of Guildmaster Levinik: some proof might be found of his misdoings, but with Gogean dead, Levinik's powerful political and underground connections would spare him a trial for tax evasion. On the other hand, he is certainly not responsible for Gogean's death, but he had good reasons to wish Gogean's death, and someone has already fabricated reasonable (though false) proofs of his involvement. A trial for murder of his most prominent political rival would certainly disrupt any chance for re-election to the Guildmaster position, and may well ruin Levinik's career.

Depending on the reason why the PCs were originally involved in the adventure, the reward may change. If the PCs were friends of Daniel and Mihail, then the primary reward is an increase in popularity among the anti-Thyatian fringes. PCs will be able to hide in the Old Quarter for at least a week, if they are ever wanted by the Karameikan authorities.

If the PCs are members of the Phorsis Guard or another branch of the Karameikan military, solving the mystery may lead to promotion. Members of the Magicians' Guild, on the other hand, will receive a free spell of their choice (level 1-3).

If the characters are freelancer hired by Lord Zogrev Yarol or another member of the Karameikan government, they will be paid as per whatever agreement they had in place.

CONSEQUENCES

This section describes how the political scene of Specularum will evolve depending on the outcomes of the adventure, as well as the consequences for the PCs. While the political scene will certainly be affected by the outcome of the adventure, the PCs might not, if their involvement was kept a secret. Apply the results only if the involved faction is aware of their role in the case.

Allowing Levinik be tried and/or sentenced: The PCs will lose favor with Radu and Veiled Society, while they will gain favor with the New Karameikan faction, as well as the Torenescu faction -- the latter, though, only if the Torenescu know the PCs were aware of the false clues and did not expose them. Levinik will fall in disgrace, even if he is finally exonerated, as suspicions and rumors about his involvement in the crime will still circulate. Deprived of strong leadership, the Apothecaries' Guild may drop in status, though not enough to make it a minor guild. The guild will be contended between Radu and Torenescu, with the latter having a greater chance of gaining control.

Exonerating Levinik: In this case, the PCs will gain favor with the Radu faction, and possibly with the Veiled Society (if they already have a

connection there), but they will lose favor with the Torenescu faction. Levinik's position will be strengthened, and the Apothecaries' Guild will remain strongly in the Radu faction for years.

Letting Daniel and Mibail be tried and sentenced: If the PCs allow these two NPCs to lose their life to a false accusation, they will be marked as pro-Thyatians, and will lose favor with all the Traladaran factions, and in particular will gain enemies in the anti-Thyatian fringe, while at the same time gaining some favor with Thyatian faction. The anti-Thyatian fringe will gain strength, and riots will be frequent in the following months or perhaps even years. The Marilenev faction will grow stronger and more radical, possibly even getting closer to the Veiled Society.

The reverse will happen if the PCs contribute to exonerating the students -- they will be looked upon favourably by most Traladarans (except as noted above for other parts of the resolution), and will become known as local heroes. However, the Thyatian faction will consider them dangerous troublemakers, and they will gain powerful enemies at court.

Revealing Aurel as the culprit and Iosif as a lycanthrope: This solution will bring the PCs to the eyes of important political figures, in particular the Duchess and Master Teldon. While they will likely earn the enmity of some of the political factions (as the result of exonerating Levinik and the Traladaran students), they will be considered by these NPCs as reliable and not tied to faction interests. Master Teldon, in particular, will show his appreciation (and that of the Magicians' Guild) by awarding a potion to each PC. Select appropriate potions based

on character level; Magic User PCs may obtain a free spell of level 1-2 instead, if they are members of the Magicians' Guild, or will be offered membership if they are not. The Duchess will not directly contact the PCs, but Emilio the Great may contact them to ask their help in some mission (without revealing who his patron is, for the time being).

On the other hand, revealing the reason of Gogean's death may lead to unpredictable effects -- for one, members of the Oderbry faction in the Church of Karameikos may attack the Church of Traladara for its inability or unwillingness to treat dangerous diseases. On the opposite side, followers of Zirchev may be inspired by Gogean's death to campaign for the rights of lycanthropes (see *Night Howlers* for similar ideas in the setting of Glantri), perhaps with the financial help of Dwarven philanthropes (or *philolycathropes*, more precisely).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The victim: Iosif Gogean (male Traladaran, age 54, L, Consul of the Apothecaries' Guild). Iosif was quite the religious person, being a devout follower of the Church of Traladara, as well as a minor political figure in *Specularum* for the Torenescu faction. As a member of the professional upper class, he lived in a comfortable house at the border between Bricktop and Hill districts.

Dimitri Levinik (male Traladaran, age 58, N, Guildmaster of the Apothecaries' Guild). Dimitri is a member of the Radu faction, as well as an external supporter of the Veiled Society, and a powerful political figure in the guild system. He is involved in a number of shady dealings.

Mirela Prunea (female Traladaran, age 29, N, Iosif's mistress). This woman is distantly related to the Torenescu family. She is educated, intelligent and willful, and was one of the most important counselors for Iosif, besides being his mistress.

Simion Gogean (male Traladaran, age 20, N, student). Simion is Iosif's son. He's a not so brilliant, but well funded, student at the Scriveners' Guild. He is also a painter of unremarkable skill. He loves the student lifestyle and surrounds himself with bohemien acquaintances.

Otilia (female Traladaran, age 25, N, Iosif's wife). Otilia is a Traladaran woman from a middle class family -- her father is a minor trader. She married Iosif primarily to improve her station, and likes to flaunt her acquired wealth.

Aurel Gogean (male Traladaran, age 52, L, F3 skilled w/ crossbow, retired hunter). Aurel is Iosif's cousin on his father's side. He is a semi-retired member of the Hunters' Guild, having purchased a small patch of farmland near Marilenev. He is quite a recluse, and has never married.



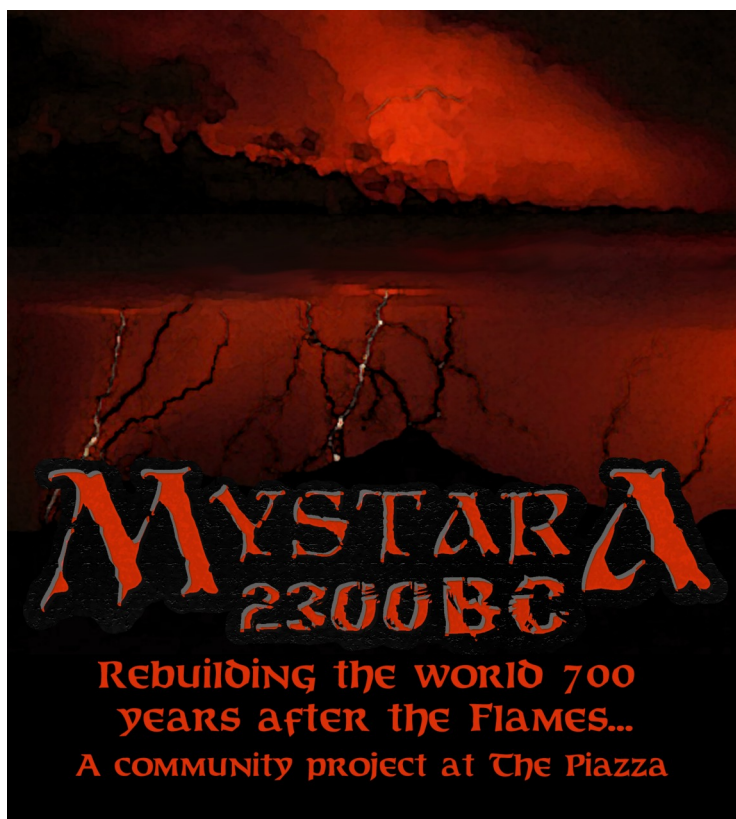
*Dimitri Levinik,
Guildmaster of the Apothecaries' Guild*

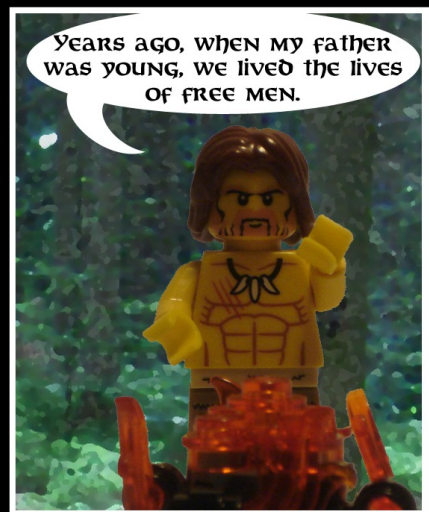
Daniel Dodrescu (male Traladaran, age 22, N, NM, student) and *Mihail Hagi* (male Traladaran, age 23, N, T1, student). These two students, Traladaran nationalists and would-be insurgents are initially accused of killing Iosif Gogean. Both come from lower-middle class backgrounds, and have used their Shearing time to gather funds for pursuing education (and a position in the guild system, most likely). Both only know the victim by fame, and neither is even a passable shot with a crossbow.

Adding More Action

The adventure is designed as combat-free, which makes it a good choice for unusual parties (e.g., those without Fighters), or for a one-night side-trek when some players are missing. However, it is possible (or the PC actions can make it necessary) to add some combat encounters. Four groups are likely to recur to violence to hinder or stop the investigation (or some specific direction): the Traladaran insurgents, the Veiled Society, the Torenescu, and members of the Oderbry faction in the Church of Karameikos.

These combat encounters are likely to take the form of ambushes or barroom brawls, or may be part of larger riots. The Veiled Society may act to protect Levinik, while the Traladaran insurgents could target any character perceived as a Thyatian supporter -- these may be Thyatian PCs or Traladaran "turncoats". The Torenescu are less likely to be involved in open violence, but the PCs may attack them while investigating the false clues about Guildmaster Levinik (see "Tracking the Torenescu"). Finally, the Oderbry faction takes the same role as the Traladaran insurgents, on the opposite side -- these NPCs are only likely to attack unarmed PCs in barroom brawls.







ARTWORK SOURCES AND CREDITS

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Page 168: *Silver bolt found in Guildmaster Levinik's office*

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Page 172: *Dimitri Levinik, Guildmaster of the Apothecaries' Guild*

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NEXT ISSUE

Next time, we're putting the spotlight not on the Known World itself, but on that repository of community lore that has helped to keep the flames of Mystara alive and well long after its discontinuation as a campaign world, to allow us to share the wealth of creativity of this international community, and which has served as a resource to fans new and old alike:

The Vaults of Pandias!

**Watch out for
further announcements**

Anticipated contents include:

- Dark Glantri revisited
- Known World 3050 BC
- Tribute to the Hollow Moon
- Community Interview with Shawn Stanley
- A History of the Mystara Fan Community
- My Mystara: Geoff Gander (Seer of Yhog)
- Leeha Gazetteer & F-Gaz series overview

And more!

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