

THRESHOLD

Issue #6

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Undiscovered Countries



*Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for your love
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.*

William Shakespeare,
The Merchant of Venice, Act 2, Scene I.

Like the Prince of Morocco in Shakespeare's comedy, we too have challenged the North -- perhaps against our better judgement, since the challenge was eagerly met. The Threshold Editorial Team received almost four hundred pages of material! So, what you hold in your hands is only the first in a series of three issues Threshold Magazine will devote to the North, which will include Norwold, the Northern Reaches and other, more exotic Northern lands. Additionally, Norse-inspired cultures, Immortals, fearless explorers, and pioneers will populate these issues.

To welcome you to the Northlands of Mystara, dear reader, we have collected a choice selection of articles, including a preview of the long-awaited F-Gaz "*The Open Arms of Leeba*". We also have an interview with Marco Dalmonte, author of the Codex Immortalis, who discussed his fascination with the mad wizard Gargantua, as well as his recent campaign set in Northern Alphatia.

To help build a Norwold campaign, we open this issue with an article discussing the themes, adversaries, organizations and monsters of Norwold, as well as the

adaptation of resources from other campaign settings and generic AD&D modules. "*The Viking mentality*", on the other hand, provides guidelines to play Northern Reaches characters true to the flavor of real world Vikings.

Adventures are included as well in this issue, with a new level for Koskatep, our megadungeon, and an adaptation of AD&D campaign module "*The Night Below*" to the Soderfjord Jarldoms.

We complete this issue with the final instalments of "*History of Ierendi and Minrothbad*" and the "*Thyatian Senators*" gallery, along with our established column on books, *Mystaranomicon*, which in this issue deals with books from Norwold and the Heldannic Territories.

So, without further ado, we welcome you to the Northlands!

Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)
Editor-in-chief, Threshold Issue #6

This Issue's Contributors

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, Star Wars and Witchcraft RPG.

Jesper Andersen (a.k.a. *Spellweaver*) has been a fan of the Known World and Mystara since his first D&D game in 1991. He enjoys creating new adventures, stories, characters and monsters, much of which can be found at the Vault of Pandius. His latest personal adventure, however, is the launch of his own RPG publishing company called Blood Brethren Games.

JTR, (a.k.a. *OldDawg*) is the author of the acclaimed F-GAZ series, which covers several regions of Norwold and neighboring areas with full-blown gazetteer-style treatment. In this issue, JTR showcases his work for the F-GAZ "The Open Arms of Leeha", covering the northern Hin lands.

Giulio Caroletti started playing in Mystara with the old red box in 1992, and hasn't stopped since. He went "internet" on the MML as Captain Iulius Sergius Scaevola in 1999, and has since written mostly about Thyatis and Dwarves. When not busy pretending to be a Thyatian officer, he lives a boring life as an atmosphere physicist from Rome, Italy. His main interests are light-eyed girls, soccer (he's an AS Roma fan) and rock music (especially 70s progressive rock).

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.

Robin Dijkema. (*Robin* at the piazza, *Robin D* elsewhere) Female, from 1962. Playing D&D since the earliest days as far as 1978. Soon becoming "addicted", bound to the world of Mystara, liked because of its diversity and yet complexity latched to each other. Current compiler of massive materials available on the Pandius site or her "[Breath of Mystara](#)" blog. Former Teacher of Biology, Ecology, Chemistry, Physics, travelled all over Europe as a stage dancer at houseparties. Once at a UK Gencon called "The Fletcher" by Bruce Heard for my compilation work in "[Revenge of the Little Ones](#)".

David Keyser has run four long-term campaigns set in Mystara since the 1980s, using published adventure and support materials as much as possible. He denies having any creative talent himself. It's just that if you put him with a group of friends who are willing to work with him to provide an evening of entertainment, there's a momentary spark like the scratch of flint on steel...and then something magical happens.

Giuliano Michelin has been playing D&D since the late 80ies and, like many others, had his start with the Red Box. He soon moved over to AD&D and divided his gaming time between his favored settings: Mystara and Ravenloft (although playing more the latter). With the coming of 3e, he moved fully back to the first setting, Mystara.

This Issue's Contributors

He collaborated with (and was a member of) the Overlord club in Padua, designing and developing D&D tournament modules for PadCon 2001 and several editions of GiocaPadova. Nowadays, he concentrates fully on his own gaming group, with a weekly D&D Mystara campaign, soon to switch to the 5th edition of the game.

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

Niels Just Rasmussen. Always striving to make the role playing experience for both

myself and my players one of putting yourself in the mind of the "Character", whom has a fundamentally different worldview & religion from our own culture. So is it not so much us playing, as the characters acting and reacting to perceived or real obstacles set before them. As the dying Augustus said: Acta est fabula, plaudite! Handed a "character sheet" by the roman gods, he played it to the best of his ability; and the gods had their fun observing.

Why not join our team of contributors?
See page 5 for more information on
our plans for future issues



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](#).

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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

We are looking especially for contributions fitting the following themes:

Issue 7 - Norwold

Proposal Deadline: Expired, but proposal could still be submitted if the author is confident that the article will be completed by the below deadline

Manuscript Deadline: January 31st 2015

Issue Published: End March 2015

Call for proposals for main themes of forthcoming issues (2015):

Hollow World and the Immortals

The editorial team will accept proposal about the above topics or anything related.

Glantri and beyond

The editorial team will accept proposal on Glantri and nearby nations (Darokin, Sind, Wendar, Ethengar, the Adri Varma plateau, the Broken Lands) and on Magic too.

Isle of Dawn, Thyatis and Alphatia

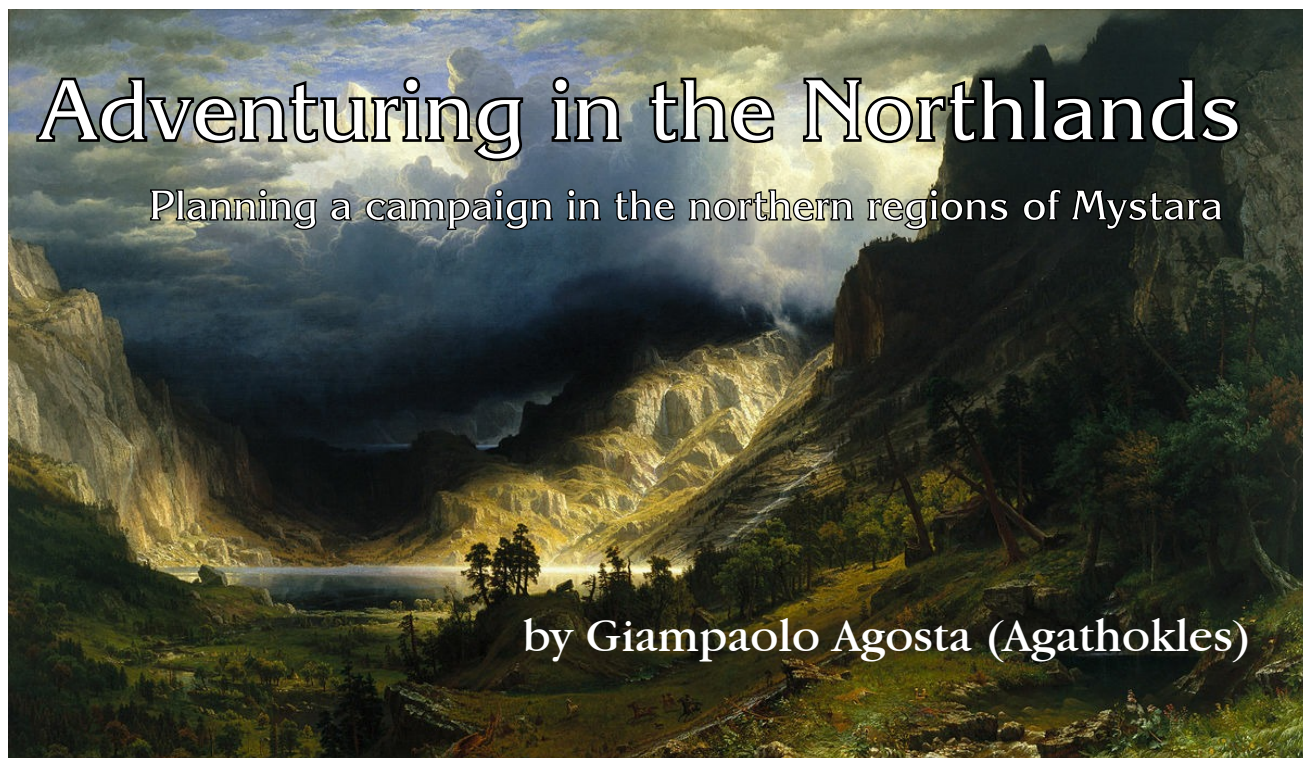
The editorial team will accept proposal on the Isle of Dawn, Thyatis, Alphatia and dependencies (Ochalea, Pearl Islands, Alatians, Bellisaria, Esterhold and any other colony).

Articles about other topics are still welcome and the editorial team will evaluate their publication in an issue, taking into account space available and that issue's theme.

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.



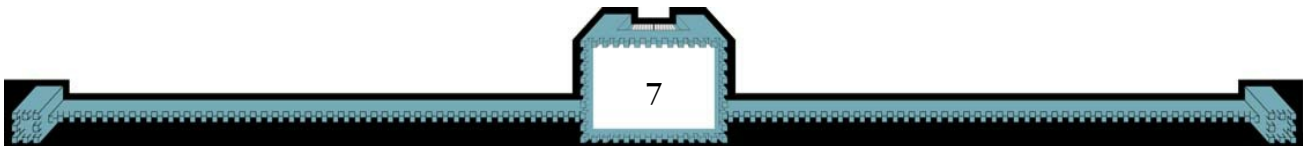
THEMES

The primary theme of a northlands campaign should be *frigid climate* found in these areas¹. Its presence, besides any ad

¹ For 3ed rules see [the D&D Wiki](#). For AD&D rules, see FR14 The Great Glacier, page 13-14. Otherwise, in any edition, an unprotected or not well protected character in cold weather (below 40° F or 4.4°C) must make a Saving throw/check each hour or take 1d6 points damage. A character who has the Survival skill may receive a bonus on this saving throw and may be able to apply this bonus to other characters as well. Even well protected PC have to make a check if temperature is below -4°F/-20°C, if they are wet, if there is strong wind or heavy snow. Failing one checks will result in a frostnip. Two checks failed will result in frostbite blisters that will heal in a month. Three checks failed will result in deep frostbite, gangrene and permanent damages. If the PC fail the first check he will also suffer mild

hoc rules the DM may want to use, is underlined by the great distances between cities and other centers of civilization. The climate can serve as a plot element, providing isolation — which can be exploited to force rulers to rely on small parties of experienced agents (i.e., the player characters) instead of armies. Climate can be used to limit transportation modes — e.g., the Mengul Mountains are impassable by flying in X11 “Saga of the

hypothermia (shivering). Two checks will be moderate hypothermia (drowsy, -5 to all rolls), three will be severe hypothermia (unconscious) and death will occur in half an hour (at 0°C/32°F, time halves for each 10 degrees below). Saving throw/checks have a progressive penalty depending on temperature: -2 for each 5 degrees below 40° F or 4.4°C or, at the DM’s discretion, for insufficient clothes. Partial immersion in cold water will gives a -5 penalty, -10 penalty for full body immersion.



Shadowlord” — and distances can leave isolated outposts undefended, as is the case of the Barony of Two Lakes Vale in CM2 “Death's Ride”.

The climate issue becomes even more critical when the War Machine is involved — campaigning and army movements are all but impossible in the winter season, except perhaps for specialized units (e.g., Leeha Hin on skis).

Colonization is a typical theme for the northern regions. Large expanses of untamed wilderness allow for campaigns dealing with dominion building, attracting colonists, securing a new settlement against various kinds of monsters, and dealing with barbarian tribes and competing neighbours.

While this kind of campaign typically targets Companion-level characters, as showcased in CM1 “Test of the Warlords”, it is also possible to play it at the Expert levels, with the player characters taking the roles of advisors and troubleshooters for an NPC ruler, or as would be rulers themselves, trying to establish a base of power in a given region. Dominion rulership takes a backseat in this case, being more of a long term goal than an immediate issue, allowing more traditional adventures.

High Fantasy in the “Tolkiensque” style can be at home in the lands north of the Known World. X11 “Saga of the Shadowlord” is the paragon of this theme, pitting the characters against a powerful, shadowy enemy, hordes of minions, in dead or dying nations. Even “Test of the Warlords” can take this turn, with a more “shakespearean” interpretation of its events (perhaps with Max I as a Macbeth figure, and the Cronos of Crystykk as the Three Witches).

Anyway, the vast expanses, with the grand sights of snow-capped mountains, fire-sprouting volcanoes, and ancient forests serve well as the backdrop for this kind of larger-than-life adventuring.

While the colonization theme relies on a lack of civilized nations, it does not mean there cannot be *ancient threats* ready to awaken. In both CM1 “Test of the Warlords” and X11 “Saga of the Shadowlord”, ancient, crumbling or entirely destroyed nations have been swallowed by the wilderness. The first Alphatian colonization of Norwold, in particular, can serve to provide undead enemies, large dungeons, and artifacts to add variety to a Norwold-based campaign, whereas the fallen kingdom of Essuria provides the background for the Shadowlord saga. Other ancient civilizations, such as those of the Giants, can serve a similar purpose, as well as providing a backdrop against which the wild nature of the region can shine even more.

ADVERSARIES

HUMANS: Alphatia and Thyatis

The two empires can be excellent motivators for adventure, starting from the low levels and ramping up to the Companion level, with CM1 “Test of the Warlord” presenting the campaign from an Alphatian point of view. At lower levels, the player characters can be involved in the struggle for control of Norwold as explorers, pioneers, and guards establishing new settlements and outposts for either empire. At Expert levels, the characters can become spies and agents



The Ransarn River Valley

working for either empire in cloak and dagger adventures to sway the various neutral powers to one side or the other — Oceansend, Leeha, the northern kingdoms of Kaarjala and Littonia, and the Thieves' Guild of Landfall are all good targets that might require extensive campaigns to be turned into allies. Alternately, the player characters might serve as advisors to the lord of a new domain. CM2 "Death's Ride" presents such an arrangement in the Barony of Two Lakes Vale, where Baron Pharo has installed personal retainers in the positions of Seneschal, Magist, Chaplain, Marshall, Castellan and Guard Captain. A typical party could easily fill these positions, giving the players the opportunity to share the burden of dominion management, with the DM playing the role of the well-meaning but incompetent ruler.

In this kind of campaign, the opposing empire is the primary adversary. If the PCs are aligned with Ericall and the Alphatian Empire, then the opposition should include Thyatian spies, bent on subverting Ericall's rulership. These opponents should leverage the weaknesses of Alphatia, such as the favored status of spellcasters, by recruiting

disillusioned mundane NPCs (and possibly tempting the PCs as well). At the same time, these agents should be vulnerable to stereotypical Thyatian weaknesses, and therefore prone to be corrupt and greedy themselves. The uncaring attitude of Alphatia towards Norwold — seen as a colony to be exploited — and its noblemen — commoners from the Alphatian point of view — could be stressed through the use of appropriate NPCs: legates from the Grand Council might treat Ericall with a condescending attitude (which might be shocking to Known World characters), commanders of Alphatian reinforcements in a war against Thyatis might ignore the local commanders who are not spellcasters, and so on. Also, these NPCs may be characterized by extravagant retinues — the imagery of Xerxes' army in Frank Miller's "300" might be useful here.

On the other hand, if the players are aligned with the Thyatian Empire, the campaign should portray the struggle of agents having to deal with a decadent but



Pioneers of the Land Grab

magically rich opponent, as well as with corruption on their own side. In this case, the Thyatian paranoia should be stressed, with the PCs unable to trust even their own allies, and the magical abilities of Alphatian agents might take a role too. In some cases, the PCs might not even know who their allies are, as the Empire keeps many agents in Norwold, and most of them are not aware of each other. The PCs might thus want to perform both missions against the Alphatians and adventures aiming at discovering the plans of their superiors — perhaps to use them to their advantage, but likely just out of the distaste for being used as pawns.

In both types of campaign, the Dungeon Master needs to balance the good and the evil aspects of the two Empires, depending on the players' preferred play style. Players who prefer a straightforward challenge will be better served if "their" empire is presented as the "good guy", perhaps with some flaws, but clearly the one to side with. For players who enjoy the "shades of gray", both empires should be portrayed with dark aspects, possibly outweighing the positive aspects. Another option is to start with a black-and-white scenery, representing the heroes' limited knowledge at the beginning of the campaign, and let the portrayal become more shadier as the campaign progresses. In these cases, the PCs may at some point decide to switch sides, probably to the other empire, but possibly to the Heldannic Knights or even carving their own nations, independent of both empires.

Giants:

Frosthaven and the Arch of Fire

Giants, and frost giants in particular, feature prominently in CM1 "Test of the Warlords". Their invasion of Norwold is a major event, which has significant repercussions during the campaign. However, the role of giants can be even greater, if a few considerations are taken into account. Giants are an old race, which used to dominate the world in a past era². As such, they must have left a significant legacy, in terms of treasures — all giants are known as great craftsmen and artisans — but also of history. AC10 "Bestiary of Dragons and Giants" does provide a number of interesting adventures featuring various types of giants, but giants become an even more useful set of adversaries when modules and adventures from other settings are used, starting with the classic AD&D "Against the Giants" series.

The last section of this article provides ideas for adapting many adventures featuring giants to Norwold, or to other northern regions of Mystara. A campaign featuring giants as a key element could start with an adaptation of Birthright adventure "King of the Giantdowns", with lower-level PCs building up a power base in a region where giant burial mounds are located, and providing an introduction to the history of cloud giants. It could follow up with a combination of G1-3 "Against the Giants" and UK7 "Dark Clouds Gather", when the PCs have neared or reached name level. At that point, the invasion of the frost giants in CM1 "Test of the Warlords" will become an almost expected event, spurred by the destruction of the hall of the frost giant

² See AC10 "Bestiary of Dragons and Giants"

king, as well as the climax of the entire campaign arc.

DRAGONS: The Wyrksteeth

With an entire kingdom populated by thousands of dragons, Wyrksteeth, and a dragon-oriented evil cult, Idris, in Denagoth, it seems immediate to set dragons as a primary adversary in a northern campaign. Also, several modules in the CM and M series, such as CM2 “Death’s Ride” and CM3 “Sabre River” feature dragons. Korbundar, Incendiarious, and Dominagon are all worthy adversaries, as are Brulefer and Vitriol in X11 “Saga of the Shadowlord”. However, in many cases these are individual opponents, who are only marginally related to the plot. A campaign featuring dragons as the main adversaries needs to put the monsters in a more central position, at least in key adventures. The structure of draconic kingdoms, described in “From Hatchling to Immortal Guardian: Dragons in the D&D game’s Known World”³, can provide a hierarchy of draconic opponents to challenge adventurers of increasing power. Expert level adventurers will face smaller

dragons, who perhaps manipulate goblinoid tribes for their own purposes, such as accumulation of treasure. Companion-level adventurers and dominion rulers may enter into conflict with the vassals of Wyrksteeth, whereas Master-level adventurers may have to face King Eruptaar and his forces. Given the scale of Wyrksteeth, it is also expected that its agents — gold dragons in human form, drakes, and others — may be part of a more political game, with the dragons oscillating between policies — evil dragons may push for the destruction of encroaching human kingdoms, while good dragons may use a softer approach based on misdirection and alliances to keep the humans far from the Wyrksteeth region.

The dragons’ relations with Thyatis (usually friendly), Alphatia (variable) and the Heldannic Territories (often hostile) will also play a role in the campaign.

An in-depth coverage of the Wyrksteeth can be found in “The Dragon Kingdom of Wyrksteeth” by Giulio N. Caroletti, in Issue 2 of the *Tome of Mystara*⁴

³ See [Bruce Heard’s article](#) at the Vaults

⁴ See this article at the [Vaults of Pandius](#)



The Wyrksteeth

ADAPTING RESOURCES FROM OTHER CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

This section discusses the adaptation of adventures and setting modules designed for campaign settings other than Mystara, or without a specific setting. The AD&D adventures generally require little mechanical conversion, since monsters have the same structure in Classic D&D and in AD&D. NPCs might need to be redesigned, taking into account the usual guidelines for high level characters when needed.

Birthright

The *Birthright* setting shows remarkable similarities to Mystara, including the use of strong real-world models for the various cultures, and a focus on dominion rulership and warfare. Thus, it is a good resource for a Norwold campaign.

In particular, “The Rjurik Highlands” boxed set describes a region inhabited by Norse-like people. The Highlands could easily be used to flesh out a more populated Norwold, since the coastline stretches more or less to the same length as the distance between Landfall and the Great Bay in Norwold.

Of the main subregions, the Taelshore includes kingdoms that remind more Vestland and Soderfjord than Norwold, although Svinik might be a good match for Oceansend. On the other hand, the Northlands and the Wildlands can be used effectively to model native Norwold kingdoms and jarldoms and recently established baronies respectively. It is worth noting that druids are prevalent in

the Rjurik Highlands. Their patron god, Eirik, can be replaced with Frey. Several humanoid nations are also described, which could be easily adapted to Norwold and/or to the Mengul Mountains⁵.

The set includes “Njalgrim's Doom”, a straightforward adventure for Expert level characters featuring wilderness travel, a ghost story, and goblinoid and undead adversaries⁶.

A separate adventure module, “King of the Giantdowns”, set in the same region, can serve effectively as the basis for a smaller scale Norwold colonization campaign, where Expert-level characters can build their way to dominion rulership in a region comprising six or so 24-mile hexes.

A few of the Rjurik kingdoms are detailed in their own Gazetteer-like sourcebooks, which expand over the information provided in the main set.

A more barbaric northern land, Vosgaard, is described in “Tribes of the Heartless Wastes”. The Russian-inspired Vos might serve as an inspiration for the Norwold Barbarians, the Vrodniki⁷, although with a darker tone — the Vos gods, Belinik and Kriesha, resemble more Bartziluth and Hel

⁵ In Birthright, Orcs are replaced by Orogs. Revert them to Orcs for use in Mystara.

⁶ Some adaptation may be required. In particular, the background story includes a *bloodtheft* performed using a *tighmaevril* weapon, i.e., a murder committed using a special magical weapon able to steal the divine bloodline of the victim — a major theme in the Birthright setting. However, such details can easily be edited to fit Mystara, as long as the ghost of a man killed using an evil, magic sword can be used as the main NPC motivator.

⁷ More details on the Vrodniki to appear in “The Skaufskogr”, in Issue 8 of Threshold.

than Thor or Freyja. Alternately, barbarians from the Northwestern Wildlands or the Midlands can be modeled on the Vos.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

The Forgotten Realms' northern setting, the Savage Frontier, is well known as the setting of several CRPGs, including *Neverwinter Nights* and *Icewind Dale*. "The North: Guide to the Savage Frontier" boxed set and the earlier "Savage Frontier" book can be used as resources for a northlands campaign in Mystara. However, the Forgotten Realms' northern lands are dominated by large city states, which do not appear in Norwold or in other Mystaran northlands.

"The Great Glacier" supplement describes an Inuit-inspired society, which may be useful for far-north campaign set north of the Great Bay or in other regions near the polar opening, such as Hyborea⁸.

RAVENLOFT

Ravenloft includes at least one arctic domain of interest, the Nocturnal Sea with the islands of Graben and Todstein. The Darklord, Meredoth, was an Alphatian necromancer and nobleman who participated in the first, failed, colonization attempt. The Grand Conjunction module, "Ship of Horror", which involves both islands, could be used as "weekend in hell" style adventure for Mystaran characters starting out in the Sea of Dawn, which

⁸ An Hyborea adaptation of "The Great Glacier" by Steven B. Wilson can be found in his [Hyborean Timelin](#)e at the Vaults of Pandius

could be followed up with an expedition to the prime-material Todstein.

GREYHAWK

Greyhawk is the setting of many classic adventures. The "Against the Giants" series is especially amenable to adaptation to the northlands of Mystara. Indeed, Frost Giants are a main feature of Norwold, and "The Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl" fits very well with the theme of the Frost Giant invasion in CM1 "Test of the Warlords". "The Steading of the Hill Giant Chief" can be easily set in most areas of Norwold, especially the foothills of the various mountain chains, and "Hall of the Fire Giant King" can be set in the Arch of Fire region, or in any other volcanic region.

In the classic campaign, "Against the Giants" serves to lead the player characters into the Underdark and to the Vault of the Drow. Unfortunately, the later parts of the "Queen of the Spiders" adventure do not fit as easily in Mystara. Unless you are willing to use Drow, or to adapt the *Schattenalfen* to fill their role, you may find it easier to use a different hidden menace instead of the Drow, and drop the D and Q series modules from the campaign entirely.

Good alternate masterminds are Alphaks, the Thyatians or the Heldannic Knights, especially if the player characters are aligned with King Ericall and the Alphatian Empire. Of course, if the characters are aligned with Thyatis or the Knights, you might want to use the Alphatians or the Wurmsteeth Dragons (primarily for the Heldannic Knights) as the instigators of the giant series.

Other AD&D Modules

UK5 “Eye of the Serpent” features a group of adventurers abducted by a Roc and trying to escape from the great bird’s nest down the side of Hardway Mountain. This module, developed by the TSR UK team, also responsible for one of the best Classic D&D modules, B10 Night’s Dark Terror, does not have a predefined setting — Hardway Mountain does not exist in Greyhawk or any other published setting, as far as we know. Thus, adapting the module to the northern regions of Mystara is actually quite easy, since there is no need to remove or replace setting lore beyond a few names.

The entire adventure takes place on the mountain itself and in the vale beyond it, which was originally populated by dwarves, and later by duergar. Human horse-clans known as the *Kharg* also make an appearance. To convert the adventure to Mystara, Hardway Mountain can be set in Vestland or in the Heldannic Territories (or the Heldann Freeholds, if the adventure is run before the arrival of the Knights). The Kharg are easily replaced by the Ethengar clans — actually, they can just be one of the minor clans. Duergar could be replaced by Modrigswerg, which points to a Vestland setting as the best option.

“Eye of the Serpent” can serve to startup a campaign, since it targets a party of 1st level characters. Its focus on the AD&D druid, ranger and monk character classes is not lost, since it can be used in Classic D&D with druidic initiates (i.e., using the druid rules for characters below name level), mystics, and Oceansend rangers (using the rules in FGAZ9 “The Free City of Oceansend”).

UK7 “Dark Clouds Gather” is another TSR UK module without a definite setting. It features heavily aerial combat, including a skyship — another staple of Mystaran adventures! The story is set on a mountain chain, Cloudscape Mountains, in a cold region where cloud giants dwell. Other involved races are the aarakocra and the ba’atun, as well as goblinoids, frost giants, and dwarves. Overall, aarakocra are easily replaced by the faenare, which are their direct match in Classic D&D. Ba’atun do not have a direct correspondent, but could be replaced with cryions, who share a similar form, as well as the same hit dice. The Cloudscape Mountains would be best set in the northern parts of Norwold, such as the Icereach Range, but could work in the Final Range, the Northern Reaches or the Heldannic Territories as well.

An additional opportunity is to replace the main adversary in “Dark Clouds Gather” with the second Ice Queen, Frota, or with the spirit of the first Ice Queen, Akra. This adaptation poses some difficulties, since neither Ice Queen was a ba’atun. This issue can be overcome by considering the ba’atun as a creation of Frota or the ba’atun leader could be possessed (or replaced) by the spirit of Akra — in either case, it might be better to replace the ba’atun with sabreclaws rather than cryions⁹. Other than this (rather limited) issue, no further adaptation is required. The ice palace in the adventure could be identified with the Ice Tomb in the Ljallenvals Mountains.

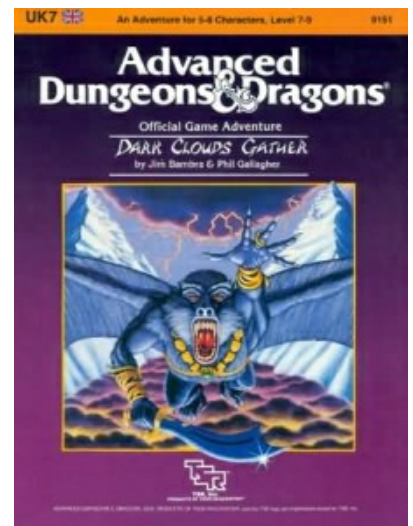
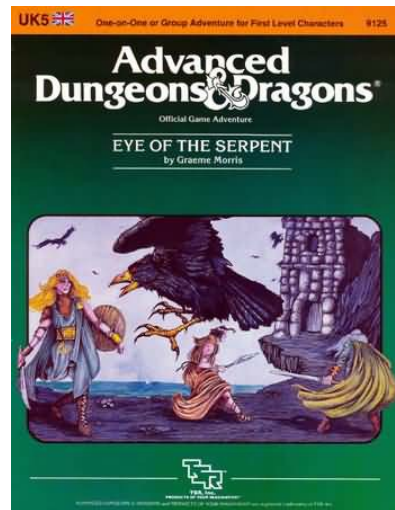
“Dark Clouds Gather” is a good adventure for PCs nearing name level, which can serve

⁹ Sabreclaws, however, have a very different challenge level, so it might be necessary to change the PC level as well, pushing the adventure in the Companion level range.

as an introduction to a portion of the campaign featuring skyships (and the Heldannic Knights, typically), or simply as a way to solve a local conflict and gain the support of non-human tribes — e.g., if the PCs have consolidated their hold on the Giantdowns, and are expanding their influence further inland towards the mountains.

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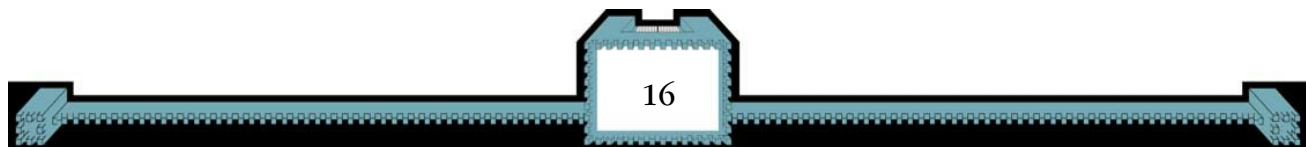




BESTIARY OF THE NORTH

The table below aims at helping in re-skinning some classic D&D creatures to cover the roles of monsters and fey from the Norse myths.

| Norse | Classic D&D |
|-------------|--|
| Garm | Hellhound or Yowler |
| Draug | Revenant |
| Fylgja | Totem Animal Spirit (as per GAZ14, The Atruaghin Clans) |
| Hafgufa | Dragon Turtle |
| Einherjar | (see Planescape Einherjar) |
| Vaettir | Nature Spirit (as per GAZ12, The Golden Khan of Ethengar) |
| Linnorm | Dragon |
| Huldrefolk | Sidhe (and Wee Folk in general) |
| Dökkálfar | The “Dark Elves”, also called Svartálfar, are difficult to distinguish from dwarves in the Norse myths. In Mystara, this could be a name for the Nightshades, or even for Demons in general. |
| Ljósálfar | The “Light Elves” could be simply the Elves, but if the Dark Elves are assumed to be powerful outsiders, such as the Demons or Nightshades, then the Light Elves should be equally powerful, like the Titans |
| Eldjötnar | Fire Giant |
| Bergrisar | Mountain Giant (also pure Storm Giants) |
| Sjórisar | Sea Giant (also sea-dwelling Storm Giants) |
| Hrímthursar | Frost Giant |
| Vindthursar | Cloud Giant (also levitating Storm Giants) |
| Ellefolk | Shadow Elves |



CHARACTERS OF THE NORTH

This sidebar aims at helping in re-skinning the classic D&D classes to adapt them to Norwold. Of course, all basic classes are found in Norwold and need little to no adaptation, although Magic Users are less common here than in the Known World.

| Classic D&D | Source | Norwold |
|------------------------------|--------|--|
| Godi (Thor, Odin, Loki, Hel) | GAZ8 | Godi are Specialty Priests of the four main Norse deities. They can be easily used for Norwolder clerics, as well as for the priests of Perun in the Vatski lands. |
| Druid | RC | Most Norwolder Druids should actually be Specialty Priests of Frey or Freyja; Druidic initiates should be allowed. |
| Ethengar Shaman | GAZ12 | Ethengar Shamans can be used to represent the shamans of other ethnic groups, in particular the Viaskoda. |
| Hakomon | GAZ12 | Hakomons can be used to represent the (rare) Viaskoda witch doctors. |
| Atruaghin Shamani | GAZ14 | Atruaghin Shamani can be used to represent the Mountain Rakasta Shamans of the Final Range (see “The Skaufskogr”, to appear in Issue 8 of Threshold Magazine) |
| Wise Woman | GAZ8 | The Wise Woman, also known under a variety of other names (seidhkona, spakona, witch), can be easily part of a Norwold campaign. However, it is an NPC class. PC Seidhkona should be covered by appropriate choices of the spells for a standard Magic User. |
| Bard | DM177 | Skald, although other character classes could be used as Skalds as per GAZ8. |
| Druidic Knight | DM177 | Druidic Knights could easily be used as “Paladins” of Frey or Freyja. They are also present among the Foxfolk of the Skaufskogr. |
| Forester | DotE | While Foresters are usually found in Thyatis, they could conceivably be found among any community that worships Ilsundal and has relations with humans. |
| Mystic | RC | Mystic traditions are not especially common in Norwold. Most Mystics would likely come from Alphatian or Thyatian territories where such traditions exist. Besides, Mystics are not terribly appropriate thematically. |

Characters of the North (CONTINUED)

| Classic D&D | Source | Norwold |
|-------------------------------|--------|--|
| Paladin/Avenger | RC | <p>These characters serve a church or similar religious body. Organized religions are not especially popular in Norwold, but could be easily found in Alpha, and to a lesser extent in the other large cities, Oceansend and Landfall (Avengers only in the latter).</p> <p>The so-called Black Avengers are agents of Alphaks, sent to spread chaos in Norwold from Alphaks' Volcano.</p> |
| Elf Wizard | GAZ5 | These character might be less common in Norwold, due to the limited contact with high-magic human cultures. |
| Elf Treekeeper | GAZ5 | Elf Treekeepers are likely present in Foresthomes that follow the teachings of Ilsundal and Lornasen. |
| Lycanthropes | PC4 | Werewolves and werebears might well be part of the Ulfhedhinn and Berserker warriors. Wereseals and wereboars would also be found in the wildernesses of Norwold, whereas wererats would likely be immigrants in Alpha, Oceansend or Landfall. |
| Goblinoids | GAZ10 | All goblinoids except Kobolds can be found in Norwold. Civilized Goblins are found in Littonia. |
| Dwarf Cleric | RC | Most Norwold Dwarves are followers of Kagyar, and have clerics as in Rockhome. |
| Elf Cleric | DM178 | While the Treekeepers are the primary priests of Ilsundal, followers of Eiryndul and other elven Immortals (such as Ordana, Lornasen and the Korrigan) could use the Elf Cleric class. |
| Gnome | PC2 | Earth Gnomes can be found in Norwold. The Earthshaker Gnomes come from distant lands, but could conceivably become Player Characters as well. |
| Wee Folk and Forest Creatures | PC1 | Most of these racial classes can be used in Norwold. Emphasizing Fauns, Pixies and Treants might be advisable. Drakes might also appear as agents of Wyrksteeth. |

ORGANIZATIONS

Several organizations can play a role in a campaign set in Norwold. Some are centralized orders or guilds, others are more templates for a number of similar (albeit smaller) organizations.

Agents of the Wurmsteeth (LN):

The Dragon King, Eruptaar, maintains a small intelligence force to keep tabs on encroaching humans, as well as on unruly subjects. These agents are often drakes or lycanthropes, but spellcasting dragons and humans are also recruited. The agents infiltrate the main courts of Norwold, especially those near the Wurmsteeth (e.g., Vyolstograd), but generally take a much less proactive stance than the Thyatian Speculatores or the Eyes of Vanya. They remain in the background, gathering knowledge and acting only when the interests of the Wurmsteeth are threatened. These agents may offer missions to PCs, but these will be more aimed at recovering magical objects or items of historical relevance, or at obtaining valuable information.

Eyes of Vanya¹ (LN):

These members of the Heldannic Order are in charge of establishing an espionage network in strategic areas outside the Heldannic Territories, besides managing counter-espionage operations within the Order's lands. In Norwold, they have established a strong network of informants

¹ see Bruce Heard, "[Heldannic Knights - The Eyes](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

across the Heldland region, especially in Landfall. Their influence, however, extends all the way to Alpha, with small cells of agents in Lighthall, Oceansend, Stamtral and Vyolstograd. Like other espionage organizations, the Eyes have limited numbers and prefer to let mercenaries do most of the work, especially when their own clerical abilities are not particularly helpful.

Thyatian Imperial Speculatores (LE):

The Speculatores are members of the Thyatian armed forces specializing reconnaissance and espionage, while the Agentes in Rebus are individual agents of the Magister Officiorum, with special training and a wide degree of autonomy. Their leader in Norwold is Longtooth, himself an imperial "Agens in Rebus" who is posing as a claimant to the title of Baron at the court of Ericall. However, dozens of agents are at work in Landfall, Alpha, Oceansend, and Gaudavpils, weaving a web of intrigue to weaken King Ericall and to subvert the Alphantian control of the region. The Thyatian agents may recruit PCs, possibly under cover, offering missions aimed at weakening key supporters of Ericall, or at gaining favor with specific groups such as the Landfall Thieves' Guild or the King of Oceansend.

Druidic Circle of Norwold (TN):

This organization is composed of Druids, Druidic Initiates (Godar of Frey and Freyja), and Druidic Knights. While the druidic organization is a worldwide one, lead by the Great Druid, the Druidic Circle of Norwold is led by a single Archdruid (a druid of level 30 to 35), a mysterious character who only communicates indirectly with other powers of the area, through messengers who are themselves powerful druids, such as Tarn Oakleaf. Druids are extremely influential among the Heldanner communities, the Foxfolk Lupins of the Skaufskogr, and the Vrodniki nomads. The Druidic Circle aims at limiting the anthropization of the Norwold forests, and may offer missions aimed at removing or dissuading offending colonists, as well as dangerous and unnatural monsters, especially the undead. Odics, a class of undead spirits possessing plants, are particularly offensive to druids.

Landfall Thieves' Guild (NE):

Landfall is Norwold's hive of scum and villainy. The city is basically ruled by criminal gangs. According to CM1 Test of the Warlords and other sources, there is a single Thieves' Guild, whereas GAZF8 The Streets of Landfall provides a more complex scenario with multiple competing gangs. In any case, the Thieves' Guild works well both as opponent and as patron. The influence of the gangs can easily extend beyond the city, through slaver rings and raiders.

Sisterhood of the Ice Witches (NE):

The Ice Witches are a magic user and clerical tradition descended from the teachings of Akra, the first Ice Queen. Magic using Ice Witches favor ice and frost themed spells, while clerical Ice Witches are always clerics of Hel. The goals of the organization are, in the long term, to bring about a new ice age, and rebuild the reign of the Ice Queen. In the short term, Ice Witches work to undermine their nemesis, the Cronos of Crystykk, and to free the banished second Ice Queen, Frota, and her white dragon minion. Ice Witches are more appropriate as enemies than as patrons in most campaigns, but individual Ice Witches may hire the PCs, possibly posing as Wise Women.

Barbarian Hosts (CG): There are many barbarians in Norwold. Most of them are nomadic tribes of herders and hunters. The Viaskoda live north of the Great Bay, and are distantly related to the Kaarjalans, while the Vrodniki live in the valleys around the Wyrksteeth Range. Due to their nomadic nature, the barbarians can cover significant distances, and thus appear in different areas. Moreover, they are often exposed to the many threats of the wilderness. On one hand, it may mean that they can require the help of PCs -- especially those with magical knowledge, which the barbarian tribes usually lack. On the other hand, it means they can act as a rapidly available, mobile fighting force for allied PCs. Adoption into a tribe and/or blood brotherhood are other options to involve the PCs.

Heldanner Mercenary Bands (CN):

Following the conquest of the Heldann Freeholds by the Heldannic Knights, many Heldanners have been displaced to Norwold. The dispossessed jarls and their retinues now operate as mercenaries in service to the Vatski dukes, or in the Alphatian cities. Unemployed bands often turn to raiding and banditry. While there is no centralized control, most bands still consider themselves Haldis partisans, and may unite against Heldannic aggression (especially if paid for their efforts). Heldanner PCs might form or join a mercenary band, finding work in the Alphatian Norwold fiefs after the Land Grab, in Landfall (for those who do not care too much about the legitimacy of their employers) or in the Vatski lands.

Alphaks' Dark Avengers (CE):

An order of fighters devoted to Alphaks' teachings, the Dark Avengers serve as the agents of the Black King of Alphaks' Volcano in Norwold. They are few in numbers, and operate alone or in small groups. Their

main goal is to weaken and finally topple the Alphatian Kingdom of Norwold. While the Dark Avengers can be used as straightforward threat, but they are as much likely to attempt to discredit the King as to cause direct damage. Note that Dark Avengers are typically high level fighters with clerical powers. Thus, individual Avengers may recruit (and would be able to keep in line) goblinoids, mercenaries, and other lower level minions.

Cult of Idris (CE):

This evil denagothian cult worship the Immortal Idris and enjoys the support of several young dragons who wish to free themselves from the rule of their elders. The cult has sent many spies into Wendar, the Heldannic Territories and Norwold to subvert the local governments. The cult of Idris supported the Shadowlord, Landryn Teriak, for its own purposes and may attempt to ally itself with similar would-be tyrants in other regions. Idrisian spies may attempt to exploit the expansionist policies of the Heldannic Order to pit it against Wyrksteeth, fostering chaos in Norwold.



Robin Dykema's Composite Map of Norwold

“As an avid Mystyara fan and DM, I always liked the large Trail maps. Being as complete enough to travel from one region to another still on the same map. Like the Trail maps I longed for a large map of the Northern part of Brun. All the Maps I found in the sources (list on Map) like the F-Gazetteers, or canon and non-canon maps I put together, without altering too much. It was a hard job doing so without a specific program, so I cut & paste all parts together in Paint (hence the minor hex shape flaws), but I seem to have succeeded.

Some parts were not filled in, so I created these following story-lines found here and there, or created after stories my gaming groups passed through. Where more detail is needed (and if other gamers have more information, please inform me) I try to o deeper into that location, on a later date.”

New icons, like Henges, Dragon Lairs, Crystal growth, Frozen mountain, Dead ground, etc., will also be further explained later.”

Robin Dykema

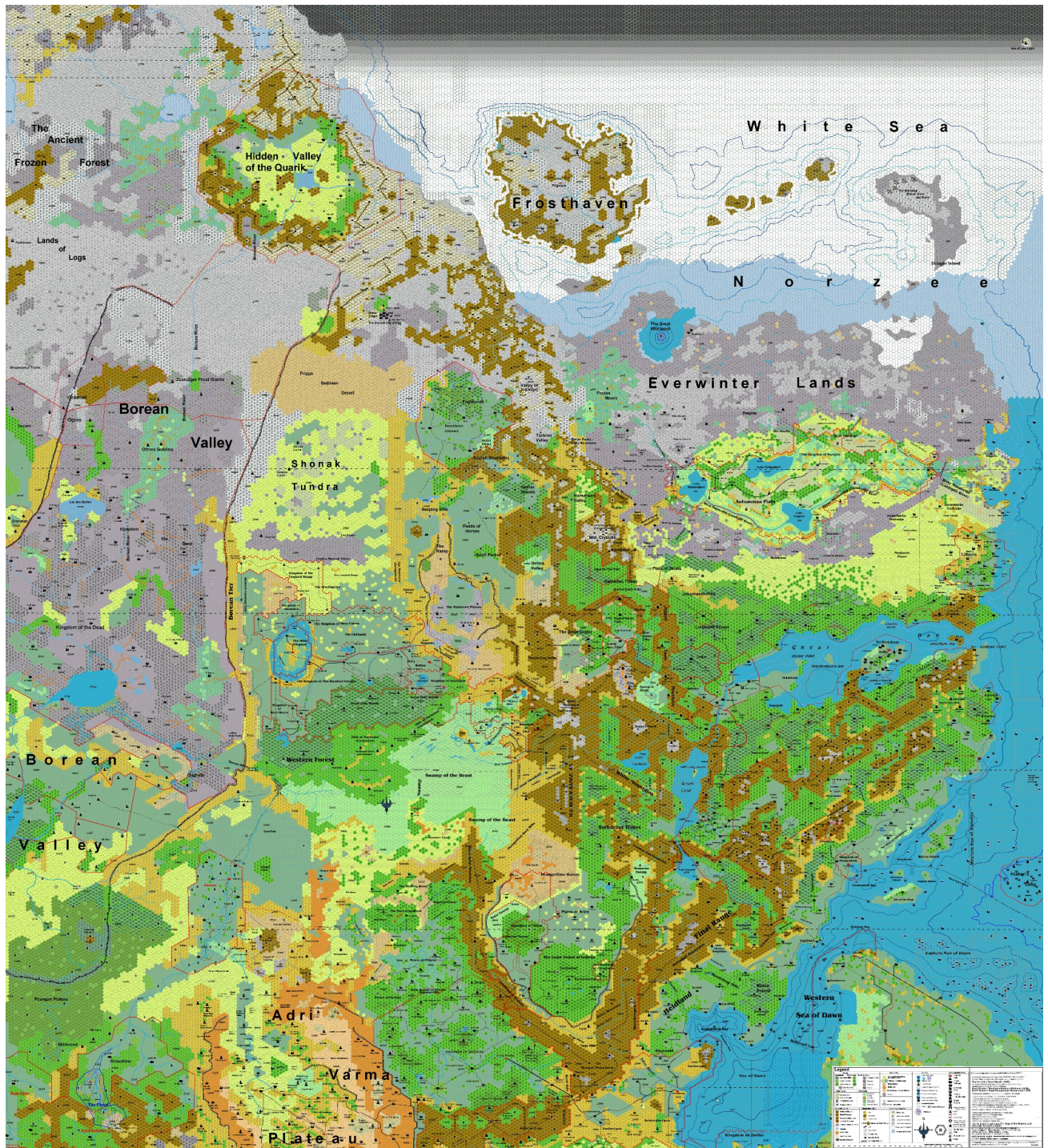


Mapping the world of Mystara
ONE hex at a time...

A COMMUNITY project at The Piazza



Robin Dykema's Composite Map of Norwold



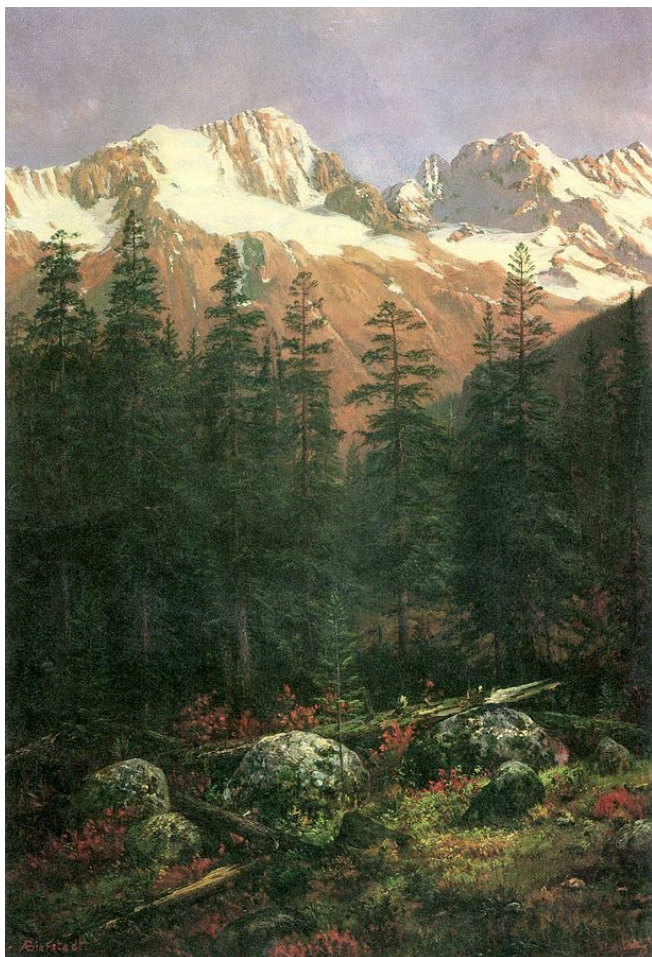
Editor's Note: Robin's map is far too large to fit on A4 or letter paper without cutting it in multiple pages, which would defeat its main

purpose. You'll find the [full-sized version of the map on Robin's blog](#).

The History of Leeha

A sneak peak into
“The Open Arms of Leeha”

by JTR



The Jagged Teeth

With a few notable exceptions, the halflings have preserved an accurate history of the western bay over the last several centuries, yet other cultures, some now forgotten, inhabited these lands prior to their arrival. And the halflings do not speak truthfully about all things.

THE OLD WORLD

Five thousand years ago, the region that now comprises the western bay area of Norwold was home to scattered outposts of beastmen, dwarves, and humans that lived in the lawless north beyond the now lost Empire of Thonia. Imperial authority eventually fell to an upstart former province, the Kingdom of Blackmoor, which led a newly refashioned Holy Thonian Empire under the Pax Technologica, a peacekeeping might that fused natural wild magic with once-alien technology.

The Pax pacified the barbarous north country – even expelling the beastmen and their brutish progeny as part of the First Beastman Crusade. Blackmoor’s direct authority did not last, though, as the nation eventually became embroiled in a global war with elves.

In BC 3150, both humans and elves launched major expeditions to reach the planetary poles and the mysteries that awaited them there. Several of the efforts produced base camps in Norwold’s interior mountains, while the forgotten settlements of the bay-region gained sudden prominence.

This activity coincided with an abrupt flare-up between humans and dragons. War ensued, and the brutal conflict raged for nearly fifteen years. In the aftermath of hostilities, dragons disappeared from the Norwold region.

The ancient world of science of magic came to a sudden and violent end in the century that followed. The Great Rain of Fire – its ultimate origins unknown even to the Immortals – bathed the world in poisonous fallout that obliterated Blackmoor and Thonia. Local survivors of the initial blast made their way south, but they too ultimately succumbed to the Rain’s effects during their sojourns.

Centuries later, vacant and crumbling cities bore silent witness as migrating glaciers laid claim to the western bay.

THE BARBARIAN AGES AND ALINOR

Unable to rely upon their technology following the destruction wrought by the Rain, the sentient races had fallen back into near-stone age existence. Modern humanoids – the heirs to the beastmen – exploded outward from the continental interior and flooded through Norwold. In response to these population movements, southern barbaric humans migrated into the Candellar region. Other barbarians eventually spread along the Bay’s northern shore, and continued waves of humans pressured the local humanoids.

By BC 800, the local humans were organized in loose barbarian kingdoms that vied with one another for territory. Despite their proven prowess against the humanoids, they were unprepared for

LEEHAN TIMELINE

BC 4000: Isolated beastmen, human, and dwarf enclaves survived in the region.

BC 3620-3330: Holy Thonian Empire and the Pax Technologica.

BC 3420: Expulsion of the beastmen.

BC 3150-3135: Human and elven polar expeditions. The Dragon War.

BC 3000: The Great Rain of Fire.

BC 2400-1800: Glaciers slowly covered the western bay region.

BC 2300: Giants dwelt at the glacial edge and in the nearby mountains.

BC 2200: Dragons and giants struggled.

ca. BC 1722: Humanoid tribes of the Great Horde settled the region.

BC 1650: Human barbarians settled the eastern Caudasteen and Candellar.

BC 1300-1200: Human groups spread along the Bay’s north shore.

BC 1000: The western bay was mostly free of ice. Local humans expanded their territory. Post-Antalian men moved up into the southern bay area.

raiding frost giants and the environmental calamities that presaged the arrival of distant Alphatian colonists.

Alphatia was a magical empire to the east of Norwold across the sea. During an era of expansion, Alphatian wizards and their commoner subjects set out to colonize the Great Bay. Under the leadership of Alinor, Prince of Alpha, the conquering wizards established a far-flung kingdom that reached into the western mountains.

The Alphatians quickly built inspiring cities and retreats, but their pre-eminence was cut short in a testament to wizardly folly. Prince Alinor sought to transform the land that he ruled and magically raised mountains where fields and plains once stood. The dweomer failed, and the collapsing mountains destroyed Alinor's capital and sent reverberations felt a thousand miles away. Whole areas had been thrown dozens – even hundreds – of miles away. Distant ranges collapsed, glaciers shattered, and the Bay shoreline was rewritten – most notably in the creation of the Leehan Gulf. The barbarians reasserted themselves after Alinor's destruction, and surviving Alphatians either were absorbed or sought refuge in the unknown west.

During the Second Barbarian Age, humanoids returned to the area in a protracted invasion that severely weakened all parties. By the time the first Emperor of Thyatis was crowned, raiding frost giants had swept away the last permanent human settlements in the northwest, and humanoids had driven humans south of the Catbergs. The barbarians' salvation came from the newly formed Thyatian Empire, which briefly traded weapons to them. With the might of steel in hand, the barbarians blunted further humanoid expansion into the south.

BC 900: The forgotten Nithians briefly explored the region.

BC 800: Rise of the barbarian kingdoms.

BC 600: Humans controlled the whole of the lowland region. Littonians controlled the north coast.

BC 500: Frost giants forayed against the barbarian kingdoms.

BC 400: A combination of earthquakes, subsidence, and rising water levels flooded the lowlands around the Jotunheimr Hills.

BC 345: Alphatians established settlements around the Great Bay.

BC 300: The Kingdom of Alinor was formalized. The kingdom allied with and conquered neighboring tribes.

BC 260: Destruction of Alinor produced the modern Leehan Gulf. Local populations reasserted themselves.

BC 115-105: Human conflicts to the north pushed refugees into the recovering western bay region.

BC 100-86: Surrounding humanoids invaded. Both sides weakened.

It was during this era that Weuwn, an Immortal troll (see Gaz F9), used Alphatian magic to remove his preternatural hunger, only to unleash it as a free spirit that became the legendary wendigo.

ARRIVAL OF THE HALFLINGS

The story of the western Bay now turns to the halflings. Far to the south of Norwold, in the coastal lands of the Known World, the shortfolk were being shipped as slaves by Minrothad traders.

In AC 383, one such expedition was intercepted in the Strait of Helskir by halfling raiders residing at Additional Minrothaddan vessels gave pursuit, and the raiders and their newly freed allies were unable to turn back south. A naval game of cat-and-mouse played out as the two fleets travelled further northward, eventually entering the Great Bay.



The Great Bay coast

BC 11: Raiding frost giants destroyed most permanent settlements south of the Jotunheimr Hills.

BC 10-4: Humanoids pushed local humans south of the Catberg Hills.

0 AC: Crowning of the First Thyatian Emperor.

AC 3-7: Lornasen, leader of the Foresthome elves, journeyed through the area en route to the Sylvan Realm.

AC 5-14: Local barbarians procured Thyatian weapons.

AC 100: The presence of dragons increased substantially.

AC 200: Various shortfolk communities thrived at Haldisvall in Heldann.

AC 300: Littonia established marginal influence over the Viaskodans.

AC 370: Minrothadders shipped halfling slaves to Alphatia.

AC 383: Halfling pirates from Haldisvall intercepted Minrothad slavers, defeated pursuing warships, and landed in the Gulf.

ca. AC 400: Ostland raiders threatened the Norwold coast and the Great Bay. Halflings banded

In a final confrontation, the halflings sank the Minrothaddan warships around the Isle of Bergholm in the east, but victory came too late to return home. Winter storms roiled the Bay and ice stretched outward from the northern shore cutting off any escape.

After a maddening two weeks, the halfling sailors maneuvered the fatigued vessels to the Gulf's southern shores. There the shortfolk beached their ships and transformed them into makeshift shelters.

Remarkably, several hundred halflings survived that first winter on ship stores and the hunting and ice fishing of brave individuals. Unaware of their present location, and without the means to rebuild their ships, the surviving hlin dispersed into the region by the late spring, each family or group left to fend for itself.

The halflings would have maintained their isolation from one another, but after nearly two decades in the Gulf, long-ranging Ostland reavers harried the peoples of the Great Bay. Many of the halflings gathered in common defense at what is now Nimbleville. Additional settlements – Goodfield and Grassy Knoll – would follow, but the first true fortress, Divotfoot, was commissioned only after the brutal First Orc War.

The Leehan Gulf halflings had little interaction with contemporaneous, short-lived Alphatian colonies in the south and east. The communities were not seriously threatened again until the Frost Giant War of AC 525 and the Second Orc War (AC 641-642), the latter of which had been prompted by conflicts still further to the north beyond the Jotunheimr Hills.

together to form the settlement of Nimbleville.

AC 452: Goodfield was established.

AC 453: Grassy Knoll was established.

AC 468: Alphatian colonies to the east conflicted with native Norwolders.

AC 468-469: The First Orc War.

AC 470: Divotfoot was established.

AC 473: Alphatian forces expanded the Empire's holdings in Norwold.

AC 486: Barbarians renewed their attack on Alphatian outposts.

ca. 500 AC: Dragons rampaged in the south and east.

AC 507: Fall of the General. Elimination of Alphatian outposts.

AC 516: Port Hinly and Barrydwell were established.

AC 525: Elves formed small enclaves in the Lothbarth.

AC 532: The First Frost Giant War.

AC 640: A northern coalition turned back humanoid hordes.

LORD STALEY'S VAULTS AND THE HOCKEY WARS

Modern hinuck culture and identity took shape in the 8th Century AC with the founding of the southern trade post of Maracope.

“Lord” Staley was an entrepreneurial spirit who had previously made contact with the southern barbarians. The tribesmen in turn visited Maracope to barter their wares. Staley was also an adventurer, and rumors persisted among the hinuck that he had discovered great treasures in the south and had stolen it away in hidden vaults.

In AC 726, the legend of Lord Staley’s Vaults enticed the forces of “Lord” Edmund Snook, de facto ruler of Nimble-ville, to attempt to kidnap Staley and force him to share his wealth. Between them lay a shanty-town derisively known as Hokie Town, and the Nimbleville krondar – or police force – mistakenly thought they could ride roughshod through the settlement en route to Maracope. The Hokies took umbrage at the trespass, and a massive fight erupted. Wielding a signature crooked club, the Hokies soundly thrashed the krondar.

In honor of their victory, Lord Staley presented them with a brass cup, allegedly from his Vaults. The Hokies proudly displayed this token, much to the consternation of Lord Edmund.

Edmund would have his revenge seven years later. Operatives wearing newly fashioned skates and padded armor used frozen streams to storm Hokie Town during winter. They stole Lord Staley’s Cup, set much of the shanties ablaze, and similarly terrorized other undesirable communities in the Second Hockey War.

AC 641-642: The Second Orc War.

AC 700: Maracope was established.

AC 726: The First Hockey War.

AC 733: The Second Hockey War.

AC 736: The Third Hockey War.

AC 741: Sunnyville was established.

AC 753: Essurians visited Maracope.

AC 786: Halflings explored the White Bear and the southern Bay.

AC 792-796: The War of the North and destruction of Barrydwell.

AC 814: Leeha was founded.

AC 846: Akra discovered a source of power within the ruins at Echalia.

AC 860-874: Age of the Witch-Queen of Norwold. Severe regional cooling. Cannabilism destroyed Sunnyville.

AC 869-870: The Third Frost Giant War.

AC 874-877: The Hunger Wars.

AC 884: Highthicket was established.

The theft of the Cup stirred up passions throughout the Gulf, and vociferous arguments degenerated into brawls and eventually large scale rumbles between the krondar of neighboring settlements. During the Third Hockey War, Lord Staley's Cup traded hands no less than five times. The krondar of Divotfoot finally wrested the prize from Barrydwell and returned it to Hokie Town.

THE WAR OF THE NORTH AND THE FOUNDING OF LEEHA

The three brief Hockey Wars left a number of hinucks permanently crippled or slain, and the fight drained from the communities. Attention and energy turned outward once emissaries of the Kingdom of Essuria – a grand nation on the Denagothian Plateau (see Gaz F2) in the distant south – visited Maracope. A generation later, halfling explorers were traversing the barbarian lands of the south and the course of the White Bear River through the Valley of Ath.

With attention turned to the south and on personal matters, the hinucks were unprepared for a gathering war with the denizens of the Jotunheimr, Frosthaven, and other northern locales. The four-year War of the North ended inconclusively, but it claimed Barrydwell as a casualty and left the Gulf region sorely wracked.

The town of Leeha was born in the War's aftermath as a neutral site among the halfling holdings and as a gateway into the southwestern interior along the Great Bear River. Leeha soon developed a mercantile, free-city feel as war-weary halflings relocated to the river port.

AC 901: Merrybrooke was established.

AC 910: Dawn of the Voyageurs.

AC 915: Port Hinly piracy.

AC 923: The Fourth Hockey War.

AC 926-931: The Hin and Barbarians War. Birth of the Hunters.

AC 938: The Whoop-it-Up Affair.

AC 939-942: The Adventures of Samuel Ironside.

AC 943: Southern troubles spurred the creation of the Western Bay Frontier Force.

AC 950-960: Halfling sailors mapped the Great Bay and parts of the eastern coast.

AC 950-990: Deep exploration of the White Bear.

AC 963: The Fifth Hockey War.

AC 967: The Force ended the Lesser Barbarian War.

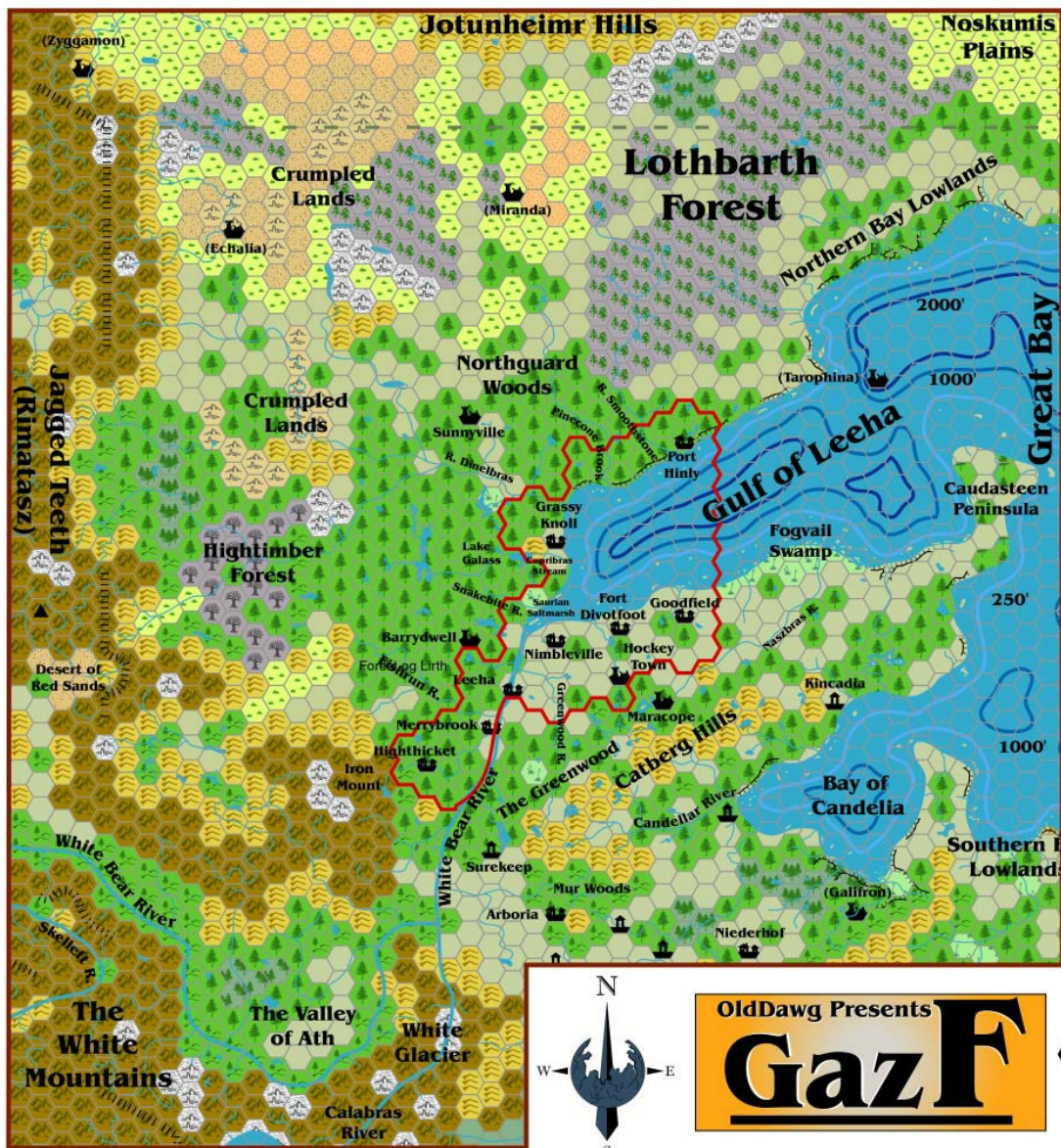
AC 977: The Force prevented the Sixth Hockey War.

AC 984-985: The Third Orc War. Maracope was destroyed. Collin prevailed at Old MacDonald's Farm.



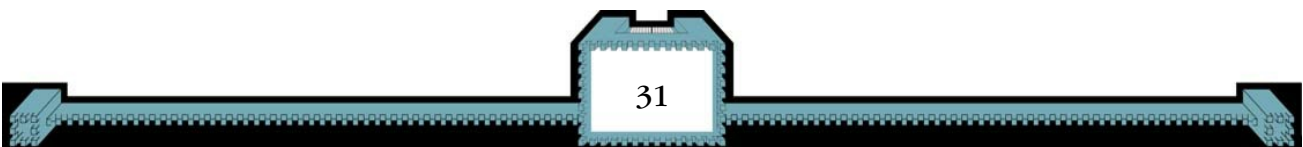
LEEHASHIRE and THE WESTERN BAY AREA

66 Degrees N



Leehashire and the Western Great Bay is based upon: Thorfinn Tait's 24mph replica of CM1-M2 Norwold (2005, originally by Diesel, 1984, and David C. Sutherland III, 1986); Dan Eustace's 4mph Leeshashire (2001). Geoff Gander's 24mph The Dominions of Norwold, AC 1015 (1999); the Italian MMB's 24mph Region of Norwold (2007); Andrea Francolini's Central Norwold AC 1160 (2009)

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Influenced by Leeha's example, the hinucks recovered and enjoyed a long period of peace and prosperity.

THE NEVERENDING WINTER

The Era of Good Hearth was brought to a close when a barbarian witch from the north country launched an ambitious gambit to conquer the whole of Norwold. Akra the Witch-Queen of Norwold and her Sisterhood of Ice Witches led an army of frost giants, white dragons, trolls, and myriad other creatures in invasion of the Great Bay and Norwold's eastern coast. Regional temperatures plummeted, and the duration of growing seasons increasingly shrank.

Although this area was never a primary front for the Witch-Queen's war, hardships beset the halflings. They fended off terrible attacks during the Third Frost Giant War, but the gravest danger came from within. Food stores throughout the Gulf had run low, but this was nowhere more true than in the community of Sunnyville. The appetite of the small folk was legendary, and in the face of starvation, deadly fights over mere crumbs erupted between fast friends. Yet worse was to follow.

The situation grew so dire that the Sunnyville hinucks took to cannibalism. First they consumed the frozen remains of those who had previously died, but it was not long before victims were openly murdered. A bloody madness descended upon the town, and the appalling and depraved actions stirred the ancient spirit of the wendigo.

Word of the carnage reached the other settlements and the local barbarians. At great personal cost,

AC 985: Alphatians settled Alpha.

AC 987: Articles of Agreement signed.

AC 992: Alphatian Empress Eriadna granted Ericall dominion over Norwold.

AC 993: Dragons destroyed many mountain communities.

AC 994: Alphatian trappers and diplomats reached the western bay.

AC 997: Collin elected Sheriff.

AC 996: Catberg Orcs defeated at Lake Galasst.

AC 1000: The present era.

scores of heroes joined together in vanquishing the hunger spirit and its mortal shells.

Meanwhile, farmers discovered that a flower native to the region, the snow tulip, was not only edible but also worked as an appetite suppressant. The oddly-blooming tulips were quickly gathered and distributed among the holdings.

The Gulf region suffered even after betrayal shattered Akra's reign and the frostfell beasts had withdrawn. For three years, the populations warred over sparse foodstuffs: human, halfling, humanoid, even wild beasts displayed unrivaled savagery in hopes of survival.

In early AC 878, a miraculous wave of heat swept over the western Bay (generated by the Great Sampo of Kaarjala Gaz F10). This was followed by returning migrations of uncountable geese and other fowl. Rejuvenated grass forced its way to the surface, and more fauna followed. With abundant sources of food at hand, the embattled populations disengaged and offered thanksgiving for their deliverance.

CENTURY'S TURN

The Gulf entered a period of quiet and reflection. Hinucks too sickened by the events that transpired during the Age of Akra and the Hunger Wars went west into the mountains, starting communities such as Highticket and Merrybrooke, as well as dozens of smaller outposts and individual

holdings. Other hinucks looked south to re-establish Essurian trading relations, and adventurers known as Voyageurs¹ set off into the wilderness to discover unknown opportunities.



The Voyageurs

Concurrently, naval science was slowly restored at Port Hinly, and sailors set east beyond the the Gulf. Port Hinly took advantage of its new power and raided barbarian and hinuck settlements alike. In 923, Nimbleville and Grassy Knoll tired of the raids and defeated the pirates and their allies in the Fourth Hockey War.

THE HIN AND BARBARIANS WAR

Homesteads had sprung up in the south during the intervening years, and initial relations with the local barbarians were generally peaceful. In the north, far-ranging hinuck prospectors found precious minerals

¹ Voyageurs are based on the homonymous French Canadian fur traders. See e.g. [this Wikipedia article](#)

and lodes of platinum and other metals in the Rimatasz and eastern Jotunheimr. They established shanty towns to ply their trade. These activities disturbed the northern barbarian tribes, who performed a number of rites at now-occupied sacred spots during the summer months. The barbarians unsuccessfully sought to persuade the halflings to return home. A number of inconclusive fights broke out, and relations deteriorated.

As word spread of mineral wealth in the north and fertile land in the south, more hinucks migrated to the frontiers. The sudden influx depleted game, and local forests shrank from clear cutting. The barbarians staged a number of raids against hinuck settlers, which provoked increasingly violent retributions. By AC 926, both the north and south were simmering, and calls rang out for greater protection of the homesteaders.

In AC 927 a band of angry, young roughnecks assaulted a northern barbarian settlement during the night, killing most of the inhabitants. The northern tribes took this as a declaration of war and banded together. Together they struck the largest shanty town in the north. The Battle of Pebble Trail was ferocious - the hinucks were soundly defeated, and the settlement was razed. Those who survived the attack urged their coastal brothers to come north and fight. At the same time, southern land disputes erupted into skirmishes.

The communities mobilized their krongar the following year, and the warm months of AC 928-929 were marked by numerous pitched battles that did little to affect the

overall course of war. Separate agendas held back the hinucks as the krongar forces often operated at cross purposes with one another. This friction was most notable at, but not unique to, the Battle of Pinecone Crossing (AC 930), where Port Hinly forces reached an independent agreement with one of the barbarian tribes and helped them stage an ambush against a band of hinucks from Nimbleville.

As the community lords dithered, the Voyageurs and volunteers without allegiances rallied together. They marched out of the holdings under a unified banner and deployed in force. This Vanguard blunted a barbarian push and parlayed with their warlords. The barbarians would not end the war until those responsible for violating their sacred lands were handed over. Hunters were dispatched to track down the offenders. Some were captured in the hinterlands, while others were dragged out of the protection of the settlements over the objections of the local krongar.

The barbarians accepted the prisoners and ended the war. The dominant tribe also adopted the Vanguard fighters as brothers, and for several years thereafter, the hunters were permitted to seek out several particularly heinous barbarians among the tribes. The settlements were scandalized by the sudden end of the war, and many prominent families lost influence and were replaced.

THE WHOOP-IT-UP AFFAIR

In 936, the Empire of Thyatis withdrew its Legions from Provincia Gurrania, a territory west of the Gulf past the Icereach Range. Not all of the legionnaires returned home; some cashiered soldiers and bureaucrats instead sought their fortune in Norwold's interior. The Thyatians and allied Essurian expatriots established Fort Borealis and began trading wine, spices, and other goods to the locals. Life at the fort was relatively easy, and the good cheer brought about by the fortified spirits earned the place the nickname "Fort Whoop-It-Up".

Local hinuck homesteaders, who had previously been trading with the tribes, found themselves increasingly squeezed out by the aggressive newcomers. In the spring of AC 938, a halfling delegation visited Fort Borealis and demanded to negotiate a deal to share the trade with the barbarians. The Borealis traders dismissed them rudely, sparking an altercation that left several people dead. Surviving hinucks fled under pursuit, and several homesteads were burned down.

Many southern hinucks retreated to the relative safety of the Gulf, but the Voyageurs mobilized and marched on Fort Borealis that summer. The fort's outnumbered inhabitants proclaimed their innocence and cited that the barbarians traded willingly and that no nation's laws held sway in that region. The Voyageurs bided their time and seized the fort after a barbarian delegation entered the palisade and the inhabitants grew drunk and raucous in the evening.

The hinucks confiscated the trade goods, but the barbarian prisoners posed a dilemma. Word filtered out to neighboring tribes, and the halflings' prospects were poised to suffer a reversal of fortune, until a solution came in the form of Samuel Ironside. The honest hinuck had earned his stripes during the Hin and Barbarians War, and he was wary of letting this situation spin out of control and spark another such conflict.

The Do-Gooder, as he would later be known, hammered out a treaty with the defeated Thyatians that allowed them to retain nominal control of Fort Borealis under the auspices of the Voyageurs network. Captured barbarians were given other face-saving measures. When the gates opened before the gathering tribesmen, they found a camp of subdued mirth and collegiality.

In subsequent years, Samuel Ironside would continue to make a name for himself – not only in the south but also in other parts of the Gulf region. In so doing, he became a model of upright standing whose strength was gloved by the velvet of civility, commanding the respect of human and halfling alike.

In AC 943, a threat to the entire region rode out of the mountains in the distant south. Fear spread like wildfire as barbarians told tales of fell beasts. Ironside organized a common defense based from Fort Borealis, and the newly-christened Western Bay Defense Force blunted incursions by monsters displaced by an invasion of the people known as the Vanatics (see Gaz F9). They also braved a direct assault by the mysterious Vanatics themselves.

CHAOS AND ORDER

As the internal affairs of the region sorted themselves out, the hinucks had undertaken numerous efforts to explore the wider world. It was only a matter of time then before contact was made with the halflings of the Five Shires on the continent's southern coast.

Through secret negotiations with their southern cousins, the Gulf representatives acquired a small Crucible of Blackflame – a historic cultural relic absent to the diasporic halflings since before the pirate days of Haldisvall.

Blackflame proved a poisoned gift to the Gulf communities and the provocation for the Fifth and final Hockey War. Word of its arrival preceded the relic, and large numbers gathered at Leeha in anticipation. Thievery and other crimes grew rampant as the hinucks grew anxious, but this turned to elation and celebration when the crucible finally arrived.

The festivities were short-lived, for two nights after its arrival, the Blackflame disappeared. Accusations of theft shattered the harmony, with the legendary family of Edmund Snook, now ensconced at Grassy Knoll, garnering more than its fair share of allegations. The Snook family seat was besieged, but the local krondar beat back the attackers. The Gulf once more devolved into a chaotic free-for-all.

The conflict raged throughout the summer and early fall of AC 963. It ceased with the onset of frost, but not before claiming the legendary community of Old Hockey Town as a casualty. Renewal of fighting was

imminent come second spring – a peculiarity of the region – but for the actions of a lone Snook scout – and former Hunter – that ventured into the Crumpled Lands.

In a location she refused to disclose, the scout discovered caverns in which streams of Blackflame ran like wildfire. She retrieved significant amounts of the magical substance, which was divided and presented to each of the major settlements in what is commonly known as Edmund's Ransom. The scout herself retired to Fort Divotfoot.

THE FORCE COMES INTO ITS OWN

The Voyageurs had developed a reputation as an effective force for order through its successes in numerous conflicts and those of its predecessors. Samuel Ironside's Western Bay Defense Force was preserved, and to its structure were added the Hunters and smaller groups such as the Legion of Frontiershin. Because their actions also benefitted the barbarian tribes, their respect was earned as well, and before long the Force was called upon to adjudicate inter-tribal disputes.

The hin constables who worked on the frontier developed strong ties with the human communities, and soon they were regularly receiving information from the tribes about developments further afield. As the information network improved, the "Lads" were able to deploy more effectively, and its Hunters were revered as the force that always caught its quarry.

In AC 967, a disagreement over hunting rights in the north country led to open warfare among the northern barbarian tribes. The summer was marked with bloodshed. The settlements stayed away from the conflict, but the Voyageurs recognized the risk of prolonged warfare and stepped in to defuse tensions. At first the enraged combatants attacked the interlopers, but years of training and experience had turned the hinucks of the Western Bay Defense Force into formidable opponents.

The Voyageurs blunted attacks from each of the major barbarian armies, and its call to truce was eventually heeded. Diplomatic members of the Force brokered a settlement that ended the Lesser Barbarian War.

Ten years later the Force interceded in another growing conflict - this time within Leehashire itself. Lord Staley's Cup had been stolen on the eve of the annual hockey tournament, and accusations were flying. Scuffles erupted in Leeha, where the cup had last been housed, as well as in other settlements. The krontar proved ineffective, as they supported their communities as often as they tried to break up the fights.

Samuel Ironside, then Chief Inspector of the Force, ordered his forces to seize control. In a matter of days, units assembled in every major community to separate and disarm the combatants, while investigators tracked down the cup. The Sixth Hockey War was arrested in its infancy, and remarkably – at least to the community lords – Ironside withdrew his units from the holdings.

THE THIRD ORC WAR

The Gulf hin continued to live under an unspoken ambivalence toward the Force. The average hinuck enjoyed the stability and inspiration that it afforded, but many of the community leaders were wary of the Force's apparent willingness to act with impunity without regard to the holdings' rights. Worse, they feared that Samuel Ironside's ultimate successor would not prove quite as honorable and would seize power in the Gulf.

Those worries were quieted during the orcish invasion of 984-85. Orcs marched out of the Catberg Hills under the command of an intelligent green dragon. The southern and western territories were hard pressed in the fight. Maracope, once the great trading and cultural capital of halflings, was destroyed in the war.

Throughout the conflict, the Lads of the Force gave aid and comfort to the dispossessed, rallied flagging morale, and went forth to face the orcs. When the orcs sought to capture the southern political figure – and Force-wary politician – Old John MacDonald, units under the authority of a dashing Captain named Collin Tremblay responded. Collin's forces routed the orcs and gravely wounded their dragon overlord.

THE GREAT AGREEMENT

The fall of Maracope stung harshly in the hearts of hinucks everywhere. Even traditional rivals at Nimbleville were shaken. But Collin's victory at Old Mac-Donald's Farm became a beacon for the power of cooperation, and the Force had proved itself as a strong shield against external threats and as a calming influence on the naturally quarrelsome elements among the hinucks.

In AC 987, community leaders and businessmen conferenced at Leeha and produced the Articles of Agreement. The Articles fell short of establishing a unified hinuck nation, but it did lay out numerous formalities, laws, and bindings between the settlements. It also granted the Force a loose regional jurisdiction beyond the reach of the holdings, provided that it was also separated from the Voyageurs' network.

THE SHIRE TODAY

It is a time of great excitement in the Gulf. There are those who wish to further develop this commonwealth into a single nation, but independence runs deep among the hinucks. Political passions are burning, and several parties now vie to define the scope of the Gulf's future.

And as the politics unfolds, new enterprises appear daily and trader barons hire rugged explorers to secure routes to far-away nations. Meanwhile, Ericall's Kingdom of Norwold is poised to expand westward into the region, and Thyatian agents and Minrothad traders advance the interests of their own nations.

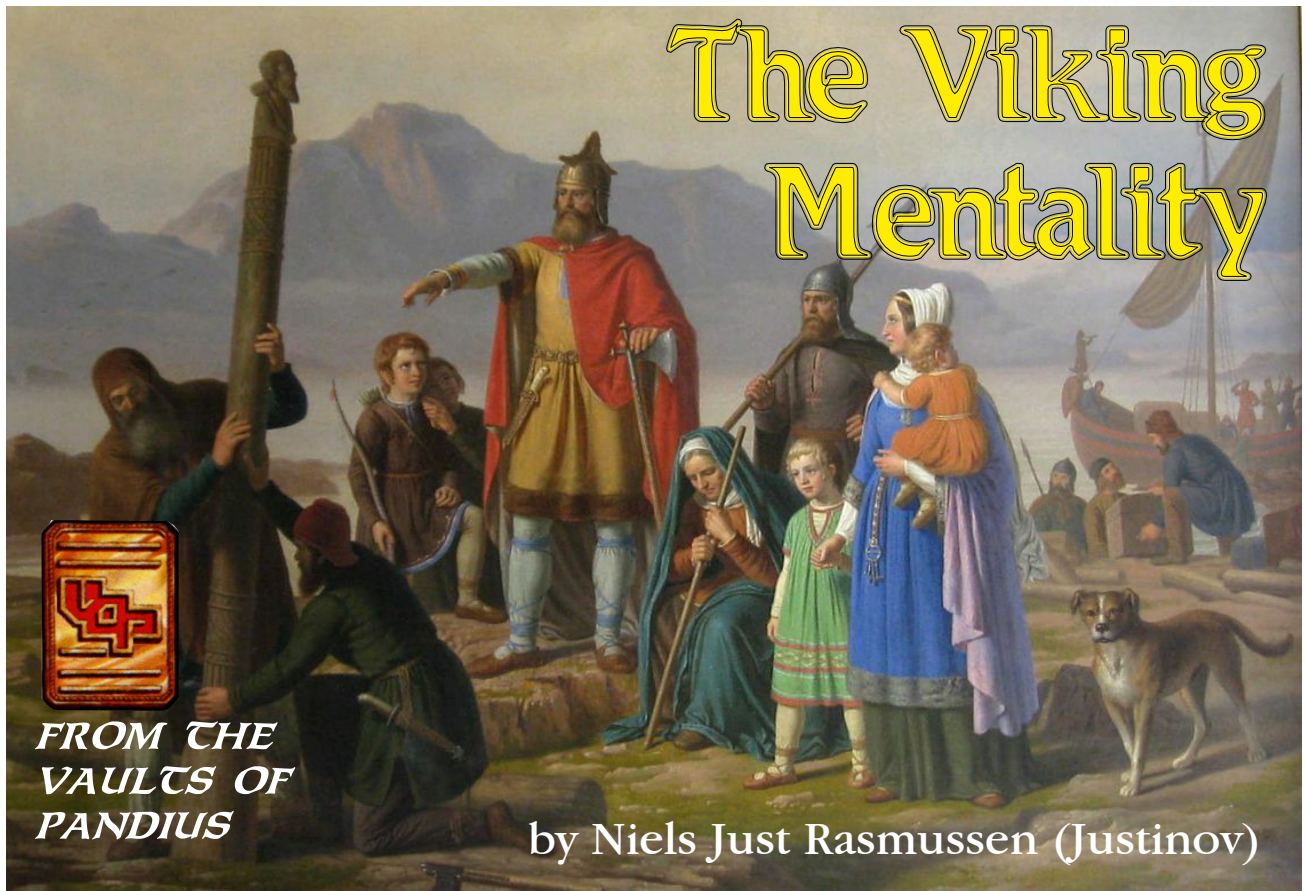
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Eirik Cnutesson lands at Norrvik

This article presents a brief guide on how to play a Northern Reaches character, which is more in tune with actual Viking mentality.

THE VIKING WORLD VIEW

In Viking age Scandinavia there was a very different view of the relationship between humans and gods than most people are used to today. In monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God is infinitely more powerful than you, so you have a very unequal standing like a Master-Servant or Father-Son relationship. Thus you worship your God and have faith that God

will bring salvation to your soul and accept it into Paradise after your death.

Viking age Scandinavians saw their relationship with the Gods much more in terms of friendship and cooperation. After all, Men and Gods both strive to uphold the World Order against the forces of Chaos, which will ultimately win at Ragnarök.

The ethics of the Scandinavians are to act in such a way as to keep the Chaos forces at bay as long as possible. Both Gods and Men are thus allied together to uphold a code of conduct in relationships both profane and religious. For them it was “**Forn Siðr**” = the old ways/customs.



Essential parts of the old ways are the beliefs in *guest-friendship*, *gift-reciprocity*, *family-honour* and *blood-revenge* and the duty to act according to gender and social class, which have different obligations.

The ultimate goal in life is to achieve “*undying fame*“, or at least to be recognized locally by achievements whether in cattle, sons, craft or personality.

So long people and Gods live by this code the chaotic natural forces are kept at bay, but when family ties are broken, guests are not well received, and gifts not given back then the world comes crashing down. This is definitely not a “Nature-religion“, but a “Culture-religion” where Gods and humans keep the natural forces of the Giants bound and under control.

It is important to note that this is not a struggle between Good and Evil, but between Culture and Nature. Everyone knows through the mythology that the Giants are the oldest creatures and that the Gods have overthrown them -- thus the Aesir are usurpers -- and built the ordered and cultural world out of the primordial Giant, Ymir. The Giants have been assigned to a lower social class of supernatural beings and every attempt has been made to tie them up and relegate them to the outskirts of the world. If Gods and men grow weak in their duty, these bonds that hold the ordered world together break and the Giants are loose to overthrow the World-Order bringing on Ragnarök.

The Giants are not “evil“, and many of the Gods are Giants through the female line and some of the Giants are even allies to the

Gods, including Loki, Ægir, Mimir, who not unexpectedly are those giants who have become the most cultured. Many Giants try to intermarry with the Gods (Freya is the grand prize for male giants) to become part of the cultured God society - but are mostly tricked by Odin or Loki and/or killed by Thor.

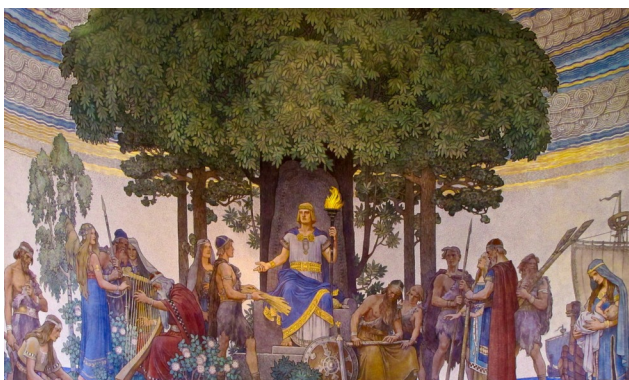
Guest-friendship

Guest-friendship is sacred. All travellers (even enemies) can expect to be received with a meal and lodgings for a night, but then must be off the next morning. Since Odin very often travels the human world in disguise, it was quite dangerous not to receive guests well as he may “pay you back“.

Gift-reciprocity

Gift-reciprocity is very important in all aspects of society. If a gift is given, the receiver is honour-bound to pay it back. This is why Viking age religion is not “worship“, but really a gift-exchange! A sacrifice is really a “demand“ to a God to pay the gift back. The payment will vary in accordance to what “function“ the God has in the cosmology. A good year thanks to the friendship of the Gods requires repayment with a good sacrifice.

A sacrifice is also a communal meal where both Gods and Men eat together – the Gods come to the feast as guests and thus all eat as friends on an equal level. The Men receive the meat, while the smoke, skin and bones belong to the Gods and all are happy. That is



Heimdallr brings forth the Gifts of the Gods to Humans

why Thjálfi¹ commits a great breach in conduct when he breaks the bone of Thor's goat to extract the marrow (making the goat limp on it's leg), and must become Thor's thrall for this crime.

The reputation of a king or chief also very much hangs on his **reputation for generosity**. He is expected to give precious gifts to his followers and they repay him with loyalty in combat or with beautiful poetry. Reciprocity follows that if one fought well for the King or arrived to his court presenting a great poem of his accomplishments, the King must pay the gift back in a splendid fashion.

So if a follower is unhappy with his gifts (either the lack thereof or for being too "cheap"), he has the right to end his loyalty to that chief and join one that is more generous.

It is important to stress that this is *not payment* for the job - such an implication would be a huge insult, as only thralls receive wages for their work. Free men are self-subsistent and may only accept and give gifts in this system of reciprocity. Something

¹ See "[Pjálfi and Röskva](#)"

given out of charity is a huge insult as it means that the recipient is not able to provide for himself. A person must always strive to pay a gift back to retain his personal honour.

HONOUR

Honour follows both the family and the individual, but it is the family honour that is most important. An individual should strive to never taint his family honour by questionable actions and should elevate it by conducting glorious actions.

Honour is not something people have in equal measure. Kings and chiefs have so much honour they must constantly guard against any slight, perceived or real, whereas thralls have no honour.

In Viking Scandinavia, all truths are subjective. If one is accused of something that taints his honour he must act to prove the accusations false, no matter if people close to him know the accusation to be false and absurd. Reputation is reality and any dent in one's reputation is a dent in oneself. Appearance is all-important – to not act on a personal slight is to prove it true.

Honour also dictates **revenge** as an obligation. If one's family member is killed, no matter the circumstances, he must kill one from the other family in return. The revenge is not individual. Any member from the opposing family is within the blood-revenge sphere, not only the individual that did the crime.

Those who do not strive to exact revenge will lose all honour and can no longer be regarded as men. A third party can act as mediator between blood-feuding families and work towards a blood-money settlement between these families. The family behind the first murder can also offer it to the offended family to diffuse the situation right from the beginning, but its regarded as somewhat unmanly if the offended family accepts without having tried to exact revenge even once.²

There will be a social pressure from other families to settle after some deaths to avoid a blood-feud from escalating out of proportion.

It is totally taboo to kill members of one's own family as they are prevented from extracting revenge (and thus are unmanly).

This guest friendship and gift reciprocity created a situation where families were bound by land and tradition to certain supernatural groups.

SUPERNATURAL FRIENDSHIP FOR FREE FARMERS

The Vættir

Normal free farmers would have a relationship with **vættir**³, supernatural

² But realism also plays in if one family is way stronger and more powerful than another.

³ Vættir should be similar to Fairies in D&D. However, vættir do not live in the wild, but rather along the mundane folk, and have a very similar society, sharing the same values and world view as the Vikings.

beings who were the original inhabitants on the land and still lived there in a society that was a mirror of Scandinavian society. So the farmers had to be on good terms with them since they really shared the land -- in a way the Scandinavians were the guests on the land. So they would help and protect a farmer, if he gave them sacrificial gifts (most often food items). There were Landvættir, Sjövættir and Vatnavættir, that is Vættir for land, sea and water.

The vættir had the ability to become invisible if they wanted and could change into any shape. They were also known as "huldufólk" meaning the "concealed people". They would rally to protect the land against supernatural attacks.

They could be scared off if they saw a ship with a Dragon prow, so one should never approach his own land with a Dragon figurehead, but take it down. But when landing on hostile territory, the Dragon figurehead would help the attackers to scare the local vættir off.

The Álfar

The **Álfar**⁴ (singular Álfr) were likely ancestors of the Scandinavians. One could become an Álfr when he died and was buried on a barrow mound on the land. Álfar were also honored with sacrifices to keep them

⁴ Since in the Nordic world view "Alfar" are ancestors, they are not the same as Elves. More likely, they can be represented by AD&D Eladrins -- i.e., spirits of the dead who have taken an elf-like shape. An interesting possibility is that the Norse people of Mystara might see the Elves are the reawakened ancestors of a people of short stature, such as the Hin.

happy and content as they expected that and so they will keep a helping eye and hand on the descendants.

The Vanir gods and the Álfar are probably synonyms for a collective group of supernatural beings that farmers had relationship with. Besides Njord, Frey and Freya the Vanir/Álfar were regarded as a collective group like the vættir and were connected with fertility and wealth.

Contrary to other communal cult-festivals a family had their “Álfablót” (sacrifice to the elves) in secret in the end of autumn lead by the lady of the house acting as gydja (female cult leader). It was the only time where one actually could turn guests away from his farm. It was “family business“ for ancestors and descendants alone.

The Draugar

A buried member of the family that did not rest in the grave could become a **Draugr** (plural draugar) also called “aptrganga“ (after-walker). They are not spirits but physical bodies stirring and even moving out of the grave at night to either harass the family for some wrongdoing or help the family against enemies.

A Draugr is killed (again) if its head is cut off and placed beneath the buttocks, or by burning the body. They were bluish-black and with great strength and could have varying supernatural powers.

Draugar in play

To better represent the Drugar in play, the key point to consider is that they are dead bodies, but with the “hugr” (mind) of the dead person still fully sentient and able to make the dead body walk around -- mostly during the night, while during the rest of the day the draugr merely sits in its barrow mound. If a person had special powers while alive, he would retain them as a Draugr. “Fully animated dead” might be the best description.

The Draugr thus retains all his skills, abilities and knowledge, but gains the common undead special abilities and resistances. Moreover, the Draugr have increased strength (+2 Strength bonus) and cannot feel pain. Hit points are doubled, but the Draugr can be killed by chopping off its head, which requires a natural 20 attack roll, using a sword or axe.

Note that in AD&D, the Ancient Dead described in Ravenloft Van Richten’s Guides books could be used to create Draugar with a variety of powers.

Draugr and Dragons: a really greedy person who is unwilling to make the journey to “the other world“ could force his “hugr“ to stay within the dead body, so he can guard his treasure in the barrow mound for all eternity. According to legend, this will actually turn into a Dragon. For the Norse people, Dragons are not a race, but something you can become. A Norse Dragon is called a “Ormr” and does not have wings.

The Dísir

The **Dísir** (plural = ladies/women) were a supernatural group of females collected into one group associated with fertility, death, fate and the underworld. It comprised of all the supernatural females, whether it was Norns, Valkyries or even the Vanir Goddess Freya. As the case with the Álfar dead ancestral women would be regarded as Dísir. An alternate name of Freya was in fact Vanadís (The Dís of the Vanir). She received 50% of the slain in the battlefield, with the other 50% going to Odin.

The Dísablót was held by all the Swedes at Uppsala at the end of February or early March. It included human sacrifices to bring peace (for Swedes) and victory for the King (over others).

Dísir are likely another name for Valkyries as a collective group. Women, that are “choosers of the slain”.

Supernatural friendship for the aristocracy

Aristocratic families (Jarlar = Earls) would more likely have a special relationship with one particular Scandinavian God, who would often also be the mythological founder of that family line.

So Scandinavian religion were not polytheistic in the respect that each God had a narrow function. Actually almost all the Norse gods are simultaneously war-gods, weather-gods or fertility-gods in varying degrees. This huge overlap of function is because each aristocratic family would be

tied in friendship to one specific god and used sacrifice as gift-reciprocity to that god.

As all free men chose their King among the Aristocratic families on the Thing, then different areas would have different prime Gods. Most common free farmers would probably have to the collective groupings of supernatural beings, though some families would also have to specific gods.

Each area could have their own cult-feasts, where all the people were assembled and the local Jarl or the King acted as “goði” = sacrificial leader. These cult feasts were based on old tradition for that particular area, with huge variance from place to place on the specifics. Only “Yule” seems to have been truly pan-Scandinavian as a winter-solstice feast lasting 3 days.

Denmark seems to have been overwhelmingly Ti/Tir (called Tyr in Iceland) country until Odin took over some time in the late Iron Age or early Viking age. Meaning that members of Odin-families became King of the Danes and so elevated their god to the prime position as Allfather of the gods. The material we have in Iceland is very Odin-oriented as Icelandic poets earned a living visiting the aristocratic courts of Scandinavia where Odin was prominent.

Frey seems to be especially connected with the Swedes and there is a lot of evidence for the mysterious Ullr⁵ as well as well as Thor.

South Eastern Norway also have Frey, and the Norwegian settlers in Iceland were very fond of especially Thor, but based on place names you can find areas of Norway where

⁵ See [this article](#) on Ullr

neither Odin, Frey, Tyr or Thor seemed to have been important.

So each description of a Norse God is coloured by whether the stories about them are told by those in friendship with them (securing them center stage) or by others (where their role will be secondary and totally absent).

We have enormous amounts of place names of the God Ullr in both Sweden and Norway, but very little story-material about him. Tyr should also be much more prominent than he actually appear in the Icelandic manuscripts, but apparently lost out. Some actually believe that Ullr and Tyr is the same god under different names.

A person would normally never change from this God-friendship, as it is family-tied. Denying that family-held bond is to reject one's ancestors and is a serious business. Regardless of whether one changes from Thor to Odin or Christ, the change causes a permanent breach with his family and ancestors.

Interestingly one of the common -vin (Anglosaxon -wine meaning "friend") names in Scandinavia seem to be Alf-vin (Elf-friend, modern Alvin). Even after accepting Christianity the old thinking of God-friendship survived, as the name of Godwinë was quite popular in Anglo-Saxon England.

Priests

It is important to note that no professional priest class existed in Scandinavia. At the cult feasts prominent men or women acted as "Sacrificial leaders" called "goði" if a man or

"gydja" if a woman. If it was a household cult of was the lord of lady of that household.

Cosmological view

Psychologically the Scandinavians lived in the "iron age" or a symbolic "fall" seasonally.

The Golden Age

The **golden age** or "spring" was after creation when the Aesir were without worries before the arrival of 3 giant ladies, who changed everything.

Before that the Aesir had build shrines and temple (probably the only mythology where the gods seem to worship something bigger), and had been doing smithing and carpentry. Apparently these three giant ladies were the cause of the Aesir losing a lot of their creative powers and from now on they were forced to create the Dwarves, that from now on supply could them with magic items.

The Silver Age

Then came the **silver age** or "summer", which is the age of human heroes. It is also the time when giants start to pressure the Aesir and where they have to keep their dominance over the giants by trickery of Loki or the help of Thor's hand and hammer.

The Iron Age

Viking age times are a time of conflict and strife. It's an **Iron age** or "fall" where things are starting to crack. The God Balder dies and Loki is chained. Odin is travelling tirelessly collecting heroes for Valhalla. Only

by friendship between Aesir, Vanir and Men can the World Order hold. They all need each other to keep Culture alive and avoid Nature coming crashing in, as the giants are growing ever stronger and waiting to break free.

Ragnarök and Beyond

Rituals with sacrifices of gift-reciprocity are important to keep Nature bound. When guest-friendship, gift-reciprocity and family-honour fails the giants will attack, so only one thing is certain: "Winter is coming" as the Völva has prophesied and as Odin and Frigg knows. The winter is the **Fimbul-winter** (Fimbulvetr, Icelandic for "Mighty Winter"), which signals the coming of Ragnarök (= doom of the powers). The Giants (nature) will win over gods and men (culture).

But not all is lost. Out of the ashes of the World burned by Surtr, some Gods and a pair of humans will survive and a new spring with a new green earth will rise. The younger generation of the Aesir will have a golden age of Culture, but Nature is ever present as the Dragon Nidhögg will be unleashed. It's very much a cyclical model of the cosmos.

The Norse concepts of the "soul"

The idea of a "soul" in the Christian sense was alien to the Norse people, which had a much more graded and fluid system, where all things naturally interchanged. The distance between supernatural and "natural", gods and men, animal and human were also much more blurred.

Hamr

Firstly there is the "**Hamr**": The outer form = the actual shape of a person.

This was able to change. Egill Skallagrímsson's grandfather (Úlfr Bjálfason) was called Kveldulf (evening wolf), because he took wolf-form after dark.

He was a shapeshifter ("hamrammr") and also an "Úlfheðinn" (plural "Úlfhéðnar"), the wolf version of the bear fighters "Berserkir" (sing: "Berserkr").

One's hamr could be changed by donning an animal skin or one could be able change to animal form on his own. It could either be an inherited ability or one learned. Freya used a falcon-hide and she loaned it to Loki so he can use it. Normally the type of animal one changed into depended on his or her personal fylgja (see below).

Dwarves could also shapechange. The Dragon Fafnir is a dwarf and brother of Reginn and Ottar. Ottar could take any form, but was in an otter form when killed by Loki, which started the whole problem of Loki having to steal the Ring Andvarinaut to pay blood money to Ottar's father Hreiðmarr and starting the Völsunga Saga. The ring Loki stole from another dwarf this time in a fish form (Pike) called Andvari. The dwarf cursed anyone who possessed his ring.

Hugr

Secondly there is the "**Hugr**" (thought). Odin had the ability to send out his "hugr" in animal form⁶, while his body laid back as

⁶ His ravens Huginn and Muninn, which mean thought and memory respectively.



Odin with Huginn and Muninn

dead or asleep. This is a form of magic close to Shamanism. Thought, mind, intellect was not bound to the body, but with enough knowledge and power it could leave the body.

The legendary berserkr Böðvar Bjarki could do it. When the Danish Lejre-King Hrolf Kraki was attacked, Böðvar Bjarki was seemingly asleep in the hall, but a huge bear appeared out of nowhere and fought to protect the King. When he was awakened, the bear disappeared and Böðvar Bjarki fought to the death in his own human body.

Many female vödur (singular vödur, seeress) had that ability too. They sent out their "Hugr" to see the future and their body appeared dead or very fast asleep. It was dangerous, because it could be hard to return to the body and if one could not return, their body would eventually die.

The Germanic word "soul" actually means "bound" and denotes the result of the

funerary rites where the dead person was regarded as being bound to the grave, so it wouldn't become restless and come back to haunt the living.

People that came back as undead (Danish "udød") appeared in bodily form as a Draugr (Danish "Genganger" = "re-walkers"). Being undead is likely the idea, that something went wrong with the correct binding-ritual. The "hugr" of the deceased for some reason didn't travel to the afterlife (Hel), but stayed in this world and by sheer force of will returned to the dead body (the "hamr") and animated it.

The concept of an incorporeal un-dead is possibly a loan from Christianity folklore gaining dominance through the middle ages and on.

Hamingja

The "Hamingja" is a personified luck. It was an independent thing and could actually choose to leave the body at critical times and go into someone else. That's why you still say in English that one's "luck has run out"⁷.

Hamingja seem to have been mostly visible among noble families. If one still were in control of his own Hamingja he could pass it on freely to a relative. So Luck was not random, but a kind of personality that could be transferred to others and be passed in inheritance.

Some people had the special ability of *luck-sight*. They could see if a person contained a powerful Hamingja. Bad luck seems to have

⁷ Literally, your hamingja has run away from you.

been the lack of Hamingja. So if one were a Viking seeking a leader to follow it would be good to have the luck-sight, so to be able to choose the right man.

Many saga heroes are tragic figure, who while full of bravery and martial prowess just are “out of luck”. Tolkien's Turin Turambar is also such a case.

Fylgja

Fourthly there is the **Fylgjur** (singular fylgja, follower), which appears in two different versions.

The first was an inherited family spirit. It would often show itself in times of crisis in animal or human form, but apparently always female. Mostly they appeared in dreams to give warning. Seeing a fylgja while awake could be a sign of impending death. Though fylgja means “follower”, it was always ahead of the person in knowledge and on travels. It seems all of the family would have the same fylgja that could show itself to all of them - making them having the same dream for instance. In some sagas the hamingja and the family fylgja could be mixed together as one. A female (family?) hamingja, that was transferred from one man to the next.

The second version is a kind of individual “free-soul”, that operated independently from the “hugr”. This was in a sense one’s “inner animal”, as the fylgja had an animal form. For shapechangers (those able to change their “hamr”), the animal they would change into depended on their personal fylgja.

A fylgja is sometimes seen also as the person dead “twin” (the afterbirth/placenta), and possibly this personal fylgja could be regarded as always being bound to the living person as the shadow, though this is speculation. There apparently were special burial rituals of the afterbirth to prevent it to take revenge on the living twin out of jealousy.

Shapechanging and the “Souls”

All the various souls described above provide for several different kinds of shapechanging powers:

Shapechange by changing outer form is a change of the “hamr”. Most people always took the shape of a particular animal in accordance with the animal form of their personal fylgja. This is again somewhat tied to the family’s hamingja as members of the same family generally always changed into the same kind of animal. Then there would be wolf-shapechangers in one family and bear-shapechangers in another.

Changing “hamr” by donning an animal skin. Here it is unclear if it is the animal skin in itself that do the trick, or the animal skin has to be in accordance with the personal fylgja for it to take effect.

Freeing the “hugr” from the body and sending it out traveling in an animal form. Odin’s ravens are really his thought and memory. This is shamanistic as the “hugr” is able to travel to other worlds and also to pierce past and future. It is often in the form of birds (raven, eagle, hawk, falcon, swan) though some shamans travel as whales or seals.

The fylgja that appears in animal form either in dreams or when awake. It's in the person, but it is not him. It can make itself visible in dreams or in the real world. This last case happens when the fylgja has left the body, which is probably why it is regarded as a portent of imminent death.

The Afterlife

This is very complex as it probably never was systematic in the Norse world, but some general outlines can be discerned.

Only warriors from families with Odin-friendship go to Valhalla and only if they die on the battlefield and are chosen by Odin and his Valkyries. So it is Kings, Jarls and their personal "hird" as Odin only picks the best for Ragnarok. It seems that other warriors dying on the battlefield go to Freya's hall, Fólkvangr (litt. people-field).



Death of a Norse Warrior

People drowning in the ocean and where they bodies sink to the bottom and not up on a shore were regarded as having been gathered in Ran's net and are going to Ægir's hall on the bottom of the sea. Fortunately Ægir and his wife Ran are civilized giants, so it is not all bad.

Most people go to Hel, though. As the goddess Hel provides dwellings for new arrivals it seems that people are received according to their social status. Even the God Baldr goes to Hel and he sits in Hel's hall as an honoured guest. High status people would be living as such there, so it is not a "hell" in the modern sense. So anyone who does not die on the battlefield or drowns in the ocean goes to Hel.

To go there is an arduous and somewhat dangerous journey for the "hugr" (leaving the "hamr" behind). Apparently the funeral rites helped that journey to Hel. So if the funeral rites failed, the dead did not arrive to Hel and the "hugr" would instead go back to the dead body.

To get to Hel the "hugr" had to ride through dark valleys for 9 days until it reached the Gjöll-river where the only crossing was over the golden Gjallarbrú (resounding bridge). The bridge was guarded by the giant woman - Móðguðr (= Furious battler). The bridge was "resounding", so any living person crossing it would make a lot of noise. Then the "hugr" arrived at Hel's gate, which was guarded by the watchdog Garmr. Garm was bound to the cave Gnipahellir, but will break free at Ragnarok. Then the "hugr" would be able to enter Hel. She resides in her hall Éljúðnir.

It could be a later partly Christian influence, but it seems that sinners would go to Niflhell (litt. Misty Hel, that is really nasty) and righteous people would go to Gimlé instead.

It seems though that most people also regarded dead people as dwelling in the their barrow-mound simultaneously with being in Hel, so one could go talk to them. At Yule the “hugr” of the dead family members would be able to come and sit with the living and even up until modern time people set plates for dead family members Yule-night.

The idea is that people are in Hel, but their “hugr” can be called to their burial mound where they are fettered by their funeral ritual. So one can call them and they will arrive if they want to.

Odin is so powerful in magic, that he can force the dead “hugr” to arrive and answer his questions even against their will. So Odin



Heimdallr

is a necromancer that likes to sit at burial mounds or under hangman trees to call forth the dead to increase his own knowledge.

For hanged criminals the noose is another kind of fetter that binds the dead person to the tree, so one could call the dead forth from the tree itself.

SOCIETY AND CLASS

Human society was created by the travels of Heimdallr under the name Rig.

He laid with “great grandmother”, who gave birth to the swarthy Thrall.

He laid with “grandmother”, who got the red-haired and red-cheeked Karl.

He laid with “mother”, who got the blond Jarl.

Jarl himself gets a son called Kon ungr (Young Kon), who is taught by Heimdallr and actually takes over the name of Heimdallr/Rig and learns magic. Other traditions say that he married Dana, daughter of Danp and got a son Dan the founder of the Danes and so Kon ungr is the mythological King (Danish = Konge) in society.

So we have a ideological colour-scheme of the threefold society of black-red-white of the three classes (Thrall-Karl-Jarl).

To a high degree, people tended to marry within a certain class, but there was some social mobility.

Thralls

The servants were *Thralls*. Thrall does not mean a “slave”, but includes anyone not able to provide for their own subsistence. Thralls had their own economy and could buy their freedom eventually becoming “freedmen”. Freedmen were an intermediate social group --they were still tied to their owner, as they had to vote according to his wishes at the Thing and owed him allegiance. After two generations the freedmen would become free men.

Children of thralls, on the other hand, were regarded as thralls.

Note that *all people receiving wages* would be regarded as Thralls and they did not have the right to take legal matters to the Thing, could not vote at the Thing and were not regarded as having any honour. Killing them would not cause any blood feud, but one had to pay for damages to their owner. This is called “wergild” (= Man-payment, meaning of blood-money) in English, and “Vígssakarbætr” or just “Bætr” in Norwegian.

Some thralls could actually be rich and powerful as the Bryti (Stewards) -- the overseers of the Kings’ halls around the country, as the Viking Kings were constantly travelling.

Karls

The class of *Karls* - the free men – are the ones that can provide for their own subsistence. Free men would in legal matters be allied under a local chief (great peasant in Iceland or a Jarl in the rest of Scandinavia) as

the same words carry different weight depending on who is saying them. So numbers of allies mattered a great deal if one wanted to have support for his cause.

They could be mustered by the King in case of war and was by law required to have at least a spear and a shield (the richer of them could also have a helmet and a war axe).

Jarls

Jarls were professional warriors who were sufficiently rich to buy expensive battle gear (swords, stylish helmets and chain hauberk) and have horses.

They had holdings large enough that they did not themselves have to work in the fields, but they were still regarded as great farmers as their income came from that source.

They belonged to prominent families that had received land-areas as reward for conquest. The place name marker is in Denmark –lev that means what is “left” (= inheritance). For instance Bjarkes-lev is the inheritance of Bjarke.

These names are often of Iron Age times and could mean the expansion of the Danish Kings. The followers of the Danish King probably gave these areas as rewards as the conquered creating Jarl families.

The new Jarls would normally have the same Odin-friendship as the Danish Kings, but allies might have kept onto their land still having their particular god-friendship.

The Law

The *þing*

In Norse society the law codes were oral. Each Herred had their own “*þing*” (assembly) where legal matters were decided at fixed intervals through the year. There were also regional greater þings and Iceland had an Alþingi (all-thing) for the whole country. Denmark had 13 “landsting” (land-things) besides around 200 smaller “herredsting”.

Beside questions of law, the þing was also a place of communal religious rituals and for the greater þings also political decisions like voting for the next King.

The Icelandic Alþingi was presided over by a “lög(sögu)maður” (Law Speaker Man), who was elected for 3 years. Each year he had to recite one third of the law from memory. In the rest of Scandinavia the thing was chaired by a Jarl or the King himself.

Every free man and Jarl had to attend and could vote. Legal matters were decided by vote. Banging the shields with a sword, axe or spear was signalling agreement. Everyone had to follow the decision of the þing or be declared an outlaw.

Legal disputes between two persons could also be solved by a Hólmganga⁸ (a legal duel).

Law and Crime

Imprisonment and corporal punishment did not exist in Norse laws. Culprits either had to pay a fine to the king and a wergild to the

offended party (and if unable to pay, they would become thralls), be exiled or in rare instances sentenced to death.

Legally a free man was one having kinship, while a thrall was kinless. Since kinship was the basis of inheritance, feuds and wergild, kinless thralls were outside of this system and thus excluded.

The law principle was based on compensation and not revenge or correction. So if a feuding could not be solved by itself it could be taken to court, where compensation was decided ending (in theory) the feud.

Most crimes were solved by fines (even killings) and each law would have very specific fines for each crime often depending on the value of the person injured or killed. So fines for crimes against men of high status were more expensive than those of lower status and those for crimes against men more expensive than for those against women. For major crimes, such as sexual crimes, religious crimes, or treason, there could be a sentence of *outlawry* or in rare instances death penalty.



Hólmganga

⁸ See [“Holmgang”](#)

In Iceland there was also “Fjörbaugsgarður” or “lesser outlawry”, that seems to have been more common than fining. The sentence was being banished from Iceland for 3 years, but without having holdings confiscated.

Outlaws were without the protection of the law, so anyone could kill them if they stayed and anyone giving them help or shelter would also become an outlaw.

Skóggangur (Forest-going) or “Greater outlawry” was a permanent banishment where all of one’s holdings were confiscated. That reduced the outlaw to a *níðingr*.

There was a difference between “killing” that was done openly and “murder”, which was done in secret. The second was far worse so running from the scene of the crime increased the seriousness of the crime.

Killing would normally end with a fine or lesser outlawry, whereas “murder” would be greater outlawry or even a death sentence.

The Níðingr

A person that committed premeditated murder using poison or magic, that lied under oath or did treason was regarded as a *níðingr*. It meant a total loss of honour and a stigma as a villain.

A *níðingr* has no kinship and is regarded as a “vargr” (warg), an enemy of humanity and as being legally dead. In reality they were a social class below thralls, that no longer were regarded as human or having any rights.

Níðings are regarded as using magic to damage and injured others and as being

unmanly (i.e., sexually perverse, called “*ergi*” as noun or “*argr*”/“*ragr*” as adjective). They were considered cowards, carrying out their evil in secret.

Ergi was the worst word in Old Icelandic and means “an unmanly passive homosexual, who cowardly lies, murders and uses magic - when dressed as a woman - to kill and injured others”.

Accusing another man in public by loudly scolding him of being “*ergi*” was legally called “speaking *níð*” and became illegal by fining later in Iceland.

Poets would even create *níð*-verses speaking ill of a person, e.g. the following verses from Iceland, in 984 AD, accused Bishop Frederik and his friend Þórvaldr vídförle:

*Hefr börn borit
byskup níu
þeira 's allra
Þórvaldr faðir.*

“Nine children have the bishop born and Thorvald is the father of them all.”

Thorvald killed the two men responsible and saved his honour -- though actually it was the bishop being accused of *ergi* since he had acted as the passive one, so it would be interesting to know what people thought of him after that.

Being accused of *ergi* and/or called a *níðingr* demanded an immediate reaction by killing the offender -- otherwise the accusation would be proven true. If it was done at a *þing* -- which was regarded as a sanctuary, so starting a fight would lead to being

sentenced to outlawry -- then the accusation had to be solved by a Hólmganga (a legal duel). So it was a strategic way to force another person into a duel, which is likely the cause it later became illegal in Iceland.

ARMIES OF THE VIKINGS

In the early Viking age the King or Jarl (Earl) did not have a standard army. He would have a retinue - often the sacred number of 12. It could for Odin-rulers typically be 12 "berserkir" (bear-warriors) or 12 "uldhednir" (wolf-warriors), but also 12 non-ecstatic "normal" fighters.

The Hird

These men - the "Hird" - were his lifeguard ("hofudvorgr" - head wardens) and they had freely taken a Sword-oath (precursor to the knighting ceremony) and were thus sworn to give their life if necessary to protect him. The Hird was normally comprised of son of kings and earls, rather than members of the lower classes.

The "Hird" could in return for their service demand protection and support ("traust") from the king/earl. These warriors were not paid, but were given gifts and parts of the war booty (they are on Danish runestones called: "heimþegar" - home receivers). It is equivalent to what the Romans earlier called the "Comitatus" system among Germanic warriors. The "Hird" lived close to their chosen leader and always sharing his table ("bordfastir" = litt. tablefast) and they followed him wherever he went, as an armed retinue ("fylgjd" = followers). It was truly a band of brothers, with the King/Jarl as "Big

brother" but still a leader among peers. Wives complained that they never saw their husbands since they were always with their leader.

TRAVELLING KINGS

At that time the Kings did not have any fixed residence, but were constantly on the move within his realm visiting his Earls, who lived in great Viking longhouses (English halls, but in Old Icelandic "salir", singular salr) owned by the King and run by Stewards (Bryti). They had to be ready to hold feasts for the King and his men at all times.

So the realm did not have any capital that could be conquered and the King and his men could also retreat to friendly Earls within the Viking sphere to return for a reconquest at a later time. That could be very far away in Russia for instance. Much like the Viking Kings, also Attila the Hun and the Merovingian Kings were also constantly on the move⁹.

Húskarls

The term "Húskarl" (Housecarl) is a bit problematic. It probably just originally meant a "manservant" of the freeman class (to distinguish them from Thrall servants), but with time seems to become synonymous with Hird, but with one important difference. It seems that they were paid, since they are also called "málamenn" (eng: men receiving wages). They were only bound in service for one year and the contract could be

⁹ That is why it took forever for the Roman diplomat Priscus to find Attila.

negotiated on one special day every year (often New Year).

Canute the Great (King 1016-1035) had 3.000-4.000 Housecarls by him in England and they can be seen as a paid standing army. Later Danish Kings did not have these numbers and King Niels (King 1104-1134) reduced the number of Hird and Housecarls to 6-7 men and placed the others as a permanent civil servant bureaucracy around the realm. Sadly that meant that when the people of Slesvig turned against him he had basically no bodyguard to defend him and he was killed. But this system was continued as it provided better control over taxes.

The Leding

In case of war the King could mobilize the entire country quickly (if he was popular). Since ancient times there was in Denmark a system called "**Leding**" (in Latin, *Expeditio*). Actually "Viking" probably means going on a sea-raid (the person going on the raid is called a "Vikingr"), so an expedition after the Leding is called for. Even in Christian times it's never called Crusades against Heathens, but always "Expeditio" against them.

The Nordic lands were separated into districts probably on the basis of old tribal borders. Each district was in Denmark called a Herred. Each Herred ("Hundred") had their own "Ting" ("thing", meaning lawseat) and was subdivided into a given a number of "skipæn" (ships) most likely between 1-4. A



Ostland Longships

further subdivision of each "ship" was "hafnæ" (harbours).

A "ship" had to provide a warship with 20-40 oars and each "harbour" provided 1 soldier (who had to be a freeman) with weapons and provision.

A "Styrisman" (helmsman) build the warship and provided leadership of it during the campaign. He was to be equipped with full armour and horse and was paid by the farmers within the "ship".

So Denmark could mobilize, when the King called for a full "Leding", 1000 ships and 30.000 men. The logistics of getting everyone to arrive at the same time (as people had to bring their own food and drink) meant that the King often called for a "Leding" of the areas closest to where he wanted to attack.



Thor's Fight with the Giants

THE MAGIC OF RUNES

USING THE NORTHERN REACHES
RUNES UNDER THE D20 RULES

by Giuliano Michelon

This article provides a set of rules for employing runic magic from GAZ7 The Northern Reaches in campaigns using the 3rd Edition Dungeons & Dragons rules, or other variations of the d20 framework.

MASTERS OF THE RUNES

In addition to the arcane and divine there is a third form of magic, possibly even more ancient and mysterious, mastered by a very limited number of people: the magic of runes. The runes are actually ancient symbols, full of energy, knowledge of which has been gradually disappearing with the passing of ages and with the spread of the two best known forms of magic. Only Nordic peoples and the followers of the Asgardian pantheon retain this knowledge, maybe thanks to their great tradition of oral

transmission. Thus, finding a cleric who masters the magic of the runes is not as rare in the Northern Reaches as it is in the rest of the world.

There are therefore only two viable ways for a mortal to access the knowledge of the runes. Either to faithfully serve an immortal of the north (Odin, Thor, Loki, Frey, Freya, or Hel) or to spend part of his life studying and researching the ancient runes of power, becoming a *Lord of Runes* (LoR).

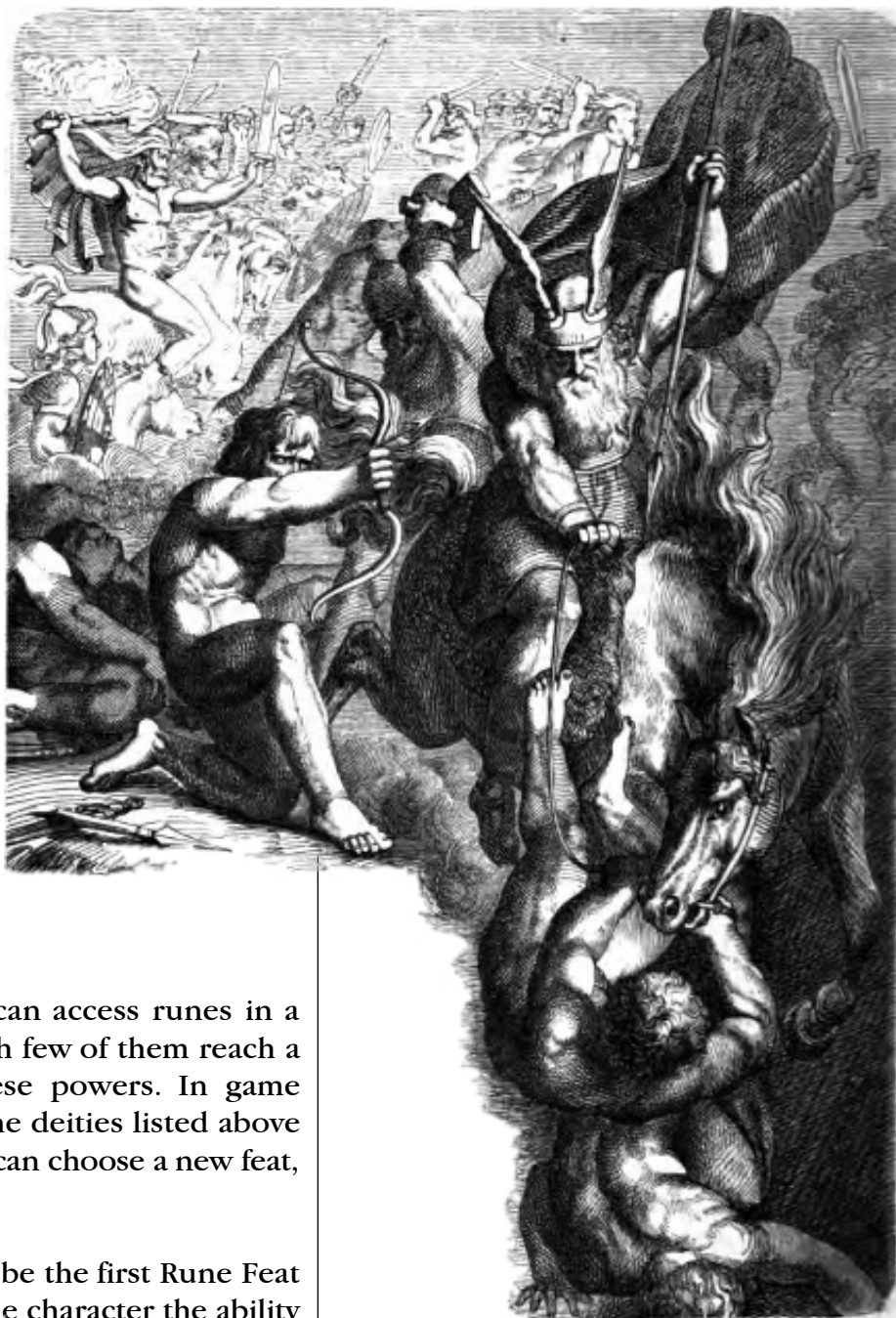
Clerics of the North

The clerics of the north can access runes in a relatively easy way, though few of them reach a very high mastery of these powers. In game terms, a cleric of one of the deities listed above may, at any time when he can choose a new feat, take a Rune Feat.

The *Write Rune* feat must be the first Rune Feat acquired, since it grants the character the ability to gain knowledge of a rune (player's choice) as well as the power to write it.

This feat can be taken multiple times, adding new runes to the character's repertoire.

However, the feat cannot be taken more times than the character's Wisdom modifier.



Battle between Aesir and Vanir

Prestige Class: The Lord of Runes

The Lords of Runes devote part of their lives to researching the ancient runes, studying them and assimilating their power. Therefore, compared to the Norse clerics, they often have a greater knowledge and a broader mastery of runes. They also have exclusive access to a special kind of Rune Feats.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements : To qualify for the Lord of Runes prestige class, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: Any

Craft (wood or stone cutting): 7 ranks

Knowledge (arcana): 10 ranks

Feats: Read Rune

Class Skills: The Lord of Runes class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Forgery (Int), Knowledge (Religion and Arcana) (Int), Profession (Wis) and Spellcraft (Int).¹

¹ See Chapter 4: Skills in the D&D 3e Player's Handbook for skill descriptions.

Skill Points per level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features:The following are class features of the Lord of Runes prestige class.

Weapon and Armory Proficiency: as for the cleric class.

Spells: the Lord of Runes prepares his spells and selects them as a cleric and from the cleric's spells list.

Rune Feat: At each level, the Lord of Runes gains a bonus feat. These feats are drawn only from the special rune related feats presented with the Magic of the Runes.

Rune Mastery (Ex): unlike clerics, who have limited and more difficult access to the study of runes, the Lord of the Runes has simpler access to their magic. Most importantly, however, his body and mind do not suffer in comprehending and mastering their mystic power. In game terms, the Lord of Runes does not suffer any Abilities loss when gaining runic knowledge. This is balanced by the fact that Lord of Runes, who devote most of his life to study rather than combat, have d6 hit dices instead of the standard d8 for clerics.

| Class Level | BAB | Fort. Save | Ref. Save | Will Save | Special |
|-------------|-----|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Write Rune Feat, Rune Mastery |
| 2 | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 3 | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 4 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 5 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 6 | +4 | 5 | +2 | +5 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 7 | +5 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 8 | +6 | +6 | +2 | +6 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 9 | +6 | +6 | +3 | +6 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |
| 10 | +7 | +7 | +3 | +7 | Rune Feat, +1 level of existing class |

THE RUNES

The runes are magical symbols that, through a complex ritual, are impressed into a bearer -- either an inanimate object or a living being. Once the rune is magically engraved, it becomes invisible and does not alter in any way the surface of the bearer. As long as it remains in this state of inactivity, the rune is considered dormant and may remain so until it is activated or removed.

When a rune is activated, it enters the active state and remains in it for as long as the duration of its effect². When the effect ends, the rune disappears and must be engraved anew to be used once more.

A rune can be activated in two different ways: on command or on contingency. The type of activation way must be decided at the time when the rune is inscribed on its bearer and in any case in accordance with the provisions in the description of the specific rune.

A rune is activated on command when the bearer (a sentient, free-willed creature) or the cleric who carved it (when the container is an object or creature without an own will and language, such as an animal) pronounce loudly the rune's name.

In the latter case, the cleric needs to cast a *Bless Runes* spell. The vocal component for the spell is the name of the rune.

A rune activates on contingency when the bearer experience the exact conditions laid down by the cleric at the time of the engraving. Many runes require an activation by contingency. Runes with multiple uses specify for each use whether the activation is on command or on contingency.

² See the description of each rune for effect durations.

Examples

Orm, the mighty cleric of Thor, writes the rune Urur, the Auroch, on his companion Deneor the dwarf. The magical symbol remains latent for several adventures until Orm's teammates are facing a dangerous opponent: a storm giant. Deneor decides to activate the rune: he utters the command word aloud (Urur) and the rune briefly glows with golden light as if the skin of Deneor had been branded with fire. Then the symbol disappears and the strength of Deneor becomes that of a Wild Bear (Str 31) for the duration of the rune effect, after which it returns to normal and the rune disappears.

Before the same adventure, Orm decides to write a rune Kaunna (Fire) on his warhammer. Later, during the battle with the storm giant, Orm decides to evoke its powers. He casts the prepared spell Bless Runes and calls aloud the name of the rune (Kaunna) as the spell's verbal component. The glowing rune appears on the warhammer surface and the weapon catches fire. The hammer burns without being consumed by fire and without damaging the wielder. Every other creature hit by his weapon takes 3d4 additional damage from fire for every successful hit. When the fire effect ends, the rune is expended.

Before the same battle, Orm writes on himself the Odala (Birthright) rune. This rune can only be activated on contingency, which Orm sets to “whenever he is damaged by an attack that would bring him below 0 hp”. Orm, who has only 20 hp, is hit by the storm giant with a devastating axe blow that inflicts to the cleric a total of 32 hp of damage. Orm is knocked down by the impact but, under the astonished gaze of the giant, he stands up from the ground unharmed and still with 20 hp. The rune of Odala has protected Orm from the deadly blow and therefore it is expended and disappears from his body.

Activating a rune is a *standard action* unless otherwise specified in the specific description of the rune.

Writing the RUNES

Writing a rune, whatever the nature of the bearer, is a complex and delicate task taking valuable components and time, besides an XP sacrifice. The time required to engrave a rune is equal to an hour for every 100 gp of required components.

Once the rune is engraved, the cleric or Lord of Runes needs to cast the spell *Create Rune*. This applies when the cleric writes the rune on himself or on an object. When he writes a rune on another person, to make it possible for the bearer to activate the rune, the cleric needs to transfer to the bearer part of his knowledge, represented by an amount of XPs equal to the component cost. These XPs are permanently lost.

Acquiring the RUNES

Every time a cleric takes the feat *Write Rune* he can add a new rune to his list. In game terms, however, the acquisition does not happen automatically. One of the following three ways can be employed to gain the new rune.

The simplest and most “traditional” method is the oral transmission by a mentor (a cleric of the Asgardian pantheon who already knows the rune). The learning time depends on the complexity of the rune and is equal to one day per 100 gp value. At the end of this period, the cleric must pass a test of *spellcraft* [DC 15]. Success indicates that the new rune has been learned while a failure indicates that



Runestone

the cleric will have to undertake another learning period, at the end of which he may repeat the test with a DC decreased by 1 for each previously attempt made.

The second method is to contact directly the patron god and ask for a divine concession through the use of the spell *Know Rune*.

The third method is to find, through research or adventure, ancient and rare manuscripts in which the desired rune is described. In this case, the writing task is almost always complex and the *spellcraft* tests have a higher difficulty [DC 18]. The time for self learning is equal to twice the time normally required to learn the rune. As in the first method, the DC decreases by 1 for each period of time it took to decipher and learn the rune itself.

In any case, a cleric can never have a higher number of runes than his Wisdom modifier.

For a cleric of the Asgardian pantheon, learning a new rune always requires a major sacrifice and the expenditure of energy. Therefore, it causes the permanent loss of 1 point from one of the three basic physical characteristics (player's choice of Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution). This last effect does not apply to the Lords of Runes.

Limitations of the Runes

The number of runes latent and/or active at the same time can never exceed the value of Wisdom modifier of their maker. Besides, no bearer can be inscribed with more than one rune.

RUNE Feats

Write Rune [Special Feat]

The character learns the powers of a rune and how to write it.

Prerequisites: Ability to cast divine spells and follower of one of the Immortals of the Pantheon of Asgard.

Benefits: The character gains a rune and learns how to write and how to access his powers.

Normal: runes cannot be used without this feat.

Special: The feat can be taken multiple times. Each time, knowledge of a new rune is gained.

Improved Rune Knowledge [Special Feat]

The character increases his knowledge of runes.

Prerequisites: *Write Rune* and minimum 15 Wisdom.

Benefits: The character can learn up to two runes more than the maximum allowed by his Wisdom (a cleric with 15 in Wisdom, for example, can learn up to four runes instead of two).

Normal: Without this feat a cleric can learn a maximum number of runes equal to his Wisdom modifier.

Improved Rune Crafting [Special Feat]

The character can inscribe a greater number of runes.

Prerequisites: *Write Rune* and minimum 15 Wisdom.

Benefits: The cleric can write (and keep in latent or active state) up to two runes more than the maximum allowed by his Wisdom (a cleric with 15 wisdom, for example, can write up to four runes instead of two).

Normal: Without this feat a cleric can have a maximum number of active and/or latent runes equal to his Wisdom modifier.

Maximize Rune [Special Feat]

The runes, when activated, act to their full potential.

Prerequisites: *Write Rune* and minimum 17 Wisdom.

Benefits: Where applicable, all variable, numeric effects of a maximized rune magic are maximized. Thus, the rune deals the maximum damage, cures the maximum number of hit points, or affects the maximum number of targets as appropriate. For example, the rune Kaunna (Fire), which normally inflicts 3d4 hp of fire damage, when maximized automatically inflicts 12 hp.

Writing a maximized rune costs 50% more and requires twice the time than a normal rune.

Extend Rune [Special Feat]

The runes, when activated, act for twice as long than their standard duration.

Prerequisites: *Write Rune* and minimum 17 Wisdom.

Benefits: An extended rune lasts twice than as long than a normal rune (if it has a

duration effect -- instantaneous effects are not modified).

Writing an extended rune costs 50% more in gp.

Spells of the Asgardian Pantheon

Thor's Spells

Fury of the Berserker (enchantment)

Level: 2

Components: V, S,

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: touch

Area: a humanoid, follower of the Immortals Thor or Odin

Duration: 10 rounds

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

The spell, which the cleric can cast on himself or on any humanoid follower of Thor or Odin, causes the recipient to enter a state of berserk rage. The recipient gains a temporary +4 enchantment bonus to Strength and Constitution, as well as +2 bonus on Will saving throws, but suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The recipient can end the rage at any time with a Wisdom check (DC 15) and during this period, in order to cast spells, must pass a test of Concentration (DC 20 + the spell level).

Ultimate Fury of the Berserker

(enchantment)

Level: 4

Components: V, S,

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: touch

Area: a humanoid follower of Thor or Odin

Duration: 10 rounds

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell works as *Fury of the Berserker*, but provides the following bonuses: +6 enchantment bonus to Strength and Constitution, +3 bonus to Will saving throws and -2 penalty to AC.

Fist of Thor (transmutation)

Level: 2

Components: V, S,

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: touch

Area: a creature or object

Duration: until the first successful attack

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell creates a magical aura around a weapon or a natural weapon of a creature. This aura gives a +3 bonus to hit and 2d12 additional damage if the weapon is a warhammer (weapon sacred to Thor) or a +1 to hit and 1d12 additional damage otherwise. The spell effect ends after the first successful hit.

RUNES OF POWER

Each rune is briefly described. Then is listed the various powers that each one can evoke, both depending on the vessel on which it is inscribed, both the activation method and finally the crafting cost.

Fehu: Cattle



This rune represents wealth. Northern people traditionally gauge wealth by the amount of livestock owned.

1 When activated on contingency, it senses the presence of a treasure (at crafting the cleric shall specify the minimum amount of treasure that the rune is active for) within a radius of 30 meters. No obstacle can hide the treasure even if physical barriers or magical means can conceal it from sight of the bearer of the rune. Cost 100 gp.

2 When activated on command, the rune indicates the direction to a specific treasure (for example: the treasure of Jorg the pirate) or of a specific object (e.g. the Eye of Traldar). The duration of the rune, once activated, is 1 hour / level of the engraver and the cost of 200 gp.

3 This rune can be engraved on an object with a specific aim protection of the item itself from any form of magic identification and has a duration of one day per level of the engraver (or until it is removed) and a cost of 300 gp. This effect is activated on command.

4 Warns the character who bears this rune that he is in sight distance from an object

that has engraved a rune or another kind of magic protection (i.e. explosive runes, sepia snake sigil, etc.). This effect is activated on contingency. The cost is 100 gp.

Urur: the Auroch

U This rune represents the strength of the wild beasts and is often represented by a huge bear.

1 The rune is activated on contingency when it senses the presence of a hostile wild animal. The animal is automatically calmed down, its aggression cancelled, unless the animal has been magically summoned or is under magic influence. In this case, the bearer must make a Wisdom check, against a DC of 1d20 + the Will Saving Throw modifier of the animal. The bearer can choose instead to make an Intimidate, Animal Empathy or Charisma check. If the check is failed, the animal is unaffected. If the animal is eyes or voice contact with its summoner, the summoner's Will Saving Throw determines the check DC, and he can impose the nature of the skill or ability check. Costs 100 gp.

2 Engraved on a willing bearer and activated on command, it gives the bearer the strength of a wild bear (Str. 31, +10 atk / dmg) for 1 minute / level. Costs 300 gp.

3 Activated on command, it forces all hostile creatures within 9 meters (30 feet) to attack the recipient of the rune (which cannot be an object or a non-sentient creature) rather than his companions. This effect lasts for 1 round

per level and costs 100 gp. Of course sentient creatures may resist this effect by succeed on a Will ST with a DC equal to 10 + ½ the level of the runes' bearer plus his Charisma modifier.

Thurs: the Giant

T This rune describes all giant and giant-kin races.

1. The rune can be activated on command, in the presence of a giant. The giant must make a Will saving throw with DC equal to 1d20 + ½ Cleric Level + Charisma Modifier of Cleric) or be fascinated as the spell Charm Monster. The duration of the charm is 1 day and the cost is 300 gp.

2. This rune can be activated both on command or on contingency at the choice of its maker (who must choose the activation mode during the crafting). When activated, the rune influences all giants located within a radius of 5 meters (15 feet) as the spell Emotion. The kind of emotion is chosen by the maker when the rune is inscribed. This effect does not allow a Saving Throw. The duration is 1 minute per level and the cost is 300 gp.

3 The character activates this rune on command. He grows to the size of a hill giant, with an increased Strength 25 and Constitution 19. However, Dexterity drops to 8, if it was higher. The character can use giant-sized weapons, dealing double damage. The duration is 1 minute per level and the cost is 400 gp.

As: the Immortals



This rune represents the Immortals and their realm beyond the Prime Material Plane.

1 The rune is activated on contingency, in the presence of an Outsider (e.g., a demon or an Immortal) magically hidden and/or disguised enabling the rune's bearer to see the disguised one like for a *true seeing* spell. The duration is instantaneous and the cost is 500 gp.

2 On command, the rune creates around the bearer, in a 5 meters (15 feet) radius, an area of protection against evil Outsiders (such as demons) equivalent to the spell *Repulsion*. The affected Outsiders are allowed a Will save with a DC equal to 17 + Wisdom modifier of the maker. This effect has a duration of 1 round per level and a cost of 500 gp.

3 Once activated on command, this rune gives to its bearer a +2 bonus on all Saving Throws for one hour per level of the maker. This effect costs 300 gp.

Raidu: Journeying



This rune represents the journey.

1 This effect activates only on contingency. It wakes up the container when a hostile creature or other enemy approaches within a 30 meters (100 feet) radius. Once activated, the rune has a duration of 6 hours. During this time, the rune continues to shine when enemies approach. This effect costs 200 gp.

2 Whenever the cleric is lost or, for some reason, cannot find directions (either due to poor weather conditions or for magic interferences) he can activates it, on command, to control the power of the rune which, although not indicating the distance, indicates the right direction to reach the desired destination. It costs 100 gp and a duration of 10 minutes per level.

3 Activated on command confers to the bearer, for six hours, the *Endurance* feat. This effect costs 100 gp.

Kaunna: Fire



This rune represents the heat that gives life, the light of the torch and the destructive force of fire.

1 On command, the rune burns like a torch for two hours even though it does not consume the object on which it was written (the bearer cannot be a living being). The fire burns even under a heavy rain but not underwater. This effect costs 100 gp.

2 On command, the rune envelops with magic fire the weapon on which it was written (the bearer cannot be a living being) without harming it. The magic fire last for 1 minute per level and allows the weapon to inflict an additional 3d4 fire damage. This effect costs 200 gp.

Gefu: Giving



This rune represents generosity and hospitality.

1 When activated on command, this effect allows its bearer (the container cannot be an

object) to positively change the reactions of relatively intelligent creatures to requests for food, shelter and clothing for the duration of 24 hours. This effect costs 100 gp.

2 When activated on command, this effect modifies positively the reactions of hostile creatures, giving +10 bonus on reaction roll dice for 1 hour per level. This effect costs 200 gp.

Wunju: Joy

P This rune represents great joy and appreciation for life.

1 On command, the rune influences for the duration of a performance (a poem, a song, a ballad) the reactions of those present with +10 modifier. The cost of this effect is 100 gp.

2 On command, the rune influences a single individual, providing the bearer a reaction bonus of +20 for 10 minutes to level. The cost of this effect is 300 gp. An individual with an opposite alignment (good vs. evil) to the bearer can try to resist this effect with a Will save (DC = 1d20 + ½ level + the maker's Charisma modifier).

3 When activated on command, the rune compels all creatures within a radius of 6 meters (20 feet) from the bearer to temporarily stop fighting. Creatures with more HD than maker's level can resist the power of the rune with a Will saving throw with DC = 1d20 + ½ level + the maker's Charisma modifier. Creatures with the same (or lower) level/HD are automatically affected by the effect of the rune and stop fighting as if hit by the effects of the spell

Daze. The effect lasts for as long as the activator maintains his concentration plus one more round or until it moves more than 6 meters from the affected creatures or until one of them is attacked. Creatures with more levels of maker can repeat the saving throw each round. The cost of this effect is 500 gp.

Hagia: Cruel Nature

N This rune represents the violent and destructive side of nature.

1 On command, the rune creates the effect of a *Lightning Bolt* spell for 1d6 hp of damage per level of the maker (max. 10d6). Alternatively, it can be written on an object with activation on contingency. The cost of this effect is 300 gp.

2 On command, the rune creates a violent storm of rain and wind concentrated in an area of 6 meters (20 feet) radius. Creatures within the area can not run, fly and their movement is considered halved as long as they succeed in a test of strength or Balance with DC 20 (failure means movement zero). The storm can move up to 3 meters (10 feet) per round. The effects of the storm last as long as the activator maintains concentration on them. The cost of this effect is 300 gp.

Naudir: Desperate Need

T This rune represents great danger and the great fortune necessary to avoid it.

1 When inscribed with activation on contingency, the maker must clearly specify the type of attack he intends to delay (for

example: “the first energy drain attack”, or “the first attack by fire” or even more specific conditions, such as “the first fire breath of a red dragon”). Then, once an attack of the chosen type strikes the bearer, the attack will be "frozen" and its effects suspended for 1 minute per level. After this time, the bearer suffers damage normally expected from the attack. The cost for this effect is 700 gp.

2. This effect allows the bearer, once the rune has been activated on command, to move to twice its normal speed for 1 minute per level. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

3 This effect, activated on command, confers to the bearer a +2 bonus on all saving throws for 1 minute per level. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

Isar: Ice

This rune represents ice and cold.

1 On command, this rune transforms a water area of 3 x 3 meters into a solid platform of ice. If placed on a river or current water, the platform can be used as a raft and supports the weight of an average man. The effect lasts for 10 minutes per level. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

2 Activated either on command or on contingency, this effect creates a tiny blizzard in an area of 3 meters in diameter (no more than 18 meters from the rune) that inflicts to all creatures within its area of effect 3d10 hp of frost damage (Reflex saving throw with DC 18 for half damage). The duration is instantaneous and the cost for this effect is 300 gp.

Jarn: Fruitful Nature



This rune represents the wealth of wildlife.

1 When activated on command, this effect enables the bearer to tell whether an animal or plant is edible or poisonous or otherwise dangerous. The effect lasts for 1 hour per level. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

2 This effect enables the bearer to identify, within a mile radius, the direction of the nearest medicinal herbs or healing berries. The rune is activated on command and its effects last 1 hour. The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

Ihwar: the Hunter



This rune represents the hunt and the art of ambush.

1. A throwing or missile weapon (except crossbows and mechanical weapons), on which the rune is inscribed, gains for one hour per level of the maker a +2 competence bonus on attack rolls and its user is considered as if he had the *Precise Shot* feat. This effect is activated on command, and its cost is 400 gp.

2 As an effect activated on command, this rune enables the trap on which it is inscribed to automatically capture its prey without causing damage. The rune lasts 24 hours and costs 200 gp. It does not work against magical or unnatural creatures.

3 When activated on command, this rune enables the bearer to follow the tracks left by a specific "prey" regardless of the terrain, the time elapsed and any measure taken to conceal it. The effect lasts for one hour per level of the maker and costs 400 gp.

Pethru: the Unseen



This rune represents secrecy and concealment.

1 Activated on command, this effect makes the bearer completely invisible and undetectable by any means by all creatures within a radius of 18 meters. Only a true seeing spell can reveal his location. More distant observers are not affected. The effect lasts as long as the bearer maintains concentration and remains immobile. The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

2 The maker can write a runic message and protect it from prying eyes by inscribing this rune on it. When in the presence of the designated receiver, the rune activates on contingency and allows him to read it. Thereafter, the entire message vanishes. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

3 As an effect activated on contingency, the rune glows in presence of invisible creatures in a range of 18 feet. The bearer cannot see the invisible being, but is aware of their presence. The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

Aigir: the Elk



This rune represents protection.

1. Activated on command, this rune, which must be inscribed on a shield, bestows a +5 special magical bonus for 1 minute/level of the maker. The cost for this effect is 300 gp.

2 The bearer, upon activating on command this effect, benefits from a +3 bonus on all saving throws for 1 minute per level. The cost for this effect is 300 gp.

3 The rune can be inscribed on a weapon. This effect, activated on contingency the first time its holder is hit by a critical hit, causes the weapon to parry it automatically. The cost for this effect is 300 gp.

Sowelu: the Sun



This rune represents healing and health.

1 On command, this effect is activated and maximizes the hit points restored by a healing spell cast on the following round. If no spell is cast on the next round, the rune is lost. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

2 This rune can be written on one person who died within the last hour. Once completed and blessed, it can be activated on command to restore life to the dead creature as for the spell *Raise Dead*. The effect restores life, but does not repair extensively damaged body parts, so it will be useless on a decapitated body, or one missing other vital organs. The cost for this effect is 800 gp.

Tiwar: War



This rune represents might and prowess in battle.

1 This rune can be written on a weapon. When activated on command, the first successful hit inflicts an automatic critical hit even on those creatures normally immune to them (such as the undead). the effect has a duration of one round per level of the maker or until it is "discharged". The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

2 This rune is activated on contingency when the bearer fails a Saving Throw against fear or paralysis. It allows it to resist the fear or paralysis effect as if the Saving Throw had been passed. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

3 When this rune is activated on command, it affects the morale of all enemies within 3 yards as for the spell Bane (with no Saving Throw allowed). The effect lasts 1 round per level of the maker. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

Berkana: the Birch



This rune represents the vitality of durable birch.

1. a command activates this rune, it lasts 1 round per level and gives the cleric a natural armor bonus of +4. Costs 200 gp.

2 this rune is activated for contingency after the cleric has suffered damage (be it physical or magical in nature). After having calculated the amount (through the outcome of the dices, for example) the cleric can choose whether or not to activate the rune that subtracts to the total damage half of it, then the rune disappears. Costs 500 gp.

3 When activated on command the cleric cures 2d8 +1 / per level of the cleric (no

limit) hp, then the rune disappears. Costs 300 gp.

Ehwar: the Horse



This rune represents both communication with and mastery of horses.

1 The rune can be inscribed on a horse. On command, it allows the activator to establish a telepathic contact with the bearer, which allows communication and mind reading for 1 hour/level of the maker. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

2 The bearer activates the rune on command gaining a +10 competence bonus on all Ride skill tests for 1 hour/level of the maker. The cost for this effect is 100 gp.

3 The cleric activates this effect on command and summon a specific horse that is within 10 miles of the caster. If the horse knows the cleric well and has been well-treated, it will answer the summon immediately. It will arrive as soon as possible, risking combat with other creatures and risking its life in difficult physical maneuvers if necessary. If not in such a good feeling toward cleric the horse may attempt to resist the summon performing a Will save with DC equal to 1d20 + 1/2 level + the cleric mod. charisma. Costs 200 gp.

Mannar: Man



This rune represents knowledge and wisdom.


1 Once activated on command, it enables to the bearer to understand the true intentions

and the basic personality of a stranger. If the foreigner is of the same level or lower than the maker, success is automatic. Otherwise the stranger can resist the effect with a Will Save against $10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ level} + \text{the maker's Wisdom modifier}$. If the stranger wins the Will contest by more than 5 points, he will be aware that someone has tried to read his mind. If he wins the test by 10 or more he will also identify the bearer. The effect has a duration of 1 round per level and a cost of 400 gp.

2 The rune is activated on command, allowing the bearer to produce an ESP-like effect on a target in the range of sight, allowing the bearer to read from the victim's mind the response to a single question. The victim can resist with a Willpower test against $10 + \frac{1}{2} \text{ level} + \text{the cleric's Mod}$. The duration is the time needed to communicate the request and its response. The cost for this effect is 400 gp.

3 The maker can write this rune on an object. The rune is activated on command, giving the activator knowledge of the direction in which the object's owner is found, but not his distance. The duration is instantaneous and the cost for this effect is 100 gp.

Lagur: Water

 This rune represents protection from drowning and from the power of the sea.


1 Activated on command, this rune allows the bearer to breathe underwater as *Water Breathing* spell for 2 hours to level. The cost for this effect is 400 gp.

2 Activated on command, this rune allows the bearer to walk on water for 1 hour/level. The bearer, besides his equipment, can carry a maximum of one person, in which case his movement is halved. The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

3 The rune can be engraved on the hull of a boat or a ship. The effect is activated on contingency, the first time the ship suffers enough damage to sink it. The effect lasts for 1 turn/level and protects the ship from any structural damage that could sink it. The cost for this effect is 500 gp.

4 Engraved on a stick and activated on a contingency when the holder runs the risk of drowning, the rune allows the stick and the person holding it to float for up to 24 hours. The cost of this effect is 200 gp.

Ingwar: Growth

 This rune represents the power of growth in natural things.

1 The rune can be activated either on command or on contingency. It creates an effect identical to the *Entangle* spell. The effect lasts for 1 minute per level and the cost is 100 gp. 2. On command, the rune replicates the effect of the *Animal Growth* spell on the animal on which it was inscribed. The effect lasts 1 minute per level. The cost for this effect is 700 gp.

3 On command, the rune replicates the effect of the *Plant Growth* spell. The effect lasts for one hour. The cost for this effect is 500 gp.

Odala: Birthright



This rune represents power over the destiny preordained by the Immortals.

1 Activated on contingency when the bearer suffers a blow that brings him below 0 hp, the effect allows the bearer to shrug off entirely the damage. The effect is instantaneous. The cost for this effect is 1,000 gp.

2 Activated on contingency when the bearer suffers a blow that brings him below 0 hp, but not below -10 hp, the effect automatically stabilizes the wounds of the bearer. This effect costs 700 gp.

Dagar: Day



This rune represents the powers of light and darkness.

1 This effect is activated on command. It illuminates everything within a radius of 60 meters. In addition, within 6 meters, the light is so intense that it has the same effect as the *Sunburst* spell. The effect is instantaneous and costs 1,000 gp.

2 This rune, when activated either on command or on contingency, obscures all light sources within a radius of 30 meters. This magical darkness last for 1 minute per level of the maker This effect has a base costs of 300 gp and for every 30 gp of additional cost, the maker can extend its duration by another minute up to a maximum of one hour.

3 Activated on command, this rune gives to the bearer infravision (as a dwarf) for 1 hour

per level of the maker. The cost for this effect is 200 gp.

RUNE SPELLS

Bless Rune (enchantment)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 50 ft.

Area: one rune

Duration: instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell activates the power of a rune of the cleric previously wrote. The effects are those described in the rune listing, and must be selected at time of writing of the rune.

Rune Interpretation (divination)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: personal

Area: caster only

Duration: instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Through throwing and interpreting the runes inlaid on wooden or bone tiles, the cleric receives a response from its Immortal patron on an action he is about to undertake. The cleric casts the spell, describes exactly the actions he intends to take, and then throws the runes. Through them interprets the response of the God. The answers are almost always generic and can be:

"You have chosen well. You have my blessing "(Good Idea)

"Your fate is uncertain, but you still have my blessing" (not a bad idea).

"Your choice is not wise. May the fate bless your luck." (Bad idea. You'll need luck).

"Your choice offends me. May you live to regret this." (Not only the choice is very bad but it also goes against your principles and those of the Immortal your worship.)

"Silence!" (Which can mean either "how dare you waste my time for such nonsense" to "do it and not just you'll die but your spirit will also have to find another Immortal to serve!")

Of course, the DM can vary at will the answers, from a single word to a long monologue on ethics.

The material component of the spell are the wood and/or bones runes themselves, which are not consumed by the casting.

Create/Remove Rune (abjuration)

Level: 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: 50 ft.

Area: one rune

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Once a rune has been inscribed, this spell must be cast to empower it. Once the spell is cast, the rune becomes invisible to all but the cleric, who will always be linked mentally with all the runes (latent or active) he wrote. The rune is permanent until removed or

activated. The cleric may use this spell to remove one of his latent runes. He can also use it to remove a latent rune inscribed by another cleric, in which case the spell works as *Dispel Magic*.

The material components for this spell vary depending on the surface on which the rune must be inscribed (e.g., a chisel for a stone surface, a knife for wood, etc.) and must have a minimum value of 100 gp.

Know Rune (divination)

Level: 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: Special

Range: personal

Area: caster only

Duration: instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to learn a new rune from his or her Immortal patron. The casting requires a secret ceremony lasting 9 hours. During the ceremony, the caster cannot be interrupted. He must also perform a ritual specific to the rune he is trying to learn. The rune is automatically learnt when the ritual is completed. However, the process is so exacting that the caster permanently loses one point from a physical ability score (Strength, Dexterity or Constitution, player's choice). Members of the Lord of Runes Prestige Classes do not suffer this loss.

The cost of materials for the ritual varies from rune to rune and at the discretion of the DM from a minimum of 500 to a maximum of 5,000 gp.

Mystaranomicon



» » » Exploring the Books of Mystara

by Jesper Andersen (Spellweaver)

At one time or another, most Dungeon Masters have had their group of player characters enter a library, a sage's office, a wizard school or a noble's study and heard the dreaded question: 'So, what are all these books about?' Mystaranomicon is a regular column that provides Dungeon Masters with books ready to be inserted into any game with a moment's notice. Use them simply as colourful fluff or to provide clues and books to adventures. This time we take a look at tomes from Norwold.



BOOK RARITY REFERENCE TABLE

Unique:

Only the original copy of this work has ever been known to exist

Collectible:

Less than 20 copies of this work are known or rumoured to exist

Very Rare:

Less than 200 copies of this work are known or rumoured to exist

Rare:

Enough copies of this work exist that it may show up in private collections and very large libraries across the world. Only rarely is one sold, rather copies are preserved and passed on.

Uncommon:

This book is difficult to come by but not impossible. If you can afford it, libraries or sages will probably allow you to have a copy made from theirs.

Common:

This book is readily available in most major cities. Books are often common if they are reproduced for teaching purposes.

“FOOLISH KING ALINOR AND THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS REALM”

Author: Unknown

Rarity: Uncommon in libraries on mainland Alphatia, probably unknown elsewhere. One copy does exist, however, in the royal library of king Ericall in Alpha.

Year: The original work dates back to 33 BC, but to preserve the work, copies have been made over the centuries.

Language: Alphatian

Contents: This book describes how Alinor settled in Norwold in 125 BC on the Alpha peninsula to found a kingdom of magic. It describes his problems with controlling the barbarian tribes and fighting off evil dragons. It ends by describing, in general terms, the destruction of his realm in 40 BC, when terrible earthquakes buried Alinor’s city and harbour, ending the colony and slaying the mage king. The book hints at Alinor having a powerful magical staff or rod that was lost with him. It correctly identifies a mountain range known today as Alinor’s Ridge as roughly the place where the city was in ancient times, but gives no further clues to its exact location.

Legality: Legal

Number of pages: 100

References: This book is a reference to a small part of the classic Companion level adventure CM1 “Test of the Warlords” from 1984, which details the colonization of the region by King Ericall I. For more information on Alinor, see the following articles on the Vaults of Pandius:

Cab, "[Journal of Averyx: A Shadow Falls](#)"

The Italian MMB, "[The Norwold Region](#)"

Michele Carpita (Lo Zompatore), "[A City of Alpha Mini-Gaz](#)",

The Italian MMB, "[Timeline of Norwold](#)"

“THE AGE OF WINTER AND THE RULE OF AKRA, WITCH-QUEEN OF THE NORTH”

Author: Unknown

Rarity: Very Rare. The original work is kept in the royal library in Alpha Castle in Norwold.

Year: Around 500 AC

Language: Originally Alphatian, translations may exist in other languages

Contents: This book is a collection of legends about a time long in Norwold’s past, when Akra the Witch-Queen and her Sisterhood of the Ice Witches ruled the land. Because of their influence, the lands were caught in eternal winter for decades until someone finally slew the evil witch and freed the land of her curse of winter. The book builds on a collection of oral tales passed down in generations amongst the Halflings of Norwold and the barbarian human tribes.

Legality: Legal

Number of pages: 100

References: For more information about Akra and how her spirit tried to return to the world of the living, see the following articles on the Vaults of Pandius:

Michele Carpita (Lo Zompatore), ["Rogues to Riches: A Synopsis"](#)

Simone Neri, ["The Nainartas"](#)

The Italian MMB, ["The Norwold Region"](#)

The Italian MMB, ["Timeline of Norwold"](#)

“VANITY AND DREAMS — THE COLONIZATION POLICIES OF EMPEROR VOLOSPIN III”

Author: Imperial court historian Kedaeldan, loyal subject of Empress Tylari I of Alphatia

Rarity: Rare in Alphatia, Very Rare elsewhere

Year: Around 540 AC

Language: Alphatian

Contents: This tome describes how Emperor Volospin III (428-506 AC) sought to reclaim Norwold for the Empire of Alphatia. After creating a settlement at the mouth of Sabre River, his forces pressed up the valley and began a war of conquest against the barbarian tribes and dragons of the region. Eager to expand his empire and dreaming of glory, Volospin III transferred large sums of money from the imperial treasury to Norwold to fund the war. This was against

the laws and the will of the Grand Council and caused much upheaval at home.

Supplies and reinforcements for the troops were halted by the emperor’s opposition in the Grand Council and eventually around 503 AC, the Alphatian army was defeated and its general killed on the banks of the Sabre River. A skyfleet sent to relieve the colony and bring back survivors the next spring was decimated by dragons over the Great Bay and never returned.

Volospin III was blamed for the fiasco by the Grand Council and died a broken man in 506 AC, leaving his daughter Tylari I as the empress of Alphatia.

Legality: Legal

Number of pages: 150

Reference: The information in this book ties in with the classic Companion level adventure CM3 “Sabre River” from 1983, in which the PCs will try to rid the land of a curse dating back to the defeated general and find the lost treasure. For more information please visit this timeline:

Italian MMB, ["Timeline of Norwold"](#)

Also, a revised version of the timeline will be available in:

Simone Neri, "A Traveler's Guide to Norwold", to appear in Threshold Magazine Issue 7, March/April 2015.

“TROUBLED SHORES — THE SAD TALE OF A REGION TORN BY WAR AND THE AMBITION OF TWO EMPIRES”

Author: Helsgrim Axelsson of Oceansend

Rarity: Uncommon in Thyatis and Alphatia,
Rare elsewhere

Year: 915 AC

Language: Thyatian

Contents: This book chronicles the events of the years AC 900-912, namely the “Trial of Norwold” diplomatic conference between the empires of Thyatis and Alphatia over who should rule the North, and the following Bog War of 904-912, in which the empires tried to settle their claims through military might.

Legality: Legal

Number of pages: 120

Reference: For more information on the peace talks and the war please visit:

Italian MMB, ["Timeline of Norwold"](#)



“THE MILFROY MANUSCRIPT”

Author: Unknown

Rarity: Unique

Year: 984 AC

Language: Heldannic

Contents: This tattered collection of papers held together by a thin metal wire is probably one of the most dangerous non-arcane books to possess in all of the Known World. Upon first inspection, the papers appear to be a collection of case notes from the criminal investigation of the Milfroy Murders – a gruesome case in 981 AC, in which three dozen women were brutally murdered in Landfall within the span of a single year. Further reading will reveal, however, that the author added his or her own notes to those of the investigation, often commenting on the conclusions being reached while investigating the crime scenes. From there,

the author continues to present his/her own theory of how the murders are connected and who the killer really was.

Shortly after the book was completed, the manuscript disappeared and the author died horribly in a huge, mechanical grinder. Word on the street was, of course, that the murders were not the work of a maniac killer but a cover-up for something else – and that the author paid the price for connecting the dots.

The information in the book is thought to be extremely valuable, but also incredibly dangerous to possess. If used with caution it is the perfect setup for blackmail. At the same time, however, being in possession of the book makes you a mark, not only for the assassins and thieves of Landfall, but also agents of the Thyatian Empire, the Alphatian Empire and the Heldannic Knights, all of whom are searching for the manuscript.

Legality: Illegal in Landfall and the lands of the Heldannic Knights, could be dangerous to possess elsewhere in the Thyatian and Alphatian territories.

Number of pages: 75

Reference: The murders described in this book are introduced in the “Streets of Landfall” Gaz-F, a fan-made Gazetteer about the city of Landfall. It can be downloaded from the Vault of Pandius website:

JTR, [“The Streets of Landfall”](#)



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Adapting the **Night** **Below** for Mystara

*A classic Underdark
Campaign in the
Soderfjord Jarldoms*

by David Keyser

FOREWORD

In 1995, TSR Inc. released a 2nd Edition AD&D adventure box set, called *Night Below: An Underdark Campaign*. It contained three 64 page booklets, sixteen sheets of player handouts, an eight page monstrous compendium booklet, eight reference cards, and three double-sided full color tactical maps. It is designed to introduce the PCs to an area at first level, and take those characters all the way through to about 14th level when they reach the conclusion of the campaign.

At the time *Night Below* was released, Mystara was in its second and final year of being published as a 2nd Edition AD&D campaign setting, one of many TSR was

supporting at the time. As the *Night Below* used common D&D fantasy tropes, a decision was made to appeal to all three classic fantasy settings in publication, Greyhawk, the Forgotten Realms, and Mystara. This was done primarily by dropping in the names of high-profile NPCs for each setting in a few places, as well as identifying a few of the gods/Immortals.

However, much of the material in the *Night Below* campaign, including the terrain, the inhabitants, the monsters and the conflicts, matches very closely to Greyhawk. This comes as no surprise as the author of this adventure, Carl Sargent, was a major contributor to the Greyhawk line. The *Night*

Below was written with Greyhawk in mind and the small amount of text devoted to suggestions for Forgotten Realms and Mystara were likely added later in an attempt to broaden the market for the adventure.

This article is an attempt to customize and supplement Night Below so as to make it more integrated with Mystara themes, as well as provide a location where you can drop the campaign into the world with a minimum amount of conversion work.

Statistics are all provided for 2E AD&D, although in a couple of cases rules are adopted in from BECMI D&D and 3.5 D&D where necessary. All of the monsters used in the Night Below box set come from the 2nd Edition 1993 Monster Manual hardcover. If that book is not available then monster manuals from other editions should contain most of these monsters but keep in mind certain creatures get modified with edition changes and may not have the same abilities described here and in the Night Below box set. This article utilizes additional monsters from the Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix.

While this article uses 2E AD&D spell names, keep in mind that in the case of spells which contain proper wizard names as part of the spell name, those proper names should be dropped when using them in play. Thus Hornung's Guess refers to a wild mage that does not exist on Mystara, and Mordenkainen of Mordenkainen's Force Missiles does not exist in the setting either. The simplest solution is to just drop the proper wizard names.

Why the Soderfjord Jarldoms?

As most of the Night Below campaign occurs underground, the adventure can be plausibly set in just about any country or land on Mystara that you wish to use. The only true requirement is that the surface region is a backwater and unimportant place locally, as the plot requires that there are no powerful forces or guardians nearby that will notice the abductions too early.

The Soderfjord Jarldoms, having no strong central government in the 1000AC era and being relatively wild and undeveloped, more than satisfies that requirement. Soderfjord also has the additional advantage of matching the races used in the Night Below campaign fairly well, and not having had its own Underdark explored and documented beyond the Falun Caverns in the Hardanger Mountains. Lastly, it is still in a reasonably central location that the ultimate plot still can threaten much or most of the D&D Known World as documented in the Gazetteer series. If you do use Soderfjord, it is recommended you have GAZ7 The Northern Reaches as a reference.

In any case, even if you do choose another location for the Night Below, much of this article will still be of use, as it has drawn on as much canon and fan material as possible to link to the adventure.

Character Creation

The standard races and classes are all available for a Night Below campaign, with one exception...half-elves. In keeping with the Mystara setting, half-elves are unknown in this area of the D&D Known World. If a

player wishes to play a half-elf, it is recommended they choose either an elf or human race for the mechanics, and give a hint of the other race in parentage by a cosmetic difference in appearance.

In the Soderfjord Jarldoms the population is primarily Rockhome dwarf and Northern Reaches human. PCs with local origins are recommended to be either a human or dwarf, while elven, halfling or other human ethnicity PCs are likely travelers who have come to the Northern Reaches in search of work, trade, or adventure.

All character classes from the Players Handbook are suitable, with all classes other than the paladin having some representation in local communities. Paladins are likely to belong to churches outside the Northern Reaches, such as in Karameikos or Thyatis. Local clerics, who are referred to in the Northern Reaches as godi(plural godar), primarily honor Odin, Thor, Frey and Freya, or Loki. PC human fighters originating in the Northern Reaches also have the option of becoming a berserker, see the Berserkers entry for more details.

The Immortals

The Night Below campaign largely relies on the 2E Monster Mythology book when discussing the various deities (referred to in the book as “Powers”) which are worshipped by the various races encountered in the campaign. Most of these will be addressed in the corresponding entries. No deities were assumed for the PCs, so there are no assumptions or restrictions for the players, they can pick

any Immortals they wish. Local clerics honor the Northern Reaches pantheon.

The Night Below campaign did recommend for Mystara campaigns using Thanatos as the deity worshiped by the evil priests encountered in the Night Below campaign. This recommendation was made for each encounter, as these priests, somewhat loosely connected, worship a death god as part of a cult. This adaptation will continue to include Thanatos as a possibility. It will also include Hel who is another Immortal also tied to death. She is well-known and reviled in the Northern Reaches.

For each encounter, this adaptation will also make suggestions for enhancing the death priest encounters based on whether they worship Thanatos or Hel.

For Thanatos, his priests tend to carry a scythe as their primary weapon, may use a death touch once per week, cannot be raised from the dead, and, if they are 6th level or higher, will animate as an intelligent corporeal undead, retaining all of their spellcasting powers, d20 days after they are slain, unless their body is dismembered, destroyed or blessed. At 9th level or higher they get a bonus animate dead spell once per week.¹

A scythe in 2nd Edition AD&D is a two-handed weapon that does 1d10+2 hp of damage per strike against small and medium creatures, and 2d6 hp of damage per strike against large creatures. It weighs 15lbs, does slashing damage, and has a weapon speed factor of 8. An acceptable alternative to the scythe is the sickle, a one-

¹ [Thanatos](#) (by Marco Dalmonte) at the Vaults

handed weapon that is listed in the 2E Players Handbook.

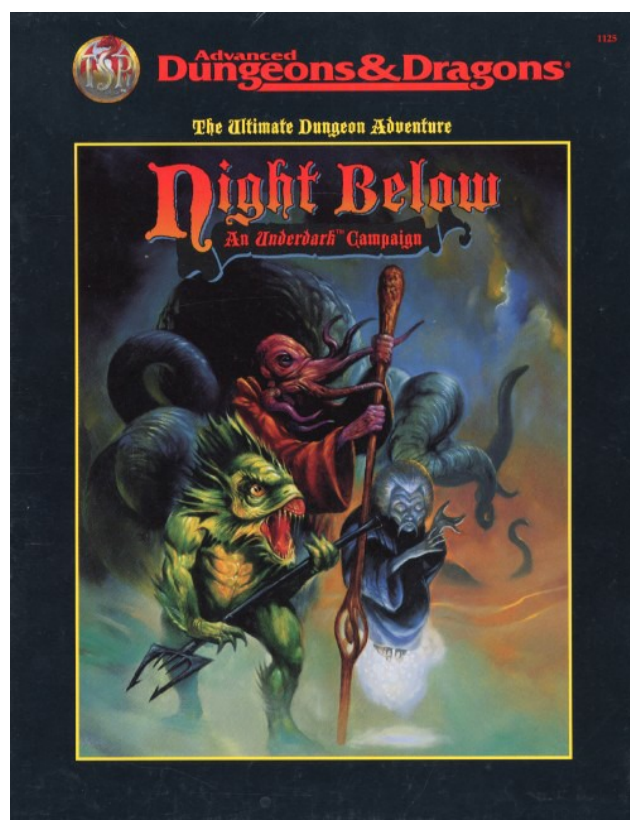
For Hel, her priests can control/rebuke undead as if they were three levels higher than their current level. They also gain access to a set of unique abilities which they select from at appropriate levels.² See each individual's entry for recommended selections.

And by all means, feel free to mix things up by having priests of Thanatos and Hel show up in different encounters against the PCs as you choose. While the original adventure suggests that it is one death cult which has members working with the kidnapers, there is no reason that two separate death cults would not each find employ with the kidnapers. Priests of Hel and Thanatos would be unlikely to work closely together, but they would be willing to respect each other's operations as long they don't encroach on each other.

Berserkers

Warriors of the Northern Reaches are particularly susceptible to being overcome with battle rage in the midst of combat.³ To account for this, some NPCs in the adventure will be designated as berserkers. A berserker will only fight opponents for as long as any remain. Once all enemies have been defeated, however, the berserker will continue to fight for 1d4 turns as long as anyone is remains standing nearby, attacking allies unless and until the berserker is incapacitated or slain.

The main mechanical advantage of being a berserker is they get +1 hp per hit die and +2 to melee attack rolls while berserk. A berserker enters the battle rage state immediately upon engaging in melee combat. Berserkers never check morale, and will fight to the death, even if their companions flee.



² [Hel](#) (by Marco Dalmonte) at the Vaults

³ See the 1991 Rules Cyclopedia p161 and/or Dungeon Magazine #23, p14

BOOK I: THE EVILS OF HARANSHIRE

This book provides the introduction to the campaign and details the lands above ground called Haranshire.

Welcome to the Grand DUNGEON

Synopsys

The aboleth are the ultimate and villains in this adventure. While the aboleth were never used in Mystara products, they are so central to the plot that they will be left unchanged. For an explanation of their origins on Mystara, as well as their rivalry with the kopru that will be featured later in this article, I recommend reading the Aboleth Presence section from the Savage Tide conversion article⁴ found in Threshold Magazine #4.

The Derro

These underground dwarves are not found in Mystara, but there is a close equivalent, the Modrigswerg⁵. The Modriswerg are clans of dwarves that live throughout the Northern Reaches, and are patterned after the dwarves of Norse mythology. They tend to be great craftsmen and the most skilled have even fashioned weapons for the Immortals, but they also have a greater tendency towards evil and insanity.

⁴ See Threshold Magazine #4, p 141-142

⁵ See GAZ7 The Northern Reaches, p24-28



The Shadowdeep

Most of the Modrigswerg encountered during the Night Below campaign belong to Clan Sareft, who are considered the most degenerate of dwarves, even among other Modrigswerg. They don't have much in the way of crafting skills but they are experts on poison and traps. Clan Sareft is predominantly found in the Hardanger mountains which is south of Haranshire, where they are allied with the kobolds in the region. Clan Sareft is allied with the aboleth in this campaign.

Darlakanand, the renegade derro in league with the aboleth, is not from Clan Sareft. He is part of Clan Grabjerger, a clan known for its devotion to dark magics which has isolated itself from all other Modrigswerg. The clan resides on the island of Noslo, which is part

of Ostland, in a hidden sanctuary deep within the mountains. Darlakahand was exiled with his closest followers for crimes which even his people reviled. Diinkarazan, the Derro demigod from *Monster Mythology*, does not play a factor on Mystara at all, unless you choose to introduce him as an Immortal, in which case he would be a minor Immortal in the Sphere of Entropy. The insane Modrigswerg in this campaign are Darlakanand's fellows who accompanied him on exile, and survived some of his earlier experiments.

The Modrigswerg who are waging a guerrilla campaign against the aboleth all come from Clan Kurweg.⁶

The Illithids

It has been established that illithids are not native to Mystara, but some have discovered the world and seek to establish a foothold.⁷ The illithids who work with the aboleth were some of the earliest arrivals of their kind to this area of the world, and soon established an alliance with the aboleth upon encountering them.

The smaller faction of illithids encountered in Book III who are preparing for war against the aboleth still have the same goals, but they are a rival faction to the illithids working with the aboleth. They represent an illithid world that would like to invade and conquer the Known World at some point in the distant

future, but correctly perceive that should the aboleth plan succeed they will need to abandon that plan. The illithids already consider the likelihood of success to be low, so the forces this faction represents are all that will be devoted to stopping the aboleth. The only change this makes is that once the illithid faction suffers the number of casualties specified in the adventure, they will abandon the fight, plane shifting back home and never return.



Anvils of the Svifneblin

The Svifneblin

There are two possibilities for the deep gnomes in this adventure. First, they may be surviving gnomes of the Falun Caverns who managed to flee their home for deeper caverns when the kobolds slaughtered the

⁶ The Sareft and Grabjerge clans of Modriswerg were created by Jacob Skytte, the Kurweg clan was created by Giulio Caroletti. See "[Modrigswerg: Clans, Houses and Families](#)" (by Giulio Caroletti) at the Vaults

⁷ See *Polyhedron Magazine* #100

rest of their kind.⁸ Gnomes are not distinguished as different sub-races on Mystara, so there are no svirfneblin. Instead gnomes tend to be distinguished by skillset or technology, such as the sky gnomes of Serraine.⁹ These gnomes have managed to hide from every hostile race for centuries, and have the same abilities of svirfneblin, but these abilities tend to have alchemical or technological origins based on the applications of fantasy physics rather than inherent spell-like abilities.

The second possibility is that they are not gnomes at all, but instead are a friendly clan of Modrigswerg called the Garlindwerg¹⁰.

The Kuo-Toa

Kuo-toa are another race which was never used in Mystara. The closest race would be the kna,¹¹ an aquatic race of fishmen who need air-breathing magic to survive on land and who are much less psychotic and neutral than kuo-toa. The kuo-toa in this adventure could simply be variant kna.

Another possibility is to make them Hresha-rhak,¹² who are virtually identical to kuo-toa and in fact could be kuo-toa.

In either case, it is recommended that the kuo-toa in this adventure have their game mechanics and statistics unchanged, and just emphasize any descriptive characteristics if you do pick a different race. For example,

rather than use the Hresha-rhak's rather extreme vulnerability to fire, use the AD&D kuo-toa's vulnerability to fire rule.

The Ixzan (Ixitxachtl)

These creatures are known as devilfish on Mystara. No one on Mystara would ever bother distinguishing between the two.

The Rockseers

These elves are very close in style to the Shadow Elves¹³ of Mystara. This isn't surprising as Carl Sargent created both elf races. This article recommends that the Rockseers are a smaller clan among the shadow elves who were separated from their brethren before the latter discovered the teachings of Rafiel. They had amongst them a disproportionate number of powerful wizards, and managed to make their way north and east before they found a safe place to settle below the Northern Reaches. Here they have developed their unique stone-shaping magic while gradually becoming aware of life on the surface. Unlike the rest of the shadow elves, the Rockseers bear no grudges against the elves of Alfheim. Rather than being tall, they are similar in appearance to shadow elves, short and slight of build, with pale hair and eyes.

The Tanar'ri and the Baatezu

In simple terms, tanar'ri are demons, while baatezu are devils. Demons are well-established on Mystara and ones like the tanar'ri in this campaign are easily explained.¹⁴ Devils, on the other hand, never

⁸ GAZ7, The Northern Reaches, p6

⁹ See PC2 The Flying City of Serraine

¹⁰ The Garlindwerg are another creation of Giulio Caroletti, (see "[Modrigswerg: Clans, Houses and Families](#)")

¹¹ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p68

¹² Created by Geoff Gander, see "[Servitor of Ubbeth \(Hresha-rhak\)](#)")

¹³ See GAZ13 The Shadow Elves

¹⁴ See Threshold Magazine #4, p128-129

had a presence on Mystara. The reason these tanar'ri and baatezu are at odds is due to the Blood War, which was a plot introduced in the Planescape setting.



The Tanar'ri

Ultimately, this adventure doesn't need a detailed explanation for why demons and devils are at war. If you don't use the Blood War in your larger setting, these fiends are at war over some other matter.

The game stats for the baatezu should be left as is, but one suggestion for distinguishing them from demons would be to have them be the fiend equivalent to demons who come from the Dimension of Nightmares.¹⁵ Additionally, if you use the original Immortals five dimension terminology, baatezu map onto a different three

¹⁵ ["Nightmare Creature"](#) (by Jamie Baty)

dimensions in five dimensional space than demons do.¹⁶

The Kopru

There are no kopru in the Night Below campaign. This article adds them in as another major faction in Book III. While kopru and aboleth share some similarities such that it is possible to do a full scale substitution of kopru for aboleth, this article builds on the rivalry between kopru and aboleth which was first described in *Dungeon Magazine*.¹⁷

The Campaign Unfolds

Calling Out the Cavalry?

While this section name drops a couple of Mystaran NPCs from the AD&D box sets of that time period, these won't be relevant to a Night Below campaign set in Soderfjord. There is one legal authority to which the PCs can appeal to throughout the campaign, and that is the Nordhartar Defense League, led by Ragnar the Stout.

The problem the PCs will face is that Ragnar and most of the defense league will be very skeptical of tales of fish-men and other monsters deep below the earth being a threat to the surface world, particularly when they have proven threats like raiders from Ostland or Gnollheim. The people of the Soderfjord Jarldoms have simply never faced a serious underground threat in recent memory.

¹⁶ See ["Outer Geometry 801: How do OBs fit in...?"](#) (by Sharon Dornhoff) for a brief primer on what all this talk of five dimensions and the Nightmare Dimension is.

¹⁷ See *Dungeon Magazine* #144, p50

Furthermore, the defense league lacks funding and support from many jarls, who prefer their independence over centralized control. Ragnar has strong political ambitions which mean every request to the defense league will be weighed against his personal objectives.

Ultimately, this means the PCs will need to pay well for the Defense League to provide a few mercenaries willing to volunteer to serve in hazardous conditions deep underground. So you can let events play out more or less as described in the adventure, with the PCs paying the Defense League directly.

The only exception would be if one or more of the PCs are jarls or direct heirs to a jarl. In such a case Ragnar is perfectly willing to accept political currency, with the jarl legally agreeing to back Ragnar's future claim to king of Soderfjord.

Capture Them Alive!

Beginning the Campaign

One of the two archers in the first ambush is a berserker. His THAC0 drops to 17 in melee, and he has 8 hp. His XP reward increases to 35.

His companions are unaware he is a berserker, having only worked together a short time. The combat against the PCs is the first time he needed to enter melee during a kidnapping.

Milborne and Beyond



Milgard

Milborne

While it isn't truly necessary, you can tweak the name of Milbourne to give it a feel slightly closer to Soderfjord towns and villages. Suggestions would be Milgard, Milholm or Milbyrne.

4. **The Folly** The river at Milborne is likely too deep and dangerous to be easily crossed. The bridge is called The Folly locally because 35 years ago the Nordhartar Defense League began building it but later abandoned the project due to lack of funds.

Thurmaster

Suggested name changes for this hamlet would be Thurholm, Thoremere, Thurland, or Thurhold.

5. **Tauster's Home** For Tauster's background, he was a significant instructor at the magical college Uppsala in Norrvik, until he had a falling out with his superior. He departed Vestland and found a home in this backwater. He will introduce himself with the nickname Tauster the Deep-Minded, but others will speak of him as Tauster the Short.

LURED INTO DARKNESS

Creeping Along Hog Brook

The encounter here introduces the Bloodskull Orcs for the first time, a large and savage tribe of orcs that lives underground and serves the conspiracy in kidnapping people to take to the cities deep below in the Underdark. Orcs are not common in Soderfjord, the closest humanoids are nomadic gnolls in Gnollheim, with kobolds living in the Falun Caverns farther away.

The orcs are easily explained as being a displaced or wandering tribe from the Rockhome Mountains to the west that found their way to this location in the last decade. While this article makes that assumption going forward, it isn't difficult to change these orcs to a more savage gnoll tribe or a particularly militant kobold tribe. As a general rule, for every three orcs encountered here and elsewhere, you can substitute two gnolls, or six kobolds. More powerful leader orcs can translate one for one to an equivalent gnoll or kobold leader with the same hit dice.

Mystery of the New Mire

Instead of goblins, this could be a surprisingly cowardly band of kobolds that split off from the militant kobolds in the Hardanger Mountain range in an attempt to find peace and safety

While it is unlikely to come up, the shaman of this tribe honors the Shining One,¹⁸ as do all kobolds in these lands. If you stay with goblins for this encounter, the small number

¹⁸ See "[Kurtulmak](#)" (by Marco Dalmonte)"



The New Mire

of goblins that live deep underground in Soderfjord have had contact with kobolds in the past and have been influenced by them. The gri-gri of the shaman of this tribe can be used to flash a bright light once per day, which forces enemies to save vs spells at -2 or face a -4 penalty to hit for 1d6 rounds. Members of the tribe will all attempt to flee or hide as soon as they see the flash.

Peril on the River

Details on the adjustments to Ranchefus can be found on page 62 in the Broken Spire Keep section.

Kidnapping on the Moors

Death dogs aren't known on Mystara, you could modify them to just be a larger pack of wolves with rabies. An alternative to keep this more of a supernatural encounter would be to possibly use one or two yowlers.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium, p121

Gazetteer of Haranshire

This is a good place to discuss where exactly should Haranshire be placed in the Soderfjord Jarldoms. There are plenty of open spaces for a couple of small villages that lie approximately 40 miles apart from each other, with nearby forests, hills, swamp and moor terrain. You can't get an exact match on Soderfjord for the Haranshire map included with the Night Below box set, but you don't need an exact match. Once you choose a place you can just pick new locations for most of the major terrain features on the map, trying to get reasonably close distances between each terrain feature, such as the Patchwork Hills and the Hardlow Woods, and the two main villages in the adventure. The Great Marsh of Soderfjord can be used for the Shrieken Mire encounters, with the New Mire being very small and recent allowing you to place it wherever you wish.

The major encounter of the Shrieken Mire does not require any close proximity to any other locations or encounters, so this article doesn't constrain itself only to locations near the Great Marsh of Soderfjord. News of the fomorian giant encounter which occurs in Shrieken Mire will travel far and wide which can draw your PCs to the Great Marsh from some distance if you choose to run it.

So, utilizing the map on pages 18-19 of GAZ7, there are several excellent candidates for Haranshire:

- Dealand (19), with the villages on the north side of the small tributary to Saltfjord River and west of Dorna.
- Otterland (26), with the villages on the north side of Saltfjord River and west of Sortfeld.

- Hedden (18) with the villages on the north side of Saltfjord River and north of Backwater.
- Rurrland (15) with the villages on the east side of the Otofjord River and north of Whiteheart Valley.
- Olvasfjord (1) with the villages on the west side of Stone River, possibly lying just on the outside of the border of Olvasfjord. If you want to have these villages living a precarious existence in an uneasy truce with gnoll tribes, you could have them bordering the north of the Angesan River in Gnollheim, with the gnolls tending to live south of the river in the summer and make their way north into Whiteheart Valley in the winter, with the villages often bypassed or seeing only small clans of gnolls in the area with their grazing herds.

Adaptations of the map of Haranshire to the Dealand, Otterland, Hedden, Rurrland and Stone River areas are provided.²⁰

The Eelhold

This small lake won't lie on one of the major rivers marked on the map of the Soderfjord Jarldoms. It will instead lie on the path of a small unmarked tributary that feeds the major river you choose for the setting of Haranshire.

²⁰ Editor's note: all the maps provide an adapted terrain and suggested location for the major point of interests and settlements presented in the Haranshire map to different locations in Soderfjord. Each map has a scale of 3.2 miles per hex (i.e., 2.5 hexes for each hex of the Gazetteer map).



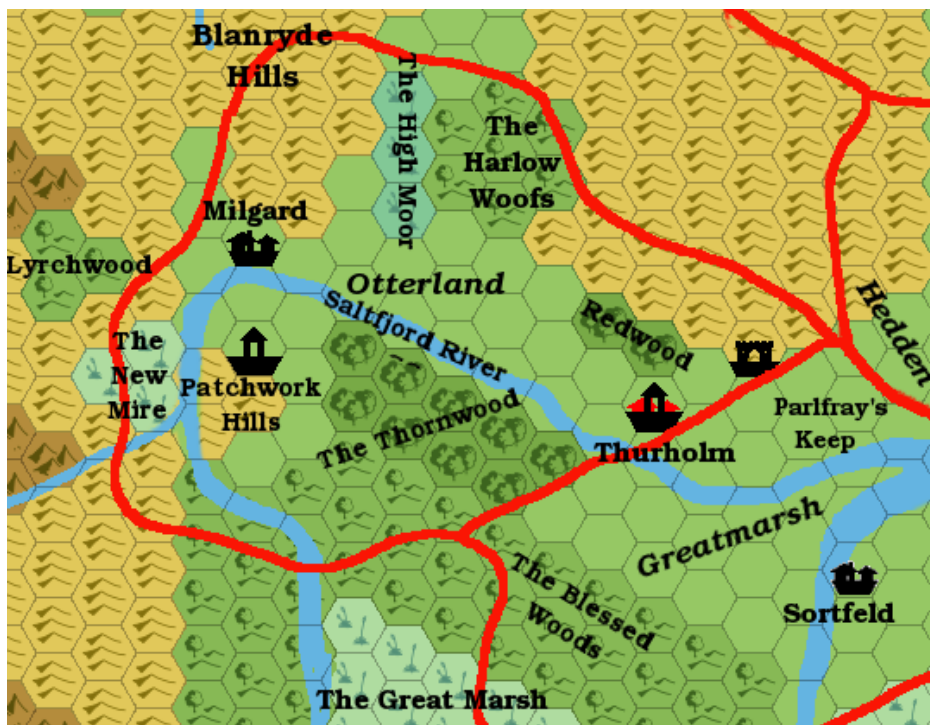
Map of Haranshire as the Jarldoms of Dealand and Vastergard



Map of Haranshire as the Jarldoms of Vithesfeld and Hedden



Above:
Map of Haranshire
on the eastern
banks of the
Otofjord



Right:
Map of Haranshire
as the Jarldom of
Otterland



Right:
Map of Haranshire
along the Stone River



The Eelhold

Shiraz is listed as a 7th level ranger and swanmay. Replace her with a female hsiao²¹ of 7HD. She has no weapons other than her talons, but she retains her remaining magic items. In all other respects Shiraz has the same personality and allies as described in the adventure. Her typical spell list includes

²¹ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p62

bleed, command, cure light wounds, protection from evil, sanctuary, aid, hold person, silence 15' radius, cure disease, dictate²², cure serious wounds.

Featherfall

Aarakocra are unknown on Mystara. If you decide to use this optional encounter, the elf-like bird people known as faenare²³ could be used.

²² The *dictate* spell is found in 2nd Edition Spells & Magic

²³ [“Faenare Race and Racial Progression”](#) (by Jamie Baty)

The Shrieken Mire

This encounter location will be replaced with the Great Marsh, even if you set Haranshire rather far away from it. While fomorian giants are unknown on Mystara, these giants encountered here and deep in the Underdark in Book III could be explained by the long presence of giants in the Northern Reaches. Perhaps some ancient past atrocity by a clan of giants led them to be cursed, or perhaps all the fomorian giants come from an inbred group of giants that was lost for centuries in the Underdark. A monolith in Book III (see page 103) is another possible origin for fomorian giants. As for this particular family of fomorian giants, they have likely escaped domination and slavery in the Underdark and recently made their way to the surface.

The Halfcut Hills

Unlike most of the people living in Soderfjord, the Parlfray family are not native to the Northern Reaches. The original Parlfray to come to this land was a Thyatian noble with too few prospects in his homeland. He led a small force of colonists and followers to this land and settled it with none of the locals really making more than a half-hearted attempt to contest their presence.

Ruins in the Thornwood

Broken Spire Keep

2b. Guardhouse The bandit fighter in this guardhouse is a berserker. This lowers his THACO to 15 and raises his hit points to 16. His XP reward increases to 65.

24. Ranchefus' Chamber Ranchefus, being a 5th level priest of Thanatos, wields a scythe +2 (1d10+4 damage) instead of a footman's flail +2. His death touch causes a victim to save vs Spells or faint for d6 rounds

If, instead you make Ranchefus a 5th level priest of Hel, his profile is unchanged. Optionally he has a few additional skeletons and zombies under his control.

Evil Below the Mines

Upper Caverns

5. Thief Guards These two halflings are criminal exiles from the Five Shires.

Lower Caverns

12. Cabin The second bandit fighter in this guardhouse is a berserker. This lowers his THACO to 16 and raises his hit points to 19. His XP reward increases to 130.

15. Storage Cabin The bandit fighter here is a berserker. This lowers his THACO to 16 and raises his hit points to 24. His XP reward increases to 130.

20. The Grand Cavern It is recommended both priest and priestess in this encounter are dedicated to the same Immortal.

If both NPCs follow Thanatos, they each have a death touch attack which causes a victim to save vs Spells or faint for 1d6 rounds. Shilek keeps her sickle as a weapon. Imrin also carries a sickle +1 which does d4+2 hp of damage per strike. If Shilek is slain she will reanimate with the powers of a 6HD mummy in 1d20 days unless her body is dismembered, destroyed or blessed. Her appearance will not change so much that the PCs will not recognize who she is, she will still have her obvious wounds amidst the body's decomposition. Shilek will either begin trying to pick up the trail of the PCs and stalk them at night wherever they stay, or seek out the Bloodskull orcs and ally with them in anticipation of gaining an opportunity for revenge.

If both NPCs follow Hel, their statistics and equipment remain unchanged. Shilek has the power to cast blight twice per day, this causes all opponents to suffer -1 to hit and damage rolls for the duration of the combat, with no saving throw. Two blights do not stack.

The Orcs Below the World

Location Key

2. Luthic's Chamber The matriarch priestess in this chamber honors Karaash,²⁴ respecting the old ways before this orc tribe migrated to this land. She is tolerated by the orc chieftain and priests. Her jagged claw weapons were blessed by a powerful Karaash shaman, they give the matriarch +1 to hit and damage rolls. Any damage caused by the claws does not heal naturally, and each healing spell cast on the claw wounds only

²⁴ ["Karaash"](#) by Marco dalmonte)

heals 1 hp of damage per casting. Her XP reward rises to 650.

She will not reveal herself as a combatant right away if the PCs attack the female orcs and children, preferring to wait until an enemy gets close enough to engage in melee.

Anyone wielding the claws of Karaash who is not a follower of Karaash does d4 damage with a claw strike, with no bonuses to hit and damage.

3. The Bloodskull Protectors Orog are unknown on Mystara. Garundzer may in fact be a cross between orc and ogre, or he is simply a higher level orc warrior²⁵ than most of his fellows. His statistics remain unchanged. He has the fighting frenzy ability (see next entry) and passes Constitution checks on a 15 or less. His XP reward increases to 270.

4. Chieftain and Priests Most of the orc tribe, including the orc chieftain and priests, worship Ranivorus,²⁶ a relatively recent phenomenon as they fell into madness during their wanderings and coming under the sway of the illithids. Of course if you have decided to use gnolls instead, then they have always worshipped Ranivorus.

Drop the ability of both orc priests to cast aid on themselves once per day, they also don't get the +1 bonus on attack rolls against elves. Instead, each can target an opponent with a madness effect once per day, the target must save vs Spells at a -2 penalty or go catatonic for 1d4 rounds. Both priests and the chieftain may also enter a fighting frenzy when they are reduced to 0 hp or less.

²⁵ See GAZ10 The Orcs of Thar Players Guide, p14-16

²⁶ ["Ranivorus"](#) (by Marco Dalmonte)

The base rules for fighting frenzy use the optional “death’s door” rule in the 2E DMG for damage taken each round, healing, and stabilization. The difference is an individual in a fighting frenzy does not automatically fall unconscious. While in a fighting frenzy, they must pass a Constitution check (12 or less on a d20) each round to continue fighting. Failure means the orc collapses unconscious in that round. Should anyone in a fighting frenzy reach -10 hp, they die immediately. If combat ends before they fall, they may attempt to stabilize themselves, provided they pass the Constitution check first so they may act in the round.

Kalyagebek, the 4th level orc priest, wields a footman’s flail instead of a long spear, dealing 1d6+1 hp of damage per strike. His THACO is incorrectly listed as 19, it should be 18. His XP reward rises to 270. The 5th level orc priest’s XP reward rises to 650. The orc chieftain’s XP reward rises to 130.

BOOK II: PERILS OF THE UNDERDARK

This campaign now moves into the Underdark, with the PCs spending most of their time underground.

Into the Deep Dark

Talking to the Svirfneblin

The deep gnomes only play a supporting role in this campaign. As mentioned earlier, rather than Svirfneblin, these are either surviving gnomes of the Faelun Caverns, or the fan-created Garlindweg. In either case the people of this city-maze, including the 13th level priestess Carmeneren, honor the Immortal Garl/Garal Glitterlode.²⁷ If you make these people Garlindweg dwarves, they refer to him instead as Garalin Glitterlode.

If these people are gnomes, this city-maze is not the only location where survivors of the Falun Caverns live, there are other hidden city-mazes in other regions which stay in minimal contact with this one. The gnomes are very careful and spread out, with designated locations for meeting that will not give away the main city location to emissaries from other cities. In this way the gnomes hide and survive amidst powerful enemies.

If these people are Garlindweg, this city-maze is not their capital city which lies to the

²⁷ [“Garal Glitterlode”](#) (by Marco Dalmonte)”

south in the Hardanger Mountains. This is a much smaller border city/fortress designed to keep an eye on enemies and provide early warning of invasion forces from this direction. They still largely hide and observe.

Returning to the Deep Gnomes

Svirfneblin Abilities For the purposes of this campaign, the deep gnomes keep their abilities as described in *Night Below* and the *Monster Manual*. The source of their powers depends on whether or not you use gnomes or Garlindwerg.

For gnomes, with their Mystaran background, their abilities are not so much spell-like abilities as equipment and gear they discovered or invented. The *nondetection* ability they have is derived from certain synthesized alloys of rare materials which they have discovered. This alloy throws off magical scrying and can even interfere with magical attacks, which also explains the deep gnome's magical resistance. The more powerful members are issued more of this rare alloy, which is why their magic resistance can increase at higher levels. They have also created alchemical substances which allow them to hurl a *blindness* effect at their enemies. Another alchemical substance can react with their alloy to create a *blur* effect temporarily. Lastly they use pigments and carry camouflage clothing material to create the effect of *change self*. All of these materials are limited in supply, and hence can generally be restricted to the once per day use that svirfneblin have.

For Garlindwerg, any or all of their abilities may be based on similar means as described above for gnomes. But as Modrigswerg, some of their abilities may in fact derive from magical items which they have crafted. As

with the gnomes, they have all the abilities and some magic resistance that the campaign book outlines, it is just that they are less inherent spell-like abilities and more likely a mix of alchemical and magic items that are limited in use and number.

The GNOME LANDS

The Burial Grounds

Location 3. Altar of Callarduran Instead of the god Callarduran, this is an altar to the Immortal Glitterlode. Its appearance is identical.

Location 8. Interdicted Chamber This chamber is a hideaway for a sorceress who intended to use it as a retreat while undergoing the transformation of becoming a lich. No further explanation is provided. In Mystara, this chamber was created by Wastoure, a 20th level wizard (24th level in BECM I D&D) who serves a Burrower trapped in the Hollow World. It is one of several of his underground caches that he has established in the Known World as he seeks the means to bring his master to the outer world.²⁸

Should the PCs find this chamber and take anything, Wastoure will not discover this until after the *Night Below* campaign is over. When he does find out, he will track down the PCs and begin a campaign of subterfuge to undermine the PCs goals and recover what he can. How he goes about this is left to the DM, but keep in mind he prefers indirect means and will seek to target the PCs

²⁸ For more information on Wastoure, see DDA2 *Legions of Thyatis*, p7, 28-29



The Svirfneblin Caverns

through their friends and allies, seeking to turn as many against the PCs as possible.

If you don't like the choice of Wastoure, there are two other possibilities. The first would be that this is the hideaway of a 20th level hakomon, an Ethengarian wizard who serves the Golden Khan in his royal court.²⁹ The other is that this is the hideaway for a high-ranking apprentice of Barimoor, the Alpathian arch-mage currently laboring for Immortality under Ylaruam.³⁰ In either case the wizard in question is planning to betray their master and attempt to become a lich, and will seek out the PCs for death once they learn their place of refuge has been violated.

The Troll Caves

Location 5. Cavern of the Shaman The two-headed troll shaman worships Vadrak, who is better known as Jammudaru³¹ in the Known World. A massive cauldron lies in the center of the chamber, which may be used

²⁹ See GAZ12, The Golden Khan of Ethengar, p 16

³⁰ See GAZ2, The Emirates of Ylaruam

³¹ "[Jammudaru](#)" by Marco Dalmonte)

for cover by the trolls. The trolls have some wood and charcoal tucked away in a corner of the cavern. Should the shaman get the opportunity, she will be happy to cook as many PCs alive in the cauldron as she can. Her claw attacks do 1d4+5 hp of damage per strike.

After the Trollkill

The hatred the svirfneblin have for derro explained in this section is not relevant in Mystara. If you are using the gnomes of the Falun Caverns, they wish death on the Modriswerg because of past treachery involving the deep gnome's near extinction at the hands of the kobolds. This treachery may have involved the Modriswerg giving the kobolds military assistance or revealing the location of weaknesses in gnomish fortifications to the kobolds.

If instead you are using Garlindwerg, then this command to wipe out Mordriswerg applies only to the Sareft clan. It would not include the Kurwerg clan whom are a potential ally for the PCs later in the campaign. Note that this latter choice means the PCs would be able to maintain the support of both the deep gnomes and latter derro more easily, something the campaign intended to make much more difficult. Keep that in mind as you run the adventure.

Gnome Talk If using the Garlindwerg, a dwarf PC would qualify for this special honor.

Perils of the Long Path

The Grell Nest

The grells and deepspawn have no precedent in Mystara. The deepspawn can be replaced with a more appropriate Mystara monster, but the grell in particular provide some unique encounters that aren't easily replicated by substituting in Mystara monsters. Here are some ideas for explaining their existence and giving them a better background. While the adventure posits that the deepspawn (or alternative) and grell are in an uneasy truce, all of the suggestions below include the assumption that the deepspawn and grell are more closely allied.

Should you wish to keep the deepspawn, the most straightforward explanation is that it exists as a spawn of a Burrower. This is likely the same Burrower who is relying on Wastoure to bring it to the outer world for freedom. The deepspawn is currently inactive and awaiting activation by Wastoure, who will use it to generate some collection of creatures that can be used for either labor (to extract the Burrower to the surface) or for war (to secure a region for slaves who can then be used to extract the Burrower).

If you prefer to not use a deepspawn, a powerful spellcasting decapus³² with more HD and a slightly larger damage die would make a good substitution. In this situation, the decapus could exist in an uneasy truce with the grell as specified in the adventure.

As for the grells, they become the deepspawn's dedicated guardians. Their tactics remain the same as described in the adventure, as they leave it in solitude. The

³² See Mystara monstrous compendium appendix p. 24

simplest explanation for how the grells came to be is that they were created by the deepspawn soon after it arrived in this area. The lightning lances are specially crafted magic items made by Wastoure after he observed the abilities of the grell. He may or may not have had the unwilling assistance of a captured deep gnome or Modriswerg in the crafting of these lances.

An alternative explanation for the grell is that they are creatures of an Outer Being which is in an alliance with the Burrower (or the decapus if you make that substitution), which keeps them as non-native to Mystara and unknown elsewhere. Or they might also be creatures from the Dimension of Nightmares who have allied with the Burrower or decapus.

Should you wish to completely replace the grell, a good alternative would be a collection of evil spirits³³ that have migrated into Soderfjord from Ethengar. The advantage of evil spirits is that their powers and forms are very flexible, so you can have them take some or all of the form and abilities of a grell. The evil spirits have similar reasons for protecting/allying the deepspawn/decapus as the grell, though not as fanatically as in the other scenarios already outlined.

Location 6. Philosopher and Phalanx The ring of armor worn by the philosopher grell was also crafted by Wastoure for the grells in addition to the lightning lances. It will not resize to fit larger fingers such as that of a human.

Location 9. Lair of the Deepspawn Should you decide to use a decapus, here are the

³³ See GAZ12, The Golden Khan of Ethengar, p 40-41

statistics for an advanced ancient spellcasting decapus which has fed on many underdark denizens for over a century. It has been crafted to mimic the abilities and attacks of a deepspawn as closely as possible.

This decapus casts its spell-like abilities as if it was a 6th level wizard. It may attack while drinking a potion (but not when using its spell-like abilities), when it does this it forfeits two of its attacks that round. A move in a combat round makes it forfeit one of its attacks for each ten feet of movement.

Ancient Decapus Scion³⁴: AC -1; MV 3, (9 in cavern amongst stalactites); HD 14; hp 71; THACO 7; #AT 9; Dmg 1d6+2 each; SA Spell-like abilities; SD Magic Resistance 70%, Regeneration (1hp/round); SZ L(5' diameter, 12' tentacles); ML champion(15); Int High (14); AL CE; XP 13,000; Spell abilities(per day): *enlarge, magic missile, shield, shocking grasp, ESP, mirror image, bold person(x2)*; Scion Powers: Enhanced Melee Damage, Innate Magic, Magic Resistance, Regeneration; Additional Possessions: A Flask containing 3 doses of extra-healing potion.

Monsters at War

Quaggoths are another creature with no precedent for being in Mystara. They are typically slaves of the drow, but once again drow do not exist in Mystara. A good choice would be to substitute a flock of darkwings.³⁵ All the caverns which the darkwings occupy will be between twenty and thirty feet high

so some can fight airborne. The quaggoth jalds will be larger darkwings with a small hit point bonus. The quaggoth thonot shaman becomes either a massive darkwing or, if you prefer, a deep glaurant.³⁶

Should you wish to keep the quaggoths as is, an intriguing link between quaggoths and the Northern Reaches is the quaggoth berserker rage, similar to the tendency for some men of the Northern Reaches to be berserkers. Thus, one possibility is that these quaggoths were all once human, but have been cursed to be in their current form. The curse may have been placed on them by Odin for acts which were so despicable that they went beyond even Entropic worship. Or perhaps the curse originates from Hel, and quaggoths are a relatively new project of hers where she reincarnates particularly evil men of the Northern Reaches to be quaggoths, in a similar manner to how she used reincarnation to create the Beastmen.³⁷ So far, quaggoths are unknown on the surface of the Northern Reaches.

Location 12. The “Chieftain” of the Horrors The rakshasa here masquerading as the chieftain of the hook horrors comes from Sind³⁸ to the west. It has tracked its brother all this way to the Northern Reaches.

Finslayer This intelligent sword only needs one slight adjustment, that being it is a +4 weapon vs drow. Since drow do not exist in Mystara, you could just drop that entry, leaving it a powerful weapon especially effective against aboleth and kuo-toa. However, this article recommends you

³⁴ A scion is rare and exceptional member of a monster race, usually from a powerful bloodline. See DM's Option High Level Campaigns p61

³⁵ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p 23

³⁶ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p 25

³⁷ See GAZ10, The Orcs of Thar for details

³⁸ The suggestion that rakshasas exist in Sind comes from HWA3 Nightstorm, p 19.

choose another race as a substitute for the +4 enchantment against a specific race.

First, you could simply use the dark elves of Niflheim, which may have had a presence in this region of Soderfjord in the past, in place of drow. This article will cover details of the dark elves and the very small role they can play in this adventure in subsequent pages.

Second, in keeping with the theme of Finslayer, you could make the sword +4 vs kopru instead of drow. This choice implies the kopru were present and active in Soderfjord in the past, possibly in allegiance with some of the kuo-toa at the time. Or you could fudge it and say the enchantments which strengthen the sword against aboleth are also effective against kopru.

The Smooth Caverns

Location 4. The Swirl Maze Xorn are not known on Mystara. Being as they are natives of the Elemental Plane of Earth, this isn't necessarily a problem. These caverns may happen to be close to a rare wormhole connecting to a region of the Elemental Plane where xorn happen to reside. As the xorn have some unique characteristics, there are not any good candidates for a close Mystaran equivalent, but if you do prefer a substitution, earth elementals of similar hit dice could be used.

Caves of the Slime Lord

Location 7/8. The Ruhk's Lair A rakshasa ruhk is essentially a rakshasa knight. This ruhk also hails from Sind, and it maintains the illusion of appearing as a native of Sind in its half-starved hermit guise.

Location 9. Shrine to Juiblex The demon lord Juiblex is unknown in Mystara, although there is certainly room for him in the Sphere of Entropy should you wish to include him in the cosmology. If not, Jammudaru can be used, in which case the five foot tall idol of Juiblex becomes a five foot tall idol of Jammudaru, featuring an ogre-like creature emerging from a cauldron with skin appearing to be melting away and the face melted except for a deformed snout-like appendage. The five rubies in the idol are inset around the cauldron portion of the idol.

Scales Before the Elves

Caverns of the Reptiles

Location 1. Azzuzir's Cavern This chamber is the home of a huge and venerable behir. Behirs are not known in Mystara, but the creature is effective as is in this encounter here. I recommend keeping the encounter unchanged, with behirs being just unknown and rare in this region of the Known World.

Location 2 and 3. Caverns of the Shadow Dragon These caverns are the lair of Fandruzsch, a shadow dragon, and his quasit familiar. Shadow dragons do not exist in Mystara, but there is something very similar...a night dragon.³⁹ Night dragons are formerly another dragon type who become night dragons upon swearing service to Entropic Immortals. They are undead and do not have typical age categories, instead there are lesser and greater night dragons. Fandruzsch is a greater night dragon. He

³⁹ See Dragon Magazine #163, p 44-45 or Heroes of the Princess Ark, p 92 from the Champions of Mystara box set

appears totally black, except for his eyes which glow slightly. Very faint shimmering of dark blue emanates from his skin in torchlight.

For this conversion, Fandruzsch retains the statistics and abilities of a shadow dragon as detailed in the book. He also gains a few additional abilities as well as a few additional vulnerabilities.

Fandruzsch has a second breath weapon attack, which creates a billowing cloud of absolute darkness. Any living being in the area of effect must save versus Breath Weapon or fall unconscious. The darkness dissipates in 1d6 turns unless disrupted with some air magic such as from an air elemental's whirlwind or the *gust of wind* of spell. *Negative plane protection* provides no defense from this second breath weapon. Fandruzsch can *plane shift* at will when in an area of absolute darkness, such as that generated by his breath weapon. Night dragons can trap the soul of any unconscious foe by spending a full combat round with its wings wrapped around the victim, but Fandruzsch will not use this ability unless the entire party is defeated. Any physical attack that successfully hits forces a victim to save vs Paralysis or be paralyzed exactly as per a ghoul touch.

Fandruzsch, like all night dragons, is vulnerable to both light magic as well as all the vulnerabilities of undead. The spells *continual light*, *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, and *light* each do 1d10 hp of damage per casting, allow a successful save vs spells for half damage. A *circle of sunmotes*⁴⁰ quest spell does double damage. In general, any light spell not covered here does Xd10 damage per casting, where X is the level of the spell. So the 3rd level spell *daylight* from 3rd Edition D&D would do 3d10 hp of

damage. In addition, a *raise dead* spell inflicts 3d10 hp of damage per casting with no saving throw. Fandruzsch can be turned by a cleric as a type special, but only if he is more than 10 miles from his lair. In general, Fandruzsch is affected by all magic and abilities that affect either undead or dragons, the one exception is the *age dragon*⁴¹ spell, which has no effect on night dragons. Fandruzsch is immune to the same spells all undead are immune to. Sunlight destroys night dragons, Fandruzsch will never be encountered outside during daylight hours.

Keep in mind that adding all of these extra abilities to the encounter makes Fandruzsch even more fearsome, he was already capable of wiping out an unprepared party as a shadow dragon. So you may wish to arrange for this encounter to happen later than what the box set anticipates. Adding all of these abilities upgrades the XP award for Fandruzsch from 18,000 XP to 24,000 XP.

Fandruzsch is likely to flee via plane shift should he fail a morale check or be near destruction. He will then begin stalking the PCs in the underdark, seeking a second confrontation to recover whatever they steal from him. His quasit will serve as a scout and spy. Fandruzsch may ally with the other enemies the PCs face later in this campaign, the circumstances of when and where Fandruzsch strikes is left to the DM.

Fandruzsch relocated to these caverns thirty years ago from Oceania on a specific mission to corrupt all three nations of the Northern Reaches. He has captured the souls of several advisers and government ministers in Vestland and Ostland, and they now do his bidding. He has had less success in Soderfjord, but has placed a thrall in Ragnar the Stout's retinue. His long term plan is not

⁴⁰ See Tome of Magic, p 112

⁴¹ See Tome of Magic, p 105

outlined here, for it is hoped that the PCs will put an end to him.

Fandruzsch will be found as described in the caverns, having received a warning from his Entropic master that his lair is in danger. While he doesn't need food, Fandruzsch still enjoys passing some time catching fish and eating them from the nearby lake. Should the PCs interact with the courts of the Kings of Ostland or Vestland, or Ragnar's hall, you will need to create NPCs that serve Fandruzsch.

The Halls of the Rockseer Elves

Characters of the Rockseers

The Rockseers are listed as having heights of over seven feet tall. If you are using a isolated clan of Shadowelves, they will all be around five feet tall, plus or minus a few inches. Aljayera is nearly 800 years old, rather than 900, and like all elves on Mystara, is showing his age, appearing as an elderly elf.

The Derro at War

The Wormholes

The purple worm encounter is perfectly consistent with Mystara. Should the PCs encounter more worms later on, there are a few good choices to add more variety to this area. Caecillias, fyrsnacas, red worms and slime worms are all excellent choices⁴² and can be a substitute for tunnel worms.

⁴² See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p 118-119

The Slavers

Groznyj is a berserker. This drops his THACO to 8 in melee and raises his hit points to 63. His XP reward rises to 2000. His companions are well-aware of his battle rage and keep a spell in reserve to disable him near the end of a combat, like *charm person* or *fear*.

Haragswald, being a 7th level priest of Thanatos, wields a scythe +2 instead of a footman's flail +2. His death touch causes a victim to save vs Spells or faint for 1d6 rounds. If Haragswald is slain he will reanimate with the powers of a 7HD mummy in 1d20 days unless his body is dismembered, destroyed or blessed. His appearance will not change so much that the PCs will not recognize who he is, he will still have his obvious wounds amidst the body's decomposition. Haragswald will either rejoin with his fellow Slavers or begin trying to pick up the trail of the PCs and slay them.

If you make Haragswald a 7th level priest of Hel, his weapon remains unchanged. He has 5 ghouls as an escort and gains an additional +2 bonus to saving throws against Death Ray.

The Watch Post

The Derro at this watchpost are Modrigswerg of Clan Sareft.

The Renegades

The renegade derro are Modrigswerg of Clan Kurweg. They all have black eyes, black hair and black beards. This is a military encampment of the Siblinghood of the Black Dwarves, and they are committed to the death of all Clan Sareft in league with the kuo-toa. They will behave as described in the book, convinced on first meeting that the



The Modrigswerg Mines

PCs are slavers or mercenaries in the employ of the illithids. If the PCs ally with this group, however, the chances of a betrayal are less than the adventure suggests.

Location 5. Chieftain-Savant's Retreat

This is the first appearance of a giant flying spider, which the renegade chieftain uses as well as other derro encountered in this campaign. As far as I know, giant flying spiders were almost never used in D&D outside of this campaign and Menzoberranzan in the Forgotten Realms. These can certainly exist among the Modrigswerg, but a Mystaran alternative would be the skinwing which are used by both red orcs in the Broken Lands and by Shadowelves in their underdark caverns. If you wish to use skinwings, you can use the following statistics to closely approximate the giant flying spider (albeit without any poison attack).

Skinwing Mount: AC 4; MV 6, fly 15; HD 4 to 6; hp 20-40; THACO 17 to 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA Infravision 90'; SZ L; ML elite(13); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 175 to 420.

If you want to keep the skinwings and the poison, you can transfer the poison(with identical effects) onto some of the weapons of the Modrigswerg in particular engagements.

Warrens of the Servitors

The Derro in these warrens, as well as those in the City of the Glass Pool, are Modrigswerg of Clan Sareft.

The City of the Glass Pool

The City and the Kuo-Toa

Location 23. The Slave Pens Most of these slaves are from the Northern Reaches. The elves will all be from Alfheim or Karameikos, change the one half-elf to an elf with everything else about her unchanged. A few of the dwarves will be from Rockhome directly rather than Rockhome emigres in the Northern Reaches. The one gnome at pen G is a traveling merchant from Karameikos. Geronmen, the crippled paladin, serves the Order of the Griffon in Karameikos. When Geronmen was captured months ago he suffered energy drain as well as other wounds.

Crown of Derro Domination This is now a Crown of Modrigswerg Domination.

Location 26. The Dome of the Glass Pool

The statue of the Sea Mother should be replaced with some entity of the Outer Beings that best represents whatever the kuo-toa or Hresha-rhak worship. Think in terms of asymmetry and non-Euclidean geometry when describing it to the PCs.

BOOK III: THE SUNLESS SEA



The Sunless Sea

With the fall of the Kuo-Toan city, Book III begins, where the campaign centers around the city of the aboleth and the various encounters around the Sunless Sea. With the placement of the Sunless Sea under Soderfjord, it is likely that it connects to the Western Sea of Dawn, making the Sunless Sea saltwater.

The Deepest Darkness

The Rockseer Emissaries

The Rockseer elves would be curious about both their surface brethren and the Shadowelf nation. Thus, regardless of whether you run this campaign before or after *Wrath of the Immortals*, you can still run this encounter with the Rockseer elf emissaries meeting whichever band of elves currently occupies the Canolbarth Forest. They can even meet both bands of elves should your PCs have contacts with both groups of elves.

Disregard all details about Corellon and Lolth and guilt about what the gods have done. This is all completely irrelevant in a Mystara campaign.

Exploring the Great Cavern

The Deranged Derro

The insane derro are Modrigswerg of Clan Grabjerge. They have no means of returning to their home in Ostland.

Rift of the Fire Giants

An Immortal for the fire giants was never established, Surtr may be from Jotunheim, or perhaps he is an alternative identify for Zugzul.⁴³ These fire giants have arrived via underground routes from their homes in the Rockhome Mountains to the west.

The Desperate Marilith

If the PCs do not ally with this band of tanar'ri, there is a 50% chance that this band will ally with the kopru. If this happens, when the PCs are near the baatezu embassy,

⁴³ See DA1 *Adventures of Blackmoor*, page 62, and *Codex Immortalis*, vol I, page 138.

they may encounter these four fiends with five standard kopru and one kopru behemoth.

The Renegade Illithids

Location 24. Broken Ones These greater broken ones are native to the illithid homeworld, disregard the mention that they come from caverns far to the south.

Shasurita Rather than a half-elf, this woman is a full-blooded human of the Northern Reaches. She is actually a spy in the employ of Thyatis, her contact operates out of the border town Castellan. A subset of her thief skills are modified as follows: Pick Pockets 45%, Hide in Shadows 60%.

The spymaster in Castellan has been assigned the task of tracking down the fate of a few notable Thyatian spellcasters who have gone missing. Shasurita managed to pick up the trail and bypass the City of the Glass Pool, but was captured by these illithids. She will behave as described in the adventure if illithid control over her is broken, but she will depart immediately after taking revenge. Assuming she makes it safely out of the Underdark, she will proceed to Castellan for a full report. Unfortunately by the time this report can make its way to the Thyatian capital and be verified by magical divination, it may already be too late.

Giants in Thrall

The monolith which currently holds these stone giants in thrall may be linked to the curse of the fomorian giants mentioned earlier. First it corrupts their souls, and then over a few years it corrupts and warps their bodies.

Trouble with Fungus

Myconids and Drow are both unknown in Mystara, so this optional encounter could easily be dropped. If you do want to run it, the Drow could be an exiled Dark Elf from the plane of Svartalfheim.

The Dao Miners

The dao miners, being from the Elemental Plane of Earth, are quite rare on Mystara, but not unknown when there is a wormhole connecting to the Plane of Earth nearby.

Isles in the Sunless Sea

Szandur's Isle

Szandur is a pure-blooded Alphatian wizard. She suspects what the aboleth are up to but believes her homeland is far enough away that it is safe. Even if you run this adventure after the events in *Wrath of the Immortals*, Szandur is still Alphatian, having escaped the cataclysm. Her enemies are unspecified here, but they are likely other prominent Alphatian wizards who would not think to look for her in the Northern Reaches.

The Isle of Shadows

Instead of Tharizdun of Oerth, the lost Dark God that was worshipped on this island is Arik of the Many Eyes.⁴⁴

Location 1. The Conclave The words "Blessed be Arik" bypass the trap here. Instead of fifty black diamonds, the treasure here is fifty red rubies, each with a base value of 1000 gp, and cursed as described in the adventure.

Location 2. The Hall of Endings As with the previous location, replace the words

⁴⁴ See B3 Palace of the Silver Princess

“Blessed be Tharizdun” with “Blessed be Arik”. The 25 black gems once again become 25 red rubies, with the same value and curse.

Pyramid of the Ixzan

Location 2. Slave Pyramid Most of the slaves kept by the devilfish are Rockhome dwarves, with the remainder of the population being of the Northern Reaches. Very few halflings should be found here, if any, and any gnome slaves are deep gnomes or Modriswerg. The dwarven fighters are all from Rockhome.

Location 3. Ixendren’s Pool Ixendren is a devilfish deity introduced in this box set. He may be a minor Immortal of Entropy that had a mortal life as a devilfish in the Underdark, or “he” may be another name for Saasskas,⁴⁵ the former devilfish of Undersea who is now an Immortal.

Location 11. The Tyrant The ornate silver rod which summons and commands water elementals is not of Drow make. It was crafted by a Modrigswerg smith.

Other Islands

The Isle of Derangement The standing stone is all that is left of a massive cursed stone altar crafted by Modrigswerg in the ancient past.

Geysir Rock If the PCs ally with the marilith and her companions, the kopru will eventually discover the wastrilith tanar’ri here and ally with him. In such a scenario, he will have four standard kopru assigned to him as well as his devilfish followers and water elementals. The PCs may encounter this group in the aboleth city, but the wastrilith will not deviate from his objective and will not seek battle with the aboleth.

⁴⁵ See PC3 The Sea People, p 59

Sunkenhome This was an old Dark Elf settlement, not a Drow settlement. The banshee is a dark elf banshee, the spirit of the only dark elf to remain trapped and tied to this place. Her statistics and appearance are the same.

Great Shaboath

Farewell to the Rockseers

The new location where the Rockseers will relocate to depends on who they have reconciled with, but assuming it is Alfheim/Aengmor it is likely they will settle in some mountain area that surrounds the Canolbarth Forest in territory nominally claimed by Darokin. The Cruth Mountains along Darokin’s southern border are one possibility. The Rockseers may need some help convincing local humanoids to relocate.

The Great City of the Aboleth

In addition to the reason given in the adventure, the aboleth have a second reason for raising their city above the water level. They are well aware of an imminent kopru attack, and raised the city as a security measure. The aboleth anticipate it will hamper the kopru invasion more than it will hamper themselves.

Among the dominated slaves of the aboleth city are a number of human fighters. Most of these are men of the Northern Reaches, and a percentage of those will be berserkers. One important difference to keep in mind for slave berserkers found in the city, the aboleth have dominated all of these slaves thoroughly and any aboleth (or illithid) can instantly stop a berserker by ending his battle rage with a telepathic command. In addition,

other races in the city who are commanding officers are given custom coded commands which can also stop this battle rage for a specific slave under their command. Thus any berserker fighting against the PCs will cease fighting once battle has ceased, unless all his commanding officers have been killed or driven off. It won't be possible for PCs to leave berserkers rampaging through the city as an additional distraction in most circumstances.

All Derro in this city are Modrigswerg of Clan Sareft.

City Location Key

Location 2a-f. Watch Posts If there are four or more slave fighters at a watch post, then one will be a berserker. As these slave fighters are of variable level adjust the berserker's stats and XP reward accordingly. The Derro savant assigned to the watch post is the commanding officer.

Location 3a-f. Watch Barracks There is one berserker among the four slave fighters at each of these barracks. As these slave fighters are of variable level adjust the berserker's stats and XP reward accordingly. All Derro savants assigned to the watch barracks are commanding officers for the berserker.

Location 5. The Lurker at the Gate Grongor is a berserker. This lowers his base THACO to 7 and raises his hit points to 121. His XP reward increases to 6000. All Derro savants and leaders assigned to the nearby Derro barracks are commanding officers for Grongor.

Location 11. The Pool-Towers Should any of these aboleth homes contain a human slave fighter, there is a 20% chance that fighter is a berserker. Any kuo-toa priest or

whip that may also be in the pool-tower should be considered a commanding officer for that berserker.

Location 12. Construction Points Any gnomes found at these construction sites will be a mix of deep gnomes and surface gnomes.

Location 15. The Ravens Three of the Ravens NPC party are modified here.

Strychnesch is a berserker. This lowers his base THACO to 6. Note that the text accidentally switched his melee THACO (which should be 2 and berserk will be 0) with his ranged THACO (which should be 3). His hit points total rises to 110. His XP reward increases to 9000. All of his companions are considered commanding officers for purposes of ceasing his battle rage.

Jabulanth is a dwarf fighter/thief, rather than a half-elf fighter/thief. He was an associate of Morur Blackheart⁴⁶ committing assault and murder in the Rockhome capital of Dengar for a few years before being caught for a lesser crime and sentenced to exile. He is 4' 6" tall. His Constitution score increases to 16 and Charisma score drops to 12. His hit points increase to 72, and a subset of his thief skills are modified as follows: Open Locks 95%, Find/Remove Traps 95%, Climb Walls 85%, Read Languages 10%. Normally both half-elves and dwarves are limited to 12th level in thief, so the optional rules from the DMG for increasing the level limit for demi-humans based on a high ability score is being used in the Night Below campaign.

Cyvrand, as a 12th level priest of Thanatos, wields a scythe of smiting. It functions as a rod of smiting, including being a +3 weapon, but does 1d10+5hp of damage per

⁴⁶ See GAZ6 The Dwarves of Rockhome, p 69-70

strike. His death touch cause a victim to save vs Death Ray or die. He can cast an additional *animate dead* spell once per week. His XP reward rises to 10,000. If Cyvrand is slain he will reanimate with the powers of a 12HD vampire in 1d20 days unless his body is dismembered, destroyed or blessed. Cyvrand will attempt to rejoin any surviving Raveners, and if that is impossible, head for the Tower of Necromancy to defend it.

If you make Cyvrand a 12th level priest of Hel, his weapon remains unchanged. Cyvrand has the power to cast *blight* twice per day, this causes all opponents to suffer -1 to hit and damage rolls for the duration of the combat, with no saving throw. Two blights do not stack. Cyvrand can also cast *wraithform* once per week.

Location 16. Slave Block I As with the construction points, any gnomes found at these construction sites will be a mix of deep gnomes and surface gnomes. All dwarves are either from Rockhome or the Northern Reaches. You can also demonstrate that the aboleth are kidnapping spellcasters from underwater communities beyond the Sunless Sea by having a few triton mages found here or in slave pens found in sections of the city still underwater.

Location 17. Slave Block II For the human priests, decide or roll randomly as to which Northern Reaches Immortal the human serves. The elven priests honor Ilsundal, dwarf priests honor Kagyar, and gnomish priests honor Glitterlode. As with Slave Block I, priests from underwater realms may be found here or in other slave pens in the underwater sections, candidates would include kna, mermen, and tritons.

Of the four fighters being brainwashed, one of the 5th level fighters is a berserker. Because his conditioning is not yet complete, if he enters a battle rage state he cannot be controlled automatically by any aboleth or illithid, and will continue to rage until incapacitated or dead. An aboleth can still attempt to dominate him, however, and if successful can then force him to stop fighting.

Location 18. Embassy of the Baatezu If you like the idea of making baatezu fiends that are not of the same dimensional space as the standard world, some ways to show this might be to have this tower appear as a two dimensional line from far away, or even until the PCs just get up close to it. The human forms the baatezu might take could actually be their normal form, and they have to polymorph into their alternate form just to look frightening to the PCs. Going into great detail on five dimensional space is beyond the scope of this article, but it is recommended you research the diaboli⁴⁷ for more ideas.

Location 25b. Second Floor: The Black-Ceilinged Chamber One of the four 7th level fighters at this location is a berserker, this raises his hit points to 7d10+7 and his base THACO becomes 12. His XP reward becomes 975.

Location 25c. Third Floor: Darlakanand's Laboratory As was mentioned earlier in this article Darlakanand is of Modrigswerg Clan Grabjerger, possibly the greatest mind his clan has ever produced.

Part of the dramatic setup at the beginning of this encounter has Darlakanand using *time stop* to cast some spells and also rant at the

⁴⁷ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix p 26 and the Immortal Set rules.

PCs. Can a target of the spell actually hear the spell caster while time is stopped? Time isn't moving for the target! Perhaps this communication could be done as a telepathic communication and thus the PCs grasp the concept instantly as *time stop* ends.

The Kopru Faction

These kopru originate from one or more kopru settlements. Where precisely they come from is left up to the DM, the kopru of the Isle of Dread are not necessarily the only location where kopru can be found in significant numbers. The scope and power of the aboleth activity has drawn the attention and response of the kopru, even from thousands of miles away.

This new kopru faction has a unique goal, it seeks to fight its way into the aboleth city and take over the Tower of Domination. The kopru are uniquely situated to do so, as their powers of domination are nearly the equal of the aboleth.

How powerful the kopru faction is depends on how much of a role you wish them to play. It is extremely unlikely the PCs will be able to ally with the kopru for even a short period of time, as the kopru will realize the PCs only wish to destroy the prize they seek to capture.

The kopru faction can be a wildcard for the DM to play at any given time. A battle between the PCs and aboleth may suddenly turn into a three way fight as the kopru enter the fray. The kopru could plunder a site before the PCs can reach it, or rouse the aboleth to full alert just before the PCs make a raid.

This faction can also be used as a tool for the narrative. Many player groups have found themselves getting bogged down, particularly with the number of towers that have to be brought down before the final tower can be breached. If your players are reaching the edge of their patience, the kopru can take down one or more of the towers themselves, letting you bypass some encounters to get to the campaign conclusion. As the Night Below set already has so much hack and slash built into it, it is strongly recommended that the kopru should not be used as an additional set of encounters for the PCs to hack their way through. Of course if the players are having the time of their lives and don't want the fun to end, then disregard this last bit of advice. The kopru faction should assist the campaign based on what the DM and players need, it can speed things up or prolong the enjoyment.

What the kopru should not be used for is a way to solve the PCs problems for them. The presence of a large kopru force does change the final narrative slightly, but one that players and DMs might find more believable. Rather than the aboleth being unable to stop one persistent party, the persistent party managed to get into the middle of an aboleth and kopru war over regional domination, and used that narrow opening to save the day.

The aboleth had their focus and preparations to stymie the kopru attack that they knew was coming. They didn't realize the PCs were as great a threat, until it was too late.

Kopru vs Aboleth Domination

In comparing the charm effect of the kopru versus the domination of the aboleth, some

guidance from the d20 ruleset were integrated, particularly the rule on multiple mental control effects.⁴⁸ Since 2E AD&D do not provide the charisma scores for these monsters, the 3E D&D scores will be used, 17 for aboleth and 10 for kopru. Should both aboleth and kopru mentally control the same victim and attempt to each have it fight on its behalf, they will make opposed Charisma checks, with the aboleth having a +3 bonus to the roll. If you want to simplify this to one roll, that equates (assuming ties are rerolled) to the kopru having a 34% chance of winning a contest for control, with the aboleth winning 66% of the time. Whoever loses the contest does not have its magical effect ended, so the death of the opposing monster in control would let the loser regain control over the victim.

Comparing Kopru and Aboleth Power

It is useful to compare the kopru and aboleth in terms of their approximate levels of power, knowing how many kopru are a serious threat to an aboleth will tell you how many kopru are a serious threat to the city. They are almost equivalent in hit dice, with the kopru having on average 4 more hit points than the aboleth. Their AC values are close, with the kopru having a slight edge. In terms of damage output, they are roughly equal, with aboleth able to inflict 4-24 hp of damage per round versus 6-24 hp of damage per round for the kopru. This assumes that the kopru's grapple and tail crush attack can't work on an aboleth, which seems reasonable. Physically, the two monsters are evenly matched.

⁴⁸ See the [Hypertext d20 SRD](#) for details

More important than this however, is their signature ability and how effective it is against each other. In 2E AD&D, the kopru can charm the aboleth, as the monster entry does not rule out larger monsters, and in Mystara it has been specifically stated that the kopru can dominate "any intelligent creature."⁴⁹ Going with this assumption, attempting to use their domination powers on each other, the aboleth must make a saving throw versus death magic, while the kopru must make a saving throw versus spells. Assuming both aboleth and kopru get to take their best pick from the warriors saving throw table as well as the wizards saving throw table, an aboleth saves against a kopru domination on a 10 or better, while a kopru saves against an aboleth domination on an 8 or better. The key difference is that an aboleth who saves against any kopru domination is immune to any further domination attacks from any kopru for the rest of the battle, while kopru remain vulnerable to repeated aboleth domination attacks. Each aboleth can dominate three times per day, while most kopru can only dominate once. So while a kopru has a 65% chance of resisting the first domination attack, over the course of three domination attempts, its odds of resisting up to 3 attempts drop to 21.6%.

So much depends on who wins initiative, the kopru has a slight advantage at the beginning, but if enough aboleth make it through the first round of domination attacks, the battle starts to heavily favor them as combat extends into later combat rounds.

There is a sentence in the Monster Manual entry for the aboleth that dominated targets will not fight on the aboleth's behalf, but that

⁴⁹ See PC3 The Sea People, p23

seems to be completely disregarded for the Night Below campaign.

Note that if you are running this campaign in 3E D&D, both kopru and aboleth use the dominate person spell for their signature ability. This means under those rules, aboleth can still dominate kopru, who are monstrous humanoids, but kopru cannot dominate aboleth. This puts the kopru at a distinct disadvantage, leaving them only able to dominate the minions and slaves of the aboleth.

It is because of the aboleth's domination powers that the kopru faction has, uncharacteristically, refused to bring any dominated allies or minions, with only one exception. The kopru do not wish to give the aboleth the opportunity to turn their own slaves against them.

General Kopru Tactics

So based on the 2E AD&D analysis, the kopru will be aggressive and push the advantage as long as they have 2:1 odds in their favor. Once their odds drop below that, and especially if combat is prolonged, they are likely to retreat.

For 3E D&D, the kopru are going to need 5:1 odds to be aggressive and push the advantage.

The only exception will be if you decide to have the kopru make a serious push into the Tower of Domination as their final effort to seize control. In such a case, as long as at least one of the three kopru leaders are still alive, the remaining kopru will keep fighting.

Kopru Underwater Camps

The kopru will establish at least two deep and hidden underwater camps at the bottom of the Sunless Sea. These camps are temporary bases and if faced with a significant threat the kopru will scatter and flee only to regroup later at pre-designated rally points. The number of kopru (and kopru behemoths) to be found in these camps will depend on how great a threat to the aboleth city you wish the kopru to be. Use the ratios in the kopru tactics section above as a guideline. A small number of kopru means the aboleth were able to engage and destroy much of the kopru army before they were able to reach the Sunless Sea. The kopru leaders (see below) will be spread out amongst all the camps.

Place the camps wherever you wish, the purpose of these camps is not for the PCs to find and destroy, but only to provide a backdrop for kopru actions against Shaboath.

The Kopru Expeditionary Force

Most of the kopru in the expeditionary force are average soldiers, filling in all needed roles of scout, assault, and magical support. They obey their superiors without question and protect them.

Standard Kopru⁵⁰ Soldier AC 3; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 8+4; hp 44 (30-60 range); THACO 13; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4 claw/claw/bite, 3d4 tail lash; SA Tail Crush (3d6), charm; SD Inherent *resist fire*⁵¹; SZ M(6'+ long); ML elite(13); Int Average (10); AL CE; XP 4,000;

⁵⁰ See Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, p69

⁵¹ See PC3 The Sea People, p23

Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion.

Among the kopru are the more elite and powerful warriors. They are the kopru behemoths. They obey their superiors without question, serving as shock troops and bodyguards for their leaders. Kopru Behemoths have a Charisma of 13, giving them a +1 bonus and reducing the aboleth advantage in a contested domination to +2. Attempting to escape a kopru behemoth's tail grapple requires making a roll under (2/3 x bend bars percentage).

Kopru Behemoth⁵² AC 1; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 12+4; hp 64 (50-100 range); THACO 8; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+2 claw/claw, 1d4 bite, 3d4+6 tail lash; SA Tail Crush (3d6+6), charm; SD Inherent *resist fire*; SZ L(9'+ long); ML champion(15); Int Average (10); AL CE; XP 8,000; Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion, one capsule (potion) of fly, partial carapace armor +1.

The following four individuals are the elite leaders in command of the kopru expeditionary force. They will not be encountered altogether, but prefer to operate alone with small strike forces of standard and behemoth koprus. Important missions inside the aboleth city may have two leaders together.

While some of the choices for low-level spells may seem useless, many of these spells were chosen based on the utility of breaking down magical defenses the aboleth have constructed around the Tower of Domination. Thus even a 1st level divination spell like *rung's Gess*, can be used to drain

⁵² See PC3 The Sea People p23 and/or Dungeon Magazine #144 p60

away the magic in the Tower of Summonings.

Elite Kopru 15th Level Wizard AC 0; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 9+4; hp 52; THACO 12; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4 claw/claw/bite, 3d4 tail lash; SA Tail Crush (3d6), charm; SD Inherent *resist fire*; SZ M(6' 5"); ML champion(16); Int Genius (17); AL CE; XP 10,000; Spells: *Charm Person, Chromatic Orb*⁵³, *Detect Secret Passages and Portals, Magic Missile, Shield, Blur, Detect Invisible, Invisibility, Mirror Image(x2), Dispel Magic(x2), Fireball, Fly, Lightning Bolt, Charm Monster, Confusion, Minor Spell Turning, Mordenkainen's Force Missiles, Phantasmal Killer, Chaos, Conjure Elemental, Feeblemind, Mind Fog, Teleport, Death Spell, Trollish Fortitude, Seven-Eyes*^{54,55} Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion, two capsules (potions) of fly, ring of protection +2, ring of spell storing(*Force Field*), wand of frost(11 charges), wand of illusion(9 charges), wand of knock(15 charges), wand of polymorphing(7 charges).

Alzazzerz is one of the most powerful kopru mages on Mystara, one who has steeped himself in the lore of the Adhuza Empire⁵⁶ at the peak of its power. He is dedicated to this mission but is a pragmatist and realizes the odds of success are low. He has a secondary mission to steal as much magic and

⁵³ The spell Chromatic Orb is found in the 2nd Edition Complete Wizard's Handbook

⁵⁴ The spells Detect Secret Passages and Portals, Mordenkainen's Force Missiles, Trollish Fortitude and Seven-Eyes come from the 2nd Edition Spells & Magic

⁵⁵ The spells Minor Spell Turning and Mind Fog come from the 2nd Edition Tome of Magic

⁵⁶ For more information on Adhuza, see [this article at The Vaults of Pandius](#), and [this discussion at The Piazza Forum](#)

knowledge as he can from the aboleth city, and when leading missions the kopru will be more likely to attack other targets where such can be found. He keeps a teleport spell handy at all times, for a quick exit back to a kopru camp when a mission goes awry, and for leaving this area altogether should all of his fellow elite fall in battle and he realizes he has no hope of capturing the Tower of Domination. Alzizzerz has a higher Dexterity than the kopru average, giving him a bonus of -1 to AC. Due to his greater intelligence, Alzizzerz can charm up to three victims, instead of one as a normal kopru can.

Elite Kopru

13th Level Priest of Demogorgon

AC 0; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 10+4; hp 66; THACO 11(8 w/rod of flailing); #AT 3; Dmg 1d6+4/1d6+4(L 2d4+3/2d4+3), 3d4 tail lash; SA Tail Crush (3d6), charm; SD Wisdom bonus to saves, Inherent *resist fire*; SZ L(7'7" long); ML Fanatic(18); Int High (14); AL CE; XP 12,000; Spells: *Cause Fear(x2)*, *Cause Light Wounds(x2)*, *Curse(x2)*, *Detect Magic*, *Protection from Good*, *Aid(x2)*, *Chaos Ward*, *Detect Charm*, *Hold Person*, *Resist Cold*, *Silence 15' radius*, *Watery Fist*, *Animate Dead*, *Cause Disease*, *Dispel Magic(x2)*, *Miscast Magic*, *Random Causality*, *Cause Serious Wounds*, *Chaotic Combat*, *Protection from Good 10' radius*, *Protection from Lightning*, *Dispel Good*, *Slay Living*, *Entropy Shield*, *Harm*;⁵⁷⁵⁸ Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion, three capsules (potions) of fly, partial carapace armor +1, ring of

protection +1, ring of spell storing(*Force Field*), rod of flailing(13 charges).

Clazzarz is the lieutenant commander of the kopru forces, second only to his superior, Malsssis. Clazzarz considers this an unholy mission commissioned by Demogorgon himself as the means to bring about the restoration of the kopru empire. He hates aboleth more than any other being. While his dedication to the cause is unshakeable, he has requisitioned additional flying capsules in order to beat a hasty retreat should it become necessary to fall back. He is also ambitious and treacherous, and should there be an opportunity in the Tower of Domination to do away with Malsssis and seize glory for himself, Clazzarz may turn against her and strike at her from behind. He would only do this if victory looks well in hand and Malsssis is very weakened. Clazzarz has a Wisdom score of 16, and has the special thrall of Demogorgon Dual Action ability that he can use once per day. Clazzarz has a Charisma of 16, giving him a +2 bonus and reducing the aboleth advantage in a contested domination to +1. Due to his greater intelligence, Clazzarz can charm up to two victims, instead of one as a normal kopru can.

Elite Kopru

16th Level Priest of Demogorgon

AC -2; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 11+4; hp 80; THACO 9(6 or 4 with flail) ; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+5(L 2d6+4(2d6+6 vs aboleth)), 3d4+1 tail lash; SA Tail Crush (3d6+1), charm; SD Wisdom bonus to saves, Inherent *resist fire*; SZ M(8' + long); ML Fearless(19); Int Exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 13,000; Spells: *Cause Fear(x2)*, *Cause Light Wounds(x2)*, *Curse(x2)*, *Detect Magic*, *Protection from Good*, *Sanctuary*, *Aid(x2)*,

⁵⁷ The spells *Miscast Magic*, *Random Causality* and *Chaotic Combat* come from the 2nd Edition *Tome of Magic*

⁵⁸ The Spells *Chaos Ward*, *Watery Fist* and *Entropy Shield* come from the 2nd Edition *Spells & Magic*

Chaos Ward, Detect Charm, Hold Person, Resist Cold, Silence 15' radius(x2), Watery Fist, Animate Dead(x2), Cause Blindness, Cause Disease, Dispel Magic(x2), Miscast Magic, Random Causality, Abjure, Cause Serious Wounds, Chaotic Combat, Free Action(grants kopru swimming movement rate on land), *Protection from Good 10' radius, Protection from Lightning, Spell Immunity, Cause Critical Wounds, Commune, Dispel Good, Slay Living, Entropy Shield, Harm, Word of Recall, Unholy Word*;⁵⁹ Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion, two capsules (potions) of fly, amulet of proof against aboleth *domination* and illithid *mind blast*(17 charges), four beads of force, partial carapace armor +1, oversized flail +3, +5 vs aboleth, ring of protection +3, ring of spell storing(Force Field).

Malsssis is the supreme commander of the kopru forces, and the main reason the kopru have managed to get this far. While it was Alzazzerz who learned of the aboleth plans for domination after years of scrying, it was Malsssis who made a kopru response possible. Through frequent communing with her patron Demogorgon, constant sacrifices of sapient beings and enormous efforts at divination, Malsssis was able to come up with the devices that can snatch power from the aboleths at the moment of their victory. It was also her leadership that convinced the kopru to form an army which was the only possible way for her to get near to Shaboath. Now that she is so close, she will let nothing stop her, for she believes that she is Demogorgon's instrument of salvation which will lead the kopru to the restoration of their empire and a new golden age (for kopru).

⁵⁹ See footnotes 57 and 58.

Any being that stands in her way is only suitable for domination and/or destruction. While she will use tactical retreats when necessary to withdraw from battle, when it comes to the final push at the Tower of Domination, she will fight to the death rather than lose her chance. Malsssis has above average kopru strength and a Wisdom score of 18, and has the special thrall of Demogorgon Dual Action ability that she can use twice per day. Malsssis has a Charisma of 18, giving her a +3 bonus and reducing the aboleth advantage in a contested domination to +0. Due to her greater intelligence, Malsssis can charm up to two victims, instead of one as a normal kopru can.

Dark Naga Lesser Scion⁶⁰ AC 2; MV 16, Sw 16; HD 14; hp 96; THACO 6; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4+2 bite, 2d4+2 tail sting + poison; SA Poison deals 1d2 damage and sleep for 2d4 rounds, Permanent *water breathing* spell effect; SD Immune to acid and poison and ESP, +2 save vs enchantment/charm, Magic Resistance 60%; SZ L(14'+ long); ML champion(16); Int Exceptional (16); AL LE; XP 12,000; Spells: *Dictation, Feather Fall, Hold Portal, Hornung's Guess, Blindness, Displace Self, Filter, Minor Malison, Suggestion*;^{61,62} Lesser Scion Powers: Enhanced Melee Damage, Enhanced Movement, Magic Resistance; Additional Possessions: One capsule (potion) of extra-healing potion.

Yn'vildarr is an exceptionally powerful dark naga, a lesser scion of an only partially

⁶⁰ See DM's Option High Level Campaigns p61

⁶¹ The spells Dictation and Displace Self come from the 2nd edition Spells & Magic

⁶² The spells Hornung's Guess, Filter and Minor Malison come from the 2nd Edition Tome of Magic

diluted bloodline that can be traced all the way back to the Serpentine Empire.⁶³ While dark naga are virtually unknown to those on Mystara, small remnants of the Serpentine Empire can still be found in isolated areas, and dark nagas have allied with the kopru for mutual benefit.⁶⁴ Yn'vildarr's bloodline allows her to keep up with the kopru as well as provides her with powerful resistances against aboleth domination attacks. For these reasons the kopru have brought her along and given her a high-rank command. She is fully committed to this endeavor and will even consider sacrificing herself (provided she passes a morale check) if it will enable a kopru victory. Of the commanding elite, she is the only one who cannot hope to control the aboleth Tower of Domination. If all the other kopru commanding officers are slain, Yn'vildarr will retreat and attempt to organize a general retreat among remaining kopru forces.

Only when the kopru attempt to seize the Tower of Domination (which may or may not happen depending on kopru success on their attacks on the city) will all remaining leaders join together for the final assault in an attempt to seize control of the tower and the city. Any of the three kopru leaders will be able to seize control of the Tower of Domination once the grand savant is slain. Note that each leader has a means of casting the spell *force field* in order to prevent the grand savant explosion from destroying the tower. The moment the grand savant is slain and begins its death throes, the kopru most senior leader will use an organic magical device in the shape of a nautilus to begin attuning to the Tower of Domination. This

procedure also completes and activates the strengthened mass domination effect. After five combat rounds, starting once the grand savant is slain, all the PCs face a magnified domination attack with a saving throw penalty of -6, unless all kopru leaders are slain before then.

Should the tower not explode from the death of the grand savant due to kopru action, but the PCs still emerge victorious, you can have the nautilus devices cause the explosion through magical feedback or perhaps have a chunk of the tower collapse and fall away. The city will still sink into the sea as described in the adventure.

If all the kopru leaders are slain before the grand savant is killed, or before the Tower of Domination is even breached, any surviving kopru will retreat out of the city and abandon the military campaign. They know their only chance now is getting as far away as possible.

Special Magic and Powers of the Kopru

Malsssis' Amulet This amulet completely shields the wearer and negates any attempt at domination by an aboleth or mind blast by an illithid. One charge is used per attempt.

Partial Carapace Armor +1 Kopru can wear bits and pieces of armor to protect their arms and chests. They usually use pieces taken from giant crustaceans and occasionally enchant them. This grants a -2 bonus to AC.

Rings of Spell Storing with Force Field This item breaks the rules as rings of spell storing normally can't hold a wizard spell more powerful than 7th level. The kopru painstakingly forged these in underwater volcanos using extremely rare ores and enchanted them with the blood sacrifices of

⁶³ See Threshold Magazine #5, *A recent history of Davania*

⁶⁴ See Dungeon Magazine #144, p58

powerful shamans from enemy underwater races. The *force field* spell actually comes from the 1991 Rules Cyclopeda, there it is an 8th level spell and allows one to create a perfectly spherical force field with a 20 foot radius at a range of 120 feet. This is just large enough to contain the aboleth grand savant's body, and protect the kopru should the grand savant explode after being slain. No kopru leader will use these rings for anything other than containing the grand savant after it is slain, as they believe (erroneously) it can cast disintegrate spells which easily destroys the force field. If the kopru manage to capture the Tower of Domination, they would be willing to use any remaining rings to capture the PCs. These rings turn to worthless slag once the spell is cast from it.

Thrall of Demogorgon Dual Action ability⁶⁵ This ability allows the cleric of Demogorgon to take two full combat rounds worth of actions in the same combat round. If you roll for initiative, the cleric of Demogorgon gets two rolls for initiative, and takes one full round of action at each initiative roll. If you use initiative phases, the cleric of Demogorgon takes one full round of action at an early initiative phase, and the second full round of action at a late initiative phase. Two spells can be cast in one round this way. This ability cannot be dispelled.

⁶⁵ See the 3.5 D&D Book of Vile Darkness, p 67

Appendix I : Other Resources for Improving The Night Below

Back in the final days of 2nd Edition and the early days of 3rd Edition, one big fan of The Night Below campaign, a certain David Ross, put together an impressive collection of pages on his website discussing the campaign, both its shortcomings and strengths. Over time he developed a lot of

excellent advice as well as good suggestions for changes. While he discontinued the site, most of the material can still be found on the [archive of "Illuminating the Night below" at the Wayback Machine](#). If you plan to run it, I recommend checking it out.

Appendix 2 : Timeline

The following timeline is based on the assumption that the Night Below campaign will kick off anytime between 1000-1003 AC. Adjust the years in the timeline if you wish to move the start to some other year. This timeline is based on both the dates suggested in the Night Below campaign book as well as the constructed timeline made by David Ross.¹ It is adjusted in order to accommodate local Soderfjord history.

Timeline

Prehistory: The aboleth are invited to Mystara by the Carnifex.

2500 BC: Gnomes and Modriswerg enter the area that will later become the Northern Reaches and settle hills and mountains as continental ice sheets recede.

2400 BC: The aboleth locate the Sunless Sea deep below what will later become the Northern Reaches. Construction of the aboleth city Shaboath begins.

2300 BC: Adhuza, the kopru empire, is on the ascendant and near the peak of its power in Thanegioth.

1700 BC: Giants, trolls, and gnolls are driven south into the Northern Reaches in successive waves of migration.

1700 BC: Kopru Empire is in steep decline, Thanegioth is now an archipelago.

1500 BC: Sophisticated gnomish and dwarven cultures co-exist with primitive giantish clans in western uplands of the Northern Reaches.

1000 BC: Nithian Empire conquers and dominates human cultures in the Northern Reaches.

597 BC: The kopru invite the aboleth to build a city under the Isle of Dread, in exchange for aboleth assistance in helping the kopru rebuild Adhuza.

500 BC: Nithian Empire collapses, weak mainland human cultures in the Northern Reaches at mercy of giant clans.

490 BC: Kobold clans invade the Falun Caverns in Soderfjord and massacre the gnomes who live there. The Valoin gnomes are transported to the Hollow World. Some gnomes escape and flee to Karamaikos.

488 BC: A few surviving gnome families manage to evade the kobolds in the Falun Caverns and proceed deeper into the Underdark. They become the deep gnomes.

378 BC: A thriving human civilization begins to manifest in the Thanegioth Archipelago, developing architecture, magic and theology.

350 BC: The aboleth seize control of kopru territory in the Isle of Dread, enslaving and partially dominating the kopru

304-303 BC: The kopru provoke war between the aboleth and the human civilization on the Isle of Dread, the aboleth are defeated.

300 BC: The aboleth abandon attempts to reclaim the Isle of Dread from the kopru, many make their way to Shaboath.

221 AC: The Rockseer elf Aljayera is born.

500 AC: Sons of King Cnute from Ostland settle in Soderfjord.

602 AC: The sword Finslayer is created for the ranger Pajarifan against a kuto-toa menace deep beneath Soderfjord.

614 AC: Kingdom of Vestland established.

625 AC: Pajarifan perishes in the Underdark, his sword is lost.

763 AC: The Rockseer elf Darafayen is born.

¹ See the Timeline at ["Illuminating the Night Below"](#)

776 AC: Sardinius (Sarden) Parlfray, son of a Thyatian count, arrives in Soderfjord with followers and family.

782 AC: Spire Keep built by Sardinius (Sarden) Parlfray, who has adopted the title Jarl. Other local jarls grudgingly accept his presence.

809 AC: The paladin Ludwig (Lothar) Parlfray destroys a cult led by an evil priest and assassins in the Battle of Hardlow Woods.

863 AC: Village of Milborne founded.

874 AC: Hamlet of Thurmaster founded.

898 AC: A fiend in the service of Thanatos (or Hel) slaughters everyone in Spire Keep. Elman Parlfray, the eldest heir, being absent from the keep at the time, survives.

899 AC: Elman Parlfray relocates his family home to the Halfcut Hills and begins construction of Parlfray Keep. He gives up the title Jarl in exchange for ownership of the surrounding lands including Thurmaster.

906 AC: Patchwork Hills carved into terraces.

940 AC: Garlstone Mine ceases to be profitable, it is abandoned.

950 AC: The Nordhartar Defense League is formed at the Council of Soderfjord, creating the Soderfjord Jarldoms.

953 AC: Carman family builds a log dam, creating the Eelhold reservoir.

961 AC: Humanoids (gnolls?) attack Thurmaster and surrounding farms and are defeated by Lord Parlfray's mercenaries.

965 AC: The Nordhartar Defense League attempts to build a bridge across the river at Milborne. Project is abandoned halfway due to lack of funds..

970 AC: The shadow dragon Fandrusch arrives in the Northern Reaches to begin his plan of corruption, he establishes a lair underneath Soderfjord.

971 AC: Parlfray mercenaries drive out monsters from an area of the Thornwood now called the Blessed Wood, this operation is referred to as the "scourge".

984 AC: The Eelhold dam breaks, flooding farms to the south. Soon after a water elemental is bonded to the place with a local nixie keeping it acquiescent.

986 AC: Tauster flees Norrvik and settles in Thurmaster.

994 AC: Humanoids from the Great Rock Dale raid the lands around Milborne and Thurmaster during the "bitewinter". The ranger Kuiper and the local militia stop them, losing 17 men but inflicting far more casualties on the humanoids.

999 AC: The Goblins of the Ring arrive from the Underdark and settle near established farms. The New Mire begins to form as the ring leaks water from the elemental plane.

1001 AC: The Frey/Freyja priest Semheis becomes the godi at Milborne.

1001-1002 AC: Beginning of the Night Below campaign...

Appendix 3 : Name Changes

While Carl Sargent had a number of talents as a game designer, assigning NPC names was not one of them (Otyl Erys? Really?) . Many of the NPC names, especially in the first book, use a somewhat random naming convention that is often found in Greyhawk adventure modules. The table below provides a list of suggested name

conversions for all significant NPCs to give them a name more suitable to the Northern Reaches and surrounding countries, as well as the book and page number where the NPC is listed.

As Norse wives did not adopt their husband's family name, the tradition is kept here, with wives not having the same last name as their husband.

| Book Name | Suggested Conversion | Page Number |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gordrenn | Godfred Arnbjorgson | Bk1: p10 |
| Carlanis | Knut Otryggson | Bk1: p10-11 |
| Carman | Ceowulfson/Ceowulfdottir | Bk1, p12-16 |
| Haldelar | Halldor Oddson | Bk1, p13,16 |
| Parella | Olga Vigfusdottir | Bk1, p13 |
| Jelenneth | Jorunn Halldordottir | Bk1, p13,16 Bk3, p23-24 |
| Rendennis | Rhorvald the Watcher | Bk1, p13 |
| Dagmire | Tormod Rhorvaldson | Bk1, p13 |
| Capella | Katla the Carpenter | Bk1, p13 |
| Dirkaster | Dagrun the Old | Bk1, p14 |
| Andren | Arfinn Unnrson | Bk1, p14, 16 |
| Barthelew | Bardi Unnrson | Bk1, p14 |
| Walright | Rollo Karison | Bk1, p14 |
| Semeren | Saemund the Goblin-Strangler | Bk1, p14 |
| Garyld | Geirmund the Lame | Bk1, p14-16 |
| Semeis | Sigvaldi Gestson | Bk1, p15 |
| Rastifer | Rhorleif Vidarson | Bk1, p15 |
| Nafton | Njal Ingibjorgson | Bk1, p15-16 |
| Thimpfen | Thorgrim Korison | Bk1, p16 |
| Gergel | Geirstein Thorgrimson | Bk1, p16 |
| Darius Carman | Ceowulf Dagfinnson | Bk1, p16, 24 |
| Weismar | Vestein Asketillson | Bk1, p18 |
| Anth | Asta Holgidottir | Bk1, p18 |
| Cynders | Sigrid Karlsefnidottir | Bk1, p18 |
| Gloris | Gjarflaug Holgidottir | Bk1, p18 |
| Barranas | Bjarni Lodinson | Bk1, p18 |

Adapting the Night Below to Mystara

| Book Name | Suggested Conversion | Page Number |
|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Tauster | Tindr the Deep-Minded/Short | Bk1, p18-19 |
| Kuiper | Klyppr Magnhildson | Bk1, p20 |
| Oleanne | Ingunn the Wolf-Tamer | Bk1, p20-22 |
| Krynen | Kolskegg | Bk1, p21, 23 |
| Maxim | Mord Kolskeggson | Bk1, p23 |
| Ranchefus | Rognvald One-Eye | Bk1, p27-28, 49 |
| Lyntern Parlfray | Luitpold Parlfray | Bk1, p28,40 |
| Lafayer | Ljotolf the Itinerant | Bk1, p30 |
| Balrat | Bardi Broken-Face | Bk1, p43 |
| Wilmors | Woden Ulfrson | Bk1, p43 |
| Heydrus | Hring Valrson | Bk1, p43 |
| Pargenter | Viking | Bk1, p52 |
| Jarucz | Gardi the Odorous | Bk1, p54 |
| Shilek | Saeun the Long-Fingered | Bk1, p56 |
| Imrin | Illugi Erikson | Bk1, p56 |
| Ramor | Rollo the Red | Bk1, p56 |
| Hellenrew | Hemming Finnrrson | Bk1, p58 |
| Snagger | Raggrim Skarrad | Bk1, p63-64 |
| Carmeneren | Cleonoren | Bk2, p2-4, 11-12 |
| Pajarifan | Ragnbjorn Strybjornson | Bk2, p19 |
| Kranin | Kolbein Aslakson | Bk2, p23 |
| Groznyj | Gunnbjorn Uddvarrson | Bk2, p35 |
| Haragswald | Havard the Black | Bk2, p36 |
| Prentyss | Freydis Rambidottir | Bk2, p36 |
| Crystenna | Svala Oraldrdottir | Bk2, p36 |
| Geronmen | Galerius Didicus | Bk2, p56 |
| Shasurita | Siglinde Gjafarrdottir | Bk3, p 19 |
| Otyl Erys | Otuziur Ehomar | Bk3, p24 |
| Grongor | Gunnar the Mighty | Bk3, p42 |
| Shalzerith | Sumarlidi Patrekrrson | Bk3, p44 |
| Strychnesch | Starkad Norrison | Bk3, p46 |
| Jabulanth | Jaldi Torkrest | Bk3, p46 |
| Morgoor | Thorunn Markvardottir | Bk3, p46 |
| Repdal | Ragnhild Ljotdottir | Bk3, p46 |
| Cyvrاند | Beowulf Heardredson | Bk3, p46 |
| Krelner | Kalf the Stubborn | Bk3, p48 |
| Darlakanand | Dvalin Fjalar | Bk1, p4, Bk3, p61-63 |

Community Interview: Marco Dalmonte

THRESHOLD MAGAZINE (TM): *We all know you as the compiler of the huge (and deeply researched) Codex Immortalis¹, and you have been part of the Mystara community longer than most of us. Can you tell us more about yourself and how you became involved in Mystara?*

MARCO DALMONTE (DM): I started playing in Mystara back in 1990, during second grade of high school, when a classmate invited me and another friend to try a new game he just acquired. It turned out it was the Red Box and that he had already been playing for some time with his dad as DM and wanted to try it with us. He gave us a couple of PCs each (my first characters were a wizard named Feidus and a thief named Malcolm) who were sent to explore the Caves of Chaos (B2) and finally ended up on the Isle of Dread (X1).



The first sessions were really funny, despite the DM not being really well versed in the rules, and it got me so hooked that when I

¹ Italian and English versions of the Codex can be found in the [Vaults of Pandius](#)

came home I started writing down my own rules system, with classes and spells, to play with my brother. Some months after my mom bought me the Blue Box (Expert Set) for my birthday, and started discovering the marvelous world of D&D more in depth.

After six months of adventures, my friend asked me to DM in his place since he wanted to play and was not very good at creating new adventures, so I accepted and rushed to buy Basic and Companion sets, which at that time were the only ones translated in Italian. From that point, I began my DMing career which is still my biggest pastime even today.

TM: **You have produced a number of manuals covering playable races, magic, religions and the Immortals, general skills, and weapon mastery, covering the main subsystems of BECMI. What are your plans for this series? Is there any other aspect of BECMI you would like to see revised?**

DM: BECMI has some really great advantages over AD&D and 3E in my opinion: it's very flexible and not chock full with rules. This gives DMs plenty of space to introduce house rules to tailor the game to their own needs. However, BECMI also has some inconsistencies that always bugged me, like the race-class thing (Elf, Dwarf and Halfling) which admittedly made demi-humans great choices for the first 10 levels, but made them definitely not worth playing with Companion and Master levels. Also the spells were quite

limited, so I started to plan a revision of all the rules that seemed inconsistent or broken to get a more streamlined and exhaustive version of D&D, and that is the motivation behind all my D&D rulebooks.

I am currently working on Monsters of Mystara, but I also plan to release a final manual to close my personal version of D&D rules, which will obviously handle classes and kits available for all player characters.

TM: You have also been working on a book on monsters. Can you tell us more about it?

DM: Monsters of Mystara is a huge work, I think it can compare to Races of Mystara, since it's over a year that I've been writing it and I'm just halfway from finishing it. It numbers 230 pages up to now and collects all monsters that appeared in official Mystara products, as well as famous AD&D monsters that can be encountered in Mystara (no Drow, sorry), plus some other interesting critters that I made up or that I found rather useful from 3E monster manuals. In particular, I added a great variety of constructs, demons and elemental creatures, and more challenging monsters for higher levels of play (Companion and Master), which were a bit lacking for my tastes. I also plan on adding an index with monsters listed by power level that may help all DMs tailor their encounters based on the party's overall level (something which may be very handy but was not present in the original rulebooks). All entries will be presented in a way similar to Rules Cyclopeda, but the data will be more streamlined, all critters will have characteristics listed as well as a clear

description of their appearance, habits, combat tactics and powers.

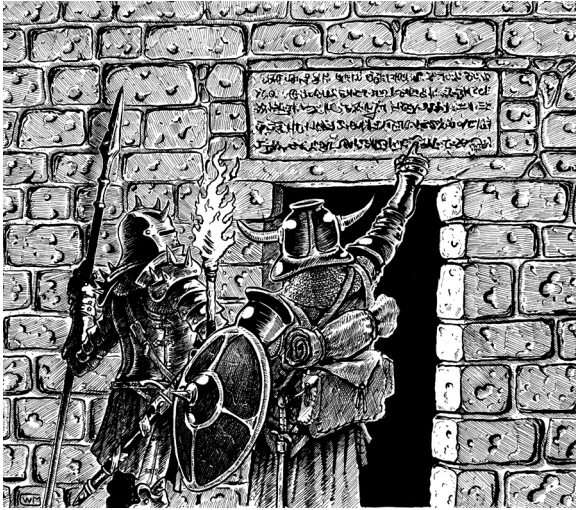
TM: Besides your magnum opus mentioned above, you have produced many other works, both in Italian and in English. Do you have a favourite?

DM: My favourite work is obviously Codex Immortalis, both for the final appearance of the manuals (thanks to the publishing skills of Axel Boucher) which makes them look official, and for the participation of many other Mystara fans in creating a really sound and detailed history behind all immortals. The discussions on the Italian and English Mystara Message Boards that allowed me to create the Codex went on for at least 2-3 years and greatly detailed the history of the campaign world, shedding light over obscure references and controversial points. I think the Codex embodies the spirit of cooperation between all Mystara fans that makes this campaign world so interesting and rich even after 20 years from its official end!

TM: You have been running a long campaign set in the northern regions of Alphatia, of which a brief excerpt can be found in the sidebar "On the Fey of Frisland and the Eye of Huldra". Can you give us an idea of the main themes you have used for this campaign?

DM: The current campaign I started back in 2010 is titled Blood Ties and revolves completely around the five main characters' personal background. It's been very rewarding so far both for me and for the players, since they've really seen their characters evolve both psychologically and

powers-wise from the start as 16 year old boys at 1st level to now (they're 3 years older and have reached 10th level throughout a series of wondrous adventures that made them travel across five continents and meet a lot of friends and foes).



We touched a lot of mature themes during these adventures (the difference between vengeance and justice, love affairs and their consequences, the importance of family ties, blind ambition and the price for power) and the characters have solved most of the plots that made them gather together in the beginning and start their quest (finding out who killed the mages' mentor and why, discovering the real story behind one of their father's demise, reuniting with an old love only to discover she bears the key to the realm's downfall, defeating a seemingly unbeatable character that held them prisoners in his magical mountain for over one year). However other mysteries are still unsolved and at least one of them fears the moment of the reckoning that is drawing near and will change their lives forever, as

well as Alphatia's geopolitical asset of the north.

TM: You have been part of the Mystaran Almanac team, which produced a significant development of Norwold. Can you share your thoughts on the development direction for this region?

DM: The idea was to have Norwold as playground for the players and DMs alike, making this a favourite setting to stage all skirmishes and wars between Thyatis, Alphatia and the Heldannic Knights. Staging a similar confrontation in the Known World would have had major impact on the setting that may not have been liked by the majority of fans, so this seemed a better solution for us all. We wanted to make Norwold seem more alive and kicking in comparison to what had been portrayed in the official supplements (PWA and RC), since it had a great potential as CM1 had already shown. I was happy to participate in the Almanac detailing the history for Wendar and Denagoth and add new schemes to make that part of the world interesting and fun to campaign in, and I did the same with Norwold, taking inspirations from my own campaign staged there, obviously. I hope the result was somehow intriguing and fun for those who read it.

TM: What are the themes and regions you favour when running campaigns in Mystara?

DM: I've always had a particular attraction for Darokin, because it touches all of the Known World's main countries and can be used as a staging ground for so many different themes,

from classic fantasy to horror to murder mystery to political intrigues. That's why most of my gaming groups started or passed through it one way or another. The last campaign is kind of an exception to this, since it's staged in Alphatia in the XVIII century AY, but I wanted to try that setting because it was basically an empty canvas to paint to my own desire.

I also find Ylaruam very fascinating (many adventures involving old Nithia can be staged there, as well as adventures inspired by the Arabian folk tales), Norwold as incredibly ripe for heroic campaigns and Glantri very useful for all kind of adventures (it's literally a Known World in miniature, much like Darokin, only with more magic).

The themes that I like to introduce in my campaigns usually revolve around the quest for power and the price that people are willing to pay to achieve it. It makes players think deeply before taking their decisions, especially when it comes to killing other people that stand in the way of their goals.

TM: Besides Mystara, which other settings are you interested in? Did you run any crossover?

I was in love with Ravenloft and run a three years long campaign there taking PCs from 1st to 8th level before they all got toasted by Azalin during the end of the Grand Conjunction series. I would never play a crossover between Mystara and Ravenloft: sending PCs to Ravenloft can really alienate the players, especially if they want to play in Mystara, unless you plan a simple one-shot adventure, that is.

Another great setting I loved is Spelljammer, and that's the only one for which I planned crossovers with Mystara (which in fact I did, albeit very briefly).

Eberron Always intrigued me, but since it's been written with 3E rules in mind, I never got the chance to buy anything related to that campaign.

All in all, I've always stayed loyal to Mystara all these years, and I know it so well that I would never change it for another setting 😊 .

TM: In your production for Mystara and BECMI, it is possible to notice a first phase where you worked more on introducing new classes, races and rules, and a second phase where you focused more on a comprehensive restructuring of entire rules subsystems. What led you to focus in this direction?

DM: All in all, I can say I am a Lawful character. I like to live in a world where order reigns. That is so much true when it comes to rules for games. The problem I saw from the start for D&D BECMI was that all the options that expanded on the core rules were scattered throughout dozens of different manuals. Therefore I started to collect them in a single product and ended up translating them in Italian, a language that was easier to understand for my players. That is the purpose of the first manuals that I wrote (Tome of Magic, General Skills and Weapons Mastery Rulebooks). Once I put everything together and started using all the rules for added spells, skills, classes and such, I noticed the glitches and

inconsistencies that riddled the system. At that point I became bolder and started to change the rules to fashion a more balanced and coherent rules set, and after years of playtesting I can tell we're really happy with the current system we use.

TM: Your Italian website is named after an NPC, Gargantua². While the mad mage does not appear too often (he does make an indirect appearance in CM1 "Test of the Warlords"), he is a tantalizing character, whose mysterious motivations and huge powers make him all the more interesting. Why did you choose him, and what are your thoughts on this character?

DM: Now this is a really interesting question and I'm glad you asked. In my campaign and in my vision of this mysterious figure, Gargantua is not a mad wizard at all: quite the opposite, he is the ultimate mastermind. Gargantua is focused on one thing: gathering knowledge that will allow him to surpass even the Immortals. Obviously a man's life is not sufficient to complete this titanic task, not even an elven life for that matter! That's why there has been hundreds of Gargantuas in Mystaran history: it's more a role than a real name, and every pupil that succeeds his master takes the name of Gargantua to add more deeds to the myth. Now, in my campaign the lineage of Gargantua amassed an immense deal of lore in their lives, and each of the successors found it more and more difficult to navigate this vast collection of knowledge, eventually driving many of them mad. The last three Gargantuas had a great idea: since no human mind could understand and memorize all this

knowledge, they would create a perfect being capable of doing it in their place, and use it to understand the real secret of the Multiverse and pierce the mystery behind the Vortex. The result of this research led to the creation of the Gargantuan monsters, the first failed attempts at building a creature with a bigger brain. In the end, the current Gargantua has managed to give birth to what he calls the Perfect Mind, an apparently common human being which has the mnemonic capacities of a hierarch Immortal but the wisdom of a baby. Gargantua instructed him to learn everything he could from his vast library, and this being, called Alom (from the first and last letter of the Greek Alphabet, Alpha and Omega), gradually pieced together a sort of message left by the Old Ones through the ages which indicated that the answer to all the questions of the universe lies in a mysterious Tower located far away in space, on a planet which apparently touches all the existing dimensions and multiverses ever created. Whoever will reach it will have the keys to unveil the secret of the Old Ones and rule the Multiverse...or so Gargantua thinks. The problem is that Alom also figured out that no one else but him is wise enough for this task, and inevitably he will stumble across the PCs and rally them for their wildest and most memorable adventure through time and space. And that pretty much sums up the preface of The Last Adventure I created to finish the campaign of my oldest gaming group, currently still in play (although we play only once a year), so I am afraid I cannot reveal anything else here... 😊

² ["Bibliotheca Universale di Gargantua"](#)

ON THE FEY OF FRISLAND AND THE EYE OF HULDRA

by Marco Dalmonte
translated by Giampaolo Agosta

Excerpt from the notebook of Abraxas Ayendir, student of the School of Thaumaturgy of Gowola (Frisland), regarding the Eye of Huldra and the Fey.

Eimir 17th, Alphatian Year 1778

The Eye is named for the first Queen of the Fey, the mysterious Huldra, the alleged founder of the so-called Winter Court which ruled Frisland centuries before the Landfall. At the time, according to Yanni legends, humans and Fey lived together in peace under the enlightened guidance of Huldra, who thanks to the Eye, was able to foresee and prevent any threat to her people.

The Winter Court was composed by members of all Fey races: sprites and pixies, dwellers of forests and glades; wooddrakes and pooka, masters of shapechanging; tiny leprechauns, craftsmen of the Wee Folk; brownies, kind and hard-working; and last but not least, the true princes of the Fey, the fair Sidhe, similar in physique to elves but vastly superior in power.

Thanks to their amazing magical powers, the Fey made Frisland, then called Fridland (or Land of Peace, in the Yanni language), a

true paradise where humans could raise cattle in green pastures and hunt game in the sprawling forests of the Fairy Kingdom. Everything changed with the Landfall of the Alphatians, who according to Yanni legends, had used force and trickery to steal the land from Fey and humans.

The Historical Annals of Frisland, compiled by Alphatian scholars, report a different version where the valiant ancestors of the current rulers of Frisland had entered an alliance with the Fey to settle in these lands, and were later tricked by the treacherous and greedy Fey who aimed at obtaining their superior knowledge and their vast treasures.

Anyway, both accounts mention the bloody war between Alphatians and Fey in the V century which led to the exile of the Fey, mostly slain and finally mysteriously disappeared, and the ascension to power of the first Alphatian king of Frisland, King Berisarde. Berisarde was a member of the House of Brissard, the first ancestor of the dynasty who had been divinised¹. He later founded the Cult of Supremacy, and his dynasty reigned over Frisland for the next nine centuries.

According to legend, Huldra was murdered by Berisarde himself, who took possession of the Eye, used it, and passed it on to his descendents to protect the throne. However, with her last breath, Huldra cast a hideous curse on her assassins, transforming the Land of Peace into the

¹ See "Brissard" in [Codex Immortalis, Volume I](#) at the Vaults of Pandius

Land of Ice. Fridland progressively became Frisland: the forests reduced in number and extension, and game migrated to southern wooded lands.

Alphatian historians consider the deforestation and lack of resources of the following centuries more a result of bad management policies by the rulers and a sudden climate shift than a result of actual fey curses. However, there is no doubt that from that time, Frisland became the coldest and least hospitable region of the entire Alphatian continent.

Later, Fey reappeared several times, trying to hamper the Alphatians by fostering insurrections and sowing chaos and trouble in Frisland. Finally, in 1000 AY, the Act of Protection was decreed, officially declaring all Fey enemies of the kingdom. This gave everyone the right to kill Fey without risking prosecution. From that time, Fey hunting was spearheaded by the Cult of Supremacy and the Eye of Huldra was used against its creators, leading to the extermination of all members of the Wee Folk that still dwelled in Frisland.

The Eye remained in possession of the House of Brissard, safely held in the royal palace, until AY 1400 when the catastrophe known as the Annihilation of Lagash led to the tragic end of King Gamorghast and his family, as well as the utter destruction of the first capital of the Kingdom, Lagash, and the death of all its inhabitants.

Before the kingdom could fall into anarchy -- before even the Emperor could name a

new king, the Primate of the Cult of Supremacy brokered a deal with the Lords that ruled the other Frisland towns and, with the consent of the Imperial Crown, invested the late king's brother-in-law, Almarath the Seer, as the new king. Thus begun the dynasty of the House of Hazaran, which rules Frisland to this date. The capital was moved to Shiell, the see of the Iron Cathedral. Since that time, the Eye of Huldra disappeared from all chronicles and recorded history.

Theories that attempt to explain why first Huldra and then Gamorghast could not foresee their own defeat are, quite obviously, confused and discordant. The most widely accepted theories propose that, due to the divinatory powers that allow to see into the future and past, the mind of the user may be subject to temporal dislocation which, in time, makes it unable to perceive his actual position in the flow of time. Therefore, it is likely that both Huldra and Gamorghast lost their minds, becoming unable to effectively use the Eye which, rather than helping them in preventing their end, actually brought it.

Other scholars, on the other hand, believe that the Eye of Huldra might have absorbed or destroyed the Queen of Fey, and then sustained itself with her spirit. That would explain its later attempt to bring on the end of the House of Brissard which caused Huldra's defeat, and to fulfil her vengeance by causing the destruction of the old capital.

Theories on the powers of the Eye vary wildly from the bizarre to the cosmic. Some

scholar believe that the artifact's powers have been largely exaggerated by Yanni superstition, as the Fey magic could not rival Alphatian knowledge. Thus, they see the Eye as an artifact of average power, and claim that Huldra ruled Frisland without problems just because she never faced a real threat. When the Alphatians arrived, the Fey yielded to the superior magic of the newcomers, and the Eye had not the power to stop them as well.

The Lagash incident, on the other hand, is still so covered in mystery that it is more likely that its cause was some powerful enchantment by Gamorghast. "Alphatian supremacy" fanatics dismiss the disappearance of the Eye as a mere accident.

Finally, others attribute to the Eye not only divinatory power but even time travel powers, in a climax of power that would allow its holder to crush the barriers of reality and reforge the flow of time according to his will.

Even the shape and appearance of the Eye of Huldra are matter of contention, a testimony to the fact that no document from the past left a complete description of the artifact and all but confirmation of its legendary nature. According to some, it would be a simple silver amulet in the shape of an Eye, holding a gem -- a ruby, sapphire or perhaps an emerald -- or maybe a drop-shaped pendant forged of the ancient eternal ice that covered the planet before the rise of man. Others propose it could be a crown or diadem, forged in a magical material from the Fey world. Some

even mention the possibility it could be an actual eye, made of some strange living material (and likely as fragile as a common human eye), which should be installed in the user's eye socket to gain its powers -- thus losing sight from an eye to obtain the ability to see the future, matching the theme of the "blind seer" that appears in many human legends.

As to the method for destroying such an artifact, there are no legends to provide hints to its weaknesses. The only exception is a mention of the attempt by some renegades to "transfix the Eye of King Berisarde by the magic lance that bore the name of Gaebulga." Moreover, according to the same account, it was that same amulet, worn by the king, which allowed him to avoid the spear blow -- so the method does not appear to be especially effective.

There are, of course, the classical methods proposed in the standard handbook, "Death to the Tyrants: Guide to the Destruction of Despots, Divinities and Legends" of the late Professor Bruuthes. The first and simplest method is still the use of the most destructive element of this world: volcanic magma. Submerging the amulet in a sea of lava could help in destroying it, or at least put it permanently out of the reach of those who would use it. A second, similar method is to expose the item to the cross-fire of five elder dragons. In addition to the disadvantage of having to gather five dragons of such power, the method also exposes the bearer to the risk of being destroyed together with the Eye. Another recommended method is to have a Titan,

endowed with the strength of a thousand suns, crush the object, or else break it with one of the legendary Alphatian weapons: the Flaming Sword of Ixion, Razud's Mace of Power, or the Heartbreaking Spear of Valerias. Obviously, this method has the non-trivial problem of recovering another artifact before attempting the destruction of the Eye, which means searching for it (in the case of lost artifacts) or obtaining it from the divine order that protects it (as in the case of the Mace of Power). The last known and reported method is to use a Sphere of Annihilation -- which can destroy any item created by man or Immortal. The blackballs, however, are uncontrollable and are found only in the most remote outer planes -- making this method both a difficult and risky proposition.

We can only hope to discover more about the actual powers of the Eye of Huldra once

it will be examined by Master Apshai, to collect more hints to its weaknesses.

The last notes that Abraxas reported on his notebook are encoded, and look quite odd:

Whatever the truth about the powers of this artifact, it certainly has a primary role in the events that led to the creation of the kingdom as we know it now, and could certainly be used in the same way by any other noble house. It is certainly a difficult artifact to control, as the events it was involved in attest, but it could give its holder the power to rewrite history at will.

Currently, it is considered one of the most important lost relics of Frisland, and both the House of Hazaran and the Cult of Supremacy are looking for it, and would pay princely sums to obtain it.



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KARRAST, DWARVEN GOLD

by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)

An offshoot of Loktal's Glittering Realm, according to ancient chronicles, the exact location of the city of Karrast is now lost to historians and adventurers, even though many have searched for it during the centuries. The dwarves took it from orcs and lost it to gnolls, and it seems they held it for only a few decades, yet the fame of Karrast was great at the time, a haven of civilization in a land of humanoids and monsters.

From "Lost and fallen dwarven cities", by Thoric Redhand Buhrodar, son of Dorto, Rockhome, 998 AC.

SECRETS OF KOSKATEP, LEVEL 4

This level can be reached only by going down from room 13 of Level 3 (Ranesh, a city of four people, published in Issue 5 of Threshold magazine). The PCs will find themselves in **Level 4, Karrast**, a dwarven city that was previously the red orc city of **Rak** and the great temple of Pflarr of the hutaakan city of **Ranekek**.

The text below reports the original description of this level in issue 1 of Threshold Magazine (Mirror of Eternal Night article). Read on to discover more on this level of Koskatep!

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) lies under the floor of the largest 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 destroy the undead dwarf, they will create five guardian golems out of old dwarven statues. These will attack anyone who does not know the passing words.

Relevant history (expanded from issue 1 of Threshold)¹

1412 BC: After the time of the Nosferatu Kings ended with the Traldar crusades against the undead, hutaakans took the site (then called Ieronyx) from the powerful nosferatu Lord Keiros, exterminating his

¹ Several details of this history come from my [“History of Traladara”](#). Other histories of the region may differ, as the one presented in issue 1 of Threshold magazine (History of Karameikos by Simone Neri, page 37), but this timeline could easily fit into them too.

followers, and renaming the city Ranekek (Light over the Darkness). hutaakans and Traldar settle the city, which over four centuries establishes peaceful relations with nearby giants and fairies. Trade relations are established with the newly-arrived Hin of Faerdinel², as well as the Nithian empire.

1257 BC: Wogar’s red orcs conquer and enslave the people of the Atruaghin Clans, as well as several cities in the area of modern Darokin. Their raids also endanger Hin and hutaakan lands, and some Orcs occupy the Western Cruth mountains and hills.

1147 BC Alik Rokov of Corescon, a nosferatu follower of Nyx, leads a rebellion against the hutaakans and lay siege to Pflarkhepet (Achelos) and Ranenek, but is eventually defeated.

1095 BC Hutaakans and Traldars establish peaceful relations with the men of Minroth who have colonised the southern islands.

1021 BC: The red orcs sack and conquer Ranekek, renaming it Rak. Several hutaakan priests survive by hiding in the lower levels. They eventually become additional guardians of the hidden temple of Ixion (Level 13).

1018 BC: An attempt by the hutaakans to reconquer Ranekek from the orcs fails.

1000 BC: Gnoll invasion, Pflarkhepet is sacked and hutaakans and humans are enslaved. The red orcs of Rak ally with the gnolls and maintain rulership of the city.

² Modern Five Shires, see Gaz8 The Five Shires by Ed Greenwood.

954 BC: Despite the successful campaign of the Traldars against the gnolls, the west is still in their hands and orcs still rule the city of Rak. In these years a large dwarven expedition reaches the Cruth Mountains. After several battles, a dwarven army defeats the red orcs and conquers Koskatep-Rak, renaming it Karrast. The dwarves are soon in constant warfare with the gnolls that rule over the region.

950 BC: A tribe of grey orcs escaped from the Shires, the Greyslayers, settle in western Traladara, raiding settlements despite efforts to defeat them by humans and dwarves.

933 BC: Vandar humans come from the west, entering soon in conflict with gnolls and dwarves.

912 BC: After the defeat of Loktal Ironshield in the Shires, the dwarves of Karrast, left isolated, are soon overwhelmed by the gnolls, who build their own city of Ranesh over the ruins. Shamans of Ranivorus and Thanatos begin to study the Starlake³.

The Random Critters table of level 2B (in issue 3 of Threshold magazine) and the **Wandering Parties** table may apply here if the DM wishes so. In this case there is a 1% chance on 1d100 in each room that a Wandering Party will be encountered, and probably the debris blocking the staircase coming down from level 3 above will

³ As explained in issue 1 of Threshold magazine (Mirror of Eternal Night, page 144), Koskatep is the center of a millennia old struggle between Nyx, Ixion, Thanatos and Hel.

already have been partially cleared.

The **Followers of The Last One** encounter table of level 1 (in issue 2 of Threshold magazine, page 122), can also still be used here if the DM wishes so. One such follower could try to join the PCs to explore this level. In this case it's likely that Gilas' spectres will attack the party right away (See Room 1 below).



Ancient hutaakan bas reliefs inside the temple

The initial layout of this level was the great Temple of Pflarr that the hutaakans built after the destruction and burial of Ieronyx (Level 5). Over the four centuries of hutaakan occupation the temple became a subterranean level of the larger city of Ranekek, that later was occupied and modified by orcs and dwarves, and later by gnolls too (Ranesh, or Level 3, in issue 5 of Threshold magazine). Ranekek-Rak-Karrast, i.e. this fourth level of Koskatep, was therefore inhabited by three very different people (hutaakan, orcs and dwarves, as the gnolls buried it fearing the presence of dwarven undead, who are still present in the level).

The surviving parts of **The Great Temple of Pflarr** are depicted in yellow in the map. The huge temple area still has many of its original wall decorations, both paintings and bas reliefs, but statues, wooden and cloth objects have been mostly destroyed or have decayed. Originally an open air

temple, the structure became a subterranean level already in hutaakan times, when what is now Level 3 (in Issue 5 of Threshold magazine) was built over it. Level 5 below was used as storage and treasury in hutaakan times.

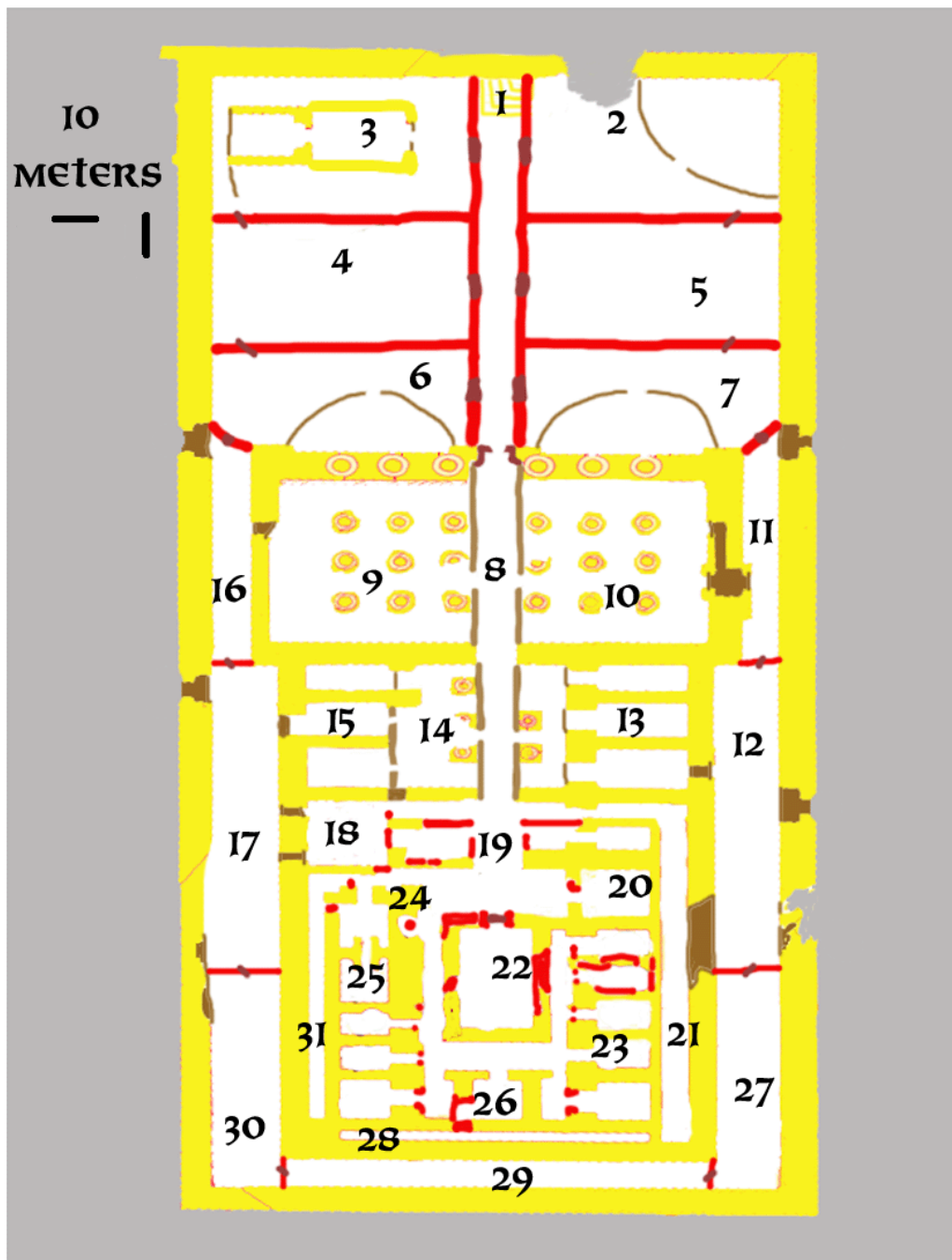
The parts added by orcs, i.e. the city of **Rak**, are depicted in brown. In the 67 years in which they held the city, they closed all the windows of the temple, built some new walls and erected five round houses in the front courtyard, to be used as dwellings, later partially destroyed by the dwarves. Orcs used the level above (Level 3) only as burial grounds, while the Orc king, his chiefs, shamans and most of his forces inhabited Level 5 (in Issue 7 of Threshold magazine). Level 4 here housed only the dwellings of females, children and low-ranking orcs.

The parts added by the dwarves of the city of **Karrast** are in red. They had the city for just 52 years, so they didn't have the time to renovate much the level, even though massive walls were added in the main courtyard. The dwarven city was mostly developed here in Level 4, while Level 5 below was mostly sealed and Level 3, above, was mainly used by dwarven soldiers and military installation.

When the gnolls conquered the city in 912 BC, they slaughtered all the dwarves and sacked this level, but they did not inhabit it as an undead dwarf was rumored to dwell here, and sometimes those who had to go to the levels below (up to the Starlake in Level 7) disappeared mysteriously. This level is still even more silent and eerie than the above ones, Indeed Gilas (see Room 28) and her spectres control this level since almost two thousand years, fighting at the beginning against the gnolls, then against ogres, Darkers and minions of The Last One. The only people she left undisturbed in the past were the priest of Ixion that reached this area, but she didn't trust them much either, so was never formally allied with them. In the last century The Last One has multiply his efforts to destroy her, endlessly sending minions from above and below, but so far Gilas has resisted.

In grey is solid stone, very difficult to dig. In white are the "open" areas. Open should be considered a relative term as much of the terrain is rugged, full of debris. The area is completely dark if PCs do not bring light. If they do bring light, of course, it makes the party quite visible.

koskatep, level 4





1 - The Staircase and the Dwarven hallway.

Former entrance to the temple, this staircase comes down from area 13 of Level 3 (in issue 5 of Threshold magazine) and in hutaakan times led to a big open court of 125x90 meters (400x300 ft), where later the orcs built several circular houses and that the dwarves divided in six houses and a hallway. The hallway is now 75 meters (250 ft) long and 9 meters (30 ft) wide. For some times gnoll still used it and keep it clear, but eventually they closed the level for fear of the dwarven undead. Two **spectres** (HD7) dwell here, posted by Gilas (see Room 28). As all the other spectres in this level, they will ask The Question: "Whom do you serve?". They can tell if someone lies⁴, and they will attack the party if there are followers of The Last One and clerics of Thanatos among them. They will not immediately attack followers of Nyx or other immortals, or unaligned adventurers (with whom Gilas is willing to parley, waiting for them in area 19). The spectres however will not tell PCs about Gilas or where to meet her, unless they're dwarves or clerics of Kagyar.

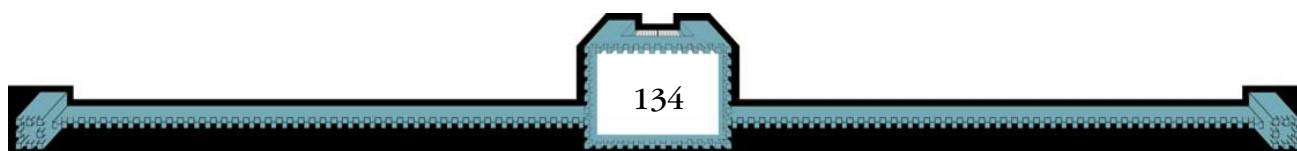
In life, the spectres, Tivan and Shialia, were followers of Ixion, killed by The Last One in 227 AC, reanimated by him and freed from his grasp by Gilas later. They could narrate their story to PCs aligned with Ixion or sympathetic immortals⁵.

Six doors opens in the hallway, leading to areas 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. They have been long ago partially smashed or burned by gnolls, but most of them still stand, as they were sturdy and reinforced double wooden dwarven doors. The great double doors at the end of the hallway were long ago

(1) - There is a pit trap with spikes in the hallway between the first and the second set of doors. It wasn't enough to stop gnolls, but Gilas decided to reactivate it to stop intruders. The spectres could warn PCs of the traps if the encounter with them hasn't been hostile

⁴ They could have a specific power or just be very intuitive, at the DM discretion, and therefore the PCs could be able to fool them (and Gilas) with a successful Bluff check or similar.

⁵ See Akropolis of Kotesh in issue #3 of Threshold magazine



destroyed by invading gnolls. Pieces still lay around.

The Darkers will try to parley with the spectres. They will probably refuse to join them and could even attack them, as former followers of Ixion, but Gilas eventually will probably find an agreement with them, at least temporary (see also Room 28).

2 - First Dwarven house

This area of 55x33 meters (180x100 ft) was once part of the big open court, then it was used as housing by orcs and dwarves. The walls of a circular orcish house still survive inside, while the several wooden houses that dwarves had built inside have decayed and crumbled. Three **spectres** (HD7) dwell here, once Darkers who came with Lord Vudar around 818 AC⁶. They are under Gilas' control, but could resist her and break free if the PCs are aligned with Nyx. Also, they will not attack if Gilas has already decided to let the PCs pass in Room 1.

After the Darkers arrive the spectres will immediately side with them.

3 - Second Dwarven house, former Shrine

This area still contains a shrine that in hutaakan times was dedicated to several minor Immortals. The orcs didn't destroy it and the dwarves repaired it, but now the shrine is quite damaged by the passing of time. Three **spectres** dwell here, one was a priest in life but he has forgotten of which immortal. He looks human, and a priest of Ssu-ma will be able to remind him that he was his patron too. The second spectre is Khainet, an hutaakan female, once a wizard who died

⁶ See Upper Ruins of Kotesh in issue #2 of Threshold magazine

(2) - In the south right corner of this area there is a shaft where a variety of orcs items were stored by dwarves after their conquest of the city. The items include pottery, weapons, headdresses, capes, pipes and many other things that remind of Atruaghin artisanship.

(3) - The possessions of the three spectres are still in this area, where all three were killed in different times. All three have unresolved matters and could reveal the locations of their objects to PCs willing to aid them. Nuf, the priest of Ssu-ma, wants his journal brought to the church. The journal will also allow him to remember his name and story, but he lost it below in Level 5. (The DM could decide

defending the city from the red orcs. The third is Marcus, once a Thyatian scout killed by Traladaran rebels in 910 AC.

After the Darkers arrive, they will try to persuade the spectres to join them. Marcus could accept but the other two probably won't.

4 - Third Dwarven house

This area was another part of the great front court of the hutaakan temple, that orcs and dwarves divided for housing. Remains of ancient houses still lay around. A powerful **ghost** (HD11) dwells here, lone survivor of a previous attack by minions of The Last One. Cydruk in life was an half orc priest of Thanatos who died fighting Ixion's followers. He is now determined to triumph over his enemies and is searching for a way to sneak up on Gilas when she's alone to destroy her. One such way could be to follow the PCs to her.

After the Darkers arrive they will destroy or chase Cydruk away, but he could be able to escape to the lower levels to join The Last One again.

5 - Fourth Dwarven house

This area is similar to area 4. A lone **spectre** dwells here, formerly under Gilas' control but long since freed from her grasp. Kuv, in life an experienced thief and a retainer of the priests of Ixion that took Koskatep in 95 AC⁷, was really a spy for the church of Thanatos. Gilas awake him from death long ago to fight minions of The Last One, but Kuv betrayed and tried to destroy her, swore allegiance to The Last One but escaped his control too. Kuv is a shady character that could try

⁷ See Akropolis of Kotesh in issue #3 of Threshold magazine

that Nuf was an avatar of Ssu-ma, thus increasing the importance of the journal for the church). Khainet wants to know about the survival of her people, so she could be satisfied if PCs tell her about the Valley of Hutaaka. Marcus wants to know if his daughter's descendants are still alive. There are indeed several still living in Luln.

(4) - The Last One may eventually send more minions to aid Cydruk, or he could join the others that recently arrived in area 17.

(5) - The Last One may eventually try to contact Kuv again to use him somehow. He finds Kuv amusing, and that's the reason why he hasn't destroyed him yet.

to convince PCs that he was a follower of a faith they could sympathize with, then betray them when it's most convenient for him.

After the Darkers arrive Kuv will obviously side with them immediately, only to wait for the best occasion to betray them to The Last One, if that can suit him.

6 - Fifth Dwarven house, Orcish house

This area of 55x24 meters (180x80 ft) was once part of the great main courtyard in front of the temple, before the orcs built their circular house here and the dwarves raised great walls to build their houses. The dwarves had once subdivided the area further with wooden walls, but those are now decayed or destroyed. One great orcish circular house still survives inside this area. Some common objects still lay around, including some fine pottery jars. Surprisingly, most of them are of red orc craftsmanship, somehow similar to modern atruaghin clans, and not dwarven.

The south wall of the orc room isn't completely closed, as once the temple facade was partially opened with great hutaakan shaped support columns. The orcs heavily damaged them, while the dwarves partially tried to restore them and resculpted one of them in the shape of a dwarf, as it was too heavily damaged to be repaired. Madur, in life a dwarven sculptor, is the lone spectre "living" here. He is only partially aware of being dead and keeps trying to repair the damaged columns. Gilas gave up trying to order him around long ago.

After the Darkers arrive they will promise Madur a new body, so that he could continue his work. Madur will be happy to join them if they give him this chance.

(6) - A fine red **orcish jar** decorated with stylized birds has retained some magical property, as it bestow a protection spell on anyone filling it with water and washing himself with this water. However the jar is quite heavy and cumbersome to carry around.



Red orcs jar

7 - Sixth Dwarven house, Orcish house

This area is very similar to area 6. Four **spectres** dwell here, often bickering loudly among themselves. In life, two of them, Mivos and Anya, were priests of Ixion who explored the ruins in 899 AC and were killed by minions of The Last One. The other two, Tawyn and Midu, were Darkers of Lord Vudar killed here in 817 AC. Indeed Midu killed Tawyn because he discovered the latter was a spy of the Church of Thanatos. In Life, Mivos and Anya were bickering former lovers. The result is that the four hate each other, often fighting among themselves and ignoring visitors in the area. They haven't destroyed each other yet because ultimately they all fear the final death.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to recruit the four spectres, and they would likely succeed as soon as they promise the four to free them from the presence of the others. Tawyn could however eventually betray the Darkers and try to contact The Last One.

8 - Orc corridor

This area was once part of the first great column hall of the hutaakan temple. The orcs divided it in two halves and created this corridor between them.

After the Darkers arrive, the trap will be disarmed, but they could always reactivate it if expecting intruders.

9 - Western major Column hall

This was once a huge columned hall contiguous with areas 8 and 10, now reduced to a 37x40 meters (120x130 ft) hall divided by great and decorated columns, that still have hutaakan bas reliefs. A window on the left wall has long been closed by orcs and their right wall is still standing. The north side of the room is partially opened to

(7) - The possessions of the four still are in this area, including two magic weapons and some old potions (high chance of poisoning) and scrolls. There are also some orcish and dwarvish trinkets (semi-precious stones, silver and such - nothing particularly valuable).

(8) - The dwarves kept the orcish corridor intact and placed a **dart trap** in it. The trap was destroyed by the gnolls but rebuilt by Gilas against corporeal followers of The Last One and other intruders, and it's still active. The spectres in previous rooms could warn PCs about it, if Gilas decided to parley with them.

(9) - The dwarves used the area as burial place for their distinguished priests, so now almost every massive column has one hidden tomb. The occupants could be dead or undead at the DM's discretion.

area 6, except for the great and now ruined hutaakan-shaped support columns, once the front of the temple. The area was used as housing by the orcs and as a burial place by dwarves. Metallic noises can be often heard here (see Room 15).

Three **spectres** (HD7) always dwell here. Dwaic was a dwarven priest in life, a close friend of Gilas. He was and somehow still is in love with her, and would give everything to be loved back, but Gilas is too focused on her fight to acknowledge that. Noril, in life a young acolyte, died prematurely from a malady and she is now eager to fight The Last One and his minions. Korlum was a warrior. He is sad and tired of the unlife but will continue to serve because he considers that his duty, as he failed in life when was defeated by gnomish warriors.

After the Darkers arrive, they will try to recruit the spectres and any remaining undead dwarf. It's unlikely however that any of them will accept to join their ranks.

10 - Eastern major Column hall

This was once a huge columned hall contiguous with areas 8 and 9, now reduced to a 37x40 meters (120x130 ft) hall divided by great and decorated columns, that still have hutaakan bas reliefs. The two great windows on the right wall has long been closed by orcs and their left wall is still standing. The north side of the room is partially opened to area 7, except for the great and now ruined hutaakan-shaped support columns, once the front of the temple. The area was used by orcs as housing, like area 9.

A **group of adventurers** is camping in this area, trying to decide if they should run back up after a couple of nasty encounters in Level 5 below. (So far they haven't been attacked by the spectres of this level). They were five minrothaddans: 2 water elves, Elren (male, fighter, deceased) and Elera

(10) - A secret tomb under the bottom right column houses the tomb of **Wyrlum Lokar**, founder of Karrast, general of Loktal, who was killed in 915 BC fighting the orcs. He was lavishly buried with hutaakan and dwarven gold, enchanted armor, shield and weapons and several precious objects. If his tomb is discovered, Wyrlum will rise from the dead as a powerful mummy (with 8HD) and attack those daring to plunder his resting place. The dwarves used the area as burial place for their distinguished warriors, so now almost every massive column has one hidden tomb. The occupants could be dead or undead at the DM's discretion.

(female, thief); a wood elf, Yipki (male, cleric, deceased); a human, Matan (male, cleric); and a halfling, Copper (male, thief), Two of them (Yipki and Matan) are clerics of Ruaidhri Hawkbane, and lead the others this far hunting a powerful devil swine. Their prey is now among the dark fairies on Level 6 and, as only three of them are left now, they are thinking they'll be unable to complete their mission. Obviously, they'll be glad to help the PC's in exchange for assistance in tracking their prey. If the PC's have a werereature or a cleric of Zirchev among them, they could quickly become hostile. If asked which way they came from, they'll try to avoid the question. In fact, they came from the nixies' ways⁸, arriving in Level 6 directly, having bargained their way with the nixies; but they were tricked, ambushed by the dark fairies, and had to escape to Level 5, where Elren and Yipki were killed by the undead orcs. They know of the passage going down from Room 21, but not of the one in Room 31.

The Darkers do not like much followers of Ruaidhri, but they'll let them leave peacefully if they promise not to return. When and if they discover Wyrlum's tomb, they'll try to bring him to their side. Wyrlum could accept their offer, depending on the DM's decision or the PCs actions.

11 - Upper east corridor

This was part of the courtyard surrounding the temple when it was first built, then became a walkway for priests and pilgrims, walls decorated with stories of the church of Pflarr. Almost nothing is left now of the ancient bas reliefs, as orcs mostly used the areas as storage and dwarves as workshops. Ancient benches and dwarven instruments still lay here, but most of the wooden benches are crumbling. The area seems empty,

⁸ See Level 1, Room 7, in issue #2 of Threshold magazine, page 105.



Unbroken seal of Wyrlum's tomb

(11) - This area has no spectres because Hrovgh, an half mad gnoll **ghost** (HD14) occasionally appears here (30% chance each time). Hrovgh cannot be talked to as he is only partially aware of being undead, and he just mutters to himself.

but a faint music can be heard here (see Room 12).

After the Darkers arrive they will destroy Hrovgh and eventually they'll clear the area of the debris lying around.

12 - Central eastern hall

As Room 11 above, this was part of the courtyard surrounding the temple when it was first built. Almost nothing is left now of the ancient hutaakan bas relieves, as orcs mostly used the areas as storage and dwarves as workshops. Ancient benches and dwarven instruments still lay here, but most of the wooden benches are crumbling. A strong music can be heard here, and soon **the violinist** will appear (spectre, HD7). The violinist will play for a while, then he'll ask the same question as the other spectres, and will attack if not satisfied.

In life Farur, the violinist, wasn't a dwarf of Karrast, but a dwarf who lived in the Kingdom of Achelos, many years later, and was killed by orcs in 425 AC. He could relate his story to interested PCs.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to persuade Farur to join them. The violinist could accept, as he would love to have some company.

13 - The Well

This serie of rooms contained the well and the cleansing room of the temple in hutaakan times. The well is still here and was used as such also by orcs and dwarves. Orcs made four rooms where once there were once three rooms only and an open area connected to room 14. Dwarves later sculpted six columns in shape of dwarves, in a style quite different from modern dwarven art. Five columns, two here and three in area 14, still stand. The sixth column crumbled long ago.

(12) - The violin that Farur seems to play is an illusionary one, but the real violin is still hidden in the room, with a protection from evil 10' radius when played. Farur would give away the location to PCs only if they are very sympathetic to him, i.e. they ask him his story, offer to help him, prove to know music and like his playing.



The violinist

(13) - A secret compartment in the ancient cleansing room, very hard to find, contains a small copper rod shaped as a stylized hutaakan. The rod has the power of purifying water and curing poison upon contact once a week.

After the Darkers arrive they will make the five columns into guardian stone golems, that will attack anyone entering the area without saying “Great Nyx be praised and the Great Night might come”.

14- Former minor Column hall

This area was once a greater hall, but the orcs divided it from area 13 with crude walls that still stand. Three dwarven columns as in area 13 stand here.

Metallic noises can be often heard here (see Room 15).

After the Darkers arrive the three columns will be turned in guardian golems (see area 13). If the Darkers discover Falis and her story they’ll try to reunite the child with her family, proposing to all three to continue unlife with new bodies as undecayed.



The dwarven columns

(14) - A lone **spectre** sometimes appears here (only 5% chance), her name is Falis and in life she was a dwarven child who died with her parents during the gnoll attack. She’s still searching for them. If the PCs carry her around other spectres will not attack them and Gilas will be pleased with them. If Falis is reunited with her father, Korlum of area 9, or with her mother, Nais of area 23, all three will hug, smile and disappear.

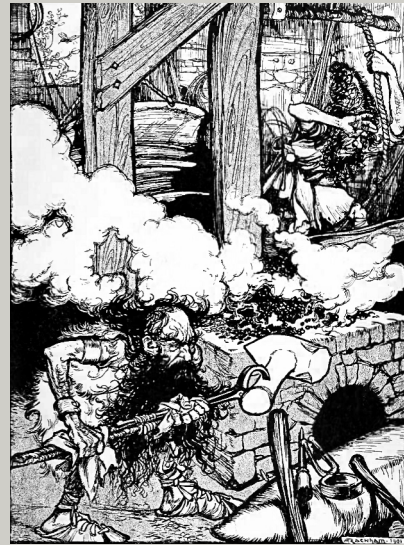
15 - Former Laboratory and Treasury, Forge

This rooms were the laboratory and the minor treasury of the hutaakan temple, then orcs and dwarves turned the area in a workshop and a forge. Now the chimney above the hearth is long closed by earth and debris, yet there are two dwarves busy working here... or apparently busy. The noise they make can be easily heard also in rooms 9, 14, 18, 19. The two dwarves, Farod and Baled, are **spectres**, and the former blacksmiths of ancient Karrast. Gilas raised them, but they aren't fully aware of being dead. They will speak to PCs and attack them or not depending on their answers, i.e. they will attack if they consider the PCs intruders, but will leave them alone if they give a good explanation for being here.

The Darkers will try to persuade Farod and Baled to join them. The two blacksmiths however will endlessly argue among themselves, unable to reach a decision, and eventually the Darkers will leave them alone.

16 - Upper west corridor

This area is very similar to area 11. An ogre **spectre** (HD12) dwells here. Guras In life was a general of the ogre king Kulfan around 600 BC, but he betrayed the king and escaped here to avoid punishment. He was later killed by Darkers but remained undead and restless in this area. Eventually he helped the Church of Ixion after 95 AC and, even after their defeat, continued to fight the minions of The Last One and so joined the cause of Gilas. In life Guras betrayed Kulfan for simple thirst of power, but the centuries have made him wiser and he is now a sincere sympathizer of Ixion, willing to fight against any



The two blacksmiths

(15) - Hidden beneath the forge are four dwarven magical items: armor, shield, helm, and hammer. The two dwarves were forging these for the king.. They will reveal the location of such items only to a dwarf they could consider worthy of it. If a dwarven PC is in the party, they will in fact ask about his or her past deeds.

(16) - The full armor, mace and shield of Guras still lay in a hidden spot in this area. The ogre would give them only to an ogre PC without sympathies for the Darkers.

minion of the darkness, be it a follower of Nyx, Hel, Thanatos or any other dark immortal.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to recruit Guras too, but he'll adamantly refuse and probably will be destroyed fighting them.

17 - Central eastern hall

This area is similar to Room 11. Normally 2 spectres left by Gilas dwell here, but a party of minions of The Last One has just slain them to invade this level. The party may include any number of **wraiths (HD5)**, **spectres (HD7)**, **phantoms (HD10)** and **ghosts (HD14)** depending on the PCs levels. In life they all were followers of Thanatos or other dark immortals like Leptar or Orcus, who entered Koskatep in the last eight centuries, since The Last One dominates the ruins.

If the Darkers encounter such minion they'll try to persuade them to join their cause, or they will destroy them all. Some of the undead could join them, especially if they have been Darkers or followers of Nyx in life.

18 - Offertory room or Dwarven armory

This was an offertory room in hutaakan times, then became a warehouse for the orcs and an armory for the dwarves. Three **spectres** dwell here, Hyvis, Kum and Tyris: mother, father and daughter, all gnomes. Hyvis was a sort of librarian in Karrast and her husband and daughter helped her. She was forced to leave the library (see area 29) long ago by The Dark Thing, and she's still worried about the books. She has tried to help Gilas defeat The Thing many times, barely escaping with her unlife. Hyvis, Kum and Tyris still love each other and do not want to die simply because they are afraid death will part them.

Metallic noises can be often heard here (see Room 15).

(17) - The undead will try to avoid other spectres to find Gilas and slay her. Gilas will fight them herself with the aid of all the spectres she can summon. If defeated, The Last One party will regroup here for another attempt, or to return to their master if they feel the odds are insurmountable.

(18) - Rusty pieces of dwarven armory still lay around in this area. At the DM's discretion some pieces could still be intact, either because they are magical or because they are made of very durable material, such as adamantite.

After the Darkers arrive they'll offer to give the gnomish family bodies and access to the library again. Even if the three gnomes could not ask more than that, they'll still refuse, as they are still loyal followers of Kagyar and do not want to join Nyx's cause. The Darkers will be impressed by their bravery and will just confine them in this area for the time being, instead of destroying them. Hyvis and her family will appreciate the courtesy and will refuse to fight directly the Darkers, but they could help sympathetic PCs in other ways.

19 - Offertory rooms or Dwarven guard posts

This area was once the hall in front of Pflarr's sanctuary. Orcs didn't used the area much, while dwarves built two guard posts to the left and the right. If the PC's haven't been immediately hostile to **Gilas'** spectres and if they haven't a strong allegiance with The Last One, she will be here waiting for them. (See Room 28 for more details about Gilas). She will question PC's and, as she wears a ring of truth, she should be able to know if they lie. The exact reaction of Gilas should be determined by each DM, but she'll probably be hostile to anyone wishing to use the Starlake in Level 7 (about which she learnt a great deal during the centuries) or, worse, wishing to reach The Dream of Fire in Level 13 (about which she knows almost nothing, but she understand could be very dangerous in the wrong hands). Followers of Nyx however could persuade her, promising her a new life, as she is now quite detached from Kagyar. Dwarves however could more easily persuade her to aid in restoring the ancient Karrast, resurrecting the dwarven city of old, as that would finally give her eternal rest. She could also be willing to make a temporary alliance with anyone willing to fight The Last One (of whom she doesn't know much, except that he is a powerful and evil vampire who has occupied the ruins for many centuries, so far slaying everyone who tried to destroy him).

(19) - Hidden in a secret compartment in the easternmost room of this area there is a surviving copy of the **Book of Ranekek**, a very rare and precious book chronicling the history of the city from 1412 to 912 BC. Originally an hutaakan book, it was continued by humans and dwarves after 1021 BC. At the DM's discretion, the book could also contain maps of levels 3, 4 and 5.



A page of the Book of Ranekek

Beside the possible presence of Gilas, two **spectres** (HD8) also dwell here, former dwarven guards killed in the fall of Karrast. Metallic noises can be often heard here (see Room 15).

After the Darkers arrive, they'll speak with Gilas here and will probably be able to persuade her (see also Room 28 and The Battle in this level section), unless the PC's get to her before and are able to win her allegiance.

20 - Purification room

This was a holy room for the hutaakans but is now empty and it's hard to say for what purpose orcs and dwarves used it, if they did. In orcish times the area was the dwelling of the king's wives and that's the reason why two **spectres** sometimes appear here (20% chance). Vraa and Ishan were two female orcs, killed here with their children by invading dwarves. During the centuries they have destroyed several dwarven spectres. They are not minions of the Last One, even if Gilas thinks so and has failed so far in cornering and destroying them, they just want revenge for the death of their children.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to recruit the two female orcs, but they will refuse to join if the Darkers spare the unlife of Gilas and of the other dwarves, whom they still hate.

21 - Eastern passage

This hallway lead to a stair leading below, to Level 5, where once was the storage area of the temple (and later the orcish city), abandoned by the dwarves when they took Koskatop. The area is now usually full of debris, mostly rock and wood, pushed endlessly here by Gilas to hinder intruders from below. There is always a 25% chance that minions of The Last One with a physical body (mummies, vampires and such) will be trying to arrive here from below. Gilas usually

(20) - A small, forgotten wooden doll lost in a crack of the floor is the true "hiding place" of Vraa and Ishan. If the doll is burned, the two female spectres will be forever destroyed.

21) - The orcs breached the eastern wall to enter the temple when they conquered the hutaakan city, then repaired it, and the reparation is still clearly visible. Inside it, several hutaakan magical objects (rods, wand, figurines, amulets and other things) were hidden by the orcs because they considered them dangerous or cursed. A dwarf PC or

leave seven **spectres** here to warn her of such attempts. They are usually former adventurers who were killed in different times by The Last One or his minions.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to recruit the spectres. They could join them or not depending on their backgrounds. All of them were in life unaligned adventurers, so they could choose or not to join the cause of Nyx.

22 - Temple of Pflarr, Orcish throne room, Shrine to Kagyar

As this area was sacked and partially burned by gnolls, it seems only debris is left inside, except for some fine dwarven bas reliefs that survived on some walls. This was the original internal shrine to Pflarr, but not much is left of the original hutaakan bas reliefs, nor of the orcish redecoration that took their place. Instead it preserves a dwarven work in progress, as it seems the dwarves were resculpting the walls.

After the Darkers arrive, if they'll be able to strike a deal with Gilas, Dorum will fight them anyway. If Gilas sees that she'll realize that the dwarf priest was an envoy of Kagyar and will regain faith in her former patron, and she'll decide to hinder the Darkers' plans in any way she can. She will however wait for an appropriate time to do so.

a PC who has expertise in building and constructions could realize things were hidden in the wall, at the DM's discretion.

(22) - Dorum, a powerful **ghost** (HD14) and former priest of Kagyar, dwells here. Dorum doesn't have unresolved matters like the others, he was raised here by Kagyar, several years after his death in this very room, to help Gilas. She doesn't know that and thinks he is a restless soul just like the others. Dorum doesn't appear normally unless followers of Thanatos, Nyx, Hel or other entropic immortals are about to overwhelm the level.



Dwarven bas reliefs

23 - Chapels of the heroes and Orcish shrines

This was a chapel dedicated to hutaakan heroes in ancient times, and the rooms were used with similar purpose by orcs and dwarves, rededicated to exalted orcish leaders and later to famous dwarven heroes. Many dwarvish votive offerings still lay around, mostly carved stones or small metal charms. At the time they had almost no value, but now dwarven historians would pay some cash to have them. A **spectre** dwells here. In life her name was Nais and she had the task to tend to the chapels. She was killed by gnolls before she had the chance to find her daughter and her husband (see area 9 and 14), and that's the reason why she cannot rest. She asks about her daughter obsessively and attacks anyone not answering her.

After the Darkers arrive they'll try to reason with Nais, but may be forced to destroy her if they haven't find her daughter in area 9 before.

24 - Statue of Loktar

This statue of the famous dwarvish king that founded the short-lived Glittering Realm between the modern Five Shires and here was placed here by dwarves. The niche once housed orcish weapons and, before, an unknown and lost hutaakan statue. The statue is still in surprisingly good condition, despite the passage of time.

After the Darkers arrive they will not immediately discover the secret of the statue, but eventually will. They could then choose to dispel its magic to avoid it being used against them.

(23) - Under one of the stone plate in the floor of one room it was hidden a magical orcish weapons, a nasty long sword +2, once belonging to a long forgotten orc leader. The sword will slowly charm his or her bearer to befriend orcs, to the point that he, or she, will try to join an orc tribe somewhere, preferably a red orc one.

(24) - No one, not even Gilas and The Last One, know this, but the **statue** is magical and can be animated to fight. Unfortunately the priest that enchanted it was slain by gnolls before he was able to animate the statue, and now only an obscure, small and almost deleted inscription in dwarvish at the base (saying "cobalt word and touch") could give a clue how to animate it. The statue in fact must be touched by a dwarf with cobalt, saying the word of the mineral in dwarvish at the same time. The statue will not fight against dwarves.

25 - Chapel and Dwarven war room

This was a special chapel of the temple in hutaakan times, where the high priests remains were stored and where was possible to speak with them through "Speak with the Dead". The orcs destroyed such remains and the room's decoration to turn it into the private chambers of their king. Dwarves removed everything once again to turn this into a war room, with maps and tactical books. Some of these things still remain here, along with Bofor, a former general of Karrast and now a **spectre** (HD 11) that Gilas called into undeath to aid her in the fight against the minions of The Last One. Bofor is highly intelligent and has proven to be invaluable in the fight. He'll be warm and affable with approaching PCs but will fight them to the death if they are enemies of Gilas.

After the Darkers arrive, Bofor, highly practical, will support Gilas' decision to temporarily ally with the followers of Nyx against The Last One. Later he will advise her to get rid of the Darkers too, as he would very much prefer some immortal of the light to rule over Koskatep.

26 - Chapel of the Other Immortals

This area was dedicated to Ixion, Valerias and other immortals considered allied to Pflarr. It seems orcs didn't damage the walls too much and some hutaakan bas reliefs still survive. The dwarves apparently didn't change the use of the room, as there are several pottery vases and other small objects that were probably meant as offering to the immortals. Many have been smashed, but some survived. The dwarves also placed some statues here, probably representing immortals or heroes, but it's impossible to tell now as they have been smashed, probably by the gnolls when they took Karrast. Two **spectres** (HD10) dwell here, Savos and Mira, two young adventurers and lovers killed here in 407 AC. Savos and Mira are

(25) - Bofor is immaterial now but his magical armor, hammer and shield are hidden in a secret compartment of this room. Only a dwarven PC able to impress Bofor with his or her valor could receive a clue on the location of such treasure.

(26) - Among the offering there is a cup representing a dwarven girl. The cup was an object consecrated to Valerias and survived the gnolls' destruction. It still has magical properties and a faint magical aura. Anyone putting water in it and drinking from the cup will heal all his/her wounds. The cup will no longer work if removed from this room.

really afraid to fight, as each fear that the other could be killed, and so he, or she, will be left alone.

After the Darkers arrive Savos and Mira would be happy to join them to have a new life together.



Cup of the dwarven girl

27 - Lower eastern hall

This area contain remains of dwarven workshops, exactly like the rest of the former external courtyard of the temple (areas 11-12-16-17 and 30). The three **spectres** here are Ratim, a Traladaran rebel killed by Thyatians in 912 AC, Lucius, a Thyatian adventurer killed by minions of The Last One in 931 AC and Jukul, an ogre explorer killed by adventurers in 978 AC. Despite their different background the three get along quite well together and cooperate against trespassers.

After the Darkers arrive they will persuade the three spectres to join them.

28 - Secret treasury

This room is only 2 meters (6 ft) wide but 70 meters (230 ft) long. It isn't connected physically to any other part of the temple, but it's accessible through a magical gate that opens to anyone who wears the Jackal medallion, a magical object enchanted to this purpose by the priests of Pflarr. The current owner of the medallion and therefore the one who inhabits this room, is **Gilas daughter of Kuris**, once a cleric of Kagyar in Karrast. When the city fell to orcs she had just found the medallion in a secret hutaakan stash and was studying it. A gnoll blade mortally wounded her and somehow the shock brought

(27) - The possessions of the three spectres when they were alive are still hidden in the area, along with many dwarven coins and semi-precious stones, but the spectres will not reveal the location of such items.

(28) - Gilas could be considered as powerful as a Spirit (HD20), is corporeal as a revenant, doesn't look decayed but just pale, and can summon spectres (but doesn't want to do that much often). She is incredibly fast and surprises her victims 50% of the time, as a revenant. The Last One has tried to destroy her several time, but she always escaped him. His minions do not last much in this level, due to her presence, a fact he considered

her to the secret treasury, where she died, but not finally. Whether an effect of the medallion, her own sadness and rage, or a magical effect of the hundreds of magical objects stashed in the treasury, she returned from death and began punishing her enemies. The gnolls were eventually forced to close this level almost completely, and only strong and numerous parties occasionally dared to venture here to reach the Starlake in level 7. No one can enter this room unless Gilas takes him/her. If anyone kill Gilas and/or steal the medallion, they could be able to enter the room. At the DM's discretion, the room could still contain the magical treasure of the hutaakan temple, so a great number of magical objects, weapons, scrolls and potions. Certain objects, as the potions, could however be long decayed by now.

After the Darkers arrive, Gilas will obviously confront them and they'll try to persuade her to join them. Even if she fought them in the past, she has been detached from her patron for so long now that she could accept their offer, unless PC's meet her before and persuade her otherwise. A dwarven PC's would probably succeed in persuading her to aid the party and could renovate her faith in Kagyar.

29 - Bottom corridor or dwarven library

This was just a corridor in hutaakan times, then a storage area for food during orcish times, then a library in dwarven times. The librarian and her family (see area 18) stayed here even after death, but they were eventually driven away a few centuries ago by **The Dark Thing** (HD20). No one, not even Gilas, knows what the Thing is, except that it has the powers of a spectre and a ghost and is certainly a minion of The Last One. Gilas was able to contain it in this area but, despite several attempts, never succeeded in

extremely annoying. He keeps trying to destroy her however, and he'll eventually win. The most precious object Gilas has is a cup shaped like a female dwarf, that she enchanted herself centuries ago. The cup works as a crystal ball (if you look inside it after filling it with water) and as a scarab of protection (1d6 charges left) so Gilas always has it with her.



Gilas' cup

(29) - The Thing is a undead that The Last One created merging several remains of almost destroyed spectres and ghosts. It hasn't a true personality but rather a collection of disconnected memories, and a lot of pain and hate. Gilas has contained it in this room by placing two Protection from Evil 10' radius at the two doors of the area. In the room most of the books, some dating back

destroying it. She could use the PCs help to fight The Thing.

After the Darkers arrive they'll eventually be able to destroy The Thing and will use again the library as such, slowly restoring old shelves and volumes.

30 - Lower western hall

This area too contained dwarven workshops of which remains still lay around, pottery in particular is abundant here. Five **spectres** dwell here. Three of them - Konur, Balis and Dorum - were dwarves artisans at the times of Karrast, and they do not know why they are still here in the ruins of their old city. Another one, Vidav, was a follower of Thanatos in life. He was killed by Achelos' soldiers in 856 AC, but was already a deserter and he's afraid of death, as he fears the dark god will reclaim his soul. The last one, Kazimir, was a priest of Ixion killed by minions of The Last One while exploring this level in 898 AC. Kazimir is more or less their leader and tries to give faith and courage to the others, who would however prefer not to fight anyone.

After the Darkers arrive the five spectres will be divided by their proposal, as Kazimir will not submit to them but Vidav will be eager to join them, and the other three could be persuaded.

31 - Western passage

This hallway of 3x55 meters (10x180 ft) seems devoid of any practical purpose. That's because it hides a trapdoor leading to level 5. Seven **spectres** (HD7) dwell here, posted by Gilas (Room 28) to guard this entrance from intruders coming from Level 5 below. They'll attack intruders coming from above too, however, unless Gilas has decided otherwise.

The spectres were adventurers in life, who died here, all killed by minions of The Last One at

to hutaakan times, are still intact and would be a priceless treasures for sages, wizards and clerics of the world.

(30) - The magical mace of Kazimir and a ring of protection +1 he wore in life are still hidden in the area. Also several fine dwarven pottery pieces of great value have survived among the rubble.

(31) - A hidden hatch in the southernmost part of this passage leads below to level 5. The hatch was hidden because in hutaakan times it led to the temple's treasury. The orcs however reached the treasury below directly from level 5, and pillaged it. The dwarves discovered this passage but didn't used it much. The hatch was then

various times from 227 AC to recent times. If Gilas will not send them to attack the PCs, they could warn them about their killers.

After the Darkers arrive, they could succeed in persuading the spectres to join them, even if Gilas doesn't or if she has only a temporary truce with the Darkers. They will also soon find the hatch and the priest's book. That would warn them that more priests in the Church of Ixion could learn of Koskatep and eventually come in force.

left undisturbed until 934 AC, when a group of Thyatian priests of Ixion reached Koskatep and tried to take it from the Last One, but were eventually defeated¹. If the hatch is opened the skeleton of a priest, still with clothes and armor, will be discovered. The priest could have magical weapons and armor, at DM's discretion. He also had in one hand a curious prayer book. Written by a priest of Ixion's church, the book contains, among several prayers to the sun, many legends and information about Koskatep, the hutaakan, Traladaran history and Pflarr. The book seems to be the source that drew the Thyatian priests here.

Prayer book with a Thyatian image of an hutaakan



¹ See Level 1, The Upper Ruins of Kotesh in issue 2 of Threshold magazine.

THE BATTLE IN THIS LEVEL

The DM could decide that there will be no battle in this level, as Gilas, even if she fought the Darkers several times in the past, is now very tired of constant fighting with the minions of The Last One. For this reason she'll probably not attack the Darkers when they will first come down from Level 3, and will wait for them in area 19. Depending on how the meeting goes, she could join them against The Last One or simply let them pass. If the PC's have met Gilas before the Darkers arrival, and convinced her not to turn to Nyx, she will probably still aid the Darkers secretly against the undead orcs of Level 5, but then she'll wait for more allies and a good occasion to fight them too.

Gilas has called many spectres; however each of them will react differently to the situation: some will fight the Darkers anyway even if Gilas will let them pass or allies with them. Those are Tivan and Shialia (area 1), Nais (area 23), Dorum (area 22) and Kazimir (area 30).

Others will fight the Darkers too because they are minions of The Last One (area 4, 11, 17 and 29). Some could survive the first battle to escape below and return later.

Some (the minrothaddan and Wylrum Lokar in area 10, the female orcs in area 20) are particular cases as explained in their area.

Some will obey Gilas at first when she'll decide to let the Darkers pass but will be happy join them and will refuse to fight

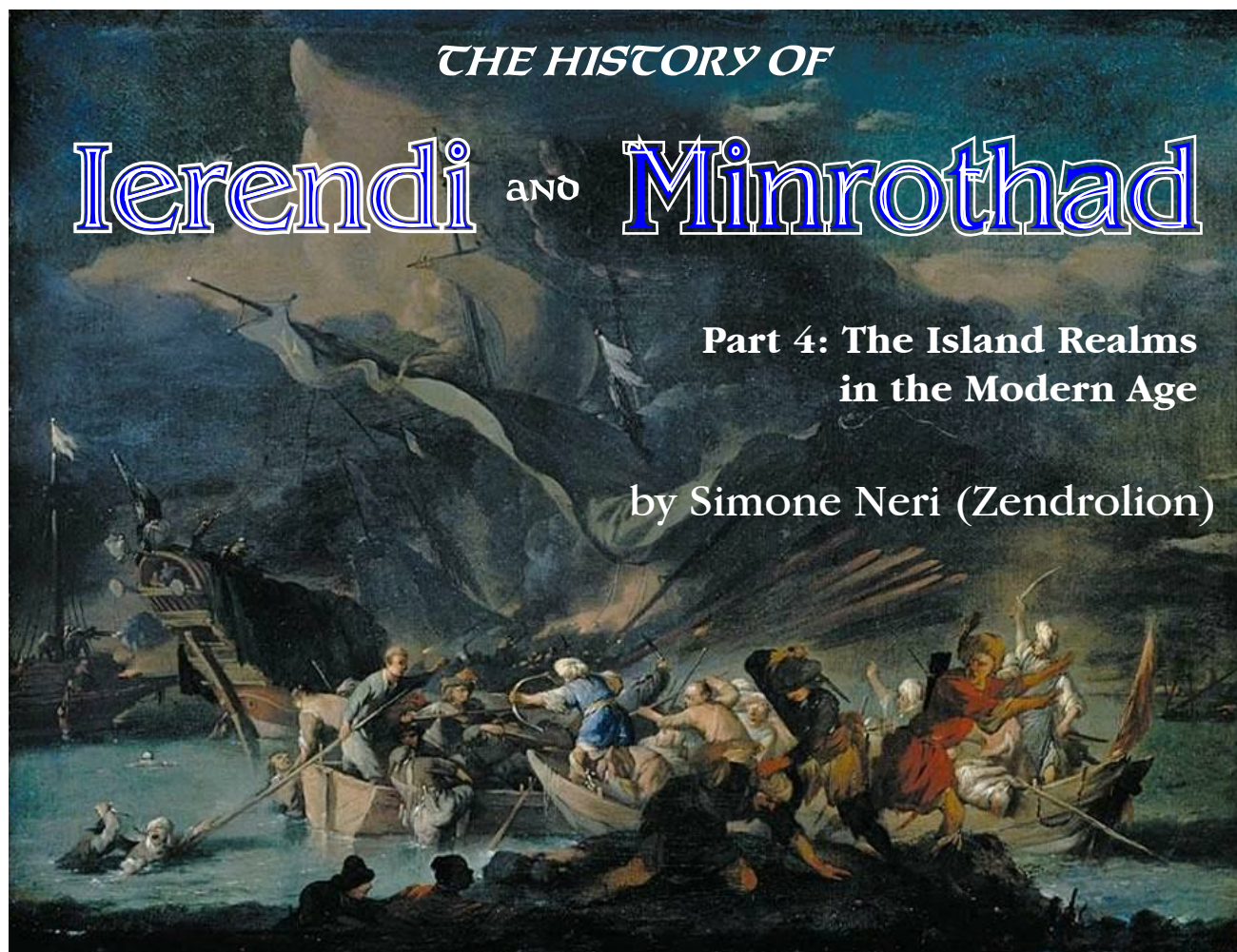
them later when Gilas turns on them. Those are the two Darkers in area 2, Marcus in area 3, Madur in area 6, Midu in area 7, Savos and Mira in area 26, the three in area 27, Vidar in area 30.

Some will obey Gilas, even if they disagree with the temporary alliance with the Darkers. Those are the priest of Ssu-ma and Khainet (area 3), Kuv (area 5, but he could later betray Gilas), Mivos and Anya and Tawyn (area 7, but the latter could later betray Gilas too), the dwarves in area 9, Guras (area 16), the gnomes in area 18, the dwarves in area 19, Bofor in area 25, the dwarves in area 30.

Some will obey Gilas but could later join the Darkers, at the DM's discretion, as Farur in area 12 and the adventurers in area 21 and 31.

Lastly there are particular cases that will not join any side, as the blacksmiths in area 15.

If for any reason Gilas has not found the time to turn on the Darkers yet when the presumed dead Last One fights back from Level 10 (see issue #1 of Threshold magazine for details about this future occurrence), she will aid the Darkers against Him, as she considers the ancient vampire the biggest threat.



THE HISTORY OF

Ierendi and Minrothad

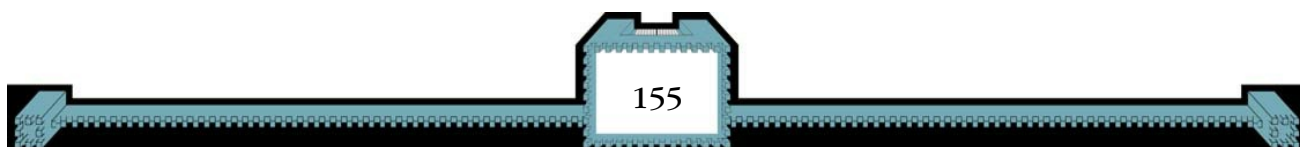
Part 4: The Island Realms
in the Modern Age

by Simone Neri (Zendrolion)

Here we come to the fourth and final part of our in-depth history of the archipelagos of Ierendi and Minrothad. In this last installment we will read how the Kingdom of Ierendi came out of the internal turmoils of the 8th century AC to become the tourist haven we know today, and what kind of long-lasting political changes were introduced in the flourishing trade power of Minrothad in the 9th century.

THE NINTH AND TENTH CENTURIES

The last two centuries were a time of prosperity and economic expansion for both island countries. Strong oligarchies made up of wealthy landowning and merchant families had finally seized power and were successfully keeping it, making both realms quite politically stable; both oligarchies, tough, did not assumed a conservative attitude, and proved their willingness to adapt their respective realm's institutions to the gradually-changing social and economic landscape; both Minrothad and Ierendi



experimented important reform processes which would impress on the two realms the features they still preserve to this day.

Apart from some sporadic conflicts, the last two centuries were mostly a time of peace at sea and between the Sea of Dread nations, which saw a decisive increase of trade, use and discovery of new trade routes, and a lessening of privateer and pirate activity which lasted until the second half of the 10th century AC, when it again began to rise.

The Kingdom of Ierendi's internal turmoil in the latter half of the previous century had ensured the success of the attempt by the guildmasters of Minrothad to challenge the neighbor's primacy. By the beginning of the 9th century AC, the Minrothad Guilds were starting their rise in sea trade which would continue, despite some challenges and times of depression, to this day.

Thanks to their economic prosperity, a common feature of the two realms in the last two centuries was immigration, which both island nations favored, bringing new resources inside their borders and making great profits from the businesses tied to them. However, while Minrothad's oligarchy reacted to the influx of immigrants with the closure of its borders for a long period of time, Ierendi was much more welcoming toward them, becoming one of the most appealing destinations for upper class tourism in the Known World.

A Liberal Paradise for Adventurers

The last two centuries have been an age of consolidation and economic rise in Ierendi, marked by decisive progressive reform, such as abolition of slavery, by policies favorable to immigration, and by the development of the new tourism activities which made the country further famous among the rest of the Known World nations. This is not to say that the oligarchy ruling the kingdom did not have to face dangerous challenges, one of which tested the stability of the realm only a couple of decades after the reform of AC 790.

The Great Makai Uprising

The two decades after the end of the Forty Years' Terror had been marked by the gradual opening of the ruling Ierendian oligarchy to access by other, recently-risen families; the old, small cadre of families which made up the old oligarchy now had enlarged, including a greater number of families -- it was still an oligarchy, but the struggle which the merchants had won against the First Families had given the population the impression that the country was undertaking a liberal and more democratic course. The following years were characterized by a very stable social climate, with the upper middle class firmly in control of the government and the rest of the people happy with this course of things.

However, there was a relevant fraction of the islands' population which was not content at all: the native Makai. Since the kingdom's proclamation of independence from Thyatis, the Makai had always been considered

backward, ignorant, and second class subjects in Ierendi. While some of them preserved a tribal lifestyle in the wilderness or in small rural and fishing villages, many had gone to search for a job in the towns and in the plantations and mines, where they had been forced to accept very hard and unprotected working conditions, mostly to undertake heavy and wearing labor. They enjoyed little better condition than slaves, but their lives still went on with great difficulty. Their conditions had further worsened during the Forty Years' Terror, when the shrinkage of Ierendian trade had led to a decrease of the slave population in the islands, with the obvious consequence that plantations and mines owners had to rely more on Makai labor. Gradually and inevitably, the Makai workers began to be subjected to the same working conditions of the slave population. Worse, the new liberal course which characterized Ierendian policies after AC 790 had done nothing to lessen the burden of Makai servitude, under which laborers were obliged to accept payment in food and goods in quantity barely sufficient to ensure their survival, were subject to an unbearable work pace, could not leave the place where they worked, and had to suffer inhumane punishments at the slightest offense or work decrease. To make things even worse, some plantation and mine owners had begun to raid the islands' interior to capture members of isolated Makai tribes in order to replenish the supply of slaves and workforce at their disposal.

Despite some signals of Makai unrest in various areas of Ierendi Island, the Council of Lords largely ignored the issue. A small faction of the Council of Citizens, however, starting from AC 798 began advocating for a

better treatment of the Makai and the slaves. The faction grew to a sizeable minority of the Council of Citizens in the course of a few years, and fierce debates took place between the conservative families - who wanted to keep things as they were now -, the progressive ones - who wanted to establish firm rules regulating slavery and protecting the Makai from being considered slaves - and the abolitionist ones - who voiced for the total abolition of slavery. Nothing concrete, however, was decided, and Makai unrest raised.

In AC 812, in the north-western region of Ierendi Island, one of the by then usual raids against Makai tribes to seize slaves led to the capture of a local warrior's young wife. This Makai, named Kekipa, gathered a number of fighting men from his tribe and led a rescue counterattack against the landowner who held the girl. The landowner and his entourage were killed by the rebels, and Kekipa's wife was freed alongside all other slaves and Makai held there. Nearby local plantation owners were worried about this event, and put together a mercenary force to capture Kekipa, kill him as an example, and take back all the freed slaves. But Kekipa tactical use of terrain led to the disastrous defeat of the mercenary army, to further raids against the local landowners, and to the appeal of the latter to Ierendi's government. This marked the beginning of what would become the Great Makai Uprising (AC 812-818)¹.

¹ The idea of the uprising, albeit within a different historical setting, was borrowed from [Alternate Ierendi Gazetteer: The Pirate Kingdom of Ierendi \(AM2\)](#) (by J.W. Biles). The name of King Konal (but not his surname), below, was taken from the same source.

The Council of Lords did not hesitate to address the problem, and sent an army to crush the rebels, but it was again defeated near Mount Kununuroa in AC 813. By this time, thousands of Makai workers and slaves had joined Kekipa's warband, which grew to the size of a true and threatening army. The rebels were also being joined by freed slaves of foreign nationality which had no means to leave Ierendi other than fighting their way out of the island alongside Kekipa, and many Makai warriors from the wilderness tribes who saw the rebellion as a way to halt and turn back the settlers' penetration into their lands and the seizing of their resources.

The uprising widened to cover much of central and western Ierendi Island, and rebellion outbreaks happened on Elogy and Fletcher islands as well. The Ierendian navy and privateers did not allow an easy flight from the Island, but as the government seemed unable to stem or quell the uprising, harsher tactics began to be used against Kekipa's followers - swift and ruthless naval raids against coastal Makai villages, execution of captured rebels, and other brutal practices. As the rebel Makai responded to these tactics with equal ruthlessness, the war became fiercer and more savage.

In AC 816, Kekipa's wife and firstborn were slaughtered during one of Ierendi's punitive expeditions against the villages which supported the rebels. Kekipa's sorrow for the loss was overwhelming, and changed the rebel leader's attitude toward his own life and the goal of the conflict - now he did not want to end Makai slavery, he wanted revenge. Kekipa appealed to a number of old Makai shamans who practiced traditional

necromantic magics, and asked them to raise undead creatures from killed enemies to bolster the ranks of his army. Zombies, ghouls, and wights joined the rebel army, much to the disquietude of fellow rebels. Kekipa himself became aloof, surrounded only by his shamans, and started practicing gruesome necromantic rituals. Dissension grew among the other Makai rebel chiefs about the new direction the uprising had taken under Kekipa's leadership; many decided to ignore Kekipa's orders and fight on their own. This hampered the coordination of the rebel attacks, and weakened the rebellion's overall war effort.

In AC 817, Kekipa led an undead army to besiege Northkeep, where the commander of the raid which had brought to the death of his family was in command. The keep fell after a short siege, and the occupants were slaughtered to the last man, not even sparing the civilian population, nor women and children. The Massacre of Northkeep was a major Ierendian setback during the uprising, but paradoxically was the one which helped turn the tide of the war.

When news of the massacre reached other rebel chiefs, the uprising definitively fragmented. Many warriors returned to their villages and abandoned the fight altogether, others condemned Kekipa's actions as a shame for the whole Makai population. There were also some who instrumentally wanted to exploit the success at Northkeep to bring the rebellion to a victorious end. The majority of the rebel chiefs, however, by now was against Kekipa.

The Council of Lords took the opportunity offered by the fragmentation of the uprising to pass a decree which granted pardon to common rebels (not including rebel chiefs) for the crimes done during the rebellion if they deposed arms within a month. At the same time, the Council passed a second decree which obliged a slave-owner to take care of his slaves' health, shelter, and clothing, and to give them enough food and drink to sustain themselves well. The same decree forbid the enslavement of Makai natives born as freemen in the Ierendi Islands.

After some weeks, the uprising had lost many of its followers thanks to the two decrees and to the failure of the rebellion's leadership. Not a few rebel warbands continued to oppose the Ierendian government, though, but in the turn of an year they were crushed with extreme ruthlessness, with most of them being executed and women and children sold again as slaves. Kekipa's undead army was finally stopped in the Battle of the Hiehie Hills in AC 818, when the army personally led by King Konal Marley trapped it between two low hills and destroyed the whole host thanks to the help of a contingent of Honor Island mages. Kekipa's body was never found, though, and some tales hold that he might still "live" today as an undead creature.

The Abolition of Slavery and the Amendment of Labor

The Great Makai Uprising was the only widespread native rebellion happened in the kingdom in the modern times. Despite its eventual defeat, the rebellion had caused some fear in the mine and plantation owners

of Ierendi, and in anyone who held Makai slaves or serfs in general. After the rebellion, even before the Council of Lords emanated edicts to limit the exploitation of Makai labor, Ierendian masters began to treat their slaves and serfs more humanly - no undernourishment, no unjust treatments or brutal punishments, no more raids against Makai free tribes. In fact, subsequent measures taken by the Council of Lords to regulate slavery and serfdom² can be considered an indirect consequence of the Great Makai Uprising. Moreover, this new attitude, coupled with the decrease of piracy and wars in the Sea of Dread which were reducing the influx of low-cost slaves in Ierendi, contributed to undermine the usefulness and cheapness of slavery.

In AC 824, an edict established that the killing of a slave by his own master was classified as murder. This was followed by another edict in AC 830, which instituted special (supposedly neutral) officers to whom maltreated slaves could appeal in case of abuse from their masters. Subsequent legislation introduced additional limits on the exploitation of slave labor and protection of the slave himself, until slavery was ultimately abolished in the Kingdom of Ierendi in AC 931.

At the same time, the Council passed various laws whose goal was to regulate the heavy labor done mostly by Makai workers which took place in mines and, most of all, in

² This paragraph expands on a sentence found in GAZ4, page 12: "Edicts of the ninth and tenth century monarchs have eliminated the worst abuses of the earlier plantation system".

plantations. The first set of laws about plantation work was the *Labor Edicts* of AC 858, which protected indentured Makai serfs from beatings, whipping, and harsh punishment, and forbid the plantation owners to employ pregnant women and children under 14 years for heavy labor. In AC 886 the use of manacles, collars, and chains to restrain indentured servants was forbidden, as well as labor for sick and old servants. In AC 917 another law limited the maximum time of indenture to two years, obliging the plantation owner to compile the indenture contract in written form and to read it to the serf. Lastly, in AC 964 still another edict considered the plantation owner responsible for a serf's death when this happened during plantation labor.

As usual in the Ierendian tradition, these laws were often disregarded due to influence and power of the plantation owners, and to the frequent habit of using bribes to bypass laws in the islands. Most of these codes, in fact, include confirmation and rewording of laws emanated previously - which clearly indicates that compliance to them as a whole was relatively lacking. Nevertheless, this liberal attitude by the Ierendian government contributed to make it appear one of the most progressive realms of the Known World, and to slightly improve the Makai serfs' labor conditions.

Ierendian Society and Economy in the second half of the 9th century

The latter half of the 9th century AC was truly a time of gradual integration of the Makai - at least those who lived in the archipelago's towns - into Ierendian society. While this result was still much behind in rural areas

and plantations, some of the Makai living in urban settlements began to be infrequently selected for lesser administration offices, to be admitted in the town watches, and so on. Bias toward the Makai who showed education and integration into Ierendian society slowly faded away during the course of the subsequent decades. Inter-marriage between Makai and settlers in the towns - and to a lesser extent in rural areas - also favored greater integration between the two main components of the archipelago's society.

The Kingdom of Ierendi in this age thus began to show greater social mobility than anytime in the past; in the last century and a half, as some of the older families declined, they had to give way to newly-risen ones, often of foreign origins, who in some cases even managed to raise enough in power to get a seat in the Council of Lords - like the Gogunov, migrated to Ierendi after the Thyatian conquest of Traladara around AC 900.

Opportunity for social rise spurred immigration, which was as well a central factor of Ierendian growth in the 9th century AC, as it was for nearby Minrothad. Most immigrants came from Traladara and Darokin, closely followed by those coming from Minrothad and from far-away Glantri. The welcoming attitude of Ierendian society toward immigrants contributed much to the popular image of the country which still survives to this day - of a tolerant, easygoing realm without social barriers and social conflicts.

From an economic point of view, Ierendian slowly recovered from the blow inflicted to it during the 8th century AC, but could never

seriously challenge the new trading power of the Minrothad Guilds, nor the rising star of Darokinian economy. The decrease of pirate activity, however, spurred Ierendian families who based their wealth on seafaring to find a niche for themselves in export and import trade, developing closer ties with the Minrothad Guilds, the Traladaran lands, the Five Shires, and Darokin. Pirate activity was still practiced but moved its sphere of action away from the most important trading partners of Ierendi - toward the western Sea of Dread (Great Waste and Yavdlom, for example) or to the Thyatian shipping lanes in the east.

An aggressive trade expansion was still beyond the forces of the kingdom, as it became evident when at the beginning of the 10th century AC, under the sponsorship of the then-ruling Queen Antonia de Scarlatos³, the Council of Lords tried to expand the country's network with a series of expeditions to the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago - which however turned a failure when these clashed against the merrow Twaelar Kingdom, and were followed by subsequent abandonment of the project (see "The Bout for Thanegioth", below).

Thus, alongside trade, exploitation of local resources preserved a strong attraction for native investors; plantations improved their economic importance with production of cotton and vegetables devoted to export trade, as well as gemstone (pearls and corals)

³ The name (but not the surname) of this queen was borrowed from [Alternate Ierendi Gazetteer: The Pirate Kingdom of Ierendi \(AM2\)](#) (by J.W. Biles); note that the source has her in an otherwise completely different historical context.

harvesting, and mining of still unexploited mineral deposits (gold, platinum, and salt). Moreover, another important economic field which developed in the archipelago in the next century, as we will see, was that of tourism.

Kythria and the Royal Tournament of Adventurers

One of the figures who decisively contributed to an improvement of the social climate, and one of the leading characters of the recent Ierendian history, was indeed a half-Makai, half-Thyatian woman named Kythria⁴. Gifted with an extraordinary beauty and an irresistible charisma, Kythria was active as an adventurer in the decade AC 840-850, after which time her exploits were told not only in Ierendi, but also in other coastal towns and cities. She was as well active in revealing mistreatment and abuses against the Makai native population, and her denounces contributed much to the enactment of the labor reform of AC 858, and to her image as a popular heroine.

Besides her more daring and noble deeds, Kythria was also a passionate character who devoted her life to amusement and fulfilment of sensual pleasures, and who gathered wealth in order to satisfy her fancies. As a cleric of the Immortal Valerias and a devout follower of her patron's precepts, she was as well at the center of many gossips and scandals - which even involved important families - in Ierendi social life.

⁴ Kythria's following background is expanded from the one found in , [Codex Immortalis](#) (by M. Dalmonte).

In AC 854, Kythria began to privately sponsor in Ierendi town a series of “challenges” based on various physical, artistic, cultural, intelligence, and social skills, open to the public, in which participants challenged each other to win a final prize. Thanks to Kythria’s grace and popularity, these events became in short time occasion for feasts and revelry, and after some years they even began to attract participants and visitors from the mainland. These “tournaments”, which were held at irregular intervals a couple of times per year - actually when Kythria wished - became the source of much economic income for the capital, both because the local people were eager to spend money during the festivals, and due to the presence of foreigners. The festivals also began to receive financial support from the government.

The festivals grew so much in popularity that they attracted the attention of the Council of Lords. After the reform of AC 790, the yearly-elected king and queen of Ierendi had kept mostly a ceremonial role, and by now they had been reduced to mere figureheads. Usually the individuals elected were prestigious or popular or influential persons - heroes, military and political leaders rewarded with the royal crown for their career, and so on - who held almost no actual power, but whose election pleased the common people. Kythria herself had been offered a candidature in a couple of occasions, although she had refused. The annual election ceremony of the two monarchs had been as well the occasion of public festivals since the first years of the 9th century AC, even if lately the popular favor for this event had declined due to the fact that the “election” had assumed somewhat

the outline of a formal appointment by the Council of Citizens than a real time of popular participation.

In AC 867, the Council of Lords proposed an institutional reform to the Council of Citizens, in order to integrate the very popular festivals devised by Kythria into Ierendi’s government machine. The proposal contemplated the yearly election of the two monarchs not by the Council of Citizens anymore, but through a series of contests modeled on those ideated by Kythria, whose winners - one male and one female - would be crowned king and queen of Ierendi for a year. The proposal was highly popular with the capital’s lower and middle classes - whose attention focused on the business which this reform might bolster - and it was unsurprisingly approved by the Council of Citizens.

Thus, the so-called Royal Tournament of Adventurers was born. With the aid of the Honor Island mages, challenging contests for would-be monarchs were devised, which called into question a participant’s combat and physical skills as well as his intelligence and problem-solving ability. The Royal Tournament of Adventurers obviously changed the nature of candidates to the royal crowns. Where before AC 867 influential and popular figures could still win the crown through elections, now the competition for the throne was dominated by experienced and versatile adventurers, who possessed a wide array of skills in a variety of fields and who were able to overcome the different challenges the tournament imposed on them.

The Royal Tournament turned immediately to be a great success, both in terms of popular favor and of economic profit. Elected competition winners also turned to be quite content of their status as yearly national heroes, and demanded nothing more in terms of political powers, leaving the burden of government decision in the hands of the Council of Lords, as it always had been. To give the Royal Tournament a national character and because the winning of the contest implied wearing the Ierendian crown, the competition was limited to candidates born in the Ierendi Islands.

Kythria herself, now eager to test and prove her skills in the Royal Tournament in order to endorse the decision of the Council of Citizens with her own participation, won the tournament fourteen times between AC 867 and AC 884, becoming the true idol of Ierendian population and the most beloved queen in the nation's history. One of her greatest accomplishments as queen was the restructuring and enlargement of the royal Castle of Ierendi in the capital, to which she contributed to with her huge personal wealth, turning the place into a true architectural marvel built entirely with corals gathered in the archipelago's waters. Today, the castle is still considered one of the most spectacularly and outrageously beautiful buildings of the Known World.

In AC 890, she ultimately left her native archipelago in order to search for Immortality, which she would achieve in AC 910 after switching from the patronage of Valerias to that of Eiryndul. Subsequently, her cult grew in the Ierendi Island, where Kythria is still worshipped today as a national

heroine as well as a patroness of lust and desires.

Ierendi in the Last Century

Despite Ierendi's failure in seizing the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago (see "The Bout for Thanegioth", below), the economy of the kingdom improved due to the steady influx of immigrants and visitors brought in the archipelago by the government's welcoming policies as by attraction provided by the annual Royal Tournament of Adventurers. The influx of visitors became even larger when the Council of Citizens decided to open participation to the tournament to outsiders and foreigners in AC 935. The competition continued to be dominated by native adventurers, however, until the extraordinary exploits of Haradith "of the Tall Cedars", a lady born in Glantri of mixed fair elf and Pure Alphantian heritage; Haradith became queen for the first time in AC 957 and then won the Royal Tournament in 12 of the 14 subsequent years, becoming a symbol of Ierendi's welcoming policy toward outsiders, and as popular as only Kythria had been before in the country's history. Haradith even managed to found her own family in Ierendi and place it in a position of power - the Halfelven hold today one of the seats at the Council of Lords.

Many native islanders understood the economic profits which could be made by providing visitors and foreigners with all sorts of services - from the most basic (lodge, food, drinks, and basic amusement) to the most sophisticated ones (special and out of the ordinary entertainment, touristic services, and so on). In short, the 10th

century AC saw the development in Ierendi of the tourism industry, which became iconic and unique to this island country. Wealthy visitors flocked in the archipelago during all the seasons of the years, falling in love with the place's pleasant climate, peaceful inhabitants, beautiful scenery, and charming beaches. The increase of tourism allowed for the birth of new jobs and businesses, like touristic guides, restaurants, rentable resorts, and the like, which brought new wealth and life to the country's economy and sizeable sums - through dues and tariffs - in the state's coffers.

A special field of the tourist entertainment especially called on adventurers, who came to visit the islands to find a place where their "profession" was a mark of social appreciation; thus the first resorts for rich adventurers were born, the first of whom was established by Queen Haradith herself. In AC 974, a couple of retired adventurers - the Ierendi native Gastenoo Longblade, and the Averoignan Simon Saint-Pierre - tried to bring adventuring entertainment to the larger public of rich patrons, opening the first adventure park on Safari Island, "Gastenoo's World of Adventure", where customers could experiment the thrill of true adventures without putting their lives at risk. Their idea was soon a great success and their business was mimicked by other adventure parks, especially on Safari Island. The last two decades have indeed seen a further raise of tourism from the Known World and beyond to the Ierendi Islands, made up by adventurers and wealthy people around the mainland who, in some cases, even try to buy properties in Ierendi and to establish there a residence to retire to in the later part of their

lives. Government data claim that by AC 1000 some 20,000 tourists flock to the Ierendi archipelago each year. Immigration has continued to grow steadily through the recent years, bringing further life and novelties in Ierendian society and culture - such as the Temple of the Eternal Truth, established in the capital by Ylari missionaries, which turned out to have an unexpectedly large following.

From a political point of view, the kingdom enjoyed extraordinary stability during the 10th century AC - especially if compared to nearby countries like Traladara, Minrothad, and Thyatis. The oligarchy in control of the government proved its ability to co-opt into the political system new and wealthy families, managing to preserve its hold over the country. Families like the already mentioned Halfelven, or the Darokinian-originated Rogers, won a seat in the Council of Lords in the last fifty years. The Council of Lords changed name in AC 980 in order to erase the distinction between "lords" and "citizens" in the realm's two main institutional assemblies, renaming itself the Tribunal of Ierendi - without modifying at all its own powers and composition.

The government did not neglect the military affairs; the growing prosperity of the realm and the lack of true wars since more than a century risked to sap the country's traditional fighting prowess. The Council of Lords enlarged and improved the old naval training school of the capital, which became the Academy of Naval Science, as a mean to keep fighting techniques and training of the Ierendian navy and sailors updated and competitive with those of nearby countries -

especially the Minrothad Guilds. New defensive works were undertaken around the capital as well, with construction of a breakwater around Ierendi's harbor in AC 977-984. The increase in ship traffic following the reopening to trade of the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago and of the Minrothad Guilds led to a steep revival of pirate activity undertaken also by Ierendi in the last decade, which has somewhat kept the Royal Navy and the kingdom's privateers quite trained and practiced.

Today, the kingdom enjoys a quite enviable status among the powers of the Known World. Its navy is considered virtually unbeatable while defending the archipelago due to the skills of native seamen, the alliance of the Sunlit Sea merrows, and that of the Honor Island mages. A stable and open political system controls the country and has managed to avoid major upheavals in the last two centuries. The economic prosperity of the realm has increased due to the improvement of trade, agricultural production, and tourism industry, and the country is experimenting a demographic rise which could as well led in the next years to a growth of the islands' urban population. However, the kingdom has not taken part in major wars since a very long time, and it is still to be seen if its adventurers-led government controlled by intriguing factions will manage to hold the realm together and present a real challenge for outside powers when the time will come.

IMMIGRATION AND REFORM IN MINROTHAD

The recently-born Minrothad Guilds had come out of the Corsair Wars with some losses, but ultimately they had managed to survive thanks to the defeat of the Thyatian Empire. Also, the quick reduction of Ierendi's trading ambitions after the end of the war and the internal turmoil of the kingdom allowed the guildmasters not only to take back the positions they had lost to Ierendi due to the conflict, but even to challenge Ierendi's own ones and to exploit the neighbor's internal social and political struggle to expand their trading power at the expense of Ierendi.

Trade and Agreements

After the Corsair Wars, Thyatian trade power had been toppled; not only the empire had lost any chance to bring back the Sea of Dread's northern archipelagos under its control, but it also had lost a sizeable fraction of its sea forces due to the privateer war against Ierendi and Minrothad and to the prolonged struggle against the Twaelar Kingdom in the Davanian Shallows. Ultimately, the further withdrawal of Thyatis from the southern seas meant the loss of any control and contact with the small colonies the empire had established in the decades before on Davania's northern coasts. Ierendi's failure at taking control of these colonies,⁵ the kingdom's internal troubles, and the Guilds' slow internal and trade consolidation after the reforms of the "Second Uniter" and the Corsair Wars,

⁵ See "The History of Ierendi and Minrothad Part 3" in Threshold issue no. 5, page .

HALL OF FAME

Here follows a list of some of the most famous and celebrated or recent winners of the Royal Tournament of Adventurers during the course of the last century and a half. In the table below, "Period of Activity (AC)" indicated the range of years within which the indicated individual managed to get his or her victories in the tournament, not the actual years of reign. Note that this list is by no means to be considered exhaustive.

| <i>King/Queen</i> | <i>Origin</i> | <i>Total Victories (So Far)</i> | <i>Period of Activity (AC)</i> |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Kythria | Ierendi | 14 | 867-884 |
| Haradith "of the Tall Cedars" Halfelven | Glantri (wood elf/Pure Alphatian) | 12 | 957-972 |
| Taran Teagan ¹ | Redstone | 9 | 976-990 |
| Mungo Shipshearer ² | Ierendi (halfling) | 7 | 982-997 |
| Antonia de Scarlatos ³ | Ierendi | 6 | 901-918 |
| Morgana ⁴ | Unknown (Common Alphatian from somewhere on the Isle of Dawn) | 3 | 977-980 |
| Palbrit Harlow ⁵ | Darokin | 2 | 999-... |
| Riaghan Teagan | Ierendi | 2 | 991-994 |
| Aislinn Teagan | Ierendi | 1 | 992 |
| Marianne Volusion | Ierendi | 1 | 1000-... |

See next page for notes to the table

Notes to the Hall of Fame table on previous page

¹ Taran is a pregenerated PC featured in adventure module M3 Twilight Calling; there his description states: “After many years as King of Ierendi, Taran turned the kingdom over to his children, and became a wandering hero”. Due to his name, I chose to have Redstone (Isle of Dawn) origins for him; I created his surname accordingly. Ierendi not being a hereditary monarchy, his children must have won the crown of Ierendi in the years after his departure; thus I included Riaghan and Aislinn (son and daughter of Taran) in the list.

² The character of Mungo was borrowed from [Alternate Ierendi Gazetteer: The Pirate Kingdom of Ierendi \(AM2\)](#) (by J.W. Biles), albeit there he is found in a different context and role.

³ See note 1, above, about this character.

⁴ Another pregenerated PC from adventure module M3 Twilight Calling; according to her background there, “She once was married to Taran”, so I supposed she might have become queen of Ierendi for a short time as well, and that Riaghan and Aislinn were the children she had with Taran. About Morgana, see also the sidebar on pages 67-68 in *The Minor Islands of the Sea of Dread*, within “Threshold” issue no. 3.

⁵ Palbrit and Marianne (below) are the monarchs featured in GAZ4; I invented their surnames.

temporarily left open a vacuum in the Green Coast area, which would be for a time filled by Hulean missions and by the rise of lesser local trade towns and countries.⁶ Only later the Guilds’ ships would have begun to prowl those waters.

In the meantime, of the lasting bones of contention between the Guilds and Thyatis, however, continued to be the isle of Terentias, which Minrothad had acquired with the Treaty of Bayville (AC 720). In fact, Thyatis was angered because - despite the

⁶ During this time, the Hulean Empire established the colony of Garganin in the Green Coast.

treaty - toward the end of the 8th century AC, pirates of all sorts openly used the island as base, without the Guilds’ government doing anything against them. The empire was in no position to wage a war against Minrothad to win Terentias back, but when in AC 799 Thyatis threatened to revoke the trading concessions made to the Guilds, the guildmasters understood where their gains laid. So they agreed to help Thyatis in joint operations against local pirates and in making the small chain formed by Terentias, North Island, and Fire Island an autonomous state within the Thyatian Empire, to be ruled by a governor elected and advised by the islands’ most important families. As the local



Guilders of Minrothad

water elf families had strong ties with Alfeisle, Minrothad continued to exert a great deal of influence on the islands' internal affairs, despite the chain be formally part of the Thyatian Empire, even if in name only.⁷

Then, in AC 878, during a time of serious internal troubles in the Thyatian Empire which would last until the end of the 9th century AC,⁸ the governor of the autonomous

⁷ This additional change of sovereignty over Terentias is borrowed from [History of the Thyatian People](#) (by J. Ruhland); I have slightly changed some details of it in order to fit with this article's timeline.

⁸ The empire likely passed through a time of fragmentation, civil strife, or serious internal troubles just before the onset of the 10th century AC. Hints of this are found in canon sources when they says that Thyatis is "a little more than a century old" (CM1 Test of the Warlords, page 4), and that "130 years ago [...] it was nothing more than a large

state of Terentias was persuaded by the Guilds' government to sell Fire Island to Minrothad. The atoll was and had always been useless, due to its dangerous active volcano that made even approaching its coasts dangerous at time.⁹ The Guilds' government, led by Missan Meditor, had special plans for Fire Island, however; in AC 880 the island was declared off-limits to all shipping, and since that time it has become the secret base of operation of the Minrothaddan Privateers Guild, supported by the government and representing a main asset for the Guilds to keep their own waters free from any rivalry or competition. As we will see, in the next years (AC 898) the Guilds will manage to strike a threefold deal with Ierendi and Thyatis, which will allow them to take possession of North Island as well.

Most importantly, the expansion of the Guilds' trade in the 9th century AC brought Minrothaddan ships for the first time to regularly plow the western Sea of Dread and the coasts of the Serpent Peninsula. In AC 852, Minrothaddan traders were the first Known Worlders to open formal trade relations with Yavdlom, establishing a storage area in Tanakumba (which they called "Thanopolis").¹⁰ In the following years, Minrothaddan vessels penetrated the

city-state ruled by shiftless no-accounts" (M5 Talons of Night, background of the pregenerated PC Shebb Woolsey). The rise of Gabrionius IV to the imperial throne put an end to this time of troubles.

⁹ According to GAZ9 The Minrothad Guilds, the Guilds are in possession of Fire Island by AC 880.

¹⁰ See *Champions of Mystara, Explorer's Manual*, page 42.

Izondian Deep, sailing toward the Gulf of Hule and the Savage Coast, opening trade with local city-states like Slagovich and Hojah, and with the coastal Hulean cities. There, the arrival of the Minrothaddans worried the small local trade powers, and resulted in some sporadic conflict at sea, which generally saw the Minrothaddan prevailing. It was clear, however, that a show of force against those competitors was necessary if Minrothad wished to decisively penetrate that trade region.

Immigration from the End of the 8th to the First Half of the 9th Century

During the 8th century AC, the raising economy of the Guilds and the smartness of the guildmasters allowed Minrothad to attract many immigrants from mainland countries, in particular from the Thyatian Empire and the various Darokinian states. In order to make their products more competitive on the Known World markets and to subtract from the other countries' merchants the intellectual resources they needed for innovations and discoveries, the Guilds encouraged immigration in the Colony Islands, allowing a great degree of freedom in artistic expression and making quite easy for the newcomers to join one of the many guilds of the country. These aspects made the islands an eligible destination for many craftsmen and inventors, who were restrained in their home cities and countries by the presence of closer-minded local guilds which most of the time hampered trade and crafting with the limitations they imposed on their members, instead of allowing free expression and competition based on the products' real

quality. So, in the first quarter of the 9th century AC, thousands of immigrants came to the Colony Islands. The Guilds greatly benefited from this influx of new techniques, new ideas, and renewed enterprising spirit, and saw a huge raise of their crafting activities.

Among the various groups of immigrants, there was one which had a lasting effects on the Guilds' future structure and which would definitely make them a multiracial country. During the Forty Years' War in the far-away Alpathian-dominated Highlands to the north, in AC 802 discovery of rich and plentiful gold veins in the mountains had unleashed a gold rush like no one had been ever seen before. Protagonists of this gold rush were mostly dwarven prospectors and miners from Rockhome, thousands of whom flocked into the already war-ravaged Highlands, adding further chaos in the country; it was not long before warbands of armed dwarven mercenaries began crossing the countryside, sometimes fighting against the various factions at war, sometimes only robbing the peasants of food in order to carry on their search for gold. As plague spread in the Highlands at the same time when the dwarves began arriving, the local population began accusing them to have introduced the disease in the country; thus began the Years of Infamy, during which the common people and the nobles alike of the Highlands unleashed a fierce persecution against the dwarves, with the goal of killing them outright or chase them out of the country. In AC 828, a decree eventually sanctioned the expulsion of all dwarves from the Highlands, on pain of death - this meant that even the law was now against the dwarves.

Many dwarves had already begun to leave the Highlands in the years before, but after the decree theirs became a mass flight from the country. A few went back to Rockhome, while others settled in neighboring countries like Sind and Darokin. Minrothaddan guildmasters were shrewd and took this opportunity to make a formal invitation to some thousands of dwarves to migrate to the Guilds' territory, offering them a place to settle on Fortress Island, which had always been a sparsely-inhabited volcanic and rocky island. The Guilds had always been lacking real stone and metalworking activities, and thought that the dwarves could represent a great addition to the national craftsmanship. The group of dwarven clans, led by Darkbrow Hammer, accepted and moved up to Athenos, when Minrothad ships helped them in their transfer to Fortress Island.

The Guilds helped the new immigrants to build settlements on the island's rocky slopes; the place was poor in natural resources, but its volcanic nature made it an ideal place for metalworking, and there were plenty of stone quarries. As the guildmasters had foreseen, the dwarves easily integrated in the Guilds' economy, trading their metal and stonecraft products with food and other necessities; their guilds quickly overcame the local, weak guilds which dealt in the same crafting areas, coming to represent an important economic force in the country. In AC 841, the dwarves established their port-town of Stronghold, on Fortress Island, which became the center of their trades.

Despite these positive economic effects, immigration also spurred some reactions in the common people of the Guilds, who

believed that the attention their rulers were devoting to the phenomenon was starting to become excessive, because it often favored outsiders over inhabitants of the Colony Islands. The quick rise of some families with foreign origins, such as the Traladaran Ebonov, confirmed this feeling.¹¹ The Minrothaddans indeed believed in free competition, but many now believed this was not a fair one, because the government wrongly favored way too much outsiders. Obviously this was not the truth, but common people - mostly on Trader's Isle - believed it to be, as well as some rich families whose businesses had suffered due to the immigrants' competition.

The Council of Minrothad (AC 850-862)

At the half of the 9th century AC, the Minrothad Guilds were developing as a nation more stable and prosper than ever. Social and economic transformation had however also taken place in the last century or so.

From a political point of view, decisions had increasingly been made within the Council of Dread, by the heads of the four Family Guilds. Prosperity and peace had marginalized the role of the General Council of Guilds and Estates, which had been called more and more only to approve the decisions taken by the Council of Dread without further unnecessary discussion. As most minor families represented in the General Council were nevertheless tied to

¹¹ The Ebonov family is featured in the Torenescu family tree in Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure.

the four major ones, this did not cause many problems.

From a social point of view, instead, the last century had seen the definitive disappearance of a neat distinction between land-owning families and mercantile ones, as the former had invested money in trade and had entered into the guilds, while the latter had sometimes used the money gained through trade to buy lands; the ruling oligarchy now formed a cohesive block of families who held more or less the same economic status.

At the same time, the development of trade had brought to the rise of an additional profession which was extremely valuable for the Guilds, and very much appreciated by everyone as well: that of the so-called "Merchant-Princes". These individuals were sea captains or master guilders who decided to carry on trade on their own without relying of the Guilds' port agents to sell their cargo and buy goods; they mixed together trading and seafaring skills, and - as most of them were water elves or magic-users - they were also trained in arcane magic. This odd mix of skills gradually blended together into the profession of the Merchant-Prince. By the half of the 9th century AC, there were so many of them that they began associating together, asking for the possibility to form a guild and to be recognized as a separate social class.

Lastly, immigration issues and the quick rise of the dwarven stone and metalcrafting guilds posed new problems which had to be addressed in order to avoid generating social conflicts.

The oligarchy's answer to these issues was the summoning of the Council of Minrothad in AC 850. The Council was a special assembly with much larger number of representatives than the General Council, chosen among the various guilds, main families, and local governments. The Council opened a long and decisive season of reforms lasted until AC 862, which would have shaped the Minrothad Guilds like they are today.

The Council of Dread was renamed Council of Guild Leaders; the dwarven metal and stonecrafting guilds were organized under one additional Family Guild, put under the lead of the Hammer family, who received a fifth seat in the Council of Guild Leaders. The Council of Guild Leaders also centered most powers in its hands, assuming legislative power in most issues, while the General Council of Guilds and Estates was emptied of real influence, being called only once per year to approve the yearly budget, and in extraordinary session to elect the nation's military leaders or to decide on important treaties or war declarations.

Also, a single head of state was established with the charge of Ruling Guildmaster, who had the largely ceremonial role to represent the nation as a whole and the duty to preside the Council of Guild Leaders, albeit being allowed to express a vote only in case of a tie in the assembly (due to abstinence of one or more members from the vote). The Ruling Guildmaster was chosen by the members of the Council of Guild Leaders.

The guild system was also restructured and reorganized through a common guild code,

which aimed at achieving a greater deal of harmonization of the various guilds to a single model; internal guild practices and offices were also clarified and uniformed. The traditional caste division of the Minrothaddan society also received formal sanction by the Council of Minrothad's decrees, seeing the institution of a new caste encompassing the magic-using sea captains known as Merchant-Princes.

Lastly, the Council of Minrothad answered to the people's growing opposition to immigration by imposing severe limitations on immigration in the archipelago, de facto decreasing and halting the influx of immigrants to the islands which had characterized the previous century.

The Rule of Missan Meditor

As the final step of the long reform process, and in the closing session of the Council of Minrothad, in AC 862 the newly-restructured Council of Guild Leaders appointed Missan Meditor, clanmaster of the oldest, most prestigious, and most influent water elf clan, as the Guilds' first Ruling Guildmaster. As part of the agreement which brought to the election of Missan, the Meditor clan had to leave the leadership of the water elf Family Guild to another family; thus, the water elf clan Kasan became the new head of that guild.

Missan was quite old when appointed as Ruling Guildmaster, and his role was largely that of representing a ceremonial, prestigious, and unifying figure beyond the various guilds' and local governments' interests. He had been for a very long time the leader of the water elf faction of Alfeisle,

and was a staunch supporter of Minrothad's trading expansion, being also quite available to use ruthless methods and force to bring the Guilds on the top of international sea trade.

The Council of Guild Leaders took largely the Guilds' policy in its own hands during the years of Missan's rule, as expected after the late reform. The Council's main goal was to limit immigration and strengthen control of the Guilds over trade in its own territory and waters. This was achieved by reinforcing or establishing monopolies of the native guilds over trades which represented Minrothad's primary activities, raising duties over importation of rival merchandise, hampering businesses managed by foreigners, and also severely patrolling the waters around the Colony Islands, in order to fight smuggling, illegal trade, and piracy. The Minrothad's navy was quite active during Missan's rule - supported as ever by the Privateers Guild - coming often to blows with Ierendian, Hin, and Thyatian pirates, and even stopping and inspecting merchant ships in their own ports or at sea to make the Council's decrees enforced.

While this policy was quite successful on the sea's surface, it found greater difficulties against trade which went on under the waves. The Council was particularly worried by trade carried on by the kna, a nomadic race of underwater traders, who were used to trade with whoever they wanted when they came near the coastline to bring to the surface dwellers their merchandise - mostly sea pearls and magical ingredients found only underwater. Obviously, the Guilds now considered such a trade akin to smuggling,

because trade had to be controlled by the individual guild which had monopoly over that specific trade area. The kna were not at all willing to comply with the Council's decrees, and an undeclared trade war ensued between the kna families and the Minrothad Guilds. Ruthless Minrothaddan piracy against the kna families - carried out by the Privateers Guild - led to the surprise slaughtering of many kna traders and clans; whenever the Guilds' privateers encountered the kna, they tried to kill them to the last creature before they could retreat in the depths. The most bloody battle of this conflict was the so-called Fire Battle (AC 880), when a flotilla of Minrothaddan privateers used a special substance - bought from a Honor Island trader - which burnt even underwater, to corner and slaughter a great number of kna families in the shallow waters between Open Isle and Fire Island.¹² The battle is still considered by the kna as one of the great modern tragedies of their race, and is the reason behind the great hate the kna harbor toward the Minrothaddans; since that day, the kna have withdrawn from Minrothaddan waters and have ceased any trade with the Guilds, however starting in retaliation a series of sporadic raids against Minrothaddan ships which still goes on today.

¹² The battle is featured on the poster map included in PC3 The Sea People; the enmity between the kna and the Guilds is further explored within the module.

The Guilds Under Kitrina and Oran Meditor

The Ruling Guildmaster Missan Meditor died in AC 887, and the Council of Guild Leaders chose to succeed him Kitrina Meditor, another member of the water elves' leading clan who was also Missan's grandniece. Her office as Ruling Guildmaster, which lasted until her assassination in AC 965, coincided with a time of further raise in Minrothaddan trade power - albeit offset by some defeats - but also with an age of gradual social stagnation and severe conservatorism, which led to a rift between the guildmasters and the highest castes of Minrothaddan societies, and the lower classes. Some of these issues were left to her son and successor as Ruling Guildmaster, Oran Meditor, to solve.

The Rule of Kitrina Meditor

The first issue that the Council of Guild Leaders had to face after Kitrina's election was the continued common people opposition to immigration from the mainland, despite the laws passed during the Council of Minrothad which severely regulated and limited the arrival and settlement of foreign people in the Guilds, and their chance to establish businesses, activities, or find a job there.

To comply with popular demands, with a move unprecedented in any other Known World country, and strongly advocated by Kitrina, the Council passed the Isolation Act in AC 890, which forbade immigration in the Guilds' territory and decisively cut the number of allowed visitors to the islands, reducing it to almost nothing. The Council

believed that this was the best way to ensure that trading secrets, advanced techniques, and discoveries made in Minrothad did not flow out to advantage the Guilds' rivals in other countries.

Indeed, the Isolation Act, coupled with measures taken during Missan's rule to enhance Minrothaddan trade monopoly in the Colony Islands, strengthened the Guilds' economic power and allowed them to successfully overcome any would-be rival to the role of main sea trading realm.

The first years of Kitrina's rule saw also the growth of Minrothaddan and Ierendian interest toward the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago (see "The Bout for Thanegioth", below). The Guilds managed also to expand their sphere of influence to the rest of the Colony Islands (North Island and Terentias) when in AC 887, amidst a serious political crisis which the Thyatian Empire was experimenting, some water elf clans in Crossbones staged a coup, ousted the pro-Thyatian governor, and declared formal independence from Thyatis and annexation to Minrothad. The Guilds sent troops to secure strategic locations in the islands, but preferred to keep the islands as a protectorate until civil unrest which was still raging in Crossbones was quelled and it was clear how Thyatis would come out of its crisis. The status of the islands was then sealed with the Agreement of Minrothad (AC 898, see below), with North Island being annexed to Minrothad and Terentias going back to Thyatis.¹³

¹³ GAZ9, *Dungeon Master's Booklet*, page 9, has North Island annexed by the Guilds by AC 900.

The Council of Guild Leaders and Kitrina wasted no time to secure North Island for Minrothad, and in AC 900 ordered the building of a great fortress town in the center of the small island, which was named Gapton.

In the first decade of the 10th century AC, Kitrina and the Council dragged the Guilds into a difficult conflict - the Aquapopulus War (AC 904-911) - against the merrow Twaelar Kingdom in the waters around the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago. The Guilds' habit to bully weaker opponents into abiding to Minrothad's decisions did not work this time, because the merrows were by no means weak. The opponents of the Meditors sharply criticized the way the war had been carried on, especially the scarce reliance of the government on diplomacy. The conflict was the first true military defeat of the Guilds after the Corsair Wars two centuries before. After the costly war, the Minrothaddan government had to renounce to all claims on the Thanegioth resources, and focus on the nation's traditional trade areas.

This blow and the tensions caused by the Isolation Act made the Guilds' economy suffer, with a decrease in trade which was gradually recovered only after the half of the 10th century AC¹⁴. Despite this, new ship designs developed by the water elves and the use of quality wood given a special treatment by the wood elves, allowed the Minrothad ships to be always one step ahead of those of other nations. Also, during the first half of the 10th century AC, the Guilds - besides doing their own import and export trading -

¹⁴ GAZ9, *Dungeon Master's Booklet*, page 12, notes that "Minrothad trade suffered under the Isolation Act of 890 AC".

specialized in transportation services, becoming the most sought-after cargo-carriers of the Known World and developing a reputation for reliability, security, and speed at sea.

This success - which offset some of the damage done by the isolationist policy - was due to the rise of the Merchant-Prince caste, whose number increased in those decades, up to the point that by AC 940 almost all Guilds' ships were captained by one of them. Obviously, a sea magic-using merchant and navigator on board each ship did not anything but increase the reputation of the Minrothaddan fleet. Moreover, the government ensured the presence of state-paid and trained marines on each privately-owned ship, thus making them still more resistant to attacks by pirates and privateers.

The Guilds' policy of trading with everyone regardless of political alliances made the Council expand the country's neutrality agreements - already in place between the Guilds and the two major empires of Thyatis and Alphatia - to many other nations of the Known World around AC 950: Ierendi, the Five Shires, Ylaruam, Sind, and Yavdlom just to name a few. This meant that those countries could still count on Minrothaddan transportation and trading services even if they happened to be at war with another nation which relied on them as well.

The Council Assumes Regency

In AC 965, Kitrina Meditor was assassinated by a member of a mainland thieves' guild; for the Council it was quite obvious that the assassination had been commissioned by

some mainland power which hoped to strike a blow to Minrothad's sea trade dominance. Actually, there were reasons to suspect some internal intrigue as the cause of the assassination, because the last years of Kitrina's rule had seen a growing opposition to the harsh isolationist policies of her government, with some families directly voicing against them; the Ruling Guildmaster seemed likely to work toward a loosening of immigration limitations, but the Council was opposed to any revision - so, the plot against Kitrina might have been weaved within the very Council itself.

The Council, as retaliatory measure against foreign thieves operating in Minrothad, issued the infamous "Death to Thieves" decree the same years Kitrina had fallen assassinated; the decree imposed death penalty on most serious thievery and robbery crimes, and is still effective in the Guilds to this day.

To honor Kitrina's memory, the Council of Guild Leaders chose her son Oran to succeed her as Ruling Guildmaster. Oran was very young and had still to complete his training in the water elf Family Guild. The Council thus established a "regency", ruling without a controlling head of state until Oran came of age.

The "regency" was a time of stagnation, corruption, and decline in the Guilds. The Family Guild Leaders took advantage of those years to accept bribes for appointments to government offices, to raise their own proxies within the guilds and the government, to diminish the quality of the Guilds' craft products in order to line their pockets, and to put their hands on the

treasury itself when needed for their own goals. A wicked secret agreement between the five Family Guild Leaders marked the start of this season characterized by exchanges of favors, emanation of decrees and laws especially suited to favor this or that guild, and by widespread neglect in various fields. The Council also raised taxes to burdensome levels in order to pay for the illegitimate expenses of its members, leaning the costs of this corrupt policy on the common people.

During the regency, in AC 980, cases of lycanthropy belonging mostly to the devil swine and wererat strains were discovered in Minrothad city. It is not known if the resurgence of the plague was due to foreign lycanthropes illegally arrived in Minrothad, or to some surviving descendant of the old weres. The Council, however, failed to address the problem properly; even worse, some Guild Leaders enlisted lycanthropes to have them perform as agents and assassins during the course of their intrigues and rivalries. When werereatures began to appear with an alarming frequency, the population was overcome with fear and asked the government for direct intervention to solve the issue - but the Council was slow to react.

Despite all this, the years of the regency saw a new expansion of the Minrothaddan trade network to the Thanegioth Archipelago, as the new progressive faction at power in the Twaelar Kingdom had begun to favor contact with land-dwelling outsiders and to sponsor trade with them (see “The Bout for Thanegioth”, below”).

Regarding foreign policy, the regency also damaged Minrothad’s traditionally neutral stance between the various nations of the Known World by signing an opportunistic agreement with the Thyatian Empire. In AC 988, when the Thyatian Emperor Thincol started his conquest of the Thratian tribes in northern Davania, the Guilds offered their transportation services to the empire’s troops for free in exchange for Thyatis’ help to defend the islands in case of attack. This was only the publicly known part of the agreement; in truth, Thyatis did pay for the Guilds’ services (albeit a reduced fee), and the Family Guild Leaders pocketed the money. Also, Thincol had obtained from the Guilds guarantee of not hampering the Thyatian conquest of the Thratians, and allowance for Thyatian merchants to trade in the Thanegioth Archipelago. While mostly useful only to make Emperor Thincol save some money and to fill the pockets of the guildmasters, this agreement gave to the other countries the impression that Minrothad was allying itself with the empire¹⁵ - something which spurred Ierendi, among others, to stimulate piracy against Minrothaddan ships.

Oran Meditor Takes Office

In AC 989, at the relatively young elf age of 150 years, Oran Meditor ended his training in the water elf Family Guild and was ready to assume the office he had only formally filled since AC 965. The Council of Guild Leaders was reluctant to give up the power

¹⁵ In X1 The Isle of Dread, Minrothad is presented as “closely allied with Thyatis”.



An Audience of the Ruling Guildmaster

its members had been used to in the last twenty years, but the Family Guild Leaders thought they could easily control and direct young Oran to do what they wished.

They were wrong. The Verdier clan even arranged the marriage of Oran with one of its scions, the young wood elf Astra, in order to manipulate the new Ruling Guildmaster, but Astra fell in love with Oran and baffled any attempt by her clan to control her husband. As soon as Oran took office, he made clear that he had the intention of opening a new season of reforms in Minrothad; during his training, he had in fact realized how much nefarious the policies enacted by the Council of Guild Leaders during the regency had been, and now wanted to impose a new turn on the country.

First of all, the new Ruling Guildmaster replaced all the heads of the political guilds - that is the government-controlled guilds which controlled the various fields of administration, bureaucracy, justice, military, and so on; during the regency, these guilds had been led by individuals chosen by the

Family Guild Leaders and had become puppets under their control, subdued to their interests. Oran needed some allies against the Family Guilds, and the newly-appointed guildmasters granted him the support of the political guilds - which also meant the nation's armed forces, the Mercenary Guild.

Then, Oran addressed the lycanthropic plague which had been raging for a decade without any significant intervention of the Council to stop it. By AC 989, lycanthropes had begun to appear not only on Trader's Isle, but on other islands as well, spreading panic among the demihuman populations. Oran ordered the Mercenary Guild to take care of the problem as swiftly and ruthlessly as possible. In the course of one year, the risk of another lycanthropic plague was foiled through lycanthrope hunts and extermination, and this success endeared very much the new Ruling Guildmaster to the population.

Next, Oran bypassed the Council of Guild Leader and appealed to the General Council of Guilds and Estates to obtain the approval of decrees lowering taxation and imposing higher quality standards to the Family Guilds' crafts, through purchase of better raw materials, control of internal promotion processes, and so on. These reforms hit the main source of profit the Family Guilds had enjoyed during the regency.

The Family Guilds understood they had a new enemy in Oran Meditor. They tried to offset the Ruling Guildmaster's popularity with the Minrothaddan people by causing trouble to the government. They contacted

the clandestine Thieves Guild, which had ties with the pirate world, and began passing the pirates informations about Minrothaddan shippings, hoping that continued pirate raids against the Guilds' ships and the inability of the government to solve the problem would cripple Oran's popularity. When the pirate raids started, Oran suspected that the Family Guilds were somehow behind them. For some time the Thieves Guild was content with this situation, but later, in AC 990, it came to resent being controlled by the Family Guilds, and its new guildmaster turned to Oran and stroke a deal with him: the Ruling Guildmaster would have allowed the guild to use Minrothad's trading network and contacts to expand its activities oversea, but in turn the Thieves Guild would have been reorganized along the lines dictated by Oran and would have avoided performing its trade in Minrothad. Since the time of this agreement, Oran had the guild perform as his own network of secret agents and spies, putting in his hands another important asset in the struggle against the Family Guilds.

In AC 991 Oran disbanded another piece of the Family Guilds' influence, rescinding his mother's Isolation Act and allowing again immigration in the Guilds' territory. This allowed new life to flow into a society which had been isolated and stagnating for about a century, stirring up competition and development of new ideas.

Some of the Family Guild Leaders did not let Oran proceed unharmed on the road of reforms. In AC 995, a first assassination attempt was done against his life during a visit in the capital; the assassin's arrow killed instead the Seneschal of Minrothad city, who

was standing alongside him. The leading clan of the water elf family guild, the Kasan, were found responsible for the attempted assassination; Oran had them ousted from the control of the water elf guild, which was assigned to a trusted water elf family, the Elsan. Also, Oran took the opportunity to replace the Seneschal of the capital - an office since a century ago firmly in the hands of a Corser-appointed individual - with one of his own men. This fact further embittered Corser family's hatred for the Ruling Guildmaster, up to the point of organizing a second attempt at Oran's life in AC 998, when he barely survived the attack of an earth elemental summoned by an alleged Glantrian mercenary wizard on Corser family's payroll.

Trade and economy have seen new rise under Oran's rule, mostly thanks to the rescission of the Isolation Act, and as routes toward the Thanegioth Archipelago - made possible due to the Twaelar benevolence - and the Gulf of Hule have begun to be traveled much more frequently. Thanks to the flourishing of international sea trade, the last ten years have seen the steep rise of piratical and privateering activities, with ever more frequent clashes between opposing pirates taking place in the high seas and in the Thanegioth Archipelago. Oran did not revoke the agreement signed by the regency government with Thyatis back in AC 988, which is still technically ongoing, but has tried to distance the Guilds from the empire in order to reestablish the country's neutral position. The Thyatian Emperor Thincol has not failed to notice this attempt, and has given his secret go-ahead to privateer and pirate raids against Minrothaddan vessels

with the aim to intimidate the Guilds back into backing Thyatis.

After two failed assassination attempts, Oran's life is still at danger; plotting of the Family Guild heads against him is rampant, with Corser and Verdier families in the front line, alongside the ousted Kasan clan. The future of Minrothad is one of conflict between oligarchic conservatorism and the progressive policies advocated by Oran; if the Ruling Guildmaster will be able to win this struggle, the Guilds' head of state office is very likely fated to assume a much more important role and greater presidential power in the institutional structure of the nation, at the expense of the Council of Guild Leaders.

The Bout for Thanegioth

Toward the end of the 9th century AC, interest of coastal and trade-oriented Known World countries like Ierendi and Minrothad in the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago grew.

This set of large islands and small keys had been mostly ignored since Thyatis had lost control of its Davanian outposts in the Green Coast and surroundings, and was considered a dangerous and wild region only inhabited by primitive savage human tribes and terrible monsters. Slavers had sometimes foraged on some of the islands' shores from Ochalea or the Serpent Peninsula, but no serious attempt at exploration, conquest or establishment of trade routes had been made. Moreover, it was in the archipelago's waters that the Twaelar Kingdom's power was centered; the Thyatians had met and

warred with the merrows a couple of centuries ago, but they had encountered them mostly in the Davanian Shallows and it was that sea region which the Known Worlders thought to be controlled by them, as no one - apart some Ierendians more in touch with the Sunlit Sea merrows - knew how large the Twaelar Kingdom was or where exactly were its boundaries located.

Attention of the trading sea powers was drawn to the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago when explorers and slavers coming from the Western Thanegioth Archipelago (east of Thanegia Island) reported the presence of relevant resources of precious gemstones and metals which were not mined by the natives, and unique spices and plants. Thyatis had always looked at the area as a potential slave reservoir, but since the struggle against the merrows two centuries ago the empire had refrained from any formal and thorough penetration in the archipelago. The newly-found resources made Ierendian and Minrothaddan eyes turn toward the archipelago.

The Tripartite Agreement of Minrothad

The Thyatian Empire had just emerged from a time of serious internal trouble, fragmentation, and civil war in AC 898, when the new Emperor Gabrionius IV raised to the throne. In the years before his coronation, the empire had also experimented an ethnic rift in its own mainland territories; religious unrest and rebellion had been carried on by the ethnic minority of the Ispans, who lived within the Duchy of Kerendas, and had been met with growing persecutions by the imperial government. A few thousands of

Ispans had already left the mainland some years before in AC 875, founding small coastal villages on the easternmost island of the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago - whom they called Nueva Ispañola - which were ignored by the empire amidst of its political crisis.¹⁶

After news of resources discovered in the archipelago reached the Known World, claims over them was almost simultaneously made by the Thyatian Empire, the Kingdom of Ierendi, and the Minrothad Guilds. The new Thyatian emperor was eager to reunite around the throne the factions which had fought among themselves in the past years through a successful war of expansion or conquest, but Ierendi and Minrothad were far too tough on the sea to give Thyatis any chance of success. The two island nations were confident of their superiority on the sea, but they did not trust one another, as Minrothad feared Ierendi's naval power while the latter was worried by the Guilds' expanding trade network.

This attitude by the three powers paved the road to an agreement between the Thyatian Empire, Ierendi, and Minrothad which was signed in Minrothad city in AC 898. Thyatis had to leave control of the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago and its resources, and to the minor islands of the Sea of Dread, to Minrothad and Ierendi - who agreed to divide their respective spheres of influences along a line running down from Shireton, west of it to Ierendi and east of it to Minrothad. On the other hand, the empire received a placet from two island states to the conquest of Traladara, that is the Guilds

and Ierendi would stay neutral if Thyatis invaded the land - Gabrionius IV foresaw a quick, easy, and successful campaign which would bring prestige to him, avoid the risk of a Traladaran unification, and keep that region out of the resurfacing Darokinian influence. The Agreement of Minrothad also set the status of the turbulent North Island and Terentias, with the former being finally annexed by the Guilds, and the latter restored as an autonomous dominion within the Thyatian Empire.

A side effect of this agreement was the Ispan migration to the Gulf of Hule region. The Thyatian government wanted to get rid of the troublesome Ispans, so planned to send them in a colonization expedition somewhere out of the empire's borders. Many Ispan families wanted to leave Thyatis as well after the persecutions they had suffered, and to join their few brethren who had settled in Nueva Ispañola some years before. However, the Minrothaddan government did not allow Emperor Gabrionius IV to endorse the migration, because it feared this was only another attempt by Thyatis to put its hands on the Thanegioth Archipelago. So, as part of the agreement, Thyatis was allowed to send a colonizing expedition in the Gulf of Hule region, to settle its western shores inhabited only by native peoples. The Guilds also thought that an increased presence of Known Worlders in that region would have definitely broken the local city-states resistance to Minrothaddan trade penetration. The expedition was thoroughly prepared and sailed to the Gulf of Hule, with thousands of Ispans on board, in AC 900, leading to the foundation of a number of de

¹⁶ See [Nueva Ispañola](#) (by J. Mishler).

facto independent Ispan domains in that region, and to a steady migration of remaining Ispans from Thyatis to the new settlements in the next years.¹⁷

The Aquapopulus War

After the agreement, Ierendi and Minrothad prepared to make concrete inroads into the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago. Some exploration took place, though slowly because the main routes used at the beginning - due to prevailing winds and sea currents - were still the western one along the Serpent Peninsula, and the eastern one along the Isle of Dawn and Ochalea.

The Minrothaddans made contact with the Ispans of Nueva España, and began trading with them, while the Ierendians set foot on a couple of islands and met the natives. When in AC 903 ships began to arrive from the two island realms in greater number, something the Known Worlders did not expect took place. At first strange and inexplicable accidents hit isolated ships, who sank beneath the waves or disappeared without a trace; the governments of the two realms imputed those accidents to bad weather or sea monsters. Then, rumors of merrow attacks reached Ierendi and Minrothad, and it became clear that something different was happening, and that the mysterious and dreaded Twaelar Kingdom was behind the coordinated attacks on Ierendian and Minrothaddan ships. It was clear that the waters around Thanegioth, not only the



Parley between a Merrow and a Merchant Prince

Davianian Shallows, were part of its alleged territory or sphere of influence. Again, as two centuries before, the merrows were fiercely resisting any attempt by the Known World countries to expand on surface lands found above “their” waters.

The Ierendian government at first faltered, but then decided to carry on its goal of establishing a hold in the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago also because the nomadic merrows of the Sunlit Sea were not particularly sympathetic toward their Twaelar kins, and no love was lost between them. The Guilds, bolstered by their recent success against the kna, were spurred to carry on the fight against the merrows more than ever. Naval personnel was mobilized in both

¹⁷ This is an attempt to explain the Ispan migration from Thyatis to the Gulf of Hule in AC 900, which also constitutes the date of birth of the Savage Baronies.

countries, and their armed effort to defeat the Twaelar Kingdom started. Thus the Aquapopulus War (AC 904-911) began.¹⁸

Both government had failed to realize the scope of the threat they were facing. The Twaelar Kingdom was able to coordinate attacks over a huge area, move underwater armies numbering thousands of creatures, and was much more powerful, resourceful, and organized than any of the other underwater realms of the Sunlit Sea. Despite training in underwater combat and special underwater weapons possessed by some Ierendian and Minrothaddan troops, these were way too few and too far from their motherland to resist the merrows' concerted attacks. Also, lack of real cooperation between the two rival states hampered their already difficult progresses in the war. Quite the contrary, merrow spellcasters were able to develop spells and effects which allowed the Twaelar armies to fight on land for short periods of time; when this sort of tactic became widespread in merrow troops, the outcome of the war was sealed.

The war dragged on for some years, during which the few outposts established by Ierendi and Minrothad were systematically raided by merrow war parties and then destroyed or abandoned, ship passage between the archipelago's islands became unsafe, and supply lines to Ierendian and Minrothaddan troops stationed here and there in the archipelago were continuously broken by Twaelar raids. True battles were few and far between; the Aquapopulus War

was a struggle of quick raids, hit-and-run tactics, and fierce skirmishes at sea. Toward AC 909, it became quite clear for the government of Minrothad and Ierendi that costs needed to keep control of the archipelago against the merrows far exceeded the benefits of getting the control of its resources. Also, within both countries there were factions that advocated a withdrawal from the archipelago: these were made up by some cost-conscious families and guilds in Minrothad, and groups in Ierendi who had closer ties with the Sunlit Sea - where the local nomadic tribes, if neutral at the beginnings, had now begun to voice against the continuation of the war effort against their kins.

By AC 910, both Ierendi and Minrothad were recalling from the archipelago their forces, which were chased and continuously hit by merrow patrols until they did not leave the northernmost fringes of the Twaelar domain. The Guilds tried to use diplomacy to obtain from the merrows some trade concessions in the Thanegioth islands, but their attempt to peacefully establish trade was considered way too late, and the merrows thus continued to press hard.

The Aquapopulus War ended in tragedy as the last garrison left in the Thanegioth Archipelago, a large Ierendian brigade, attempted to return to the motherland. The merrows chased the Ierendian ships, reaching them around the Skeleton Key and starting to sink them. The humans falling in the water were killed by the ruthless mermen; the survivors reached the shores, but then were cornered in the island by their opponents, and slaughtered to the last man.

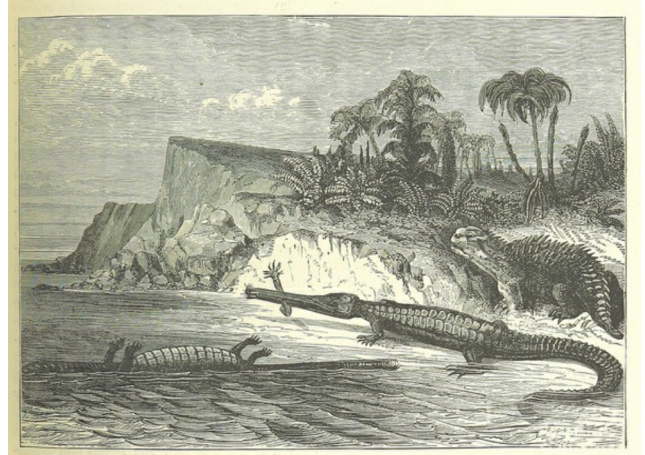
¹⁸ The Aquapopulus War, and the battle of Skeleton Key, are mentioned in XSOLO1 Lathan's Gold.

News of this tragedy did not immediately reach Ierendi and the Known World; only later, scanty rumors told of a “last brigade” of Ierendian soldiers lost in the Sea of Dread and butchered by the merrows. Still today no one has found the place where the tragic “Battle of Skeleton Key” happened.

Trade in the Sea of Dread in the Last Decades

After the Aquapopulus War, Ierendi and Minrothad had to admit defeat and relinquish any claim on the Eastern Thanegioth resources. The Twaelar Kingdom only allowed the presence of those land-dwellers which posed no threat to its sea-based domain - the archipelago’s natives, and the recently-arrived Ispans of Nueva Española, who had struck a deal with the merrows already before the Aquapopulus War. The Twaelar merrows, however, had for the first time in their recent history met modern surface-dwellers organized for war; they had been the winners of the war, but they had suffered many casualties as well. The Aquapopulus War made them realize that they knew too little of their land enemies; some merrows began to think that establishing trade with the land peoples might be good for preserving peace, or as a mean to know them better in order to defend from their expansionism or to attempt to conquer them later. In the next few decades the Twaelar society, indeed, experimented a rift between a progressive faction favorable to trade with land-dwellers and a conservative one which opposed such ideas. Around AC 960, the progressive faction took the lead of the Twaelar Kingdom, opening a new phase of contacts between

the Known Worlders and the southern merrows.

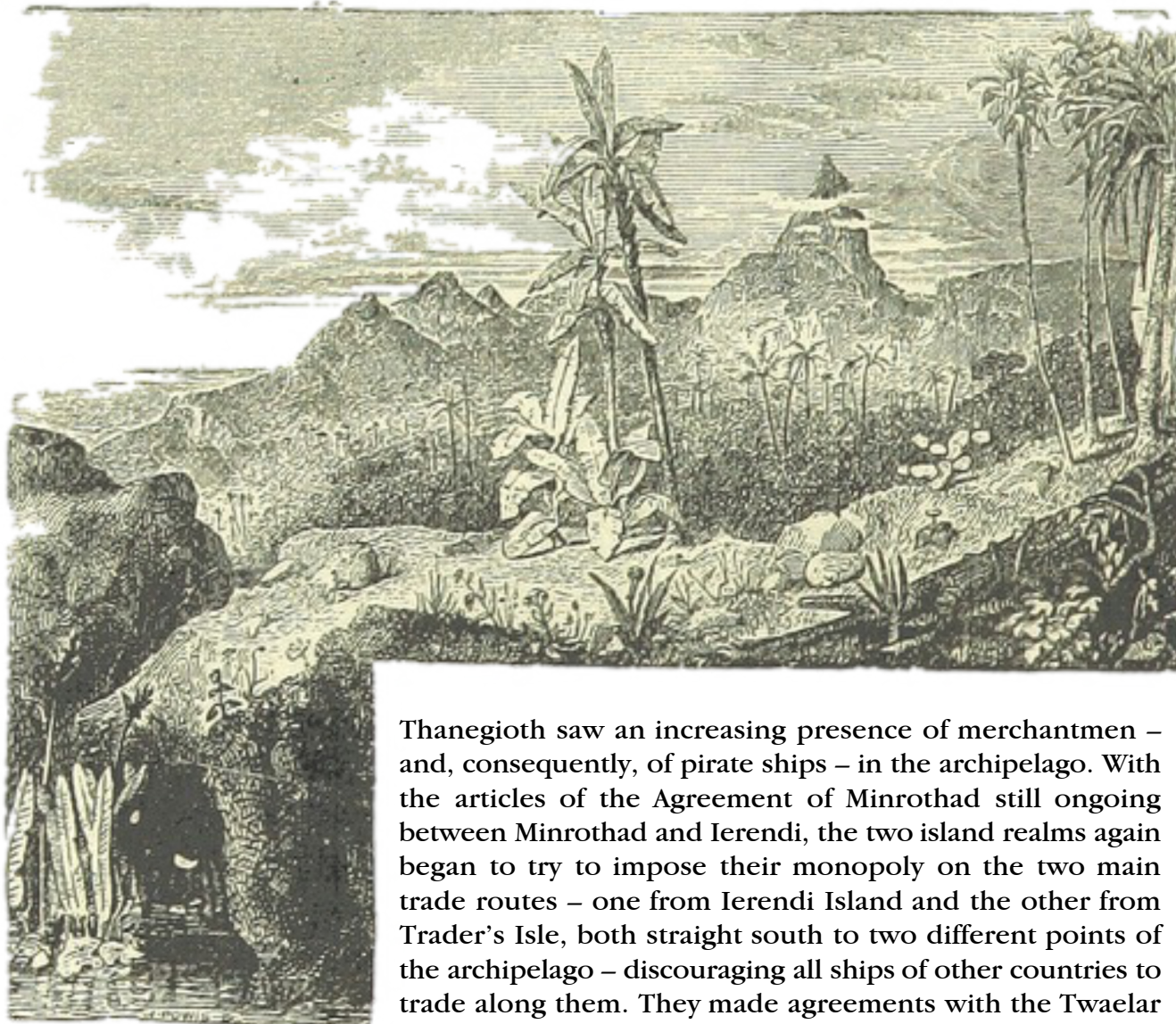


The Isle of Dread

Thus, between AC 960 and AC 970 the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago again began to be appealing for the Known World’s ships from Ierendi, Minrothad, and Thyatis, and its islands were gradually but thoroughly charted when the first explorers made their inroads in its waters. The main explorer of this age was indeed the Caerdwican Rory Barbarosa, who was the first to map the coastlines of the Isle of Dread.¹⁹

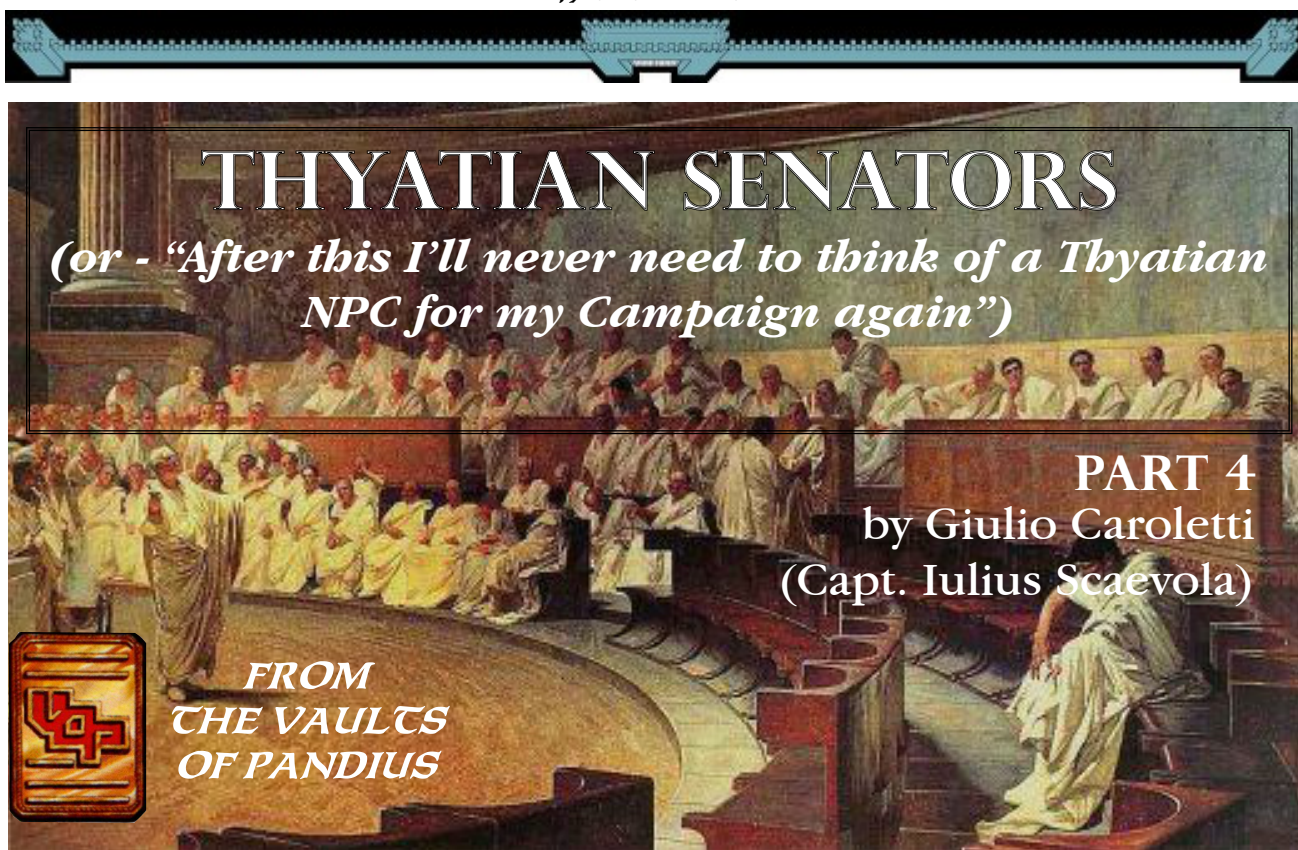
With opposition from the Twaelar merrows lowered in the recent decades, the Eastern

¹⁹ See X1 The Isle of Dread. “Rory” (true name Ruaridh) was a Thyatian born in Caerdwicca, in the southern Isle of Dawn, likely in a halfblood Thyatian-Caerdwican family. He devoted most of his life to the sea and to the exploration of the Sea of Dread, working both on a private basis, and for trading companies and governments like those of Ierendi and Karameikos; most of his explorations, indeed, were based in Specularum.



The Isle of Dread

Thanegioth saw an increasing presence of merchantmen – and, consequently, of pirate ships – in the archipelago. With the articles of the Agreement of Minrothad still ongoing between Minrothad and Ierendi, the two island realms again began to try to impose their monopoly on the two main trade routes – one from Ierendi Island and the other from Trader’s Isle, both straight south to two different points of the archipelago – discouraging all ships of other countries to trade along them. They made agreements with the Twaelar Kingdom this time, receiving permission to sail in the archipelago’s waters and to do trade with the native population and with the merrows, but without establishing any settlement beyond small forts and trade stations. After the Thyatians conquest of the Davanian Hinterlands, trade in the Eastern Thanegioth Archipelago has further increased, but it is still to be seen if the Known World powers will be content to leave the situation as it is or will again try to directly seize the archipelago for themselves through another conflict against the Twaelar Kingdom.



From the author:

Dear readers, it is with pleasure that I introduce you to the fourth and last part of the gallery of Thyatian Senators and their families, relatives and allies, continuing the articles that you can find starting in Issue #2. In this last part, we will complete our survey of the Thyatian Senate with the ecclesiastical senators, who include priests of the Church of Thyatis, diviners, sages and prophets from all the corners of the Empire, and the *Conscripti*, meritory people who have been awarded a personal, permanent seat in the Senate.

3. ECCLESIASTICAL SENATORS¹ (16)

Along with the Emperor, the Aristocracy and the elected Senators, a less obvious but nonetheless major factor in Thyatian politics are the religious faiths. The most important faith is clearly the **Church of Thyatis**, which informally is called by Thyatians the “Ecclesia”, or “the Church”, in the same way that Thyatis City is called the “Urbs”, or “the City”.

¹ See also “Patres et Conscripti”, Threshold Issue #2, page 149, for an introduction to Ecclesiastical Senators.

The role of the Immortals in Thyatian politics was recognized early on with the establishment of Senatorial seats reserved to the most important religious representatives in the Empire. Originally, there were three seats reserved to the so-called **Flamines** (chief patriarchs) of the Immortals Tarastia, Valerias and Solarios (Ixion).

In time, with the rise in importance of the Church of Thyatis and the increase in number of Senators, there were established another 12 seats for important representatives of the Ecclesia chosen from among all the priests, clerics, diviners and sages of the land: these are called **Pontifices**.

Six Pontifices are chosen by the leadership of the Church of Thyatis, while six others are elected by the followers of the Church of Thyatis. Regardless of the means of their selection, they serve for their lifetime. Last but not least, the Emperor or Empress is always considered by the Ecclesia the 13th Pontifex, and he bears the symbolic title of Pontifex Maximus ("Greatest Pontifex").

When one of the six elected Pontifices retires or dies, there is an ecclesiastic election to choose his or her replacement. This election requires registration and a fee to be paid to the Ecclesia. The fee can vary from a few copper pieces for beggars and the poor, to lavish donations from the rich and powerful - the registration is subject to the approval of a priest of the Church, and is the subject of the usual rolling of eyes and backchat about Thyatian corruption like all other aspects of the Empire's civic and political life.

The Church of Thyatis, or Ecclesia, is a polytheistic faith which aggregates

followers of 12 Immortals: **Asterius, Diulanna, Halav, Ilsundal, Khoronus, Korotiku, Odin, Protius, Tarastia, Thor, Valerias** and **Vanya**

(also known as the "Thyatian Twelve" or "Thyatian Pantheon"). This doesn't mean that all followers of these Immortals belong to the Church of Thyatis, nor that all priests and followers of the Church follow one of these specific Immortals.

A good example of this comes from the followers of **Solarios** (the ancient, traditional Thyatian name of Ixion) and those of **Koryis**, the patron of Ochalea. Solarios was once a major Immortal in Thyatis and belonged to the Thyatian Pantheon, but he was removed from it, and many of his most prominent followers fled or were exiled to the Savage Coast after spreading an ideology which was considered heretical by the Ecclesia and dangerous by the Empire. Many of the followers of Solarios who stayed true to the traditional view of the Ecclesia have since been trying to be re-admitted into the official ranks of the Church (even patriarchs of Solarios are currently just considered simply faithful like any common man by the official ranks of the Ecclesia), and to bring Solarios again into the Thyatian Pantheon. In this, their major allies are, unsurprisingly, the followers of Valerias. At the same time, some of the followers of Koryis would like to get the Ochalean patron into the Ecclesia, although their efforts have been in vain so far, especially since the priesthood of Vanya has been fiercely opposed to Koryis's pacifism.

In recent times, Gens Aurelia managed to pass a bill (backed by Sergii, Zendrolian, Pure Ones and many Populares) by which

the Church of Karameikos, although officially a different church altogether from the Church of Thyatis, might propose one of their members to the Senate. It is then up to the Church of Thyatis to approve of the suggestion, or to ask for another name.

The Church of Thyatis and Gens Aurelia are trying in this way to hold some control over its daughter Church. How all this will change in the future, when and if Stefan decides he is strong enough to declare himself King, is uncertain. But Gens Aurelia has done this also to separate the fate of Karameikos from that of its state Church, and to secure themselves an extra senatorial seat.

As the Church of Thyatis includes followers of several Immortals, it holds a wide range of different positions among its priests and faithful.

There are four main political and philosophical groups in the Ecclesia:

- » The **loyalist** branch, numerically the biggest, led by the priesthood of Tarastia and also including about half of the followers of Odin; politically, they include moderates of the two major factions (Optimates and Populares), as they support the special status of the Thyatian Empire - according to the teachings of Tarastia, the Emperor, Aristocrats and People all share the power through the interaction between Throne and Senate. Nonetheless, most of the loyalists in the Ecclesia see the Gens Aurelia as their closest ally, while they think most of the Aurelii as merely the glue that should keep together all the various institutions of the Empire, and not as the key to bring the Ecclesia to power and turn Thyatis

into a full theocracy. Most human followers of Ilsundal (and most Foresters) belongs to this branch.

- » The **conservative** branch is the one most linked to the Gens Aurelia and thus, although smaller than the loyalist one, it is the one most involved in Senatorial politics. Almost all Immortals of the Ecclesia have some of their followers belonging to this group, but those of Halav and Protius are the most numerous and influential. The priesthood of Khoronus shares the traditionalist philosophy of the priests of Halav and Protius, less so the support of Gens Aurelia's efforts toward an aggressively theocratic policy. The priests of Halav in the last decades have lost ground in the Ecclesia because of the political happenings in Karameikos and the perceived links between them and the government and Church in Karameikos. To counterbalance this, the most prominent patriarchs of Halav have multiplied the efforts to link themselves with Gens Aurelia. The conservative branch opposes the efforts from the priesthood of Valerias to bring Solarios back into the Thyatian Pantheon, and the efforts from the priesthood of Korotiku to bring Koryis into the Pantheon.
- » The **imperialist** branch has historically been allied to the loyalist branch, as together they made up a clear majority of the followers of the Church; however, in the last century, given the departure of many followers of Vanya towards Heldann, its ranks have been significantly reduced. There tends to be a good number of followers of Tarastia and Thor among this faction.

» The **progressive** branch is mostly made up of the followers of Korotiku, and the other half of the followers of Odin, which opposes both the efforts of the priesthood of Solarios to rejoin the Church and the aggressive, militaristic attitude of the priests of Vanya. Among the goals of the progressive branch is adding Koryis to the Thyatian Pantheon. Many priestesses and female followers of Diulanna consider themselves aligned with the progressive faction, as they think that the followers of Tarastia and Vanya are too meek in their attitude towards women's rights and prerogatives in the Empire (many of the Vanya followers that were more open towards women have moved to Heldann.)

PONTIFICES

1) Okaka Nuar. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Philosophers.

One of the foremost representatives of the Church of Thyatis, **Okaka Nuar** (born 945, C9 (of Korotiku), CG) has been Senator for several years, first as an elective representative for the Pearl Islands and then as one of the chosen Senators of the Ecclesia. Okaka is the leader of the progressive branch of the Ecclesia and is an eager supporter of the Philosophers' faction.

Okaka is married to **Amina Badu** (born 953, T (Rake) 3, CG), a famous paintress. They have a small villa in Thyatis City, where they spend the spring and summer, while they tend to live in a small village on the island of Nuar during the winter months. They have three children: the only

male, **Ogbonna** (born 975, F4, NG), is a Navy officer on the Isle of Dawn; **Deianira** (born 979, NW, CG) is studying ancient history in the University of Biazzan; while the youngest daughter, **Aretha** (born 985, NW, NG) still lives with the parents, and even at her young age is a promising paintress and sculptress.

Okaka is tall (1,80/5' 11") and was a strong, muscular man in his youth. Now in his mid-fifties, he is a little overweight, but nonetheless he looks young for his age. He has short black hair and eyes, and a full salt-and-pepper beard.

2) Theophila Leparulos. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Gens Zendrolian.

A staunch supporter of Thincol, **Theophila Leparulos** (born 940, C10 (of Tarastia), NG) is a close friend of Demetrion Karagentereopolus, with whom she shares many ideas and points of view. She has provided clerical support and spells to further many of the Magist's plots, and adventurers in the service of Demetrion can easily meet her if the help of a patriarch-level cleric is needed. She maintains her age about 20 years younger with *longevity potions* provided by her friend.

Theophila was born in Kerendas, the daughter of a wealthy family, and enjoyed some adventuring in her twenties before settling down in Thyatis City and becoming a key figure of the Church of Thyatis. She was briefly Demetrion's lover, before marrying another patriarch of Tarastia, **Kostantinos Melicenna** (born 930, C16 (of Tarastia), LN), a half-Tel-Akbiran half-Kerendan cleric and a renowned adventurer and politician who did hold several times

the position of Quaestor and Praetor in various parts of the Empire before retiring a few years ago. With the support of Kostantinos and of most of the Tarastian clergy, Theophila has been a Pontifex for many years now and enjoys her role. She is among the most beloved ecclesiastic figures in Mainland Thyatis, liked for her sense of justice, her dedication to common people and her support of the Emperor.

Theophila is a short (1,55 m) woman, with green eyes and raven-black hair with a few grey stripes. She is busty and slightly stocky, but a very beautiful woman.

3) **Benedicta Innocenti. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Gens Zendrolian.**

Benedicta Innocenti (born 959, C11 (of Diulanna), TN) was born in Thyatis City, third daughter of an impoverished woodcrafter and of a washerwoman. While her two oldest daughters tried to escape poverty through marriage to craftsmen, Benedicta was attracted by the faith of Diulanna and its progressive view of women and their role in the Thyatian society. As an adventuress, she rose among the ranks of the Ecclesia and later traveled to the Hinterlands, where she has got in touch with the Thratian followers of Diulanna and tried to help normalize relations with the conquered Hinterlanders and open diplomatic ties with the hostile locals who combat the Thyatian invaders. She is a progressive imperialist and is well liked in the Ecclesia, something that explains how a relatively young priestess has got to such an important position. Among her chief enemies in the Senate is Terentius Thalassonion, the anti-imperialist

and pro-hinterlander Populares Senator from Actius.

Benedicta is married to **Paulus Saburra** (born 957, F7, TN), a Thyatian colonist in Raven's Scarp, and they have two children: a son, **Marcus**, 6 years old, and a daughter, **Arena**, 2 years old.

Benedicta is a thin, tall (1,75 m/5' 9") woman with hazel eyes and light brown hair. She has a charming smile and lively eyes, and while she is in great shape she is not exactly a beauty with her long nose, big ears and heavy cheekbones.

4) **Michele Kostantinidis. Elected by the Faithful. Gens Aurelia.**



Elected into office fifteen years ago, **Michele Kostantinidis** (born 938, NM, TN) is an important politician of Gens Aurelia, formerly an elected Senator from Thyatis City.

Kostantinidis, son of an important priest of Tarastia, became a scholar and a theologian, but never took the clerical vows and entered politics at 40 years old. Since then he has split his time between teaching theology and leading the conservative faction of the Ecclesia. A bald, thin, wrinkled man with a lush, well-kept white beard, Michele is a very cautious man who is especially devoted to the Immortals of the Sphere of Time.

Michele is married to **Diana Errante** (born 944, P6 (of Khoronus), LN). They have two sons, **Ludwig** (born 970, F7, NG), who is an officer in the Hinterlands; **Darius** (born 976, P6 (of Khoronus), TN), a priest; and

one adopted daughter, **Adriana** (born 979, NW, NG), whose parents, friends of Michele and Diana, died shortly after her birth and had no close relatives. Adriana loves her adoptive parents but she would like to have more autonomy. While Michele pushes for her to marry some promising politician and Diana to join the ranks of the Ecclesia, Adriana would like to do something more creative with her life - though what exactly, she still doesn't know.

5) **Albrecht Reus. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Gens Aurelia.**

Albrecht Reus (born 942, P9 (of Vanya), TN) is a Hattian priest of Vanya who was chosen by the Ecclesia about ten years ago for the Senatorial title. He is a worried man who has spent most of his life to maintain the power and reputation of his Order, hampered by the flight to Heldann of many priests of Vanya on one side, and by the presence of many priests of Vanya among the Storm Soldiers on the other.

Albrecht is a cold-blooded, cautious and analytical man, who is only concerned with the prestige and fame of the priesthood of Vanya. He defends the traditional values of Vanya in Thyatis, like the imperialist attitude and the importance of conquest and expansion, but he is considered a bit narrow-minded. He responds to this criticism by noting that the priests of Vanya are on the defensive at the moment and that only a rash and foolish general enters a war when his army has to be rebuilt and reorganized. His critics reply that the conquest of Heldann happened fifty years ago and he should move on - or, even better, step aside and leave the leadership

of Vanya's followers to younger, more energetic priests.

Reus is one of the most ruthless enemies of the Storm Soldiers and despises racists like Alkybiades Nemeicus and the Pure Ones. He is more annoyed than enraged by the pacifist Philosophers. He dislikes Thincol: a gladiator is a fighter who can help to defend an invaded country, but he should never have reached the throne. Only the Ecclesia can provide the Empire with the backbone of values and virtues by which it will move towards expansion. The Heldannic Order is only a bunch of heretics who will be in due time subdued. For his views, personal integrity and charisma, he is considered a primary political figure and spiritual master in the Ecclesia both by imperialist and conservative clerics.

Albrecht, a tall (1,80 m), heavy, bald man with blue eyes and a thin blonde-grey moustache, is married to **Gertie Ritter** (born 950, NW, NG), the daughter of a Hattian landlord. They have four children: **Mario** (born 970, NM, TN), a professor and researcher at the University of Biazzan; **Karen** (born 973, W6, NG), who works at the Ministry of Magic; **Steffi** (born 976, T3 (Rake), CG), who is second-in-command on a commercial ship; and **Peter** (born 982, P1 (of Vanya), LG), an enthusiastic and optimistic youth who is a novice among the priests of Vanya.

6) **Theodosia Martino. Elected by the Faithful. Gens Zendrolian.**

Theodosia Martino (born 960, Diviner 10, TN) is a supporter of the Emperor. A quiet magic user born in West Portage, she travelled on the Shadow Coast for some

time, adventuring and studying the local mysteries before moving to Thyatis City to work in the Ministry of Magic, where she rose to the higher ranks in a very short span of time. She was elected a few years ago into the position with the support of a former, retiring Pontifex, **Valente Sempronius** (born 916, Diviner 15, NG), a major prophet and seer - and a friend of Demetron Karagenteropolus - hailing from Port Lucinius, where he has now retired.

Outwardly Theodosia is calm and professional, but she is quite rash and emotional in her private life. Knowing this, she tries to separate completely work and home, something that has become a painful strain now that she is a Senator - Andrew Selkirk, the Populares Senator for Kendach, was a former lover more than ten years ago, when they both were adventuring, and he is trying to rekindle the flame of their relationship. Theodosia is extremely anguished by this, for she still feels attracted to the roguish Selkirk. Among Theodosia's friends in the Senate is Leonardo Casto, the Magister Arcanum, who was a former superior at the Ministry of Magic.

Theodosia is beautiful, of average height to be a Thyatian woman (1,63 m/5' 4"). She has high cheekbones, a pale freckled complexion, black eyes and dark brown hair, which is usually kept in a long braid.

7) Paulus Minutarius. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Gens Zendrolian.

The sly **Paulus Minutarius** (born 960, F3, LE) is a corrupt politician and a former Army officer who has more or less bought his way into the Senate - and found that the

best way to do so was through the imperialist branch of the Ecclesia. His religious credentials are dubious at best, but Minutarius has many friends among the priesthoods of Valerias and Solarios, and is a close friend of Eusebius Torion, being part of the Prince's closest entourage.

Paulus is of medium height (1,70 m), and is an extremely strong man (Str 18). He is of powerful built and has a deep, bass voice. He is an accomplished singer and plays very well a variety of musical instruments. He is a balding man with dark grey hair, a well-trimmed grey beard, and sardonic green-brown eyes.

8) Terentius Torquatus. Chosen by the Ecclesia. Gens Aurelia.

The leading figure among the Patriarchs of Khoronus, **Terentius Torquatus** (born 927, P19 (of Khoronus), TN) have been in the Senate for over 30 years. Torquatus was born in the City of Thyatis and adventured for the most part of his youth. He was already a Patriarch when Thincol repelled the Alphatian Spike Assault in 959, and rose through the ranks to become a chosen Pontifex of the Ecclesia only 40 years old.

Terentius has always put the Ecclesia before the petty matters of internal divisions; he hasn't put the good of the Ecclesia above the good of the Empire only because he thinks they are the one and same. He respects the institution of the Throne more than the current Emperor, whom he considers an upstart that hasn't been able to solve the chronic problems of the Empire. Torquatus doesn't like elections very much - he doesn't really believe that commoners can take the best decisions. On

the other hand, he humorously comments himself that neither can aristocrats and priests, given the huge amount of corruption and greed found among their ranks.

Terentius is a short man (1,60 m/5' 3") with a large girth - the fondness of the man for venison pies and honeyed ham is renowned. He has humorous brown eyes, sparse white hair and a heavy white beard.

9) **Silke von Ravenschlöss. Elected by the Faithful. Gens Aurelia.**

Silke von Ravenschlöss (born 967, P5 (of Vanya), LG) is a relatively young priestess of Vanya and an ally of Albrecht Reus. Hailing from the Hattian seashore, the heir of Hermann, a landed Knight killed by the Storm Soldiers, Silke is a supporter of the Thyatian multiethnic culture and sees the polytheistic and open Pantheon as the perfect religious expression of the Thyatian culture. Silke is a progressive member of Gens Aurelia, sympathetic to the Philosophers and to the priests of Solarios. This is increasingly worrying Reus, who is starting to think that Silke is too young to be a reliable ally in the Ecclesia and the Senate.

Silke was a fighting priest early in her career, but she isn't a bullheaded imperialist. She thinks that the war in the Hinterlands is a waste of resources, that should be employed to rebuff the Alphasians on the Sea of Dawn and in other potential areas of conflict like Norwold. According to her, Heldann and Oceansend should also be drawn into the Empire in due time.

Silke is a very independent woman and is disliked by the more conservative priests and Senators. She had a short affair with Maldinius Kerendas that didn't go very well. The malevolent Duke has since made her subject to quite gross public sexual innuendos, and she has always despised him since. She is an extremely beautiful lady with red-brown hair, green eyes and milky-pale, heavily freckled skin and face.

10) **Ilian Cestis. Elected by the Faithful. Populares.**

Ilian Cestis (born 948, W13, NE) is a wizard from the City of Thyatis who holds one of the estates on Sclaras reserved for the powerful mages of the Empire. Ilian is a selfish man, who has entered the Senate through using his contacts in the Ecclesia and his relations with the Shadow Hand and the wererats in Thyatis to get himself elected to the role of Pontifex.

Ilian is considered affiliated to the Populares because he is a commoner who despises the haughty senatorial families and people who are not able to carve a living out for themselves. After several years as an adventurer, Ilian became a wizard-on-hire for people who could pay him enough - and more than once he has backstabbed his own employers for his own benefit. He has hoarded riches and worked for Helenites Osteropolus, the Shadow Hand and the *Westies* (the West Portage Thieves' Guild) as a 'free agent', but he is not inherently evil, and when paid well enough he has operated for others, especially patriarchs and priests of the Ecclesia in the later years, to establish a reputation on which to build his election to Pontifex.

Ilian doesn't care much for the Immortals or religion, but is careful to look very pious in public to uphold his reputation. The thin, middle-heighted Ilian has in recent years carefully developed a very somber look: he dresses almost always in white, grey or black, and has grown a grey beard and started shaving completely his head.

Ilian is currently into his third marriage, and has several son and daughters from his former wives. His children are the only real persons he cares for, and he has tried to teach them to become something and not rely too much on their father's personal wealth.

11) Traianos Brevis. Elected by the Faithful. Populares.

Traianos Brevis (born 963, Diviner 7, TN) is a well-known adventurer and criminologist, known for his interest in solving 'cold cases' from the past through his magic powers. A serious man with little personal ambition or greed, he was elected Senator a few years ago, after having been sponsored especially by Antonius Merula. Traianos is not too interested in senatorial matters, but has taken seriously his duties as a Pontifex, and sees his entrance among the Senators as a way to build contacts in the Ecclesia through which further his scholarly interests and continue his personal quest for justice.

Traianos is a typical Thyatian of medium height, with a common, homely face, brown eyes and receding brown hair.

12) Antonius Merula. Elected by the Faithful. Populares.



Antonius Merula (born 930, P10 (of Asterius), CG) is a major figure of the Ecclesia and the most loved priest among Thyatis' commoners. The friendly, sympathetic cleric is a born politician: shrewd, he is a man of

goodwill and compromise, and an enemy of corruption and treachery. He is a vocal opponent of the Shadow Hand, is one of the few Senators that can reply publicly to the Emperor's face, and dislikes very much (and very publicly) people like Helenites Osteropolus and Maldinius Kerendas. Since the affair of Silke von Ravenschlöss with the Duke has ended very sourly, he has taken the young Pontifex under his personal protection.

Merula, an old man with a flowing, luxuriant grey-white beard and deep black eyes, has been married for about fifty years with **Serena Izirne** (born 933, W10, NG), a skilled wizard from Helskir of pure Alphatian origin. Serena is a Populares meritory senator.

Antonius and Serena have three sons and four daughters, and a score of grandchildren and some grand-grandchildren. The Merula are minor nobles from Halathius, and their family seat is an old-fashioned castle in the hills north of the city of Goldleaf, where the couple spend most of their time during the summer.

FLAMINES

13) Gaia Ephore. Flaminia Tarastiana. Gens Aurelia, Quaestor of the City of Thyatis.



The aristocratic, charismatic, brilliant **Gaia Ephore** (born 958, P17 (of Tarastia), LN) is among the most powerful women in the Ecclesia, having been chosen as the new Flamina Tarastiana only two years ago, after

which she left her previous post as Pontifex. Gaia, the daughter of a noble landlord from the County of Retebius and of a distant cousin of Leana Scaurus, adventured far and wide in the Known World and Sea of Dawn during her youth, before retiring at the age of 33 to pursue her political career as a loyalist in the Ecclesia.

Gaia is married to **Maximinus Aurelian** (born 956, F11, LN), a Thyatian General coming from a branch of the Aurelian senatorial family. Maximinus, a red-bearded, bald man with dark eyes, is the cousin twice removed of Tracin Aurelian².

Gaia and Maximinus have three children: two daughters, **Devota** (born 992) and **Aurelia** (born 996) and a son, **Rufus** (born 994).

² See Threshold #5, page 190, for more information on the Aurelian senatorial family.

14) Silvia Kommodoris. Flaminia Valeriana. Gens Aurelia.

The experienced leader of the priesthood of Valerias is **Silvia Kommodoris** (born 923, P14 (of Valerias), CG). The old priestess, who keeps her age (and her sexual life) 40 years younger thanks to *potions of longevity*, is close to retirement: she is just waiting to find a good replacement. Silvia has always kept a compromising position between the followers of Valerias's attitude towards the cult of Solarios and that of the Ecclesia. She thinks that the time is not ripe to allow the cult of Solarios back into the Thyatian Pantheon. She thinks that the priority of the Ecclesia and of Gens Aurelia is not the plight of the few followers of Solarios, and she is suspicious of Eusebius Torion's interest in the cult.

Through her life, Silvia has had several husbands and lovers, and has seven children and sixteen grandchildren.

15) Papirius Rubens. Flamen Solarios. Gens Sergia.

Papirius Rubens (born 937, P11 (of Solarios), LN) is an ageing man who has tried most of his life to uphold the residual power of the Cult of Solarios (Ixion) in Thyatis. Rubens is an embittered man with few friends, and is an anomaly among Thyatian priests as he is a supporter of Gens Sergia, something that hasn't helped him to convince the Ecclesia to give Solarios back his role in the Thyatian Pantheon. Rubens is a short, olive-skinned man with a clean-shaved head and long, thin fingers. He is ambidextrous and is extremely skilled at handcrafts - he is

renowned for his ability to write at the same time with both hands, is an amateur jeweller and watchmaker and has even written a few monographies and biographies on goldsmiths, jewellers and watchmakers in the Known World. Not unsurprisingly, among his closest friends in the Senate are the dwarven Senators. Rubens has travelled several times to Rockhome and is well known in the gnomish kingdom of Highforge in Karameikos.

Rubens doesn't look with favour upon Eusebius Torion's friendship with one of the most influential and charismatic young upstarts in Solarios's ranks, **Xenos Dracma** (born 966, P9 (of Solarios), LN). Dracma wants the priesthood of Solarios to take a more aggressive stance. He doesn't care much about re-joining the Ecclesia. However, he is carefully grooming Eusebius's support in order to bring the order of Solarios back to prominence independently of the Ecclesia. Rubens considers this idea idiotic: since the times of the heresy, the cult of Solarios has little support outside the Ecclesia, and in the multicultural, polytheistic Thyatis, the support of a Prince (or an Emperor, for the matter) would not be enough to restore its power.

Representative of the Church of Karameikos

16) Gregor Kelvin. Gens Aurelia.

Second cousin to Desmond, Baron of Kelvin in Karameikos, **Gregor Kelvin** (born 970, Pal7, LG) has been chosen as a triple-compromise between the two factions of the Church of Karameikos and the Ecclesia.

Gregor, a Paladin born and raised in Thyatis, moved to Kelvin and has been involved in several missions on behalf of his cousin and the Church of Karameikos. Gregor is a tall fighter in his prime, with fiery black eyes, dark brown hair and a short beard; strong and heavy as a bull, he is not exactly beautiful, but has a powerful personal magnetism. When he was chosen in 998 AC for the role, he was not happy, as he had to come back to the capital, where he feels he is not able to live up to the standards required by his order. He is trying to convince the Pontifices to replace him with someone else - Antonius Merula and Albrecht Reus have promised to support him as soon as they find a suitable replacement.

4. CONSCRIPTI (23)

The *Conscripti* are the Empire's Meritory Senators. They can be up to 39 - this for an ancient Thyatian tradition: as the aristocratic Senators (the *Patres*) are 40, they could never be more than them. Things obviously changed with the introduction of elected senators and dominion ruler representatives, but the rule remained.

The choice of the *Conscripti* follows generally the balance in the Senate among the factions. Gens Zendrolian tends to have most *conscripti*, also because it is customary to appoint to the Senatorial title most of the major ministers chosen by the Emperor. Populares and Philosophers tend to have much less meritory Senators, although they can try to force some of them

in the ranks after a favourable election, or if they feel they can be helped by popular support to a sympathetic, charismatic candidate.

Moreover, the Emperor is always immediately *conscripted* into the Senate after his appointment. As being *conscripted* is for life and is not formally linked to any previous title, an abdicating Emperor would not be required to leave his position as a Senator.

1) Emperor Thincol Torion, Princeps Senatus, Pontifex Maximus. Gens Zendrolian.

Little needs to be said about **Thincol Torion** (born 938, F23, TN), the Emperor of Thyatis and Princeps Senatus. Born on Oceansend as Thrainkell Torson, in a comfortably wealthy shipwright's family, Thincol became an adventurer and gladiator and, in 960, when the Alphatian Spike Assault nearly led to Thyatis' conquest, he organized a force of gladiators, soldiers and adventurers and led a crushing counterattack that set the stage for the successful driving out of Alphatians from the Thyatian lands. Thincol persuaded Princess Gabriela, whose father Gabrionus had just perished by Alphatian magics, to marry him and associate him to the throne.

A hard, ruthless, uncompromising man, he has no true friends and loves only his family and his power. He considers Senatorial debate a waste of time, preferring the efficiency of direct autocratic control. He loves the Empire in the same way a rich entrepreneur loves the company he owns (or in which he is the major stakeholder). He is, quite obviously, the leader of Gens

Zendrolian. Thincol keeps his age around 40 through the use of *potions of longevity*. He has hard and hawlike features, dark brown hair with hints of balding, and black eyes.

His wife **Gabriela** (born 944, NW, LG) is a bitter, aging woman. In 960 the Alphatians conquered the Imperial Palace, and murdered her parents and five older siblings during the Spike Assault. Young and impressionable, she agreed to marry Thincol, who wooed her, married her, fathered children upon her, but never really cared for her. Thincol kept her for the sake of legitimacy and their children, but takes mistresses as it pleases him and ignores her most of the time. Depressed and old in body and spirit, she does not take the *potions of longevity* her husband buys for her.

Their first son **Eusebius** (born 961, F14, LN), Duke of Thyatis, entered the West Reach cavalry academy at 18 and spent a dozen years as a good cavalry officer. At 32 he married **Lucianna**, and now has two children, **Coltius** and **Gabronius**. Very much his father's son, only in a more calm and cold way, Eusebius loves little beyond his family and wants little more than to be the new Emperor. The only private interest of his life, the faith of Solarios (Ixion), is also taking a more and more public dimension, much to the dislike of the Church of Thyatis and of the Aurelii - Solarios is not part of the "Thyatian Twelve", and many of his followers were exiled to the Savage Coast about a century ago. Moreover, even among the Zendrolian faction, some have reservations or outright worries at this fascination with such an unpopular and out-of-fashion deity.

Thincol and Gabriela's second child is their daughter **Stefania** (born 970, T12, CG). Stefania ran from home after killing a major Ostlander prince on their wedding night in 987. It took Thincol eight years, during which she travelled under the assumed identity of the adventuress Demetria (an alias she still uses from time to time), to relent and accept her back in the family. Stefania, despite (or because of) the Emperor's obvious disapproval, has begun a love story with the adventurer and gladiator **Anaxibius** (born 970, F20, LG), now a rich man who has settled his family from Machetos in a large estate on Emperor's Hill, and one of the most popular men in Thyatis City.

The royal couple's third and last child, **Asteriela** (born 979, M4, LG) has been in Sundsvall for a year as a hostage to Empress Eriadna of Alphatia, in exchange for Eriadna's son **Tredorian** (born 983, F4, LG) staying a hostage of Thincol. Asteriela is studying magic with Tylion, the Empress's father. She has grown to love the colorful city and the undemanding and warm Empress. She loves but fears her father, and her loyalty is slowly shifting towards Eriadna. On the other hand, the same is also happening to Tredorian towards Thincol.

2) Demetrium Karagenteropolus. Gens Zendrolian.

Demetrium Karagenteropolus (born 895, M23, LG), a powerful mage and dragon-rider hailing from Julinius, had already retired on Sclaras when the Alphatian Spike assault began. Demetrium returned first to Julinius to help his family and then moved to Thyatis to help Thincol in his counter-

attack on the invaders. Since then he has become Magist to the Emperor and a consultant to the Retebius Air Force, and even held for several years the post of Magister Arcanum. He is a great supporter of Thincol and one of the few truly independent individuals who can criticize the Emperor to his face, and has more than once leaked information to indirectly help to stop what he believed were misdeeds on his part. An aged man, he keeps himself about 30 years old through *potions of longevity* but uses illusions to look 65 years old.

3) Leonardo Castro, Gens Zendrolian; Magister Arcanum³.

Leonardo Castro (born 950, M16, NG) is one of Thincol's ministers and one of a few but prominent friends of Demetrium Karagenteropolus in the Senate. Castro, a former adventurer, was given the position by Thincol under the recommendation of Demetrium.

Leonardo is a middle-aged man with a few black curls and brown eyes, with strong, homely features, and slightly overweight. He holds an estate on the island of Sclaras, and is married to **Diana M'vula** (born 960, M9, CG), a Nuari wizard. Leonardo and Diana have four children: Demetrium (born 986), Gabriela (born 989), Tanarobi (born 991) and Tanja (born 994).

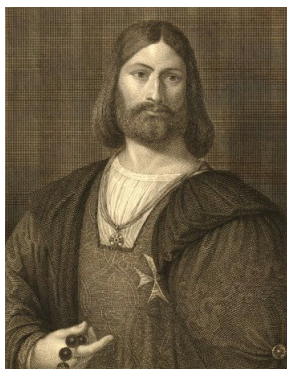
³ The four major ministerial positions of the Empire (Magister Arcanum, Magister Aerarii, Magister Officiorum, Magister Vestarii) are described in Threshold Issue #3, pages 213-214.

4) Nabila Al-Taracena, Gens Zendrolian; Magistra Aerarii.

Thincol's Chancellor of the Sacellium is **Nabila Al-Taracena** (born 955, W9, LN), a noblewoman from Biazzan of Espa and Alasiyan descent who studied Economics in Biazzan and Selenica. Her family preferred to deny its faith in Solarios to avoid an effective exile and retain their possessions in Biazzan and Machetos. Nabila is a personal friend of Emperor Thincol, and has shortly been one of his lovers, but their relationship is now of a purely professional nature.

A few years ago she married a wealthy battle-mage from Biazzan, **Rasheed Tourabi** (born 955, W14, TN). They have one son, **Mehdi** (born 996). Nabila, a very beautiful woman with olive skin, green-yellow eyes and black, curly hair, keeps her appearance ten years younger thanks to a *potion of longevity*.

5) Retameron Mura, Gens Zendrolian; Magister Vestarii.



Hailing from Carytion, **Retameron Mura** (born 952, W12, TN) belongs to the lesser nobility of the island, and a cousin of Ignitia Saragat, the wife of Senator Traianos Murco⁴. A second son, Retameron worked in

the Ministry for most of his adult life, after having studied at the Great School of Magic in Glantri. He is mostly disinterested in politics, but is an efficient archivist and

planner. Thincol chose him as Magister Vestarii because he is rich from his family estates, is a reliable supporter of the Emperor and is not politically ambitious. As is often the case with the four major Magisters, he was conscripted to the Senate shortly after his appointment.

Retameron is short and lean like most Carytians (1,60 m for 50 kg). He has a short-trimmed black beard and small black eyes, and suffers from beta thalassemia, a hereditary blood disorder that is relatively common among ethnically Carytian inhabitants.

6) Petrus Umbra, Gens Zendrolian; Magister Officiorum.

Born in the forested hills of Halathius, **Petrus Umbra** (born 955, T13, NE) is Thincol's Magister Officiorum (the Thyatian minister of information networks, communications and counter-intelligence). Petrus began his career as an elite soldier in the Thyatian Legions, before entering the Speculatores (military explorers at the orders of the Magister Officiorum) and then the special Agentes of the ministry. He rose to the top ranks of the ministry thanks to his skills, his enormous and methodical knowledge and memory, and his incredible analytical intelligence - but also thanks to his skills in oiling mechanisms and corrupting and blackmailing thanks to his information network.

Petrus Umbra has been chosen by Thincol as he has proven himself loyal in more than one fishy occasion that benefited the Emperor, but he is slowly and cautiously moving towards Eusebius, as he recognizes that the Prince is the future of the Empire,

⁴ See Threshold #5, page 200.

and Petrus wants to stay on top also when the throne will change hands.

Petrus is taller than the average Thyatian (1,78 m/5' 10") and is in perfect physical shape. In addition, his jet black hair and beard without a hint of grey, contributes to making him look at least five years younger.

7) Cabirio Nasica, Gens Zendrolian.

Cabirio Nasica (born 960, T11, CE) is one of the most important Alphatian spies in Thyatis. He is a relative of two other Senators, Ulpius Nasica, elected Senator for Redstone, and Antonius Nasica, elected Senator for Sclaras.

Cabirio was born on the Isle of Dawn, the son of an impoverished landed knight. He became a thief-adventurer and later an important guild member of the thieves' guild in Dunadale, working also in Helskir and traveling all over the Isle of Dawn hoarding riches through adventuring and theft. He built a personal web of connections and in the end decided to become the Alphatian master spy in Thyatis, where he poses as a supporter of Thincol.

Cabirio Nasica is a member of Prince Eusebius's closest group of friends. He is a dangerous man with no scruples whatsoever. He can be used as a master villain for a Thyatian campaign, or the hard and unscrupulous employer of Alphatian characters to operate on Thyatian soil. Cabirio's goal is to replace Petrus Umbra as the Magister Officiorum when Eusebius reaches the throne - it would be a major coup for the Alphatian master spy to get his hands on the secret services and information network of the Empire.

Cabirio Nasica is secretly married with **Dalida Linn** (born 966, T9, NE), a Master of the thieves' guild in Dunadale, and they have two boys, Yldian and Jorek, 8 and 4 years old respectively. When Cabirio Nasica spends time with his family in Dunadale, he does so with the assumed identity of a dunadalian adventurer and traveller known as Pyr Adrius. With this name he has also published a few travel reports about the Isle of Dawn and Sea of Dawn, in which he displayed a humorous and life-loving side that people who should know who he really is would find amusing.

8) Philippos Abete. Gens Zendrolian.

9) Hans Larsson. Gens Zendrolian.

Philippos and Hans are two close friends of Emperor Thincol. They were chosen as meritory persons after Thincol's ascension to the throne, when the Emperor's popularity forced the Senate to accept without opposition his choices and nominees. Things went quite differently with the two friends, however.

Philippos Abete (born 936, F11, CE), a gladiator at the time of the Alphatian Spike Assault, has become a corrupt and decadent Senator. Although still a strong man with few hints of old age (thanks to a couple of *potions of longevity*), he is up for sale whenever the Shadow Hand or a powerful Minrothaddan or Darokinian merchant house needs a help for a bill or a push in the Senate or in governmental agencies. Both Thincol and **Hans Larsson** (born 941, F16, LG) know this, but while the honest soldier of Oceansend origin, an old adventuring companion of the Emperor, is disgusted and enraged by this, the

pragmatic Emperor simply uses Abete's weaknesses to control him and use him as his eyes and ears to inform him on the less pleasant activities going on in the Senate. Hans Larsson doesn't like it: he tells himself that Thincol is sacrificing honesty in the name of matters of state, but wonders more and more whether the Emperor has always been a cynical man of power and never the good hearted friend he remembers from their old days together.

10) **Destinus Giovanni, Gens Zendrolian.**

Destinus Giovanni (born 888, F18, P9 (of Nyx), TN) is a nosferatu, and a sworn enemy of the Storm Soldiers and of Count Oesterhaus of Hattias (in fact, an avatar of Thanatos). Destinus is a supporter of Gens Zendrolian very close to Empress Gabriela's family. He was a close friend of her father Gabronius, and was a retired General and a *conscripti* Senator already when the Spike Assault stroke (as a former Magister Vestarii). He tried to advice Gabriela against marrying Thincol, and disappeared for a while after Thincol's ascension. The reason for that was that the Emperor tried to kill and dispose of him. However, Destinus was able to escape, and went on the run for some time.

During this time, he planned his return, first rejuvenating with spells and potions, and then trying to establish a base for a coup. However, Destinus, being a loyalist aristocratic supporter, saw that Thincol managed to save the throne against the menace of populares, republicans and aristocracy, and understood that he had to set aside his personal hate for the good of the Empire.

Embittered and confused, Destinus left Thyatis again to become a mercenary leader in various parts of the Known World and beyond, to the Savage Coast, and ended his days killed by a nosferatu priest of Nyx in Karameikos. As an undead, he became an apprentice of his killer, and then took against the leadership of mercenary companies in Ethengar and Norwold.

As he has never been officially dead, Destinus is still a Senator, but he is almost never seen in Thyatis. His fame means that, whenever he is seen in the City, every politician, spy, ambassador and commoner smells something very big going on.

11) **Mauritius Palykratidius, Gens Aurelia.**

See Issue #5, page 199, entry for the Palykratidius senatorial family.

12) **Valerius von Lustig, Gens Aurelia.**

13) **Marino Asforteris, Gens Aurelia.**

Valerius and Marino are both former Pontifices. They both resigned when Gens Aurelia managed to make them *conscripti*, a practice Gens Aurelia has used to get more power into the Senate after favourable elections.

Valerius von Lustig (born 820, F14/P14 (of Vanya), LG) is an elf priest from Hattias. His ancestors moved from Terentias to Hattias a couple of centuries before the establishment of the Empire, and embraced partly Hattian and Thyatian customs and culture. Valerius's father Hermann von Lustig (born 633, F9) is a Lord Knight (the lower landed aristocracy). Valerius is a very peculiar figure: the tall, blond, green-eyed elven priest is almost always seen dressed

like a Hattian priest or aristocratic knight, and is an unusual and immediately recognizable sight in the capital. He is a very moral person, unsmiling and stern, and although he gets along reasonably well with his fellow elves in the Senate, he is sometimes mocked for his attitude. One of the most famous jokes about him goes like: "What do you get when you cross an elf with a Hattian follower of Vanya? A tall, unbearded dwarven priest".

Valerius married **Federica Lorindel** (born 828, F3/W3, NG), an elf from Terentias, and they have two daughters, **Findula** (born 963, NW, NG) and **Karen** (born 978, NW, NG). Federica is much less austere than her husband. The couple has a nice villa in the Silver District of Thyatis and Federica loves to hold parties where she likes to mix the guests in the most bizarre ways: aristocrats with artists, ambassadors with actors, elves and Glantrians with dwarves and Alasiyans, foreigners with locals. An invitation to the couple's villa can be a good starting point for the weirdest adventures, and Federica might be the unsuspected person to turn to in order to get in touch with an elusive or peculiar character.

Marino Asforteris (born 938, P12 (of Vanya), LN) is a priest of Vanya and one of the leaders of the Brotherhood of the Grey Lady, the biggest fighting order in the Empire of Thyatis.

14) Orane Lamrabet. Gens Aemilia. Imperial Envoy to Tameronikas.

A naval officer with a Nuari mother and Tel-Akbiran father, **Orane Lamrabet** (born 944, F7, LG) was for many years Magister Fabricae (the governmental officer in

charge of the imperial arsenals in Thyatis, Lucinius and Beitung). He resigned from the position in 986 to become an envoy in Tameronikas (Ylaruam), and was conscripted to the Senate in 991 as the result of a compromise to hold the balance in the number of meritory Senators among the aristocratic factions.

Orane is a honest politician - many point at his racial ancestry to say that it would otherwise be impossible for a Mainland Thyatian to be honest - and still lives and operates as an envoy in Tameronikas. He is married to **Sade Trinca** (born 954, NW, LG), an ethnically Thyatian/Tel-Akbiran woman born and raised in Port Lucinius, that he met during his years as Magister Fabricae. They have three children: a son, **Camus** (born 982, NM, LG), and two daughters, **Victoria** (born 984, NW, LG) and **Aysha** (born 987, NW, LG).

15) Aemilius Fabius. Gens Aemilia.

A member of the wealthy (and huge) senatorial-aristocratic Fabius family, **Aemilius Fabius** (born 941, F3, TN), born and raised in Redstone, is the typical Aemilii meritory senator. The Aemilii make it a point of honor to appoint some of the politicians from their faction that fulfill the whole *cursus honorum* (holding at least once all the major senatorial governmental positions - Praetor, Quaestor, Aedilis, Consul and Censor) - another example is Damianus Paulus (see below). A major figure of the aristocratic party, Aemilius Fabius is not overly corrupt to be a politician - and he never acts from personal benefit, using treachery and money to further his faction's goals, that he (like

many senatorial aristocrats) consider equivalent to the Empire's goals.

Aemilio is an ageing man with brown eyes, grey, sparse hair, and a short goatee and moustache. Although he is still powerful and strong, he is quite overweight.

Aemilius is married to **Antonia Retebius** (born 947, NW, CN), a strong-willed, hot-tempered aristocratic lady that breeds running horses in the family estates on the Isle of Dawn, and they have three sons: **Liberius** (born 968, F8, LN), a naval officer on Terentias; **Valen** (born 970, F9, CN), a hippogriff rider in the Retebius Air Fleet; **Plutarch** (born 972, NM, LN) a lawyer and local politician in Redstone; and two daughters: **Cynthia** (born 974, P3 (of Faunus), CN), a veterinary doctor, married to her cousin **Lavinio Retebius** (born 960, W16, CN), one of the powerful wizards of Sclaras; and **Plotinia** (born 976, NW, TN), a young architect in Redstone.

16) Damianus Paulus. Gens Aemilia.

17) Maccio Paulus. Gens Aemilia.

Damianus Paulus (born 944, F6, LN) and **Maccio Paulus** (born 928, F4, TN) are two important members of the Pauli family, one of the leading families of Gens Aemilia (see also Threshold #5, page 200, for more information on the Paulus senatorial family).

Damianus is the younger brother of Tiberius Paulus, who holds the family's senatorial seat. He was chosen not only because of his family relations - he has also held all the positions of the so-called *cursus honorum* (Praetor, Quaestor, Aedilis, Consul and Censor), and has proved

himself a honest and reliable politician. Damianus is of average height (1,70 m/5' 7") and weight. He has brown eyes and short grey hair with a bald spot on top.

Maccio is Tiberius and Damianus's uncle. He is a respected patriarch of the Pauli family, although he has never been a prominent leader of Gens Aemilia. However, he is a shrewd observer and intelligent man who has always been content to play second fiddle for the good of his party. Maccio is slightly below average height (1,65 m/5' 5") and is overweight. He has brown eyes and is completely bald, but bears a salt-and-pepper beard that make him look a few years younger.

18) Mongezi Pukwana. Gens Sergia.



Hailing from Dwair in the Pearl Islands, **Mongezi Pukwana** (born 940, Bard 12, NG) is a famous and respected Nuari who has spent many years as an adventurer and has published many travel reports who are among the most read

popular narratives in the Pearl Islands and Ochalea, and have sold moderately well also on the Mainland. After having spent many years as an ambassador in Minrothad, Ierendi and as a consul in Thothia, he was chosen a few years ago for a meritory Senatorial title. After many years in the employment of the Empire he is a little too 'governmental' to associate himself with the Philosophers - however, he is still a very good friend of Archduke Tanarobi and of most of the Nuari and Ochalean senators.

Mongezi is married to **Melina Osei** (born 945, Bard 3, LG), a Nuari playwright and actress, and they have three sons: **Amarfio** (born 970, F6, LG), a ship captain married with two daughters, **Spartacus** (born 973, T (Rake) 1, NG), a naval engineer married with one son, and **Lasisi** (born 978, Bard 2, NG), a musician and actor.

19) Skrain Syrklist, Gens Sergia, Imperial Envoy to Denwarf-Hurgon.

The only other demihuman *conscriptus* in the Senate is **Skrain Syrklist** (born 873, F14, LG), a dwarven champion from Buhrohur. His father was a Syrklist from Stahl in Rockhome, while his mother was a member of the baronial family Blyskarats. Skrain served many years in battle in the Thyatian Legion, becoming the most famous dwarven General in the Legion of all Thyatian history. After he retired, he fought on with mercenary companies and adventurers, being for some time the right hand of Destinus Giovanni in Ethengar. He was chosen as a Senator in 989 with the support of the dwarven senators, Destinus Giovanni and Gens Sergia in particular, after the death of a former dwarven *conscriptus* Senator. (Somehow, the Thyatian Senate has always deemed necessary to have at least one dwarven meritory Senator in their ranks.)

Skrain is essentially a military man. He says of himself that he is not able to do anything else but fighting, but thinks the most important thing is to know what one fights for. Notwithstanding his words, Skrain has also been a skilled (albeit rough) military diplomat in matters involving conflicts between Thyatis and Alpathia, and this is why he has been nominated as Imperial

Envoy at the newly established Thyatian Consulate in Denwarf-Hurgon in 994. Since then, he has spent most of his time in Alpathia, although he comes back to Buhrohur and Thyatis at least for a couple of winter months every year, to avoid feeling too homesick.

Skrain is essentially a good man and loves equally his race and his country. He lives in Denwarf-Hurgon with his wife of many years, **Dania Buhrtar** (born 900, F4, LG), a Torkrest dwarf from Dengar in Rockhome. Dania loves Skrain and is happy that he has finally settled down after a lifetime of fighting. They have two sons and two daughters.

20) Yi, Mei. Philosophers, Praetor of Ochalea.

An Ochalean priest in his middle forties, **Yi Mei** (born 946, Pr 14/Philosopher of Neutrality, TN) is a follower of Mystic Way of the Eight Immortals. While Baoxin Shendao priests are never named as Ecclesiastical Senators, and rarely participate in elections, Yi Mei was conscripted after he defeated, with the help of his fellow monks, an epidemic of vampirism that had taken hold in the province of Sung. The epidemic, carried by a Thyatian vampire from Furmenglaive, threatened to halt the mining of gold, a lucrative activity that supports the entire province as well as lining the coffers of the Grand Duchy of Ochalea and the imperial treasury.

Thanks to his combat experience, powerful magic, and expertise in facing mysterious threats and a variety of monsters, Yi Mei has been selected as the Praetor of Ochalea.

This allows him to spend most of the time in his monastery on the Five Peaks in Sung, when he is not travelling through Ochalea to carry out his duties.

In his travels, he is never without his twin Ochalean houndling apprentices, **Ah Hao** and **Ah Fang** (both are born 983, Pr5/Philosopher of Neutrality, NG). Both Yi and his apprentices are Philosophers both from the political and the religious point of view -- their magic comes from their deep understanding of the neutral philosophy rather than from any of the Eight Immortals.

21) Noureddine Neqrouz. Populares.

A Tel-Akbiran of Alasiyan descent, **Noureddine Neqrouz** (born 934, F18, NG) won his seat thanks to his twenty years as one of the foremost officers in the Isle of Dawn in the years after the Alphatian Spike Assault. He was voted in office a few years after Alkybiades Nemeicus, after a Populares-favorable election, and as a sort of counter to Alkybiades's prominent racist stance. Noureddine is a moderate, who dislikes Republicans and has great faith in the multicultural and multilateral nature of the Empire. He is well liked by all people of the Empire, including Dawn citizens of Alphatian origin, who have learned to trust the deep respect of Neqrouz for their culture. Noureddine is on surprisingly good terms with the Philosophers, given his military past. His enemies are, unsurprisingly, the Pure Ones, Storm Soldiers and most Thyatian ultranationalists.

Noureddine is a tall (1,90 m/6' 3"), slim man in great shape to be over 60, almost completely bald, with a thick, grey beard and piercing green-brown eyes. He is

married to **Amanda Bint Sina** (born 942, T(Rake)5, CG), and they have four children and ten grandchildren. Noureddine is a moderate follower of Protius and is sympathetic towards followers of the Nahmeh, a book for which he holds great respect.

22) Serena Izirne. Populares.

Serena Izirne is the ethnically Alphatian wife of Pontifex Antonius Merula. See above for more information on Serena.

23) Alkybiades Nemeicus. Pure Ones.



Alkybiades Nemeicus (born 924, F20, LN) is a former General, maybe the mightiest in the last forty years of Thyatian history. He led the most spectacular and dangerous missions and battles on the Isle of Dawn post-Alphatian

Spike Assault. He is also a strong believer in the paternalistic vision of Thyatian enlightenment having to be spread to all people over Mystara, a nationalist who hates Alphatia passionately and dislikes all the other cultures that make up Thyatis as "inferior" or "savage".

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