



THRESHOLD

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All issues of **THRESHOLD** are available for **FREE download** from the [Vaults of Pandius](#) website

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Thanks To: The Mystara Community, for your support, hard work, and dedication to Mystara.

The aims of *THRESHOLD* Magazine:

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

Tales from the Alphatian Sea

I am very happy to present to you a new issue of *THRESHOLD* Magazine which in my humble opinion contains wonderful material thanks to the great work of many authors and illustrators! We appropriately open with **Monsters of the Alphatian Sea**, a wonderful creature catalog by Cab, lavishly illustrated by Jeffrey Kosh. Then there is my article on **Bellissaria**, the first detailed description of the island continent ever attempted, thanks also to the great 8 miles per hex maps by Ramelin, more incredible illustrations by Jeffrey, and some beautiful portraits and landscapes obtained by Sebastien (Senarch) with Midjourney.

I want to especially point out Jeffrey's work because for the first time in a Mystaran production we get to see some iconic creatures, such as pardasta, cloud pardasta, reptilian races and lupins, in colorful magnificence, and this time he really surpassed himself producing an incredible number of illustrations for this issue!

The results obtained by Senarch with AI art are also quite impressive, as you will be able to see in the portraits and landscapes of the next article by Cab, **Metinsulae, Island of the Metamorphs**, and in other articles too.

The adventure by King Everast, **Islands of Death**, is the first part of a series of adventures set in the Alphatian Sea, and also contains two different illustrations of a nagpa, another iconic Mystaran creature, by Jeffrey and Senarch.

Alphatia in Dracopolis is an alternate view of the namesake empire by Lance (Wangalade), with a floating city as capital.

In the rest of the issue, our Master Cartographer Thorfinn Tait continues his series on **Mystara Mappers** with the works of Adamantyr! In the next article Not a Decepticon adapts the adventure **The Grey Wanderer** to the Northern Reaches. And behold a scary Nithian draugr, again by Jeffrey! Then Doc Necrotic continues to guide us through the **Mists of Ravenloft**, describing some domains which were created by Mystaran natives. Last one is the fourth and last part of my **Mystara Generator of People, Stories and Everything** which started in issue #26, this time about spells and item creation, horoscopes and predictions, art and entertainment, and much more of the everyday life of adventurers.

The next issue of *THRESHOLD*, to be published mid 2023, will focus on Undersea, which has been upvoted in our last **poll** at The Piazza forum¹. A new poll will soon be created to choose the next two themes of 2024 that will come after the 2023 issues, Undersea and Dungeons, so go voting! To join the next issue as authors or illustrators please send your **proposal** to the *THRESHOLD* mail (check Submission guidelines and mail on the last page of the issue) or write

¹ <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewforum.php?f=3>

in the Call for Contributors thread for issue #31 which will soon appear in The Piazza forum after publication of this issue. Even if we usually have no shortage of articles, we always need help for **proofreading and editing** the submissions. So anyone willing to help the *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team please come forward and let us know through the mail or in the above thread at The Piazza. Helping *THRESHOLD* Magazine certainly needs some time commitment, but is creative and rewarding work!

The *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team and the authors hope you will enjoy this new issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together, and stay tuned for the next issue!

Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)

Editor, *THRESHOLD* Issue #30

Your Opinions?

The Editorial Team welcomes your feedback on this issue of *THRESHOLD*. Please post your comments either by posting in [The Piazza Forums](#)

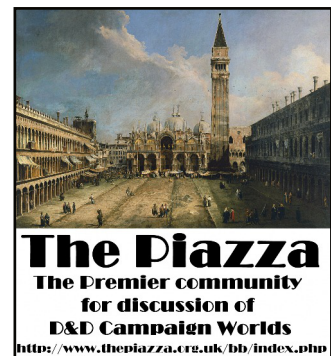
Or by email to the Editorial address: Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com

Please begin the subject line with the tag “[LETTER]”

FROM the
Mystara
FORUM at



Some features in issues of *THRESHOLD* carry a “From the Mystara Forum at The Piazza” tagline. These Discussion Boards are an active and dynamic home of creativity for the Mystara community and many other game worlds. We hope you will enjoy the articles from The Piazza website: <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/index.php>



FROM
The Vaults
of Pandius

Some features in issues 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 the Vaults of Pandius website: <http://pandius.com>



This Issue's Contributors

Cab Davidson has been running his Mystara campaign since the 1980s, and while he has years of experience handling dangerous microorganisms has not knowingly created a new form of vampirism.

Doctor Necrotic (Brian Rubinfeld): despite never being as intense of a fan as much of the fandom, Brian has had a fondness for Mystara stretching back as many eons as the stars! Whether coming up with zany ideas or diving into the earthiness of the setting's lore, he always finds something to love about the Known World and beyond. When not writing for *THRESHOLD*, Brian is an amateur writer and game creator looking into freelance options, as well as currently working in a pharmacy.

Jeffrey Kosh is the pen name of a writer and graphic artist specialized in book covers and movie posters. He collaborates with various publishing companies and authors. His covers range from dark horror to space opera, from thrillers to fantasy. Inspired by great fantasy artists, such as Clyde Caldwell, Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, and more, Kosh likes vibrant colors and heavy use of light and a dark contrast. His graphic tends to be moody and evocative. He also likes to work on 'era-specific' movie posters and book covers, trying to re-create the style used in those years, from the 1920s to the 1990s. As a writer he has been published various times.

(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykosh/graphics/home>)

King Everast hails from his dwarven kingdom of South Africa. A fanatical fan of everything dwarven, he is mainly based in Mystara viewing all that happens from beneath his mountain. His many other interests include reading every Dragonlance novel he can lay his hands on, playing all the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks existing, and thinking up new and devious ways to destroy the players of his next D&D adventure.

Lance Duncan (aka Wangalade) started playing D&D with his father using the BECMI boxed sets. With his sisters and brother, he explored the caverns of Quasqueton and the Caves of Chaos and the Isle of the Hideous One, eventually discovering the lost valley and journeying to the faraway land of Hule to defeat the Master. Though he has explored many different games (Alternity being a favorite), he has always come back to Mystara and D&D. His current D&D campaign is set some 30-odd years after the events of that original campaign; the known world of Dracopolis reflects how Mystara was presented by his father with the limited resources of the box sets and a few adventure modules.

Linus Andersson - NPL illustration. You can find him on Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/nplillustration>

or on Artstation:

<https://www.artstation.com/nplillustration>

Not a Decepticon has been in love with RPGs since seeing a commercial for D&D in a comic book at the age of six. But an

opportunity to DM and play regularly only revealed itself recently, with exception of a brief attempt in college. Now he combines a love for classic campaign settings and the latest edition of the game.

Sebastien Martineau (Senarch) is a half-French, half-English resident of Prague, working as a business psychologist. He started playing D&D again last year, dusted off his prize GAZ1, and promptly fell down the Mystaran rabbit hole. After a childhood spent drawing, he was sadly forced into doing Latin instead of Art in his teens, and slowly lost the taste for drawing. However a few years ago he started using Daz for 3d-rendered illustrations for gaming and comics, painting miniatures for Blood Bowl, and generally getting arty again. He now experiments with combining AI, Daz and drawing into art, mainly for D&D. He is slowly talking himself into writing and illustrating modules. His free time is mostly spent on his baby daughter. His work is closely, and often disapprovingly, supervised by his cat Pablo Escobar. Some of his work can be found here:

<https://www.deviantart.com/mrmusashi/gallery>

Even though **Sturm (a.k.a. Francesco Def-ferrari)** 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.

Thorfinn Tait hails from the Orkney Islands in northern Scotland, though he has lived in Japan for many years now. Growing up with BECMi and the Known World, he learnt to type by compiling a database of Mystara's timeline. He joined the Mystara online community in 1997, but his true contributions began with the Atlas of Mystara project starting in 2005. Recently he has made the jump to become a published fantasy cartographer, working on Bruce Heard's Calidar series. You can follow his work on his cartography site (www.thorfmaps.com) and the Atlas site (mystara.thorfmaps.com).

Allan Palmer (a.k.a. AllanP) was first introduced to D&D a long time ago (but not quite in a galaxy far away) by a work colleague who set up a gaming group using the last version of the "blue book" rules. While dabbling with RuneQuest and Traveler along the way, he developed a liking for what would become the world of Mystara as the BECMi box sets were released. He has always been fascinated by maps. He is an IT professional and when not indulging in hobbies of panelology, retro tv watching and family history research, uses his various PC skills to consolidate the writings of others into the issues of *THRESHOLD*.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The *THRESHOLD* editorial team invites all fans of the Mystara setting to submit contributions to the magazine's next issue. We are especially looking for contributions fitting the following themes:

Issue 31 - Undersea

The first issue of 2023 will focus on the dominions and the people found below the waves of Mystara's oceans!

Proposal Deadline: February 15th, 2023

Manuscript Deadline: May 1st, 2023

Issue Published: June 2023

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

Call for proposals for main themes of forthcoming issues:

Issue 32 - Dungeons!

The second issue of 2023 will focus on a big part of the D&D game!

Proposal Deadline: August 15th, 2023

Manuscript Deadline: November 1st, 2023

Issue Published: December 2023

THRESHOLD accepts and invites submissions of extended or revised versions of works having appeared on *The Piazza* or *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.

Please refer to our [Submission Guidelines](#) on page [226](#) of this issue.

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 BECMI/RC, 2nd Edition, 3rd edition/Pathfinder. However, this material should be limited to a minimum. For most NPCs, it is sufficient to mention class, level, and alignment. For important NPCs, a one or two line stat block may be included.

THRESHOLD

The Mystara Magazine

PDF editions and print-ready files are available for free download from the Vaults of Pandius website:
<http://www.pandius.com/>



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Over time, the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team received enquiries about obtaining print versions of its issues. Following continued interest, in 2022 an initial trial using issue #28 created print-ready files of cover and interior page that could be submitted to a print-on-demand service (such as www.lulu.com) by individuals to produce a professionally printed version for their personal use. The trial garnered a positive response and work continued through 2022 to generate print-ready files for all previous issues (as well as incorporating the process in the production of new issues).

The print-ready files are an option provided in addition to the “normal” PDF document version of each issue. Individuals may freely download the two print-ready files (cover and interior) and submit them to a print service for professional printing at their own risk. Any associated financial transaction is between the individual and their chosen print service. Neither the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team nor the Vaults of Pandius receive monies in respect of the provision of these print-ready files or from the printing of them.

The print-ready interior and cover files have been formatted to produce an A4-page sized paperback book; no other page size/format is available; the print service will offer users choices of colour quality, paper stock, cover finish, etc. The print-ready files have been successfully used at www.lulu.com to produce a printed book; the Editorial Team cannot guarantee the use of these files with other print services.

The print-ready version of *THRESHOLD Magazine* is provided for personal use only. *THRESHOLD Magazine* in either its PDF or print version cannot be sold in any online or physical store.

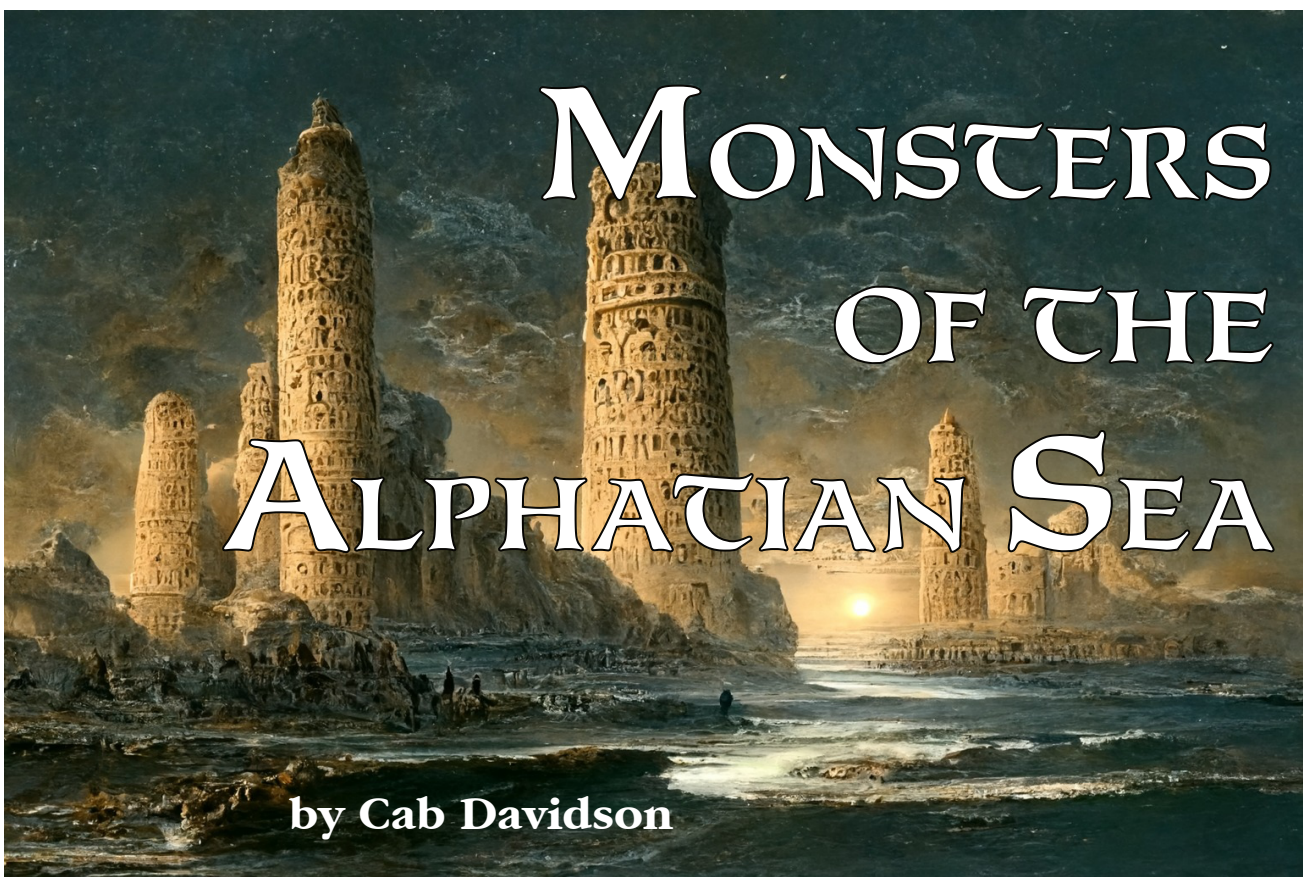
FREE Downloads of Previous Issues



Previous issues of **THRESHOLD** - the Mystara Magazine, both in digital and print-ready format are available for download from the [Vaults of Pandius website](http://www.pandius.com) (www.pandius.com)

Also available at the same location are higher resolution versions of the maps that were included in the issue's PDF, allowing greater detail to be viewed.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|---------------------------|-----|------------|--|
| #1 | (Oct 2013) | "Karamaikos" | #21 | (Oct 2018) | "Specularum" |
| #2 | (Jan 2014) | "Vaults of Pandius" | #22 | (Mar 2019) | "Adventures & Campaigns" |
| #3 | (Mar 2014) | "The Sea of Dread" | #23 | (Aug 2019) | "Adventures & Campaigns 2" |
| #4 | (Jun 2014) | "Return to Dread" | #24 | (Nov 2019) | "Adventures & Campaigns 3" |
| #5 | (Oct 2014) | "Exploring Davania" | #25 | (May 2020) | "Strongholds" |
| #6 | (Dec 2014) | "The Northlands" | #26 | (Dec 2020) | "Heroes, Villains & Organizations" |
| #7 | (Apr 2015) | "Exploring Norwold" | #27 | (Jul 2021) | "25 th Anniversary of the Vaults" |
| #8 | (Jul 2015) | "Warlords of Norwold" | #28 | (Jan 2022) | "Trade Routes and Darokin" |
| #9 | (Sep 2015) | "Hollow World" | #29 | (Jul 2022) | "Vampires and the Undead" |
| #10 | (Jan 2016) | "Elven Realms" | | | |
| #11 | (Apr 2016) | "Thyatis & Alphatia" | | | |
| #12 | (Jul 2016) | "Ages Past" | | | |
| #13 | (Oct 2016) | "A Crucible of Creatures" | | | |
| #14 | (Jan 2017) | "The Shadowdeep" | | | |
| #15 | (Apr 2017) | "Mystaraspac" | | | |
| #16 | (Jul 2017) | "Dwarves, Gnomes & Hin" | | | |
| #17 | (Oct 2017) | "Western Brun" | | | |
| #18 | (Jan 2018) | "Savage Coast" | | | |
| #19 | (May 2018) | "Planes and Immortals" | | | |
| #20 | (Jul 2018) | "Skothar" | | | |



by Cab Davidson

Alphatian port, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

From the journal of Averyx, Immortal Patron of the Alphatian Expansionist Movement, Finder of Lost Immortals, Investigator of the Eternal Mysteries, etc.

“Selection of the island that would become known as Alphatia as the disembarkation point for refugees from Old Alphatia, to settle and build a new homeland, was not a simple matter. My own studies of the world of Mystara had been ongoing for some time, but this world was only one of the candidates we considered. Ultimately it was not the land itself that was the deciding factor – as an island continent Alphatia is quite unremarkable. It is merely a landmass with quite normal mineral resources,

typical soils to grow crops, and a mixed population of creatures such as may be found on any of a multitude of islands on thousands of worlds across the multiverse. No, the deciding factor for us in settling on Mystara was the ocean around that island continent.”

“This may surprise you. After all, one patch of brine looks rather like any other. But you’d be amazed by how many worlds there are where oceans are not the mostly benign facilitators of trade that they are on Mystara. They are often filled with hostile sentient beasts, tentacled horrors or in one hilarious example, poison-spitting man-eating shrimp. What you want in an ocean

when settling a new world is sufficient hazard to keep others out, but in a form that can be tamed just enough to allow expansion and eventually trade. And in that regard the Alphatian Sea was and remains perfect. It has some dangers that can be tamed, and some that cannot, but with skill and the exuberant application of magic it can be mastered.”

“I don’t intend to list every creature in those seas; that doesn’t sound like much fun. After all, the presence of merrow, aquatic elves, kna traders and sea giants is not especially interesting. Those creatures may be found from Zyxl to the Arm of the Immortals (long or short way around!). But I do think it is worth noting some creatures that are unique to this area because they define these seas, from the coasts to the depths. Anyway, we’ll start at the top (well, the north) and work down. Let’s start in the ice flows of the north of Norwold and Esterhold, and head down from there.”



HUNTERS FROM THE ICE

“Most of the normal horrors you might expect in the cold north region can be found, of course. Polar bears, white dragons, big shaggy white apes. What’s more interesting is that the cold expanse at the north of the Alphatian Sea has some distinctive inhabitants that aren’t found elsewhere. Whether that’s because they just can’t get around Hyboria and Skothar, I’ve yet to determine. But inhabitants of other regions should be thankful that this is the case because none of them are what you’d call welcoming.”

“The three most hazardous are the beisht kione dhoo, the bregdi, and the qalupalic. The beisht is a predator that can and often does destroy fishing vessels. It may be found from the ice in the north to the Yannifey Isles and the Great Bay of Norwold in the south, while the bregdi migrate from the waters near southern Alphatia in winter northwards in summer, where they play merry havoc with slave ships both coming from and around Esterhold. But the most sinister are the undead qalupalic, essentially an aquatic ghoul that stalks the cold islands and ice floes for seals and their human hunters, taking the young of the latter down into the darkness for some as-yet unknown purpose. Do you want to know why the people of the Yannifey Islands have never amounted to much? That’s why.”



Beisht Kione Dhoo, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

Beisht Kione Dhoo

AC:	6
HD:	12
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d10
No. Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Vx3
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,250

The beisht kione dhoo (literally “beast of the black head”) is huge (30' long) eel-like fish that hunts the sea lochs of the northern regions of Norwold, Alphatia, Qeodhar and islands of the Alphatian Sea. It lairs in submerged caves, primarily hunting at dawn and dusk. Its prey include seals, dolphins, fish and humans and humanoids (when available). The last thing that such prey is typically aware of is an enormous, toothy maw at the front of a matte-black head, with lifeless black eyes behind them.

A beisht kione dhoo can swallow a man-sized or smaller creature on a roll of 20. Attacking at night or from below, they surprise a foe on a 1-4 on 1d6.

Bregdi

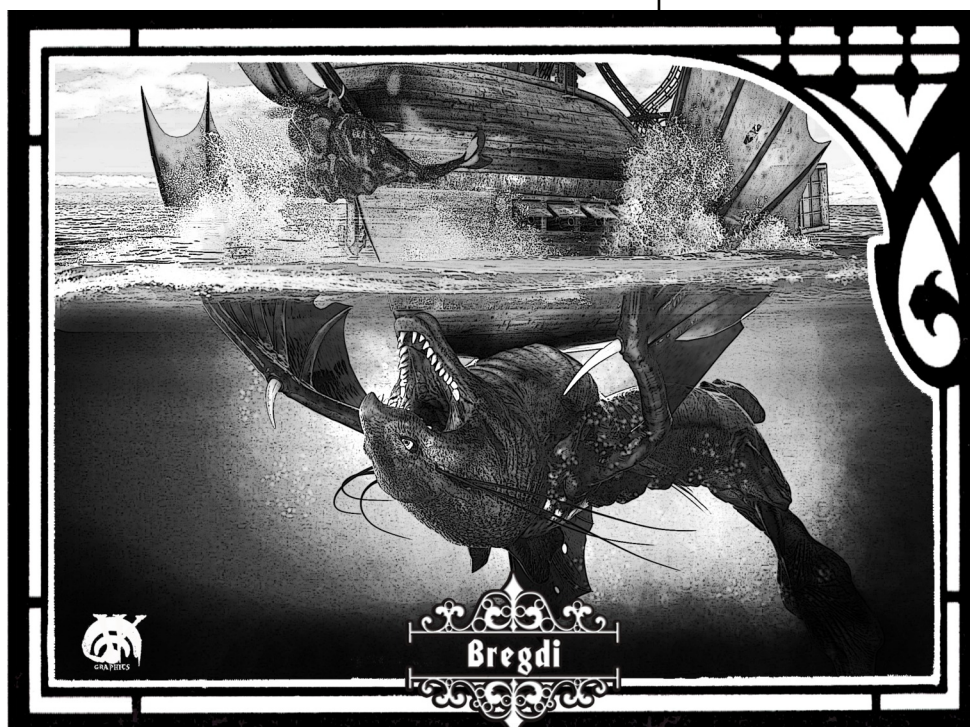
AC:	5
HD:	22*
Move (swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite + special
Damage:	2d20 or special
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F11
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	G
Intelligence:	4
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	5,000

Bregdi are massive (around the size of a small sailing ship hull), long necked, ship sized fish with fins on either side adapted to form gigantic claws with which they can clasp a vessel from underneath. They inhabit the cool waters around the north of Alphatia, Esterhold and Norwold, migrating further north in summer into the colder waters. They are a serious threat to shipping.

Their preferred form of attack is to wrap their claws around a ship from underneath, where they begin to gnaw on the hull, inflicting 1d10 hull points of damage per round. This frightening rate of attrition can allow them to overturn ships very rapidly, at which point the ship is dragged to their underwater wrecking grounds where inhabitants are consumed, and treasures stored. They cannot attack anything smaller than a ship with their claws, but they are more than capable of attacking creatures in the water with their bite. On a roll of 17-20 human sized or smaller foes are swallowed whole. They typically ignore single foes in the water and concentrate on attacking a ship until that is sunk or they are driven off.

Thankfully natives on the island around which bregdi hunt have methods of dissuading attack. Bregdi fear amber and throwing a single amber bead at them will drive them off. They will however defend their lairs to the death and cannot be driven off from

there with amber. Most bregdi maintain two lairs, one in their summer hunting grounds and one in their winter grounds, and most of their treasure is swallowed to be transported between the two as they migrate.



*Bregdi,
original drawing
by Jeffrey Kosh*

Qalupalic

AC:	6
HD:	2*
Movement (swimming):	90' (30')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d3/1d3/1d3 + paralysis
Number Appearing:	0 (1d12)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	B
Intelligence:	7
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	24

Appearing as mermaids but with an horrendous rotting appearance, and exuding a sulphurous stench, the undead qalulapic are hunters among the ice floes and islands of the north. They attack and take any prey, paralysing it with their bite and claws before dragging it under the water, consuming it to satisfy their desire for flesh. Their favourite prey is man, and they are known to stalk hunters and nomadic groups along the shorelines. They attempt to overturn rafts, small boats and ice floes to drag humans into the sea. They are even known to jerk on fishing nets to try to jolt fishermen into the water.



It has been noted that qalupalics always have empty baby carriers (or papooses) on their backs. For reasons unknown, they prize stolen human babies above all things, and take those babies down into the depths for unknown reasons.

Qalupalics are immune to sleep, charm, hold and all cold effects. They can be turned as ghouls.

Qalupalic, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh



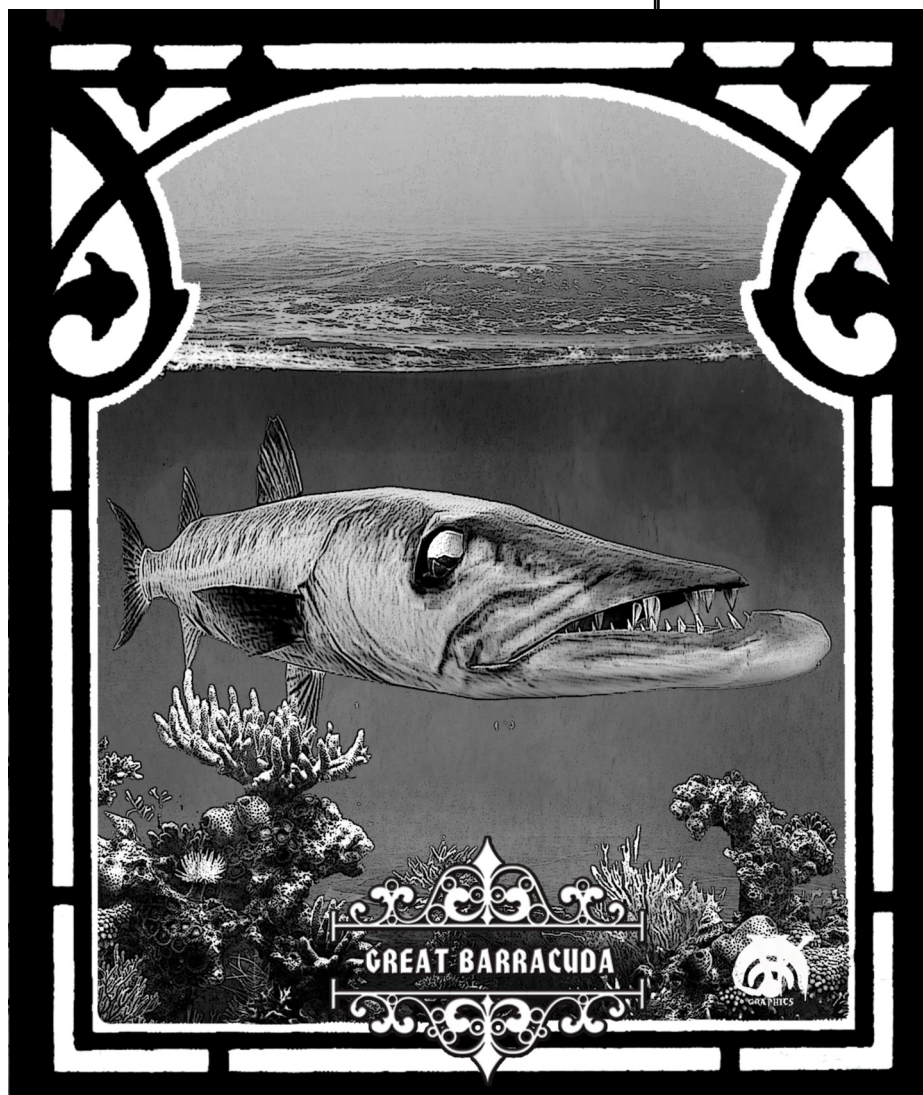
THE OPEN OCEAN

“There are some who view the surface waters of the open seas around Alphatia as harmless. And to an extent this is true, they are relatively safe from most of the larger predators that plague the aptly named Sea of Dread, for example. But there are many species there that present a serious risk to unwary travelers taking a dip over the side of a ship. Sharks are a particular danger in the waters around Alphatia, following warmer currents from the south and feeding on shoals of fish that in turn swarm from the colder, fertile waters of the north. Barracuda also are an issue – good eating in themselves, but more than happy to return the favour. The carcharodon is a species of shark lost across the rest of Mystara but it is the undisputed alpha predator of mid-ocean, open waters in the region. Indeed, the lack of some of the other notable predators of other oceans allows sharks to thrive in these waters, and there are more varieties of large shark here than anywhere else in the world. That doesn’t mean that there are no oddities. The morgawr is a nightmarishly horrible creature and at a distance removed from anything to be found in other oceans. My relief that old Gargantua never got hold of one is tinged with just a little regret as to how awe-inspiringly horrific that would have been.”

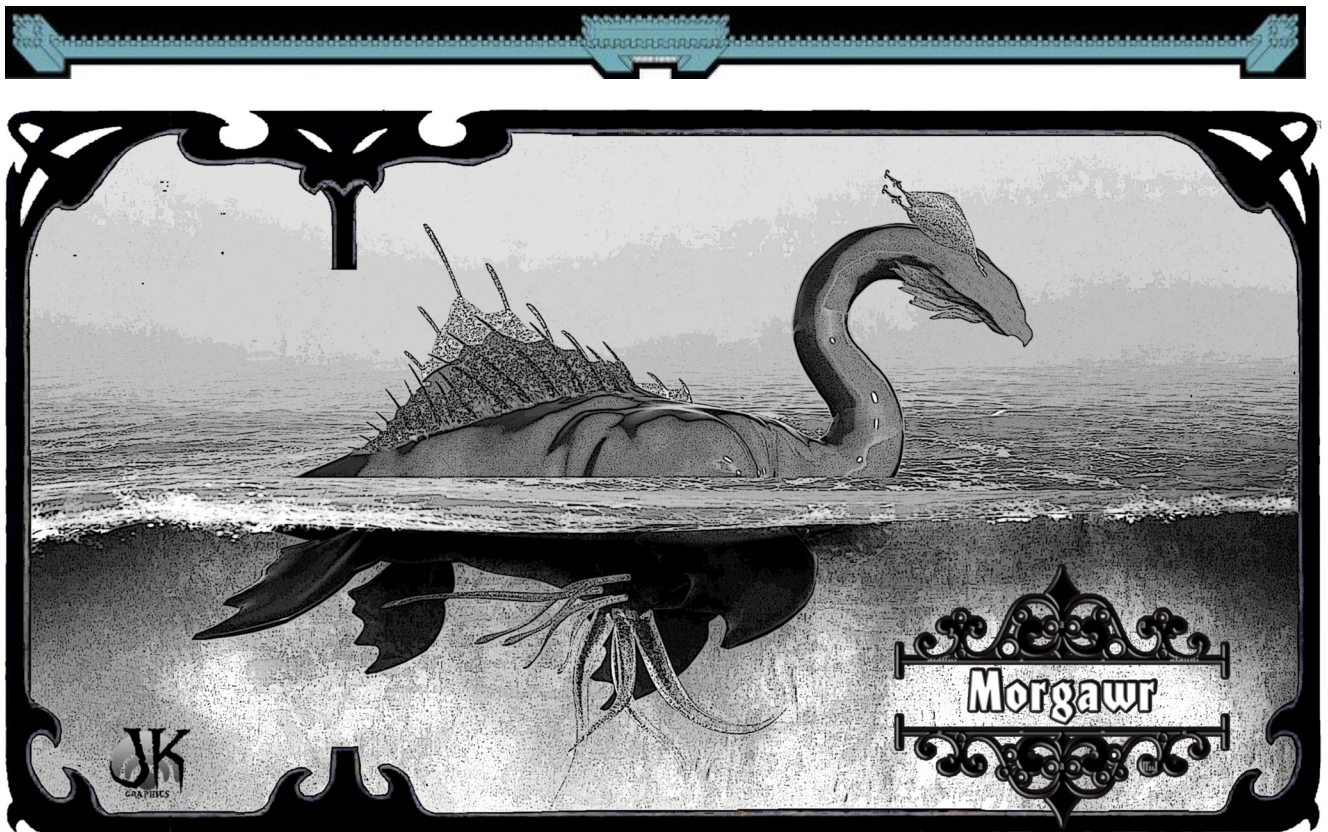
Great Barracuda

AC:	4
HD:	3
Movement (swimming):	240' (80')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d12
Number Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	20

A torpedo shaped, streamlined predatory sea fish around 4'- to 6'-long that will attack nearly any potential prey. The barracuda has no interest in killing larger prey, and will usually settle for a bite before escaping. Due to their narrow profile and great speed, they surprise any opponent in a 1-4 on 1d6, and will usually take a single bite before attempting to swim away the next round. Note that bleeding prey may subsequently attract other predators, typically sharks, and that a shoal of barracuda can kill significantly larger prey.



*Barracuda,
original drawing
by Jeffrey Kosh*



Morgawr, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

MORGAWR

AC:	5
HD:	4*
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 tentacle
Damage:	1d4+paralysis
No. Appearing:	0 (1d6)
Save as:	F2
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP value:	100

An unusual predator of the open seas, ranging from Norwold to Bellisaria, morgawr are often mistaken for far more dangerous prehistoric monsters. The morgawr is a highly developed worm. A greyish brown, rubbery creature around 5'

across, with 4 evenly distributed flippers, a it has a humped back and a long extendible neck upon which is an organ reminiscent of a head with which it can lash out at any opponent within 10', inflicting 1d4 damage and requiring a save vs. paralysis to avoid being paralysed for 2d6 turns. There are no identifiable eyes on a morgawr; rather it has sensory patches all around its perimeter, with which it can sense movement of both prey and potential predators. Its mouth is a ring of tentacles in the centre of the underside of its body, with which it tears prey apart and feeds parts thereof into its mouth. In combat it swims towards prey and attempts to stun a target with its head-like organ, to drag its prey away into the deep to feed. While morgawr rarely attack humans they may do so if surprised or if caught in an unfortunate fisherman's net.

Shark, Carcharodon

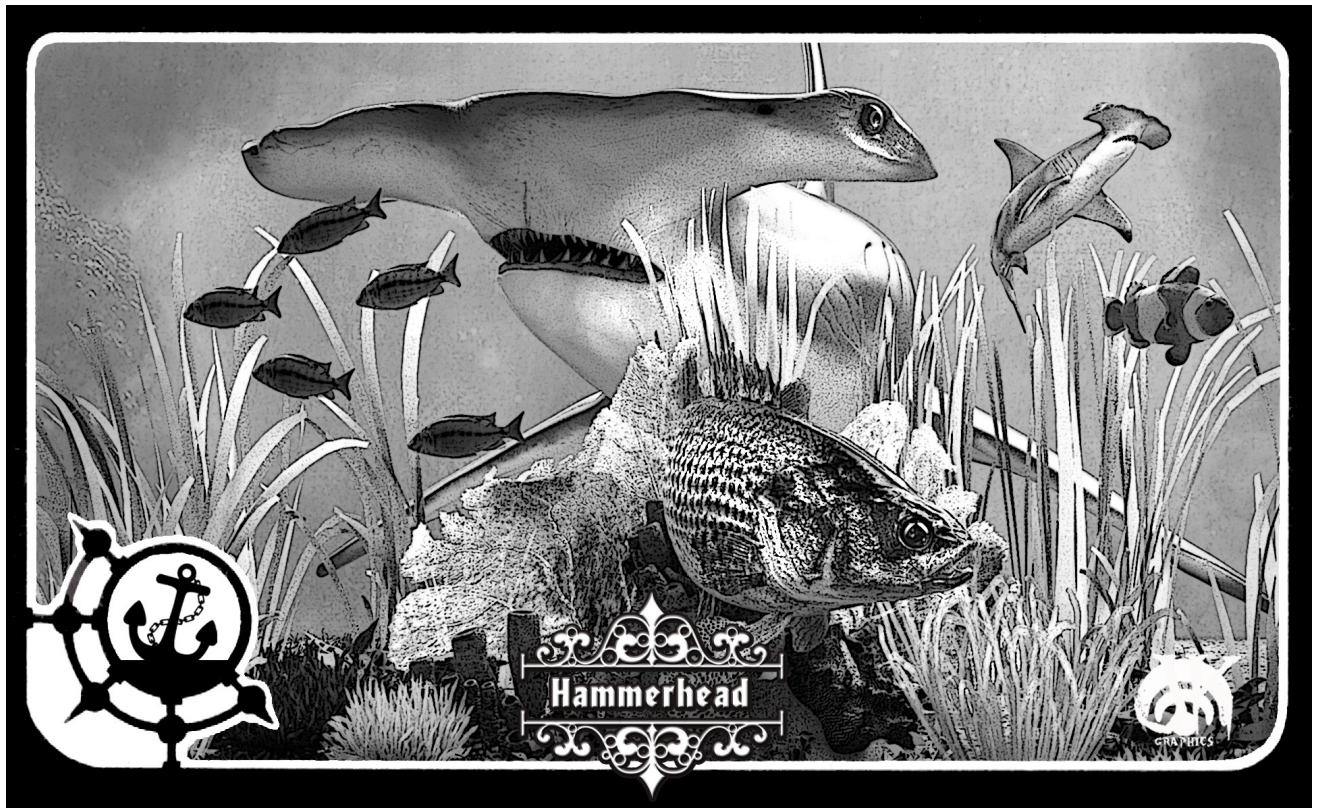
AC:	3
HD:	16
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d10
No. Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,000

largest known predatory shark, migrating north from the Southern Alpathian Sea in summer into the cooler waters where huge shoals of fish migrate from the north to spawn. Primarily an ambush predator, willing to attack almost any prey up to the size of a small whale, a carcharodon often take a bite before swimming off at pace to return and attack by surprise again and again. It is not infrequent for this shark to attack sailing vessels, up to the size of small sailing ships, mistaking them for basking mammals or other species of shark near the surface of the ocean. Such vessels are rarely sunk but frequently sailors are knocked overboard (and they are then in danger of being consumed).

Similar to a great white shark but even larger, at up to 50' long, the carcharodon (also known as the megalodon) is the



Carcharodon, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)



Hammerhead, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

Shark, Hammerhead

	Lesser	Greater
AC:	4	4
HD:	5	7
Movement (swimming)	180'(60')	180'(60')
Attacks:	1 bite	1 bite
Damage:	1d10	2d8
No. Appearing:	0(1d4)	0(1d3)
Save As:	F3	F4
Morale:	8	9
Treasure Type:	Nil	Nil
Intelligence:	2	2
Alignment:	Neutral	Neutral
XP Value:	175	450

Hammerhead sharks are aggressive hunters that will often take an experimental bite out of anything in the water. The lesser hammerhead is around 4'-5' long, whereas the greater hammerhead can reach 15'-20'. They have keen senses and can sniff out blood within 300'. They are immediately recognisable by having distinctive hammer-shaped heads, with their eyes positioned very widely spaced at either end. This gives them extraordinarily wide vision, which alongside keen senses of smell and vibratory reception make them almost impossible to surprise (they are only surprised on a 1 on 1d12).

Shark, Thresher

AC:	4
HD:	4*
Movement (swimming):	200' (66')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d4
No. Appearing:	0 (1d8)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	125

The thresher is a 10'-long silvery grey shark, capable of immense speed. Around half of its body length is composed of a long, thin dorsal tail fluke. Its favoured form of attack is to move in at huge speed, take a bite from a victim, and escape. When attacking thus, it has a +3 bonus to surprise a victim, and it will typically try to escape the following round. Deaths due to thresher sharks are thus uncommon, but horrific injuries may result.



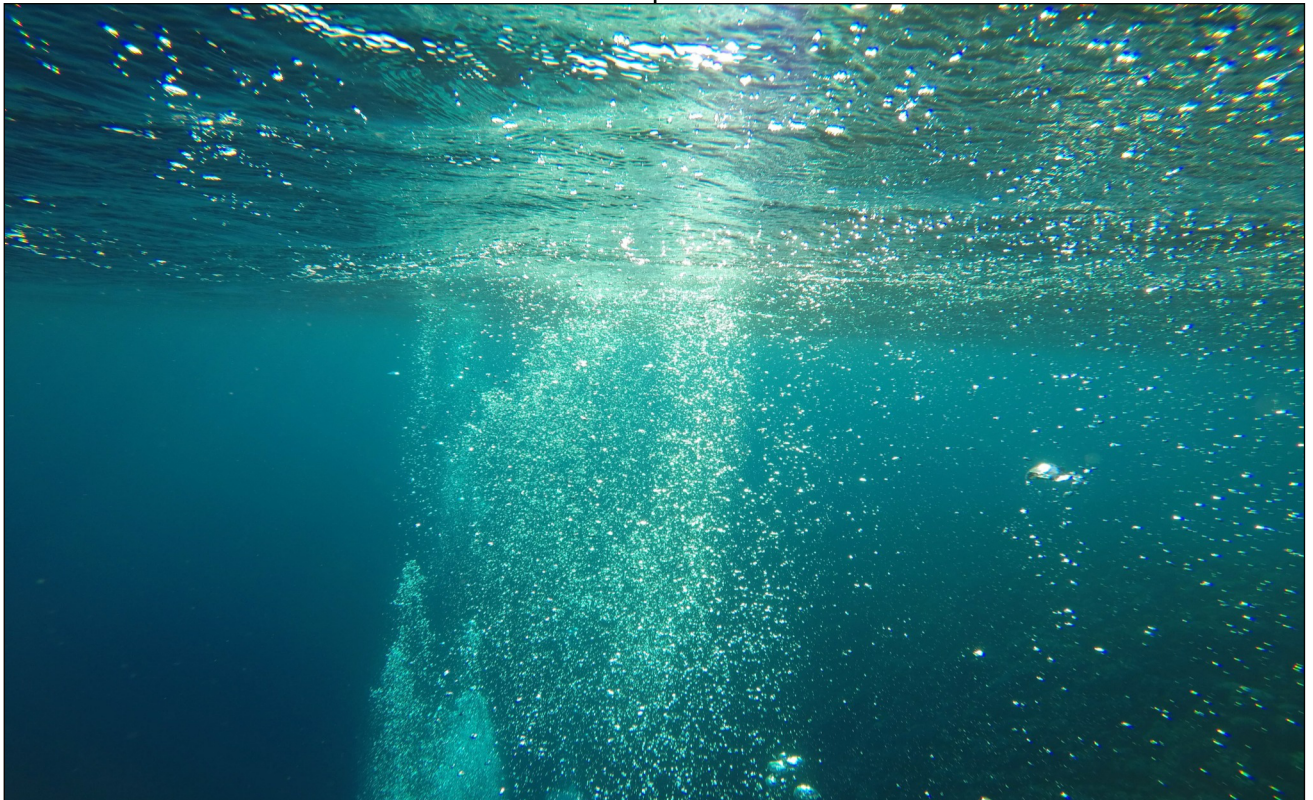
*Thresher,
original drawing
by Jeffrey Kosh*

THE ABYSS

“The ocean is not one place. If you put a spot on the map in the ocean, that’s not even one place. This takes some getting used to if you’re a landlubber. The creatures who live in the surface waters are not the same as those that inhabit the deep. The great squid, the arthropods and the other horrors lurking in the dark depths of other regions are also found in the Alphatian Sea, but one of the things that does make the Alphatian Sea different is that the great whales (or sperm whales as they are uncharitably known because of the excellent spermaceti oil that can be extracted from them by idiot whalers who don’t understand they are rendering down their allies) form an organised guard against the horrors of the deep in a way that they do not in other waters, and their nightly hunting trips

into the abyss serve not only to feed them but also to turn the tide against the greatest dangers of the deep. Indeed, one such creature, by the name of Crasawk Wreoong, is the most gifted of all the druids of the ocean and should you encounter her she can tell many fascinating tales about the dangerous inhabitants of the ocean depths.”

“The drawback of this hunt (where the whales keep in check the spread of such nightmarish monstrosities as giant rotifers) is that when they fall, there is a danger that they will succumb to the same forces that make their enemies so formidable. When this occurs, there is the risk that they may become globsters, rotting parodies of whales forever stuck between day and night in the crushing depths.”



Anthropod

AC:	6
HD:	1-12****
Movement (swimming):	120' (40') or 360' (120')
Attacks:	1 weapon/1 spell
Damage:	1d8+skewer or by spell
No. Appearing:	3d4 (10d8)
Save As:	C 1-12
Morale:	8 (10)
Treasure Type:	L, N, O
Intelligence:	14
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	11 to 4,750

Anthropods are guardians of the deep waters of the Alphantian Sea, druids protecting the abyssal vents from any who may threaten them or indeed anything that may enter through them, allies of the great whales in their never-ending crusade against a spiritual and existential darkness that would absorb all.

Their upper parts resemble those of fiendish-looking humanoids, short but savage, while their lower parts are closer to those of an octopus, with a mass of 8 tentacles in place of legs. When fully stretched out they are only around 6' long, more comfortably sitting at around 4' tall. Their whole skin is similar to that of an octopus, allowing them to change colour to blend in spectacularly well in their surroundings. This allows them to surprise any foe on a 1-5 on 1d6, and (quite often) to go entirely unnoticed should they wish. They possess near faultless infravision to a distance of 120', and much of their own language is conducted using subtle changes in colour imperceptible to other creatures of the abyss. They are surprisingly fast, when necessary, and while they normally move no faster than a human walking across the land, they may for 1 turn every hour move at 3x that speed, or at a faster 360' per round for up to 1 round in every minute. This is usually used to escape a foe, with a puff of black ink being immediately followed by a rapid escape in any direction,



Anthropod, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

accompanied by an immediate change of colour. When fleeing from combat in such a way it is quite likely that they will be immediately out of sight of their foes, who must make a saving throw vs. wands to even see in which direction they disappeared.

Anthropods are not typically aggressive towards neutral or lawful creatures, but they can be hostile if they are challenged or if the abyss in which they reside is threatened. All anthropods are druids, capable of casting clerical and druidic spells as a caster of a level equal to their hit dice, and they tend to form mixed-level groups for any of the specific activities they are involved in (foraging, defence, exploration, etc.). If forced into combat they use either their magic or wickedly barbed tridents (with which they are considered 'skilled' for the purpose of skewering an enemy, using standard weapon mastery rules). Their settlements are found in great caverns in the depths of the ocean. Scattered villages of anthropods are found across the Alphatian Sea, and there are rumours of a great city of anthropods, Octopolis, containing untold riches, spread by less scrupulous kna merchants.

Haunt, Globster*

AC:	-3
HD:	15****
Movement (swimming):	90' (30')
Attacks:	1 touch/1 gaze
Damage:	Age 10-40 years / Paralysis
No. Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F15
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	E, N, O
Intelligence:	12
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	5,850

Attacks: Ectoplasmic Net; Gaze (paralysis); Ageing damage per blow.

Defences: Immune to all spells except those affecting evil; harmed only by +2 or better weapons; Saving Throw vs. Turning destruction (spells).

Globsters are a form of haunt (see *Rules Cyclopedica*, page 182), formed from decaying sperm whales, who stalk the great valleys at the bottom of the sea. Their rotting bodies degrade to a form barely resembling a whale, often with an elongated spine with a fatty thread of flesh as all that remains of their forequarters. They arise when a sperm whale falls to one of the great evils of the deep, and they roam the abyssal plain in the vicinity of their deaths seeking revenge on the sentient living things they were trying to defend. In common with other haunts they can only be harmed by magic weapons of +2 or greater enchantment. They are immune to all spells except those affecting evil. They do not inflict normal damage, rather they cause ageing with their physical



Globster, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

blows. They can create an Ectoplasmic Net while doing other things and can use their Gaze attack as well as their physical touch attack each round. If seriously threatened (or if Morale fails), like other haunts the globster will escape into the Ethereal Plane and not return for 1-8 days. They can only enter the Ether three times per day but can leave it at any time.

Net: When first encountered, a globster will typically start oozing ectoplasm. In the darkness of the deep ocean this is barely visible at all, and unless characters are specifically looking they are unlikely

to see it. The ectoplasm slowly forms a net. The Net initially has no effect on the movement of the globster or others for 3 rounds, but after that time, the net is complete, forming a 10' radius around the globster and moving with it. Any living creature within a complete ectoplasmic net must make a saving throw vs. spells or be pulled into the Ethereal Plane (where the net also exists). The ethereal victim is helpless unless special items or spells (oil of etherealness, *gate*, etc.) permit travel from that plane. The globster will ignore its ethereal victims until after defeating those remaining on the Prime.

Gaze: A globster's gaze attack has a 60' range, and may be used once per round (against a single victim) at most, in addition to other attack forms. The eyes of the globster shine a dull blue-green colour when this is used, like a deep sea squid glowing to attract prey. The victim of the gaze must make a saving throw vs. spells or be paralysed for 2-8 rounds. A globster usually ignores its paralysed victims, concentrating its attacks on other enemies nearby.

Ageing damage: Each blow from a globster ages the victim by 10 to 40 years. Elves may ignore the effects of the first 200 years of ageing; dwarves may ignore the first 50 years, and halflings, the first 20 years. Otherwise, each 10 years of ageing will cause the victim to lose 1 point of constitution. This loss is permanent and cumulative (each additional 10 years drains another point). A *wish* will restore only one point lost in this manner, and less powerful magic cannot affect the loss. All ageing should be noted on record sheets, as it does not wear off; it can be countered with a potion of longevity or a *wish*. If a victim's constitution drops to 0, the victim dies permanently, and cannot be raised.

Song: The song of the globster is reminiscent of the plaintive tune of a dying whale. The globster may sing at any time, even while making other attacks, singing at one target per round within 120' from when first encountered. The target must make a saving throw vs. dragon breath with a -4 penalty to the roll or be struck unconscious for 4d4 rounds and lose buoyancy, sinking at a rate of 90' per round for the duration of the effect.

Turning: When a cleric's attempt at turning a globster gives a "D" result, the creature may make a saving throw vs. spells to avoid destruction. If the saving throw is successful, the globster is not turned or destroyed, although the cleric can repeat the attempt. Other turning results are handled normally.

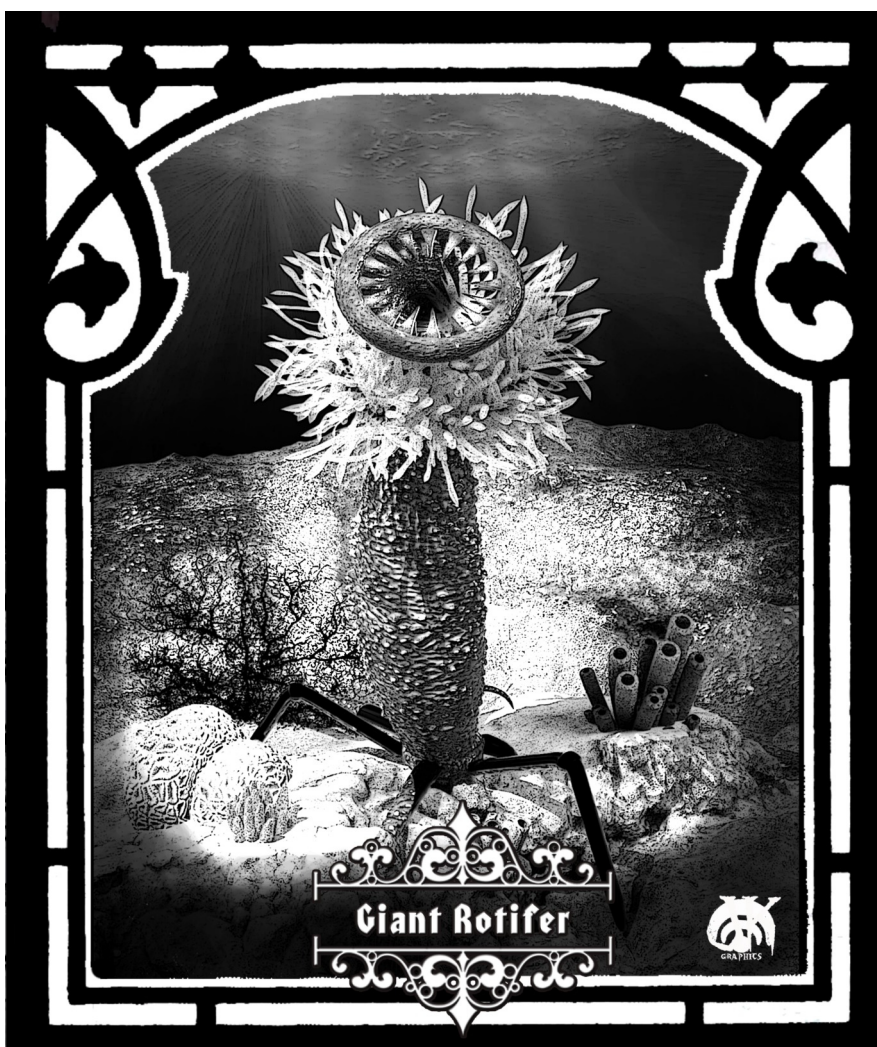
The globster keeps the treasure of its victims somewhere within its haunting grounds, often within a shipwreck or sea cave. While the globster hates all cetaceans, and all sentient lawful creatures, they have no interest in creatures of animal intelligence, and their lairs are often shared with other horrors of the deep. Victims of globsters do not become globsters unless they are themselves great sperm whales.



Rotifer, Giant

AC:	6
HD:	7+3*
Movement (squirming):	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 suck
Damage:	0 (10d10)
Number Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	Vx2
Intelligence:	0
XP Value:	1,025

Rotifers are common, tiny, predatory animals found across the world in ponds, rivers, lakes and indeed anywhere there is a body of water. The giant rotifer is rather akin to a giant, muscular jelly, with a single powerful foot with which it holds on to a surface, and at the other end of its body (15' away) it has something akin to a head, with masses of beating cilia generating a current towards its mouth. That current drags anything in the water towards it, at a tremendous rate, where prey is eventually crushed and swallowed.



Rotifer, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
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Giant rotifers do not target specific prey, they merely suck water towards them. That creates a cone, 100' long and 50' wide at the far end. Any creatures therein must make a saving throw vs. dragon breath or be caught in the cone and be dragged at increasing rate towards the mouth of the beast. In the first round their motion is deflected by 10' from their chosen course, towards the rotifer. In the second round they are drawn a further 70' towards the rotifer, and in the third, if they have not already entered the mouth-parts of the rotifer, they are consumed.

The only hard part of the rotifers body is a ring of horrific tooth-like extrusions in its neck, called a mastax. Being chewed by a mastax causes horrific

(10d10) damage, and in the unlikely scenario of surviving ingestion a character takes a further 2d8 damage per round from digestive juices.

Giant rotifers are found in the deepest, darkest lakes and ocean trenches. It is unknown what process causes a rotifer to grow to such a size or indeed whether they are the same kind of life form as other rotifers. Sages have speculated that they may be from an outer plane dominated by gargantuan animalcules. If that is true, no explorers have returned from said plane to tell the tale.

Whale, Great

Great whales (or sperm whales) of the Alphatian Sea are identical to great whales as described on page 212 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*, except that they are far more intelligent and wiser, with average scores of 13 in both, with their own highly complex whalesong language. Many are also druid shamans (see page 216 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*) and can advance up to level 14 in that class.



Great whale, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
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THE COLD SHORES OF THE NORTH

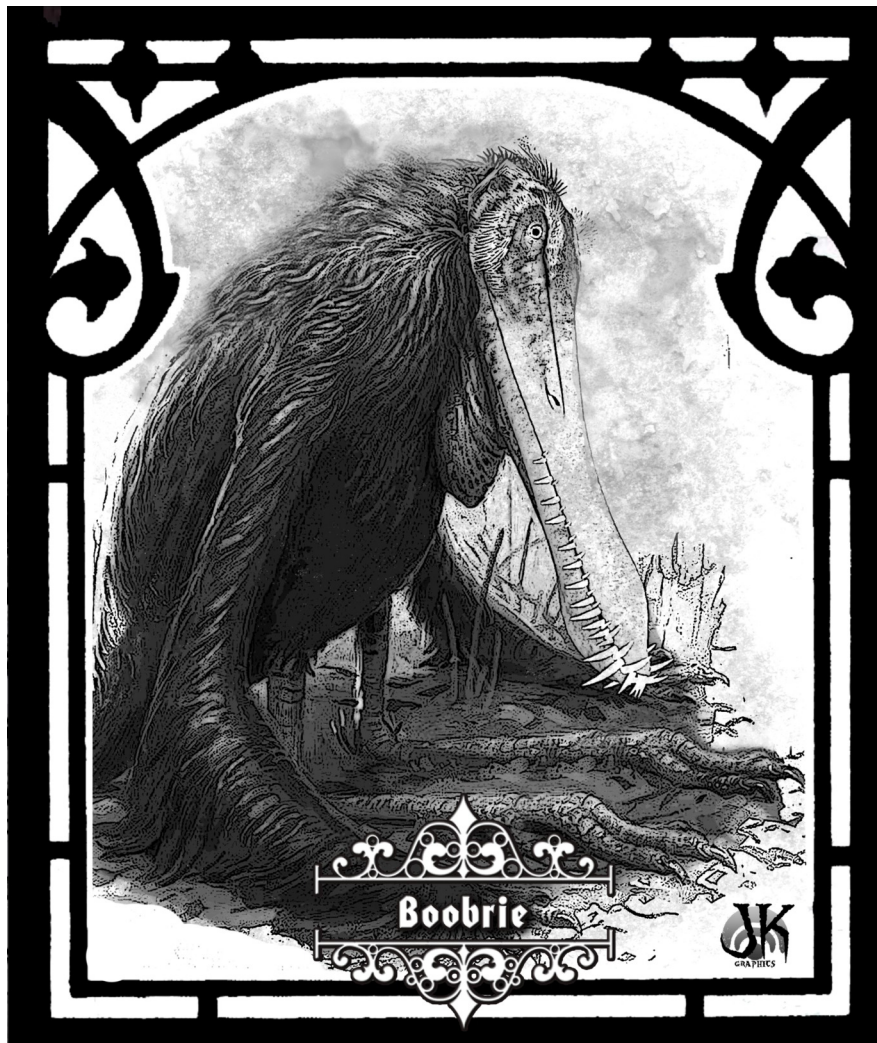
“Many species are common to all of the shorelines and islands of Norwold, the Isle of Dawn, Alphatia and Esterhold. The commonality of higher rainfall in those coastal regions creates deep sea lochs and wide estuaries that are dominated by specific predators distinct from those of the open ocean. This transition zone is crucial both to species of the land and the ocean, representing both an area of change and of conflict. The top predators of this zone originate both on land and in the water, and there are even some species of freshwater that have colonised this brackish water zone. It is here we find some of the strangest aquatic creatures of the region, such as the legendary boobrie, the curious dohar-chú, and the terrifying trollgadda. I would observe that it is better to have such creatures on your own shores than those of your enemy – it is better to know and come to terms with these dangers than to encounter them unexpectedly. Many is the time that would-be invaders reaching the shores of Norwold have discovered this the hard way, when the great trollgadda who infest those waters make their presences known.”

Boobrie

AC:	4
HD:	6*
Move (walking):	120' (40')
(flying):	240' (80')
(swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 or special
Damage:	1d8 or 1d6
No. Appearing:	1 (1d4)
Save As:	F3
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	C
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	500

The boobrie is a massive bird that hunts the lochs and shorelines of the cold north. It can move freely between two forms, one being similar to a heron but pure black and standing around 9' tall, and the other a shorter (7') and stockier bird resembling a great auk or penguin. When nesting (and hunting) on loch shores it chooses the heron form, when at sea or nesting on islands it chooses the auk. It is a dangerous predator feeding on larger fish, young seals, livestock and even humans and demi-humans.

While in heron form it can, once every 3 rounds, attack by swinging its wings at all creatures in front of it within 20'. All creatures will take 1d6 damage and must roll under their dexterity score on 1d20 to remain standing. While a boobrie in this form will rarely attack humans, recognising them as dangerous, they will fight to the death to defend their massive (20'-30' across) nests among reeds and marshlands. In auk form, boobries pay little attention to fishermen (who often see the presence of a boobrie hunting seals in the water as good



*Boobrie, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

luck). But anyone who falls into the water is in serious danger. An auk-form boobrie can once every 6 rounds when in the water emit a piercing shriek that inflicts 1d6 damage to all creatures within 20' in all directions, all of which must make a save vs. paralysis or be stunned for 1d3 rounds. They are immune to normal and silver weapons and can only be struck by magical weapons.

Like many birds, boobries have a habit of gathering the assorted shiny things that they find. They don't covet treasure, but when they are found with treasures in their nests

that treasure is often accompanied by various other assorted shiny objects. Many lost rings, charms or even stained-glass windows have been recovered from boobrie nests.

There are persistent rumours that another, higher form of boobrie related to the faerie races, and which is more intelligent and able to shift into a number of other forms (cormorant, diver and water bull among others), may still exist. Whether this is true or a rumour spread by the Sidhe remains to be determined.

Dobhar-chú*

AC:	2
HD:	7*
Move (land):	150' (50')
Move (swimming):	180' (60')
Attack:	2 claws+ 1 bite
Damage:	1d8/1d8/2d8
No. Appearing:	1 (1d2)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	E
Intelligence:	7
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	850

Dobhar-chú are the legendary kings of the otters. They stand around 4' tall at the shoulder, are anything up to 15' long, and built in a far more muscular, massive way than normal otters. They are not innately hostile to humans and demi-humans, but they frequently find themselves in conflict with them if mustelids (otters, weasels, badgers, ferrets, etc.) and their habitats are threatened by human encroachment.

Their thick fur coats seem to protect them from some forces, meaning they can only be struck with magic weapons, and are immune to 1st level spells. Their pelts are highly valued and can be fashioned into high quality leather armour that is easier to magically work with than most other leathers (+5% chance of successfully enchanting). Any creature wearing armour made thereof suffers a -4 on reaction rolls with all mustelids.



*Dobhar-chú, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
<https://jeffrejkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrejkoshgraphics/home>*

All mustelids are willing to obey them, including giant weasels, badgers and giant ferrets, and any within 360' will hasten to their assistance if called. Dobhar-chú are intelligent, and can be bargained with, but they are uncompromising in defence of these creatures, which they see as their subjects.

Trollgädda

AC:	4
HD:	3* to 25*
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6 per hit dice
Number appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	Fighter of ½ hit dice
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	See below
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	50 to 6,500

Trollgädda are pikes – sharp toothed, elongated predatory fish of fresh and brackish waters in temperate and cold climates, but with a capacity to grow to astonishing size and ferocity. They are by nature ambush predators, choosing to hide in the shadows of trees, weeds, and riverbanks and cliffs before darting out and taking prey.

As they age, trollgädda can reach astonishing size, around 1' long per hit dice. And as they grow their attack becomes ever more savage. At 3HD, on an attack roll of 19-20 they can swallow a pixie sized target whole, increasing to halfling-sized at 6HD, dwarf-sized at 8HD, and human/elf-sized at 10HD. Any creature hit with a bite and not swallowed must make a saving throw vs. paralysis to avoid being held within the teeth of the fish, causing them to automatically take damage from the bite each round until dead.

Larger specimens of trollgädda are confined to the larger lakes and the brackish waters of great estuaries of colder climates, but younger specimens may be a hazard in even small bodies of water. Thankfully it is

only the larger specimens that regularly attack humans and demi-humans. While possessing only animal intelligence, trollgädda instinctively know better than to attack foes they cannot swallow, unless forced into a fight. They are highly territorial, and only a single trollgädda of 8 or more HD will be found within a single lake or estuary.

Trollgädda have no need of nor interest in treasure, but they do tend to have favoured grounds for resting, where the remains of unfortunate victims are excreted. There it may be possible to find a range of valuables, depending on habitat. The DM should decide what is possible, but small specimens may for example have treasure type U, while the most monstrous may be the equivalent of treasure type H or greater.



*Trollgädda, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

WARMER SHORES

“The warmer shores of the southern parts of Alphatia, the Isle of Dawn and northern Bellissaria have a very different range of creatures to the colder climates. The great predators of the colder waters sitting at the top of the rich food web stemming from vast shoals of fish found there are infrequent, and the creatures frequenting the shorelines tend to be smaller, but no more benign. It is here that the greatest variety of humanoid inhabitants around the coast is found, not only merrow, mermen and sea elves, but also lizard men, shelly-coats, tiddymen and grindylows (although the latter three can be found as far north as southern Norworld). These smaller creatures require less feed, but they live in an area of even greater diversity and need to fight just as hard to survive. There are no favours to be had on the shores of the Alphatian Sea!

One other curiosity is the coral golem. Honestly, they were there before we were, and I don't entirely know who created them first. They're a fascinating combination of living corals with magical constructs formed of the hard bodies of corals of years gone by, and they seem to grow as they age. Some of the older coral golems that wander up from the dark seas between Alphatia and Bellissaria have reached monstrous size, growing near the hydrothermal vents on the sea bed, but most of those created by the wizards of Aquas are more manageable.”

Golem, Coral*

AC:	4
HD:	12*
Movement Rate:	90' (30')
Attacks:	1 sword
Damage:	3d6 + paralysis
Number Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	4
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,125



*Coral golem, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
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Coral golems are created by aquatic races as servants or guardians much as other golems are created on land. They are typically tall, heavy, lumbering coral constructions covered in live polyps, wielding massive, polyp-encrusted golem swords that are integral to one of their arms. They are capable of movement on land or on the sea bed, but on land the polyps that give their sword attack its special effect (see below) retract, and the sword only inflicts normal damage.

When attacking foes around coral reefs they can blend almost seamlessly into their surroundings, surprising them on a 1-5 on 1d6. Their sword attack causes 3d6 damage, and all underwater foes not immune to poison must make a save vs. spells or be paralysed for 2d6 turns due to the stinging effect of their polyps.

Coral golems share the same immunity to poison, sleep, charm and hold spells, as well as gaseous attacks, as other golems. They are also immune to cold-based attacks and petrification, and can only be struck with magical weapons

Grindylow, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

GRINDYLOW

AC:	5
HD:	2*
Movement Rate:	90' (30')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d4/1d4/1d2
Number Appearing:	1 (1d4)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	C
Intelligence:	7
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	25



Grindylows are small humanoid amphibians, with small bodies around 3' long but with long, spindly arms and legs that can reach out up to 15'. They have green, scaled skin and large mouths with jagged, pointy teeth, beneath a small nose and large orange eyes. They are equally at home in the water or on land, with the same movement rate in both environments. They inhabit pools by shorelines, in salt marshes, fens and swamps, and await their prey, which they reach out and grab from the pools in which they reside under the water. If they strike a foe of human size or smaller up to 15' from their pool with both claws then that creature is dragged to the pool (no saving throw) where the grindyflow will attempt to drown its victim, inflicting an extra 1d2 further damage per round on top of any other attacks until the creature is dead.

They will take any prey that is human size or smaller, although they esteem the flavour of human children and the tiddy (fey creatures they share a habitat with) above all other foods.

There is a persistent rumour that they have a queen, of the name of Jenny Greenteeth, who travels the land bestowing favours upon her people. If this is true, the grindylows are not saying. Grindylows often hunt tiddy, who consider them mortal enemies.

Shellycoat

AC:	2
HD:	1*
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
Movement (walking):	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 weapon
Damage:	By weapon
No. Appearing:	2d6 (8d6)
Save As:	F1
Morale:	7 (9)
Treasure Type:	E (R)
Intelligence:	7
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	13



Shellycoat, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

Shellycoats are thought to have originally been goblins, who for reasons unknown took to inhabiting temperate and subtropical shorelines, lakes, rivers and estuaries. Some scholars dispute this classification and argue that the shellycoats are an entirely different lineage derived from an aquatic species. Whichever is true, the shellycoat is a medium-sized (around 5' tall) humanoid with greyish skin, that cultivates shellfish (freshwater mussels, oysters and any other essentially immobile bivalve) on the surface of their skin to form a natural, growing armour. On land, shellycoats are noisy and slow, being more at home in the water (in which they can breathe as easily as on land).

They are tribal, with each tribe having a chieftain who has 3+1HD. The chieftain has 2d4 bodyguards of 2HD. If the chieftain is alive and fighting with the tribe, shellycoats have a morale of 9, otherwise they have a morale of 7. They make their lairs in the muddiest of water and in ocean caves. They lack infravision, but can see through cloudy water by echolocation to a range of 90'.

Shellycoats fight with weapons, preferring weapons that work underwater as well as on land, such as spears and tridents. They occasionally raid coastal villages or sites on rivers, but conflict with shellycoats more commonly occurs when they sneak aboard ships on rivers and in estuaries to take away whatever they can carry.

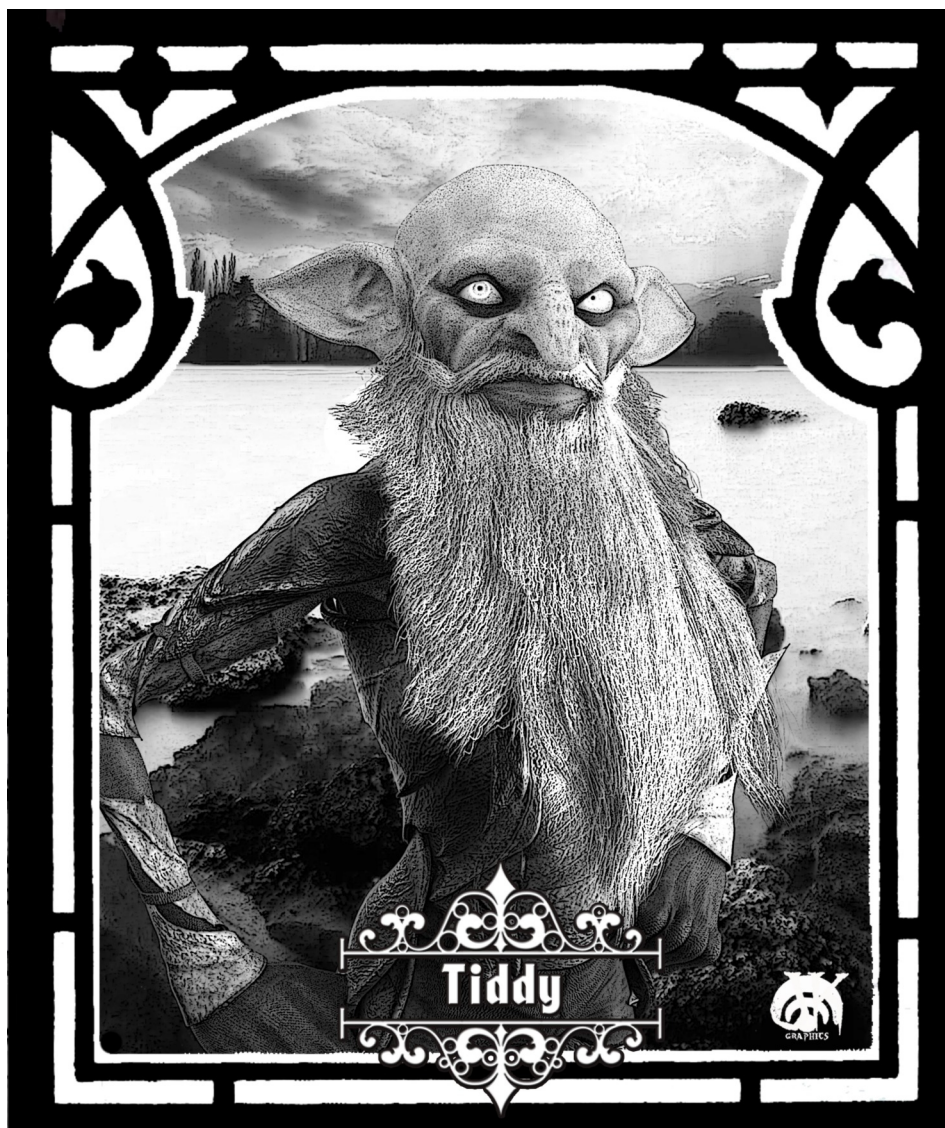
Tiddy

AC:	7
HD:	1/2**
Movement:	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 club or special
Damage:	1d2 or special
No. Appearing:	3d8 (0)
Save As:	E1
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	R
Intelligence:	13
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	7

The tiddy people are possibly the most bizarre-looking of all fey races. No larger than newborn human babies, with thin, spindly legs and arms and heads and feet almost as large as those of adults. All have long, shaggy beards whether male or female.

They make their homes in coastal salt marshes, swamps and fenland, the only habitats in which they are not completely helpless. They can become invisible to mortals at will, but even striking with complete surprise they are barely competent in combat. Indeed, it would seem unlikely that the tiddy could survive at all, and this would be impossible for them outside of their beloved wetlands. However, they have special attacks and defences in such terrain that make them almost undefeatable.

In any wetland, each tiddy can create a modified lower water or raise water effect, once per round. They can only affect a single creature with this effect, and the water level beneath them can be raised or lowered by up to 30'. Their target does not get a saving throw against this effect. They

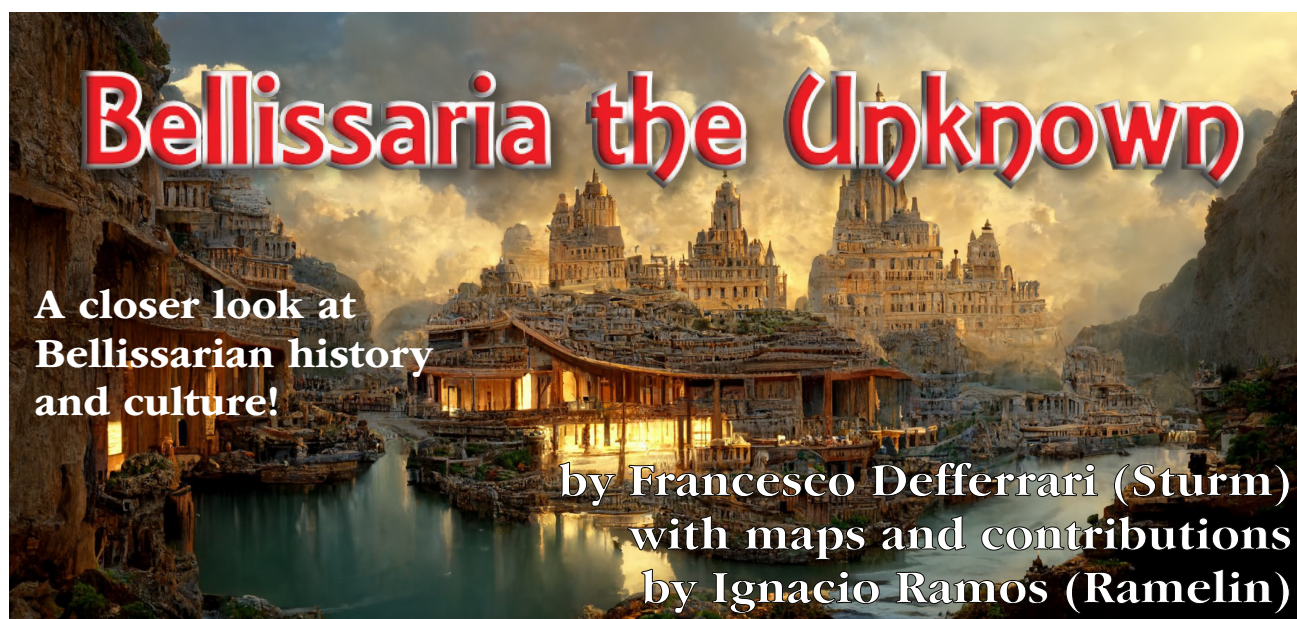


*Tiddy, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

can also do this at their own location, effectively disappearing instantly. After doing so they may reappear standing in any pool of water up to 240' away. Any other creature affected must either sink or swim.

Fenland farmers and shoreline gatherers of shellfish know to treat the tiddy with respect, and in areas where they are known to reside a small part of the first harvest of

the season is always left for the tiddy. Farmers know if their local fenland is populated by the tiddy because of the presence of large, flat boulders called strangers' stones, on which the tiddy dance on moonlit nights. There is rumour that their king, Tiddy Mun, travels between all the locations where the tiddy reside. Tiddys are mortal enemies of grindylows.



View of South Harbor - image generated from Midjourney AI with prompts by Senarch

BELLISSARIA IN CANON

The Island-Continent in CANON SOURCES

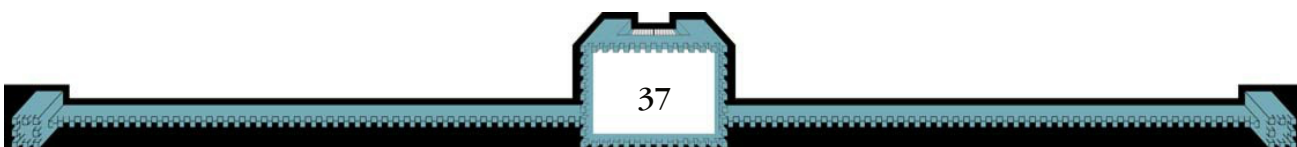
Bellissaria was introduced as an Alphatian colony in “*Dawn of the Emperors*” boxed set¹. To say that the description of this great island, the second biggest of the world after Alphatia, with an area greater than the whole Known World, is sparse, is an understatement. On page 64 of the set’s *Dungeon Master’s Guide* booklet Bellissaria is described as a very quiet place, dedicated to being the bread basket and the southeastern military border of the Empire of Alphatia. People are described as taciturn, close-minded and superstitious. Peace and quiet are valued over anything else and troublemakers are exiled as soon as possible. Another mention is on page 11 of the *Player’s Guide to Alphatia* booklet, which

¹ [Available to purchase](#) in the DriveThru RPG online store

describes Alchemos, capital of Meriander, as a center of alchemy and Spearpoint as the military bastion against Minaea, while the rest of Surshield is a land of anarchy by the king’s will.

In the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac*” I, II and III² Bellissaria receives a better treatment. There is an indication of its area, 1,295,215 square miles, and population, 455,000 inhabitants, and it is named as a continent. The Almanac says few monsters inhabit Bellissaria, with no mention of big predators. The population is mostly copper-skinned Alphatian with a minor proportion of wizards compared to the mainland, only just a little higher than in other countries.

² [All available to purchase](#) in the DriveThru RPG online store



The Bellissarians again are noted as being close-mouthed and close-minded, with no love for strangers. That's not much more, but the Almanac then has descriptions for the six individual kingdoms. **Dawnrim** is described as a nation of poor fishermen, cattlemen and shepherds, with only 25,000 inhabitants, 5,000 in Alinquin, and very few spellcasters, with a fighter, Teskilion, as king. **Horken**, with 30,000 inhabitants, 5,000 in the namesake capital, is described as a shipbuilding center, using timber mostly from Lagrius, with the major families involved in the trade having the real power behind king Villiun, a cleric. **Lagrius** is ruled by Queen Siaron Lagrius, has 150,000 inhabitants, 15,000 in Blueside, and its industries are timber and fishing in the central lake. **Meriander** is ruled by Queen Drulivia, has 100,000 inhabitants, 15,000 in Alchemos, and is noted for the University of Alchemos and agriculture. **Notrion** is described as an underpopulated nation with 50,000 inhabitants, 10,000 in Aaslin, with most people gathered on the northern side and involved in trade. King Lodrig III has become unpopular as the drop in trade following the sinking of Alphatia forced him to impose much more taxes. **Surshield**, ruled by Queen Gratia, with 100,000 inhabitants of which 30,000 in the capital of Spearpoint, is just a military city ruling only formally over an anarchist nation. Queen Gratia's attempt to impose order in the interior will not be well received. In the "*Poor Wizard's Almanac II and III*" the kingdoms' description is under Bellissaria but no other details are added, however the map of the Alphatian sea in "*Poor Wizard's Almanac III*" gives names to several previously unnamed Bellissarian communities.

The Mystaran Almanacs FROM AC 1014 TO 1019

The fan almanacs starting from AC 1014³ summarized the situation in Bellissaria and from AC 1016 added individual descriptions of the Bellissarian nations, mentioning some hill giants in Horken, humanoid mercenaries in the interior of Notrion, tasloi, hill giants, cyclops and dragons in Surshield, and giving short updates about the current rulers. The year AC 1016 also saw the birth of three new Bellissarian kingdoms: **Eirundrynn**, meant to become a territory dominated by Shiye elves, in western Surshield, **Turmoil**, an anarchic territory, in the middle, and **Veroth**, founded by Randel's refugees, in western Notrion. The AC 1018 *Mystaran Almanac* has more extensive descriptions of the Bellissarian kingdoms. Ogres, giants and dragons are mentioned in Horken, and a former military base inhabited by three dragons and humanoids in Surshield, also with tasloi in the forests. Humanoids, tasloi, hill giants, dragons and brigands are also described in Turmoil, and again more tasloi in Eirundrynn. The AC 1019 *Mystaran Almanac* has no further descriptions, but the new imperial capital of **Vaisalian** is founded in central Bellissaria and a new map⁴ shows its location and the borders of the new kingdoms.

The AC 1010 Almanac and all the following ones also have events for Bellissaria. But before looking at them, one first annotation.

³ Available in the [Almanacs section](#) of the Vaults of Pandius

⁴ [Map by Thibault Sarlat](#) available in the Vaults of Pandius

Three Very Unlikely Claims

Canon sources say that Bellissaria had no history before the Alphatians, that its density is just 0.35 people per square mile, that there are no 'monsters' living in it. Such statements are so incredible I think they should all be challenged and maybe dismissed as 'Alphatian propaganda.'

History

The idea that Bellissaria has no history before the Alphatians or that its history can be completely ignored is quite unbelievable. In the "*Hollow World*" boxed set⁵ planetary maps Bellissaria is indicated as a peninsula attached to Skothar before the cataclysm, and the nearest people are an Oltec colony indicated in BC 3000, likely the ancestors of the Jennites. After the cataclysm only the Alphatian arrival is indicated in BC 1000. In *DRAGON Magazine* #247, Pardasta and Cloud Pardasta are noted as living in Bellissaria. Just these brief mentions can likely indicate Bellissaria has a complex history from before the Alphatians. We will examine it below along with the reasons why the Alphatians may have interest in dismissing the ancient history of the island continent.

People

The number of inhabitants in canon sources is quite unrealistic for a region which is in a temperate-warm area, is by canon very fertile to the point of being the bread-basket for the whole Alphatian Empire, and is well connected to trade routes. The density

⁵ [Available as a pdf](#) from the *DriveThru RPG* online store

of just the human inhabitants should be at least three times higher, and there would still be room for plenty of non-human inhabitants. Unless the Alphatians are counting only one kind of inhabitant, the Alphatians, ignoring all the other ethnicities and races.

Monsters and races

By canon all the other lands around Bellissaria, including Alphatia, are inhabited by at least some elves, dwarves, lupins, humanoids and other races. In Bellissaria just humans and rakasta are mentioned. That's not impossible but again it's a bit unrealistic because at least some non-human immigrants from Alphatia will certainly be present among the population.

Almanac Events in Bellissaria

In **AC 1010** there is a peasant revolt in Notrion (Yar. 8), with King Lodrig having to flee the capital and some troops deserting. The revolt is finally quelled and the leader executed (Fel. 2) but King Lodrig is eventually killed (Kal. 4). Spies from Lagrius attempt to kidnap Coltius Torion in Thyatis City but instead take Tredorian and let him go (Kla. 9). A civil war starts in Surshield when Queen Gratia tries to impose rule on the interior (Fyr. 8) until she finally gives up (Svi. 4). An acid golem is invented in Alchemos to help the Isle of Dawn against Thyatis (Amb. 5). An Alphatian skyship from the Hollow World visits Bellissaria, starting from Alinquin in Dawnrim (Eir. 20 – Kal. 20).



Skyships - image generated from Midjourney AI with prompts by Senarch

In **AC 1011** Zandor's troops from Aquas invade Bridgeport in Dawnrim (Yar. 16) and Alinquin submits to him (Kla. 3). Notrion is divided between two competing wizards (Kla. 12) with civil war in Aaslin (Kla. 17) until Commander Broderick of Aquas takes the city and nominates an Alphatian fighter, Corydon, as governor (Kla. 18). King Villiun of Horken submits to Zandor (Kla. 26) and later all the other rulers as well (Fyr. 5). Zandor accepts their submissions (Amb. 9) but later decides to depose Queens Siaron, Drulivia and Gratia (Eir. 13). Queen Gratia refuses to abdicate (Kal. 8), so Commander Broderick prepares for war against Surshield, while Queen Siaron nominates a friend, Elenitsa, as queen, and Queen Drulivia retires to study and nominates Commander Hubertek as king.

In **AC 1012** Commander Broderick of Aquas sends spies to Spearpoint (Nuw. 4) and wins a naval battle against Surshield Navy, forcing it to retreat (Nuw. 9). Then Broderick convinces Queen Gratia to escape to Esterhold (Vat. 8 and 13. Tha. 1) and nominates King Rolando Rutherford (Tha. 6). Bellissarian pirates attack merchant vessels (Fla. 14). The Bellissarian vessel *Sea Stalker* captures Minaean pirate

captain Firebrand and his ship *Stormrider* (Yar. 3). Pirates raid the village of Chemok in Surshield, taking prisoners and asking for the freedom of Firebrand (Yar. 19). Former queen Gratia of Surshield joins the rebellion in Skyfyr, Esterhold (Kla. 20, Fel. 8, 28). The New Alphatian Council forms after Zandor's deposition and capture, and Queen Gratia returns to

Surshield (Kal. 13).

In **AC 1013** there are no events for Bellissaria in the "*Joshuan's Almanac*" except for a note about the consolidation of the New Alphatian Confederate Empire (NACE⁶). The *Mystaran Almanac* of the following year mentioned that King Hubertek of Meriander and King Corydon of Notrion put an end to the old Alphatian law that restricted nobility to spellcasters.

In **AC 1014** there is a Hardball Tournament in Ionace (Fla. 1) ending with a final between the the Aquas Seahawks and the Coppertown Red Skins⁷ of Dawnrim. After a long, disputed match, the Seahawks prevail. (Fla. 28). After NACE officially

⁶ In the *Mystaran Almanacs* the acronym is also spelled Nayce, a spelling modification supposedly introduced by Minrothaddan traders and adopted in common diplomatic language.

⁷ This name goes back to 20+ years ago and mirrored notorious USA football teams which have now changed name as it was considered cultural appropriation of Native Americans. However in the Dawnrim case the name could refer both to the native population of Oltec descent and to the Cypric Alphatians, as both fantasy ethnicities are described as having copper skin tones. Or also to the copper miners of the town, being copper the 'red metal'. Therefore in this fantasy context, the local people would have no reason to find the name inappropriate.

announces Alphatia still exists in the Hollow World, Queen Gratia of Surshield has a confrontation in parliament with Baron Norlan of Qeodhar (Svi. 9).

In **AC 1015** the NACE Council discovers that the Sundsvall Maelstrom can be used to reach Alphatia in the Hollow World (Amb. 28) and sends diplomats (Eir. 15) who also meet the Karameikan Expedition to the Hollow World in Alphatia (Kal. 26).

In **AC 1016** there is civil unrest in Notrion following the decision to diversify cultivations (Nuw. 10, 25) and construct new domes there for Aquas (Vat. 7). A yacht race in Lagrius (Nuw. 26, Tha. 8) leads to the discovery of Randel troops hidden in the interior of Notrion (Tha. 26) and the meeting of the Ionace Council (Kla. 8, Fel. 14). Raids from Surshield hit Dawnrim (Tha. 20), and Dubbo in Surshield is attacked by golems escaped from Gaity (Fyr. 14), leading to the division of Surshield into three dominions: Surshield proper in the east under Queen Gratia, Turmoil as an anarchy in the middle, and Eirundrynn in the east under the elf Jhedryll as governor (Kal. 21). Queen Elenitsa of Lagrius abdicates to Siaron Lagrius (Kla. 16). Magist Drulivia in Alchemos develops a new sealant for submersibles (Fyr. 2). The kingdom of Veroth is granted to Randel refugees in the west of Notrion's territory under King Verothrics, former king of Randel (Fyr. 11), who later kills a former Glantrian spy in magic duel in Lagrius (Eir. 19). There are bombings in Alchemos, Meriander, by opposers to wizards' nobility (Amb. 12), later arrested (Svi. 27). New forts are built between Dawnrim and Veroth (Svi. 3, Eir. 1).

In **AC 1017** Karszamon the wizard becomes NACE Commander after possessing Broderick's body (Nuw. 22). A shipwreck in Lagrius (Tha. 17). Annual regatta decided in Lagrius but canceled as NACE is plagued by underwater undead (Fel. 15, Amb. 7). Thieves' Guild exposed in Notrion (Fyr. 23). Domes are completed in Notrion to be used for the new undersea settlement of Torenal in former Arogansa, but transport is delayed by undead problems in the undersea of former Alphatia (Nuw. 12, Kal. 2).

In **AC 1018** the domes finally leave Notrion (Nuw. 10). The NACE Council struggles to cooperate (Nuw. 12). A carnival, Milos's Exhibition of Wonders, with an Earthshaker, visits Crownhaven in Notrion (Tha. 15). Notrion has a budget problem (Tha. 17) and imposes new taxes (Fla. 6). Veroth sends mercenaries to help the Alphatians menaced by the Jennites in Esterhold (Fla. 11). Queen Gratia recruits sailors against Minaean piracy (Fyr. 16). Powerful wizards start to settle Turmoil, which becomes more and more the Blackheart of Bellissaria (Amb. 5). Governor Jhedryll of Eirundrynn invites Shiye elves to settle his territory (Svi. 6). Notrion is near default (Eir. 3) and the economic crisis also hits shipbuilding in Surshield (Eir. 21). King Verothrics of Veroth and Master Terari discuss the future of NACE (Eir. 25). Milos's Exhibition of Wonders arrives in Lagrius (Kal. 3).

In **AC 1019** the evil wizards problem worsens in Turmoil (Nuw. 25), also resulting in raids by bandits in Eirundrynn (Vat. 1). Economic crisis in glass factories in Alinquin, Dawnrim (Tha. 14), leading to a short rebellion (Tha. 19), while unemployment rises all over Bellissaria (Tha. 22). Veroth invites workers (Fla. 12). Notrion goes bankrupt

(Yar. 9). Undead are spotted in the sea near Alinquin, Dawnrim (Yar. 21–26). Slow growth of elven presence in Eirundrynn (Kla. 10). A Naycese submersible battles undead off the coast of Dawnrim (Fel. 2–4). Riots due to unemployment in Alinquin, Spearpoint, Aaslin, and Blueside (Fel. 4). Village of zombies created by a necromancer in Turmoil (Fel. 7). The launch of the Seawarden, the prototype of a new, smaller class of submersible, results in disaster in Spearpoint (Fyr. 11). A gargantuan dusanu attacks Ionace causing the evacuation of the city (Fyr. 19). The elf Lathdras begins a reforestation project in Eirundrynn (Amb. 22). New Imperial capital of Vaisalian founded in the center of Bellissaria (Svi. 4). The NACE project to increase farming has success only in Meriander but fails in Notrion, Surshield and Dawnrim (Svi. 18). The Silent Distribution, a thieves' guild of South Harbor in Turmoil, discovered behind the increase of zsonga in Bellissaria (Svi. 19). The NACE Council decides an expansive investment policy to overcome the economic crisis (Svi. 26). After the collapse of the Aegos's Pit and death of many workers (Eir. 8) a group of revolutionaries against the aristocracy forms in Notrion (Eir. 22). King Ericall of Norwold accepts to welcome unemployed commoners from Bellissaria (Kal. 11). Inhabitants of Turmoil attack wizards' towers, attempting to remove them from their territory (Kal. 28). The revolutionaries calling themselves 'The Collapse' attack wizards on the day without magic, and an attempt on the life of Commander Karszamon ends with him losing a hand (Kal. 28).

So in the end the Almanacs added a lot of information on Bellissaria, bringing it a bit to life from the rather dull description of DotE. And then obviously there was more fan production on the island-continent.



Farmers in Bellissaria

Bellissaria in the Vaults of Pandius

The Bellissaria section in the Vaults of Pandius⁸ has a few interesting articles about the island. Starting from the oldest, “*The History of Jamuga Khan and his Horde*”⁹ by Captain Ebenezum, which has a Lagrius wizard founding a nomadic horde in the steppes of Dawnrim, now led by his children Dasadas Khan and Ari-Ki Orkhan. The same author also wrote a “*Gazetteer of the Kingdom of Dawnrim*”¹⁰ connected to the history mentioned above, with Dawnrim founded by rancher barons. Rulers and hard-ball teams of Dawnrim are also described.

The “*Bellissarian Economics*” article by Bruce Heard¹¹ is very important because it completely revises the population of the island-continent, bringing it to a much more realistic 9 million people! In my opinion such numbers make much more sense than

⁸ [Bellissaria section](#) in the Vaults of Pandius

⁹ “[The History of Jamuga Khan and his Horde](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁰ “[Gazetteer for the Kingdom Dawnrim](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

¹¹ “[Bellissarian Economics](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

those previously seen in canon. For example my calculation of a more realistic population density for the Known World¹² suppose a population of about 48 million intelligent creatures, of which 18 million are humans. If we apply the same idea to Bellissaria, it would be fair to assume 9 million human inhabitants and possibly the same number of other intelligent creatures, if not more. Consider that such a number would mean a population density of less than 7 humans per square mile, which is still very low for agricultural areas.

“Expedition to the Great Southland” by Jamuga Khan¹³ described the discovery and first settling of Bellissaria at the end of the first century AY. The article supposes the names of the Bellissarian capitals are those of the admirals and captains who first arrived on the land. But we’ll discuss the Bellissarian toponyms in more detail later.

“The Minaean Affair” by Jamuga Khan and Captain Ebenezum¹⁴ describes how Alchemos was founded by Minaeans in AY 900, which leads to a series of wars ending in the fall of Alchemos in Alphatian hands in AY 924 and the founding of Spearpoint as a base against further Minaean incursions.

“The Order of the Lakes” by Jamuga Khan¹⁵ is also relevant because it described a shipping company which also appears in the *Mystaranan Almanac* events by the same author.

“Monstrous Atlas: The Island of Bellissaria” by Sheldon Morris¹⁶ is also quite interesting as the first source about non-human inhabitants of the island. It’s basically just a generic list for encounters, but let’s take it for granted and so imagine Bellissaria has the creatures listed there. This would mean there are pooka, drake, dragons, dwarves, elves, sidhe, brownies, redcaps, dryads, flitterlings and treants among the intelligent creatures, plus some giant animals, classic creatures like griffons and manticores, undead, gargoyles, worms and more, but no humanoids.

“Bahldaraat-Khor” by Geoff Gander¹⁷ imagines a civilization in Bellissaria dated from before the Great Rain of Fire, inspired by ancient Phoenicians and Carthaginians, which fell with the great disaster that also destroyed Blackmoor.

“MMOs on Alphatian Soil - A Step Too Far?” by Gordon McCormick¹⁸ is a humorous article imagining the magical equivalent of GMOs, but it contains a lot of interesting ideas which could be used in Bellissaria, such as magical anomalies in the local terrain caused by dead dragons, buried tarasque or ancient horrors, golem harvesters, nomadic and underground rebels and rakasta ecologists!

¹² In my *“UnKnown World Trail Map”* articles, especially [part one](#) in the Vaults of Pandius and the [last part](#) with the recap tables

¹³ *“Expedition to the Great Southland”* in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁴ *“The Minaean Affair”* in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁵ *“The Order of the Lakes”* in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁶ *“Monstrous Atlas: The Island of Bellissaria”* in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁷ *“Bahldaraat-Khor”* in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁸ *“MMOs on Alphatian Soil - A Step Too Far?”* in the Vaults of Pandius

Bellissaria in 8mpb, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)



“*Shadow Elves: Clan Nelymbryn (The Apostates)*” by Rodger Burns¹⁹ imagines a stranded group of shadow elves under the mountains of Bellissaria.

“*Alphatia: Kingdoms Before Landfall*” by Rodger Burns²⁰ also introduces a nomadic culture of Bellissaria which was eventually defeated and assimilated by the Alphatians.

And finally an adventure, the “*Lagrius adventure*” by Gilles Leblanc²¹ which puts the PCs against a Thonian vampire and his minions.

About **maps**, Thorfinn Tait obviously made a Replica map²² of the *Poor Wizard’s Almanac* Alphatian Region, 72 miles per hex, which is the canon map with most details about Bellissaria. Beside him, the great mappers of Mystara were just three people. Thibault Sarlat drew four 72 and 24 mph maps of Bellissaria, of which the most important is certainly the last one made in 2004²³, showing the new kingdoms and the new capital of Bellissaria and NACE.

LoZompatore in “*Thoughts about Bellissarian maps*” published in 2006 a beautiful 24 mph map of Bellissaria²⁴ adding some terrain and several unnamed villages in all the kingdoms.

¹⁹ “[Shadow Elves: Clan Nelymbryn \(The Apostates\)](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

²⁰ “[Alphatia: Kingdoms Before Landfall](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

²¹ “[Lagrius adventure](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

²² “[Poor Wizard’s Almanac Alphatian Region, 72 miles per hex](#)” at the Atlas of Mystara website

²³ “[Thibault’s Bellissaria 1010 AC, 24 miles per hex v2](#)” at the Atlas of Mystara website

²⁴ “[Thoughts about Bellissarian maps](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

And finally Ignacio Ramos in 2018-2021 mapped the whole of Bellissaria at 8 mph²⁵, adding a lot of details to the land, its terrains and communities, including placing some territories inhabited by hill giants and cyclops!

Bellissaria’s past in Threshold Magazine issue # 11

One more fan source about Bellissaria is what I wrote in Threshold Magazine, in the article “*Lost Civilizations of Thyatis and Alphatia*”²⁶. As I was not happy with the lack of canon information about the past of the region, I developed in the article a series of civilizations which lived and prospered in the Alphatian Sea before the Alphatians, using what little canon hints could be assumed from the migration maps of the “*Hollow World*” boxed set and what other fans have written over the years. And so from this we can start with the real History of Bellissaria, as I imagined it!

²⁵ See “[Stitched map of all the Bellissarian Kingdoms and surrounding lands](#)” in the Vaults of Pandius

²⁶ “[Lost Civilizations of Thyatis and Alphatia](#)” in THRESHOLD Magazine issue #11

THE REAL HISTORY OF BELLISSARIA

As narrated by Georgios Meleti, historian in Minaea

“Alphatians pretend Bellissaria had no history before their coming. This is just one of the biggest lies ever written down in the history of the historical lies of Mystara and, as a historian, I can assure you dear reader that History is full of lies. Countries always try to defend their actions in the eyes of the contemporary and of the posterity and Empires do so even more because they are more powerful, and have more people whom they can devote to this task.

The main purpose of this big lie was originally to distance the Bellissarian native population from its original roots, which are, simplifying a bit, the same roots of us Minaeans, of the Thyatians and of the Thothians. As such roots come from the most ancient and powerful civilizations of Mystara, it's not surprising that the Alphatians, as outer planar invaders, did their best to hide them. They arrived at the point to spread ridiculous population numbers, pretending the whole of Bellissaria was inhabited only by about half a million Alphatians, ignoring the very existence of 9 million native Bellissarian and probably as many native non-human inhabitants.

As a further irony, Bellissaria is clearly a Milenian name, which indeed comes

from an ancient general²⁷ of whom the average Alphatian, in their typical arrogance, knows nothing.

It should be noted that in previous centuries even the Minaeans and our ancestors, the Milenians, mostly ignored the history of Bellissaria before themselves. But this has changed now as I and others have studied extensively the ancient history of the great island, and I have spoken personally with one of its most ancient inhabitants, the sidhe.”

Of Fairy Folk, Giantkind, Dragonkind, and the Scaly Kingdoms

Before the humans, and even before the rakasta, Bellissaria was inhabited by the fairy folk, by giants and by dragons. This was in times so ancient it is difficult to measure them, hundreds of thousands of years before the time of man. These first inhabitants of Bellissaria sometimes lived in peace, and sometimes they fought among themselves. But what really started thousand years of wars was the arrival in Bellissaria of many reptilian races. The sidhe said they were called saurials, pterafolk, carnifex, lizardmen, troglodytes, gatormen, frogfolk, and more. Some are known to exist in modern times too, others have been extinct since many centuries.

Some of the dragons allied with the reptilian races against the giants, or even against the fairy folk, and so all these ancient races were weakened by so many wars, while the reptilian races rose in numbers and power.

²⁷ And indeed that's true: [Belisarius Wikipedia entry](#)



*Mountain Giant, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

Of Brutemen and Burrowers

But as for all things of the world, their time of power was not to last forever, as new races spread in the world. Those who are now called 'brutemen' and in modern times live only in the most remote lands or in caverns under the earth, and some sages speculate could be ancestors of modern men, once according to the sidhe were numerous and powerful in magic.

When they arrived in Bellissaria the struggle against the reptilian races was going badly for fairy folks and giants, but the brutemen changed the course of the wars and after some time the reptilian races were severely limited in numbers and territories.

The time of brutemen came to end too, however, when terrible, huge monsters called the Burrowers appeared in the world, destroying whole civilizations. The sidhe did not know if they were sent by some dark Immortal or called by some terrible and ancient magic, but in any case before they were defeated and returned deep down the earth from whence they came, many lands of Bellissaria were laid empty of life.



*Caracasta fighting a lizardman, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

Of the Arrival of the Rakasta



Golden lupin, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>

Here came the rakasta, or more precisely pardasta, cloud pardasta and caracasta, arriving from Skothar to live in the great plains, forests and mountains of Bellissaria. As the other races were much diminished in numbers they had much space to live and prosper.

The rakasta mostly lived in peace with fairy folk, giants and dragons, and with the remaining but dwindling brutemen, but occasionally warred with the reptilian people who still lived in no small numbers in Bellissaria.

They also had sometimes fluctuating relations with another minor migration which arrived in Bellissaria, the golden lupins²⁸. Still the lupins were few and their numbers could not endanger the prominence of the rakasta.

²⁸ Inspired by the real Golden jackal - [Wikipedia entry](#)



Lizardfolk, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

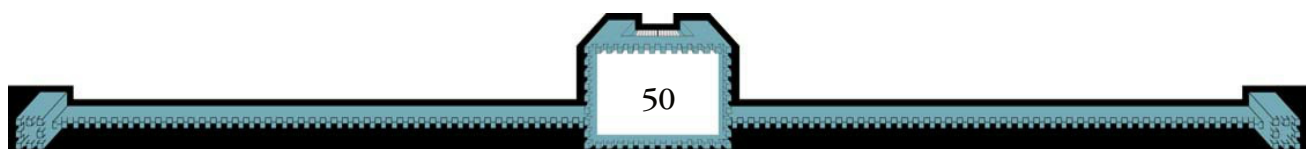
Of the High Carnifex Empire

Then, for a time and not for the last time, reptilian races returned to power in the Alphatian Sea, including Bellissaria, forcing other races to hide or retreat. The sidhe said that the carnifex, a reptilian people which does not exist anymore nowadays, unified all other reptilian races under their rule, and became so powerful they tried to defy the Immortals.

In that time, the climate in Bellissaria became hot and humid, favoring even more reptilian races over the rakasta and others. But in the end the carnifex were banished by the Immortals and with their end came the time of men.

Of Oltecs and Lhomarrians

It is a well known fact among sages that Neathar, Oltecs and Tanagoro were the first three main human races. While the Neathar spread slowly in northern Skothar and later in Brun, and the Tanagoro in southern Skothar, the Oltecs were the first ones to use navigation, and they spread from western Skothar, likely our present Minaea and Esterhold, to Bellissaria and the whole Alphatian Sea up to the far west of Brun and Davania. This happened according to the sidhe more than 10,000 years ago. Another human group, related to both the Oltecs and the Neathar, developed even better sailing skills, and spread from Minaea to Bellissaria and to Davania. These



people called themselves the Lhomarrian, from their great island nation of Lhomarr²⁹ in southern Davania, an island which does not exist anymore today.

Of the SECOND CARNIFEX EMPIRE AND LhomARR

A second carnifex empire rose in northwestern Davania, and rapidly spread over the world, almost touching even the Alphantian Sea. The sidhe said that the carnifex and Lhomarr destroyed one another in a long war fought with terrible magic. Bellissaria in the meantime was divided into many communities of Oltecs, Lhomarrians and rakasta.

Of SERPENTINES AND AZTLAN

After the fall of Lhomarr and the carnifex there was a power vacuum in the Alphantian Sea, which was soon filled by the Aztlan or Atlan Empire, created by some Oltecs who came back from the west, and local descendants of Lhomarrians. The Empire came to dominate most of Alphantia and Bellissaria, but eventually it ended when its capital was destroyed by a seaquake and subject territories rebelled. In the meantime a new reptilian empire was born in Davania, Arypt, dominated by the serpentines, which now maybe survive only in the southern continent. Their conquests however never reached Bellissaria.

Where was the capital of Atlan? No one knows for sure. The sidhe said it was

²⁹ About Lhomarr and the Carnifex of Y'hog see ["Lhomarr: The Land, Its People, and Their History"](#) by Geoff Gander in the Vaults of Pandius

where now there is Aaslin in Bellissaria, and then was later moved to the current location of Archport in Alphantia.

Of Blackmoor AND the Great Rain of Fire

During the time of power of Blackmoor, Bellissaria was dominated by the Kingdom of Bahldaraat-Khor, formed by people related to the ancient Lhomarrians. It was destroyed by the same cataclysm that destroyed Blackmoor and all the kingdoms of the world, and for centuries thereafter Bellissaria like many other places was subject to harsh climate and repeated invasions of different peoples, including insect men called the hivebrood from the north. Nevertheless in the end the Asidh people, descendants of the ancient Lhomarrians and Oltecs, and the pardasta, were able to resist and prosper.

The name 'Baaldarat' indicated the island continent of Bellissaria for many following centuries, until it was substituted by the current Milenian name.

Of HUMANOID INVASIONS

A thousand years before King Milen's migration to Davania, the founding of Milenia and the arrival of the Alphantians, Bellissaria was inhabited by city-dwelling descendants of the previous civilizations in the north, nomadic herders in the middle and pardasta hunters in the southern mountain and forests. Tanagoro traders founded some small colonies in the south, and from the north came occasional hivebrood invaders, and from the east the Shumarians, a

people which had a powerful nation in present day Thonia. At the time in fact two land bridges, the sidhe said, connected Bellissaria to Esterhold and the Isle of Dawn. Beside that, it was a harsh time when piracy was widespread. But the worst for many human cultures of the region was yet to come, and it happened when the humanoids arrived from the north.

About 700 years before Milenia they stormed the area which is now presumptuously called the 'Known World' and through land bridges eventually they arrived in Alphatia, the Isle of Dawn, Ochalea and, later, also in Davania. Some groups even stole ships from the northern men and, using them themselves or forcing men to drive them, attacked northern Skothar and many other places. Some centuries later a group of orcs, the kara-kara, even started to build their own vessels to harass islands and ships all over the tropical seas. But despite all this, humanoids never settled Bellissaria. How is this possible?

The sidhe said it was the combination of two fortuitous events. Actually humanoids tried to invade Bellissaria twice, once coming from the Isle of Dawn and the other from Esterhold. In both cases however the land bridges were sinking at the time, and just a limited number of invaders could pass. The city states, the nomads and the pardasta were strong enough to dispatch or send running the rest of them.

In the following centuries the cultures inhabiting Bellissaria became even stronger, and smaller invasions by kara-kara or other humanoids with ships were thwarted. And so it is that Bellissaria remained one of the

few regions of the world without relevant humanoid populations.

Of the Power of Thothia

Two thousand years ago, at the time when most of the 'Known World' was still occupied by humanoid hordes, the gnolls invaded Traladara, King Milen led our people to Davania and the Alphatians made landfall, Thothia³⁰ had a great empire. The Thothians had founded colonies in many lands in the west, in the Alatians, in northern Davania and in Bellissaria.

If the Thothians came from the west, another people had come from the east, the Tarystians, who lived in the region which is now our country of Minaea. And another people of great seamanship skills, the Varelyans, had come from Davania. Neither of those people actually had hunger for territorial conquests. The Thothians founded many colonies, but they generally counted on their magical and trading superiority to control other peoples around them. The Tarystians were not united, but normally founded city states loosely allied among themselves. The Varelyans too were more interested in trading than in territorial conquests. Still in Bellissaria the most important cities in the west, the east and the south were mostly absorbed by one of these people, while the interior generally remained in the hands of the rakasta and the Teref nomads.

But soon enough, two great empires had risen, both hungry for territorial conquests, and therefore destined to clash.

³⁰ It was Nithia obviously, but the writer cannot know this due to the *Spell of Oblivion*.



A Bellissarian city before the Alphatians and the Milenians

Of Alphatia and Milenia

As the empire of Thothia slowly decayed, Alphatia rose in power and finally in Milenian Year 500 absorbed the very territory of Thothia and several of its colonies, for example in the Alatians. But in those five centuries Milenia had not remained idle and had built a great empire in Davania, conquering many territories and powerful Varellyan cities, trading with Ochalea, the Pearl Islands and Tarystia, founding colonies in the Alatians, the Sea of Dawn and Bellissaria.

As the two rising empires came into contact, the clash was inevitable, and it certainly happened, each battle and war only intensifying the hatred and the determination of the contenders.

If the Alphatians had their superior magic and skyships, the Milenians had their alchemical fire, griffon riders and any other ally they could find. The Milenian Empire tried everything to contain the Alphatians. They sought alliances with or paid several factions in Ochalea and the Pearl Islands,

and even their former enemies, such as the Thyatians and the Varellyans. Milenian envoys reached as far as the Jennites and the Thonians in Skothar, humanoids and Northmen in the Isle of Dawn, Alphatia and Brun, to harass and hinder the Alphatians from all possible sides. In Bellissaria, the Milenians established colonies and helped the local Tarystian cities, the Tiref nomads and the rakasta fight back against Alphatian encroachment.

Alphatian attempted to invade several times from Milenian Year 250 to 500, and especially after the fall of the Thothian Empire when Alphatia occupied Ochalea, the Alatians and the Isle of Dawn. Here came general Bellissarius, the Milenian hero who eventually gave his name to the island continent. He was sent to Bellissaria in Milenian/Alphatian Year 602, and defended it successfully against Alphatia with limited resources and men, rallying the local population against the invaders. He never went back to Milenia, eventually receiving permission from the emperor to stay in Bellissaria until his death in Milenian Year 654. The city of Prinkipapolis, now Princetown, was named Bellissariopolis in his honor, and soon all the island continent was known as Bellissaria, even by the Alphatians.

But as the Milenian Empire faltered and approached its end, resisting became more and more difficult. The Milenian colonies in the Isle of Dawn and Thyatis were the first to fall, and then the Alphatians could focus on Aegos and Bellissaria.

In the latter island, even if the regions of modern Alinquin and Aaslin had long been in the hands of the Alphatians, all the rest

of Bellissaria stubbornly resisted, especially the east, the south and the interior, limiting the Alphatians to the northwestern territories.

It's therefore completely false what's written in several Alphatian chronicles, which say that Bellissaria was completely conquered by Alphatian/Milenian Year 924, even if it's true that at the time that the Milenian Empire was meeting its end, the Milenian cities in Bellissaria were in great danger of being absorbed by the Alphatians.

How was it possible for Milenia to compete for so long with the Alphatian might? Well, easy to say. Alphatia has been rarely, if ever, a united empire. It's more a collection of kingdoms, as the parts of the empire are indeed named, whose unity greatly depends on the strength or the power of persuasion of the ruling emperor or empress. Milenia on the other hand was for most of its history a very united empire, except for some minor periods of internal strife.

But then, we should ask ourselves why Alphatia lasted and Milenia fell. Most sages suspect that Alphatia indeed had some part in the fall of Milenia. Obviously the Milenians were trying the very same thing, for example by financing Thyatian rebels. But history favored the Alphatians. Maybe it could have gone the other way as well.

Of Minaea

In the Milenian Year 900, as Milenia was about to fall, Minaea was founded. Unlike Milenia, Minaea was never a unified empire. However Minaea often worked better as an informal alliance of city states than Alphatia

did as an empire. This and the fact that in the west Thyatis rapidly became a thorn in the side of the powerful Alphatian Empire meant that Bellissaria was not going to be easily conquered by the Alphatians.

In the years of the crisis of Milenia, when the Minaean city states were still consolidating in new regional powers and the Thyatian Empire wasn't born yet, the Alphatians gained some territories in the west of the island, and in fact Bridgeport and Blueside were conquered by the Alphatians by the Alphatian Year 924, Minaean Year 24, but the east and the south keep resisting, and soon enough received help from the Minaean cities. Those Alphatian conquests, and the example of the Thyatians in the west, persuaded Minaeans they had to fight back the Alphatians approaching their shores, or they would be overwhelmed.

Indeed we can say that from the Minaean Years 100 to 825, which correspond to Alphatian Years 1000 to 1725 and Thyatian Years 0 to 725, the cities of Crownhaven, Alchemos, Seahaven, Cairnport, Princetown, Horken, Spearpoint, South Harbor and Dubbo were all allied with Minaea, and later part of the Minaean League, and all bore Milenian names at the time, which were Stemmopolis, Alchemopolis, Thalasopolis, Soropolis, Bellissariopolis, Ormopolis, Doropolis, Notolimani. Dubbo is the only one which kept its name, as it was not Milenian but an ancient Tanagoro name. The Alphatians simply translated the Milenian names into their language, with the exceptions of Bellissariopolis and Ormopolis ('city on the bay' in Milenian), which became Princetown, from the original Milenian name Prinkipapolis it had before Bellissarius, and Horken, from the name of the

Norwold general who led the final Alphatian conquest of Bellissaria. Because indeed the Bellissarian cities were conquered by the Alphatian during a dark time of Minaean history.

Of the Fall of Bellissaria into Alphatian Hands

In the seven centuries mentioned above the Alphatians tried to conquer the Milenian cities of Bellissaria multiple times. In Alphatian Year 1353, Minaean Year 453, the Alphatians conquered Leontion, in Minaea itself, and at the same time attacked several cities in Bellissaria. Dubbo, Stemmapolis and Notolimani fell into Alphatian hands and were never reconquered. But still the Alphatian plan eventually failed. The wizards of Leontion, individualistic Alphatians as usual, ended up betraying their homeland and joining the Minaean League. The south of Bellissaria was taken by Alphatia in name only, as continuous revolts made it impossible for the invaders to control it. However the Alphatians were not going to give up. They tried again in Minaean Years 545 and 638, Alphatian Years 1445 and 1538, when the Minaean League was at war with the Skotharian kingdoms of Tangor and Hastwr, and managed to conquer Bellissariopolis. In the year 546 the Minaean reaction took the city back, but in the year 640 the attempt failed and the Alphatians kept the city, a great shame for the other Milenian cities of Bellissaria, as the city named after the eponymous hero was considered the de-facto capital of their people.

Finally in the Minaean Year 821, Alphatian Year 1721, the final assault began. In that

year the green orcs of Skothar were threatening the whole Minaean League. The cities of Erech and Sinbay were sacked and there was chaos in Minaea for six more years. The Milenian cities of Bellissaria were alone, and this time the Alphatians, in a rare moment of unity, threw their full might against them. General Horken from Norwold was an intelligent tactician and between Minaean Year 821 and 825 he captured all the free Milenian cities, first Ormopolis/Horken in Minaean Year 821, then all the minor cities on the eastern coast, with Alchemopolis and Doropolis/Spearpoint the last to fall in the years 824 and 825.

Then panic struck Minaea. Bellissaria had fallen. The Alphatians were just a few miles off our coasts. In the Year 830 Captain Arkali ousted the corrupt government of Minaeapolis and pushed for the creation of a true confederate kingdom, as it happened in the Year 838.

In the same year and multiple times until the Year 841, Arkali attacked Alchemopolis, Doropolis and Bellissariopolis, but the attempts to take back the Milenian cities of Bellissaria always failed. Soon enough a new strategy was decided in Minaea to contain the Alphatians.

Of Minaean 'piracy'

The Alphatians are too arrogant to admit that Minaea is strong enough to challenge them, and therefore call our actions of war 'simple piracy.' This claim is outrageous but has an element of truth. The Confederacy of Minaea in fact, realizing it was not going to take back Bellissaria by direct military

action, focused on systematically disrupting Alpathian trade routes and fomenting internal rebellions against wizards in general and Alpathians in particular. It worked relatively well as Alphatia was never able to obtain a full control over Bellissarian kingdoms and, combined with the many setbacks the empire suffered in the west in the last two centuries, Alphatia was forced to accept that Bellissaria was always going to be partially independent and uncontrollable.

It indeed became safer for Minaean ships to navigate the Bellissarian Sea and the Inner Sea of Ormopolis, as we still call Horken, than it was for Alpathian ships. We kept trading freely with eastern and southern Bellissaria, while the Alpathians accepted the fact that the island for them was mainly just an easy source of grains and other basic products, but was not going to become a reliable military stronghold, except for Spearpoint.

Then the Great War came, and Alphatia was greatly damaged by it, to the great gain of Minaea.



A Bellissarian warrior at the time of the Milenian cities

Of the future of Bellissaria

What will be of Bellissaria? Will it remain in Alpathian hands or return to Minaea? After the Great War in the west the Alpathians have made several attempts to gain more control of the island continent, with mixed results. Which of the two peoples will have less difficulties and will have to fight less enemies will probably be able to gain the upper hand in Bellissaria. The east and the south would gladly return to Minaea, while the west and the north are probably more firmly aligned with Alphatia. Only time will tell what will happen in the future of the great island continent.

THE KINGDOMS AND THE TRUE PEOPLE OF BELLISSARIA

As I will use Ramelin's map to illustrate each kingdom, I've asked him to describe each one as he originally intended them when making his maps. Following his description, the other chapters for each kingdom are my ideas to update them, also using the *Mystaran Almanacs* and other fans' contributions.

Notrion

Rulers³¹

King Lodrig III of Notrion (dies AC 1010). Male wizard 9, about 20 years old, pale skin, blue eyes, black hair, tall, lean, height 6'4". Spoiled and argumentative.

King Corydon of Notrion (successor in AC 1011). Male fighter 14, lean, copper skin, long brown hair, blue eyes, elegant, about 40 years old.

King Verothrics of Veroth (rules the west from AC 1016). Male wizard 18, black hair, black eyes, pale skin, looking about 40 years old, muscular.

³¹ Descriptions come from the *Poor Wizard's Almanac* or, in a few cases, have been invented by me. Statistics are not included there but for some rulers can be found in the canon Almanacs



Lodrig III

Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch



Corydon

Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch



Verothrics

Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Description, by Ramelin

Notrion is a “breadbasket nation”, the dominions are plantations known as sitabolons³². Of course, only the sitabolons are more or less civilized, the rest of the nation is quite wild. As with Earth’s plantations, workers are slaves who live wretched backbreaking lives. The plantation owners are almost omnipotent inside their fiefs. The only free towns are the capital and a few larger ports. The sitabolons are highly productive, so the king, the nobility, and metropolitan Alphatia have no interest of bettering the standard of living of the slave class. Slaves are very close-mouthed and outsiders (adventuring parties) are not welcome in the sitabolons. Nevertheless local lords do have monster problems from the surrounding wildlands and are in occasional need of “monster specialists” (the PCs).

More about Notrion, by me and others

As we saw in the events above, Notrion is quite a turbulent kingdom, where a king was killed and the new one decided to abolish wizardly nobility, but still had to face discontent and economic crisis. It’s also one of the main exporters of grain thanks not just to the land but more to the conditions on the sitabolons. The maps by LoZompatore, Thibault and Ramelin referenced above all have different communities in the interior and the coast. The more detailed 8 mph map by Ramelin is used as the basic reference for this article.

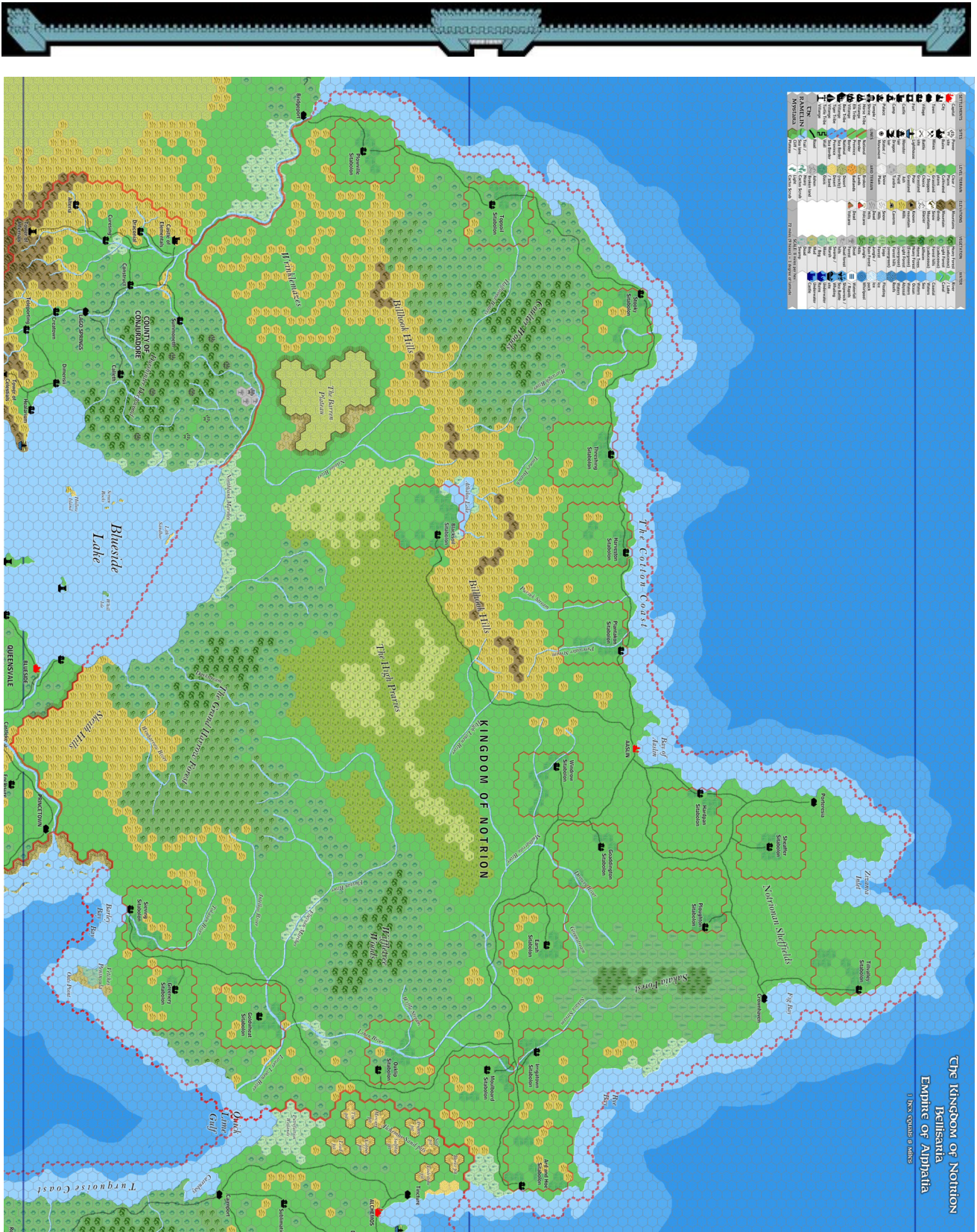
³² Sitabolon is a corruption of the Greek words for ‘granary’ or ‘a fertile grain-growing region’ (*sitapothiki* and *sitobolonas* according to Google).

History after Landfall

The Alphatians arrived in Aaslin the first time in AY 102. The city was named Asyghan at the time and was inhabited by a native people allied with the Thothians. Peaceful trade relations were established immediately, and when Thothia fell the city was absorbed by the Alphatians. Soon enough the whole northwestern coast of Notrion entered the Alphatian Empire, and slowly the plantations were created. However all attempts by the government or individual wizards to establish footholds in the interior were met with strong resistance and ultimate disaster for the invaders. Likewise the whole eastern coast of Notrion, and the city of Stemmapolis (later Crownhaven), successfully resisted any attempt of conquest. When Bellisarius arrived in Milenian/Alphatian Year 602, he saved Stemmapolis, which was about to fall, and organized the east, the center and the south of the island to resist Alphatian encroaching for some more centuries. However in Milenian/Alphatian Year 924 the Alphatians reached the region of Blueside Lake and founded the namesake city, yet the interior of Notrion remained de-facto independent and the eastern coast firmly in Milenian, and later Minaean, hands.

Only in Alphatian Year 1353, Minaean Year 453, was Crownhaven conquered by the Alphatians, yet the eastern coast remained in Minaean hands until the conquest of Princetown in Minaean Year 638, Alphatian Year 1538. Raids by the Minaeans continued for two centuries more, then the situation stabilized and Notrion’s kings only had to worry about ‘piracy.’ The truth is they had zero control on the interior, very little on the plantations, and de-facto ruled only the coastal cities.

Bellissaria the UNKNOWN



Notrion in 8mph, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)

Notrion after AC 1014

If you want to use the events of the *Mystaran Almanacs* summarized above, this means the new Kingdom of Veroth was founded in western Notrion by Randel's refugees. Its border should run, in Ramelin's map, along the Halfwood Waters and the Nikolos River. Its capital, Stalwart, should have been built over the Barren Plateau, a defensible position which fits perfectly with the militaristic mentality of Randel. The later development of Randel done by Bruce Heard in his blog, which includes dragon-riders, also fits with the idea that the dragons of Bellissaria may have granted them permission to settle in the region. In the Almanacs Bridgeport would also become part of the new Kingdom of Veroth. Later, in AC 1019, the NACE Council built a new capital, Vaisalian, which is meant to become the capital of the new empire. It should be placed on Blueside Lake, in the forest hex in the middle of the Northbank Marshes. This could also lead to settlements in the High Prairies, and resulting tensions with the local inhabitants.

The Almanacs also describe a new Thieves' Guild taking hold and a widespread sentiment of rebellion against the aristocracy, which could well encompass other kingdoms of Bellissaria.

People and communities

Notrion has about 2.2 million official inhabitants, the ones living along the coast and in a heavily farmed territory about 100 miles from the coast. It is estimated that one million more unofficial inhabitants live in the interior of the country. The true



*Aaslin,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

Alphatians number just 60,000, of which 10,000 are in Aaslin. The capital has a population of about 60,000 people, and around the same number of people live in the many other cities along the coast³³. However, most of the farming population lives in the great plantations, which are still owned by powerful wizard families.

The plantations do not produce and export only grain, fruit, and oil, but also meat, especially beef and pork.

The coastal cities of northern Notrion have a long and proud history dating back to millennia ago, but most of them are now reduced to small and quiet places, hardly remembering their glorious past if not for the fact they still often refer to Bellissaria with its ancient name, Baaldarat.

³³ In my version of Notrion, the coast should have more cities than those shown on Ramelin's and other maps.

Crownhaven and the eastern cities instead remember their Milenian identity very well and would gladly join the Confederacy of Minaea rather than remain under the Alphas. Except for Crownhaven, which has about 15,000 inhabitants, none of the other cities has more than 5,000.

The Alphas of Notrion live predominantly in the cities, but many of them are commoners. Among them there is also a certain number of elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings and humanoids of Alphasian origin, who generally have immigrated over the centuries and work as specialized artisans, traders, laborers or servants.

The humans of Alphasian origin are mostly of Cypric descent and are generally not distinguishable from the true natives who, like them, have copper skin. The only difference is that natives generally have black to brown hair while the Alphasians red to brown. 'True Alphasians' with black hair and pale skin are a rare sight.

The farmers of the plantations are mostly native humans, i.e. non-Alphasians. Most of them are commoners, not slaves. In fact the Alphasians in the past had trouble introducing large-scale slavery in Bellissaria, due to frequent rebellions, and in Notrion on average the slaves are treated better than in mainland Alphasia. They can choose their own spouse and have a house, a small pay and some free time. Occasionally they can also obtain permission to leave the plantation for a few days. The free farmers instead typically do not own the land but rent a plot from the landlord. The difference between a free farmer and a slave is mainly the fact the free farmer can leave when they want to, even if normally this

just means changing plantation, and they have on average a better paycheck. Due to the fact that Notrion has been in Alphasian hands for centuries, and over the centuries many slaves have been freed or gained freedom, today just a third of the farming population of 2 million people consists of slaves. It's still the highest percentage of all Bellissarian kingdoms.

However several plantation owners tried to import slaves at different times in the past. This did not work very well, as many of them escaped to the interior of Notrion.

Fairy folk, brutemen, reptilian races, giants, lupins and rakasta are the native inhabitants of the great vast interior of Notrion. Over the centuries they have accepted a relevant number of humans, descendants of Oltecs, Thothians and of Alphasian slaves, and also a certain number of humanoids, which also were imported as slaves from mainland Alphasia and escaped.

The Land and its other inhabitants

The forests of Notrion are firmly fairy folk lands, where only druids and a few more humans who are proven friends of the fairies dare to go. All fairy races from pixies to treants live in the forests, except for the centaurs who normally prefer to roam the great plains. The forests are also guarded by the tasloi, a creature which looks like the cross between a goblin and a gremlin. Legends say they were created by the sidhe to fight ancient reptilian races. They are greatly feared by humans as they are masters in ambushes, jumping down from trees with nets and javelins.



Tasloi, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

TASLOI AS A BECMI RACE

The tasloi is a chaotic evil AD&D creature living in jungles, with no canon connection to fairy folks. However their similarity to Mystaran gremlins and the fact that other fans had already placed them in Bellissaria made them perfect as guardians of the forests. For their stats I've 'mixed' the original tasloi with the BECMI gremlin. The Mystaran tasloi could have been brought here with planar magic by the fairy folk of Bellissaria or they could be a unique creation of sidhe magic, as the DM prefers.

Tasloi (BECMI)

Armor class:	5
Hit Dice:	1*
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	2
Damage:	1d3 or by weapon type
No. Appearing:	10d10
Save As:	Elf 1
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	9
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	20

Tasloi are 3-4' feet high, have green skin with some black hair, and golden eyes which can see in the dark. They have 90' infravision but suffer a -1 penalty in full daylight, if not protected by deep foli-

age. They are extremely nimble on trees and opponents suffer a -4 penalty on their surprise rolls. They can also hide in shadows as thieves with a 75% effectiveness.

Spells sent against them have always a 50% chance of failure.

They are very quick and prefer to use javelins and nets, using ambushes and attacks followed by rapid retreats, in very numerous warbands. They eat anything they find in the forest, including fallen enemies.

Their villages are built on trees and usually also host trained giant spiders and giant wasps, which can be brought in battle. The outskirts of their villages are typically full of nasty traps, often poisoned. Each village usually numbers at least 100 individuals, and has a chief with up to 5 hit dice, and a shaman. Half the inhabitants of the village are normally younglings who do not fight, but females fight as savagely as males.

They respect fairy folks and never attack them. Sidhe, pookas, drakes or treants may be present to help a tasloi village if it has been attacked by monsters or outsiders.

Reptilian races nowadays are relatively rare in the forests and the hills, with only small clans living underground, but there are sizable communities in the marshes along the eastern rivers and coast, around Athakos Lake and in the Northbank Marshes of Blueside Lake.

The Billhook Hills, the Wrinkelmazes and the Barren Plateau are mainly inhabited by brutemen, generally living in caves or underground, hill giants, and sarabi lupins. The Sarabi are a massive breed of lupins, greatly appreciated as guards in the plantations and coastal cities, where some of them have come to live. A much smaller breed of lupin, the kokoni, is of Milenian origin and normally lives in the eastern cities, where most of them work as servants, traders or artisans.

The only rakasta of Notrion are the caracasta who live in the Skeith Hills in the south and at the out-



Sarabi lupin, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

skirts of the Grand Harrow Forest and the Wiffletree Woods.

The High Prairies of Notrion are centaur lands, but are also inhabited by some clans of nomadic humans, the Asydh, who claim to be the native inhabitants of Notrion, and mixed clans of humans and humanoids, who claim to be escaped slaves. These three types of prairie clans normally get along relatively well, but the stealing of horses, cows or goats is common, as are small clashes and rivalries between the clans. There are no 'traditional' humanoid tribes in Notrion, as the humanoids live mixed with humans and so there is not a specific rivalry among humanoid races and neither between the nomadic humans and the humanoids.

Has the strength of all these people been enough to keep the Alphatians out of the interior of Notrion? Well, not just them. The interior lands have dragons. Many dragons. And dragons, with some exceptions, do not like Alphatian wizards.

Beside them, the typical fauna of Notrion in the forests include the pale leopard, a variety common in Notrion and Dawnrim; in the hills and mountains the light brown bear, a straw-colored bear typical of Bellissaria, the Bellissarian tur, a local goat-antelope; and in the prairies the Bellissarian tiger, which survives only here. In the High Prairies there are also several species of wild goats and gazelles, the Bellissarian ostrich and the Bellissarian bison, plus jackals, wolves and caracals.

Intrigues and adventures

Notrion has plenty of intrigue and a lot of opportunities for adventurers. The cities on the eastern coast are thick with Minaean spies and agents, and there is a growing tension there between the plantation owners of the interior and the cities' authorities. The same also happens in the north and west, where the local cities, even if they would not want to join Minaea, suffer the excessive political power of the plantation owners. The inhabitants of the interior will obviously violently oppose any attempt to impose Alphatian control over them.

After the Wrath of the Immortals things get worse as the king is killed and the new one has many economic problems. They could probably be overcome with better taxation on plantation owners, but that poses a not insignificant political problem, as the king comes from the same bunch.

The founding of Veroth and eventually Vaisalian could well be the end of Notrion. Both places could quickly become more organized and unified and completely absorb the current country. But the Minaeans will likely not be happy to have the militaristic Randelians or the capital of NACE so near their coasts, and could decide to do something about it.

Dawnrim

Ruler

King Teskilion of Dawnrim. Male fighter 13, brown eyes, tanned skin, blond hair, beard and mustache, height 6'. Looks about 45 years old, fit, lean, wears plate mail, generally friendly.



Teskilion
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Description, by Ramelin

Dawnrim may well be the cause of the perceived lack of magic-users on the Bellissarian island continent. While on the rest of Bellissaria, magic-users are not very common, in the Dawnrim territories, they are in very short supply, and even wizards migrating from elsewhere find their power and craft diminished while in Dawnrim.

(I suggest a few game mechanics. All spells studied while in Dawnrim are treated as if one level higher, and level advancement suffers a 20% XP penalty. This way, magic-users have more difficulty advancing in level, and also operating in daily life.)

The cause of this phenomenon is not known. It could be a curse not unlike the Red Curse of the Savage Coast. Maybe it is an Immortal artifact like the Pearl of Oblivion hidden in Ylaruam. It could be a magic-draining monster buried under the land, a little like the Burrowers of the Hollow World.

Settlements in Dawnrim are few and far between. The land, especially inland, is dry. The only civilized settlements that survive here are cattle ranches in the huge prairies of the south. The other sizable settlements are on the coast or in the Twin River Valley, which is fairly fertile.

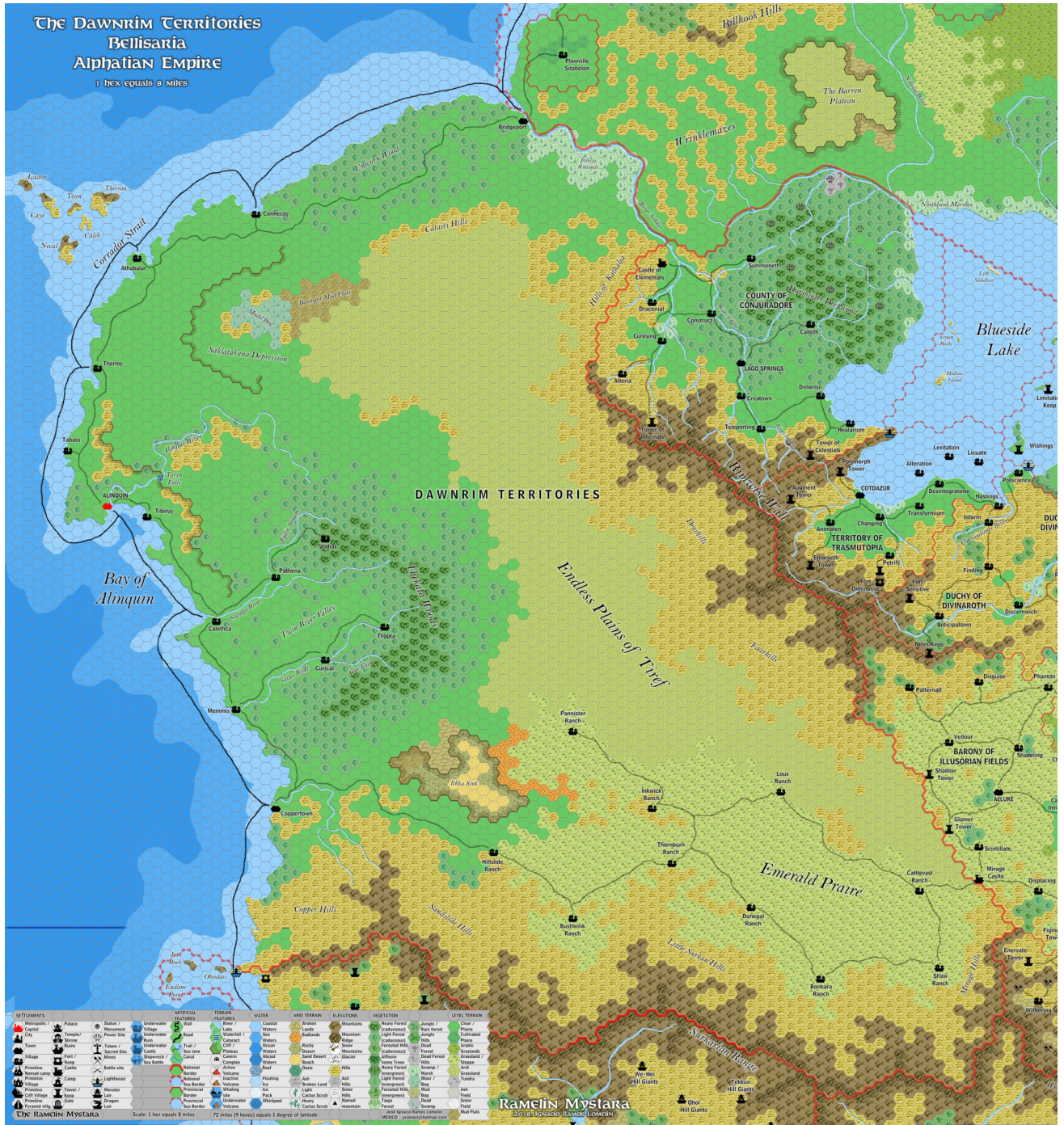
Dawnrim is therefore a setting for magic-less swashbuckling in a frontier setting. The magic-draining effect may or may not be reversible, but it is the task for very high level adventurers. Maybe the magic of the land has not been drained, but accumulated, and lifting the curse could make Dawnrim a magic-rich land, where magic is even easier to learn and cast than in other lands.

More on Dawnrim, by the author and others

Dawnrim had not much development even in *Mystaran Almanacs*, but the works of Jamuga Khan and Ramelin fortunately gave much more personality to the place. The idea that magic is difficult, maybe due to a buried and forgotten Burrower, is a great possible spark for adventures.

History after Landfall

Alinquin was the second place where the Alphantians arrived after Aaslin in AY 102,



Dawnrim in 8mph, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)

and the city soon became a trading partner which was later absorbed by the empire after the fall of Thothia in AY 500. The natives were people distantly related to the Thothians in the coastal cities, but another people, called the Tiref nomads, lived in the interior. Inland from the coasts was also inhabited by a not negligible number of fairy folk, brutemen, giants, dragons, reptilian races, lupins and rakasta. Alphatian propaganda labeled the lands of the Tiref nomads 'strifelands,' attributing to them many negative traits and accusing them of following entropic cults. The truth is more that the Tiref opposed any attempt by the Alphatians of settling in their lands. As the Tiref were distant from the Milenian and later Minaean cities of the south and the east, it was more difficult for them to receive aid against the Alphatians, so over the centuries and following war after war they were mostly dispossessed of the better grazing lands of southern Dawnrim, the Emerald Prairie. They were then pushed to the northern Endless Plains, a much more arid land. This went to the benefit of the so-called Rancher Barons, Alphatians who ran the cattle business in the interior of Dawnrim. The Barons used the classical strategy of putting the various inhabitants of the interior plains, humans, rakasta, lupins and centaurs, against each other, weakening and dividing their clans.

In the last century, the Tiref nomads were in danger of going completely extinct, but the situation changed when an Alphatian wizard from Lagrius, later known as Jamuga Khan, became sympathetic with their plight and started

helping them in AY 1927. The Kingdoms of Dawnrim and Lagrius exiled him in AY 1947, but his sons kept leading the nomads, eventually reaching an agreement with the Alphatian rulers in AY 1957. Since then, the nomads have had access to the Emerald Prairie and promised in exchange to not attack the Alphatian ranches. So far the agreement has worked and the situation of the human nomads has improved greatly.

Dawnrim after AC 1014

Dawnrim does not actually undergo many changes in the *Mystaran Almanacs*. Mostly it is endangered by the surge in undead creatures coming from the north, and it is affected as all of NACE by economic crisis which prompts small rebellions and unrest. There are also bandits raids from Surshield; likely to stop, or at least decrease, after the creation of the military government of Eirundrynn.



*Alinquin,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

People and communities

Dawnrim has over 1.5 million inhabitants, of which the Alphatians are just 30,000. Alinquin has about 50,000 inhabitants, while Coppertown and Bridgeport have about 15,000 each. Another half a million inhabitants live in the interior, including human nomads and other races.



*Bridgeport,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

The natives of Dawnrim are copper-skinned like the Cypric Alphatians, even if on average they are just a bit lighter than the natives of Notrion. As in the latter kingdom, the only difference with the Cypric could be the hair color, as red is more common among the Cypric and black among the natives. There has never been large-scale slavery in Dawnrim, and therefore most of the inhabitants are freefolk. Agriculture is not based on gigantic plantations as in Notrion, and there is a mix of small to big family

farms. The ‘granary’ of the kingdom is in the Twin River Valley, between Alinquin and Coppertown. The coast also has a relevant trade in fish, sheep and goats.

Bridgeport is mostly a military town, due to its strategic position. Coppertown and the Copper Hills are an important source of copper for the whole empire. It’s the only place in Dawnrim where there is still a relatively high percentage of slaves, but they make up no more than 10% of the total miners. There is much diversity among the miners, with humans of fair skin or black skin and humanoids, descendants of slaves of centuries ago. The miners however are very united when they have to fight for their rights against the mining companies, which are generally partially privately owned and partially in the hands of Dawnrim’s government.



*Coppertown,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

But the most important economic activity of Dawnrim is certainly cattle breeding and herding in the eastern ranches. The ‘cowboys’ and ‘cowgirls’ who work in the ranches are not slaves either, but descendants of workers who came from the coast, from Alphatia or from the Teref nomads who agreed to settle down. Now they are a specific community with their uses and rituals, shared with their employers, the Rancher Barons, who typically live and work with their employees.

Many ‘cowboys’ are saluki lupins, a local breed of thin build and fast legs, who once ran in the prairies but now ride horses as the others. Few if any nomadic Saluki clans are left in the eastern plains. Some others have settled in the northwestern coastal cities, where it’s common to also find demi-humans and humanoids, emigrated from Alphatia over the centuries.

Others have settled around the Thekata Woods, where they have a near monopoly on the fur trade due to old agreements with the local fairy folk.



*Saluki lupin,
Midjourney AI prompted by Sturm*

Finally, unconfirmed rumors say that the Surkarian Range, in the south of Dawnrim, is home to all sorts of monsters, giants, brutemen, and even a reclusive race of underground elves.

The most important inhabitants are likely the cloud pardasta who dominate the Range.

The Land and its other inhabitants

The two major woods of Dawnrim, the Unicorn Wood in the north and the Thekata Woods in the west, are firmly controlled by fairy folk, with many tasloi guards. Humans must obtain permission from local druids to enter the forests, however there is a small native human community living around them.

Reptilian races are mostly confined in the Billow Wetlands near Bridgeport and in the Saklatakana Depression in the northwest. The Ithka Sink plateau in the south is a giantish stronghold, and more giants live in the southern and eastern hills, along with brutemen and troglodytes living mostly in caves.

The Endless Plains of Teref are the home of the Teref nomads, centaurs and some clans of caracasta. All these people now, after the agreements of AY 1957, also have permission to roam the Emerald Prairie in the south, where the big ranches are.

The typical fauna of Dawnrim includes pale leopards in the forests, pale bears, cave bears and cave hyenas in the mountains, and on the plains wolves, jackals, caracals, ostriches, mouflons, gazelles, and three



*Centaur, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

animals which are found only in the Endless Plains. The auroch is related to the cattle of the ranches, but not the same species, and possibly their ancestor. The Tired nomads do not really breed the auroch but rather follow the herds, living in a sort of symbiosis with them. The Bellissarian lion lives mostly along the western edge of the Plains. The giant horn rhinoceros could well be the biggest rhinoceros of the world. It normally lives in the plains, but it has also been sighted along the western rivers. The coastal cities, beside the usual horses and donkeys, have also domesticated dromedaries. It is not clear if they were natives or were imported by the Thothians, but certainly nowadays they do not live in the wild anymore.

Intrigues and adventures

The equilibrium between Rancher Barons and Tired nomads in the interior is likely to be fragile, and could be a source of potential troubles. Dawnrim is also set to be the first target in case of a Thyatian invasion, so Thyatian spies could be present in Alinquin. The creation of the Kingdom of Veroth and its absorption of Bridgeport could as well be a cause for tension with the new kingdom, which could be tempted to take some more pieces of Dawnrim.

Sunshield

Rulers



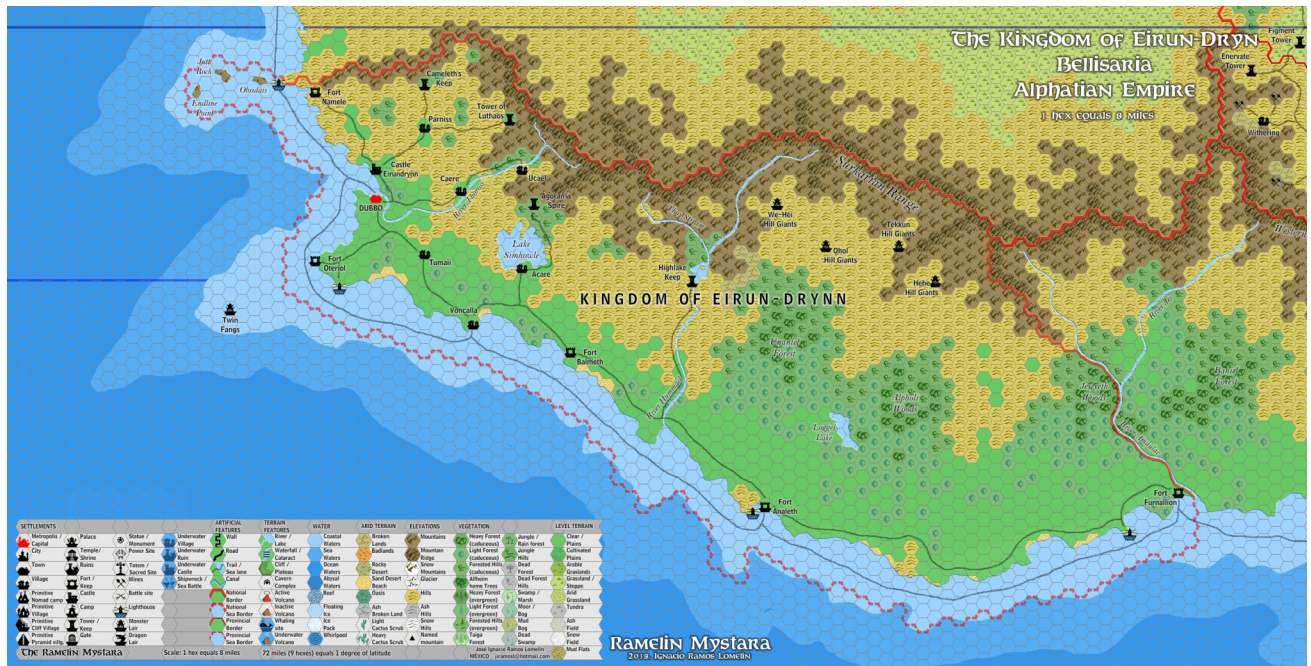
Gratia
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Queen Gratia of Sunshield (deposed and reinstated in AC 1012), female wizard 14, height 5'11", black eyes and hair, light-skinned but a bit tanned, good-looking but not vain, slender, tough, short-tempered, looking about 30 years old.

Governor Jhedryll of Eirundrynn, male elf 10, pointed ears, lean, green eyes, blond hair, pale skin, young-looking.



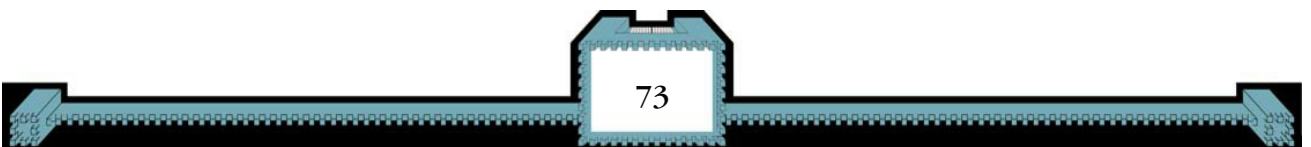
Jhedryll
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch



Eirundrynn in 8mph, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)



Turmoil in 8mph, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)



Info on Surshield, by the author and others

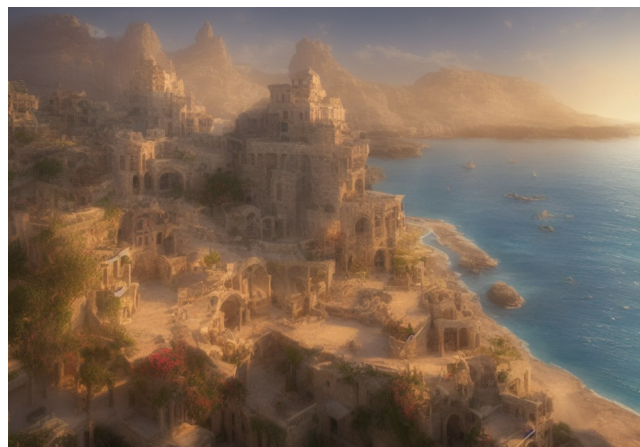
Surshield was certainly, along with Notrion, the kingdom which was subject to most changes both in the canon and fan almanacs. First the failed attempt by Queen Gratia to impose order, then her removal by Zandor and his army, her reinstatement, and finally the division of the kingdom into three parts: Erundrynn, Turmoil and Surshield. There were also several troubles with golems escaped from Gaity, pirates from Minaea, and lawless wizards creating tyrannical and dark dominions in Turmoil, the now central part of the kingdom.

History after Landfall

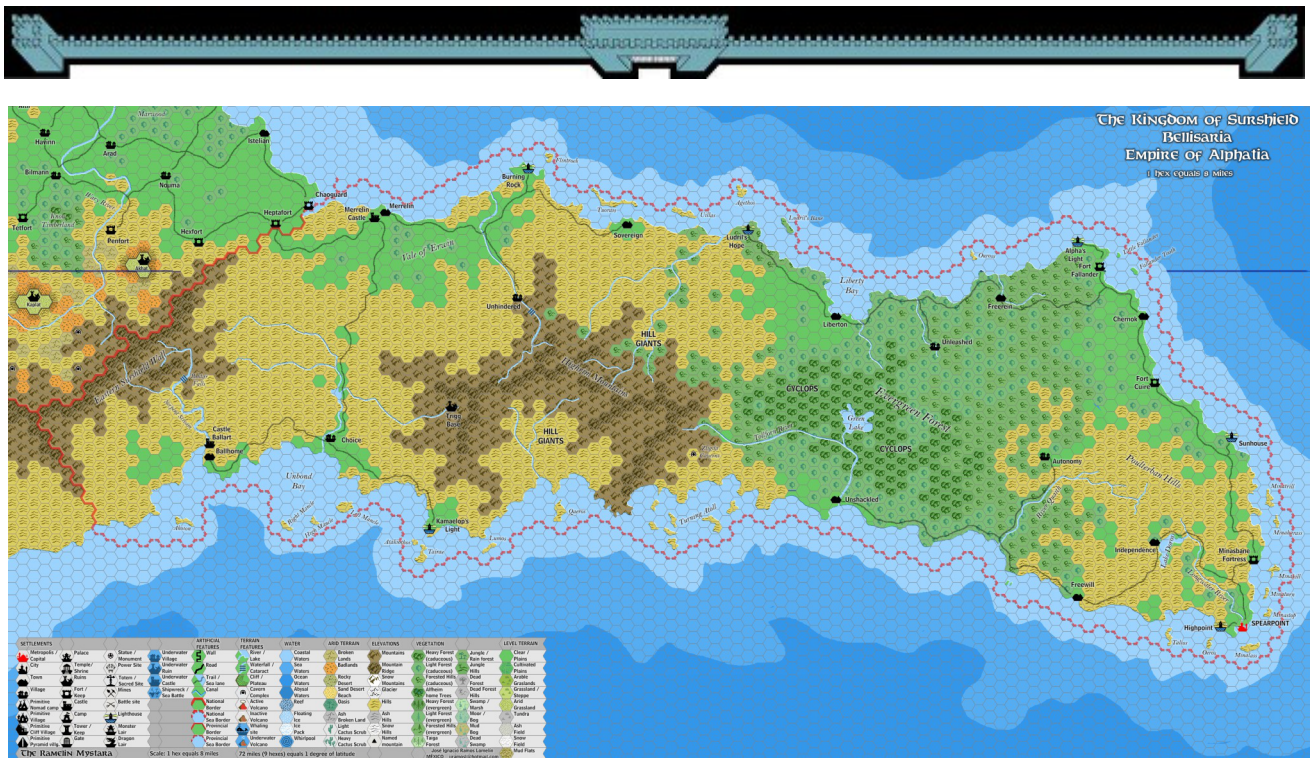
Surshield was the first region of Bellissaria colonized by Milenians, who started trading with the region in the early times of the empire, around Milenian/Alphatian Year 150, and by the Year 300 had firm control of modern-day Dubbo, which maintained its original Tanagoro name; Notolimani, later known as South Harbor; and Doropolis, later Spearpoint. The three cities stayed in Milenian and later Minaean hands for more than a thousand years, until in Alphatian Year 1353, Minaean Year 453, Dubbo and Notolimani were taken by the Alphatians. Doropolis remained Minaean until Alphatian Year 1725, Minaean Year 825. Whereas Spearpoint was successfully turned into an Alphatian stronghold, the story was much different with all the rest of Surshield, which de-facto never submitted to Alphatian rule, despite multiple attempts over the centuries. The basic culture of Surshield is still mostly Milenian, and beside a few isolated wizards, the Alphatians live only in

Spearpoint. The Alphatians have called Surshield's freedom 'anarchy' and, while it's true most communities tend to rule themselves independently, more than in a true anarchy the inhabitants believe in keeping the Alphatians out of their homes and lives. What the Alphatians have called 'Minaean piracy' is just free trade of the region with Minaea and local hostility toward Alphatian traders who come in thinking that they own the place. The Alphatians can pretend to own Surshield, but when they act like they really do, the locals have always found effective ways to cure them of such a delusion.

Recently the division of the kingdom into three parts had the objective of confining 'anarchy' in the central region of Turmoil and firmly controlling the eastern and western parts, a new and smaller Surshield and Eirudrynn. But without specific agreements with the local population, this plan is doomed to fail. Many inhabitants of Surshield now also think that the arrival of apparently independent Alphatian wizards in Turmoil is just a plan to submit the area to Alphatian rule, and they are determined to destroy this scheme, whatever the cost.



*Dubbo,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*



Surshield in 8mph, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)

Surshield after AC 1014

The kingdom experiences heavy changes in the *Mystaran Almanacs* with the division into three parts. It's still dubious if such a move will really work to obtain more Alphatian control of the region which has been de-facto independent for centuries. The pirate activity from Minaea could well mean that the attempt by Queen Gratia of Surshield and Governor Jhedryll of Eirundrynn to impose order and control, at least on their territories, will be met with strong resistance from the eastern Minaean Confederation, which still considers southern Bellissaria a part of its own backyard.

People and communities

Surshield has about 1.6 million official inhabitants, of which the Alphatians are about 100,000, most of them living in Spearpoint. About 30,000 are soldiers or work in

the army or the navy there, and the rest are relatives. Even in the army, there are about 12,000 more people of non-Alphatian origin, either locals or people who come from the Alatians or the Isle of Dawn. Spearpoint has about 110,000 inhabitants, while Dubbo and South Harbor have just 20,000 each, while the other coastal cities and communities are all under 5,000. Most of the human inhabitants live on the coast or near it, working in trading, fishing and farming. There are no plantations or ranches in Surshield, as farms are mostly family-owned. There are however several rich families of ancient Milenian origin who own large farms, ships and warehouses. Surshield mostly exports wheat, fruit, beef, mutton and wine, and imports salt, spices, cloth, silk, textiles, glassware, and common metals, mostly for the needs of the army. Spearpoint also has an important production of arms and armor, and imports 'monsters' too, generally those who can be ridden or find some other use in the army.

The native inhabitants of Surshield have black to brown hair and olive skin, typically Milenian. Their skin is, on average, a bit lighter than the Minaeans and the inhabitants of Notrion and Dawnrim, but it's a difference of hue that most foreigners will not be able to notice. They are also, on average, a bit shorter than Alphatians. Slavery was present in the region at the times of the Milenian Empire, but it has now all but disappeared, except for a few house servant or laborers of some rich Milenian or Alphatian families.

Rakasta, generally pardasta and cloud pardasta, are not an uncommon sight in Surshield's cities, even if they live predominantly in the interior and up the mountains.

There are no lupins in the interior but some kokoni lupins live in the coastal cities.



Kokoni lupin, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
 (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

The Land and its other inhabitants

The west of Surshield, later to become Eirundrynn, has forests inhabited by fairy folk, while the hills and mountains are inhabited by giants, pardasta, brutemen, and some mysterious elves. The forests are the areas where Shiye elves are most likely to settle according to NACE plans. The coast is mostly inhabited by humans. The presence of reptilian races is minimal, except for some troglodytes living in humid caves.



*South Harbor,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

The central Surshield, later to be known as the Territory of Turmoil, is not much different if not for the fact it has even wildest mountains and forests, inhabited more or less by the same people as in the west.

Eastern Surshield is dominated in the interior by the Highrim Mountains and the Evergreen Forest, heavily inhabited by giants, cyclops, fairy folk, cloud pardasta and pardasta, with minimal to non-existent human presence. The giants and cyclops of this region are generally allied with fairy folk and pardasta, or at least they all agree humans in general, and Alphatians in particular, should keep their distances. If not,

tasloi are relatively common in the forested areas, and dragons as well.

Like the rest of Bellissaria, and probably even moreso, Surshield has a thriving fauna. The biggest predators are leopards, jackals, wolves and lynxes, with cave hyenas only in the mountains, and the black bear, which however is a rather peaceful animal. The most common herbivores are several subspecies of deer and, only in this region of Bellissaria, elephants. The local subspecies is a bit smaller than the Davanian variety, so it's not clear if they were brought by the Milenians or are natives.



*Spearpoint,
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

Intrigues and adventures

The attempt to create a new elven kingdom in Eirundrynn, formerly western Surshield, is obviously a great potential source of adventures. The elves will have to negotiate with the existing powers and inhabitants, especially fairy folk, giants and pardasta. In the center of Surshield, to be known as Turmoil, anarchy still reigns in the *Mystaran Almanac*, but some wizards try to establish their personal domains by any means, including necromancy. It's up to the DM to decide if such events are just the actions of individualistic wizards or rather an attempt



*Cloud Pardasta,
original drawing
by Jeffrey Kosh*

<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>

by the NACE government to impose a sort of Alphatian rule on Turmoil. The east, remaining under Queen Gratia, is supposed to extend its control beyond the walls of Spearpoint. Something which was already tried, with disastrous results, back in AC

1010. Obviously the Minaeans will do their best to encourage all resistances to a central government in Surshield, as the region was only formally conquered by the Alphatians, but remained mostly an independent land of Milenian culture.

HORKEN

Rulers



Villium
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

King Villium of Horken, male cleric 19 (of Alphatia), height 6'3", brown eyes, copper skin, white-gray hair, looking about 60 years old, lean, elegant, severe features.

Description, by Ramelin

Horken is a nation of shipbuilders, churning out the best ships for the Alphatian navy. This is what the brochure would say. The truth is more complex than this. Horken is a nation divided in three tiers: the Coast, the Valleys, and the Uplands.

The coast is where the shipbuilding occurs. The various towns specialize in the diverse components for the shipbuilding industry. One town specialized in sails, other in ropes, other in plank forming, yet another in metalworking for anchors and other naval needs. Each town guards its trade secrets very closely. An outsider can come in and buy what the town produces, but questions are

not welcome. The only place where ships are really built (in reality just put together) is in the drydocks of the City of Horken.

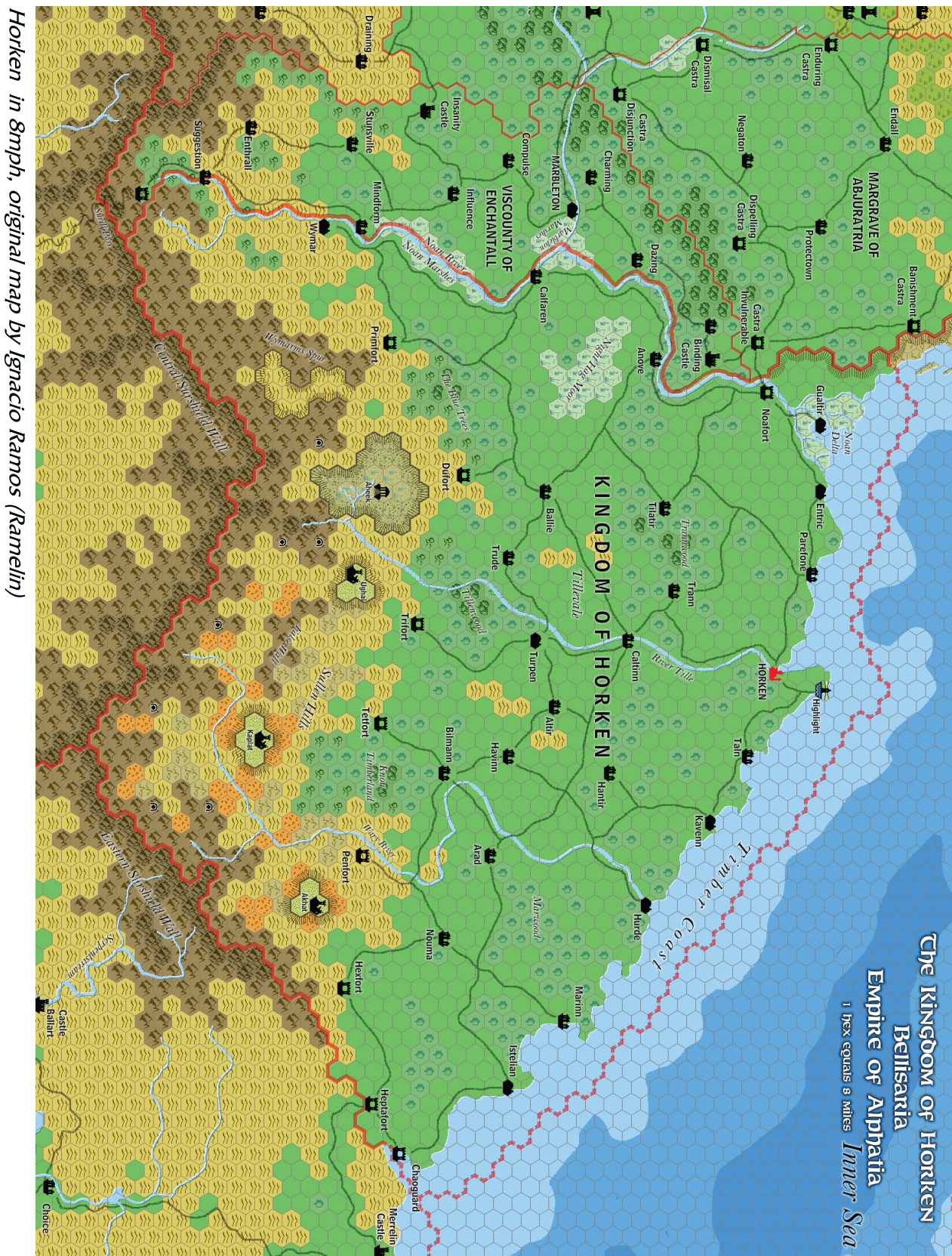
The Valleys region is dominated by wooded areas, plantations (hemp and cotton are common), and various small villages which try to produce the primary materials for the coastal industries, and at the same time try to cope with the humanoid problem in the Uplands. The communities are very close-mouthed, wary of outsiders, and not very helpful.

The Uplands is humanoid territory. The Horken military maintains eight forts in an attempt to contain the humanoids. However, and despite the efforts, the humanoid bands continually slip past the guards and wreak havoc on the Valleys' communities. The military are reluctant to go into the foothills because past attempts to control the humanoid pests have provoked the monsters to organize under a single war leader and become a greater threat to the communities downhill.

This is the chance for the PCs to do some serious humanoid stomping. The military would certainly thank them although they would deny any involvement. The Valleys' towns would not be thankful, and the Coast's towns don't care.

More on Horken, by the author and others

Horken has not much development in official and fan sources and it is mostly mentioned as a shipbuilding center. But Ramelin's map and some more ideas on its communities and territory could well change this picture.



Horken in 8msh, original map by Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin)

The Kingdom of Horken

Bellisaria
Empire of Alphatia

1 hex equals 9 miles
Inner Sea



Horken, Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

History after Landfall

The city of Horken, Ormopolis, the city on the bay in Milenian, has been a shipbuilding center since ancient times, even before it became mostly a Milenian city. It has indeed always been the most important city in the namesake Inner Sea. The city was conquered by the Alphatians, led by General Horken, who gave its current official name to Ormopolis, back in Alphatian Year 1721, Minaean Year 821. Since then the city and the kingdom have kept a policy of formal loyalty to Alphatia while doing business as usual with Minaea. The Alphatian Empire, and later NACE, were still the greatest buyers of Horken ships.

Horken after AC 1014

Not many changes occur in Horken in the *Mystaran Almanacs*; the kingdom joins NACE willingly and the king is not a target of Zandor's madness as happens to Queen Gratia of Surshield and others. The shipbuilding industry helps in limiting the economic crisis which affects the rest of NACE in the almanacs.

People and communities

Horken's official inhabitants are less than 800,000, and Horken is indeed the smallest kingdom of Bellissaria by area and by population. There are just 30,000 Alphatians, and the rest of the population are descendants of the Milenians, Minaeans, Tarystians or even more ancient people. The city of

Horken has 40,000 inhabitants, while the other coastal and farming communities are all below 5,000. The humans of Horken have tan skin and brown to black hair, with tones midway between the people of Notrion and Surshield.

Due to the great shipyards, the city of Horken has, over the centuries, drawn people from all over Bellissaria, so it's not rare to see demihumans, humanoids, lupins, rakasta, and even brutemen, hill giants and other races.

Slavery has been occasionally used in shipyards and on ships, and there are still slaves employed in such works, but their number are relatively limited.

Horken exports maize, vegetables, beef, pork, precious wood, and imports spices, tea, silk, textiles, books, and common wood. Even if there is a relevant production of wood in the kingdom, it is not enough to sustain the shipyards and therefore much of it is imported from other Bellissarian kingdoms, the Isle of Dawn, Davania or Skothar.

The Land and its other inhabitants

Horken has fewer wildlands than the other big Bellissarian kingdoms, yet there are some notorious ones. The Noan River has several marshes and moors along its course, including the Night Hag Moor, inhabited by reptilian races, malevolent fairies, and dragons. Similar inhabitants are also present in the river's delta. The forests of Horken are small and completely domesticated, as trees are constantly cut and planted for shipbuilding, and therefore there isn't a great pres-

ence of fairy folk in the kingdom, except for some brownies and leprechauns.

The Sullen Hills and the Surshield Wall are another matter entirely, as they are inhabited by brutemen, giants and humanoids who are often hostile to humans and prone to raid the lower valleys. The humanoids are mostly escaped slaves who ran from Notrion or Horken's coast, and have often formed mixed bands with giants, living in the uplands of engaging in horticulture, hunting, gathering, some goat breeding, and occasionally raiding and stealing.

Some clans of golden lupins live in the hills both in Horken and Lagrius.

The animals of Horken are a bit more mundane than other Bellissarian kingdoms', as Horken is much more settled and the forests are small and heavily traveled by humans. The uplands however are inhabited by many big creatures, such as elephants, cave bears, cave hyenas, griffons and manticores.

Intrigues and adventures

Horken is a very strategic kingdom for the NACE, due to its shipbuilding industry, and its close location to Minaea. It could be the primary target in case of invasion from the east, and so it's likely to be thick with spies and intrigues, and rich families trying to take advantage of the situation. Another good source of adventure would be the exploration of the Uplands, with all due caution not to stir too much trouble and bring that trouble back to the lowlands.



*Hill Giant, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

Lagrius

Rulers



Siaron
Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Queen Siaron Lagrius of Lagrius (deposed in AC 1011 and reinstated in AC 1016). Female wizard 13, looking about 45 years old, red hair, copper skin, brown eyes, height 5'4", pudgy.

Queen Elenitsa (from AC 1011 to 1016). Female fighter 10 thief 6. Friend and advisor to Siaron, ruled in name only.

Description, by *Ramelin*

This description is quite unlike the official Lagrius. I found it very dull and I wanted to spice it up a little. I came up with a nation of “wizard specialists.” The magic-users of Lagrius are NOT like the D&D3.5 or AD&D2.0 specialist wizards, they only fancy themselves as such.

The Archwizardate of Lagrius fancies itself as a wizards’ nation in a magic-poor continent (at least by Alphantian mainland stand-

ards). Each of the Lagrian dominions is named after a particular school of wizardcraft, and the magic-users living in each dominion specialize in the dominion’s school but lack knowledge in some other school of spells. Of course, these “specialist wizards” believe all other schools to be beneath them and have constant bickering with specialists from other schools. Of course, local laws and rulings are in favor of the local specialists.

This bickering may very well turn into open fights or even deaths, so the queen has decreed that all disputes between wizards be resolved in officially-sanctioned duels. These duels are the kingdom’s sport as they are public events that draw large crowds. The only place where this bickering and animosity is curbed is at the Queensvale domain, where all wizard schools are welcome, and fights and duels are forbidden, by royal decree.

In truth, there are no more wizards in Lagrius than in other Bellissarian nations. Moreover, the so-called specialization gives the Lagrian wizards no special advantage over a ‘generalist’ (a derogatory term in Lagrius), who suffer from lack of versatility, as they simply refuse to cast spells from rival schools. (Use the D&D3.5 specialist wizard prohibited school rules as guidelines for the rival schools.)

Lagrian nobility relies partially on bluff, and the peasantry have fallen for it and are in awe of the Specialist nobility. They rely on their ‘powerful nobles’ to do their craft to solve major problems. In truth, the nobility often uses the service of ‘lowly generalists’ (the PCs) to solve major problems or threats.

This bluffing attitude is reflected in the names of the regions: Barony of the Illusorian Fields (illusion spells), Margrave of Abjuratia (spells of protection), Nation of Necromere (necromantic and death spells), Duchy of Divinaroth (divination spells), County of Conjurore (conjuration and teleportation spells), Territory of Transmutopia (spells that change the properties of things), Earldom of Evocar (spells that create materials or energies), Viscounty of Enchantall (spells of charm and mind control). In spite of the names, all territories have equal rank in the queen's council. The neutral ground is the royal domain: The Queensvale Domain.

**More on Lagrius,
by the author and others**

There is quite some material about Lagrius in official and fan almanacs, with Queen Siaron Lagrius abdicating to her friend Elenitsa when she becomes the target of Zandor's displeasure, but returning to the throne some years later. It appears indeed, as in Ramelin's ideas above, that Lagrius is the most magic-rich kingdom of Bellissaria and therefore becomes quite important for NACE after the "Wrath of the Immortals" events.

History after Landfall

For centuries the Milenians, and especially General Bellissarius in Alphatian/Milenian Years 602 to 654, kept the Alphatians away from Blueside Lake and the whole east and south of Bellissaria. The pre-existing community on the site of Blueside was actually a Tarystian small city, but the Milenians helped it resist any Alphatian attempt to take control

of the lake, and they had a major stronghold in Bellissariopolis/Princetown. The situation changed after the fall of Milenia, and the Alphatians reached Blueside Lake and founded Blueside in the Alphatian Year 924, Minaean Year 24, starting the Lagrius dynasty. From there the Alphatians tried to expand toward the coast, but the Minaeans successfully repelled all attempts until Alphatian Year 1538, Minaean Year 638, when the Alphatians took Bellissariopolis, and in Minaean Year 640 resisted the Minaean attempt to take back the city. From this time Lagrius had the current borders, even if it had to fear Minaean incursion from Ormopolis/Horken and the east for two more centuries.

It was still less subject to 'piracy' than other Bellissarian kingdoms due to its rocky and limited coast but, like all the other eastern kingdoms, Lagrius traded also with the Minaeans as well as with the Alphatians, if not more.

Lagrius after AC 1014

In the *Mystaran Almanacs* Lagrius certainly has some interesting events, such as the yacht race, the return to full power of Queen Siaron after her pretended abdication in the canon almanacs, and some economic crisis affecting all of NACE, even if the effects are lesser in Lagrius than in other Bellissarian kingdoms. The anti-aristocratic movement, which started in Notrion, could probably also arrive in Lagrius. Two other events affecting Notrion, the founding of Veroth and Vaisalian, are going to have an impact on Lagrius too, as the new kingdom and the new capital are right on Lagrius's northern border.



Blueside, Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

People and communities

Lagrius has more than 1.2 million official inhabitants, of which the Alphatians are about 150,000. Blueside has 60,000 inhabitants and Princetown 35,000. All of the other communities are much smaller, typically around 1,000 inhabitants or less. A typical community of Lagrius is in fact a wizard's tower with a village or a town nearby. The wizard is often also the owner of the most important industry of the area, which could be a farm, a ranch, a glass factory, or anything else. In this respect

Lagrius is more similar to mainland Alphatia than the rest of Bellissaria.

Similarly there is also a higher number of slaves in Lagrius compared to the rest of Bellissaria, although they still number less than 10% of the population due to the absence of a steady supply over the centuries. Minaea was never a significant source, as it was and it still is more common for the Alphatians to be captured by Minaeans than the other way around.



Princetown, Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

The average inhabitants of Lagrius have copper skin and brown hair in the west, due to Tarystian and Oltec ancestry, and olive skin and black hair on the coast, due to Milenian ancestry. Pure Alphantians with pale skin are rare, but there are some among Blueside's nobility.

Demihumans are relatively common in Blueside and Princetown, but not much elsewhere. There are some humanoids among the slaves.

Lagrius exports wheat, maize, fruit, vegetables, fish, beef, goat meat, wine, spirits, common wood, and imports glass, porcelain, pottery, silk, gems, and common metals.

The Land and its other inhabitants

Lagrius claims to exert full control on its territory, unlike other Bellissarian kingdoms, but that's not really true. The human settlements are indeed numerous but there are still plenty of unsettled regions between them. In the northern County of Conjurore, the Durshinter Deepwood is inhabited by fairy folk with many tasloi guards. The nearby coast is settled by reptilian races, predominantly lizardmen and troglo-

dytes. The Rimwise Wall mountains and the hills below them in Conjurore, Transmutopia and Divinaroth are inhabited by brutesmen, golden lupins, caracasta, troglodytes, giants, and gargoyles.



Gargoyle, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
 (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

The latter are only one example of many magical creatures which have escaped from wizards' control during the centuries and now live independently in the kingdom. The Barony of Illusiorian Fields is roamed by many centaurs and human nomads from Dawnrim who do not recognize borders as applying to them. The Queensvale Domain, Abjuratria, Evocavar and Enchantall are certainly the more 'civilized' regions of the kingdom, but there are still many extensive patches of lands inhabited by golden lupins, fairy folk and reptilian races, or just wild and infested with native and escaped monsters.

Lagrius does not have many big animals, the most common are deer, elk, wild goats, boars, leopards, lynxes, wolves, jackals, hyenas, and bears. However occasionally lions from Notrion and tigers from Dawnrim wander in. Other bigger creatures, such as rocs, dragons, griffons, hippogriffs and manticores are not rare either.

Intrigues and adventures

Lagrius is the place where wizards' intrigues and rivalries could have the perfect setting. The creation of a new capital as it happens in the *Mystaran Almanacs* could also spark all manner of intrigues as Lagrius's nobility will probably not be happy that Blueside was not chosen instead.

Minaea will likely increase efforts to take back Princetown, the former Bellissariopolis, which could have a great symbolic meaning if reconquered.

Meriander

Ruler



Drulivia

Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Queen Drulivia of Meriander (deposed in AC 1011, retires to research and teaching). Female wizard 15, alchemist, 70 years old, brown eyes, silver hair, copper-skinned, tanned, lean, gentle, calm, polite, short, height 4'11".



Hubertek

Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

King Hubertek of Meriander (from AC 1011), male fighter 20, plate mail, muscular, large and big, red hair, green eyes, tanned skin, 50 years old, height 6'1".

Description, by Ramelin

Meriander, the “nation of the Alchemists,” is blessed with a wide variety of terrain types, as well as mines of different ores and minerals. The diversity of plants and animals in the country is astonishing. It is no surprise that most alchemical components can be found somewhere in Meriander. One curious feature of Meriander is the Ore Pits. These are sandy pits with high concentrations of different mineral ores. In the Pits, you do not mine ore, you scoop the ore and sift it. During the daytime the pits are quite safe, but at night strange things happen. The pits have a very soft glow that seems to emanate from the sand itself. Occasionally one can catch a glimpse of moving shadows that have no apparent source. The fact is that trying to extract ore after sundown is dangerous indeed. The wannabe night-miners simply disappear, although anything that they carried remains. Even clothing. The next morning, cautious ore sifters find the remaining gear and clothes of foolhardy night thieves.

The local population is, as in all Bellissarian nations, close-mouthed and proud. They do not care for foreigners and will certainly not sell components to them as the king has an absolute monopoly on the alchemical components. The locals supplement their income searching for new ores to sell to the royal agents, and often take risks to try and find strange components.

Alchemos, the capital, is aptly named. It is the only place in the kingdom where alchemical components are mixed and turned into potions, balms, gasses, or any other product. It is a city of frequent explosions and a thoroughly drilled fire brigade.

The rest of the country is fairly backwater. The towns are named after alchemical paraphernalia, but this was the idea of some king in the past. The names really have no resemblance with the real features of the land or its rural inhabitants (for instance the River Alkali is not alkali at all).

**More on Meriander,
by the author and others**

This kingdom had a bit more canon development than others but not much in fan works, so I suppose my ideas about its history and Ramelin’s map are the greatest development done so far, except for some events in the *Mystaran Almanacs*. In the canon almanacs, Queen Drulivia is deposed by Zandor and replaced by a fighter, King Hubertek. She is not worried too much about it and just goes on with her alchemical studies. The kingdom obviously prepares for a possible Thyatian invasion, and helps the Isle of Dawn by sending a new weapon, acid golems.

History after Landfall

Comprising the whole south and east of Bellissaria, Meriander was one of the first regions where the Milenians started to trade and settle in Alchemos, Seahaven and Cairnport, which were named Alchemopolis, Thalassopolis and Soropolis. They were already powerful Milenian cities before the fall of the Thothian Empire and remained so until Alphatian Year 1723 and 1724, Minaean Year 823 and 824, when first Seahaven and Cairnport and then finally Alchemos fell into Alphatian hands. Alchemopolis was already a city specialized

in alchemy, indeed it was the place where Milenian Fire, the alchemical compound that kept the Alphatians at bay for over a thousand years, had been invented. Even if, at the time, the Alphatians thought that was going to be the end of Minaea, and the Minaeans themselves had reasons to fear the same, that was not the case. Enough alchemists escaped the fall of the city and took refuge in Minaeapolis, continuing their work there. In the following centuries the Minaean Confederation proved to be more united than the Alphatian Empire, and more effective in maintaining control of the seas.

Now, with the Alphatian weakened by the Wrath of the Immortals, maybe permanently, the occasion for them to conquer Minaea could have been forever lost, and the opposite may happen at any time—Bellissaria returning in Milenian hands.

Meriander after AC 1014

In later years the University of Alchemos is still busy developing new weapons for NACE, former Queen Drulivia has, for example, started working on sealants for submersibles. Despite the fact that the new King Hubertek granted nobility to non-spellcasters too, Meriander along with Notrion is another kingdom which develops a movement of rebellion against spellcasters, who are still a dominant group. The measures tried by the NACE government against

the economic crisis, especially development of better farming, have however had more success in Meriander than in other kingdoms.

People and communities

Meriander has more than 850,000 inhabitants, of which about 100,000 are Alphatians, which is indeed the highest percentage of all of the Bellissarian kingdoms. The rest of the population is overwhelmingly of Milenian descent, with the typical olive skin and black hair. Alchemos has 45,000 inhabitants, while Cairnport and Seahaven have about 20,000 each. The other cities have generally less than 5,000.

There is a certain number of human and humanoid slaves in Meriander, mostly imported from Alphatia, Esterhold or even farther places, and employed in dangerous alchemical jobs. Still, the percentage is very limited, less than 5%, so most of the workers are freemen.

Alchemos, as a University City, has a diverse population, which includes demihu-



Alchemos, Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch



*Pardasta, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

mans, rakasta, lupins and other races. Meriander exports wheat, grain, fruit, vegetables, olives, oil, salt, fish, pork, beef, mutton, common wood, precious woods, dyes and potions, and imports wine, spices, cloth, silk, textiles, pottery, hides, furs, glassware, and books. The country is certainly the most trade-rich of Bellissaria and a big part of the trade is obviously with Minaea.

The Land and its other inhabitants

Meriander passes as fairly settled and 'civilized' but it's not completely so. The Putrefaction Wetlands in the west are a domain of dragons and reptilian races. The Crucible Grassland in the north is inhabited by centaurs and golden lupins. The Ore Hills are inhabited by brutemen, troglodytes and hill giants. There are also several mines, and generally the owners try to reach agreements with the local population, mostly because trying to bypass them proved to be a disastrous strategy too many times in the past. The Hills are also inhabited by dangerous flying and subterranean creatures. The Meriander Forest, also called Southern or Turquoise Forest, is populated by fairy folk, tasloi and pardasta. Generally, they are not hostile unless disturbed. Some wizards have established agreements with them to source alchemical materials from the woods, in controlled quantities.

The wildest lands are also inhabited by bison, deer, mouflons, chamois, bears, wolves, jackals, lynxes, leopards, cave hyenas. Seals are common all around the Meriander's coast.

Intrigues and adventures

The search for new alchemical substances could be a great part of the adventures in Meriander. Then there are the many possible intrigues among the wizards, who are likely not especially happy about King Hubertek giving nobility to non-spellcasters, and among the general population, who could probably view a Minaean intervention to free them from the lumbering presence of Alphatian wizards with favor .

MORE NON-HUMAN PEOPLE

With the wilderlands of Bellissaria being as big as they are, and apparently unoccupied by large humanoid tribes, it is readily possible to place several other non-human races which appear in Mystaran canon in isolated areas. Aranea, crabmen, mugumba mud-dwellers, faenare, galeb duhr, geonids, goatmen, gyerians, harpies, manscorpions, minotaurs, nagpas, neshezu, pegataurs, phanatons, rock men, sasquatches, sphinxes, tabi, turtles, and wercreatures of all kinds are intelligent folk which could well live in some places of Bellissaria or have a unique Bellissarian version. This list does not include giants, reptilian races and fairy folk as they have been already established as living in Bellissaria in this article. It's also fair to assume many underwater races live around the coast of the island-continent. We'll explore their seawater homes in the next issue of *THRESHOLD* magazine!

Metinsulae

Isle of the Metamorphs

by Cab Davidson



Metamorph,
generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

The island of Metinsulae is described here as a location 100 miles to the northeast of the city of Helskir (at the northern tip of the Isle of Dawn), in the Alphatian Sea. As described, history and foreign relations as described fit into that context, but otherwise the island of Metinsulae is designed to be essentially agnostic as to location, and can be included almost anywhere in Mystara or indeed within any other game world.

*Note on the Island of Metinsulae,
Titus Alphatius Nuarius Crassus,
Admiral of Classius Insulam Aurorae*

“It is to be observed that the isle known as Metinsulae is off-limits to all military shipping, and it is our advice that civilian and mercantile ships should also stay clear. The Metinsulans are dangerous. The inhabitants of the island, almost human in nature, are of frightful visage,

with lifeless, featureless eyes betraying a hollow, savage soul. Initial contact was made in AY 1450, and our records show that to have been peaceful. Our assessment documents from that date record a natural harbour of quite unsurpassed usefulness and defensive possibilities, with a small, flat, central island made up of rich soil, ample fresh water and abundant forests located in the Alphatian Sea, occupied by a few hundred apparently defenceless natives. It was assumed that a landing of a few cohorts of soldiers would be enough to take and garrison the island, but a whole legion was sent to secure it because this promised to be a great strategic resource. That legion was never heard from again.

10 years later, another attempt was made, this time by sending diplomats to the island to contact and offer terms of alle-

giance in the hope that the island might become a protectorate of the empire, but that mission was met by a polite delegation of natives presenting the helmets of fallen legionaries as a gift for the Emperor. The Emperor was enraged, and sent an overwhelming expeditionary force to punish the islanders.

This invasion was repelled, but this time there were survivors. They reported that the peoples of Metinsulae did not resist invasion, in fact they were apparently not home when our forces landed. But for reasons unknown at the time, our ships began sinking within the bay that surrounds the central part of the island, and small groups of soldiers ashore were ambushed by unseen enemies who used the environs of the land to separate and pick off legionaries in small numbers. Our show of force had failed to impress the inhabitants; they had merely retreated to counter-attack on their own terms. And piece by piece, that force was mostly destroyed.

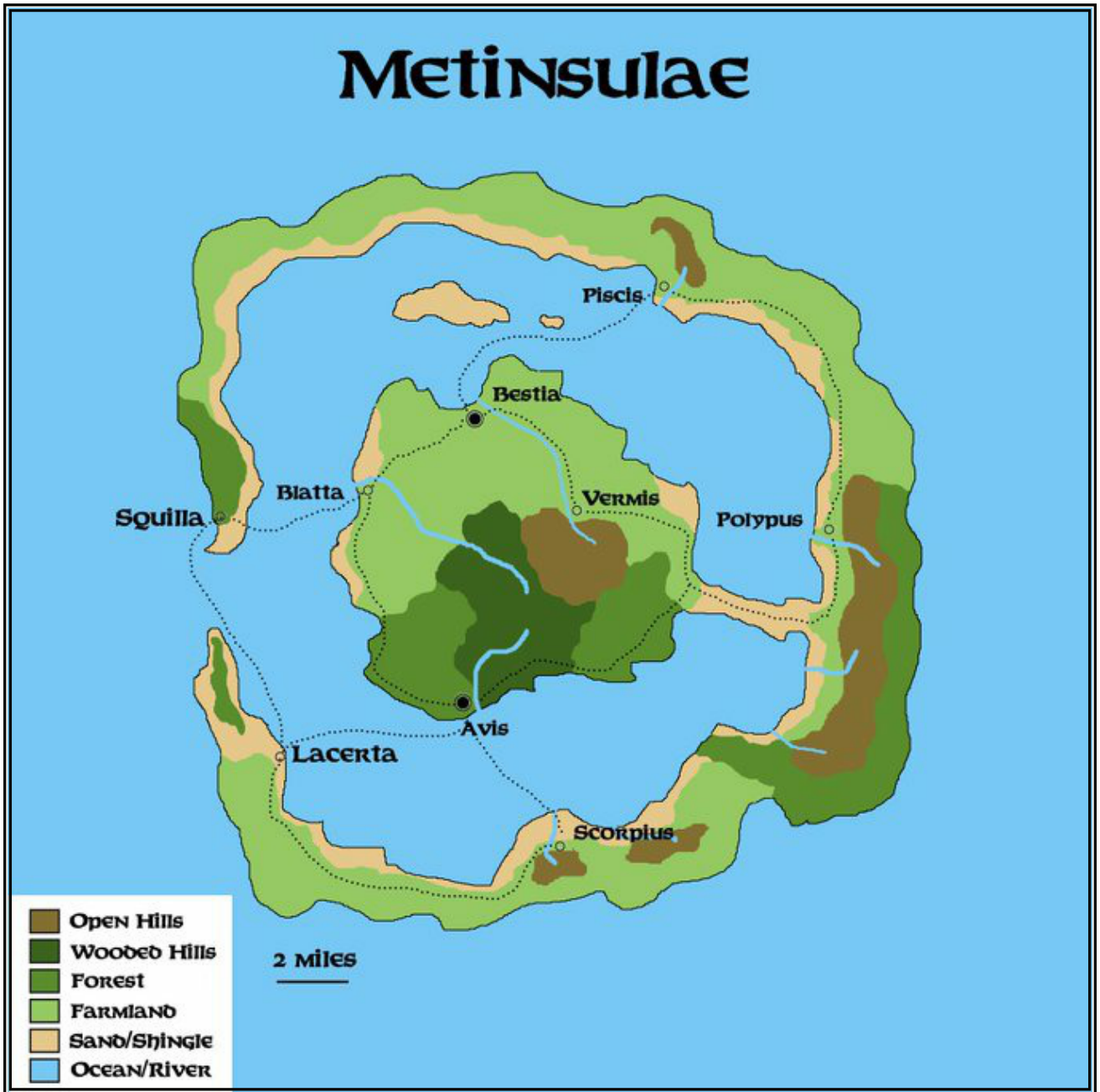
Since then, few official Thyatian contacts have been made with Metinsulae. When any of our ships have been in trouble in those waters, assistance (clerical help, fresh water, even repairs) have been provided by the islanders, but our ships have not been allowed entry to their harbour. It is to be assumed that memories of our failed invasions have persisted through the intervening generations.

We did not find out the identity of the Metinsulans for another 200 years. Metamorphs? That amply explained why our invasions had failed..."

THE ISLAND

Metinsulae is Mystara's only known Metamorph nation (if such it can be described). It is made up of a single island, formed from an aeons-dead volcano in the Alphatian Sea, around 100 miles northeast of Helskir on the Isle of Dawn. Its position makes it a valuable site for migrating sea birds, who flock to Metinsulae and the associated smaller islands in vast numbers, with puffins, guillemots, razorbills, shags, eider, little auk, great auk, gannets, and terns turning every inch of beach into a breeding ground through summer. Birds and seals feed on plentiful shoals of white and oily fish that teem in the cold waters streaming down from north, mixing with the warmer water and air from the Isle of Dawn making for a cool, productive, wet, maritime environment. Prevailing winds from the west provide ample irrigation, feeding a number of streams and rivers typically flowing down the west side of the shallow hills that absorb most of the rain, but mists that shroud the island most mornings dampen most surfaces sufficiently to ensure that no uncleaned surface is free of moss or larger plants.

An almost complete ring of land, separated by 4-5 miles of water from the main island, surrounds the central isle except for a 2-mile opening to the west. A causeway, 2/3 of a mile wide, made up of sand and shingle, connects the east side of the island to the outer ring. On the highest spring tides this causeway is covered by the ocean. This inner sea forms a massive lagoon, known to locals simply as The Bay, with shallow water depositing the very finest sand on beaches and in sandbanks. The waters of



Metinsulae map drawn by the author

the lagoon are treacherous, with shoaling banks that shift with each tide. Skilled local sailors navigate this zone with ease, understanding how both the colour of the water and the shape of the waves reflect the depth of the bay, while unwary outsiders are likely to find themselves helplessly beached if they try to enter without a guide. The shifting sands of this region are ideal for the growth of sea lettuce and dulse seaweeds, cockles and clams, as well as marsh samphire, sea beet, shore crabs and sea kale in the wetlands, all of which are harvested for use by the island inhabitants.

The land itself is rich and productive. Most of the outer ring (referred to by locals merely as The Beach) is made up of rich farmland fertilised by millennia of bird droppings, where the islanders grow wheat, barley, vegetables and other crops. In places ridges of the old volcano poke through this, forming short chains of near featureless (except for nesting birds) hills. Small patches of woodland that are found in The Beach are rich with hazel, sea buckthorn, elder, cherry, gorse and hawthorn, and enclose dense thickets of bramble and raspberry that fruit through summer and autumn. The central island of Metinsulae rises from its lower northern half, which is farmed for crops as intensively as The Beach, to a hillier and in places densely wooded southern side with apple, pear, plum, service, guelder rose, whitebeam, sloe, bullace and medlar trees tended for fruit among older, greater oak, ash and elm trees.

*Alphatian Travel Writer,
Lindqvist of Frisland,
his travels to Metinsulae*

“Typically one finds that most inhabitants of a nation share similarities in doctrine and belief, and while regional differences do occur they are rarely found to be great over short distances. A hostelry in Akesoli is more similar to one in Darokin than another in Selenica, but the requirement to leave a hefty tip to guarantee quality service and mediocrity of the wine invariably remind us we are touring a second-rate nation. Thyatis and Tel Akbir differ in architecture due to their cultural ties, but not in the surly attitude of slaves who ruin what could otherwise be an almost passable restaurant culture. Metinsulae is unique in that in such a very small space, with only a few settlements, there is more variation in food, architecture and culture than one may believe possible. The nine settlements in this malodorous maritime speck represent not only different places of habitation, but different philosophies of metamorphosis. The villages (each as different from the next as one nation from another) are generally friendly to each other, but I can discern little in the way of central governance, and almost no continuity of culinary and artistic culture. It is to be admired that, uniquely, through this diversity the Metinsulans seem to be the only culture who manage to be less than the sum of their parts.

There is no reason to visit Metinsulae, unless for trade, or you are specifically interested in the metamorphs themselves. They are an interesting breed of

the species, being generally light of skin but dark of hair, with prominent, perhaps even dignified or, less politely, robust noses. The eyes of these metamorphs are featureless and white, as are those of all of the species, and their countenance and habit is both expressive and expansive. It is my belief that they would be unable to talk at all should their hands be held to their sides. The men tend towards physical health, with an outdoor lifestyle in farming, fishing and hunting that feeds the body at the expense of the mind (they are no great thinkers) and soul (they are also no great artists). And the women, well, when young they are near unsurpassed in beauty, but as they age they adopt more of the countenance of warships – hardened, uncompromising, and should you cross them you should expect to be holed beneath the waterline.

The tastes of the Metinsulans are complex. From us, they import a number of both Alphatian and Thyatian goods (for some reason they do not trade directly with the Thyatians). This includes olives, garum, liquamen, sugar, salt, citrus fruit and various worked metal products. They export cured fish, some uncut gemstones, silk, dyes and pearls – but all in small quantities. One product, byssal silk, a golden fabric of great worth, is unique to the island.

I shan't finish my review with my customary exhortation to visit this or that site. I shall say only this – do not go to Metinsulae, it is a dreary place.”

ON METAMORPHS

*Lecture notes of Wisemeuller,
Reader in Biological Anthropology,
University of Limn in Trollhattan,
transcribed verbatim by Gingaanguuly,
nixie student reading Comparative Zoology.*

“The metamorph is rather close to a human in his appearance, being of a similar size and shape and in similar hues to Mystaran humans. But it would be verging on impossible to mistake one for a human; their ears are somewhat pointed, coming to an abrupt rather than the tapering point of an elf, and their eyes are completely white, without any visible iris or pupil. You would be wrong to assume that this difference is subtle; it is fundamental to the nature of all humanoids, especially humans and their demi-human kin, that they immediately perceive such ocular details. Metamorphs are like humans, but they are never mistaken for humans.

In structure their organs, both internal and external, are like those of humans, with few measurable differences between the two. It is within the brain and certain glands that differences become apparent. Through either Immortal intervention or selection, the parts of their brain associated with imagination are tethered to the oldest parts of the hindbrain, the most primitive regions associated with basal functions like olfaction and reproduction, and thence via ganglia to assorted glands such as the thyroid, parathyroid, pineal and adrenal. This confers direct control over physiology in ways unknown in any other creature. Simply, this conveys cognitive control over their own physiology – an ability to change form.

This ability takes many years to mature, and it is around the onset of puberty (for a metamorph this occurs between the ages of 16 and 20) that they learn to harness this skill. By full adulthood they usually know at least three broad forms – perhaps mammals, birds and reptiles, or arachnids, insects and fish. What is just as interesting is that, in the later years of childhood, they develop intellectually at an extraordinary rate, learning both natural and moral philosophies in a way we would not expect of any human or demi-human of that age. Their awakening as a physiologically adult metamorph is synchronous with their dawning as a conscientious being. Thus there are few cruel metamorphs – they cannot help but empathise with others, which is both their moral strength and, arguably, their strategic weakness.

They have, at this age, a desire to learn and to travel, and perhaps uniquely the majority become adventurers. It is amusing to note that their apparent empathy has been mistaken by the Thyatian Empire as weakness, at the expense of several lost invading legions over the years! But those who do not succumb to death in this younger, adventurous phase of their lives can expect to live anything up to 200 years. Fertility, gestation and such matters are as similar to those of humans as makes no odds.

Thus, I would describe the metamorph as mankind's physiologically over-achieving cousin. A fascinating species, whose societal and biological behaviour can be explained by some unique anatomical quirks.”

LANGUAGE

The islanders use a form of sign language known to all metamorphs, which is primarily communicated with hands and arms. There is a spoken form of this language, but it tends to only be used when one metamorph needs to attract the attention of another or to be heard over a distance. For the most part, discussions between Metinsulans seem oddly silent to foreigners.

Most Metinsulans also speak one or more of the languages of human visitors. Minrothadan (itself a patois of Thyatian) and Alphatian are common, with a few also knowing the Heldann tongue. Curiously, if metamorphs choose to ‘speak’ a foreign language among themselves they also seem to intuitively form a sign language version of this. They may thus speak behind the back of another creature, right in front of them, and silently. And they take great amusement in mocking outsiders in a sign language form of their own tongue that they cannot hope to understand.

CURRENCY AND TRADE

Metinsulae is a small but prosperous island. Currency is not minted locally, but Thyatian, Alphatian, Minrothaddan, Norwolder and other coins are accepted if they make the accepted weight. The island has numerous surprising exports. It is known to export high quality cured fish and there is a small excess of grain that is sold to passing traders. But those most in the know understand that this island is a treasure trove for smaller scale, higher value products.

Metamorphs are unique in their capacity to obtain and process a range of materials simply inaccessible to other creatures. By cultivation of certain deep sea shellfish, insects and seaweeds they create raw materials for the manufacture of exotic dyes and unique silks, and the precision mining techniques available to burrowing creatures have allowed them to open impressive tunnels to access gemstones well beneath the surface of the dormant volcano that forms the island. Volumes obtained are not sufficient in themselves to make the islanders wealthy, but they are enough to allow them to import things that they need to make their lives more interesting. Imports include foodstuffs (olives, olive oil, garum, liquamen, citrus fruits and cured meats are esteemed), worked goods (metal goods in particular) and boats (which they can produce, but not of the quality obtainable in Helskir, Oceansend or Alphatia).

The unique skills of metamorphs mean they are in demand in other lands, and notable metamorph adventurers have returned with massive fortunes.

Lastly, Metinsulans are not above piracy. They do not publicise this, of course, but their biological skillset is very well suited to piratical ventures.

PHILOSOPHY OF METAMORPHOSIS

Section of a lecture given by Cochlea Lolligo, to visiting Fellows of the Draco Centre of Natural and Moral Philosophy.

“For metamorphs, family is more important than nation, religion matters according to an individual’s strength of faith, but none of those things are the basis of our identity. As we grow, we find ourselves drawn to the animals around us, and we begin to have an initial affinity for a particular kind of animal as we enter puberty. That affinity isn’t about liking or even admiring those animals, it is about sharing an understanding of the wider world with them. Being able to see their point of view, to understand the basis of what they might think and feel.

On the island of Metinsulae we take this further, and when first becoming aware of such an affinity the child has the option of going to live with others who share that perspective, where they can study those creatures. In fact each of the villages maintains good relations with several examples of their kind of animal, not so much in captivity but by mutual agreement, who can be studied. As we mature further, we travel to other villages to study other creatures and learn their forms but from that point our chosen village remains our home. For us, place, philosophy and sense of self are all one.

This is also the age at which we choose our own names. Our parents give us

names when we are born, as I believe is the case of other creatures, but when we are called to our initial form we choose our own names to reflect the identity we have chosen, usually based on animals we feel the greatest affinity for.

For us, shapechanging is not a magical gift, it is not an expenditure of mystical energy that allows us to take another form. It is the philosophy of understanding the creature that allows us to shift into that form. It is the beingness of a being. The rabbitness of a rabbit, the eagleness of the eagle. We call this the telos of an animal, and it is the close understanding of that creature, the telos thereof, that brings us to a point where we can assume its form. We must gain both a mental and philosophical understanding of a creature before we can learn its form.

And, yes, we travel and we gain experiences of the world outside of our home island such that we can learn more forms. If you like, our whole existence is a voyage of discovery, a life spent furthering our personal and collective philosophical understanding of the living world.”

Foreign Relations

There are no formal embassies on Metinsulae, nor are emissaries or ambassadors from Metinsulae present in other countries. Despite the lack of formal links, most Metinsulans travel quite widely in their younger days before settling back on the island, and there are traders from some nations who are aware of the island and who visit regularly.

Attitudes towards and from each nation can be summarised thus.

Alphatia

Metinsulae was known to Alphatians from around 500 years after Landfall (BC 500), and by that time the metamorph culture there was already thriving. While the mineral wealth and agricultural potential of Norwold and the plains of the northern Isle of Dawn were of obvious value, the metamorph island was more of a curiosity. There followed a protracted debate in the Alphatian Grand Council as to whether metamorphosis was magical, making the islanders spellcasters and therefore entitled to Aristocrat status within the Empire, and for over a century no clear decision was made. To this day the possibility of offering the island Kingdom status within the Empire based on what some still hold to be obviously a magical ability remains a hot topic of discussion among a certain subset of academics. But as the island was never a threat and is of little strategic worth while Alphatia maintains ports on the Isle of Dawn, in Norwold, and of course at home, there has never been any impetus to resolve the matter. Relations have remained cordial,

with metamorphs welcomed in Alphatia, and the occasional delegation of wizards allowed to study on the island.

The rise of Thyatis changed this relationship, but only subtly. Alphatia still had no interest in taking the island by force, but had to tread carefully to avoid triggering a Thyatian invasion. The policy changed to one of quiet support – supplying information on Thyatian military plans, subtly interfering with any plans Thyatis might have to invade, etc. Thyatis possessing such a superb natural port at a strategic location could not be countenanced, and should this occur Alphatia would have to intervene. Thus far, this has thankfully not been the case.

Alphatian ships call regularly on the island and are the main trading partners of Metinsulae.

Thyatis

The usefulness of a huge natural harbour with ample fresh water in the Alphatian Sea has always been obvious, and Thyatis has tried to invade the island twice, both times with terrible results. It was assumed that the islanders would be a pushover, but on both occasions the invading forces were massacred. Since then, Thyatian ships have been unwelcome.

More recently, Thyatis has come to suspect that Alphatia has supplied the islanders with tactical information and would probably intervene militarily if another invasion came, so they have changed their tactics. Their agents seek to find younger, travelling islanders and turn them to favour Thyatis, a long-term strategy that they hope will

allow them to use the island as a military base in the future. Until recently, results have been poor, but a recent breakthrough may well tip the scales in their favour.

Minrothad

Traders from Minrothad call at Metinsulae, as everywhere, and are often the route that metamorphs take to reach other lands when the urge to seek adventure strikes. While the islanders' needs are quite simple, Minrothaddan traders are the most widely travelled in the world and bring both strange and interesting goods and tales of exotic creatures that are always of interest. In return, they trade for gemstones, pearls, dyes, silks and other small volume, high value materials that the islanders produce.

Northern Reaches

Centuries ago, Metinsulans kept a wary eye to the West, in case of raiders. But those raiders learned the hard way that the blood price for plunder here is too high, and now relations are relatively cordial. In fact, pirate booty obtained by the metamorphs is usually fenced through the Northern Reaches. Metinsulans are happy to accept a lower price for such goods rather than draw attention to their piratical activity.

Settlements of Metinsulae

There are nine settlements on the island. Bestia and Avis are the largest, found on the central island, along with two smaller settlements named Vermis and Blatta. Five others are found on The Beach, namely Squilla, Piscis, Polypus, Scorpius and Lacerta. While residents in each are loyal to their home settlement, outsiders typically fail to understand that the nature of settlement on the island is not familial or geographic, it is philosophical, and as they reach adulthood Metinsulans are free to choose which of the settlements they adopt as their home, the settlement reflecting a primary form of metamorphosis they favour above others.

Each settlement reflects that form of metamorphosis in various ways, including architecture and cuisine. Each is represented by a single Elder, who is elected as leader of the settlement by all adults of the settlement once every two years. The Elders convene regularly in Bestia, the largest of all Metinsulan settlements, typically quite informally, to make any decisions or form any policies necessary to reflect the whole island. So informal it is, in fact, that to visitors the island may appear to be entirely ungoverned.

Bestia

The largest settlement in Metinsulae is Bestia, with 1,150 adult metamorphs making this small town their home. The prevailing philosophy of the town is that of changing into mammals, although which mammal is best is a hotly contested discussion often shared over an ale. While big cats, bears, dogs, various rodents and deer are kept here for study (in excellent conditions; they are considered friends rather than prisoners) many prefer the forms of dolphins, porpoises and killer whales that are found in local waters. Whichever form is most favoured, every Bestian chooses to learn to become a mammal as their first form. This defines a Bestian.

The architecture of Bestia is closer to that of the rest of the Isle of Dawn than anywhere else on the Island, with much Thyatian influence being visible. Most people live in spacious flats opening out onto open courtyards, the square three-storey buildings built by the river. A granary, a temple (with shrines to Malafor, Zirchev, Protius and Terra) and the Armoury, a simple stone fort overlooking the bay, make up the sum of the public buildings. Few choose to cook, many prefer to hunt for food, but most choose to eat at one of the half-dozen or so thermopolia (counter-serving restaurants) where a mix of fish, olives, bread, simply cooked vegetables and wine is preferred. Most are employed in farming or gathering seaweeds, wild plants and shellfish in the lagoon, and half a dozen fishing boats leave on every tide. The method of fishing, namely finding a shoal and turning into dolphins to drive fish toward nets, is unique to the island.



Bestia, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Visiting metamorphs usually stay with other metamorphs in the settlement, while the few from off-island who stay here do so at the single inn (referred to as The Hospitium).

Mustela Porcus

(Metamorph Cleric of Zirchev)

Mustela Porcus, Metamorph Cleric 15: Alignment Neutral, AC0, HP 56, Str 9, Int 15, Wis 17, Dex 10, Con 13, Cha 16, Expert with mace and Skilled with sling). Ring of protection +3, shield +3, mace +1, sling +2. Also has a rod of healing, ring of holiness, and an elven cloak.

Mustela appears much as any other local metamorph. She is short (5'3"), relatively stout, and looks to be about 40 years old. She carries herself with confidence and has an air of moral authority, a cool charm that comes without effort, and most find themselves trusting her.

She travelled in her youth, visiting Traldara, the Isle of Dread, Alphatia, and Norwold, seeking out both knowledge of Zirchev and the teachings of other groups of metamorphs. She is the natural choice for Elder of Bestia, bringing both authority and wisdom to the role.

Lyncis Cattus

(Metamorph Thief)

Lyncis Cattus, Metamorph Thief 9: Alignment Neutral, AC 4, HP 28, Str 11, Int 16, Wis 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Cha 10. Skilled with normal sword and dagger. Ring of navy†, dimensional ring†, normal sword +2, dagger +1 of slicing).

† see **New Items** on following page for details of these rings

Lyncis is a young man with a keen eye for profit, without any ambition for power but with a certain panache with finance. He's tall (6'3") with the most pronounced nose even for a Metinsulan, and doesn't outwardly

seem in any way adventurous. He comes across as more studious, more serious than this. But an adventurer he was and remains, with close links with thieves guilds in both Helskir and Norwold, who send him details via *scrolls of communication* as to where the juiciest and most lucrative cargo ships are heading to, and with this knowledge he leads perhaps the most dangerous group of pirates in the Alphatian Sea.

They go by no name, they have no great ship. They crowd aboard two small but handy sailing vessels, posing as fishermen, and they approach their targets at dusk. After nightfall, when many a merchantman will slow to avoid the dangers of ploughing through a wine-dark sea, they strike. Transforming into whales, dolphins or sea birds they board and plunder the vessel, taking only the most valuable goods, and usually causing only as much harm to the crew as they absolutely must. Many merchant crews fail to ever even find out how they were robbed.

Lyncis understands that this can go on only so long, because sooner or later either the Alphatian or Thyatian navy will come looking for them, and he is already looking for his next business opportunity. But for the moment, he's having the time of his life.

†New Items

Ring of navy

The wearer of this ring can summon, for up to 2 hours, 6 sailors. The sailors will not fight and are unarmed and unarmoured, and have 8hp each; they can row, sail, work with ropes, carry things, tell off-colour jokes and salty dog stories and in the broadest sense perform the work typically expected of sailors. A second command word will make the sailors disappear again. Any sailors killed cannot be replaced.

Dimensional ring

This ring can, upon command, sequester up to 6 palm-sized items in an extradimensional space. They may be anything that can be held in the hand up to the size of a dagger (e.g. a gemstone, a coin, another ring, a potion bottle, etc.), and any can be summoned in a round by stating a command word. If the ring is removed while items are still sequestered, the items are scattered on the ground around the wearer.



*Bestia's fort at night,
generated by Midjourney AI
prompted by Senarch*



Avis, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Avis

The second largest settlement on the island, Avis is home to the avian philosophy, with around 940 metamorphs whose first chosen form was that of a bird. It lies at the mouth of the river at the south side of the island, facing out into the salt lagoon and surrounded by dense woodland. To the north and east wooded hills stretch upwards. The design of homes in Avis very much reflects the avian philosophy, many being built into or onto the trees with rooms at almost random heights. Avians don't refer to their rather loose collections of rooms and shelters as 'homes', they call them 'nests', and such they really are, very often with the most sparse reception chambers at ground level with more opulent upper rooms higher in trees reached by flight or with ladders. There are no public buildings per-se in Avis, but the assortment of free rooms and homes within Avis is such that there are always numerous free spaces for visitors, for trade, and for storage. While there

is no formal temple, glades near to the village are held to be sacred and are used in rituals to honour Immortals favoured here, including Terra, Simurgh and Protius.

Moored in the river are dozens of flat-bottomed barges, which the folk of Avis use for fishing in a most unique fashion. Avians typically punt in the shallow waters until they find a likely site for fishing, whereupon they transform into cormorants, bringing fish after fish back to the boats. Usually one metamorph drives the shoals to others who are waiting to make the catch. Bestian nets catch more fish, Avians catch better fish.

Avians tend the forest to produce fruit and edible plants, harvest ample food therein for their needs, and trade for farmed goods from Bestia. Outside visitors are welcomed, but rarely come to Avis, most external trade being conducted at Bestia and Squilla.

Struthionis Aquilae*(Metamorph Paladin of Protius)*

Struthionis Aquilae, Metamorph Paladin 20: Alignment Lawful, AC-3, HP 65, Str 17, Int 9, Wis 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Cha 16, Master with normal sword, Expert with bolas, Skilled with dagger). Ring of protection +4, shield +4 of scenting†, normal sword +3, bolas +2. Also has a ring of speed, scroll of creation and a rod of batting†.

† see **New Items** following for details of these objects

Struthio, as he is known to his friends, spent years adventuring in Norwold, training at the Tondera monastery among other metamorphs, and battling evils from Landfall to Frosthaven, before returning to bring riches back to his homeland and to try to master the polymorphing arts as well as his martial ones. He was surprised to be elected Elder of the settlement and has no intention of seeking to stay beyond his initial term in charge, but for the moment he has decided to stay and see what can be done to further the lives of his countrymen before moving on again.

He is an imposing specimen by any measurement. 6'6", muscular and fast, he exudes physical prowess. He hasn't aged as well as he might have done, with the rigours of years on the road showing in his 70-year-old weather-beaten features. There is more salt than pepper in his hair these days.

† New items*Shield + 4 of scenting*

This shield can be commanded to create any smell, centred on the wielder, once per day. From that point and for 4 hours that smell will be detectable by any character within 10'. This scent completely replaces the wielder's own aroma, and will throw any creature hunting by scent off a character's track. Any (non-harmful) smell can be created – perfume, rotting eggs, fresh bread, coffee, etc.

Rod of batting

This rod is rather wider at one end than the other, and has a distinct handle with which it can be held in either hand to be used, and can be handled alongside a normal one-handed melee weapon. Up to two ranged weapons up to the size of a spear per point of dexterity bonus the character has, can be batted away by the wielder per round, as an extra action in addition to any actions taken. To bat away a projectile the wielder must make a hit roll, successful vs. the armour class the attack was made. In addition, the wielder may choose to attack using the rod, by tossing a rock in the air and batting it up to 150'. Rocks thus propelled must weigh at least 5cn each, and inflict 1d8 damage.

Gallina Pullum*(Metamorph Druid)*

Gallina Pullum, Metamorph Druid 10: Alignment Neutral (just!), AC6, HP 37, Str 7, Int 17, Wis 17, Dex 9, Con 12, Cha 16, Skilled with staff). Staff +2.

Gallina is jokingly referred to as 'the force of nature' among other metamorphs, being known across the island as perhaps the most outspoken advocate for the protection of natural resources among all residents. From her initial philosophical perspective of "protect the environment because that saves the birds," she somehow contrives to oppose most interactions between metamorphs and other races, between Metinsulans and other nations, and indeed most other means by which anything on the island would ever change. While in many nations such a stance may make her a subject of ridicule, here she is cherished as a necessary voice for the environment and for the animals around the island.

Short, claiming to be 5'1" but actually closer to 4'11", she's thick-set and both intellectually and physically rugged. Dark-set brows under an uncontrolled shock of black hair allow her to become more visibly imposing than she may otherwise manage, exacerbating the ferocity of her blank-eyed gaze. Intensely persuasive rather than likeable, her force of personality may be her most potent weapon.

Piscis

The third largest settlement on the island, and the largest on The Beach, Piscis and the surrounding area is home to around 450 metamorphs who conform to the philosophy of the fish. The main village is located on a spit of land between a river in the east and an ocean bay in the west, and it is dotted with rivulets of fresh water which flow from the hill to the northeast, mixing with inlets of water from the ocean. Homes are built across and above these rivulets, sometimes enclosing dug-out pools of water temporarily trapping the flow thereof. All are single-storey, except for the village temple which is a three-storey tower built with both fresh and saltwater flows beneath. The temple contains shrines to Protius, Malafor and Calitha.

Piscians make a good living farming the fertile northern plains of The Beach, and also travelling out to several small, sandy islands where they hunt sea birds.

Salmo Tructa*(Metamorph Magic-User)*

Salmo Tructa, Metamorph Magic-User 10: Alignment Lawful, AC3, HP 46, Str 12, Int 18, Wis 13, Dex 9, Con 9, Cha 16, Expert with staff and dagger. Ring of protection +3, dagger +3 of disengaging† wand of lightning bolts (22 charges), staff of wizardry (28 charges), earring of speed.

† see **New Item** on following page for details of this item



Piscis, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Salmo maintains a simple home in Piscis, and also has other humble residences in coastal towns from Slagovich to Skyfyr. She is tall (at precisely 6'), willowy, long-haired and quite striking in appearance. She favours simple, practical clothing that allows free movement, and has a habit of being constantly in motion – she has never been one to sit still. As arguably the most potent magic-user from the island (although Cancri Hermetica of Squilla may have something to say about that), she teleports to coastal spots across the world where she finds examples of unusual fish to bring home to communicate with and study. It is this rather than her actual magical ability that has led the metamorphs of Piscia to elect her Elder.

† **New item**

Dagger +3 of disengaging

If wielding this weapon, once per day a user may recite a command word that creates an identical illusion of themselves still fighting against the foe, allowing them to disengage from combat for a single round (to run away, to reposition, to step out and drink a potion, etc.) The illusion lasts for a single round, and any magic short of a truesight cannot see through it. Note that creatures ‘seeing’ by scent, sonar etc. cannot be fooled by this.



Polypus, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Polypus

This settlement of around 400 adult metamorphs is found on The Beach east of the main island, nestled between the rain-swept hills and the bay. Aeons-old steam vents, betraying the volcanic origin of the island and scoured out by river water flowing down from the hills, form dry, secure networks of caves that the Polypans make their own. The tunnels descend therein to a number of tidal pools, connecting in an underground network to the bay, and it is within the palatial splendour of this enormous complex that the Polypans make their home. In one particularly rugged chamber, with surprisingly good natural acoustics, they have a temple with shrines to Malafor and Protius.

Polypus is the home to the mollusc philosophy, and Metinsulans drawn towards octopus, squid, snails, cuttlefish and the like make their homes here. The caves in which they reside, while brightly decorated, weather-resistant and comfortable, are ideal for

this philosophy, allowing them to live as closely as they can to the water to take the form of cephalopods, while the wooded hills nearby are an ideal habitat for gastropods.

While adept at both farming the plains of The Beach and tending the forests for fruit, Polypans also farm oysters within those tidal caves, carefully tending them in octopus form to grow large pearls that are highly valued for export.

Cochlea Lolligo

(Metamorph Fighter)

Cochlea Lolligo, Metamorph Fighter 30: Alignment Lawful, AC0, HP 105, Str 15, Int 10, Wis 17, Dex 17, Con 15, Cha 9, Grand Master with normal sword, Grand Master with longbow, Expert with trident. Shield +5 of steeding†, normal sword +4 of extinguishing, longbow +4 of lighting, 12 arrows +3 of sinking, ring of protection +4, scarab of protection.

† see **New Item** on following page for details of this item

ochlea is an elderly metamorph who long since retired from active adventuring to come home to Metinsulae. She's seen a lot, having hacked her way through Ulimwengu jungles, kelp forests in Undersea and even Vulcanian ice fields, but now she prefers teaching the young who come to Polypus and who join the philosophy. She's quite tall (5'9") and built powerfully, but never shows any aggression towards anyone or anything, except if pushed. Unsurprisingly, this elderly (at 215 years old one of the oldest on the island) metamorph is the elected Elder of Polypus. Her greatest regret is that she has known for over a century that Sanguisina Parasiticus of Vermis loves her, but she prioritised teaching over her personal life. Perhaps it isn't too late?

Cochlea Lolligo, Metamorph Fighter 30: Alignment Lawful, AC0, HP 105, Str 15, Int 10, Wis 17, Dex 17, Con 15, Cha 9, Grand Master with normal sword, Grand Master with longbow, Expert with trident. Shield +5 of steeding, normal sword +4 of extinguishing, longbow +4 of lighting, 12 arrows +3 of sinking, ring of protection +4, scarab of protection.

† **New item**

Shield +5 of steeding

Once per day this shield creates a single steed. The steed is a perfectly normal creature with tack and saddle, that will do the bidding of the summoner, and disappears after 8 hours, if killed, or the shield dropped.

Lacerta

A low-lying village of around 380 metamorphs south of the opening from The Bay to the ocean, Lacerta is home to the reptilian tradition.

The village itself is constructed just above the sand dunes, built from flat stones gathered from miles around across The Beach. Over a hundred huts cluster in a fairly small space, dug down into the sandy earth and topped with larger capping stones that make a fairly flat surface upon which much of the activity of the village is conducted. Like other villages on The Beach, Lacertans farm some of the fertile grasslands, but they also maintain a fleet of around a dozen small fishing vessels on the west coast that are fully seaworthy, and they net herring, mackerel, and various white fish. On that shore they also maintain small lagoons where live a dozen or so large salt-water crocodiles, descendants of others brought to the island in infancy hundreds of years ago. Said crocodiles could not be said to be tame, but they are tolerant of the metamorphs and even friendly to the Lacertans, and deeply hostile towards any other humanoids. The crocodiles are competent ocean swimmers, and accompany the fishing boats, adding a bonus harvest of seals and dolphins to the catch. There is a small temple in one of the central vaults of the village, containing shrines to Ka, Matin and Ralon.



Lacerta, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Aspidus Vipera (*Metamorph Thief*)

Aspidus Vipera, Metamorph Thief 14: Alignment Neutral, AC2, HP 45, Str 9, Int 13, Wis 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Cha 17, Expert with normal sword, skilled with short bow. Normal sword +2, short bow +3 of crackling†, ring of protection +2, scroll of shelter.

† see **New Item** following for details of this item

Recently returned from mainland Thyatis, where he based himself with a group of adventurers who were causing havoc in and around the capital. He left with the town guard and more than a few imperial officials only a few steps behind him, with the intention of laying low at home for a while before returning. He's entirely average in appearance and build (5'9"), with a prominent nose and a moderately rich mane of hair styled in a way he wrongly takes to be rakish, and carries himself with the confidence of a man with

whom you are already impressed. He had little intention of settling back on the island, but within a few short months he found himself rather besotted with another metamorph he grew up with (now going by the name of Apis Vespae and living in Blatta) but whose charms he hadn't recognised before he left, and has set his sights on wooing her. To that end, he has done his best to go respectable and stood (and was elected) village Elder. The wooing, that hasn't gone so well (yet), but he figures she'll eventually fall for what he considers to be his obvious charm.

† **New item**

Short bow+3 of crackling

Once per day, for 1 turn, bow can inflict an extra 1d4 electrical damage per arrow. If a foe is immune to electrical damage, no extra damage is taken.



Blatta, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

Blatta

Winds funnel through the west opening of The Beach hitting the shallow tidal waters of the bay coalesce into a daily mist, which falls on to the west coast of the central island. At the mouth of the longest and widest river on the island lies Blatta, a village of about 300 adult metamorphs who follow the philosophy of insects. There is a navigable but quite serpentine deep-water channel from Blatta to the open ocean, and the villagers maintain three longships that are used for towing ships in and out of the bay where they can both load and offload goods, take on supplies and freshwater, or shelter from rough seas. Many secluded deep-water anchorages are known to the villagers, and they have an excellent understanding of treacherous, mist-shrouded shifting sand banks in this part of the bay. Any ship without a native guide must travel very slowly, with careful sounding of the depths, to be sure not to become beached.

And with each tide the sands can shift, meaning that a carelessly selected anchorage may be impossible to vacate for months.

The village itself appears to be a ramshackle selection of grounded and beached ships, dragged above the high tide mark and linked together with wooden and rope bridges. Over a dozen vessels, from a grand Minrothaddan four-masted clipper down to an upturned Ostlander longship (which serves as a temple, in which there are shrines to Buglore and Protius), all lost to the muds of the bay, have been refloated and laboriously dragged above the high water line. Within this complex the villagers make surprisingly comfortable lives, in spacious chambers converted for living, business, and storage. And, crucially, the moist environment allows them to maintain complex and variable internal climates for insects of all kinds to thrive.

While Blattans do farm the local plains for food, they also gather vast amounts of shell-



fish from the shifting mud and sand flats to supplement their diet, and forage many wild plants from the marsh for food. They effectively form the first point of contact for visiting traders.

Apis Vespae

(Metamorph Fighter)

Apis Vespae, Metamorph Fighter 14: Alignment Chaotic, AC3, HP 58, Str 16, Int 9, Wis 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Cha 17, Expert with voulge, skilled with crossbow. Voulge +3, crossbow +3 of dissecting†, ring of protection +3, medallion of mindmasking, scroll of trapping.

† see **New Item** following for details of this item

Returned from adventuring in the Sea of Dread three years ago, where she learned the forms of some truly magnificent creatures, including insects, on the Isle of Dread. Her leadership qualities made her an obvious choice for village Elder. On her travels she was befriended by many Thyatian adventurers while there, including one who was an asset for Thyatian intelligence services. Slowly, over years, she was slowly convinced of the Thyatian pitch for dominance in the Alphatian Sea and is now an advocate for better relations with Thyatis. She still corresponds with her old adventuring friends, and her letters are like gold dust for Thyatian Intelligence. She is nervous to push too hard for the Thyatians, knowing that most of the other elders would oppose this, but she hopes to use the affections of Aspidus Vipera of Lacerta (who she holds in contempt) as leverage to turn him to her way of thinking as a first step. She is a petite (5'3"), energetic, short-haired, determined fighter, taking the same

resolve she shows in battle and applying it to all other activities. She takes her name from stinging insects, but due to her obvious zeal to many on the island she is known as Firefly.

† New item

Crossbow +3 of dissecting

A creature killed by this weapon, i.e. if the killing blow is inflicted by a bolt from this crossbow, then it is not merely killed but it is neatly dissected into well sorted, labelled parts. The skin, all organs, bones, glands, etc. are neatly described with simple labels in piles around the site of death. This may enrage any creatures allied with it or may necessitate that they make a morale check.

Vermis

Vermans, all 250 or so of them, are a breed apart, even among metamorphs. The calling to learn the philosophy of the worm before all others is not the most unusual among metamorphs (indeed there are two philosophies that do not even have their own settlements on the island) but the mindset is so alien that few other metamorphs are truly able to have an affinity for worms.

The village is nestled at the foot of the hill at the centre of the island, upstream of Bestia, and while there is rich farmland to the north the village itself is set within a steep-sided river valley, with homes built in wood and set back into the earth on either side. The valley is densely wooded and moist, with the aromas of petrichor and



Vermis, generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

pine mixing to create an atmosphere permanently reminiscent of an approaching storm. While the villagers produce some food by farming on the grassland, they also produce goods that are among the most important exports of the island.

Among the trees, Vermans farm beetles from which a red dye, carmine, is produced. This is a valuable export, but a secondary product based on the mineral-rich waste from a very peculiar form of mining that the Vermans practice. A number of volcanically produced gemstone types (opal, peridot and olivine) are found in the deep soils of the valley, and in the form of various large worms villagers find and extract them for export.

Unknown to outsiders, even to other Metinsulans, is that there are caverns under the hillsides, reachable only by small, burrowing animals such as worms, lined with delicate natural crystals. Vermans consider these sites sacred, and treat them as shrines to Protius, Terra and Urtson.

Vermans frequently travel to The Bay, through Bestia and into the sea, to study and take on the forms of marine worms.

Sanguisuga Parasitus
(Metamorph Cleric of Urtson)

Sanguisuga Parasitus, Metamorph Cleric 30: Alignment Lawful, AC2, HP 77, Str 10, Int 13, Wis 18, Dex 10, Con 13, Cha 17, Grand Master with staff, Master with sling. Staff +5 of defending, sling +4 of banishing†, ring of protection +4, scroll of creation, stone of commanding earth elementals.

† see **New Item** following for details of this item

An older man whose adventuring days were brief and long ago, Sanguisuga set out to become a great warrior and failed. In an incident involving a mysterious shrine and a gremlin, he was transported to a far-off plane where he learned the teachings of the Kryst immortal Urtson, which seemed to be so close to the ideals of metamorph

philosophy, and to fit so closely to the sacred sites in Vermis, that he felt called to return home and share his revelation. Over a hundred years later, Urtson is the most revered Immortal among the Vermans. Sanguisuga is a physically unremarkable, of average build, older metamorph, but his wisdom and charm are universally admired across the island. Through most of his long (190-year) life he has carried a torch for Cochlea Lolligo of Polypus, but always feared that this affection would be unreturned. He has for years been the elected Elder of Vermis.

† **New item**

Sling +4 of banishing

This powerful weapon allows the wielder to attempt to dismiss an extraplanar foe. If a normal attack hits an extraplanar creature, the wielder may choose to try to banish that creature back to its home plane. It may resist the attempt only if it makes a saving throw vs. death ray at a -4 penalty to the roll. The successful banishment of a creature permanently reduces the magical bonus of the weapon by 1, becoming non magical when it loses its last bonus. An unsuccessful attempt causes no loss of magical bonus.

Scorpius

Home primarily to the arachnid philosophy but also to a smaller group following the way of the amphibian, Scorpius is a small settlement of around 190 metamorphs. Set back on a hillside above an almost mile-wide freshwater marsh that slowly gives way to brackish and then salt water in the bay, it is a sheltered village of low-lying buildings set around a small plaza. The houses are mostly stone-built, fashioned from dark volcanic rocks taken from the hill to the south. An unremarkable building serves as a temple with shrines to Korotiku, Calitha and Protius. Here, as elsewhere on The Beach, the locals farm the rich grassland around the village, and also gather shellfish, samphire, sea kale, sea beet, sea buckthorn and other foods from the marsh.

The dark homes, as well as providing ample room to live, also serve as a site where spiders can be farmed for silk. The quality is not as high as the alien spidersilk of Alphatia, and certainly not as princely as the byssal silk manufactured in Squilla, but it is almost indistinguishable from normal silk and can be manufactured in large volume both for use on the island and for export.

Camelus Aranea

(Metamorph Thief 9)

Camelus Aranea, Metamorph Thief 9: Alignment Chaotic, AC 4, HP36, Str 10, Int 13, Wis 17, Dex 17, Con 10, Cha 15 Expert with blowgun, Basic with normal sword. Blowgun +3, 8 blowgun darts +1 or infecting, normal sword +1, ring of deathwatch (4 charges), ring of invisibility, elven cloak.

† see **New Item** following for details of this item

Camelus is the village Elder here. She's young to take on such a role, being only around 40 years old, and brings a sense of youthful enthusiasm to the role. She's been looking to acquire some Alphatian spiders on the black market to boost the value of what her village produces, and while she hasn't succeeded yet she's fairly sure it's just a matter of finding the right unscrupulous adventurers to steal her some. This is not, however, why some of the other Elders mistrust her. Cancri Hermetica of Squilla thinks she's too ambitious. Aspidus Vipera of Vermis thinks she's a flirt. Struthionis Aquelae thinks she's just a bit creepy. There is just something about her that some people don't like, except for the other Scorpions who hold her in very high regard. And despite always having a rationalisation for not liking her, it's really just innate. She puts people on edge, and she's quite happy with that. She's relatively short (5'4"), nimble, and whether through her appearance (always very well turned out, dressed stylishly and colourfully) or with a cutting remark, you will notice her if she's around. Her adherence to the way of the arachnid, the calculated way she goes about things, makes her stand out. Love her or hate her, you can't ignore her.

† New items

Blowgun darts +1 of infecting

This ammunition seems as if covered in dried ichor. Any creature hit by it must make a save vs. poison or be infected as if by a *cause disease* spell.

Ring of deathwatch

A ring of deathwatch is a protection against death. When found, a ring of deathwatch

contains 1d6 charges. In the event of its wearer being exposed to anything that kills them outright or otherwise reduces them to 0hp or less, it creates a *cureall* effect to restore them to full health (minus 1d6hp).

Squilla

The smallest settlement on the island, Squilla is home to metamorphs who follow the crustacean philosophy, with a few who follow the rarest philosophy of all, the centipedes. 110 adult metamorphs live here.

Standing at the end of a wooded ridge near the northern end of the west entrance to the bay, Squilla looks out over a picturesque sandy shore, at least when it is not shrouded in mist (a daily occurrence). Homes are built on the hillside, in wood, amongst the trees, sheltered from the worst of the winds and the weather and they are typically comfortable and spacious. Villagers grow forest crops, harvesting fruit and nuts from the trees, and edible plants from the bay (sea kale, sea beet, samphire, dulse, sea lettuce, etc.) but do not participate in conventional farming. They do however maintain an industry unique to the island: they produce a variety of silk called byssus, farmed from vast beds of sea pen (a variety of mollusc) offshore, harvested by metamorphs in crab form and processed by others in the form of centipedes. This extraordinary, golden fabric is lighter, stronger, warmer and finer even than spider silk, but requires an enormous amount of work. A single pair of gloves woven from it are as strong and warm as spider silk that is 10 times thicker and can be folded neatly into a walnut shell. While it is only possible

to produce a few dozen yards of this fabric per year, it is considered a cloth worthy of the most noble and wealthy, and is a great status symbol in Vertiloch, Darokin, Ierendi, Minrothad, Thyatis and even in faraway lands such as Slagovich and the Savage Coast. There is no known magical means of creating this fabric, and resultantly it can be sold for hundreds of times the cost of spider silk. When used in the production of silk-based magic items, byssal silk reduces the initial enchantment cost thereof by 15%.

A simple temple was constructed atop the hill many years ago, and it contains shrines to Polunius, Ilmarinen and Protius.

Cancri Hermetica

(Metamorph Magic-User)

Cancri Hermetica, Metamorph Magic-User 20: Alignment Lawful, AC3, HP 54, Str 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Cha 14, Master with dagger, Expert with staff, 2 daggers +4 of slicing, staff of elemental power (22 charges), wand of cold, wand of fireballs, ring of protection +3, 3 bags of holding, crystal ball with ESP.

Cancri is the most well-respected member of the community here and has been a village Elder for the last 10 years. He travelled widely before settling back at home, initially wanting to have a quiet life but finding that the magical prowess he'd gained adventuring with a renowned Alphatian party was just too useful to his fellow Squillans. He still *teleports* to see his old adventuring companions and other friends across the Alphatian Empire, and from those trips he brings back many strange and exotic goods to share across the island,

and acts as an informal ambassador for trade and more broadly for Metinsulae in those trips. Unknown to other metamorphs, he spent time working for the Alphatian Intelligence Service, the so-called "Ministry for Ungentlemanly Warfare", and still maintains links there to keep an eye on Thyatians in the Alphatian Sea. He is the primary means by which the Alphatians quietly feed data to Metinsulae regarding the activities of Thyatis. He is a youthful-looking 80 year old, with the high nose and dark hair typical of islanders, standing at 5'10" but with an upright stance that always makes him seem taller.

GENERAL SKILLS

Metinsulans are thoughtful, educated people. They tend towards skills in knowledge, but there is no specific knowledge skill that typifies them. Nature Law (specific to the island and creatures that are kept or encouraged to make their homes there) is popular, as is Science (zoology). Many are skilled in sailing, fishing, hunting, foraging or boat piloting. The diverse array of Immortals followed on the island leads many to favour mysticism over learning the skill of honouring a specific Immortal, but of course clerics and druids learn that skill in addition to any others.

There are some skills that are rather more idiosyncratic, found in few places other than Metinsulae.

Animal Empathy (Wisdom)

Generally knowing how to keep a wild animal on side – not so much controlling them or communicating with them, a suc-

Successful check will inform a character as to whether an animal is likely to be aggressive, friendly, dangerous, or in general how it is likely to react. The character may then be able to change their behaviour accordingly and affect how the animal will react. This will not tame an aggressive animal that has already attacked, but it may allow a character to avert an attack or, at least, be ignored by an animal.

Aquaculture (Intelligence)

Farming shellfish or fish, typically in coastal waters, including knowledge of how to feed, keep clean and harvest. This is used by Metinsulans in various forms, both for fish production in the Bay, oysters for pearls, for producing dyes from shellfish, and for the highly valuable production of byssal silk.

Byssus Weaving (Intelligence)

Byssus is the most luxurious and expensive form of silk on Mystara, and after harvest it must be cleaned, treated, dried and spun before weaving. This secret craft is never taught to outsiders.

Foraging (Intelligence)

How to identify and sustainably and safely harvest useful plants, fungi, shellfish, seaweed, fruit and nuts. An essential survival skill, and in some regions a means of producing harvests for sale or trade.

Permaculture (Intelligence):

Forest farming, for production of crops at ground level, mid-storey and forest canopy through the year to sustainably maximise production of leaves, berries, nuts and fruits, fibres, wood and other products in a semi-natural woodland. An important part of Metinsulan food production, also practised by elves elsewhere.

Magic of the Metamorphs

Almost all metamorphs on the island of Metinsulae have adventured at some point in their lives, with most becoming thieves or fighters, some becoming clerics, and a few becoming magic-users. Druids, paladins, merchants, mystics and rarer classes are also occasionally known.

When pursuing spellcasting classes there are a few spells known to Metinsulans that are idiosyncratic to the island.

Copy Form

2nd level Cleric/Druid Spell

Range: 90' (and caster only)

Duration: Special

Effect: Allows the caster to copy a form

A handy spell for a metamorph but of limited use for any other character, this spell allows the caster to change into the form of another creature that the caster can see within range. Normal restrictions on the habitat of origin of such a creature do not apply, but the caster must be able to change into that type of creature. For example, a cleric who sees an arctic fox but who is not able to transform into creatures from the arctic can, if they cast this spell, change into that creature, assuming that they can transform into a mammal and have not already done so that day.

Detect Shifter*2nd level Magic-User or Cleric Spell*

Range: 120'
 Duration: 1 turn per level of the caster
 Effect: Shows shapeshifted creatures to the caster

A popular spell among metamorphs and also quite useful for other spellcasters, this spell allows the caster to see all shapeshifted creatures (lycanthropes in animal form, metamorphs who have changed shape, polymorphed, etc.). The true form of that creature is not revealed, and no indication of the process governing shapeshifting (magical or natural) is given. Invisible polymorphed creatures are visible to the caster in a vague outline form, the caster can discern that they are there but not what form they are in.

Metamorph Sight*3rd level Magic-User of Cleric/Druid Spell*

Range: 120'
 Duration: 1 turn per level of the caster
 Effect: Shows all creatures in their true form

While this spell lasts, the caster can see the true form of all polymorphed or shapeshifted creatures within range. Such creatures if invisible are rendered visible to the caster and their true form is likewise shown to the caster.

Render Trueform*3rd level Magic-User Spell*

Range: 120'
 Duration: Instantaneous
 Effect: Forces a victim into their true form

This spell may be cast at any creature within range. If that creature is shapeshifted, polymorphed, metamorphosed or in any way in a form other than their true form, they will (if the magic or metamorphosis is from a lower level than the caster or in the case of a monster of a lower HD than the caster has levels) immediately be forced to revert to that form. If cast at a shapeshifting creature of higher level or HD than the caster, or polymorphed by a higher level caster, there is a 5% chance of failure per level or HD above that of the caster of this spell.

Impose Form*4th level Magic-User spell*

Range: 120'
 Duration: Special
 Effect: Allows the caster to control another creature's form

This spell can be cast on any creature able to polymorph, metamorphose or shapeshift. The creature must make a saving throw vs. spells or they are forced into a form that the spellcaster can change into and must stay in such a form for at least 1 turn before they can use their own ability to change form again. The caster cannot force a creature into any form they are not themselves familiar with, or if the spellcaster cannot change form then the victim may only be forced into humanoid form if this is possible. This can be used to force a crea-

ture that is polymorphed back into its own form, to force a lycanthrope into their animal form (if it is one the caster is capable of becoming) or back into humanoid form.

Split Essence

7th level Magic-User,

6th level Cleric/Druid Spell

Range: Self only

Duration: 1 turn per level of the caster

Effect: Allows the caster to become 2 creatures

This spell allows a metamorph caster to split his life essence into 2 forms simultaneously. Both forms must be kinds that the caster can become, and no extra metamorphoses for the day are gained. The combined number of HD of the creatures must not be greater than the level of the caster, and that the combined total number of hit points of the two is the same as the caster's hit point total. The caster may, for example, change into a bear and an eagle at the same time, or a shark and a dolphin. Both remain under the control of the character, psychically connected, but they can operate independently at any distance. This may, for example, allow one to be *teleported* elsewhere while the other is aware of everything seen or heard there. Note that if one form is killed, both die, and also if the two are not together at the end of the spell's duration the caster will die.

Combine Essence

8th level Magic-User,

7th level Cleric/Druid Spell

Range: Touch

Duration: 3 turns

Effect: Combines 2 metamorphs into 1 form

This spell allows 2 metamorphs, the caster and 1 other, to combine into 1 form. This allows them to take the form of a creature that may otherwise have too many HD, for example. The two metamorphs must include the caster and one other willing metamorph participant. One or both must be able to take the chosen category, even if they could not normally become such a large example thereof. The individual with the highest combined intelligence and wisdom scores remains in control (the caster in the event of a tie), and other modifiers (individual initiative modifier, saving throws, etc.) are made according to whichever is best for the combined character. The entity has a combined hit point total equivalent to both metamorphs.

At the end of the spell's duration both metamorphs return to humanoid form, and share any damage taken equally (if an odd number of hit points of damage has been taken, the extra hit point of damage is attributed to the metamorph with most hit points). This may be sufficient to reduce one of the two metamorphs to less than 0 hit point, in which case at the point of separation that metamorph dies (thus it may be better to seek magical healing before separation). The spell also ends if either of the two parties wishes it to end, i.e. either may simply revert to their own form at any time.



*Metamorph,
generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch*

Metamorph Characters

Metamorphs are among the closest relatives of humans, closer even than demi-humans. They may resemble humans of any ethnicity, and are built similarly, but cannot easily pass for human due to possessing somewhat pointed ears and pure white eyes. They have, through centuries of discipline and practice, attained a non-magical ability to shapechange, allowing them to take on the form of animals (and, when of sufficiently high level, monsters and even plants). This often causes them to be mistaken for lycanthropes.

Metamorph communities usually resemble those of demi-humans, with which they typically have good relations. Many metamorphs shy away from human contact, and they build their settlements far from the villages and towns of men.

While not tied to the mountains, hills or forests like dwarves, halflings and elves, they are linked to the natural world around them perhaps more tightly than any demi-humans. Their natural shapechanging abilities are, initially, tightly tied to the fauna of their homes. Metamorphs spend much of their time living with and studying the animals of their homelands, which they work tirelessly to protect. They understand that predators need prey, and do not interfere with such matters, but they will ensure that outside influences are stopped from causing significant harm.

Character Class, Class Abilities and Level Advancement

Metamorphs may pursue any character class available to humans, but most who adventure choose to be fighters, clerics or druids. They attack, cast spells, make saving throws and use all special abilities as per their class and level. Metamorphs are typically more resilient than humans, and use the next hit dice up at every level of experience (e.g. d6 instead of d4 if playing a thief, d10 instead of d8 if playing a fighter, etc.) and have a natural armour class of 6 (plus or minus any dexterity modifier). However, they cannot polymorph in armour, and whatever class they choose they cannot wear armour. They can, if their class allows, use a shield. They gain skills, weapon mastery and saving throws according to character class.

Metamorphs advance more slowly than humans in any class, and require 30% more experience per level gained. They gain additional special abilities according to their level, as shown in the table on the following page.



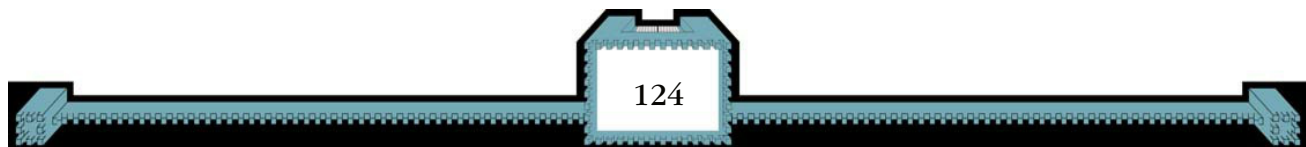
Metamorph Level	Forms/Day	Abilities
1	3	(a)
2	4	
3	5	
4	6	(b)
5	7	
6	8	
7	9	(c)
8	10	
9	11	(d)
10	11	
11	11	
12	11	(e)
13	11	
14	11	
15	12	(f)
16	12	
17	12	
18	13	(g)
19	13	
20	13	
21	14	(h)
22	14	
23	14	
24	15	(i)
25	15	
26	15	
27	16	(j)
28	16	
29	16	
30	16	(k)
31	16	
32	16	
33	17	(l)
34	17	
35	17	
36	18	(m)

Metamorphosis

A metamorph can change into a number of forms per day, determined by their level. This ability is natural and cannot be dispelled. Each transformation takes 1 round to complete. The total amount of time a metamorph can spend in changed forms is 6 turns + 1 turn per level of experience, per day, for all combined forms. All forms taken have the same hit point total as the metamorph, but attacks are made as if by a creature of the number of HD taken. The forms available to a metamorph depend upon level of experience as discussed below.

Abilities

- (a) A level 1 metamorph can shapeshift up to 3 times each day, but only into certain categories. The player must choose which 3 of the categories (listed below) are known at first level, and the character learns another category at each level until level 9. Unlike the *polymorph self* spell effect, this non-magical shapeshift gives the metamorph all the abilities of the new form, even special attacks (such as a skunk's spray) are gained. No giant-sized or fantastic forms can be taken, but any normal non-magical form can be used. The animal categories a metamorph can learn to use each day are: worm, mollusc, spider, centipede, insect, crustacean, mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, and fish. (The DM should be familiar with the differences between all these types; for example, spiders, centipedes, and





- insects are all different.) Once a category has been used, the metamorph cannot change into that category again that day. The total number of Hit Dice of the creature must be equal to or lower than the character's level of experience. The metamorph can reassume normal form at any time. At levels 1-3, every animal form chosen must be found in the metamorph's home area. For example, a metamorph from an arctic region may be able to transform into a polar bear, seal, arctic fox, salmon, etc. Whereas a metamorph from a subtropical savanna may be able to transform into a giraffe, lion, meerkat, vulture, etc. At each level of experience up to ninth, metamorphs gain the ability to change into one more of the listed categories, and can therefore change form once more per day. A metamorph cannot take any extra material into animal form at this level; any clothing and equipment is left behind.
- (b) At level 4 a metamorph can, as well as choosing forms native to their own home area, transform into any animal form native to the area they are currently in. For example a metamorph native to an arctic tundra may, if traversing a tropical jungle, choose to turn into a monkey, sloth, snake, etc. The metamorph must have seen a species before taking that form.
- (c) From level 7 a metamorph no longer has to drop everything they carry when changing form. Ordinary clothes change with the metamorph, being absorbed into the new form.
- (d) From level 9 a metamorph may in turn into any animal form chosen, from any habitat, as long as they have seen that species. Metamorphs who are name level or above also receive a +2 bonus to saving throws against any *polymorph* effects. An additional 200cn of material, in addition to the metamorph's ordinary clothing, can now be carried into polymorphed form.
- (e) From level 12 the metamorph gains the ability to communicate with other creatures of the type he has changed into. Only that specific type of creature can be communicated with. For example, a metamorph in the form of a tiger can communicate with other tigers, but not with other great cats. This applies to any of the metamorph's forms. While the metamorph can communicate with creatures of the same kind, those creatures are not necessarily friendly to the metamorph. An additional 800cn can be carried into any form by the metamorph from this level.
- (f) From level 15 a metamorph can, once per day, in addition to all other categories known, assume the form of any giant-sized animal that exists in the campaign. For example, a giant rat, weasel, ferret, *etc.* Only established giant forms of animals can be chosen, for example if giant foxes do not exist in your campaign then the character may not transform into one, and gargantuan forms may not be assumed. The creature must still have fewer HD than levels of experience of the character. A metamorph can carry up to their normal encumbrance load (2400cn) into any form from this level.

- (g) From level 18 a metamorph can, once per day turn into any plant that they have seen. The form of a plant-like monster cannot be chosen, and the plant should be able to survive in the location where the metamorph is. For example, a metamorph taking the form of seaweed in a desert may take damage from the terrain they are in.
- (h) From level 21 a metamorph can, in addition to other forms, once per day, take the form of any normal monster that they have seen of fewer hit dice than the character's level. The creature must not have any special abilities (as represented by asterisks following HD in their monster description). Note that any equipment or clothing associated with the creature is not produced – a metamorph becoming a bugbear will be unclothed and unarmed (except for items that the metamorph already possessed).
- (i) At level 24 and above metamorphs can, even if they fail a save vs. *polymorph* effects, simply turn back to their preferred (or native) form at will. Metamorphs of this level are also immune to lycanthropy, gain a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. *turn to stone*, and by changing form can cure themselves of any normal, non-magical disease.
- (j) At level 27 a metamorph can additionally transform into any creature with limited special abilities (with up to 2 asterisks after the HD figure in their monster description). The form taken must be a living creature, have fewer HD than the metamorph's level of experience, and cannot be undead or a construct.
- (k) At level 30 a metamorph can attempt to control a single creature of the type they have transformed into. That creature may make a saving throw versus wands to avoid the effect; if they fail they are charmed as per *charm monster* until the metamorph relinquishes their current form.
- (l) At level 33 a metamorph can additionally transform into any monster with 4 or fewer special abilities (denoted by asterisks after HD number in their description), for one hour per day. The form taken must be a living creature (not undead or a construct), and have equal to or fewer HD than the metamorphs level of experience.
- (m) At level 36, a metamorph can, once per day, take on an additional form that combines abilities from creatures he can transform into. For example, a 36th level metamorph may take the ability of a red dragon to breathe fire and use it while in the body of a wolf. Only the abilities of two creatures can be combined, one of which must be the form assumed.

The Islands of Death

by King Everast



INTRODUCTION

The Island of Home is a peaceful place, where merchants live lives of prosperity – or is it? Death has taken hold of the trading castle that dominates Home; no one has been heard from in months; and adventurers previously sent there have not returned. A formerly profitable trading business, getting much income for Thyatis, has seemingly been ruined. What is going on?

In this adventure, the heroes must journey to Home, but all is not as it seems, and before long they realise they have stumbled into something far bigger than they could have imagined – no less than the destruction of the world. And there is a high chance of it happening!

The Islands of Death is a Companion-level adventure, where the party must penetrate deep into the Topaxi Archipelago, or as it will become known, the Islands of Death. They have an awe-inspiring foe, the mighty and terrible Althores, the King of Fire Giants.

Good luck in your explorations!

Needed For Play

The *Basic*, *Expert*, *Companion* and *Master* sets or, alternatively, the *Rules Cyclopeda*. It is also helpful to have the *Creature Catalog*, but I will include brief descriptions of the monsters used from it.

I also ask you to download Cab Davidson's excellent [Necromancer character class](#) available from the *Vaults of Pandius*.

Levels

I have not been able to decide on the levels or number of PCs because all parties are different, so I would suggest you read it through, compare it to other adventures you have run, and then decide for yourself.

DM's BACKGROUND

The background information given here is the background to all parts of this adventure. Much of it will not seem very relevant during Part 1 of the adventure, which follows, and will only be useful in later parts. The section on Skretonas and Home is, however, useful for Part 1.

Althores — King of Fire Giants

In ancient times the very name would chill the hearts of anyone, whether they be a follower of law or chaos.

Althores, the immortal giant, and his legendary steed, Flamis the Fire Worm, were enough to strike terror into the heart of even the most reckless adventurer. The giant, Althores, would gather enormous armies of giants, trolls, orcs, and goblins, and lead them into battle – forcing them to obey him through fear and awe. Humans, dwarves, elves and hin would gather to fight, but the giant would always destroy them – yet nothing, not even the most powerful magic, could injure him.

The giant and his armies would conquer every region he came to – for none could stand up to him. But in times of fear and destruction the Immortals intervene. One Immortal bequeathed the strongest fighter in the land a staff made entirely of precious metal; when in its presence it would make Althores mortal. The fighter presently gathered an army and, as the last hope of men, elves and dwarves, he marched on Althores. The two massive armies met with a sound like thunder and the hero immediately charged Althores, who did not realise the powers of the staff. But even mortal, he was incredibly strong and slew the fighter. In that moment all seemed lost, but the fallen fighter's brother took up the staff and drove his sword into Althores's shin. Althores had never known such agony and he fell, only to have the same sword stab his neck. Thus the battle was won.



The brother, though, had not realised that the staff had to be laid next to Althores in his grave to keep him dead. They threw him in a forgotten pass, and, as the staff was an item of great power, he took it home. Many months later, he was killed by a dragon attack on his castle and the staff was taken.

Many years passed and Althores became a legend, and eventually was forgotten.

But he should not have been...

The dragon who had stolen the staff was Flamis, who had survived the battle in which Althores was killed, and she was in disguise. Ever loyal to her master she stole the precious staff as revenge, but on examining it with magic, learnt of its purpose and that her master was not dead. She found the valley where Althores lay, held between life and death. She healed him and took him to a new place perfect for a headquarters – an island archipelago far to

the north (which is the Topaxi Archipelago in this adventure, containing Home). There they made their base in a volcano and, over the centuries, Althores regained his former strength and power. They gathered an army, hid the volcano using magic, and found suitable guardians for the staff – for he could not let it get into the hands of humans once more.

Everything was going well, and so he made his move: he began to send out armies to the nearby islands. Topaxi was attacked, and then the pesky merchant castle Home. He was sure he would conquer the world. But attacking the Thyatian trading port so soon, when the Thyatians could send able adventurers to find what had happened, was a mistake that Althores, hailing from another age, did not even begin to understand.

Skretonas was the most powerful Necromancer of his land. He loved his power and magic more than anything else. He loved his magic so much that he went too far. One dark night he was performing a ritual when something went awry, and before he knew it he had been struck down with a curse. He was turned into a lich. Not such a powerful lich as to be able to strike people down with a touch, but one who could now cast his spells without such long rituals or personal sacrifices because he had become a favourite of Hel.

Althores in his hunt for generals quickly found Skretonas and was immediately attracted to his cruelty and cunning. Skretonas was put in charge of the attack of Home, along with Nrachag the nagpa and Roryphor the dark-hood. When he arrived at Home, he disguised himself and slipped poison into everything which when drunk or eaten

turned everyone into skeletons. That got rid of most of the occupants of the castle; he then sent Roryphor and Nrachag in, and they brutally murdered anyone who had survived, and so the castle was taken. The only minor panic was when a sailing ship arrived, but in the end that was taken care of with just a small explosive cloud which led them into confusion and onto the rocks.

When the party in this adventure arrives on Home, however, Skretonas decides to take a risk and not eliminate them immediately, thinking that he will have a bit more fun. That could prove to be his and Althores's doom...

Players' Background

The recommended way to get your players into this adventure is that they are summoned by the master of Thyatian trade who asks them to journey to the Island of Home. If you are wondering what he is thinking, asking companion-level adventurers to explore the island, it is because his job hangs on this trading port's profits. The previous Head of Thyatian Trade had set up a trading deal with Topaxi and the major trade item was the mineral topaz. The deal was exceedingly profitable for the Thyatians as the Topaxi natives were unaware of the value of the mineral elsewhere. If the trade master fails to keep the deal going, he will be fired. None of the lower-level adventurers he's sent to Home have ever returned.

He will try and pay as little as possible to the adventurers, trying to play on the characters' kindness and lawfulness to convince them to go. He starts by offering 1,000 gp, but will

go up to 100,000 gp. However, he will only give an advance fee of 10,000 gp, and will never give the rest, no matter what the players do and how successful they are. He argues on the grounds that they failed to save the people of Home.

Alternative ways to get your players started on this adventure include: they could be sailing in the area, having heard of a hospitable trading castle; or to be more adventurous, you could have them ship-wrecked on the island.

Location

The location of the Topaxi Archipelago is up to you. It is based somewhere to the south of the Isle of Dawn and is in a tropical region. It is also north of Davania. Put it where it best suits your campaign.

Travelling

The party must have a ship and if none of them can buy or hire one then the merchants' guild will supply one, but if it is damaged then the guild demands they keep it and pay for it in full. The crew will also not obey the adventurers other than to take them to the islands, and they will have a low morale.

I would advise the adventurers to take their own ship, with a crew that trusts them. You can, of course, have any encounter you want on your journey to Home, but I have not included any in my writing. In later parts I will show maps of the full archipelago but for now you must be left in the dark. Good luck on your travels. A dangerous foe awaits!!!

PART I: THE PEACEFUL ISLAND OF "HOME"

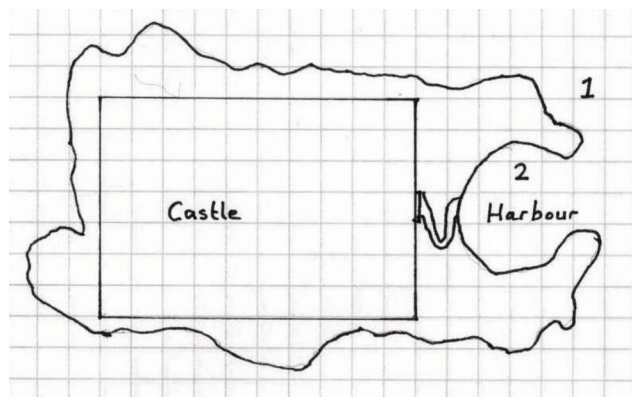
The Goal of Part I

The goal of Part 1 is to free Home from Skretonas, Nrachag and Roryphor. Information should not be found on Althores or the staff in this part of the adventure. Players should get enough clues from this part to make them inquisitive enough to go to Topaxi.

The clues they can find are:

- Thyatian traders have been trading with Topaxi natives;
- two of the merchants who lived on Home are now on Topaxi;
- and finally in the book, which can be discovered in the treasury at the end of the adventure, the location of Topaxi is given and it also states that Topaxi has been very uncooperative lately.

Give the players prompts if they do not realise the significance of the clues, or they could even be hired to investigate further. Topaxi will be described in part 2.



Map of "Home"
Each square corresponds to 30 feet

1. "SHIPWRECK!!!"

Your ship rounds the cold windy shores of the rocky island. Tendrils of mist swirl just above the water. The faint outline of a gloomy stone castle shows atop the 50-foot-high cliffs. The ship creaks and the waves slap against the prow. The crew strain to see ahead in the mist. Suddenly, one of them says, "There's an opening up ahead. Possibly a harbour." Before you can reply, there's another shout, "Shipwreck!"

At this point on the island's coast, very near the harbour, lies a shipwreck 15 feet below the water.

The ship is a dismal sight: its deck is scattered with rope, timber, and all manner of flotsam; in amongst the detritus the glint of skeletons can be seen, with their bones gleaming eerily white against the forlorn background.

All areas of the ship are underwater and players must have something to enable them to breathe underwater – or they can only stay under for 1D6 + 3 rounds.

A: Deck

The deck of the ship is as described – covered in flotsam and all kinds of refuse. The door to B is closed and locked, but the entire thing is so rotten that it could be broken by anyone with 9+ strength. The trapdoor down to the lower deck is swinging open. There are three human skeletons on this level: one lying beneath a fallen mast, one lying tangled amidst rope and one clawing at the wheel. If the PCs wish, they can loot their tattered rags, but each reveals merely 5 cp.

B: Captain's Cabin

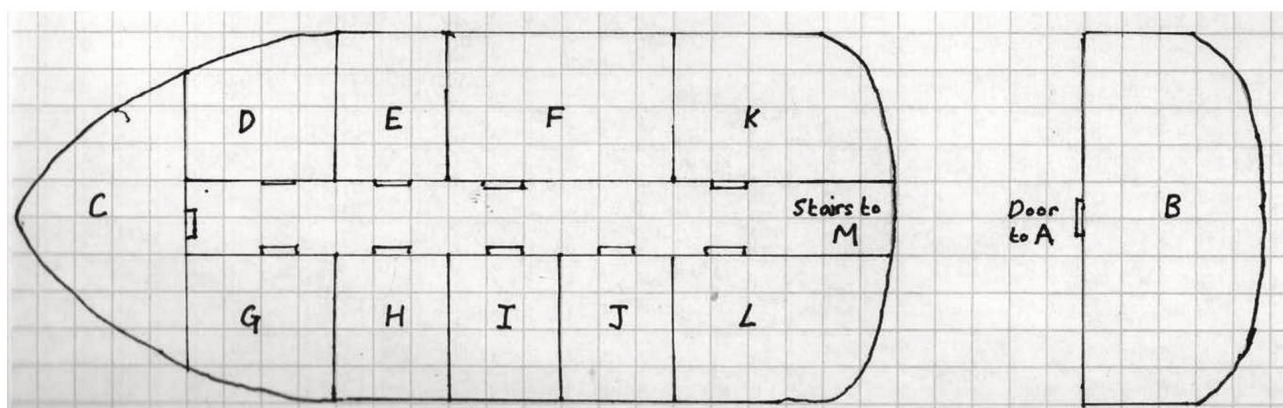
This is a dismal room filled with broken furniture. A table and four chairs are attached to the floor. A bed at one side of the room still has some surviving pillows and a drifting sheet. A skeleton claws at the window as if even in death it wishes to escape. This is the body of the captain of the ship and he has 5 gp and a ring of protection+1. Beneath the tattered bed, the captain's treasure chest has been pulled down through the floor to M where a giant octopus lives.

C: Galley

This dismal room is a horrible mess of floating bits of rotting food and other miserable substances. The rocks jut into the side of this room. And a skeleton lies face first in a pot full of burnt porridge.

This room is quite obviously the kitchen and is now horrible. The disgusting foods are so gross that the PCs must make a saving throw vs. poison or vomit and swallow water and immediately have to swim to the surface or start choking. Unless they swim up immediately for every round

Islands of Death



The shipwreck - each square corresponds to 3 feet



Skeletons, Daz 3d rendered image by Senarch

they stay under they lose 1D4 hps and must make a saving throw vs. death ray or black out.

D, E, G, H, I, J : Cabins

These 6 rooms are all pretty much identical as they are all cabins of the crew and they all have 3 beds and a chest at the end of each. Each chest has a pile of clothes and a

couple of copper pieces: 6 to 15 or 1D10+5. Each room also has 1–3 skeletons within. Choose or randomly determine. Each skeleton has a further 5 cp.

Room **E** has a chest with a false bottom containing a notebook and 50 gp. The notebook, which has been protected from wet by the false bottom, reveals a few of the



crew were planning mutiny and had been paid to do it by a mysterious person.

F: Mess Hall

The door opens to a large room with a long table with benches either-side, and a chair at one end. There is a large chest behind the chair.

This room was the mess hall for the ordinary folk, and the captain sat in the chair. The chest has wooden crockery and at the bottom a golden goblet and plate which are both worth 50 gp.

K: Cleric's Cabin

This room holds a large ornate bed and a chest of drawers. In the corner of the room an altar stands. Lying sprawled next to the altar, clutching a mace in its hand, is a body. The body is clad in ragged garments and has a look of utmost fear upon the female face. You are startled that this body is not skeletal, but appears as if it died just yesterday.

This is the room of the ship's cleric. The mace it holds is magical +1. The body of the cleric, who served the Immortal Petra, has 100 gp on it. This cleric resisted the spell that struck down the rest of the crew and was assaulted personally. She died defending her room. Her body is preserved by some kind of spell.

L: Navigator's Cabin

A large bed again stands in this room. A chest of drawers is located here, as well as a desk and chair. The desk has many maps and papers that are all ruined.

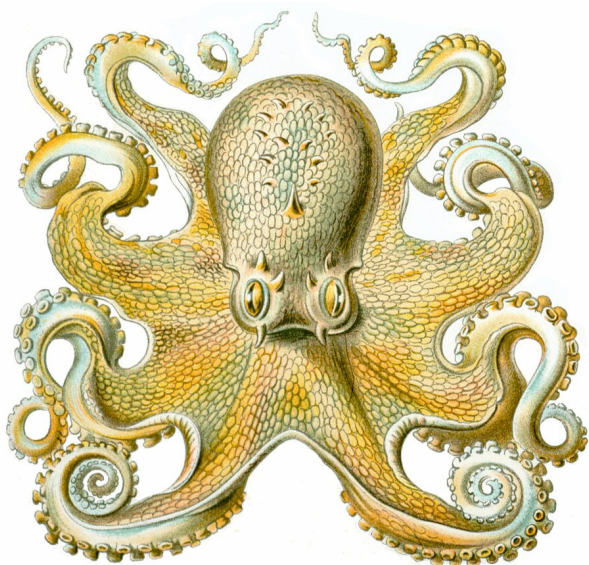
This used to be the navigator's apartment and there is a valuable magical item stored in the drawer of the desk. It allows the user to always be able to find north even in the worst fog. In another drawer there is a pouch containing 20 cp. All the papers are ruined and unreadable and there is nothing else of interest here.

M: Ship's Hold

The hold of this ship has become the lair of a giant octopus and her brood of 5.

Giant octopus	
AC:	7
HD:	8
hp:	55
MV:	90' (30')
#AT:	8 tentacles/ 1 bite
D:	1-3(x8)/1-6
Save:	F4
ML:	11 (from her desire to protect her brood)
Int:	2
AL:	N
XP:	650

5 young octopi	
AC:	1
HD:	4
hp:	20 each
MV:	90' (30')
#AT:	8 tentacles/ 1 bite
D:	1(x8)/1-3
Save:	2
ML:	7
Int:	1
AL:	N
XP:	75



In combat, a giant octopus will squeeze a creature with its tentacles and stab or bite with its fearsome beak. Once its tentacles hit, they will constrict and automatically do 1–3 points of damage each round. Each tentacle that hits also reduces its victim's chance to hit by 1. A character severs a tentacle when any single hit with an edged weapon does 6 or more points of damage. If combat is going against the giant octopus, it will flee, jetting away at triple speed and trailing a large, black cloud of ink (40' radius). The octopus fights as above and desperately tries to protect her brood. When the characters enter, the octopus is on the ceiling and automatically gains surprise due to its camouflage. There are three more skeletons down here (5 cp each). There is also a sturdy waterproof chest in the wreckage. The chest is locked but not trapped. It contains 1,000 pp and a ship's log.

The book explains that the ship was sent by the traders' guild in Thyatis to find out why the Trading Island of Home was not sending any messages. They set off 3

months back and were sailing fine and there were no problems.

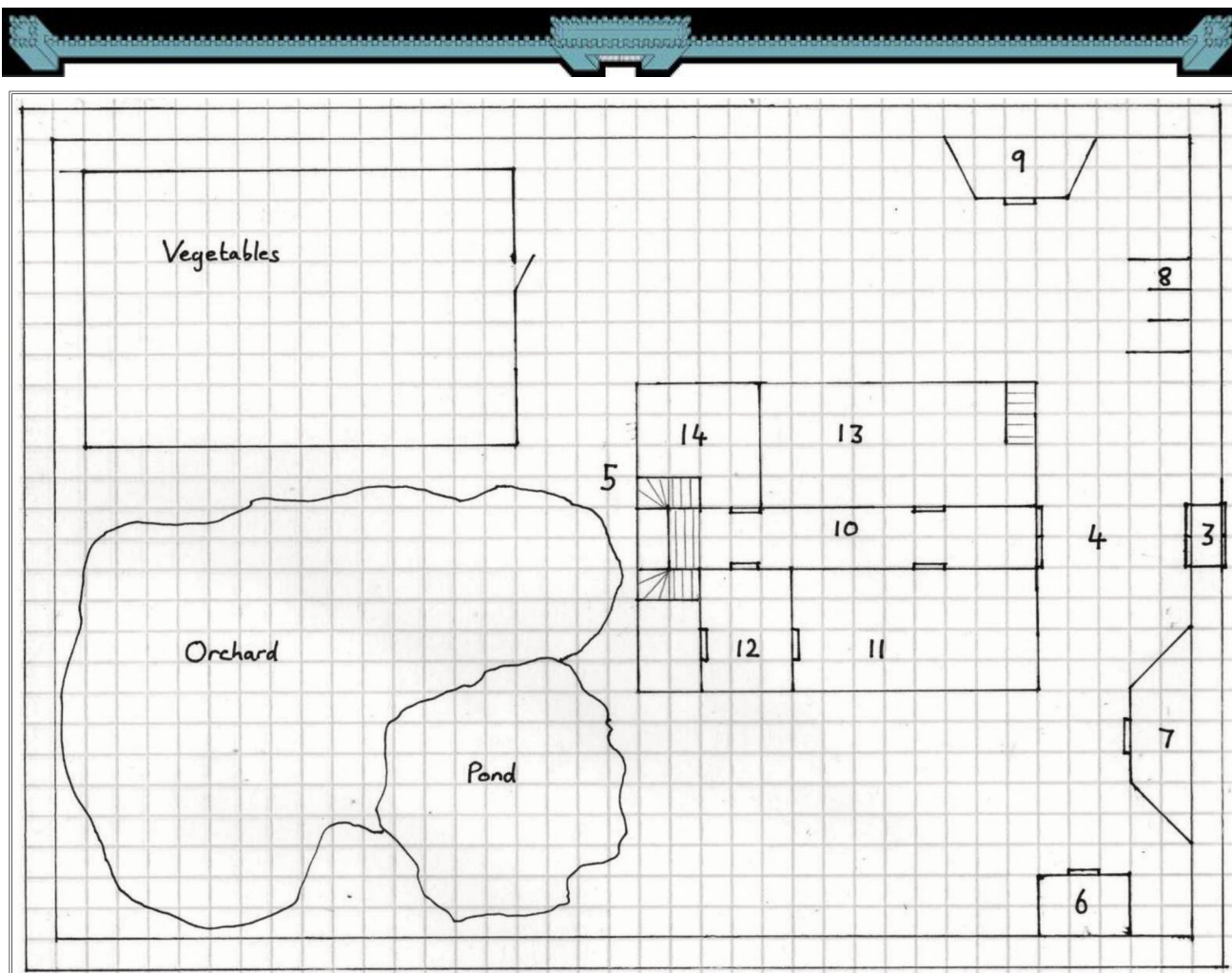
The last entry dated 2 months ago reads:

We made good progress through the mist guided by our excellent navigator and are sure to arrive today. Flurk is whining about the mist and I gave him 5 lashes - mainly because he's always been complaining. The crew has been pestering me non-stop and I am quite fed up. (Here there is a break in the passage.) Home has been sighted and I must say I am glad. Oddly there is no smoke and it is a very chilly day. Unusual to have so much mist in summer. I hope nothing is amiss. I can't wait for good food and a nice ...

The passage ends in an untidy scrawl and the book shows signs of being hastily put in the chest.

2. Harbour

This quiet harbour is sheltered from the waves by the rocks. There are currently two small sailing ships in the harbour. For their layout, treat as the SHIPWRECK but neither have a cleric's cabin and instead the first mate occupies that section. There is the same furniture in both but no treasure and the upper parts of these ships are damp, and while there is no water pooling below decks from wind or rain there is dust. There is no living thing about and the entire area is even devoid of seabirds.



Castle Level 1- each square corresponds to 10 feet

**Castle Level 1:
GROUND FLOOR & COURTYARD 3-14**

This entire area is under the effects of Skretonas's *abandon hope all ye who enter here* spell.

3. Gates of Death

High walls loom above and the gates are firmly shut. The entire area is in shadow no matter where the sun is. The gates open easily, but the moment the first 2 characters go through, a massive gust of wind blows the gates shut and bowls over the characters. Anyone going through the gate when it shuts takes 10-40 points of damage, but can make a dexterity check for half damage.

4. The Courtyard

The courtyard of the castle is meant to be a cheery place, but now it is entirely in shadow. Storm clouds hang in the sky menacingly. It is dark and gloomy. There are two small buildings to your left and a small stables and a blacksmith to your right. Around the side of the castle you see a small pool. And directly in front of you there is the central keep, which is two storeys high with a bell tower at the front. It should look cheerful, but its stones have been blackened and scorched by an incredible power, and are now withering away. Shivers run down your spines,

and the worst part of the entire horrible scene is that there is not a single sound: no bird cries; no wind in the bushes – as the bushes are all dead anyway; no rustling of trees – every one of the trees is twisted and black; no murmur of human voices; worst of all not even the stormy sea and the slap of the waves on the rocks is heard – nothing.

There is nothing special here.

5. The Gardens

The gardens are as described in area 4: twisted, blackened and dead. Underneath all the fruit trees, decayed rotten fruit lie on the ground, but without even a fly or a maggot infesting them. The pool is horribly clear and you can see right to the muddy bottom. Dead fish lie within, but they are nothing but skeletons. The water is exceptionally poisonous. Anyone drinking from it – even just tasting it – must make a saving throw versus poison or die within 6 rounds, unable to do anything because of the agonising pains. The moment they die they will turn into a skeleton. 15 dead seagulls – nothing but skeletons – lie dotted around the yard.

6. The Bakery

The door opens into a dim room with wooden panelling and a large stone fireplace. The room is filled with loaves and baking utensils. A skeleton lies on the floor near the loaves of bread; a rolling pin is still in its hand.

This room is as it seems except that although the bread looks good to eat, it contains the same deadly poison as the pool.

7. The Storeroom

Many sacks of flour lie in this dimly lit room. They are piled up high – right to the ceiling. The room was obviously once crawling with rats, but now there is nothing left but tiny skeletons.

This is again quite clear: the room is as described and nothing is hidden. The flour contains the same poison as above.

8. The Stable

This open room obviously used to be a stable, but now there are just the remains of three horses amongst the straw – they are all just bones.

This room is for the three main merchants' horses that they wished to bring to the island – a silly mistake. There is a cupboard in each stall for the saddle and bridle.

9. The Armoury

This dark room is filled with beautiful armour and weapons. There is a large forge and an anvil. The sight of a skeleton lying face first in the forge shows you what happened to the armourer.

There are various ordinary weapons and armour from the *Expert* rulebook lying about, as this counts as a weapon storage, as well as one for making weapons. There

is also a secret compartment in the anvil, and the anvil sounds hollow to the touch – it is found by any thief examining the anvil. Inside is a dagger +2, 100 gp and 10 pp, all in a small leather bag.

10. The Hallway

The hallway of this castle is just like an entrance chamber: it is wide, long and tall. The roof is some 10 to 15 feet high, unlit torches are in brackets on the walls, which are decorated. There are 5 ways leading off: two doors on each side and a staircase at the far end of the hall. The first door to the left is a great double door, leading to the eating chamber. The second door to the left is a plain door leading to the kitchens. The first door to the right leads to the barracks and the second to a guest chamber. The hall is very dark if the doors are shut.

11. The Great Hall

The door opens into a large banquet hall with a majestic candle chandelier lighting up the place. The table is laden and has food of every type. It is exotic and the smell of it wafts into the air – it must have been made just a few minutes ago. Suddenly you realise that all the robed figures sitting at the table are not eating and drinking, but they are all skeletons.

This is the banquet room in the castle. There are 11 skeletons here, all seated in their finest robes, and one of them, at the end of the table, is actually living – it is the skeleton of a magic-user, responsible for all the other skeletons. If the party ever comes

back into this room once they have left, the magic-user will not be there for he is stalking the party and has cast *invisibility* and *silence* on himself, so unless someone has cast *detect invisibility* then he cannot be seen or heard. If he is seen by *detect invisibility* then he will cast a spell of destruction instantly on the person, but if he still lives he will quickly cast *fireball* and *teleport* away to the top of the tower. The PCs should only be allowed to attack him properly later. This room has a door that leads to the kitchens. The food all looks very wholesome: there is a large soup tureen, potatoes, some lovely bread rolls and lots of fruit. There is a magnificent-looking finely-spiced fish in the centre. The food is as poisonous as everything else here, see area 5 The Gardens for details.

12. The Kitchen

This dark room is the kitchen of the castle and three skeletons are all standing exactly where they died: one is stirring a pot of stew; one is reaching for a potato in a sack; and the last is bending into the still hot oven, reaching for a charred haunch of meat. All of the food in this room is incredibly poisonous, see area 5 The Gardens for details.

13. The Barracks

This is a dark room with a large number of beds on the ground – totalling 20 – each with a wooden box at its foot. There is a long, large table in the centre with most of the twenty skeletons in light leather armour, and some in chainmail. Each has a bowl of meaty soup and there are also some rolls

and other food. The food is as poisonous, as everything else here, see area 5 The Gardens for details. There is a small trap-door in one corner that leads down to the prisons.

14. Guest Chambers

This fancy room is incredibly gloomy for such a fancy area. The bed is a four-poster and there are some carved wooden tables. A massive chest of drawers stands in one corner, and there are many candles. But the gloominess comes from the three bodies lying sprawled around the room, brutally murdered.

This is the visitor's chambers and the bodies are the previous adventurers who came to investigate the area. The skeleton mage decided to have a bit of fun with them first, and cast an illusion making it seem everything was normal, but the moment they relaxed and began to send a message to the trading hall, the skeleton mage destroyed them.

**Level -1:
The Crypts 15-19**

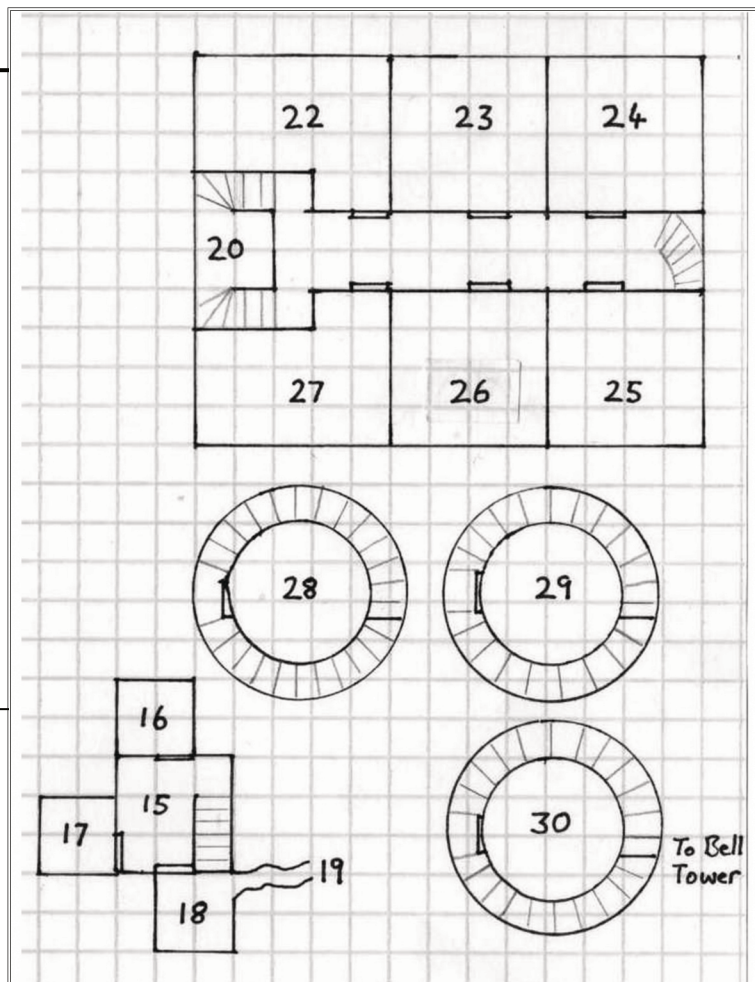
15. Guard Room

This is the guard room for the prisons and there are three skeletons, all in full plate-mail armour, with large swords. They have the same soup and bread as in the barracks. You can see into all the prison cells 16-18.

16-18: Prison Cells

These are dusty derelict chambers, each with a straw mat and a pail. The bars are burst open as if by an explosion.

There is nothing unusual in two of the chambers. Only number eighteen contains anything of interest – out of sight, beneath the mat, there is a small tunnel leading down into the rock for a meter and then across.



*Crypt, Living Quarters and Tower levels
- each square corresponds to 10 feet*

19. Tunnel

This is a narrow tunnel snaking away to the south, just over a meter tall and a meter wide. It leads all the way to a narrow crag right next to the sea, and the entrance is damp.

Level 2:

The Living Quarters 20–27

20. The Stairs

The stairs are plush and ornate, but covered in dust. The floorboards creak as the players climb, and when they reach the first landing the floor suddenly opens up to reveal a pit beneath the stairs.

The players at the front must make a dexterity check at -2 or fall down. There are iron spikes at the bottom and they do 3–18 points of damage to anyone landing on them. Whatever happens, the floor which swings downwards makes an eerie echoing crash. The trap was added after the castle fell and is used to warn the upper-level creatures of intruders, and be a nasty surprise.

21. The Upper Hallway

This hallway is dusty and has six doorways leading off. At the end of the hallway are some narrow winding stairs that lead up to the tower. The hallway has torches in the brackets along the wall, but none of them are lit.

22–27: The Bedrooms and Offices

All these rooms are very similar and each is the abode of one of the merchants. There is an ornate four-poster bed in each room

with a bedside table. Each room has a massive wardrobe full of garments and a desk with locked drawers. The keys are in the bedside table's drawers.

Individual room descriptions show any differences to the above.

22. Bedroom A

A picture of a beautiful woman with the name Melissa is on the bedside table. It has an ornate silver frame and is worth 50 gp. There is a letter on the desk with writing utensils all set out. The ink pot has been spilt all over the letter, but you can make out:

*My dear beloved Melissa
All goes well here and the trading is good. I really think my fortune has changed for the better. I will make a bit more money and then . . .*

It is then blurred and you can make no more out until the end.

*I will come home soon.
Yours truly
Astenon.*

The drawers contain many accounts and trading papers.

23. Bedroom B

The door to this bedroom has a closed sign hanging from it. The person who occupied it has left for Topaxi. All personal belongings have been taken with them and there is nothing unusual about this room.

24. Bedroom C

The owner of this bedroom liked pets, but as with everything else the pets are skeletal: there are big cages with 2 parrots and 1 snake, and then three cats and a dog on the floor. The cupboard has a lot of pet food inside, now spoiled (see area 5 for details). The drawers contain many accounts.

25. Bedroom D

The cleric of the castle lived here. He was a follower of Asterius, patron of merchants. The room contains an altar to Asterius, and the drawers contain plans about how to win over the natives. There are also many books about Asterius and history on a bookshelf. All of the books on the bookshelf are cursed. If any cleric who follows an Immortal other than Asterius opens or looks at a book they must make a saving throw vs. spell with a plus or minus the difference in Immortal rank. For instance, if the cleric follows a Celestial, then the difference is 2 because Asterius is an Eternal, and so there is a minus 2 to the saving throw. Otherwise they immediately become a follower of Asterius and the Immortal they left will dislike them.

26. Bedroom E

The door to this bedroom has a closed sign hanging from it. The person who occupied it has left for Topaxi. All personal belongings have been taken with them and there is nothing unusual about this room.

27. Bedroom F

The magic-user lived in this room. The bed is particularly comfy and there are many history books on a bookshelf on the wall. There are red robes in the cupboard. The drawers of the desk have been broken open and there is nothing in them.



Nagpa, a Daz 3D rendered image by Senarch

Levels 3–5: The Tower 28–30

28. Study

This is a lavishly decorated room with an ornately carved wooden desk and large comfy chair. There are also two sofas, a table and a cabinet containing wine (very poisonous: see area 5 for details) and some dainty snack containers – all are now empty. The drawers of the desk contain nothing.

29. Chaos Unleashed!

Right, DM! Let's hope you are reading this before your PCs enter this room. If you were thinking, "*It isn't necessary to have Companion players – it's dead easy!!!*", then I am going to prove you wrong. You have been warned!!!

If the party choose to enter this room, read the following DM description:

"This room is a very fancy bedroom with smooth silks and a massive four-poster bed. Ornate candlesticks line the walls and a towering wooden wardrobe stands in the corner."

The moment the last of the party enters the room OR if they move straight on to the next floor, continue the DM description with:

"You suddenly hear a noise from the staircase above: a soft tapping and rustling of a cloak. A frail old man with a walking stick is making his way down the stairs. But when his head comes into view you see it is a crow's head. The horrific crow-headed Nagpa raises his staff, and with a loud raucous croak



slams on the stone staircase. Everything goes black..."

What has just happened is incredibly complicated. The nagpa is a special general in Althores's armies. Althores has granted him the ability to cast a number of very powerful spells, once per day. He casts the ninth-level magic-user spell *timestop*. Following that he casts the seventh-level cleric spell, *swallow the sun* (described below), while in *timestop*. When the PCs wake they will hear a bell bonging. The moment the PCs wake, the dark-hood swoops up to scare them downstairs. There the skeleton necromancer has performed the ritual for *army of dead* and raised every single skeleton in the grounds. They all pour forward and attack the PCs. All the monsters are briefly

described below, but the nagpa, dark-hood and the necromancer are described fully at the end.

Nagpa (Nrachag): AC 3; HD 9****; hp 70; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 bite or spells; D 1-8 or special; Save MU9; ML 9; Int 17; AL C; XP 3,700

Dark-Hood (Rorphyr): AC -2; HD 13*; hp 80; MV 240' (80'); #AT 1 touch + special; D 1-4 + fear; Save MU13; ML 11; Int 14; AL C; XP2,300

21st level Necromancer (Skretonas): AC 0; HD 9+12; hp 45; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 spell; D special; Save MU21; ML 12 (he will only flee if his life is in actual danger); Int 18; AL C; XP 10,500

I will list the skeletons in order of which ones will arrive first. Each skeleton has varying abilities due to who he was in life.

3 Adventurers (Room 14): AC 4; HD 3; hp 15; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-8; Save F3; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 35

3 Cooks (Room 12): AC 6; HD 1; hp 3; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-4; Save NM; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 10

10 Merchants (Room 11): AC 7; HD 1; hp 6; MV 120' (90'); #AT 1; D 1-8; Save F1; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 10

20 Soldiers (Room 13): AC 4; HD 3; hp 15; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-8; Save F3; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 35

3 Guards (Room 15): AC 2; HD 4; hp 20; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1; D 1-8+2; Save F4; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 75

Armourer and Baker (Rooms 9, 7): AC 7; HD 1; hp 5; MV 120' (90'); #AT 1; D 1-6; Save F1; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 10

Captain (Room 1): AC 2; HD 3; hp 21; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-8; Save F3; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 35

20 Sailors (Room 1): AC 7; HD 1; hp 6; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1; D 1-8; Save F1; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 10

3 Horses, 15 Seagulls, 2 Parrots, Snake, 3 Cats, Dog: AC 7; HD 3 (horse) 2 (dog) 1 (cats, snake) ½ (parrots, seagulls); hp 15, 10, 5, 3; MV 120' (40'); #AT 3, 1, 1, 1; D 1-6, 1-8, 1-6, 1-2; Save NM; ML 12; Int 1; AL C; XP 35, 20, 10, 5

This is meant to be a tough battle, so make it tough. Do whatever you can to make these creatures destroy the party (without using your DM powers of "You are the god.") The necromancer will flee, so do what you can to make him live, but if it is impossible you will have to change future adventures with him, or substitute him, or make him come back to life.

30. Treasure!!!

This final room in the tower is the treasury. The door is locked but Nrachag holds the key. A lamp hangs from the ceiling, illuminating the contents of the room: a bookshelf, 5 chests, and a stool topped with a red cushion, on top of which there is a ring of x-ray vision.

The chests are all locked, and none are trapped.

- Chest 1 has 5,000 pp
- Chest 2 has 5,000 gp
- Chest 3 is small and contains a box with a large diamond in it worth 10,000 gp
- Chest 4 has a flowing green cloak neatly folded inside. It is a cloak of protection +1
- Chest 5 has a circlet of gold with a starstone emerald worth 20,000 gp

The bookshelf is filled with fake books. Only two are real. One is a scroll with *polymorph others* and *charm monster* spells on; the other is a log book containing the records of the castle. This book gives the location of Topaxi, as well as many other random thoughts and musings of the recorder. Right near the end, though, the book says that Topaxi has been strangely uncooperative lately – and that a couple of merchants are being sent to investigate...

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventurers should hopefully be curious and worried enough to pursue this further. If all goes well, they will want to go to Topaxi; if not, you will have to do more prompting. Topaxi will be described in Part 2 (due to come out when I finish it, either on the Vaults of Pandius, the Piazza or in issue #31). I hope you enjoyed it.

APPENDIX:

THE DENIZENS OF HOME

Dark-Hood (Rorphyr)

The hideous undead creature known as a dark-hood (or rorphyr) thrives on the emanations of fear which it creates in its fleeing victims. Although the creature seldom does much physical harm to its victims, it will often leave a party scattered, weakened and vulnerable to attacks by other creatures. The dark-hood appears as a grey, translucent, robed figure whose cowled face is completely hidden in shadow. Each dark-hood has a particular territory – typically a few hundreds of feet across in a crypt, old dungeon, or abandoned village or town. The dark-hood is unable to leave its territory. Within it, however, it has complete freedom of movement, being unimpaired even by solid objects, and it will often appear unexpectedly by emerging from a wall, floor, or ceiling for example.

A dark-hood can only be hit by magical weapons of +2 or better, and is immune to spells such as *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and so on. The creatures can be turned as haunts and, like them, are only destroyed on a “D” result if they fail a saving throw vs. death ray. The dark-hood can draw visions from the dark depths of its victims’ imaginations. Those who are the most intelligent have the most fertile minds and are the most susceptible – thus anyone seeing the dark-hood must make a reversed ability check by rolling higher than his or her intelligence on 1d20. For characters who have recently undergone particularly harrowing experiences, the DM may choose to make them more susceptible to the dark-hood’s visions

by subtracting between 1 and 3 from the die roll. To those who roll greater than their intelligence on 1d20, the shadowy void beneath the creature's cowl remains empty. To those who roll less than or the same as their intelligence, the cowl becomes filled by hideous visions from the depths of their imaginations. Those who experience such a vision flee in terror from the dark-hood, running maniacally at 30 more than their usual movement rate for 1d4+2 rounds, changing route at random. Running from a dark-hood is very exhausting, and fleeing characters must make a saving throw vs. spell each round or temporarily lose 1d3 points of constitution, plus any hit points that may result from a constitution bonus being lowered. Any character whose constitution drops below 3 will fall unconscious until it rises to 3 or more. Lost constitution is regained at a rate of 1 point per turn. Once a victim has experienced the fear of a particular dark-hood and has recovered from it, he or she is immune to further fear attacks from that creature for the next 24 hours.

In melee, the dark-hood attacks with a chilling touch which causes 1-4 points of damage and instills the victim with an overwhelming terror which has the same effect as an imaginary vision. It is from terrified and fleeing characters (affected by touch or vision) that the dark-hood draws its sustenance, and it will pursue them until they drop, often overtaking them by moving unseen through the walls so as to suddenly appear in front of them. In this way, the dark-hood will keep fleeing victims herded within its territory. The dark-hood ignores unconscious victims, and gives up its "attacks" once all of its victims have collapsed, recovered from the fear, or have

left its area. The creature, sated from the hunt, will then return to its lair.

Nagpa

Nagpa look like dried, withered humans with the heads of vultures. They are intelligent and are highly magical in nature. They may use the following powers up to three times each day: create flames (causes an inflammable object within 60' to burst into flames for 1-3 rounds, inflicting 2-12 points of damage per round, halved by a successful saving throw vs. spell); paralysis (all lawful characters within 10' must make a saving throw vs. spell or be paralysed for 1-4 rounds); corruption (causes a non-living object within 60' to decay or rot into an unusable condition - magic items are allowed a saving throw vs. spell at the level of the character using the item); darkness; and phantasmal force. In combat, a nagpa will try to avoid melee if possible, and use its spells. Nagpa are rarely met, preferring to stay in deserted ruins or wastes. They speak their own tongue, their alignment language and the common language.

This nagpa can also cast *timestop* and *swallow the sun* once per day.

Swallow the Sun

Range: Special

Duration: Special

This turns day into night. The sun disappears below the horizon in less than a minute. All lawful and good creatures must pass a morale check at -2 or flee into the night. Those that don't flee will fight at -2 till they recover from the shock. Evil creatures will rally to the spellcaster.

**Skretonas,
2 1st Level
Necromancer**

Spell Level	Number available
1st	6
2nd	5
3rd	5
4th	5
5th	4
6th	4
7th	3
8th	2
9th	1



*Nagpa, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)*

Spells Memoriaed

1st level:

*animate pet
darkness
dead man walking
magic missile
read magic
skull soliloquy*

2nd level:

*dead bolt
dead ringers
ghoulish touch
lifeglass
zombie valet*

3rd level:

*animate dead mounts
cardiac arrest
dominate lesser undead
fireball
skeletonise*

4th level:

*abandon hope all ye who
enter here
confusion
dead arm
feign death
mist of the leech*

5th level:

*animate dead
black inferno
black strike
teleport*

6th level:

*death spell
disintegrate
mort rouge
weather control*

7th level:

*dead spell
reverse gravity
summon object*

8th level:

*death sentence
explosive cloud*

9th level:

army of the dead

Alphatia in Dracopolis



Skyship - generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

by Lance Duncan

OVERVIEW

This is how Alphatia is presented in *The Known World of Dracopolis* (my home campaign)¹.

At the time of conflict between the Followers of Air and the Followers of Fire on the Alphatian homeland (whose name has been lost to the ages), the Alphatian people were at a high level of scientific and technological advancement, and on the verge of discovering the secrets of Ascension, the process of leaving the corporeal body behind and gaining Immortality. The Followers of Air theorized that Ascension could be obtained through focus of the

¹ The [“The Known World of Dracopolis” thread](#) by the author on the Piazza forum is dedicated to this Alternate Mystara

mind and the power of thought. In opposition to this the Followers of Fire thought the application of technology and the direct infusion of energy into the body could release the spirit as a shortcut and more efficient means of Ascension. There were also Followers of Water, who believed the application of genetic manipulation would lead to the desired Immortality. And Followers of Earth who believed in remaining grounded in the natural world. The followers of Earth and Water had minor followings and remained neutral during the conflict between Air and Fire, ultimately becoming victims to the destruction of their homeland.

During this period of conflict a famed scientist among the Followers of Air, called Kerothar, foresaw the coming destruction and built a great city-ship that could traverse

the stars to escape the disaster and save any who would listen to his warnings. He and his followers fled the Alphatian homeland and arrived on Mystara to find the land inhabited by “primitive” humans, called the Cypri (though Alphatian legend places the Cypri as natives of the Alphatian homeland, this is not true). The Alphatians made Kerothar king in this new land, and he fell in love with one of the humans of the new world named Kleite (known as Cleito to the Thyatians). She bore him five sets of twin sons (Alphas and Theran, Randel and Bettelyn, Arogonsa and Eadrin, Ar and Ambur, Hossetta and Wyllareth) and one set of twin daughters (Aasla and Frisia). The children of Kerothar each conquered portions of this new land and established themselves as kings and queens of their respective dominions. Kerothar established laws by which his children should govern themselves and settle disputes. After the death of Kerothar, the eldest son, Alphas, established himself as ruler over his brethren in the place of his father.

Over time the city-ship that brought the Alphatians to Mystara came to be called Alphatia, after the first king of kings, Alphas. The City of Alphatia is located in the center of a large protected estuary called Alphas Lake fed by the Alphas River, and surrounded by the city of Aasla on the surrounding shores of the lake. The City of Alphatia is a wonder to behold, filled with many technological marvels that appear magical to the outsider; these include self-moving carriages, flying ships, holographic devices, weapons of curious design, and living automatons to perform menial labor. However, to the disappointment of many outsiders, all of these devices can only be operated by someone of pure Alphatian

stock, and sometimes limited to specific family bloodlines. When a person of the right heritage touches a device it will activate by illuminating a series of patterned lines with a pale blue light, while a matching pattern, called a skymark, will brighten on the Alphatian’s skin. Once activated all of these devices are controlled simply by thought. There are many ancient wonders in the city whose purpose and design have been long forgotten.

The city itself is a jumble of many architectural materials and styles that have accumulated over the years. The oldest buildings, the walls, and the foundation of the city are built of a white, red, and black stone which was placed in various designs to make the colors pleasing to the eye; these old stone buildings have not decayed at all over the centuries and seem indestructible. As one journeys closer to the center of the city, the buildings will become taller and more crowded until they blot out the sun for anyone walking among the lowest levels of the city, forming a veritable jungle. Newer tower-like buildings, reaching toward the sky, pile atop the stone buildings on the lower levels of the old city. Many of these so-called “sky-scrapers” are constructed of glass, steel, and a unique metal called orichalcum. The newest buildings in the city are brick or lumber additions built haphazardly where space permits. Among the highest levels of the city, bridges, open balconies and platforms connecting the towers form a latticework that creates a sense of being on solid ground high in the air; this level is known as The Skyway. The Skyway is only available to the wealthiest families and guests. Each lower section of a tower is noticeably poorer than the one above it. The lowest levels of the city are ruled by

organized crime and rampant corruption. Strict laws are enforced by automaton guards among the towers of the wealthy elite, while the lower city is completely lawless and subject to the strongest arm. The deepest level is below the city itself, under the submerged water of Alphas Lake; this is called The Cogs. The most miserable citizens work down here mining for orichalcum, the key to Alphatian technology, below the lakebed. Many outlaws or other citizens down on their luck take refuge in The Cogs from time to time.

Tourists come from all over the Empire and beyond to see the wonders of the floating city of towers, and to experience the many cultural and culinary delights of the city. Alphatia and its sister city Aasla are the center of trade in the Empire; anything from the most exotic lands can be found here for purchase, legally or on the black-market. Visitors can travel about the city on sky coaches, using lifts to reach the upper levels, walking among the many bridges and walkways, or by taking mundane mounts or carriages. The upper levels of the city are always lit by street lamps that never extinguish. These everburning lamps are also present in many of the homes of the wealthy, giving Alphatia the moniker “the city that never sleeps.”

THE FLOATING CITY OF ALPHATIA

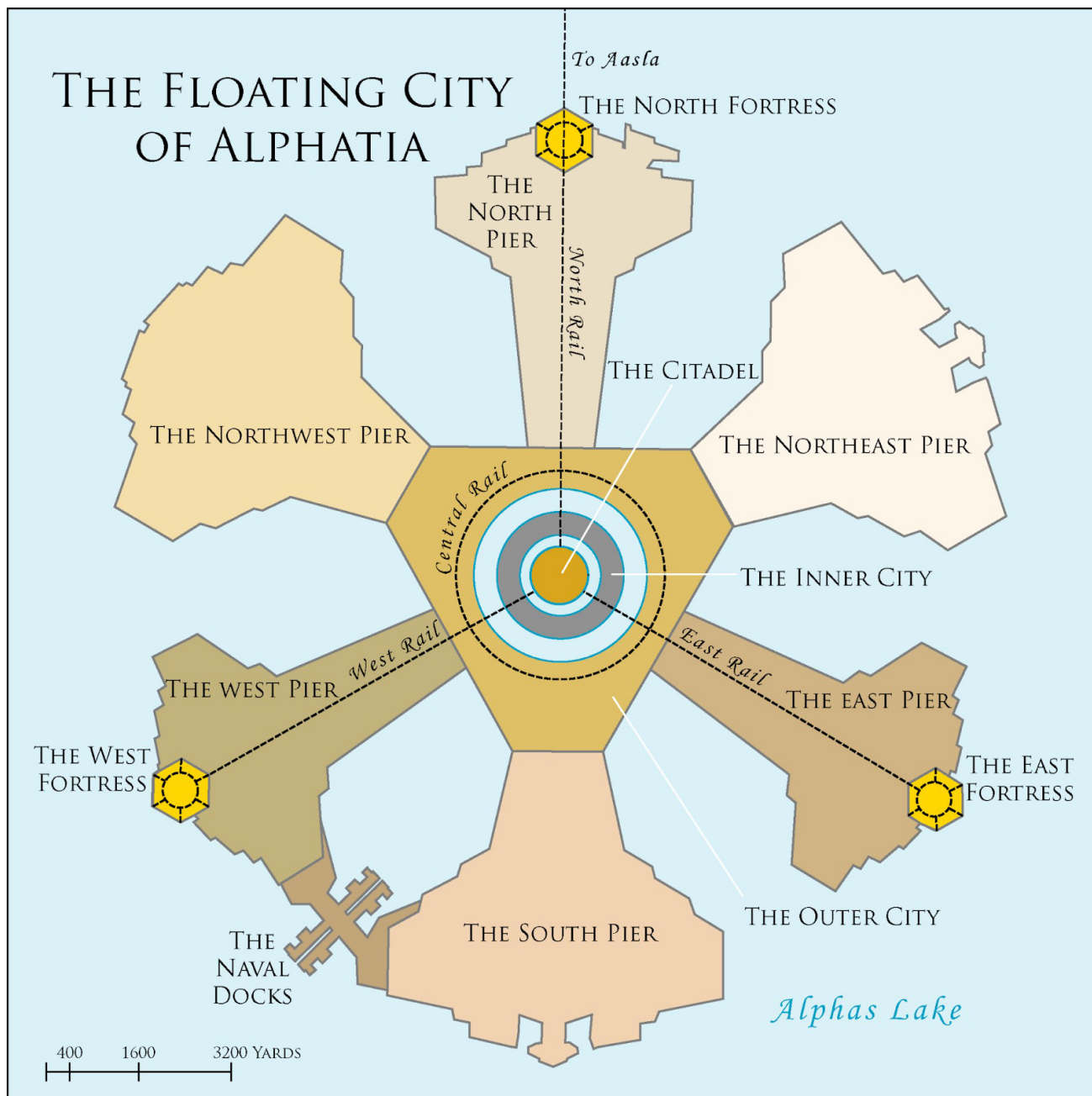
(Refer to map on following page)

The Citadel

There is a great wall covered in glistening orichalcum surrounding this innermost section of the city. Each of the three entrances are guarded by massive gatehouses. These gatehouses and various guard posts are manned by the largest and the most intelligent automatons of the Empire. Anyone entering the Citadel must provide proper up-to-date paperwork to be allowed entry inside because it is the personal domain of the Imperial Family.

In the center of the citadel stands a hill, which is enclosed by a fence of gold. Within the enclosure is the Palace of the Emperor, which began as the simple home of Kerothar and has been expanded and built on by each successive emperor. Also within the enclosure is the grand Temple of Kerothar, the springs of Kerothar, and gardens.

All of the outside of the temple, with the exception of the pinnacles, is covered with silver, and the pinnacles are covered with gold. In the interior of the temple the roof is of ivory, curiously wrought everywhere with gold and silver and orichalcum; and all the other parts, the walls and pillars and floor, are coated with orichalcum. In the temple are placed statues of gold: there is Kerothar standing in a chariot pulled by six pegasi of such a size that he touches the



Map of the Floating city of Alphatia, original drawing by author

roof of the building with his head; around him there are a hundred nereids riding on dolphins. There are also in the interior of the temple other images which have been dedicated by private persons. And around the temple on the outside are placed statues of gold of all the kings and queens of the great houses through the ages, and there are many other great offerings of kings and of private persons, coming both from the city itself and from across the Empire. There is an altar too, which in size and workmanship corresponds to this magnificence.

Near to the temple there are twin fountains, one of cold and another of hot water. Around the fountains are many buildings and baths both public and private, with the grandest reserved for the imperial family. All of these are fed by the waters of the springs. The water runs off to the gardens of Kerothar, while the remainder is conveyed by aqueducts along the bridges to the outer circles.

The Inner City

The tin-covered wall surrounding the inner city is not quite as large as the citadel wall, but is still massive. This section is controlled in various parts by the other eleven great houses of Alpathia that claim descent from Kerothar and Klete. There are many universities and temples spread throughout the inner city, along with open “greeneries,” areas of open fields and gardens reserved for the elite to enjoy.

The Outer City

The outermost section of the city proper is surrounded by a great wall coated in brass. The inhabitants of this section of the city are members of lesser or common Alpathian houses. This section is crowded and bustling, and each family no matter how small is always vying for more control of the towers and the streets.

The Piers

The Piers of the city are built up and not part of the original city ship. The base of the piers are constructed mostly of wood, along with a majority of the buildings, yet they still seem to reach the staggering heights of the city proper, with each building stacked upon another and tied together with the mysterious technology of the Alpathians. The common Cypri residents of Alpathia are exiled to these sections and compose the majority of the population of the city. In times of danger a sea wall can be raised (from below water) as protection between the gaps in the piers.

The Naval Docks

The warships of the Imperial Navy, both water-bound and airships, are docked here when not under sail. The facilities here have stockpiles of supplies and munitions for many years in the case of a siege.

The Fortresses

These are massive fortifications constructed as the first line of defense for the city. Each

fortress is self-sustaining, manned completely by automatons save for a few senior ranking Alpathian officers and technicians. (Note the entire imperial military is composed of automaton soldiery and pure-blood Alpathian officers.) These fortresses are made of a solid concrete construction, with orichalcum runes throughout giving greater strength to the natural material. Each fortress commander, acting in unison with his fellows, can activate the orichalcum runes that are carved on the walls to raise a protective dome around the entire city. The full strength of the dome has never been tested, yet it has been designed to be completely protective against both the vacuum of space and the deepest depths of the ocean, should the need for launching or sinking the city-ship ever arise. A more primitive version of this dome can be raised around each of the inner walls. The city of Seashield was built and sunk as a pressure test of the great dome of the city under the waves of the ocean.

The Lightning Rail

This technological wonder is made of long lengths of orichalcum about 4 inches in diameter which float high above the ground. When activated these “rails” appear to be a never-ending line of lightning in the sky. Carriages, with an orichalcum “hook” especially built for the purpose of grabbing the rails, travel along the lightning rails transporting food, raw materials, people, military supplies, and any manner of other goods. Each carriage is constructed with a specific purpose; passenger carriages are made almost entirely of transparent glass, military carriages have thick steel walls with no windows and are designed to

be nearly impenetrable, carriages carrying foodstuffs are temperature- and humidity-controlled, etc. These carriages are often hooked together to form “trains” that travel along the rails on tight schedules. The lighting rails are always built in pairs, so that trains can travel in opposite directions on the same line at the same time. In the City of Alpathia each line from the citadel to the fortresses (called a spoke) are built with 6 rails, 2 pairs are put to civilian use, and 1 pair is reserved for the military. The central hub in the outer city is built with 4 pairs of rails, and those inside the fortresses themselves are only 2 pairs. Underneath the hub, in the central city, is a massive racecourse for horses and chariots that doubles as a fairground and greenway. Underneath each spoke crossing the outer and inner city are canals wide enough for a single Alpathian warship to pass through, allowing the military to keep the water both inside and outside the city in control; these canals are overlaid by stone forming a tunnel beneath the city.

THE CITY OF AASLA

The daughter of Kerothar chafed under the rule of her brothers and so settled on the mainland and took compassion on the local primitive humans which were being enslaved by her brothers. Her small settlement soon grew into a city to rival Alpathia itself, and before the death of her father, he granted her dominion over the city of Aasla and the Kingdom of Haven. Now the city of Aasla is the largest metropolis in the Empire; it may not boast as many skyscrapers or technological wonders as Alpathia, but it still staggers the mind of any visitor



Alphatian city - generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

by its sheer size. Its outer walls completely encircle well over 100 square miles completely surrounding Alphas Lake until they meet the sea.

THE BLOODLINES AND GREAT HOUSES OF ALPHATIA

All Alphatians (pure-blooded that is) are members of either a great house or a lesser house, and their lineage through bloodlines are meticulously tracked. Each Alphatian is born with a skymark; these skymarks delineate the house to which an individual belongs, even if their parents have a different skymark (an ancient bloodline may be dominant over more recent heritage). Skymarks appear as beautiful blue patterns on the skin, resembling tattoos more than birthmarks. When an Alphatian learns to use a skymark they shine with a shimmering pale blue light any time an ability is activated. There are four castes within Alphatian nobility: those with a least sky-

mark, a lesser skymark, a greater skymark, or a mark of the heavens, the rarest of all. The purer the bloodline of an Alphatian, the greater the skymark and the more power the skymark grants. A least skymark is no bigger than a couple inches in diameter, a lesser skymark is about the size of the palm of a hand, a greater skymark may be as large as to cover a person's entire face, and a mark of the heavens will extend across the entire body. A skymark may appear anywhere on a person's body, so when an Alphatian is born they are immediately inspected for a mark and assigned to a house and station for their lives.

There are twelve great houses, each claiming descent from one of the children of Kerother and Klete, and many lesser houses descended from one of the many Alphatians who joined Kerother in his flight from the Alphatian homeworld. The laws by which his children are to govern themselves are inscribed on a pillar of orichalcum at the temple of Kerother in the city of Alphatia. By tradition, alternating every fifth

or sixth year the heads of each house and the kings of each province gather at the temple of Kerothar. Here they meet together, settle disputes between themselves, and consult for common cause. From this practice the Council of Alphatia has developed over the years. To inaugurate each council a bull hunt is held and each council member swears a sacred oath on the inscription of the pillar, upon which the blood of the bull is shed, to abide by the laws of Kerothar and punish any who transgress them. During the night following the sacrifice, the kings and other council members hear accusations and their judgment is recorded on gold tablets in the morning. The most important laws of Kerothar are thus: the different houses are forbidden from making war on each other; they are to support the imperial house if any other house tries to overthrow the imperial house; they are to consult together in matters of war and state, with the voice of the House of Alphas being supreme; the emperor is not to have any authority over the life or death of another pure-blood Alphatian without the consent of the council.

The House of Alphas

Those Alphas born with the mark of scribing belong to House Alphas. This house is involved in every aspect of the bureaucracy of the Empire. From this house all identification papers for a citizen of the Empire are issued; bank notes and other official documents are notarized; many diplomats, lawyers, accountants and translators of the Empire belong to this house.

The Kingdom of Greenspur is ruled by the House of Alphas. The royal family, the

direct descendants of Alphas, once ruled the kingdom from the city of Eagret. From Eagret the Kings of Greenspur protected the entry to the Gulf of Aasla with the greatest navy of the Empire. In the Kingdom of Greenspur, the common people both gentry and soldiery are treated better than elsewhere in the Empire as they were vital to the first line of defense of the young Empire. Eventually the royal house died out with the imperial seat passing to House Theran, and the bureaucracy of the kingdom took over governance with the Magistratar at the head.

The House of Theran

Those Alphas born with the mark of the sentinel belong to House Theran. Those with the mark of the sentinel are gifted in the ways of combat; many become bodyguards and soldiers. The Kingdom of Theranderol is ruled by the House of Theran, and currently Empress Eriadna holds the imperial seat. The noble families of House Theran are great knights of the Empire, the elite officers of the army, and follow a strict chivalric code, making use of enchanted banners and heraldic devices to give an advantage in warfare.

The House of Randel

Those Alphas born with the mark of handling belong to House Randel. The mark of handling gives members of this house an affinity towards beasts and animals. The best livestock is bred by this house, and many members become successful animal trainers, grooms, shepherds, cattle drivers, and teamsters. House Randel

rules the kingdom of the same name. The most elite with the mark of handling even form bonds with dragons and are called mage knights. These mage knights are each a member of a draconic order, and are the main military power of the Kingdom of Randel.

The House of Bettelyn

Those Alphatians born with the mark of healing belong to House Bettelyn. Alphatians of House Bettelyn are the best healers in the Empire; they staff hospitals throughout the Empire. The royal family, who rule the Kingdom of Bettelyn, are devout followers of the Seven, a pantheon of archons that have achieved immortality. The kingdom pays homage to the Empire, but is willing to force the worship of the Seven on the Alphatians and commoners alike of the neighboring kingdoms when the time is right.

The House of Arogansa

Those Alphatians born with the mark of hospitality belong to House Arogansa. The best chefs, restaurateurs, innkeepers, and hostlers come from this house. The kings of Arogansa take advantage of this aptitude and have transformed the kingdom into a vacation and tourist destination for all the



Alphatian skyship landing - produced by prompts from Senarch into Stable Diffusion AI image generator

elite of the Empire. The realm itself is ruled by autocratic nobles of pure Alphatian blood, with the monarch being elected by a council of the seven greatest nobles in the realm, while any common people are low servants treated as chattel.

The House of Eadrin

Those Alphatians born with the mark of shadow belong to House Eadrin. The mark of shadows is beneficial to those practicing all forms of espionage. Those with the mark of shadow are different from other Alphatians; they have ashen skin, and are often driven mad by their

gifts. It is said that Eadrin, the son of Kerothar, stumbled upon a place called The Well of Shadows during his exploration of this new land, and it transformed him into a creature of shadow. Now all his descendants bear his curse. His direct descendants rule the Kingdom of Eadrin, and the current ruler is known as the Queen of Dusk.

The House of Ar

Those Alphatians born with the mark of the storm belong to House Ar. Those with this mark have an ability to manipulate the winds and weather. Soon after the Alphatian landfall, Ar, the son of Kerothar, poured his energies into the research of flight and levitation, and far to the north-east of the continent discovered a special mineral which he called cloudstone. It is these cloudstones which are the secret to all the levitation technology of the Empire, airships, impossibly high skyscrapers, the floating rails of the lightning rail, etc. During his experiments Ar caused entire islands to float above the land that would later become the Kingdom of Floating Ar above the ground and the Kingdom of Ar on the surface. These islands are now inhabited exclusively by pure-blooded Alphas and their servants, while the lower Kingdom of Ar is mostly common folks eking out a living through agriculture. Some of the House of Ar have deigned to live among the common people on the surface and use their gifts to assist the farmers; these members of House Ar are called “rain callers” by the common folk, and considered as lowly peasants by those living high above them among the clouds. The shipping industry

both by sea and air is completely dominated by House Ar.

The House of Ambur

Those Alphas born with the mark of detection belong to House Ambur. The mark of detection allows these gifted Alphas to see things others cannot or just may not notice. Perhaps this is why so many born into the house look towards the stars; maybe they glimpse something in the firmament that others do not. These “astromancers” make use of the stars as a way to enhance the technology and magic found in the small Kingdom of Ambur, making the city of Starpoint one of the most wondrous to behold in the Empire.

The House of Hossetta

Those Alphas born with the mark of warding belong to House Hossetta. This house has always been insular and isolated, more concerned about protecting its own interests than anything else. The mark of warding reflects this, enhancing any protective measures, be they traps, shields, locks or anything else. These talents have led to a reliance upon House Hossetta as the most trusted bankers in the Empire. House Hossetta has never ruled a large realm, being a small kingdom at the base of the Kerothar mountains staying out of the many wars and conquests of its neighbors until eventually being annexed by the Empire and given the status of county within the Kingdom of Friland.

The House of Wyllareth

Those Alphatians born with the mark of passage belong to House Wyllareth. Alphatians of House Wyllareth are the most likely to be encountered outside of their home territory, the Duchy of Wyllareth in the Kingdom of Frisland, because the mark of passage allows them to travel vast distances at much greater speeds than most others. With this gift House Wyllareth has established a renowned and reliable mail service with waystations throughout the Empire. The most wealthy individuals, and not just their mail, may even be instantaneously transported between locations through this courier service. Most mundane caravans and caravansaries are dominated by Wyllareth; the lightning rail was also developed by House Wyllareth and all operators are specially trained by the house, enforcing the Wyllareths' monopoly on the movement of freight and passengers overland. House Wyllareth is always trying to find ways to improve the speed and efficiency of their transports as a way of competing with the shipping business of House Ar.

The House of Aasla

Those Alphatians born with the mark of making belong to House Aasla. Some would say that House Aasla is obsessed with the creative arts. The mark of making enhances the ability of any artist or craftsman to create masterpieces, and thus the Kingdom of Haven is littered in art both grand and insignificant. All things practical, such as ships, the most advanced Alphatian technology, gadgets, and things of pure artistry, such as sculptures, new fashionable clothes, murals, and mosaics, and other

works of art are produced in the Kingdom of Haven. All artists, whether of the common variety or pure-blooded Alphatian, are respected in Haven.

The House of Frisia

Those Alphatians born with the mark of finding belong to House Frisia. Many of House Frisia are individualistic rovers, who variously act as explorers, bounty hunters, and treasure hunters, who rely on their gifts of locating hidden things to bring them fortune. Many also take up a life of smuggling forbidden substances from the Kingdom of Frisland out to the rest of the Empire, while the kingdom officially hires bounty hunters to stop this smuggling activity, though much of the wealth of Frisland comes from these "exports."

The House of Ozafreth

There are rumors among the most learned of Alphatians of an ancient thirteenth house, though nearly all traces of it have been expunged from imperial records, and no surviving members of this house are found in the Empire today. In truth Ozafreth was a bastard son of Kerothar. His descendants dabbled with strange magics used by a native tribe called the Ogam, and destroyed themselves. In fact a few managed to survive and are born with the mark of death; these few remain in hiding on Alphak's Volcano serving their dark master and plotting revenge on the Empire.



Alphatian port - generated by Midjourney AI prompted by Senarch

THE GUILD

Everything presented above is the state of Alphatia at AC 1000. After that things begin to change. Note that I have never used or played the *Wrath of Immortals* campaign in my world, so that timeline is ignored. All of these events were either summarized during play or actually played out by PCs.

Around the year AC 1010 an otherwise unknown automaton is lost in the wilds of the Empire away from any masters or structure of command. In the wilderness they undergo a spiritual transformation and is visited by the immortal goddess Terra who teaches them the way of the guild, naming

the automaton Xean-hu. This is the first automaton that gains sentience.

Upon their return to civilization in AC 1011 Xean-hu begins preaching the way of the guild among other automatons and quickly gains a following. The new behavior of automatons acting independently bewilders their Alphatian masters.

By AC 1013 the Guild has spread among the common, non-Alphatian, class of humans within the Empire. In some places whole towns follow Xean-hu and practice the way of the guild and supplant the bureaucracy of the Empire, refusing to pay tribute or obeisance to the Empress.

By AC 1014 many of the lesser nobles within the great houses, chafing under the centuries-long tyranny of the kings and royal families have secretly become followers of Xean-hu. When the Empress orders a massive purge of followers of Xean-hu, both automaton and human, she is surprised by the extent of the networks of guild followers even among the pureblood Alphatians. This purge results in an uprising of the guild all over the Empire. The Empress and the kings of great houses are forced to flee from the city of Alphatia to Sundsvall. (Note Sundsvall was originally built by Alphas I as a vacation home for the Imperial Family. With the exodus of the royalty and those loyal to them from the city of Alphatia, it has become a city in its own right. Its location is now kept secret as described by Bruce Heard.)

The Guild quickly begins to spread beyond the Empire of Alphatia and onto the continent of Brun. In the year 1016 the followers of the guild overthrow the King of Norwold, who sends a plea for help to the nearby federation of Denagoth. The Federation army drives out the guild forces from the Norwold capital of Alpha during the battle of Norwold. A few months later, special agents from the Federation assassinate Xean-hu, halting their plans for a counterstrike. These same agents forge an alliance with the Empress of Alphatia in hiding. Due to this alliance the Empress and those loyal to her are able to fight back against the guild.

At present the Empress controls the Kingdom of Vertiloch and the Imperial Territories, and the kings of Bellissaria and the elves, dwarves, and gnomes remain loyal to the Empress. The guild controls the rest of the continent of Alphatia. There has been an uneasy truce between the Guild and the Empire for the last twenty years; rumors abound among both sides that forces are being martialled for a final great clash.

The Guild itself is organized along an egalitarian basis. There is no single leader now that Xean-hu has perished. Each worker is given tasks appropriate to their talents, and in return receives an equal share of the necessities of life. Display of wealth or luxuries are forbidden, only the basic needs of food (for organics) and housing and entertainment are allowed. The great houses have been replaced by guilds. There is a yearly conference among the guilds where each town or city guild sends a representative; during this conference differences and grievances are settled (or pushed aside) and each guild is assigned tasks by a central committee. (Yes the Guild is supposed to be an analog of the Soviet Union, but without a central leader like Lenin or Stalin.)

Rules for playing a skymarked Alphatian, an Alphatian follower of air, an Alphatian automaton, and Alphatian artificers are to follow in a later article.



**Mappers of Mystara,
a series by Thorfinn Tait**

In this series, both on his blog [Atlas of Mystara](#) and here in *THRESHOLD Magazine*, Thorfinn will highlight the fans who have mapped Mystara over the years.

ADAMANTYR

Pixel-perfect maps from an 8-bit enthusiast

At a time when software and hardware limitations were a major issue for Mystara's cartographers, Adamantyr created a beautiful set of maps in his own unique style, influenced by his love for computer RPGs.

Profile

Nickname: Adamantyr ([Vaults author page](#), [Twitter profile](#)); previously went by Ironwolf

Location: Washington, USA

Maps Posted: 1999-2003

Areas of Interest: [Savage Coast](#). [Known World](#)

Scales: Almost all 8 miles per hex, with a single 24 mile per hex map

First Posted Map: [Isle of Dread, 8 miles per hex](#) (November 1999); first finished map was [Eastern Gulf of Hule, 8 miles per hex](#) (January 2000)

Software: MS Paint

Mapping Style: Bright and light colours, with custom-drawn pixel art hexes

Fonts: Monotype Corsiva (titling), Times (all other labels)

OVERVIEW

Adamantyr was quite active on the Mystara Mailing List (MML) during its heyday in the late 90s. He was an active DM and player at that point, and took part in many memorable discussions. He also frequented the Mystara Message Board (MMB) in the mid 2000s.

“FOREWARNING: I do it the hard way.”

I'm working in Paint, using it to draw both hexes and the legend to construct the maps. The only real slow part to it is the coastlines and rivers, also contours and borders, otherwise, I should have a pretty snazzy looking map done soon.

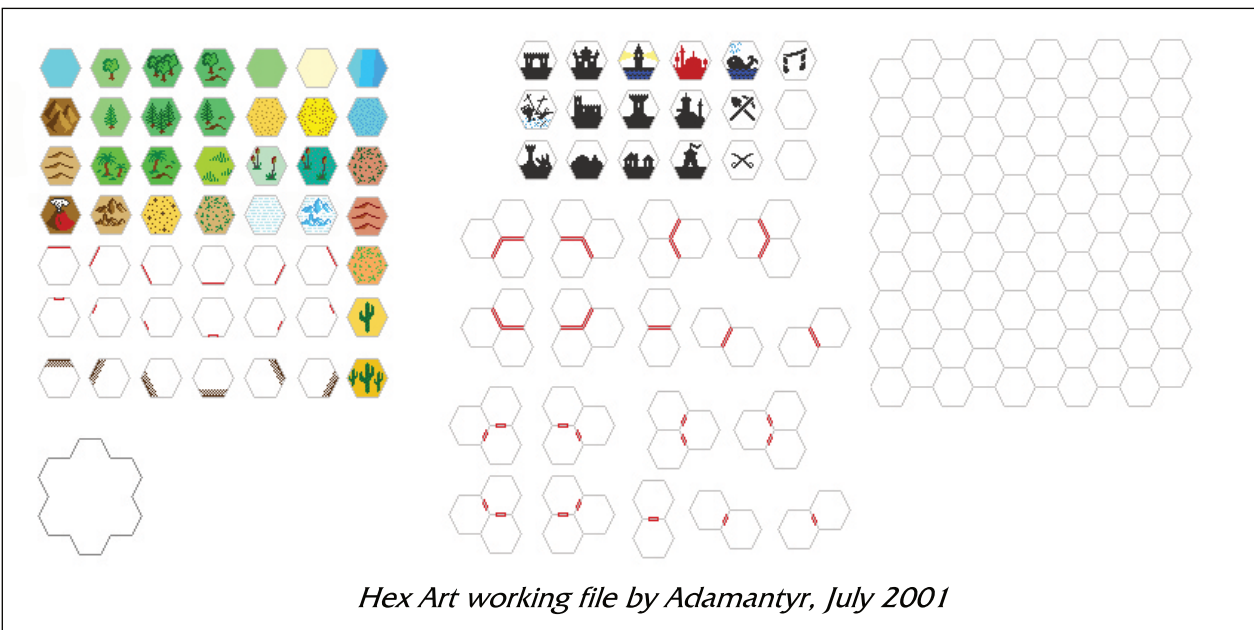
*“Maps in the Works”,
29th August 1999, MML*

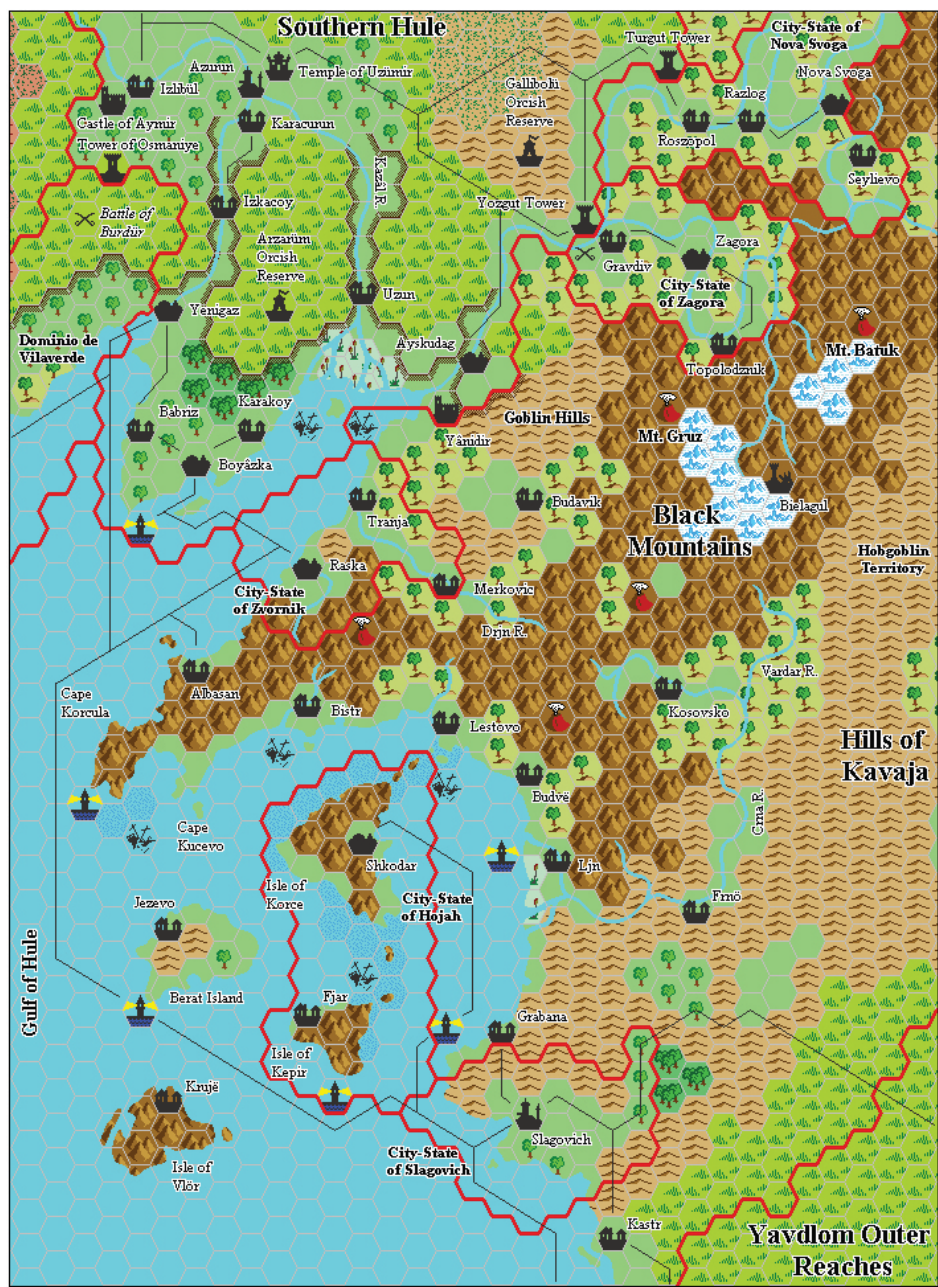
His first mention of making some maps came in August 1999, when he talked about creating his own set of hex art icons in MS Paint. Then in November he shared a small map of the Isle of Dread converted to 8 miles per hex, using this art. This was actually a crop of a larger work-in-progress map showing the whole Thanegi-oth Archipelago, but unfortunately he never completed it.

Following this, in early January 2000 Adamantyr posted a work-in-progress Known World map. After some revisions to this map, his interests moved to the Savage Coast, and his first finished map soon followed: the Eastern Gulf of Hule, 8 miles per hex.

THE SAVAGE COAST

The rest of Adamantyr's maps largely followed the journey of the Princess Ark along the Savage Coast: the Savage Baronies; the Barbarian Kingdoms of Robrenn and Eusdria; the Animal Kingdoms of Bel-





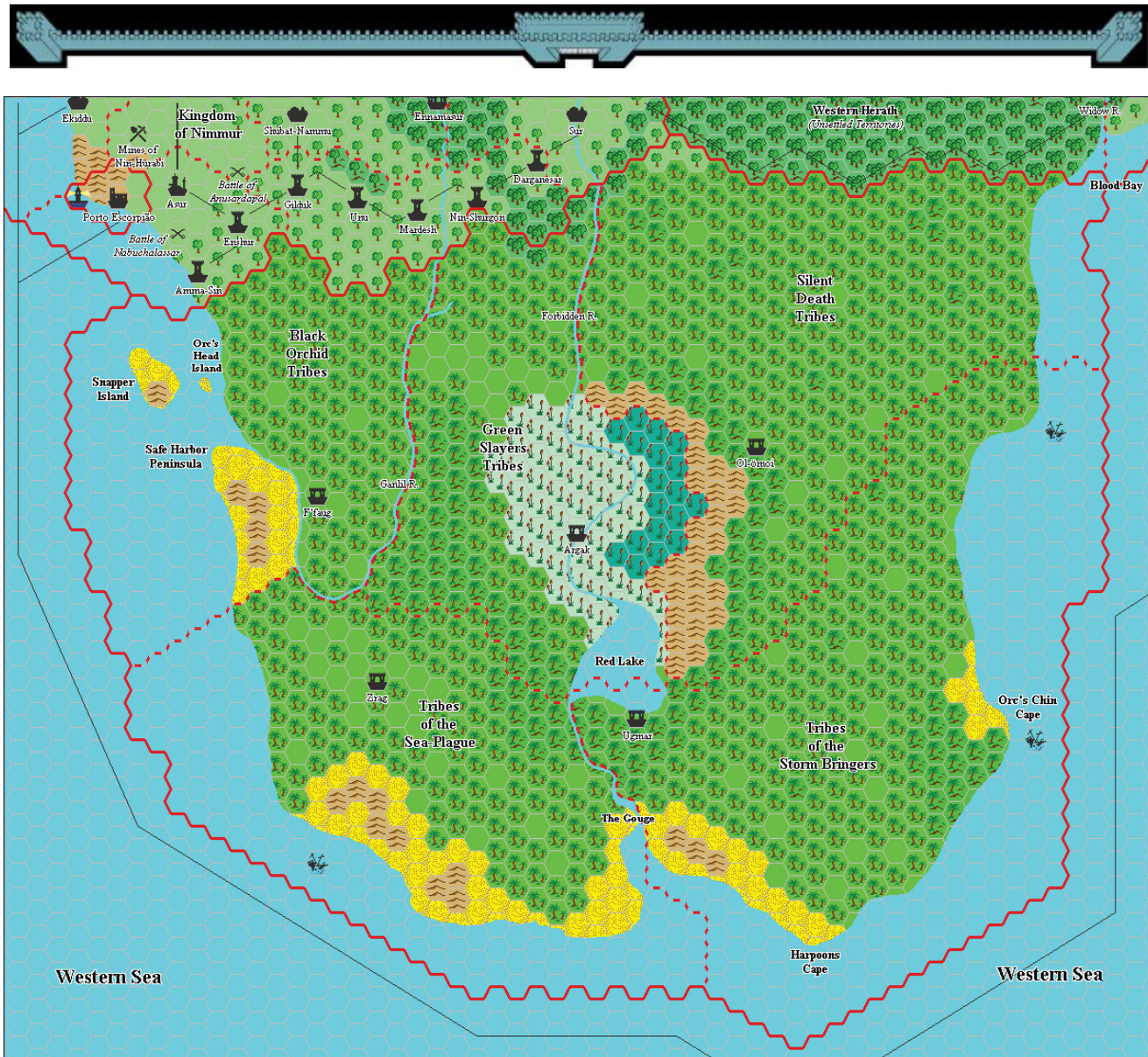
Eastern Gulf of Hule
Scale: 1 Hex = 8 Miles

- | | | | |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| | Capital | | Rocky Desert |
| | City | | Sandy Desert |
| | Town | | Tundra |
| | Village | | Glacier |
| | Tower/Keep | | Swamp |
| | Castle | | Marsh |
| | Fort | | Steppes |
| | Temple | | Light Forest |
| | Lighthouse | | Heavy Forest |
| | Shipwreck | | Forested Hills |
| | Camp | | Light Forest |
| | Battle Site | | Heavy Forest |
| | Ruins | | Forested Hills |
| | Mine | | Jungle |
| | Border | | Hilled Jungle |
| | Inner Border | | Hills |
| | Farmland/Clear | | Mountains |
| | Plateau | | Volcano |
| | River | | Broken Lands |
| | Water | | Badlands |
| | Reefs | | Red Badlands |
| | Whaling | | Red Hills |

Eastern Gulf of Hule, 8 miles per hex with Legend by Adamantyr, January 2000

layne and Renardy; the Magiocracy of Herath; Jibarú and Nimmur; the Reptile Kingdoms of Shazak, Ator and Cay; and finally the Orc's Head Peninsula. All of these were presented in 8 miles per hex, including the Orc's Head, which he converted from 24 mile per hex maps.

This appeared between January and March 2000, except for the last two, which he completed in July 2001. Unfortunately, technical limitations with the computers of the time prevented the assembling of the maps into a single trail map.



The Orc's Head Peninsula

Scale: 1 Hex = 8 Miles

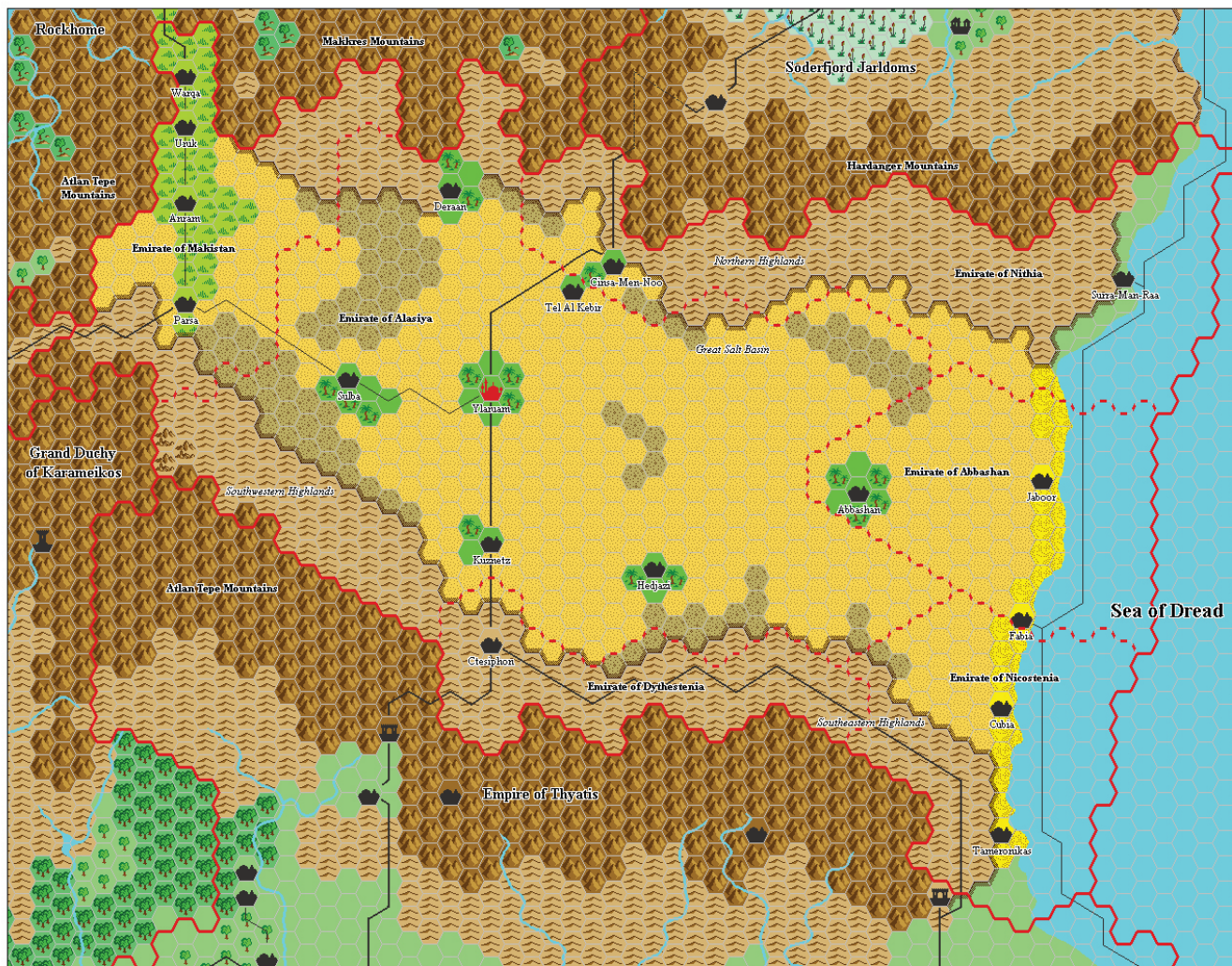
The Orc's Head Peninsula, 8 miles per hex by Adamantyr, July 2001

He also posted maps of Karamaikos and Glantri during this time, and completed one of Ylaruam, too. The dates for these are not entirely clear, although they certainly stem from the 2000-2003 period.

8-bit Style

I copied the originals by eye and hand in MS Paint, and created layers for the coastlines, water, hexgrid, and assorted terrain work. That way I could just drop copies on top of each other for the finished product.

*"The Known World Map — Done!",
11th January 2000, MML*



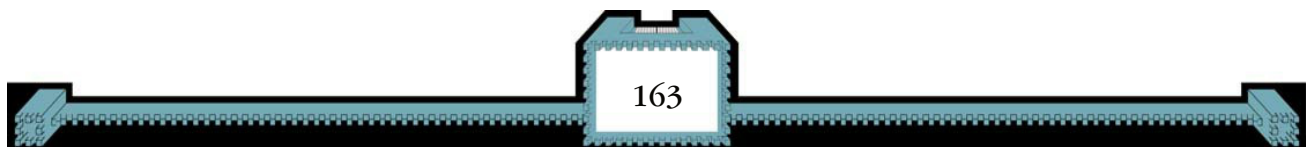
Scale: 1 Hex = 8 Miles

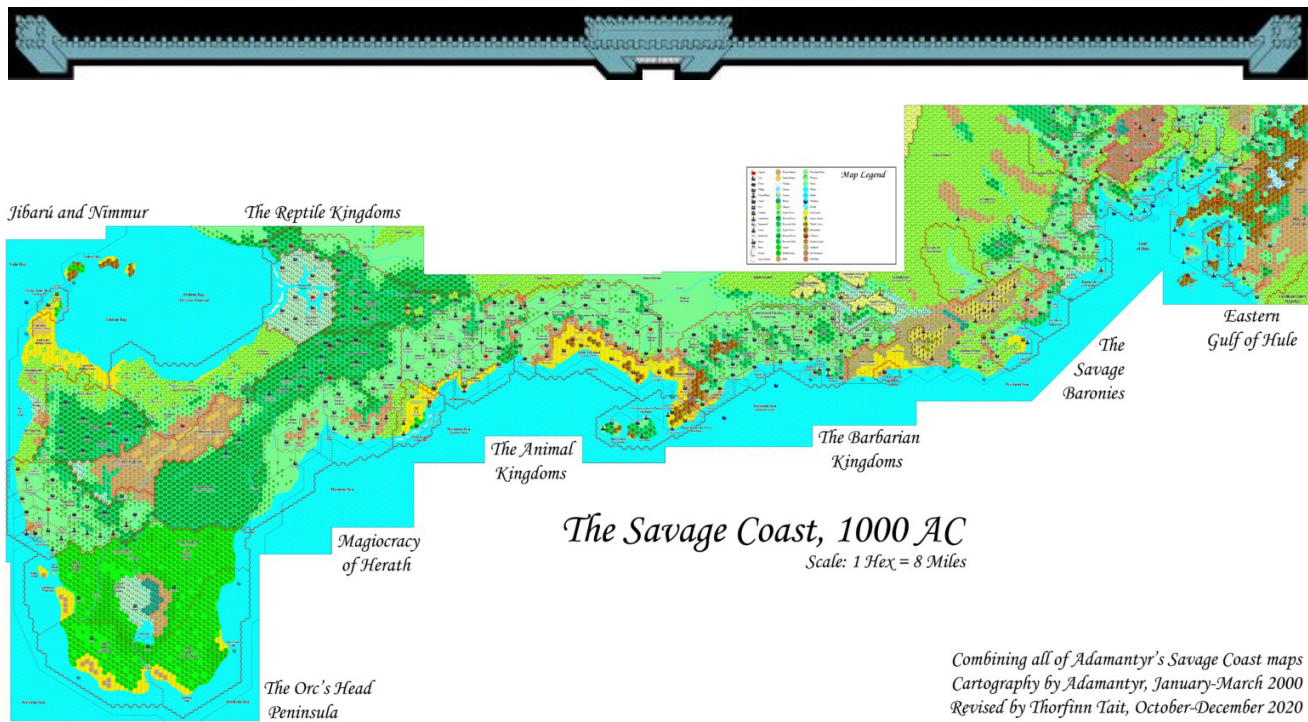
Emirates of Ylaruam

Emirates of Ylaruam, 8 miles per hex by Adamantyr, December 2003

Unlike many of Mystara's other cartographers, Adamantyr's style arrived almost fully formed with his first maps. After just a short period of trial and error, he quickly established his signature style, and then stuck to it. The result is a very nice set of cohesive and consistent maps, with a deliberate artistic influence from the 8-bit computer game era.

The main evolution that can be seen involves the presentation of rivers (black border or none) and other line-based art (borders, roads, etc.). The labels also took some thinking to establish a good style — as they usually do for all cartographers. Some earlier versions of Adamantyr's maps have been lost, but there is enough to see this progression in style.





Combining all of Adamantyr's Savage Coast maps
Cartography by Adamantyr, January-March 2000
Revised by Thorfinn Tait, October-December 2020

The Savage Coast, 8 miles per hex by Adamantyr, Revised by Thorf, December 2020

COMBINED MAPS

To the best of my knowledge, it wasn't until 2015 that anyone produced a combined version of Adamantyr's Savage Coast maps. At that time, I assembled his Orc's Head Peninsula, Jibarú and Nimmur, Herath, and Reptile Kingdoms maps into a single piece to assist with my work on Lining Up Mystara.

Then in late 2020 I combined the whole series, and [shared it with the man himself on Twitter](#). This may well be the first time these maps were all posted as a single trail map.

INTERVIEW

Adamantyr graciously agreed to answer some questions for this article.

How did you first get interested in Mystara? What draws you to the setting?

I've loved the setting ever since I first looked at the map in the old Expert rules book. What I liked about it was they used real-world cultural examples to fill in the world.

Did you have a favourite official map?

I think the map for Rockhome was my favorite, because it was the first Gazetteer I got as a Christmas gift, and the map is a lot more interesting in terms of depth than some of the others.

When did you start mapping Mystara?

In the late 90's, when the only source for maps was in Dragon magazine for the new Savage Coast. I was also intrigued to try and reproduce the commercial maps TSR did.

When and where did you post your first map online?

On my own gaming website, dedicated to my 2nd Edition AD&D campaign based on the Savage Coast.

What software did/do you use? Or did/do you draw your maps by hand?

I used MS Paint mostly, although I also used Paint Shop Pro to do some quick color changes that MS Paint didn't have the capacity to do.

What were/are the limitations or peculiarities of that software?

Mainly, MS Paint doesn't support layering and only allows pure white as a transparency color. It also doesn't let you blast and change colors across the entire image easily.

Please describe your process in brief.

The maps are built out of multiple images, which are copied and pasted on top of each other for the final result.

First, I created a basic hex pattern with enough size for reasonable resolution of the icons, then created a large grid map and saved it as a blank map.

I also hand-drew the icons, creating a map leend.

I'd then hand-draw the rivers and coast-lines, using the original maps as a guideline. When finished, I'd wipe the hex map out using the eraser tool but retaining the coast-lines. Then fill in the water.

Then I'd create the hex map itself, copy and pasting the hexes and placing them by hand. As the "water" layer would overlap it, I wasn't worried about the hex graphics carrying into water areas.

Then the border layer, which involved copying and pasting hex outlines.

Then the trickiest layer, the text labels. I usually would do a semi-complete map then type and place the text in their respective areas. Then I'd have to color-wipe using eraser all the hex graphics. (Which I always avoided using pure black in for this reason.) Then I'd outline by hand each text with a single layer of pixels in a garish color that was easy to see. Then using the eraser tool I'd swap this color with a NEAR white, usually 254/254/254 RGB, which would not be transparent but would also give it a nice white outline when pasted on top.

What challenges did you face during your mapping projects?

Mainly the limitations of MS Paint, which has if anything gotten more limited. I liked Paint Shop Pro better but Corel chose to go a more Adobe Photoshop route with it which I disliked.

What was your favourite area to work on?

Probably the Savage Coast. I loved merging the disincorporated maps into larger pieces and seeing it all together.

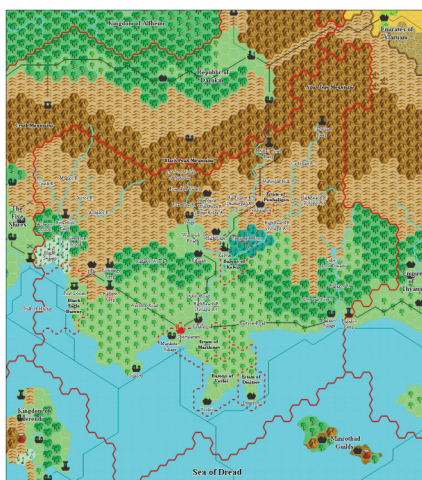
Do you have any future plans for your maps of Mystara?

At the moment, I don't. I'm doing more playing than running games right now, my brother runs a weekly D&D game (5E rules) over Discord and Fantasy Grounds. I'd originally planned to keep going and do every map of every Gazetteer location, but the time required to make the maps started to wear a bit, and I actually ended up going back to college around that time, which ate up a lot of my free time.

What are you doing these days?

I'm working on retro gaming projects mainly. 😊 My CRPG for the TI-99/4a definitely was inspired a bit by the Known World. <http://quixotic.adamantyr.com> is my software site.

Thank you, Adamantyr!



Grand Duchy of Karamaikos Scale: 1:100c - 8:2000c

SOURCES

In researching this article, I searched out all the references I could find, and consulted with everyone I could track down. I have made every effort to ensure that the information is accurate, but in some cases I may have slipped up — especially when dealing with maps that are years or even decades old. I take full responsibility for any mistakes; please don't hesitate to point these out if you find them! Following is a summary of my sources for your reference.

- Direct messaging with Adamantyr
- [Mystara Mailing List Archive](#)
- [Mystara Message Board Archive](#)
- Adamantyr's personal map archive
- Thibault Sarlat's personal map archive



Adamantyr's Maps

Name	Vaults URL	Date	Date Source	Region	Scale	Notes
Legend		1999/8/29	MML	Legend	-	A
Isle of Dread		1999/11/9	MML	Isle of Dread	8	
Thanegioth Archipelago		1999/11/9	MML	Thanegioth Archipelago	8	A
The Known World		2000/1/11	MML	Known World	24	A
Eastern Gulf of Hule	eghule.gif	2000/1/12	MML	City States	8	B
Eastern Gulf of Hule	eghule.gif	2000/1/16	MML	City States	8	C
The Savage Baronies	sbarony.gif	2000/2/3	MML	Savage Baronies	8	
The Barbarian Kingdoms		2000/2/7	MML	Robrenn, Eusdria	8	
The Animal Kingdoms	aniking.gif	2000/2/10	MML	Renardy, Bellayne	8	
Karameikos		2000/2/10	MML	Karameikos	8	D
Legend		2000/2/16	File	Legend	-	
Magiocracy of Herath	herath.gif	2000/2/27	MML	Herath	8	
Jibarú & Nimmur	jibnimm.gif	2000/2/28	MML	Jibarú, Nimmur	8	
Principalities of Glantri		2000/3/	Guess	Glantri	8	E
The Reptile Kingdoms	reptking.gif	2001/7/16	File	Ator, Shazak, Cay	8	F
The Orc's Head Peninsula	dkjungle.gif	2001/7/16	File	Orc's Head Peninsula	8	F
Emirates of Ylaruam		2003/12/31	File	Ylaruam	8	
Trident Bay and Orc's Head Peninsula		2015/12/12	File	Orc's Head Peninsula	8	G
The Savage Coast, 1000 AC		2020/10/18	File	Savage Coast	8	G
The Savage Coast, 1000 AC		2020/12/17	File	Savage Coast	8	G

Notes to Table of Adamantyr's Maps

A - Work in progress

B - first posted version

C - Revised version with legend

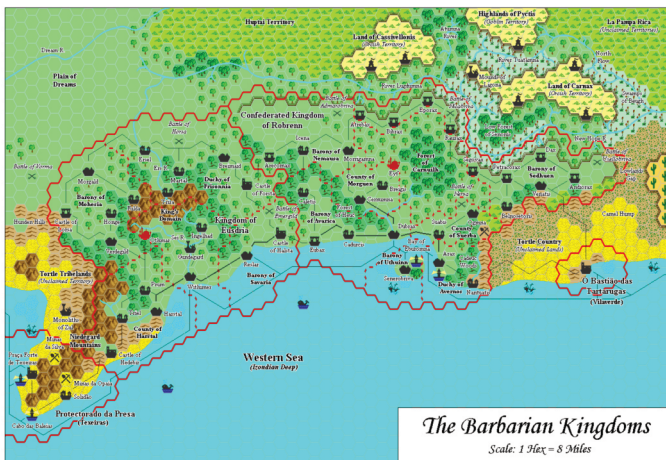
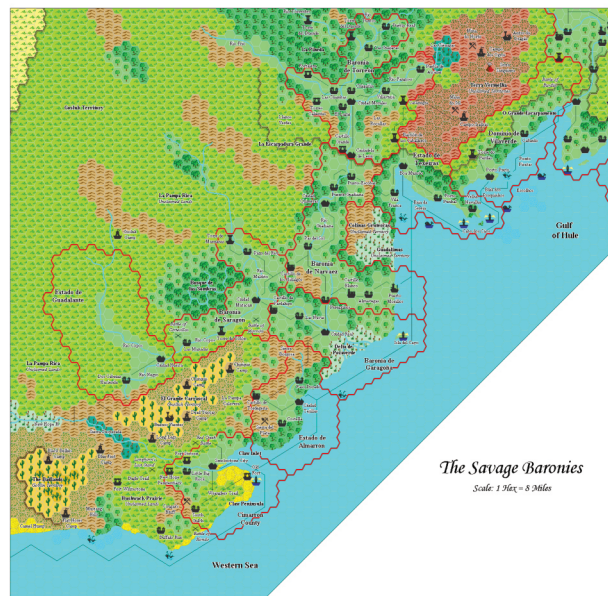
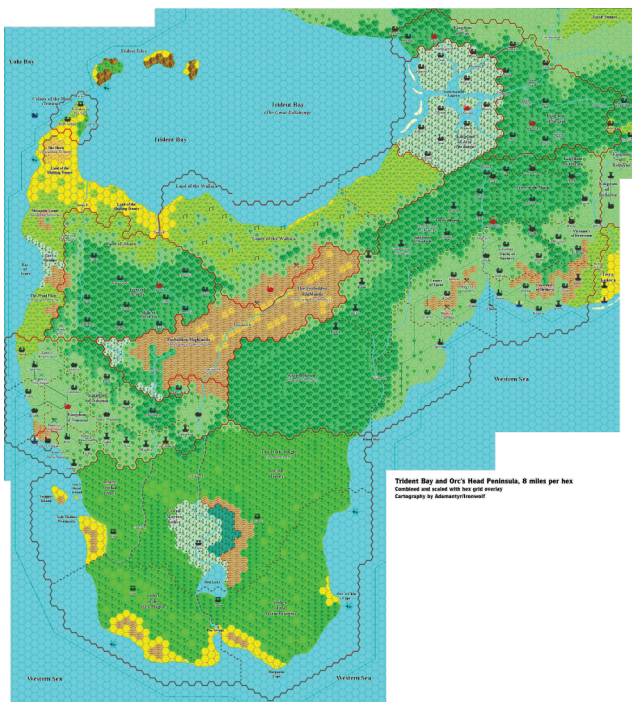
D - MML mention in 2000/2/10; date uncertain

E - Date uncertain

F - Posted by Thibault 2002/1/31

G - Revised by Thorf

Examples of Adamantyr's maps - see <https://mystara.thorfmaps.com/appendix-m/adamantyr/> for links



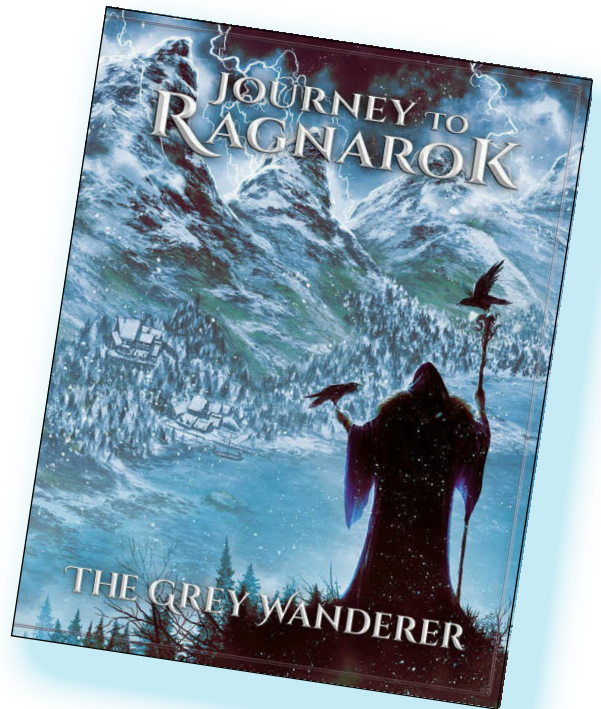
THE GREY WANDERER

in

MYSTARA

by Not a Decepticon

Far in the North, an old man, clad in all gray, walks the frozen land. He may walk to your household or camp, requesting hospitality and shelter from a snow-storm. If you welcome him, he will offer the gifts of songs, knowledge, story and vast wisdom. But beware angering him. For his wrath is mighty and he can be as spiteful, lecherous and petty as Odin himself. Some believe that's exactly who he is...



Cover of the Grey Wanderer adventure, which can be purchased at DriveThruRPG.com

INTRODUCTION

Created by Mana Project Studios for 5th Edition D&D, “*Journey to Ragnarok*” presents a very interesting setting for Mystara fans. It mixes both the Norse Mythology and real-world cultures that followed it with *Dungeons & Dragons*. As such the prospect of adapting elements of it to the Known World, particularly to Northern Reaches, is quite tempting. I have made an attempt myself, not with the titular adventure, but a shorter “introductory” module, “*The Grey Wanderer*”. Below I will lay out my process of adapting the adventure and all the issues I’ve run into. Be warned, that this will spoil the whole thing, so consider the following text for the Dungeon Masters’ eyes only.

BASE PREMISE AND LOCATION

The story of the Grey Wanderer is set in Viking territories ruled currently by Queen Thorunn Horrikdottir. On the north there is a wall and a fort, Danevirke, separating her lands from those of the Franks, militaristic people with a different faith, who are led into battle by knights and priests. The adventure deals with the quest of discovering what is happening at Danevirke and finding its captain, Thorunn's cousin, Erik Knutson.

Close to the Northern Reaches the best analogue for the Franks would be Heldannic Knights; located on the northern border, this military order of religious zealots is already pushing away worship of Norse Pantheon from their lands, in favor of Vanya, Immortal of War. They fit perfectly to the antagonistic role that Franks are playing in the story.

Queen Thorunn is a bit harder to adapt. Vestland does not have a named queen, it has a king, Harald Gudmundson. There is no mention of him having any named children or a wife within the GAZ7: *"The Northern Reaches"*. Thorunn could therefore easily be slotted as his daughter or even a wife. You could also easily replace her with Harald or any of the Jarls as you wish.

Alternatively, and I have gone with this approach, you could make her one of the northern Jarls. In my game she has inherited the position of Jarl of Skaniscost. This had provoked an uprising of those who did not feel like taking orders from a woman. Some of these rebels even had a "brilliant"

idea to show her weakness by assisting Heldannic Knights in an assault on the Jarldom. Of course, when you give Heldannic Knights a Jarldom, they'll take your country, so this led to a full-scale invasion. To the surprise of everyone, Thorunn has dealt with both the uprising and an invasion, and even led a counterassault on Heldannic Freeholds. Upon her return, she had gained enough reputation to be given the commanding role of the northern part of the Home Guard. Eyvind the Odd of the Namahed Clan is serving as one of her closest allies and advisors, lending her his experience and also advancing the position of his clan and Tromso through her continued successes. It is in Tromso where a heavy winter locks both of them away from investigating worrying news that something bad may be happening at Danevirke. And this is where the PCs come in.

CLASSES AND SUBCLASSES

"Journey to Ragnarok" provides us with a set of subclasses and a whole new class, the Runemaster, that bring the flavor to the Nordic adventure. Let us give it a quick overview:

Barbarian gets *Path of the Storm Wielder*, which is very similar to official Wizards of the Coast's *Path of the Storm Herald*, but more limited in flavor and also self-damaging. It is a Barbarian who has attuned to the primordial force of the storm. This may be among the hardest subclasses to implement into the setting. However, a potential blessing of Odin could serve as an explanation. An option to discuss with the DM is



that the PC somehow got one of the Runes allowing them to call storms, but damaging themselves in the process, could also be a possibility. Alternatively, a connection to a Storm Spirit could be used, if a DM wishes to have Spirits included in the campaign.

Bard gets *College of Valhalla*. I like its flavor, reframing the bard as a figure singing of the legends as they watch said legend being made. Personally I think it fits well with the Northern Reaches and such Bards would be rather welcome, traveling from settlement to settlement, bringing news of heroes and their deeds.

Cleric gets a *Sacrifice Domain*. Which sucks. I had to rewrite it to even consider it an option because it demands players to willingly take permanent (at least until you get access to high-level spells like *regeneration*) nerfs to their characters for temporary buffs, something that is just a bad trade for the sake of being edgy. It makes an intersection of mechanics and roleplay in such a weird way I do not see anyone willingly using it. Aside from people who intentionally make characters bad at their job and call anyone who does not do that a min-maxer. And I refuse to believe this is a common thing. My advice? Make buffs and nerfs from this subclass last the same time and allow the PCs to decide how long that is.

Druid gets the *Circle of Yggdrasil*. As it is concerned mostly with traveling the planes and being able to more easily adapt to the changing environments, I do not see much of a reason in discussing it here, within a small campaign where the only border to cross will be international, not interplanar.

Fighter gets the *Warden*. The subclass is recommended to use a shield, but it is not necessary, and utilizes a number of passive, and a smaller number of active, combat abilities. Within 5e it is comparable to Battlemaster, but not as powerful. The class emulates, in theory, the fighting experience of Northern warriors and does not need any adjustments.

Monk gets the *Way of Glima*, based on the Nordic folk wrestling. There isn't much to comment here, this is part of Nordic culture, whose addition could help ease up having a somewhat out-of-the-place Monk in the Northern Reaches. I will also mention the proximity of the Northern Reaches to the

Ethengar Khanates and the fact that Mongolians are also known for their wrestling traditions. If someone brings Glima to your table, I think you should give them an Ethengarian wrestler as a rival.

Paladin gets *Oath of the Chosen*—someone born with the calling from the gods to perform great deeds and become worthy of their seat in Valhalla. I do find this overall appropriate, with only one issue—the 20th-level feature. Which for some reason attempts to divide by genders what forms do the Paladin gets, similar to how Warden makes a note female Wardens are called Shieldmaidens. Except here male Paladins become Einherjars and female—Valkyries. I'm no expert on Norse mythology. But even for me "*Journey Into Ragnarok*" making Valkyries and Einherjars male and female versions of the same thing feels like a gross oversimplification at best. I would just call them Einherjars. That being said, this is a 20th-level feature, while even the main campaign only goes to level 15, so it will likely never come up.

Ranger gets a *Wolf Pack Conclave*. This is a Ranger that specializes in fighting with a group, emulating packs of wolves. In my opinion, this not only does not need adaptation to the setting, but can be easily put anywhere, not just the Northern Reaches.

Rogue gets the *Unshapen* subclass, which gives it minor magic abilities functioning similar to a Warlock, but with an even more limited number of spell slots and only allowed to learn specific spells. An interesting aspect of this class lies in a strong implication that Rogue is basically the Warlock of Loki, or at least that they learned knowledge of their specific magic with Loki's

subtle help or blessing. As Loki in Mystara seemingly does not do much to incite open worship and is very secretive, a possibility he could secretly empower more sneaky agents seems at least probable.

Sorcerer gets the *Jotunn Origin*. It draws power from the body of the primordial frost giant, whose bones were the foundation of Nine Realms in Norse Mythology. It even comes, at later levels, with power to call upon an ice elemental. Dungeon Master will be required to think how exactly this myth relates to their version of Mystara, as it does impose strongly on cosmology in a way that cannot be dismissed as just "what the Norsemen believe." An easy way out would be to say that, since Odin and Hel are among the most ancient Immortals, there is a possibility some sort of entity of Ice (maybe an Outer Being) was once slain by Odin and its corpse (resonant power?) used in the creation of Mystara.

Warlock gets two patrons, the *Norns* and the *Endbringer*. As such, it shares similar issues with Sorcerer. Norns as a patron can be tied to Wise Women, mentioned in the Northern Reaches Gazetteer, due to sharing many similar themes. Endbringer is much more of an issue, as it ties the Warlock to entities such as Fenrir, Jormungandr, or Nidhogg, whose existence once again strongly affects the whole setting. I'm already using Jormungandr in my other campaign, but once again, DMs need to think what role these creatures could play in Mystara, before allowing use of this subclass. Saying that they are powerful entities created by Loki for the prophesized day of Ragnarok may work just well enough. Another possibility could be that, just as Zuzul is said to pose as Sutr in fan materi-

als, some Immortals may do the same for these monsters. Nidhogg, described as either snake or dragon, could as well be Atzanteotl, Prince of Corruption, or Pearl, patron of Chaotic Dragons. Fenrir could be any of the humanoid Immortals or maybe, thanks to his connections to lycanthropy, trusty, reliable Orcus. Jormungandr could be Demogorgon, patron of primal savagery and destruction. Another possibility would be to tie these three to local manifestation and forms of the Three Entropic Princes, as described in Havard's *Entropic Alliances*¹. Jormungandr is Prince of Destruction (Orcus), Fenrir is Princess of Death (Nyx) and Nidhogg is Prince of Deceit (Atzanteotl).

Wizard gets *School of Wanderers*. It draws power from being both a storyteller who knows the people, and a traveler who knows the land. There is a part that discusses how to be a wizard without a spellbook, as Vikings weren't writing things down. But I do not believe this applies to the Northern Reaches, so we may skip it. Overall, this is a very thematic subclass and explains why a squishy wizard is traveling the dangerous land.

Finally there is the new class, the **Runemaster**. Runemaster vaguely fits the same role as the Godi in the lore of the Northern Reaches, that of a fortune teller connected to the gods. However, the runes on Mystara work differently and the class names gods who do not have been listed among Immortals in Mystara the way Thor, Odin, Loki, Hel, Frigg, Frey and Freya have. Both issues can be explained, however, in rather simple ways. Loki not making Clerics makes it a precedent that people of the Northern Reaches worship Immortals who

¹ ["Entropic Alliances"](#) by Håvard in the Vaults of Pandius

do not grant spells. So it's not impossible they may worship members of the Norse Pantheon who aren't yet known in Mystara and Odin is simply keeping an open spot for future Immortals. Alternatively, titles like Heimdal could be names assumed by other Immortals, similar to how some fan content lets Zugzul play the role of Sutr. Runes themselves may lack the divine power of full-fledged runes, either serve a purely ritualistic role to commune with the Immortals, or their use in augury may be the result of them invoking the image of true runes.

Having gone through the classes, let's get into the proper adventure. Be prepared for unmarked spoilers from this point on.

ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY

Reading some of the encounters in this module, I got the impression the writers did not really get a good grasp on the combat balance in the 5th Edition. I do not fault them for it, there is a good argument that even Wizards of the Coast did not fully grasp the issue of "early game hell." To explain simply, characters at the first 3 levels are extremely squishy and can be brought down really easily, even by accident. There is a reason why the opening dungeon to *Lost Mine of Phandelver* has probably killed more player characters than all other 5e adventures combined.

In "*Grey Wanderer*", there are few ways to deal with the balance issue. I would assume most DMs will run it for a party of 4 to 6 players, so a quick fix would be to either run it as a level 4 with midpoint advance to 5, or just entirely level 5, adven-

ture. My recommendation is to run this for a level 5 party of experienced players, who will welcome a challenge. Though even then there is a lot of work to do if the DM wants to hide the railroad a chunk of this adventure is on. As someone told me when I wanted to run *Against the Cult of the Reptile God*, in old-school modules “for levels 1 to 3” on the cover meant “for level 3.” And in this case it is safe to assume the *Grey Wanderer* is very old-school. Due to that, it may translate better to less forgiving editions of the game or OSR, but in 5e it is pretty jarring, as if the adventure is frustrated with the very ruleset it is confined to. However, when discussing challenges it provides, I will assume that the potential DMs will run it in 5e, as this is the system I’ve run it in. I will also provide some quick alternatives to scale down the threat level for weaker parties, and maybe some Mysteran flavor, to more challenging encounters, so that they actually feel challenged and not just straight out unfair and spiteful. My policy is that if you want to wipe out the party, at least do it in a way that they do not feel the deck was stacked from the very beginning.

THE BACKSTORY

A year before events of the module, Odin, as the Grey Wanderer, has lured Eric Knutson to venture to Frank...I mean, the Heldannic Territories. There Eric discovered ruins of village Silasthorp, where he was supposed to recover a pendant from the tomb of an ancient warlord. Instead, he robbed the place, stealing a pretty strong magic sword (which my players nicknamed “The Viking Sting” after a similar weapon



Odin as the Grey Wanderer

from *Lord of the Rings*), and awakened a draugr, who killed his companions and turned them into ghastrs. Eric fled without the one thing he came for and Odin has cursed him, promising that after death he will not see Valhalla. Years later Eric decided to undo his mistake...and promptly got possessed by the draugr that is now turning him into his host body. In the meantime, Danevirke’s command chain collapsed, with different subordinates of Eric fighting for power, and Heldannic Knights seized the opportunity to attack. Wounded messenger reached Thorrun, but died before he could explain the situation. So now she wants the party to investigate what is happening. She will demand the party to swear an oath to her to carry this task and discover what happened with Eric. This is something you may consider dropping, as it effectively puts the party on a blatant railroad that the players will eventually notice. Due to how the combat encoun-

ters are set up in this module, once sworn the PCs cannot at any point run to fight another day without being labeled oath-breakers.

Silasthorp could stay as it is, with the cause of its destruction being, of course, Heldanic Knights, who may have not just burned the city, but also destroyed historical records of it, possibly out of fear of the clearly magical tomb. While not necessary, it may be a nice touch to make the buried individual, who is now a draugr, be actually a Nithian, to potentially confuse the party slightly as to why there is a dead Egyptian guy in the land of the Vikings.

JOURNEY NORTH

The journey to Danevirke is described as travel through, and this is no exaggeration, famed Fimbulwinter, the eternal winter to precede Ragnarok, itself. The towns and cities on the way are packed with refugees and camping outside during this multiple-days-long journey, grant only benefits of a short rest. While we do not need to go as far as to attribute this to the first sign of Ragnarok, an extremely harsh winter could grant the same narrative effect. It may also serve as an explanation as to why the party cannot travel by sea to the nearest city and from there to Danevirke, but later the winter can ease up a bit, enough to give PCs an option to travel from Danevirke to Silasthorp. Although rules for sailing provided by the module are so unforgiving, you may as well drop sailing as an option entirely.

The party may choose if they wish to travel fast, slow or at medium pace. Depending on their decision, they get a number of random encounters and make a number of checks to avoid exhaustion. Exhaustion is the most dreaded condition in 5e, as it provides a whole set of detrimental, cumulative effects. It is very easy to push a character into a death spiral with exhaustion or to cause them to get killed by things normally far more trivial. While this works great to establish the harsh, unforgiving nature of the grim north, a lot of the random encounters are skill and/or role-play challenges that, if failed, punish the PCs with a level of exhaustion. It creates a bit of illusion of free choice that makes it feel less as if creators of this module tried to develop the atmosphere and more as them being very determined to give the PCs arbitrary nerfs before a big battle. What's more is that the final encounter of the module is dependent on how long the party traveled. If the journey was fast, Eric is still in control and will aid the PCs. If they take their time, he will be driven mad and controlled by the draugr as an additional enemy. If they decide to travel at a slow pace or take a long rest in one of the settlements on the way, he is transformed into a CR 6 monster so strong the module flat-out admits this fight will likely be a Total Party Kill. I don't really like deciding the outcome of the whole adventure based on the early decision, especially one the players must make while they cannot know the consequences or even if there are any. If you have to go to such an effort to punish the players for taking a specific choice, why even bother giving it to them in the first place?



I would personally implement a simple way to ease the travel, while keeping the challenging aspect. Namely, that if players cast spells or use other limited resources on any task that, if failed, would result in gaining exhaustion levels, they succeed automatically. This way they still use up their resources, but in a much less punishing way. If you run this for a party below level 5, don't be afraid of granting inspiration or letting go of some exhaustion tests, as a reward for creative thinking. For example, my players suggested using a sled pulled by reindeers, instead of horses. As they all played small races and reindeer are better suited to harsh winter conditions, I didn't even roll saving throws for exhaustion of their mounts. Random encounters that involve civilians may earn the party some extra rewards, like potions of healing.

Draugr, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

You may think I'm too generous here, but trust me, once they reach Danevirke, they will need that stuff.

An important event on the way is meeting the Grey Wanderer—disguised Odin who will challenge PCs to the game of riddles and give them the quest to bring him that pendant. A DM should be prepared for the possibility players will immediately guess this is Odin, mine did before I got to finish a sentence. I also advise being prepared that, even if you do “as Odin would” and cheat at the contest, you will likely fail. I was literally googling replies to riddles as the players came up with them and still got flabbergasted at least once. I suggest having Odin be a good sport and find it amusing that someone managed to beat him at a riddle.

DANEVIRKE MUST NOT FAIL

This encounter is where I realized this adventure needs a basic rebalancing. After a journey, during which they can amass multiple levels of exhaustion, the party is immediately, and a bit clumsily, thrown into a battle. Against a Knight, a Priest and 8 Guards, with more Guards coming each turn. Having put it through Kobold Plus Fight Club calculations, this is a hard fight for a well-rested party of four 5th level adventurers and a deadly challenge for 4th level one. Running it for 3rd level, less alone 2nd, is a guaranteed TPK. A Priest alone can one-shot pretty much every 2nd level PC with *Spirit Guardians*. That spell dropped my group's Barbarian to 2 HP, and he passed the saving throw.

If you plan to run this as written, I suggest having the Guards engage NPCs soldiers (who may literally be there to die of a single hit, just to keep the Guards busy) and help their buddies up the wall. Meanwhile, the party may face only Knight and Priest. I recommend establishing the two as somehow related—father and son, brothers, uncle and niece or something like this. This way, if the PCs are still getting massacred, you can have them “win” by dropping just one foe. The other will then carry their relative's body and command a retreat. It may feel like going easy on the party, but I am the type that finds the party gaining an enemy for life much more compelling than being curb-stomped by two no-name NPCs in an unfair fight. Of course, if the party kills both, you can decide to have Guards retreat, demoralize, or fight, if you decide the victory was too easy. It is unlikely but it may happen, with good rolls. An issue with balance in 5e is that at early levels PCs can dish far more than they can take.

I find Danevirke rather underdeveloped, so I suggest coming up with a few NPCs, such as two to three warriors competing for command, with all higher-ranked people either dead or too wounded to take the position. After a hard battle, the players may find meddling in internal politics of the stronghold and deciding who will be in charge, a refreshing change of pace. They may even feel like taking command themselves. But, with clues to Eric's location AND Grey Wanderer's quest both pointing in the same direction, the party will eventually have to venture into enemy territory.

A NEW JOURNEY

There are two ways to get to Silasthorp. Sailing there is pretty much going to get a PC or whole party killed, unless it is a large party. If you don't run this for a large group, you may as well say that the sea is in the middle of a storm and sailing is too dangerous right now. The other option is to sneak at night through enemy camp. There are few interesting events that can happen to raise the alarm, and in this case I do not mind the overwhelming force that will be thrown at the party if they do get spotted. Stealth sequences require a fight you cannot win in case of failure, after all. However, few of the events that can happen could be utilized by the party itself to divert the enemy's attention and in such cases, they should make the stealth easier, not harder. My players decided to distract the Heldannic Knights with arson; I could see a group of Berserkers being used similarly. In fact, if the capture of the party seems inevitable, I recommend having the Berserkers show up and draw the bulk of the Heldannic forces, allowing the PCs to escape. That is, unless one has a whole sequence for escaping capture prepared, as the book does not provide an option here.

One issue I have with this module is that it really does not provide any good means for the players to discover what is actually going on. I would recommend either having the party find notes from Eric's journal somewhere in Danevirke or Silasthorp. Or at least have them find a dead traveler, killed by Heldannic Knights or the cold, whose journal may shed some light on the history of Silasthorp.

GHOSTLY HORDE

As the party approaches the ruins of ruined village Silasthorp, they are going to be ambushed by 10 specters. An extremely deadly fight for even a party of 4 5th level PCs, and the module expects them to be level 3 at this point. My alternative is to instead use an unique Mystaran monster—the ghostly horde. Ghosts of defenders of Silasthorp manifest themselves to travelers, forcing them into duels to make the story of their last stand against the Knights be remembered. It is a very climactic encounter, which pits the party against a far more even fight and doesn't risk killing them in what is basically a warm-up before the main battle. To borrow a cooking metaphor, you want to tenderize the meat here, not grind it to paste.

The fight in the tomb is not much better. Once again, four ghastrs and a Veteran is an epic challenge...for a level 5 party. If you run this for a lower-level group, I recommend replacing the ghastrs with ghouls and making Eric an agarat. The origin of agarats is unknown, so one being created by a draugr is plausible, and they command ghouls, making them a perfect addition of Mystaran flavor to the adventure. Mind you, this option can backfire if anyone in the party can turn undead and effectively trivialize the encounter. But if the party lacks Clerics or Paladins, this is a more balanced option for a low-level group. And honestly, if you do have someone play either of those two, just let them turn the ghouls, especially if the DM wasn't pulling punches earlier, as the players earned a moment in the spotlight.

Once Eric dies, the draugr will spew a few words about how his kingdom of undead was the only salvation from the horrors of Ragnarok, and flee. It's a good opportunity to foreshadow anything the DM has planned for the future. I ended up referencing events of *Wrath of the Immortals*, for example. The draugr may also become a recurring antagonist, causing similar trouble and not engaging the PCs directly, before the party is strong enough to take it head-on. He makes for a perfect campaign villain as well.

One last advice I have is to make the pendant very visible during the final encounter. Call attention to it so the players cannot blame the DM if they do not take it. Which is likely, seeing how the tomb begins to collapse with Eric's death and the draugr's departure. If the party did not take the pendant, furious Odin will put a pretty nasty curse on them, with the only way to remove it being to give away all treasure they did take from the tomb to his priesthood. It feels way too mean-spirited, considering how the module itself forgets to give the players any hint to the pendant's location or importance.

Overall, I like the ideas of *Grey Wanderer*, but it clearly wants to be a much grittier, brutal game than the system it is written for. It contrives itself to make the players' lives harder in a way that is likely to frustrate and make them not want to play with you anymore. It may work better either by

buffing the party up to a higher level, or transplanting it to something like B/X, AD&D or OSR games that are better at handling its brutality. Even then, I think the DM will have a lot of work to do. That being said, my players had a lot of fun and the adventure was a very atmospheric introduction to the Northern Reaches. So I'd say the effort was worth it.



Ghoul, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>

Lost Jaibul and Other Dark Secrets

A **MYSTARA**-**Ravenloft**

Crossover Continued

by Doctor Necrotic (Brian Rubinfeld)

ON the Mists and Worlds KNOWN

Ezra is an Immortal and I can prove it! Her origins are not rooted in some unknown land or world, but ancestral Traladara!

—*Bogdan Sokolov,*
a Heretical Priest hailing from Karamaikos

And so, it continues! My last excursion to the demiplane of dread unveiled a few new domains containing various Mystaran villains. These are lands taken from the Atrughin Plateau, the Northern Reaches, and Ylaruam. From the feedback I have been getting, the reception seems pretty good. I'd like to give a shout-out to the Piazza and the Fraternity of Shadows, for taking an interest in my little pet project. This time around, we dive into the ancient eras of Mystara, albeit after the fall of Blackmoor, near the islands south of the present-day Five Shires, via Taymora. Following this ancient land, is an examination of Black-

moor's triumphant rise, and its fall to destruction. As for Jaibul's¹ fate? It remains just as enigmatic as the magical overlord controlling it in the material world. Truth be told, Ravenloft works best when not including "outside celebrities" from other settings—or rather, pre-existing characters from said settings. As such, the powerful mage operates in the background. Just as before, these new lands are twisted shades brought out as both the memories and sins of their respective Darklords. Jaibul remains only a remnant of the Black Rajah's homeland, while a Blackmoorian colony has warped amidst new surroundings. By the grace of Immortals, a portion of Taymora was spared ... but at what cost?

Continuing the background narration and meta-narrative, the Black Rajah continues to toil and languish in frustration and confusion. The world he knew has vanished, and few are willing to help. Even as his cronies

¹ For more on Jaibul, look at *DRAGON Magazine* issue #169 and the ongoing adventures of "The Voyage of the Princess Ark".

pierce the veil of the mists and lurk among other domains, he is doomed. With current circumstances, one of the Black Rajah's potential allies, Meredoth of Nebligtode, has many reservations supporting the fallen ruler. But more on this can be found below. Before continuing with this article, I suggest reading my prior contribution in *THRESHOLD* Magazine issue #29, with the article "Beyond Nebligtode: Mystara in the Mists." This gives details of three domains from the perspective of the Black Rajah of Jaibul. With Meredoth as narrator, this article will correct, expand, and elaborate details deserving their own examination. Hark, fair traveler of the Known World and beyond, are you prepared to return to the Dimension of Dread and face new forms of horror?

solve his own problems through such foolishness. I have more to contend with than the mania of some foreigner. Meanwhile, my subordinates collect information. A distraction, more than likely. However, this knowledge may reveal others who have vanished from our world as well. I have heard of the lands Atruaghin, Sind, Ylaruam, and the collective Northern Reaches. All of them have representative prisoners, besides myself. Yet, I dare not pry too deep into these mysteries, for we are already ill-fated. With regard to Sind, I have few notes and thoughts to relate."

**From the journals of Meredoth,
Darklord of Nebligtode**

“Most troubling, I have been given word another powerful mage seeks my guidance. Improbable. Concealed to this island retreat, but I am doomed to constant distraction. Merely another thing to ponder. As my knowledge of this “Black Rajah” increased, my suffering grew as well. He is an eccentric and dangerous character—a menace! As I understand, “Rajah” is a title granted to powerful mages deemed fit to rule. Yet it is a custom far removed from Norwold or Alphatia. This Jaibul is a relative of Sindhian powers. He proclaims devised schemes to defeat that which curses us. Fool! I am wizened by age and my own experience. I see little hope attempting to escape in whatever cursed land I have found myself. Eventually, caring too much only enables the mysterious source of this horror. The Rajah shall



*The Black Rajah,
original art by Linus Andersson
<https://www.artstation.com/nplillustration>*

Let us begin with the Black Rajah. A mage of considerable power, and one of several Maharajas loosely allied with the Kingdom of Sindh. My minions do much to collect information on him. Before this great curse, I knew of Jaibul amidst lengthy scrolls and endless tomes; volumes of the world beyond the Known World. As with those before him, Black Rajah was a title granted to a mage seen fit to rule, surely beneath the might of Alphatia. His aversion towards the Maharajah Maharajah—or the great king of kings—became a thing of notoriety, gradually earning the ire and disdain of nearby rulers. This led to direct conflict with the Maharajah of Putnabad, ally of the Maha Maharajah. Through use of magics and alchemical contamination, the waters were poisoned with a mesmerizing elixir. The effects leave subjects sluggish and feeble, susceptible to suggestion. The end goal; to remove Putnabad's power, in a misguided attempt to grant the Black Rajah more. Through poison and power plays, the Black Rajah's adversaries were made weak, thereby making them easy prey to his plots. His ruse was uncovered by Prince Haldemar of Haaken and the crew of The Princess Ark. Patriots in service to the all glorious Alphatia gathered clues of slain allies, tortured slaves, witness accounts, and written testimony. This evidence made a trail leading directly to the Black Rajah. Initially the damaged Princess Ark inadvertently disrupted a desert battle, resulting in the rescue of Prince Dharjee Ashupta of Jahore. After a brief time within Putnabad, a conspirator in allegiance to the Black Rajah was unmasked, further implicating the foul mage. It was revealed that the Black Rajah had mocked "The Pearl of Putnabad" before King Chandra; and thus, should Prince Ashupta fail to build a proper palace worthy of his king, he would lose royal title and all sense of honor. In his confrontation with the Ark's crew, the Black Rajah was ultimately defeated and

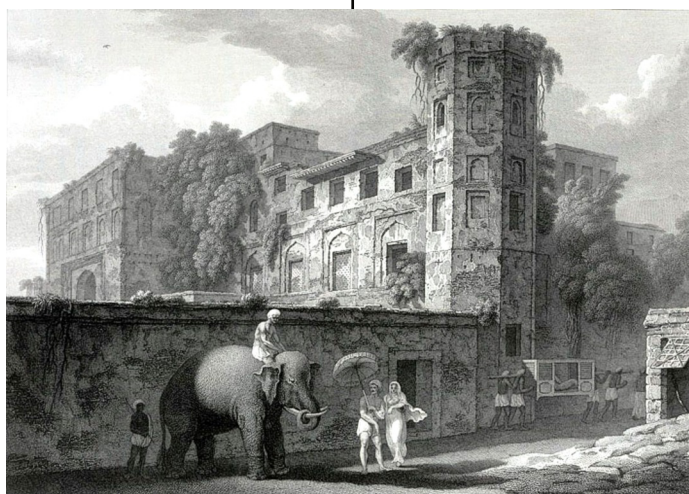
imprisoned. The Ark's crew deliberated about what to do with the villainous rajah, Prince Haldemar not wanting to keep the dangerous mage aboard his ship, when a boltman hastily threw him off the ship. Sensing danger below, the Obsidian Scorpion relic of Jaibul halted his descent; nonetheless a misty vapor enveloped him. Surely he was blessed by the Immortals, and given the chance to rule Jaibul once again! Yet, this place was not his Jaibul nor even Mystara. Though both doomed to rot in this twisted otherworld, knowledge of the Known World is still conveyed to me. By all means, the emergence of victims such as the Black Rajah is an opportunity for me to learn more of our true world... much more. But, what of this alternative Jaibul? Or should I say, Lost Jaibul?

Jaibul in this Otherworld is uncannily like its true manifestation. Many changes are subtle yet confusing. Much of the geography and settings look eerily similar to the original. However, everything else has changed. This infuriates the Black Rajah. In his mind, Jaibul was perfect; for he had made it so. Time, energy, and coin are needed for Jaibul to be restored to its former glory. But in his often delirious state, the Darklord cares not to act. This is of minor inconvenience compared to more pressing issues. He is confronted nightly by cruel dreams; those of conquest, where not only the Kingdom of Sindh, but also the nefarious Master of Hule cower before him. This vivid dream is always restlessly interrupted by distractions within the domain. The song of a bird, intrusion of a servant, or needs of his counselors drag him back to reality, sleep eluding him until the following night. This obsessive longing to return to the dream world, the Black Rajah now uses enhanced magics to protect him from outside disturbances. Disheveled and incoherent in his delirium, sanity and sense of reality slip through his grasp. His plight is reminiscent of the terrors

suffered by another. A mage of repute, known as Hazlik the Red Wizard. Still, while Hazlik fears dreams, the Black Rajah desires them more than life itself. Rituals and countless alchemical concoctions indulge his desire to sleep. As such, Jaibul suffers from his neglect. Conversely, reality depresses him. Sindh is presently out of reach. Likewise, the Master wishes neither collaboration nor manipulation; overpowering either, is now impractical. There is only Jaibul, his land. Though he is not isolated upon some mist shrouded island, as new lands now surround him. As Jaibul's woes compound, foreign enemies ply the Darklord's borders, seeking his downfall.

There is plenty of corruption to be found in this Other-world Jaibul. Cabals of mages compete for power, much as they did upon Mystara, as all manner of dark magics are employed against adversaries. Despite swearing loyalty to the rajah, their allegiance is tenuous at best, often hinging on outright betrayal. Some are enticed by subtle offers, borne on the wind by Arijanni. However; Arijanni masks his true nature. Only time will tell if the fiend is open to new allies. Moreover, others dream of taking the rajgaddi². They see the Black Rajah's might faltering, floundering in his attempts to reclaim past glory. The usurpers only need wait for an opportunity to assassinate him, as his grip on reality fades. Even his "Chosen of Jaibul"³ muse over his

deposition. Other powers surrounding the "Verdant Land," "Steaming Wrath," or "Steaming Lands"⁴ as the Rajah calls it, range from tolerant to disdainful towards this new menace. Trade syndicates have emerged to seize power as a result of the Darklord's negligence. Many maintain trade in gold, oils, and slavery. Of the last, many are outsiders captured not long after arriving in this domain. Many guilds are run by aspiring slave lords, gaining advantage through endorsement of the almighty mage of the land. Curiously, many guild members gain magical gifts from outside of Jaibul. Despite these challenges to the Rajah's reign, the Magocracy of Jaibul remains independent from other powers, even more so than on the Prime Material. Reliance on powerful magic wards off forces from Sri Raji and Kalakeri (which may well be a dream of the Black Rajah) much how Sind was kept at bay upon Mystara. Time will tell if this kingdom is worth examination and alliance, or a threat to be extinguished. Still, Jaibul does not lack defense beyond magic; his soul isn't the only one damned to this place. A vile underground market allows a slave trade to thrive. While there is more resistance to slave acquisition and trade, the Chosen still manage to obtain victims in Jaibul's name. Surrounding realms expect the Darklord to curb or cease this practice; yet by the Black Rajah's desires, the trade has expanded to the black markets of bor-



² An ornate throne used by rulers for important occasions.

³ The Chosen of Jaibul comes from the *Tome of Mystara*

article, "[Espionage Organizations in Mystara](#)"

⁴ For more on this reboot of the Verdant Lands Cluster, see the *Daemons & Deathrays* blog for the [Steaming Lands](#).

dering lands. Sri Raji and Kalakiri have also established criminal underground syndicates, harkening back to the dark olden days. The Chosen of Jaibul maintain remnants of a spy network, observing rival domains in the name of protecting the Black Rajah, albeit his fading ambitions. Though The Chosen still find themselves in service to their arcane master; their patience with him has begun to wear, as they wait on a man who vanishes for hours or days, often to his own fancies and depressive gratification.

My conclusion; this arcanist is unhinged and therefore incompetent ... especially for my own designs. Those miraculously still loyal pose more threat, but only if I am discovered. For such a once powerful leader, his persistent pleading is ironic. His actions are more akin to groveling servant boy than leader. Let him scream within his dream-scape, for none can hear. I speculate his new masters lie within the Court of Dreams, from the mysterious Nightmare Lands.⁵ This assumes the Dimension of Nightmares has not consumed him first. A topic for a later date, as I have more important objectives. I hear those on the outside world aware of my fall from grace, use the opportunity to fabricate moral tales and twisted fables about me. Yet let them fear me; for not even Blackheart could handle my knowledge and power. Inferior Alphantians, all of them! But, this foolish rajah, astonishing, given the fact he is aware other victims are drawn from our world. This covets far more than Mystarans. Meanwhile, I possess more victims. Let them recall troubles upon the Known World and beyond, before their eternal imprisonment.

⁵ Information on The Nightmare Lands and The Nightmare Court can be found in The AD&D 2e "Nightmare Lands" Boxed Set. If using this scenario in a solely Mystara campaign, as opposed to crossover scenarios, the Dimension of Nightmares could substitute for the Nightmare Lands.

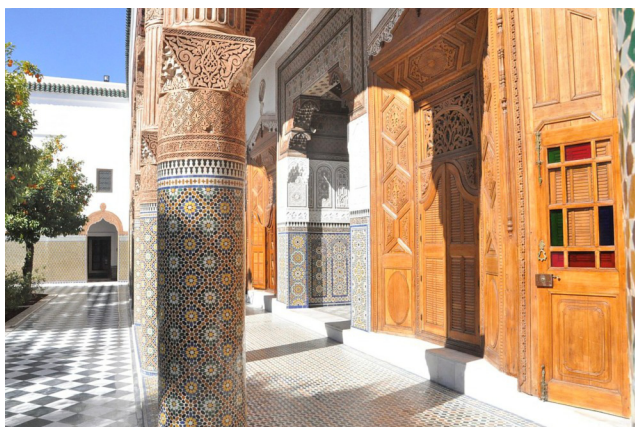
Reexamining the Black Rajah

The Bandit City of Ylar

This charlatan researcher seems prone to mistakes and oversight; more concerned with lulling himself into a trance-like state through magic than uncovering arcane secrets. Or perhaps, lost within himself, his underlings do not share his devotion to accuracy. Utterly pathetic. The most glaring matter concerns the confusion of two sobriquets for the vicious clan of disguised were-jackals. I am confident the clan cannot pierce my defenses; their secret is mine alone. Upon their homeworld of Terra, they are marked by the sins of Abdul Alhazred. This mad monk has connections to the profane and cosmic. This macabre work of passion and hysteria is known as "Al'Azif" or "The Necronomicon." It is unknown if this unholy grimoire has found itself upon this land of "The Mists". Should this transpire, apocalyptic revelations may occur, if rumors pertaining to the strange book are true. Such admissions appear vague mutterings and crazed half-thoughts, lacking time to substantiate these rumors. But, what of this tainted Alhazred bloodline? Even now, these sins plague the realm of Ylar; a land remarkably similar to Ylaruam. However; Clan Zalafred is a misrepresentation coined by the Ylari after first encountering the self-styled "Clan Kalzafred" as they fled Pharazia. To reiterate, Clan Kalzafred is their "accurate" alias. It would seem native Abbashanni dialects confuse the nature of this new family of refugees. Regardless, the Black Rajah repeats this inaccuracy.

Another oversight heeds precise details regarding these Mystaran prisons. Each abode hosts some means of torment relevant to its grim victims' sins. Yet what determines their fates? I know not, still talk of "Dark Powers," insinuates the power of some Immortal. Insanity; pure Insanity!!

Such things will only be mentioned in jest or as a proxy. To the best of my abilities, I will rectify these errors ... if only for my own folly. As noted, errors exist regarding scrutiny of this Ylaruam fraud. First off, delving into Clan Alhazred—distorted as Kalzafred—indicates it was not a Ra-Hotep Shrine within this realm. On the contrary; one of his victims, a maddened high priestess to some forgotten Immortal, is trapped within. Her faith speaks of a long lost Nithia. Imprisoned since ancient times, she seeks revenge against both Ra-Hotep and the Black Rajah. With Ra-Hotep out of reach, the Black Rajah has become the focus of her ire. Unfortunately, she is oblivious to the fact she has also become just as much a monster as Ra-Hotep. It is likely by her influence the undead emerge to attack the forsaken Bandit City. According to the Bandit King, tales of the undead were far rarer during its day near Abbashan. Alongside these grievances, little description of the wretched city of rogues and scoundrels is found among long forgotten scrolls; described only as a dizzying and illogical urban labyrinth. Its construction is akin to the decks of a colossal sailing vessel. Though sand and stone comprise its structure, metallic beams support this impossible citadel. No true districts or wards subdivide the city; nonetheless, a bazaar is sculpted within the city's center. The palace composes perhaps the most recognizable



feature within this fortress city, furnished with lavish comforts stolen from across Ylaruam. Here the Bandit King often finds refuge, consumed by fear and suspicion towards all that surrounds him.

Vasfar

Other Mystaran prisons were poorly conveyed by the mad sorcerer. Vasfar is a frigid waste resembling the winters of the Northern Reaches. Vasfar is a fabricated name though, unlike anything in the lexicons of Vestland, Ostland or Soderfjord. Such a land is far more familiar to me than Sind, Ylaruam or the Atruaghin Plateau. More than vengeful ice nymphs, accursed beasts, and cruel spirits threaten the Juletine,⁶ while putrid undead Draugr stalk the grounds near an eerie hermitage. Worst among Vasfar's perils are giants haunting the frost biting winds. A far greater menace than the Rajah or the whole of Vasfar realizes. Thankfully, for most they are merely a tale, except those daring to tread into impenetrable storms and frozen winter forests. The simple and feebleminded call them "Dread Giants," I cannot use such terms outside of jest. During violent blizzards, the giants traverse through the blinding winds and snow in search of quarry. Enormous lumbering humanoids, whose form and features are obscured by the merciless weather; abduct victims for either prey, servitude, or entertainment. Despite these brazen attacks, the Vasfar Giants are not foolish. Common hearsay claims they keep humans and demi-humans as slaves, which may be quite true; often degrading them to menagerie like exhibits for amusement. These chattel slaves are bred for labor or pleasure, taught only to carry out

⁶ A winter holiday season within Vasfar, often filled with celebratory lights but also tales of grim monsters. It has no direct precedent in Soderfjord, Ostland or Vestland.



the extent of their assigned tasks. Instructed in the giants' language, they are now unfamiliar with Mystaran human and demi-human languages. A solitary secret known to few on Mystara, one that should defy my knowledge, the Vasfar Giants now set their sights on another servitor race; the Modrigswerg or "Rot Dwarves."

While far weaker clones than the real world race, these dwarves toil away; conducting vile and dark crafts in the giants' service. Their abominable deeds are often coupled with a brutal sacrifice. Woe to the commissioner not ready to pay with their soul or through some ironic fate. The same fate awaits those foolish enough to wield rot dwarf relics. Slaves doomed to the unbearable conditions of the Rot Dwarves often perish, if they do not slip into insanity first, much like the dwarves themselves; unless becoming corrupted horrors like the Vasfar Giants. One need not seek out these creatures, for they find you. Unlike other giant servants, they are invulnerable to the snow, wind, and freezing temperatures of mountain blizzards. Capable of briefly emerging near settlements, lest their olden curse

horrify and enrage outsiders as it has in their Mystaran home. Attempting to break through the jagged north mountains is a death sentence without guidance from the wicked giants or their dwarven minions, for only they know the way! It is said another prisoner dwells here. A former Ice Giant, known as Claeg, sealed the fate of the original Darklord. Myth alleges the desolate soul is buried deep within these mountains; forced to suffer this torment in a catatonic state; forever confined to his deep mountain prison. The fallen giant's thoughts and emotions are believed to usher the giants through his conjured blizzard, effectively closing the borders of the mountain. The Ice Giant turned "Dread Giant" is not Vasfar's Darklord and is likely the forsaken spirit of the prior Darklord's machinations. I believe this to a degree, given what I know of domains and their Darklords. This giant is cursed, but is an unlikely inheritor of this land, as his curse does not reflect the nature of the current domain. Should he be purged, there will be no major revolution in this land, as savage storms will continue regardless. While Vasfar borders two lands to its east, its north, south, and western borders are met with nothing but void.

The giants and their mountain kingdom is cause for concern. But could the Darklord be the eccentric hermit Nils? The implication he is the mists' prisoner is baffling, yet one I can humor. Nils's existence is humble, living in a small homestead sufficient for a large family, but inhabited solely by him. Unforgiving weather constantly surrounds the hermitage, dying down to light snow flurries along the holding's boundary. The air continually lingers around freezing. A simple cottage sits contently upon a small slope; overlooking pens for hardy elk, goats, and cattle. Despite being the sole resident, Nils rarely emerges from his home; yet the animals seem well fed and cared for, as though the strange pall of death sur-

rounding the land does not affect them. In fact, the implausible croft seems quite vibrant. Against all odds, even crops manage to survive the chill blustering down from the heights. Carts lie about, supposedly in preparation for an unexpected harvest. The ambience should feel inviting, especially because of the unexpected vitality, but is dreadfully uncanny in its current environment. This unseen influence apparently affects the unnatural exuberance of Nils as well. Despite looking truly ancient, he is still capable of great feats strenuous for a warrior half his age. His worst behavior arises when he is challenged by visitors, disputing stories of his mighty warrior past. Otherwise, he reluctantly offers brief hospitality amidst the brewing storm. Yet, this is no act of selflessness, as his guests are always delivered to the Draugr's maw. Due to Nils' curse, word of his achievements never travels far. Tales of great triumph are distorted into the mundane. His deeds are misremembered or forgotten entirely, or likely another story captivates the masses; assuming any traveling skalds aren't killed by the draugr first. The Juletime horrors detract the Darklord's focus; furthermore, the indifference of the undead towards him and his lively homestead puzzles me. No; angers me. The audacity of life against the mighty powers of necromancy!

Few of my spies survived their encounter with the cursed olden warrior, but he is surely a piece of the puzzle within Vasfar's mysteries. The Rajah infers the hermit is similar to the Draugr; however, he refers to Nils as a "High Level Ancient Dead," when using terms like "Haugbui" or "Gjenganger" might better suit the hexed hermit. But, if he were a Darklord, what course shall I take? Could one empathize with his plight, elevating him beyond mediocrity? Gleaned from archaic manuscripts and forgotten tomes, I have discovered Nils was always an insecure and malignant narcissist.

His undoing, the Egg of Coot's dark influence. The Elder Demon penetrated Nils' mind, exploiting fears of losing fame and glory at the hands of comrades. The hermit's own journals speak to his woes. Back and forth, he wrestled with aiding the people of Vasfar or succumbing to Claeg's schemes of vengeance. Ultimately, his test of redemption was a failure, like countless prisoners before him. Wretched Black Rajah, can you do nothing right! Confusing Nils with Lars Yoricksen! Yet, perhaps his misconception is almost pardonable. Both hail from similar lands, albeit distantly separated by time. Additionally, killing another Darklord often results in one inheriting the curse and domain. My studies of Invidia have taught me this, as this befell Invidia's Witch Queen once taking the throne from frothing Baron Bakholis⁷. Nils was inconsequential prior to replacing Lars. Should one of the Chosen of Jaibul assassinate the Black Rajah, it is possible he will bequeath this same fate. Yet, I shall dwell on this domain and Darklord no longer, for there are other lands that require explanation.

Land of the Scarred Crag

The Scarred Crag are the last domains described through vexing letters, convoluted notes, and general musings of this deluded madman. Much like their Atrughin home, two tribes dwell upon a towering plateau. I doubt the two tribes dwelling here exist upon Mystara. The Opossum Tribe are this domain's true inhabitants, while the Jaguar Tribe are outlanders of The Mists. Is the former tribe a creation of The Mists? The latter have built upon the plateau, erecting sacred shrines to their exalted Immortals. My spies succeeded where the Rajah's failed, discovering the

⁷ More on this backstory for Invidia can be found in Ravenloft Gazetteer IV

holy site of this land's conquerors. A sinister temple, granted to a maniacal high priest with delusions of grandeur, crowns their architecture. Many morbid ceremonies are held there, sacrificing the tribe's enemies as offerings to Danel, their patron Immortal. A stout stone structure cradles a pyramid jutting skyward. Beneath this vaunted ritual altar lay many concealed chambers and oratories for various purposes. Its depths contain holding cells for soldiers' conversion into werejaguars, ritual grounds to appease Danel, and warded alcoves holding all matter of potent objects. The artifacts in service to the Great Spirit, are relics of the Opossum Tribe's prior age. According to Opossum tribal shamans, daily worship promotes health, as well as a deeper connection to their original patron through dreams. In the current age, it is rather likely Danel... or his priests proselytizing the False History of The Mists.

Tribesmen claim communion with lesser spirits, or perhaps even the Great One. It's possible their connection and faith have also led them to The Nightmare Lands, the very place likely haunting the Black Rajah. The Jaguar Tribe's shamans have destroyed a few Opossum Tribe relics and idols, to grasp their hidden secrets. For greater works, true artifacts, they research methods to nullify their effects. Cursed Darokinian weapons and armor are stowed here as well. Users of these entropy tainted artifacts often rapidly wither, which greatly intrigues the Darklord. However; his bestial side looks upon these mighty weapons, relics, and artifacts with a primordial fear.



Members of the Jaguar Tribe are compelled to make daily pilgrimages to the temple grounds to give oblations. Rising from its unnatural escarpment, the temple is conspicuous, and a constant symbol of surveillance and oppression. Attempts to destroy the temple have failed, and rebellions have been quickly suppressed.

Atop the central structure sits a sturdy and ornate altar. Below this sacrificial altar are private cells for prayer and several hidden niches for the lycanthropic infected clergy. Likewise, there are secrets within a Darokinian outpost beyond rumors of a "dragon" lurking in the woods.⁸ Perhaps for this

⁸ See article "Beyond Neglitode" from the previous issue of THRESHOLD Magazine (#29)

reason, the lost Elk Tribe village is placed upon the map, while ruins of the Darokinian settlers are ignored; as is the home of “the Dragon”. Just as the lost tribe's spirits were bound to the land, so were the failed settlers. Much of their garb and gear are still found within the ruins. While some Jaguar tribal warriors are unafraid of using enemy weapons, armor, and relics; most sense the deeply profane energies afflicting the discarded objects. The grounds are encircled with heptadecagon runic circles, each casting unique curses upon those who dare trespass. The mystical symbols' origins are vague, purging knowledge of the Darokinians. It is said the curses were inscribed by the Immortals before the Opossum Tribe fell and The Mists rose to claim them. Perhaps this tribe was already part of the mists, before being revealed to the high priest. Regardless, no member of the Opossum Tribe willingly enters the ruins of trappers, loggers and traders. Those doing so are often outcast, escaping the false visions of their oppressive captors. However, lingering upon this forsaken land takes its toll. The soil is infertile, the water contaminated, and the wildlife feeble and insipid. Living around this blighted area has its consequences. Those who possess dark secrets are transformed just as the dark werebeast afflicted soldiers in service to the Jaguar Tribe. In fact, their bloodline hails from their opossum tribal namesake. The werepossum in human form appears disheveled and wiry, having frantic or sour temperaments. They would rather kill than infect another, preferring to keep the curse confined to their bloodline. In alternate forms, they keep juveniles close at all times. Individuals infected with the disease, not being members of werepossum families, are ostracized from the main tribe, living on the fringes of society in haunted ruins. Despite being outcasts, the werepossum families and rogue stragglers independently fight the Jaguar Tribe occupiers. However,

like the opossum, intense trauma induces a state of torpor. Yet for the were-beasts, this lethargy takes effect upwards to one hour, during which time healing is greatly enhanced.

This prelude has been prolonged beyond intention, but this gathered information has proved advantageous. Hereafter, I will refrain from commenting on the Black Rajah's inconsistencies. ⁹ The agent “S” is more forthcoming than Azalin Rex anticipated; a foolish misstep. Her espionage provides even less reason to fully trust that Wizard-King. He is no ally. Azalin shall maintain his station of Darkon, as I uphold mine in Nebligtode. I have an incapacity towards Norwold. I speak of my own world, because I know success shall be mine, despite my imprisonment in this realm. May Azalin find this “Oerth”, and therefore never trouble me again. Thereafter learning new forms of magic, inferior to those of mighty Alpathia. I mock these endeavors. He may be master of the undying, but so am I; relinquishing living subordinates, undaunted by his secret order of lawmen and defenders, the “Kargatane”. Should Azalin try meddle into my affairs, he shall face far more enemies than the torments of Falkovnia! I hold many secrets to vanquish them, yet simply seek to break the curses that bind. Yet the Black Rajah may have uncovered truths too. I shall not muddle misleading evidence with confirmed fact(s). These realms of Mystaran past, are long buried and sentenced to obscurity.

⁹ A character in the 3e Ravenloft Gazetteer line who was essential to a metaplot surrounding Azalin Rex of Darkon.

Tyoraam (Island of Terror/Sea of Sorrows)

Land of Origin:

Taymora¹⁰ post BC 2300 (Mystaran Calendar);
Emerging 740 Barovian Calendar as an Island of Terror;
755 Barovian Calendar along the Sea of Sorrows

Leadership:

Empress Jahei'irias of Tyoraam

Darklord:

Jahei'irias, Daughter of Jadikira, C(E)
Human Nosferatu Vampire Wizard 17

Curse:

Suffers fear and anguish over Taymora's fall and doom, through vivid visions each playing out differently. Likewise, her beauty was taken from her, as she is now a hideous and monstrous creature. Both of these things have driven her insane. Her distance and alienation also risks Tyoraam being taken from her clutches by rivals and false allies.

Population:

20,000

Encounters:

(Common) cows/bulls, snakes, sharks, goats;
(Uncommon) nosferatu, zombies, madmen;
(Rare) gray philosophers, vampires of Thanatos, lycanthropes, fleshcraft abominations, giant snakes

Tyoraam map description

The mainland is a literal island, surrounded by rocky shores as well as ruins towards the domain borders in the seas (The Sea of Sorrows). The land mass is perhaps 10 - 12 miles long; larger than the Scarred Crags, as the island chain takes up possibly 3 - 4 miles of water and land both north-by-northwest of the big island and southeast of it. Tyoraam contains various names more befitting of more modern Karamaikos, Thyatis, and other potentially Hellenic inspired lands in Mystara; to show that this New Taymora is slowly moving from a Pro-to-Greek inspired culture to classical Greek, still retaining more of Taymoran aesthetic.

The island is a mostly flat sub-tropical land, especially towards its interior. Urban sprawl beyond the city-state, named after Tayma, can be found in the center of the island. It continues for several miles. Several smaller villages dot the nearby area. Likewise, the city of Ichthyo acts as a port on the northern side of the island, while the seas surrounding the island are turbulent and likely contain numerous shipwrecks. A mile or so from Ichthyo is a large temple to Tanit, which remains nearly intact despite the ages. Within the southwestern quadrant's center, an emerging town stands in defiance of the undead rulership. The town of Ílios exists as the hub for the cult of Idu. It's possible there was vampiric influence in the area, but was likely exterminated. However, blight has caused this settlement to noticeably wither. Several abandoned villages and towns dot the domain, especially in blight marked regions. Near the main city is also a lake known as The Sisters' Lake, which has profound psychological effects on visitors.

¹⁰ For more on Taymora, consult its entry in "[Historical Areas of the Outer World](#)" section of the Atlas resource at the Vaults of Pandius.



Besides the two main urban areas, the region is mostly lush and filled with abundant natural life, despite necromancy dominating the land. However, there is an emergence of blighted areas in the domain, where life becomes tainted, sickly, and sterile. Manifestations of the undead. These signs are becoming a worry for the populace. Blight lands that haven't been healed tend to exist in less populous areas. Often disappearing after being restored by the populace, they do not reappear elsewhere for some time. Currently, few exist.

Other smaller islands exist as part of an archipelago. Ulgraash is a deathly wasteland devoid of life. It is gray, practically ashen. It's 4 miles southeast of the major island, with the coasts well guarded to prevent trespassers. The other is a small archipelago composed of mostly submerged seamounts relatively close together, but each too small to be their own island. On it lies a penal colony called Imlekiug. It is 5 miles north-by-northwest of the main island. - *From an anonymous Terran cartographer*



Jahei'irias, original art by Linus Andersson
<https://www.artstation.com/nplillustration>

Domain Description

Jaheir'irias, a vampire embraced by Jadikira, was set to preserve her sire's bloodline and power. Jadikira sensed something wrong in Taymora's future, yet was never fully certain. A plan of succession was enacted in secret in hope of ensuring the Vampire Queen's power. However, Jaheir'irias proved more self-absorbed than her superior. Despite her own talents of visions and soothsaying, she was oblivious to much of her present surroundings. This filled her sire, Jadikira,

with contempt and great concern. The spawn could lead to the unraveling of her land. The Vampire Queen tolerated this, while Tamorazz continued to be a prominent and important facet of Taymoran culture and power. While Jaheir'irias lacked a prophecy as potent and mighty as the threat of Ghaeranatos's forces upon early Taymora, she was still gifted incredible visions of her own. But one in particular terrified her. The doom of her people through a watery grave. Taymora is shaken to its core, sinking beneath the waves. Such a traumatic vision pushed her to learn manipulative charismatic arts from

a gifted nosferatu [*Mystaran nosferatu*]¹¹. However, these nosferatu differ from those in the Demiplane of Dread. Mystaran versions are more in touch with their humanity than other vampires, able to drink blood without fully draining their hosts. Likewise, they have an easier time of blending with mortal hosts, compared to other creatures of the night. It is hard to say if Jaheir'irias was as in touch with her human side, given her desire to exploit her divining abilities and compose boundless lies. Her flagrant abuse of divinations, charismatic wit, and natural beauty led to the ruination of many. Receiving no negative visions resulting from her actions, she persisted. Her final doom was the result of the destruction of a Temple of Light, her minions massacring all within. Her grim gifts robbed the people of hope, as she relished a sadistic joy before mists claimed her.

The Sea of Sorrows warns of this land as a backwards and degenerate place, seemingly lost in time despite the fact it has evolved from the Taymoran culture. Reaching it proves perilous, the mysterious journey a source of numerous seafaring tales. According to lore, a mistway connects the coasts of Valachan to Tyoraam. Prior to sailing beyond Valachan, the ruins of Taymoran civilization can be seen in the depths. However, Valachan is



not the only domain where one can witness ruins. The Ichthyan Sea of the Broken Cog connects to Tyoraam, should sailors seek out sunken civilizations. Within these ruins, horrific undead and chondrichthyan monsters lurk. However; treasures and surviving relics reveal clues of what happened to the real Taymorans. Without prior knowledge of the domain, it is impossible to find. Bioluminescent algae dance upon the Sea of Sorrows, illuminating safe passage into Tyoraam. Venturing inside the ruins center requires their presence; revealing the taint of cursed wards and undead¹².

The City-State of Tyoraam sits atop an island surrounded by dark oceanic waters. Warm currents along the southern Sea of Sorrows maintains the Taymoran climate, with many months intolerable in the oppressive heat. Salvagers and fishermen

¹¹ Nosferatu Vampires can be found in AC9/DMR2 for BECM I or the *Mystara Monstrous Appendix* for AD&D 2E. This modern incarnation is close to the weakened form of most of the domain vampires.

¹² The undead and curses surrounding the border claim those who lack the awareness of their presence.

along the coastline claim distorted structures lay beneath the waters. Jaheir'irias fears all of Taymora has fallen; her dominion the sole remnant of its forgotten glory.¹³ The Tyoraam people remain resilient, persevering in the face of decline and hopelessness. Many still seek to overthrow the necrocracy that restrains their land. Even then, they endure as a pale shade of their Mystaran descendents. Much knowledge was lost in the time when the mists revealed the land. Lore regarding Taymora's fall within this domain is purely False History, as the actual event transpired centuries after. The living exist in humiliation, seeking to exist beyond mere sustenance, at the mercy of their undead rulers. Much as the vampiric nosferatu act as parasites on the living, the cityfolk of Tayma tear down, scrap and repurpose whole districts in order to survive, to the humiliation of Jaheir'irias. Traditions like Blood Tributes continue, even as more living subjects rebel against it. This bloodlust pushes a thirst for decadence and luxury from the vampiric overlords, as faded glory and miasmic gloom hovers over all.

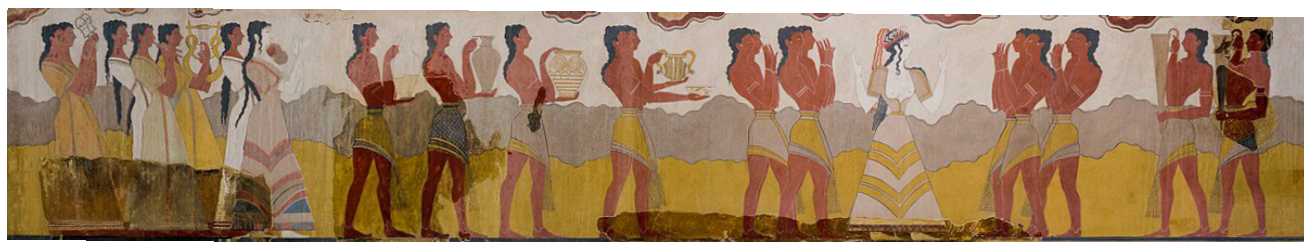
But, what of the land and its people? Their connection is blatant. From evading conquerors and performing dark rituals for survival, to their undead rulership. But just as signs of collapse were in the original Mystaran empire, the same persists in this domain. A False History tells a gruesome fate behind Sisters' Lake, a body of water some miles south of the main city. Allegedly, another Vampire Priestess was slain by undead hunting rebels. The rebellion soon fell apart, as most were slain by other nosferatu in retaliation. A profound melancholy now haunts the area, afflicting living and undead alike. This isn't the only sorrow to affect the masses. Their empress

is regarded not with love and respect, but fear and horror. In many ways, she suffers in ways familiar to Count Strahd of Barovia. However, her corrupted gifts and form make her more monstrous than "The Devil Strahd." Due to narratives of a mostly sunken kingdom, the people refer to her as "The Antediluvian."¹⁴ Few have ever interacted with her, as she is forced to act through proxies that she fears carry some ulterior agenda. Even worse for the High Priestess, many religious movements have sprung in reaction to the overbearing oppression of the undead. Idu, Mahes, and Protius rival Tanit and Thanatos. The Temple of Tanit by the fishing and port city of Icthy is seen just as much of a blight as it is seen as a place of honor.

The people of Tyoraam are born to endure much punishment and pain. Their ancestors were among those who willingly took part in the sacrificial rituals for survival. Openly, the people follow the holy orders of Tanit, daring not to speak out too boldly in the face of the nosferatu that lurk nearby. Traditions and values have been subtly bent towards the growing rebellion. The fashion of the era has begun to change, to reflect times advancing regardless of the stagnant rulers. While men and women still keep their hair neat, especially for higher classes, the styles reflect new attitudes. Braids that curl and connect have become popular among men and women alike, though it's often longer for women. Nonetheless, tying it back was considered more proper. For the wardrobe, simple use of color was no longer enough. For the wealthier, elaborate patterns detailing a lineage was a prominent part of garb. The Tyoraami have likewise embraced newer techniques and technologies, pushing them into an

¹³ According to the Mystara 2300 BC series, Taymora sinks by BC 1,750.

¹⁴ Meaning from before the flood. Alternatively, absurdly archaic and old-fashioned.



Iron Age and eventually Classical culture¹⁵. This in particular unnerved the nosferatu, as wealthier merchants and more powerful mortals were openly challenging the old aristocracy. This has resulted in suppressive policies to ensure a traditional Taymoran garb, much to the discomfort of the denizens. Likewise, the symbology of snakes, blood, death and more have caused similar feelings. Beyond the land, sightings of foreign ships have brought not just uncertainty and concern, but also excitement for change. These ships and a wider sea marked the end of a 15 year seclusion, cut off by poisonous and dangerous mists. While most foreigners found the Tyoraami to be primitive and disturbing, mortals felt more emboldened through trade and outside contact. Minor embargoes have cut down on this trade, assuming sailors haven't met their fate upon the rest of Tyoraam's archipelago.

Two other islets and chains make up the rest of the domain. Ulgraash is a barren wasteland filled with undead. Tyoraam proper uses it as a piece of propaganda, a fate to those who question the protection of the High Priestess. Nothing grows on Ulgraash, nor does anything live there. It is gray in color and ashen looking. Those who spend too long battling the undead upon that island risk carrying a blight, which afflicts the soil and eventually other forms of life. Imlekiug, a name coined by an invading tribe, remains another place of horror. According to False History, this was a penal colony destroyed by its own

prisoners after a successful revolt. In reality, it is a dumping ground for the shame and failures of the ancient empire, given new life in the Demiplane of Dread. The somewhat linked chain of islands are also dotted with Taymoran ruins, either salvaged for other purposes or left to rot. Among the fiercest of the prisoners is the Lukka, a form of lycanthrope magically engineered by followers of Nyx and used by the nosferatu. The former foot soldiers turned against their masters, resulting in their quarantine. Now they hunt other monsters and humanoids on the isle, unintentionally aiding the Darklord's interests. Creating offspring or infecting new victims is rare, as the Lukka consider themselves to be a mistake and wish to die out naturally. Other problems come from all sorts of undead experiments and the results of fleshcrafting creations; abominations that are sickening to look at. After threats of warfare began to settle down, these sculpted tools of murder saw no further use. Rather than becoming a threat, they were confined to Imlekiug. Mundane rejects and exiles have been confined here for being too dangerous or seditious. Most of these humans and demihumans have gone mad within this prison. Some have proved lucky, making themselves leaders of these penal colony communes. They are immensely untrusting of non-Taymorans, assuming them to be mercenaries sent to slay them. Both of these places are little compared to Jahei'irias herself.

The Darklady Jahei'irias is no mere mad hag. Her powers of visions, deep foresight and more are perhaps legendary. While

¹⁵ See also Ravenloft Cultural Levels

divination almost always fails within the mists or is greatly altered, she sees with a distinct clarity—all things present and future are known to her, as much as the Dark Powers allow. She's also capable of unleashing mental attacks on those not initiated, causing paralysis, madness and death. However, her own strange powers and illness can sometimes cause her to go into psychotic fits, causing her to lose all perception of reality around her. And even then, she is still of a noble nosferatu bloodline. Her own strange bloodline powers have seemed to accidentally cannibalize her missing "sisters", perhaps as a boon from the "Dark Powers." Such practice of consuming bloodlines and power, called Diablerie, is deeply forbidden and shunned by her own vampiric cadres. She has displayed the illusionary power of Lovanara and psychic power of Durjas, bloodlines and powers belonging to previous Vampire Queens. As such, she has gained power to weave disguises and craft fanciful tricks, but these fail when disguising herself magically. Likewise, she is capable of reading minds, seeking truth and rarely digging into the memories of her targets. She thinks of these as mere disciplines of the blood, due to her muddled mind barely able to recall the other Daughters of Taymora too well.

The nosferatu bloodline from Mystara is a bit different than that of Ravenloft. The true roots of the Taymoran nosferatu truly shine here, albeit twisted by the powers of The Mists. Those confined to this realm have been stripped of many bloodline powers, save for that of the Darklord and her former allies. Most of these nosferatu are closer to their contemporary Mystaran relatives in terms of power, but suffer curses and strife like other vampires in the Demiplane of Dread. The Mystaran nosferatu connection to their humanity is mostly lost in the mists, as they are as ravenous

and overwhelmed by a sinister hunger. Likewise, they drain blood and deal damage akin to a Ravenloft nosferatu, on top of whatever residual Bloodline powers they might have. Like her fellow kindred, Jahei'irias has a presence that is unwelcoming towards life. Unlike other vampires in the mists, their touch doesn't kill flora so much as warp it over time. Continuous exposure to an elder blooded vampire causes plant life to take a sickly grey tone, warping into forms that seem more threatening as well. The plants are also deadly to eat, resulting in regions called "blighted zones." Fortunately, most farms have not been affected, but some have shown signs. Likewise, animal life in the area begins to act strange. Predators and prey alike have begun to thirst until drying into desiccated corpses. The only way around this is through blood. Some of the beasts have become full vampires, suffering dearly in the sunlight.

Closing the Domain: Those who attempt to flee begin to suffer delusional visions of apocalyptic calamity, becoming worse the more you think about all that is familiar to you. The effects of this damage health, requiring a saving throw or taking 6d6 damage per minute under the effects of the mental power, unless a successful save to resist is rolled. Regardless, this causes the victim to make a roll against madness. This ends if the victim retreats back towards the domain proper. Worse yet, their vulnerable state can leave them as easy prey for vampires patrolling near the edges of the domain.

Darkheath (Island of Terror /Broken Cog Cluster)¹⁶

Land of Origin:

Pre-Great Rain of Fire Blackmoor roughly BC 3450–3350 (Mystaran Calendar); Emerging 755 Barovian Calendar as an Island of Terror; 759 Barovian Calendar along the Eastern Ichthyos Sea (across from Zherisia and New Rockbaecche)

Leadership:

Governor Reginald Higgins III

Darklord:

Fleet Admiral Stefan P. Holden, Blackmoorian Imperial Navy, N(E) Human Fighter 11

Curse:

Times of triumph and victory are always cut short by another tragedy or conflict. Also, despite retaining his handsome features well into his years, he cannot appreciate this. Every reflection, such as from a mirror or even a puddle, renders him as a beastman in a tattered version of his garb to taunt him.

Population:

7,000 (human and demihumans); unknown (beastmen and other monsters)

Encounters:

(Common) beastmen (*eastern Darkheath*), elk, black bears;
(Uncommon) wolves, enemy soldiers (*on the sea*), mad scientists;
(Rare) beastmen (*western Darkheath*), gray philosophers, ghosts, zomborg, blighted dead¹⁷

¹⁶ For more on the Broken Cog Cluster, a series of domains with a dark steampunk theme, please see this article on the [Daemons and Deathrays blog](#). This expands on the domains of Rockbaecche, Zherisia, Nosos, Alleigosto and Phyresha .

¹⁷ Zomborg and blighted dead are found in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue#27, in the “Threats

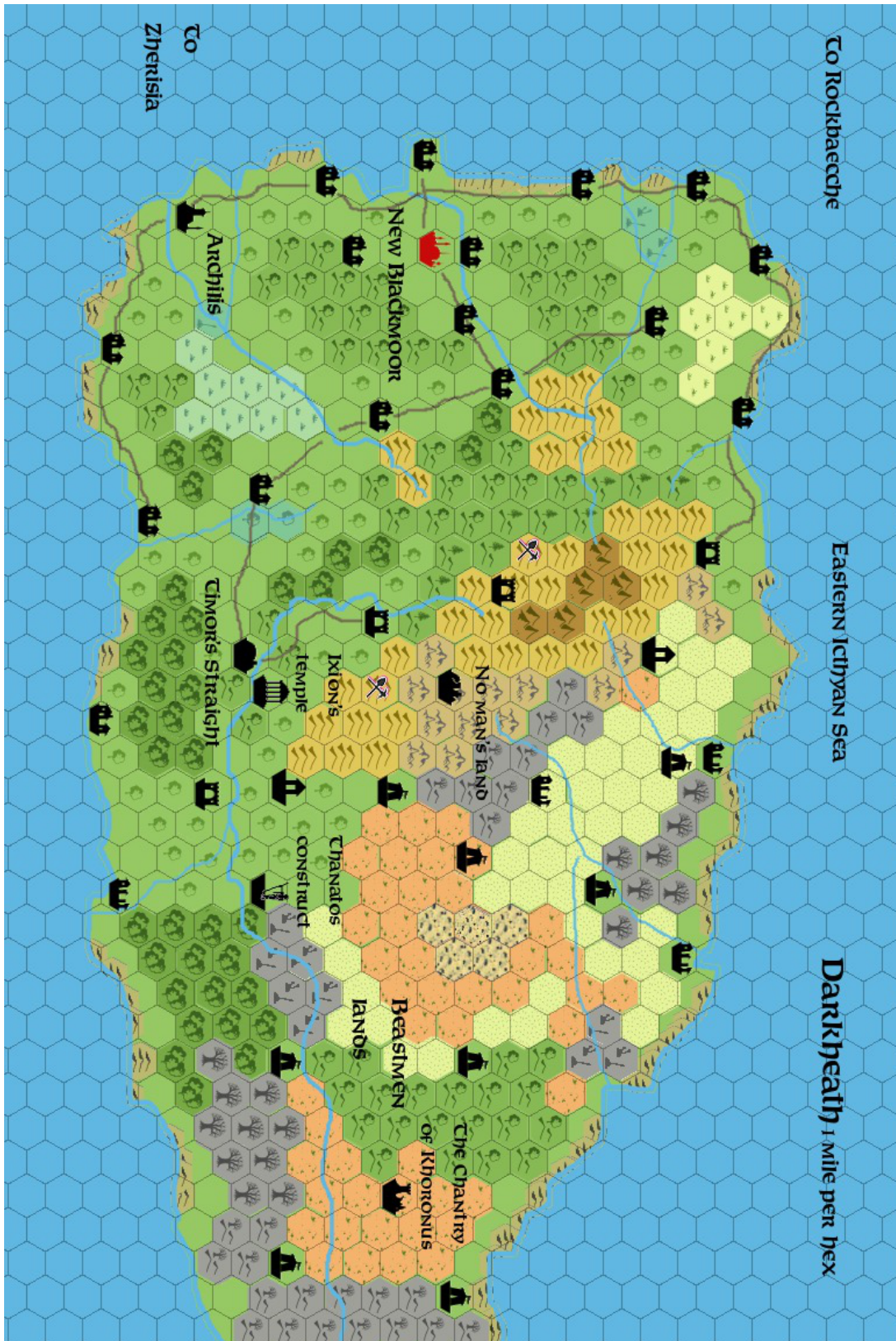
Darkheath Map Description

A remote island off the coast of the eastern Ichthyos Sea (See also: Broken Cog Cluster). It's to the east of Zherisia¹⁸ and slightly southeast of Rockbaecche. The coastline is beyond the domain border, but is sometimes visible.

The lands themselves are eventually cut off and are on the east side of the domain, which is far smaller than the west side. It's possible that Darkheath isn't an island at all, just a jutting landmass, like much of the Broken Cog Cluster. Much of the western side is more civil and hospitable, seeing numerous towns surrounding the near-coastal touching “New Blackmoor”. This capital city ranges for nearly 2 miles, with roads forking to the smaller towns and settlements under its watch. The further east one goes, the only occupation by Blackmoorians is from forts and then into outposts. Beyond that is a series of ruins, camps occupied by cultists and tribal grounds for the Beastmen. In the center is a war torn No Man's Land, with wreckage strewn about, a glowing haze, flooded ditches and more. It's not an evenly divided line, it's rather jagged and goes through hills, streams, rivers and valleys. The no man's land is the dividing point between a beastman containment zone and the rest of the colony. Despite the majority of land beyond west of the glowing no man's land line (from radiance), much of it is not yet conquered. Most of this contains outposts and small settlements fortified by Blackmoorian soldiers. Preparations line the areas closest to the western side of the no man's land border; makeshift walls, dug outs, trenches and well protected battle stations. In Beastman lands, there is a ruin

and *Foes of Returned Blackmoor*” article.

¹⁸ For more information about it, see the [Zherisia entry](#) in the *Ravenloft Wiki*



called “The Chantry of Khoronus”.

South of New Blackmoor is Archilis Township, far more interested in coastal trade and related affairs. Timor’s Straight due east of Archilis, is running along a river that flows towards the western border of the “No Man’s Land”. A temple of Ixion is quite near the township. Due east a few miles is also the wreck of a construct of Thanatos, based on vague knowledge of the Age of the Wolf¹⁹. - From an anonymous cartographer

Domain Description

Darkheath has its roots in ancient Blackmoor, amidst the terrifying campaigns against beastmen, the Egg of Coot and other forces of chaotic terror. For one man, this could all be ended once and for all. The people of Blackmoor would be liberated and he would be deemed their champion. Fleet Admiral Stefan P. Holden won countless victories against these scourges of Blackmoor amidst this Beastman Crusade through superior tactics and impeccable leadership.²⁰ All the same, he was vain and self-absorbed, always finding ways to admire himself or make matters focus solely on him instead. A treasured mirror within his manor was a perfect symbol of this. Despite his brilliance matching his ego, one final campaign would be his



Fleet Admiral Stefan P. Holden, original art by Linus Andersson <https://www.artstation.com/nplillustration>

undoing. His mission was simple: help protect a recent Blackmoorian colony while fending off the ongoing evils of the beastmen and the other adversaries of the state. Unknown craft were docked near the colonial port. When hailed, the ship was revealed to be crewed by a mixture of beastmen and devotees to the Egg of Coot. Upon discovery, battle commenced. Holden, a brilliant but front-fighting man, dispatched a smaller covert ship to slip around the battle and travel to the island. The crew, well-armed and ready for action,

¹⁹ For more about ‘Age of the Wolf’, see info on [Harvard’s Blackmoor Blog](#)

²⁰ This references James Mishler’s epic timeline of [“The Age of Blackmoor”](#) at the Vaults of Pandius.

was commanded to take the island back by force. After the vessels on the water were overpowered and the villages were cleared, a darker truth emerged. A mixture of illusion and enchantment revealed those slain to be brainwashed and disguised Blackmoorian colonists. Suspicious characters found nearby fled deeper into the territory, unveiling a tribe of beastmen. While unfriendly towards the Blackmoorians, the beastmen claimed no involvement. The humanoids were cut down by cannonfire from the bay and soldiers on land. Even those trying to flee were massacred without a second thought. Holden demanded further action from his superiors, who wearily granted it. The ships then began to patrol nearby waters, while soldiers deposited onto land were ordered to purge anything seemingly related to cults or beastmen, taking mages with them to dispel illusions. Many beastmen uninvolved with the politics or conflicts were found and exterminated over the course of days. Attempts at mutiny were squashed, as mortified sailors attempted to defect or rebel. Natives along the region were accused of Egg-cult worship and were likewise purged. As dust cleared, countless victims lay dead: Oltec, Azcan, independent beastmen, and various other victims. The admiral was crestfallen, collapsing in shock. He had orchestrated a pointless wave of death. While he didn't regret removal of beastmen and other humanoids, the human deaths easily outnumbered that. Mists surrounded him, as he closed his eyes in despair, lying upon the deck of his ship. The mists parted as Holden emerged aboard his flagship, HMS Tide Turner, to find not Blackmoor or its Brun extension, but a new colony in need of his direction. Guilt and trauma still surrounded him, but this new site lifted his spirits ... at first.



Darkheath, true to Blackmoorian history, has endured never-ending conflict with the beastmen that also inhabit the land, as well as heretical cultists, rogue Thonians and even new enemy powers. The purging crusades continue over into the Lands of the Mists, but with some twists all of their own. The beastmen of Ravenloft prove far more cunning, adaptable and technically savvy. More and more, they understand human customs, culture and most importantly of all; warfare. An inherent tie to entropy drives their hatred of the Blackmoorians, made worse by the history of massacres brought upon by their fearful enemy. However, some beastmen go mad from strange visions at seemingly random times; foreign and invasive memories of some possible past life. These visions are often attached to a specific person. Even the dark priests of the beastmen cannot fathom the meaning of this, but confine the afflicted until the "curse" placed upon them fades out. Brutish might is bolstered by a renewed interest in armor thanks to advancing firearms such as muskets and lock mecha-

nism pistols. Even blueprints for weapons called *repeating rifles* and *revolver pistols* have emerged. By all means, they are almost as well armed as their more “civilized” adversaries. However, they lack the strange magitech associated with ancient Blackmoor. Upon Mystara, such wares prove dangerous and destructive, defying mundane logic to the same degree as the superior arcane arts. Battles with this magitech have led to consequences upon Darkheath. A sickening radiance has been unearthed along a no-man’s land between the colonist and beastman controlled territories. The sickly glow from this protruding earthly wound remains visible well into the night. Those who stay more than a brief moment often succumb to deadly illness. The beastmen are not immune, but seem to have a resistance to the poisoned ground. Little in the way of wildlife approaches the no-man’s-land.

Human threats prove just as dangerous as beastmen and environmental hazards do. Devotees of Entropy have become empowered to bring horror and harm. Even Thonian vessels join new ships to unleash campaigns of terror upon Darkheath’s watery borders. While the land of Darkheath prevails, they are often pyrrhic victories that bring shock rather than pride. Sages and scholars fear foreboding prophecies related to these mad works of artifice. The seers and prophets speak of doom befalling the domain of Darkheath and this “Broken Cog” landscape that it belongs to. One day, it will ignite in a radiant fire. This parallel is lost on the Blackmoorians, but the irony is no doubt known by The Mists’ prison wardens. This likely ties into mad apocalypse theories like the “Time of Unparalleled Darkness,” a cacophony of nonsense preached by the Church of Ezra.²¹ In regards to calamity,

²¹ From “*The Evil Eye*” module, in which an apoca-

lytic event will befall the Demiplane starting 775 of the Barovian Calendar.

there is a very human truth behind the beastmen themselves; they weren’t necessarily in the domain when it first emerged, they were created. Darkheath citizens who die in service to the admiral or his army become reincarnated as new beastmen, resenting their death in their past life and seeking to retaliate. So far, the Darklord is none the wiser about this reincarnation process. As long as Holden continues to embrace his warmonger attitude, this problem will persist.

Further domestic threats bring strife to these New Blackmoorians. Minions in service to Entropic Immortals seek to topple the influence of other Immortals. These cultists are bolder, wielding powers to far greater degrees and skill. One victim of these Entropy cultists was the Chantry of Khoronus, now a ruin deep within beastman territory. The strange temple and surrounding abbey is a deeply haunted place, seemingly out of time. Anyone who trespasses is assaulted with violent and disturbing sequences of the past playing out, before fading back to the eerie wreck of the present. Likewise, phantasmal priests are liable to form and retaliate against intruders. While all communication with the motherland has been lost, a faith and nostalgic obsession pushes the people onward, albeit in a stagnant direction. And for the ghosts of the chantry, it is all they have become. These are no longer mere monks, but gray philosophers, tainted by their sudden deaths and the encroaching powers of Entropy. Vindictive thoughts, desires for revenge and musing on grim things have caused Malices to emerge into this Dimension of Dread. Joining the Entropic forces are Enhanced Clockwork Machine-Men of Thanatos, corruptions of the Automaton of Blackmoor. Built for raw aggression

lyptic event will befall the Demiplane starting 775 of the Barovian Calendar.

and unholy power, even the strongest of the military struggle to defeat them. However, there is a glimmer of hope. Beyond the Temple of Ixion, well east of Archilis Township, lies the wreckage of a Herald of Thanatos. These massive constructs brought destruction and created undead in their path, a testament to technomancy falling into the wrong hands. Despite being true to Blackmoor, the denizens here are a little more reluctant to actively dabble in or use technomancy, seeing how it has been easily manipulated by evil powers. Some of the more eccentric do their best to wield the arcane science in fascinating new directions. In time, some even find mistways to take them to other lands such as Alleigosto without crossing the water, or to ever distant mountains of Lamordia. Nonetheless, they seek to perfect the plans and workings of those before them. Often, these mad scientists are influenced by entities from beyond, feeding them ideas for things that should not yet exist if they should exist at all. These eccentric builders of magitech are not wholly held in contempt, but they are treated with caution. Still, the forces of Darkheath would rather coerce them to their side than let them fall in line with wicked entropy of Chaos or the heinous beastmen. As is, these crazed inventors have created clockworks-infused undead and other abominations. These



threats often consume much of the Admiral's time, tearing him away from his love of the sea. Furthermore, the eastern waters of the Ichtyan Sea are rife with pirates, mercenaries and war fleets threatening the Blackmoorians. Brigands, scoundrels and general faces of the Rogues' Gallery bring torment to Darkheath for a variety of reasons. A mixture of Blackmoorians and foreigners, there seems to be a black market thriving off of poached Blackmoorian goods.

Despite these troubles, the people proudly retain their Blackmoorian identity. The lands of Darkheath are not only familiar to previous Blackmoorian colonies, but can be likened to Blackmoor itself. The climate is a temperate zone, with predominantly mild if very damp weather. Fishing towns in particular have denizens often grumbling over cold rains and foggy shorelines. Wildlife is not too different from the homeland or some familiar colonies along Brun. Game animals are in abundance on the western part of the island, which makes up the majority of the domain itself. The exception to this weather comes in the winter, with threats of harsh blizzards and whipping wind gusts. This does little to hamper the beastmen, but rival naval powers are kept at bay until conditions clear. Typically, shores are far calmer on the western portion of the island, should

one travel between Darkheath and nearby lands westward. However, the eastern coast has more hostile waters, complete with damaging terrain and wreckage in abundance.

While contending with nature, customs continue as the day-to-day status quo attempts to be held in this foreign land. Fashions here seem antiquated next to the rest of the Broken Cog Cluster, but the colonists do not care. Their aesthetics would be somewhat in line with residents of Mordent²², but with some hints that seem to otherwise fit Zherisia. Powdered wings have all but left the public consciousness, save for in commemoration and special events. Well trimmed hair and fine head garments, such as bonnets or top hats, have become more prominent. Suits and gowns have likewise evolved, but retain much of their prior charm. Seemingly modern and anachronistic at the same time, many do not know what to make of these Blackmoorians. Along with a proper but plain-looking garb, it is common for men to trim their hair appropriately. Some are given leeway to wear longer hair, so long as it is kept neat and tied back. Women often wear their hair longer than the men, but are usually held to a similar reserved standard. In either case, citizens who display hair too freely or messily will be held in just as much contempt as if their garb was sloppy or ill put together. Despite the classical look, the colony prides itself on its industry, creating all sorts of wondrous technologies that easily rival or even surpass most of the domains in this cluster. The politics of the land are upheld by a Royal Governor in service to the king. Reginald Higgins III and his council act as the governing officials.

²² For more on Mordent and other domains of dread, consult the AD&D 2E Ravenloft "Domains of Dread" hardcover.

Despite a mostly favorable view of the Royal Governor, all in turn pay reverence to King Alvin II of Blackmoor, unaware that any attempts to pay fealty to the Crown are lost to the mists. Olden religions dedicated to local Immortals like Ixion and Khoronus remain within Darkheath, with deeply conservative resistance to new faiths such as The Church of Ezra, which has migrated through Zherisia. The Temple of Ixion is one of the original remaining places of worship within the domain.

While Darkheath retains some former glory of Blackmoor, it also retains enemies on all sides. The Broken Cog Cluster, the land west of Darkheath, is a series of fractured colonial states all vying for control. The name Blackmoor is just another name in the Demiplane of Dread ... another far-off land that brings misery to this one. Curiously, the nearby domain of Zherisia claims a common ancestry. This is likely False History, but has allowed for some level of peaceful trade, while waters aren't rife with combat. The emergence of Darkheath has been beneficial, as the Zherisians have used them as an ally to keep the rivaling power of New Rockbaecche at bay. However, a false history paints the nearby nation of New Rockbaecche as the inheritors to Thonia. Few have challenged these twisted messages and propaganda. In truth, New Rockbaecche hails from the same world as its neighbor state of Alleigosto, neither are from Mystara. However, for the displaced Mystarans, both of these territories uncomfortably resemble some of the worst aspects of Thonia from their memory; Alleigosto socially and New Rockbaecche militarily. Due to craggy cliffs and built-up walled borders, another foreign land of Phyreshia is obscured from the island nation. In the case of Phyreshia, they find Darkheath distasteful but pose no threat of violence. New Rockbaecche

has kept Darkheath's struggling navy in check. Their casus belli or war justification, in far more tasteful non-Thyatian, comes from them blaming their plights and widespread illness on the Blackmoorians. Cultists of Entropy, the radiant no-man's land and other evils are cited as the sources. Even under Holden's command, he is challenged by superior opponents. For the time being, battles are just brief skirmishes, akin to a predator playing with its food. In truth, this hostile power has too many problems of its own to fully engage and invade Darkheath, but the Blackmoorian Imperial Navy is not aware of this.

Enough of the citizens, brigands, enemy soldiers and monsters; I shall turn attention to the cause of this realm. The Fleet Admiral retains a youthful vitality, attractiveness and athleticism not usually seen for a man into his later 40's. It is also possible that he has stopped aging, but it is too soon to tell. Beneath attractive and vibrant looks, he is tortured soul who hides his shadow. He remains a ruthless and cruel military leader, even with a damaged ego. Holden's reflection betrays him, taking the form of a beastman to mock his wicked behavior. Not only is it ghastly, but it seems to have a mind of its own. The creature taunts him at every chance. Those who catch a glimpse of the mirror creature remark that they've seen a demon and risk falling into madness. His overt hatred became self-loathing and terror. Even when he's not battling with his ego, he fights a war on two fronts. Should he operate a brigantine through the Timor's Straight in a beastmen campaign, Thonian or Rockbaecche forces will amass towards western domain waters. Should he set upon his flagship to fend off foreign invaders, threats of beastmen assaults will soon trouble him. And amidst that, various pawns of entropy,

madmen and monsters will find ways to tug at the admiral all at the same time. Despite the endless conflict, he retains all who were loyal to the Blackmoorian cause before. At the slightest call for help, nearby Blackmoorians will leap in defense, regardless of what they have to arm themselves with. This zealous surge of national pride becomes uncanny and unnerving at times, something he cannot alter or stop.

Closing the Borders: When Fleet Admiral Holden decides to close the borders, ships will move along the misty borders, in the primary position to open fire upon a target. Should the interloper call a bluff, an assault will begin until the target makes it clear they wish to return. The ships will then recede into the mists. Even on the eastern peninsula side of the domain border, ships will fire cannons with frightful accuracy.

IN CONCLUSION

This has been a most intriguing diversion, if only to outdo this false rival from Jaibul. Reality frightens him more than he should frighten reality. This exercise only proves my information gathering skills surpass the Rajah or even Azalin. Regardless, part of me shudders that other denizens of Mystara have fallen just as I have. It begs the question: how many more of them are there? And, what has caused these otherworldly "Mist" forces to keep grabbing us? Should I find myself lost in another one of these musings, then perhaps I'll investigate this further. What strikes me as strange is how this dimension seeks to take the heinous and profane, plucking them out of time. I have garnered research on ancient commanders and raiders in Blackmoor and Skandaharia, both from

places that should have long since been lost. My knowledge lies within half-understood texts, faded maps without context and few notes. Likewise, the ancient realm of Taymora was long lost well before my time, long since sunken as ruins near the Malpheggi Swamps. These lost secrets should have been scoured by the Immortals, but traces of them lingered within Mystara. What this Dimension of Dread is remains a mystery. It is best I don't think too deeply about it, as I have my own rituals and research to return to. Likely this is another distraction set up by my dimensional captors, something to keep me from finishing my glorious work... Or worse, boredom or fatigue once again plaguing my ability to create. These distractions are not too different from some weary false maharajah of Jaibul, the mad mage king of Oerth, foolish Fraternity of Shadows intruders²³ or any other con-

²³ This refers to the altercation between Meredoth and an agent of the Fraternity of Shadows, as found in *"The Nocturnal Sea Gazetteer"*.

temptible characters. It would be in best interest to return to other forms of research, away from these cowards, thieves and fools.

And with that, thank you for reading my continued adventures into the Demiplane of Dread through the eyes of Mystarans. Likewise, huge thanks to Joseph Setorius for lending some major help in editing this article! Will there be further horrific crossover into Ravenloft? I can't say for sure. But, I do hope you enjoyed this adventure as much as I did writing it.

A generator of (almost) everything for a campaign in Mystara

Tables to create almost any Mystara PC's, NPC's, story and adventure!

Part 4: Miscellanea
or
the PCs' free time

by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this series is to provide inspiration for more Mystara stories and adventures. The first part, dedicated to Characters and Plots generation, has been published in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue#26](#) and then a second part in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #27](#) dedicated to Monsters and Creatures and a third part in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #28](#) dedicated to Time, Weather, Travel, Trade, Taxes, Money, Dominions and War.

As said in the previous installments of this series of articles, the protagonists do not exist in a void. There is scenery around them, a world made of locations, other people, animals and monsters.

Randomly selecting such things could automatically create a plot, but the scenery ideas can be used to greatly enrich it as much as the DM desires.

The first part in issue #26 was dedicated to the **creation of characters**, either PCs or NPCs, and stories, from simple events to complex **adventures**.

The second part in issue #27 was dedicated to encounters, from **monsters to common animals**.

The third part in issue #28 was dedicated to the **environment** around the characters and their stories, the many things which can exist and happen around them, enriching the game worlds and the adventures that occur within it. So we addressed Time, Calendar and Holidays, Weather and Climate, Travel, Roads and Transport, including Flying, Trade, Prices and Currencies, then Dominions and Disasters, War, Sieges and Armies and finally a Random generator of towns and villages.

In this fourth and final part we'll look at other aspects which we could group in



the private lives of PCs, i.e. **what they do when they are not adventuring**. So we'll look into Magic and Item creation, Horoscopes, Storytelling, Art, Sport, Guilds, Universities, Jobs and Hobbies, Diseases, Diplomacy and Demography, and finally we'll take a quick look at Immortals, Religion and Immortality paths. All are important subjects to add depth to a game world and the characters' lives. Some of the tables and information below are derived from the *Rules Cyclopedia*¹ and other canon products, as indicated in each description below, but many have been heavily modified depending on the result I wanted to achieve.

MAGIC

Spell research is treated on page 25 of the *D&D Expert Set* and in more detail on page 255 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*. This is likely to be an important occupation for magic-users, clerics and elves. The *Expert* set only indicates 1,000 gp (or 1,000 'base' or copper coins in the modified coin system I proposed in issue #28, see link above) and 2 weeks per level of the spell. In the *Rules Cyclopedia* there are much more details, as the character will need a library, components for example from creatures of the same HD as the spell's level, 1,000 gp per level and one week plus one day per level. The chance of success depends on character level, spell level, value of the prime requisite (intelligence for magic-users or wisdom for clerics) and has a different formula if the spell is common or new.

¹ Available as pdf or POD [here](#) at DriveThruRPG.com



Common spells: $[(\text{Prime requisite} + \text{Lvl}) * 2] - (3 * \text{spell level})$

New spells: $[(\text{Prime requisite} + \text{Lvl}) * 2] - (5 * \text{spell level})$

This means a 1st level magic-user with 13 intelligence will have only a 25% chance of discovering a common spell and a 23% chance of creating a new spell, and will have to spend at least 8 days and 1,000 gp in research.

A 6th level cleric with 16 wisdom will have a 39% chance for a new 1st level spell and a 29% chance for a new 3rd level spell. The chance increases by 5% at each new attempt, but the character still has to spend 8 more days and 1,000 more gp. That's quite prohibitive for low level characters obviously, and this is exactly the intent of the rule.

A 36th level magic-user with 18 intelligence will have a 100% chance for any 1st level spells, 98% for a new 2nd level spell down to 63% for a new 9th level spell.

The philosophy behind those chances is that spell creation is quite difficult at low levels but gets much easier at higher levels, provided you have a large amount of money, which is basically the equivalent of three years of average income for a first level spell and about 25 years of average income for a 9th level spell.

Personally I do not like all these money requirements much, or rather I would make it possible to substitute the money with components the character can obtain or with an appropriate task or ritual they can perform, in the case of clerics.

I would also modify the chances of spell creation, making it easier at lower level but in general more difficult for new spells, in the way described below. It will still not be possible to learn spells the caster cannot use.

Requirements: Library, 1 week per spell level, 100 gp per spell level **OR** 1 HD creature component per spell level **OR** A task taking 1 week per spell level.

Chance of spell creation: 51% minimum for common spell at first level and prime requisite value of 10, increasing of 1 % point per level and 2 % points per each prime requisite value above 11, up to a maximum of $50+36+16=102$ i.e. above 100 for a 36th level magic-user with 18 intelligence studying a common spell.

A penalty of 2% for each spell level above 1 and of 30% for new spells, means that a 2nd level magic-user with intelligence 13 researching a new spell will have a $50+2+6-20=38\%$ and a 36th level magic-user with intelligence 18 has a $50+36+16-18-30=54\%$ for a new 9th level spell.

The formula becomes

Common spells: $[50+\text{level}+2*\text{prime requisite value above 10}]-2*\text{spell level above 1}$

New spells: $[50+\text{level}+2*\text{prime requisite value above 10}]-2*\text{spell level above 1} + 30$

It's not extremely different from the original one but makes it a bit easier to learn a common spell and a bit more difficult to create a new one, even at high levels.

But what's a common spell and what's a new spell? Originally it seems the author intended that the common spells are the ones in the BECMI rules and the *Rules Cyclopedica*, while the new ones are anything invented by the PC. However later products and fan works expanded the list of spells. The list of Mystaran spells is now huge because beside the 'original' ones in the BECMI sets (and in the *Rules Cyclopedica*), so many were added in other canon products and even more created by fans. Your guide here is the ["Spells and spellcasting"](#) section of the Vault of Pandius which could well provide a lot of inspiration for your PC.

It's ultimately up to the DM to rule if a spell found in a Gazetteer or in a fan work should be considered 'common' or 'new'. Possibly the PC should have the same chance of learning it as for a common spell, provided they have access to a text describ-

ing the spell or to a spellbook which contains it.

And don't forget the Seven Secret Crafts of Glantri present on page 69 of GAZ3: "*The Principalities of Glantri*". Bruce Heard, in his blog, also recently added some resources which could well be used for Alphatia, such as "[Skyship Spells](#)" and it could also be appropriate to use original AD&D or later D&D editions spells to reflect the variety of spell creation which is likely to be found in Alphatia or other magic-heavy countries.



MAGIC AND MUNDANE ITEM CREATION

Another important part of the lives of spellcasters, it is introduced on page 25 of the D&D *Expert Set*, where a caster must be of at least 9th level, search for special materials and spend 500 gp and 1 week time per spell level if the item duplicates a spell's effect. The chance of success is 85%. There are then examples of items not replicating spell's effect, with a minimum of 1 month time and 10,000 gp for 20 arrows +1, same cost but 6 months for plate mail +1 and up to 100,000 gp and 12 months for a ring of x-ray vision. This certainly makes magic items extremely rare and costly, maybe a bit too much.

The *Rules Cyclopedia* from page 250 onwards has more detailed rules. The spellcaster must be of 9th level or higher in some circumstances and know the related spell. They must work together with a specialist, for example an armorer, if they

want to make enchanted armor, and pay for their work. They must acquire some special or rare component. The chance of success is given by the formula $([Int+Lvl]*2)-(3*\text{spell level}) = \%$, which is relatively low considering even a 36th level magic-user with intelligence 18 will have an 81% chance of success with a 9th level spell enchanted item. Then there are detailed rules on the costs of making magical armors and weapons and miscellaneous magical items. Compared to the ones in the *Expert Set*, these costs are much lower, making theoretically possible the existence of a magic item trade in the world. Enchantment time is given as one week per 1,000 gp, and there are also rules for permanency and limits for destructive items. Pages 253 and 254 have rules to make magical constructs and huge magical items, including vessels and buildings, with the example of an underwater vessel and the effects dispel magic spells may have on flying ships.

The above rules were mostly introduced in GAZ3: "*The Principalities of Glantri*",

GAZ6: *"The Dwarves of Rockhome"*, and the *"Dawn of the Emperors"* boxed set. The *Player's Guide to Alphatia* booklet also has on page 29 a specific table on how some items which are usable only a certain number of times in a time period will cost less. On page 31 there is also a more detailed description of The Shark, a magical submersible and The Air Ship of Love of Gaity. As indicated on page 32, the AC11: *"The Book of Wondrous Inventions"* had quite different and cheaper building costs for magical items, a fact which is justified by DotE as the builders were specialists in their own lands or made things with technology rather than magic. This is an interesting note as there may be a competition for example between magic-users and gnomes, in Alphatia and elsewhere. From page 88 to 92 of AC11 the section of Dorfin's Little Shop of Horrors illustrates a series of gnomish inventions which can be found for sale or ordered. From page 92 there are also rules for creating spells and magical items and then for magic users to create a library with XP for gaining spells and creating magic items.

The *"Champions of Mystara"* boxed set Designer's Manual is dedicated to the creation of skyships, expanding the guidelines mentioned above from DotE and the *Rules Cyclopedia*. PC2: *"Top Ballista"* has Gnome Construction Skills from page 34 and some special Equipment and Magical Items from page 39, then on pages 62–63 rules for Airplane Design and Weaponry. GAZ6: *"The Dwarves of Rockhome"* has Special Dwarven Task from page 31, including Dwarven Craftmagic and some special big devices such as The Proto-Zeppelin and The Steam-Powered Dimension Launcher.

And obviously there are the Clan Relics of elves, dwarves and halflings in the *Companion Set* and on pages 145-147 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*. The elven 'Tree of Life' can create lightships, the dwarven 'Forge of Power' can create rockships and the halfling 'Crucible of Blackflame' can create moonlight sails or kites, and all three can create other magical objects. A gnomish relic is not mentioned in canon, but fans have supposed it could be some technological artifact². Other relic-like objects are mentioned in canon, such as in GAZ 9: *"The Guilds of Minrothbad"* 'The Pearl of Power' for the water elves and 'The Carved Oak' for the Wood elves, and in PC3: *"The Sea People"* 'The Frond of Life' for the aquatic elves of Undersea. And then there is in X11: *"Saga of the Shadowlord"* 'The Elvenstar', later mentioned also in the fan works on Wendar³. 'The Chamber of the Spheres' of GAZ13: *"The Shadow Elves"* could be a 'relic' too, as does 'The Blue Knife' of GAZ10: *"The Orcs of Thar"*. There are many other possible examples in canon products but the distinction between a relic and an artifact is dubious. The demihuman relics could indeed be considered 'just' powerful artifacts and therefore many other races, countries or religions could have their own.

The module set in ancient Blackmoor DA3: *"City of the Gods"* has a list of Alien Devices on page 32, the Nucleus of the Spheres in the adventure in Wrath of the Immortals *"The Immortals' Fury"* has other technological devices, and another, gun-like item appears in GAZ3: *"The Principalities of Glantri"* in the hands of Prince Jaggar Von

² See also ["Multifunctional Gear Relic of Garal"](#) by Marco Dalmonte in the Vaults of Pandius

³ See also ["A Treatise on the Nature of the Demihumans' Relics"](#) by Marco Dalmonte in the Vaults of Pandius

Drachenfels. The technological constructs of the Blacklore elves in the “*Hollow World*” boxed set are not supposed to work outside of their lands due to Immortals’ will, but around the world many technomagical items of the Blackmoorian times could still be around to be used or studied and imitated by magic-users and other spellcasters.

About other magical items in general, a full guide to Wandcraft has been also recently created by Bruce Heard on his blog, beginning with “[D&D Introduction to Wandcraft, Pt. 1](#)”. And the Vaults of Pandius obviously has a huge [list of tech and magic items](#) created by fans.

HOROSCOPE AND PREDICTIONS

A Glantrian Horoscope first appeared on TM1: “*The Western Countries Trail Map*” as ‘Glantrian Horoscope’ with Star signs, Ascendancy and Influences, later expanded in the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac*” with descriptions of the Signs and Ascendancies but without the Influences. The Influences however re-appeared in the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac II*” which also contains Horoscopes for AC 1011, which could be easily used as adventure seeds. The “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac III*” has the same with much expanded Horoscopes for AC 1012. Horoscopes are also present in all the fan almanacs⁴ from AC 1014 to 1018. Both the canon and fan almanacs also contain generic predictions which can be easily inserted in a campaign as uttered by some mysterious soothsayer or found in some

⁴ Which can be found here on the Vaults of Pandius <http://pandius.com/alm.html>



rare book or adventuring location. In the Explorer’s Manual of the “*Champions of Mystara*” boxed set the society of Yavdlom, dominated by seers, is described. Another land quite interested in horoscopes and predictions is Ambur in Alphatia, for which Bruce Heard created rules for weekly horoscopes⁵.

ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

Storytelling was certainly a huge part of people’s lives before the invention of press, radio and television. A Storytelling chart appears on page 33 of GAZ2: “*The Emirates of Ylaruam*”, allowing a d100 roll to determine the success of a tale. A chapter Of the Telling of Tales also appears in GAZ8: “*The Five Shires*” on pages 13–14 of the Player’s book.

Theaters are certainly an important part of the city life in many Known World nations. Emilio the Great is the notorious actor and spy who appears in GAZ1: “*The Grand Duchy of Karamaikos*”. Thyatis and Alpha-

⁵ Read it in Bruce Heard’s blog: “[Ambur: The Counties of Skyglint & Stardust](#)”



tia, especially in Ambur, certainly have an active theatrical life which is noted in canon products, for example a ‘Hattian Play’ series of events appears for Thyatis city in “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac I*”, which also nominates the Gemstone Theater in Ambur, where another one, The Elshethara Theater, a ‘site to behold’, is nominated in “*Dawn of the Emperors*” boxed set. More details on Ambur’s theaters appeared recently on Bruce Heard’s blog⁶. Traveling actors and troupes are also likely to be quite common in many Mystaran nations, as described for example by Lost Woodrake on *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #26⁷.

Art could be another important occupation for PCs, either as consumers or producers. The Kingdom of Haven and especially its capital city of Aasla in Alphatia⁸ are described as the main art center of Mystara, but forms of art are likely to exist in all

⁶ Read it in Bruce Heard’s blog: [“The Alphantian Province of Ambur”](#)

⁷ [“The Actor Troupes of Darokin”](#)

⁸ See also in Bruce Heard’s blog [“The Alphantian Province of Haven”](#) and [“The City of Aasla—Beating Heart of Haven”](#)

countries and among all races of the world, including magical ones.

Playing **music** could be considered both art and theater. Before recording was invented, traveling or resident singers were a common feature of almost every village of the world. In Mystara recording may not be common, but it could probably exist in magic-rich nations, albeit it may be too expensive for the common people.

Organized **sports** are a feature of modern times in the real world, but tournaments were their direct ancestors. One, *The Golden Dagger*, is mentioned in the *Companion Set*, another for the Spring Festival in Norwold in CM1: “*Test of the Warlords*” and the Royal Tournament of Adventurers is the way Ierendi chooses yearly its King and Queen. And obviously there is the Arena of Thyatis, featured in the namesake module, and the Hardball Tournament in Alphatia. Håvard compiled a list of Games & Sports in Mystara⁹, at least those mentioned in canon products. Yet canon Mystara also has the World’s Games which started in Darokin in AC 1010 as described in the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac*”, and later continuing in all the canon and fan almanacs.

The “*Red Steel*” boxed set on pages 112 and 113 also contains **Dueling** rules. Duels are not exactly a sport but in many societies of the past they were indeed a relatively common occurrence and the most famous ones avidly followed by nobles and common people.

⁹ [“Games & Sports played by characters in Mystara”](#) by Håvard in the Vaults of Pandius



Hobbies could be another important part of the private lives of the PCs. Some may fall into the ‘Art’ or ‘Sport’ categories mentioned above, but there are obviously many more, such as listening to music, cooking, gardening, reading or writing, collecting or building all kinds of small to big objects, useful or not. Giving your PC a hobby will grant them more depth and could easily become a source of adventure, for example if the PC wants to search for some special object or ingredient related to his/her passion.

GUILDS AND JOBS

Guilds were an important part of the daily life of medieval and renaissance times in the real world, playing the role of modern unions and industrial and trade associations. There were guilds for every job and occupation and guild rivalries had a very impor-

tant role in the politics of historical cities and countries. In *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #1 Agathokles gave a good example of this in his adventure *Guild Wars*¹⁰ set in *Specularum*. Thieves’ guilds obviously appear in canon material and are described also in *GAZ1: “The Grand Duchy of Karameikos”* and other canon products. *GAZ3: “The Principalities of Glantri”* from page 32 an extensive list list of Guilds and Brotherhoods; in *GAZ9*, *Minrothad* is a whole nation based on trade guilds, and similar guilds are likely to exist in some form in all



the countries of the world.

Guilds are a perfect source of jobs for adventurers, either common jobs to have a steady source of income or special jobs which can send the PCs to perform quests and find adventure.

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

TM2: “The Eastern Countries Trail Map” has a list of the Major Universities of the Known World. The Great School of Magic in *Glantri*

¹⁰ See [“Guild Wars”](#) by Giampaolo Agosta from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #1



city is detailed in GAZ3 and the School of Magic in Krakatos, Karamaikos features prominently in the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac*” series. Sending the PCs to a specific school to acquire special competences could be an adventure in itself, such as studying at the Retebius Air Academy in Thyatis to use and obtain flying mounts. And starting a campaign with juvenile PCs in a school is relatively easy, considering the number of novels, movies and stories in the world which could provide easy inspiration.

More common schools could exist even at village level, provided by the central government, by local lords or by churches. Teaching in such local schools could be the

main job of a PC, or a way for them to support the local community.

DISEASES

TM2: “*The Eastern Countries Trail Map*” has a list of diseases by area affected. Diseases are not exactly ‘occupations’, but certainly are accidents of life which sooner or later happen more or less to everyone, from the simply annoying to the serious. They can provide complications during a specific adventure, which is more or less the meaning of the TM2 table, or become the very center of adventures or even campaigns, for example if a cleric PC is focused on curing a particularly nasty and dangerous disease, or if part of her/his duties for the church involve providing basic medical



assistance to the faithful or to the general public.

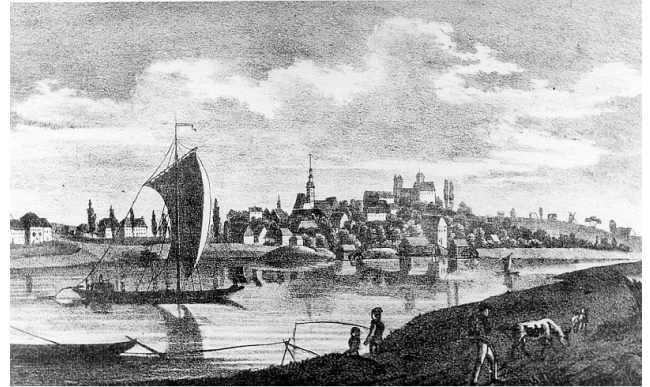
Most past societies indeed did not have any form of modern healthcare and churches typically covered this role, unless a particularly illuminated local lord or lady was willing to provide this service to their subjects.

DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TM2: “*The Eastern Countries Trail Map*” also has an ‘Imperial Geopolitical Intelligence (table 1)’ briefly describing, for each Known World nation the current ruler, attitude, politics, laws and philosophy. Most of the Gazetteers have a list of Ambassadors in the list of the famous people of each country, and several original D&D BECMI modules make heavy use of diplomacy, for example the CM and M series. GAZ11: “*The Republic of Darokin*” has a strong focus on diplomacy with the Darokin Diplomatic Corps. By the time PCs reach Companion level, or even earlier, it’s likely they will be involved in the politics of Known World nations and beyond. All sorts of diplomatic missions, spy games and intrigue stories fit very well in Mystara and it could be easily said they are built-in in the setting right from the start.

DEMOGRAPHY AND STATISTICS

TM2: “*The Eastern Countries Trail Map*” has an ‘Imperial Geopolitical Intelligence (table 2)’ listing square mileage, population, common people revenues, kingdom treasury and peacetime military of many Known World nations. A lot of stats are present also in the “*Poor Wizard’s Almanac*” series, in the “*Joshuan Almanac*” and in the fanon “*Mystaran Almanacs*”. And fans obviously have expanded this topic even more, for



Quelle: Deutsche Fotothek

example Simone Neri in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #1 and #3 with the Demography of Karameikos, Ierendi and Minrothad¹¹, me in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #13,14,15,16, 18 and 19 with the “*Unknown World Trail Map*” articles¹² describing the inhabitants of settled lands and wilderlands, and Fabrizio Nuzzaci in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #28 and 29 with the Economy of Vestland and Ylaruam¹³. All of these sources gives a bird’s view of the environment around the PCs but can be extremely useful to give depth to the world in which they live and act, and obviously can also be an infinite source of adventure, as if we assume such data are collected in-world governments will likely send adventurers to settled lands and wilderlands to explore and report.

Historically in the real world the development of centralized governments required

¹¹ See Simone Neri’s “[The Demography of Karameikos](#)” and “[The Demography of Ierendi and Minrothad](#)” from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #1 and #3 respectively

¹² See “[The Unknown World Trail Map](#)” by Francesco Defferrari from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #19 and previous instalments

¹³ See “[Economics of the Kingdom of Vestland](#)” and “[Economics of the Emirates of Ylaruam, AC 1000](#)” by Fabrizio Nuzzaci from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #28 and #29 respectively

the creation of a local bureaucracy which could collect taxes and provide protection, justice and other services to the local population. This process was neither quick nor easy and all the nations which did it needed soldiers and guards to help their civil servants, a role which in a fantasy world could easily be covered by adventurers (and wannabe adventurers).

The “*Red Steel*” boxed set, on page 6 of the *Savage Baronies* book, has a ‘Frequency of Character Types by Homeland’ table which is interesting because it assumes that ‘common people’ are 65 to 75% of the population, warriors are 10% to 20%, rogues 5% to 15%, wizards 2% to 10% and priests 1% to 10% with great variations among the baronies, likely to exist also in other nations. As the boxed set uses AD&D rules, there is also a 1% to 4% of multiclass, psionicists or other classes allowed by the DM in the campaign. According to the Player’s Guide to Alphatia of “*Dawn of the Emperors*”, 20% of Alphatians can become wizards and as spell-casting gives automatic nobility in Alphatian society, it’s fair to assume that at least 5%, if not 10%, of the population takes at least a clerical level. Countries with a strong military tradition as Thyatis have probably at least 20% of the population if not more with a basic warrior training. Under BECMI rules, where races are also classes, all the elven population should have at least an Elf level, but the DM could decide that there are ‘common’ elves without any combat or magical training. Still it is likely that in elven societies the percentage of magical abilities is quite high and the same could be valid for example for combat abilities among dwarves and humanoid.

Finally, to create a country from scratch in the unknown regions of the world, there is also the “*World Maker’s Guide*” on pages 36 to 50 of the “*Champions of Mystara*” boxed set.

RELIGION, IMMORTALS AND PATHS TO IMMORTALITY



Religion is an important part of life for many people and even if Mystara technically has Immortals rather than gods, they do have religions and churches which influence societies and countries and occasionally compete or fight among themselves. The original *Immortal Rules* boxed set and later the “*Wrath of the Immortals*” boxed set are obviously the canon sources for the Immortals of Mystara, while specific churches and religions appear in many Gazetteers and other canon products.

The definitive resource about religions and Immortals of Mystara is certainly the “*Codex Immortalis*”¹⁴ by Marco Dalmonte. Also *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #19 has been dedicated to Planes and Immortals¹⁵.

As every BECMI DM and player knows, PCs who rise high enough in level can try to

¹⁴ “[Codex Immortalis](#)” available in Italian and English at the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁵ Download [issue #19](#) for free at the Vaults of Pandius

become Immortals themselves, following specific Paths by Sphere of Power as detailed in the source mentioned above. And fans have obviously added more Paths¹⁶ in the Vaults of Pandius.

MORE TABLES AND RESOURCES

All that was written above and in the previous instalments of these articles should be enough to provide resources and inspiration for quite some Mystaran campaigns, but more tables exist in other canon products; for example Robin compiled on The Piazza a list of tables present in the classic modules¹⁷.

And that's all for my Mystara generator of (almost) everything! Keep adventuring in Mystara!

¹⁶ See the [“Paths to Immortality”](#) section in the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁷ See [this post](#) in the “The Best Little Tables in Mystara” topic on The Piazza forum

A Mystara Glossary

The Editors present a list of common abbreviations that authors may use to refer to various Mystara-related game products and events:

- AC#** - Accessory series product (rules supplements, campaign sources, etc)
- BECMI** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Master, Immortals rules (by Frank Mezter, 1983-6)
- BX** - Basic/Expert rules (by Tom Moldvay/David Cook, 1981)
- B#, X#, CM#, M#, IM#** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Immortal level adventure modules
- CoM** - [“Champions of Mystara” boxed set](#)
- DA#** - Blackmoor setting adventure modules
- DDA#** - Challenger series adventure modules
- DMR#** - Challenger series rules supplements
- DMSK** - “Dungeon Master’s Survival Kit”
- DotE** - [“Dawn of the Emperors” campaign boxed set](#)
- GAZ#** - Gazetteer series campaign sources
- GAZF#** - [Fan-produced campaign sources](#)
- GRoF** - the Great Rain of Fire, a cataclysmic event in Mystara’s past that destroyed the ancient Blackmoor civilization
- G:KoM** - “Glantri: Kingdom of Magic” campaign boxed set
- HW** - [the Hollow World campaign setting](#)
- HWA#, HWO#** - Hollow World adventure modules
- HWR#** - Hollow World rules supplements
- JA** - [“Joshuan’s Almanac & Book of Facts” campaign source](#)
- KW** - the Known World campaign setting
- K:KoA** - [“Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure” campaign boxed set](#)
- MA** - [Mystaran Almanac](#) (fan-produced)
- MCMA** - “Monstrous Compendium, Mystara Appendix” rules supplement
- PC#** - Creature Catalog campaign sources
- PWA** - “Poor Wizard’s Almanac & Book of Facts” I, II & III (AC1010, AC1011 & AC1012)
- PSK** - “Player’s Survival Kit” campaign source
- RC** - [“Rules Cyclopeda”](#)
- RS** - Red Steel campaign setting
- SC** - Savage Coast campaign setting
- TM#** - Trail Maps
- VotPA** - [“Voyage of the Princess Ark”](#)
- VoP or Vaults** - [The Vaults of Pandius](#) website
- WotI** - [“Wrath of the Immortals” campaign boxed set](#)

Readers may also find Dave Keyser’s [“An Index to Mystara Products”](#) and Andrew Theisen’s [“Mystara acronyms”](#) (both available at the Vaults of Pandius website) of assistance

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NEXT ISSUE

The first issue of 2023 will focus on the realms under the waves

UNDERSEA

Anticipated contents include:

- Realms of the Mystaran Oceans
- Islands of Death: Part 2
- Kopru Hidden Empires
- Pirates and Artifacts of Alphatia
- Kingmaker in the Isle of Dawn
- Mappers of Mystara

...and much much more!



Cover not yet finalised

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The Editorial Team welcomes your feedback on this issue of *THRESHOLD*.

Please post your comments either by posting in [The Piazza Forums](#)

Or by email to the Editorial address: Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com

Please begin the subject line with the tag "[LETTER]"

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Proposals

All proposal submissions can be sent by mail to the editors at the following address Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com, and must be received by the proposal deadline†. The *THRESHOLD* editorial team will contact you within 7 days of the proposal deadline regarding the status of your proposal.

Submission proposals should be sent inline in the mail, using the following subject format: [ISSUE#][Proposal]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- Proposed article title
- The type of article being proposed (short story, adventure, geographical location, organization, etc...)
- A one paragraph description of what the article is about
- An estimated word count of the article (articles should range anywhere from 1000 to 7000 words, depending on the type of article submitted)

Manuscripts

Manuscripts should only be submitted after you proposal has been accepted by the *THRESHOLD* editorial staff, and must be received by the manuscript deadline†. When submitting a manuscript file, please use the following naming convention:

threshold_#_your_title.<extension>

(extension: see below for recommended file formats)

and the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Manuscript]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- The article title.
- An attached document containing the article contents.
- The final word count of the article.

Other types of contributions: the editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

The following guidelines apply to different types of submissions:

Illustrations: Please submit art and maps in lossless format (e.g., PNG).

Articles: Manuscript submissions can be sent by mail as plain text, doc(x) or odt, or shared as Google Doc. The issue editor will create a shared document (for each article) to allow the author and editorial team to work on it. Articles can be as short as a single page, or as long as 6 pages, depending on the specific content. The editorial team will do its best to accommodate the contributions, but especially long works may be split over several issues.

Tables: Tables should be numbered (Table X: Name of Table), and any references in the article should refer to that table number (and not to “the table below,” for example).

Author Bios: Please include a short blurb (one or two sentences) biography/blurb about yourself for our “contributing authors” section. It can be serious or silly, but don't get too carried away with it, please.

Other types of contributions: The editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

†Refer to “*Call for Contributions*” (page 7) for next issue deadline dates.

#Insert relevant issue number in place of ‘#’