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GAZETTEER

UNOFFICIAL GAME ACCESSORY

The Central Altan Tepes

by SIMONE NERI



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An Unofficial Game Supplement

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Introduction

The central Altan Tepes region – that is the point where the south-eastern part of the chain, coming from Thyatis and Karameikos, meets the northern part of it, which encloses the dwarven realm of Rockhome – is a frontier area bordering five realms: Darokin, Rockhome, Ylaruam, Karameikos, and Thyatis.

Overall, the region is crossed by various valleys and gorges, many of which are nevertheless devoid of notable settlements and have become the shelter of bandits and, mostly, humanoid tribes. In particular, the Karameikan and Ylari sides of this region mostly abound of hostile tribes – both humanoids and frost giants. Many borderland settlements – small villages, keeps, and border castles – and other interesting places are scattered in this region.

This supplement wants to give a swift look at the foremost places of the region, with the aim to present the DM with useful ideas to set adventures here or locations in which to send his PCs.

Some Notes About the Map

The map attached to this booklet has an odd scale: 2.7 miles per hex, that is each hex represents one-third of one 8-miles hex, the favourite one of GAZETTEER series' maps. Even if the scale isn't the most practical one for game purposes, I've chosen to use it in order to avoid to descend into an excessive level of detail – which would have been overwhelming, given the size of the map.

Another thing to note is the use I've done of the "volcanic formation" map symbol featured for the first time in the 1-mile per hex map of La Vallée des Loups, in module *PC4 – Night Howlers* by Ann Dupuis (TSR 9368, 1992). I've used that symbol to mark mountain peaks impervious to normal travel; they represent the uppermost mountaintops, and they'll have to be climbed if the characters want (or have to) pass through it. Likely, the PCs will be required to have proper equipment (pythons, ropes, etc.), and use the Mountaineering General Skill.

A last thing to note about the map (and not only) regards the villages and people names of the Makistan area, which, at first, may not seem to have an "Ylari" (i.e. Arabic) feel. Nevertheless we should remember that, according to *GAZ2*, Makistani culture comes from the Ethengar steppes, thus their language should also have a Central Asian, even Turkman feel. Moreover, this choice is supported by the name of Makistan's Great *Khan*, featured in *Poor Wizard's Almanac II*, which also doesn't have a proper Ylari feel (Kamal Mazin).

A Note About Dragon Age

Official sources give different interpretation of the age of dragons. In the *Rules Cyclopedia* it's stated that "many dragons live for hundreds or thousands of years"; likewise, many of the dragons which appear in novels like

the *Dragonlord Trilogy* by Thorarinn Gunnarson, or *Son of Dawn* by Dixie Lee McKeone, are extremely ancient (one thousand of years or more). On the other hand, in what it's perhaps the most detailed writeup about dragon, Bruce Heard's article "From Hatchling to Immortal Guardian" in *Dragon Magazine* #170, draconic lifespan is reduced to only a few centuries for the more powerful species, and even less for the others.

In the attempt both to preserve Heard's game rules about dragon life cycles, and to explain the novels' overly ancient dragon characters, I suggest the DMs to adopt one of the following two rules to make dragons' lifespan a little longer than Heard says:

1. A dragon lifespan becomes longer at the end of every Cerimony of Sublimation it successfully completes. In game terms, once a dragon comes at the end of a successful Cerimony of Sublimation, its lifespan extends of a number of years equal to a roll for his whole lifespan, as indicated in the table included in Heard's article. For example, if a white dragon (which has a base longevity of 1d20×6 years) completes a Cerimony of Sublimations, in addition to other effects it extends its lifespan by another 1d20×6 years.

2. Sleeping dragons don't age. The Fourth Cycle of the Cerimony of Sublimation is known as the "Quest for Knowledge" among dragons (see the abovementioned article by Heard). Under this second option, while dragons sleep during this cycle, they age only one month for every year that passes. Moreover, as a dragon gets a bonus on the final roll to determine the outcome of the whole Cerimony, depending on how well he performed during the Fourth Cycle, dragons will naturally try to pass as much time as possible asleep (while their spirit roams the planes of the Draconic Cluster).

Official Sources

Of course the main sourcebooks which were used as starting point for the compilation of this booklet are *GAZ1 – The Grand Duchy of Karameikos* by Aaron Allston (TSR 9193, 1987), *GAZ2 – The Emirates of Ylaruam* by Ken Rolston (TSR 9194, 1987), and *GAZ11 – The Republic of Darokin* by Scott Harting (TSR 9250, 1989). Those GAZETTEERS offer indeed some general details on the regions, cultures, and peoples touched within this booklet.

Also useful was adventure module *B2 – The Keep on the Borderlands* by Gary Gygax (TSR 9034, 1981), which described in great detail Castellan Keep and the surrounding area. The *Oirtulev's Eye* was instead taken from the *Dungeon Master's Survival Kit* by Steven Schend (TSR 2512, 1995).

Also, I've included therein many cues given in the FIRST QUEST series novel *Son of Dawn* by Dixie Lee McKeone (1995), in particular the history of the dragon Blethinferelth, and the story of the battle between Is-

cranin and Yealeletherveri.

Moreover, the *Poor Wizard's Almanac II & Book of Facts, Edition for AC 1011* by Ann Dupuis (TSR 9441, 1993) was the source for the name of the Great Khan of Makistan.

Finally, the *Rules Cyclopedica* (TSR 1071, 1991) was used as reference for game rules and characters and items stats.

Unofficial Sources

Most important for the description of the region featured in this booklet was the incoming Italian adventure *Sulla strada di Ylaruam* by Alarico Ariani (2009), which detailed the Karameikan part of the Altan Tepes, and the village of Ab Mazar. Equally important was *A Karameikan Companion*, by Giampaolo Agosta (2008), mostly for the descriptions of local humanoid tribes. Lastly, my very own Italian sourcebook *Demografia Mystarana, Volume I: Compendio storico sociale del Mondo Conosciuto* (2006) was instrumental to give the setting the proper background.

Kudos

First and foremost, my thanks goes to Alarico Ariani, author of the incoming Italian adventure *Sulla strada di Ylaruam* for which I wrote this mini-gazetteer two years ago; he consented to the English translation and publication of this booklet separately from his adventure.

Then, I'd like to thank all the friends of the Italian Mystara Mailing Boards who were so precious in the refining of the material presented therein, providing much-needed ideas, criticism, and suggestions.

I'd like to thank as well all the Mystara fans who regularly contribute to the developing of this amazing campaign setting on international boards. Among them, I wish to send a special thank both to Thorfinn Tait for his wonderful work on Mystara's maps, to which my own cartographic work is heavily in debt; and to Shawn Stanley for his management of the Vaults of Pandius website, the "home" of all Mystara fans.

Last but not least, some thanks also go to my gaming group, for which I created many of the locations described in this booklet.

Now, without further ado, I apologize for my bad English, and I hope you'll enjoy reading the booklet. Long live Mystara!

Simone Meri,

March 9th, 2009

The Darokin Side

The border between Darokin and Ylaruam is a frontier area for the Republic, which mostly belongs to the Borderlands and which is divided between various dominions (Altieri, Flowerhill, and Kermaned). In spite of its frontier character, this region is frequently passed through, because it's crossed by the **Selinna Pass**, the long gap which leads from Selenica to Makistan, and through which rides one of the main trade routes of the Known World. The pass' name derives from the Alasiyan words *Selim 'ujnna*, which literally mean "Selim's pass" from the name of the Ylari hero which, according to an ancient legend, wishing to lead his people in the once-fertile Ylaruam plains, dug this pass with the help of a magical spade of which the Immortals had gifted him.

Even if most of these lands are owned by Border Magistrates (the rulers of the aforementioned domains), the Republic, mostly through the government of Selenica, keeps a close control on the Selinna Pass; the paved road which crosses it frequently sees the passage of the Republic's legions, which support the two small forts at Zemin and Scabton. The villages of this area are often passed through by travelers and foreigners, and host Ylari (Makistani in particular), Thyatian, or, more rarely, Karameikan, minorities.

The fact that the Selinna Pass winds between two savage areas of the Altan Tepes only increases the need for the Republic's army to patrol it. The southern side of the pass is indeed the unchallenged domain of frost giants; during winter heavy snowfalls carpet that side's valleys and the giants likely come down from their glaciers to ransack the villages, supported by the hordes of their snow ape servants. The northern side of the pass, instead, is inhabited by many goblin tribes, which once in any given time like to descend through the gaps to raid caravans and the region's more insular communities.

The Borderlands Domains

Barony of Altieri

This domain is part of the Republic of Darokin's Borderlands, and it's ruled by Baron Guidobaldo III d'Altieri (Neutral 6th-level Fighter). Altieri family has Thyatian origins, and came here from Alasiya when Al-Kalim threw the Thyatians out of Ylaruam; Altieri's noble title traces back to the second half of 9th century AC, when they married into the local Rashdun noble family.

Altieri is a small barony nestled in two narrow valleys down the slopes of the Altan Tepes. Its inhabitants live on shepherding (mostly sheeps and pigs), hunt, and agriculture (fruit trees and barley above all). The village of **Vallestretta** (470 residents), which controls the access to the domain, is the largest settlement of the area; it's followed by the villages of **Anzaldo** (330 inhabitants), lo-

cated on the shores of Lake Resta, and **Glorenzia** (260 inhabitants), a fortified settlement overlooked by a crag on which **Altieri Castle** is built, a menacing tower surrounded by a wall where the Baron's family dwells.

The domain must bear from time to time the frost giants' raids during winter, and it receives help in the form of money and soldiers from the city of Selenica – where the Baron has allies among the Hallonica – to better defend itself from this danger. The giants usually only perform swift strikes, destroying some buildings and taking away some cattle, then retreating in their mountain lairs; so far, they've never engaged in a vast-scale invasion.

Barony of Flowerhill

This Barony also belongs to the Republic of Darokin's Borderlands, and it's ruled by Baron Horace Rendiers (Neutral 5th-level Fighter). His family is at odds with the Hallonica which rule the city of Selenica, and thus also with their Altieri allies. Baron Horace does his best to annoy Hallonica's caravans passing through, and he sketches the occasional plot against the neighbouring Altieri. In order to avoid submission to the Hallonica's trade dominance in this area, he keeps open a trade route with Ylari villages on the other side the border; this route go through the nearer passes of the Altan Tepes, reaching Hojambaz. The Baron is also fastening closer ties with the Al-Azrad, in order to annoy the Hallonica.

The Barony of Flowerhill is located across the paved road which leads from Selenica to Parsa through the Selinna Pass. Its main settlement, the village of **Flowerhill** (630 inhabitants), is located amidst a wonderful series of hills which blossom in spring, showing a breathtaking multicolored landscape to the viewer. The trail which goes from Flowerhill southward leads to the village of **Sternstone** (460 dwellers), the center of local iron-mining activity, and to **Scarroof Keep**, the Baron's and his family's dwelling place. Both Scarroof and Sternstone are well-fortified: during winter this area is covered by abundant snowfalls, and the frost giants' raids are much more frequent; because of this, Scarroof Keep, an impregnable stronghold built on a rocky spur, is fortified with towers provided with ballistas and catapults.

Viscounty of Kermaned

This border domain is part of the Republic of Darokin's Borderlands; Kerman family, of Makistan origin, rules this lands since the 6th-century AC. The current Viscount Ferhan V Kerman (Lawful 9th-level Fighter) comes from generations of marriages with Darokinian aristocracy, and Makistani heritage in him is almost lost but in his name's tradition. The Viscount is in good standing with Great *Khan* Kamal Mazin of Makistan, as well as with the Hallonica and the Al-Azrad, both of which appeal often to him as their middleman at the Great *Khan's* court. The

Viscounty's location is indeed quite important, because it lays in a point watching the main pass used by northern goblin tribes to come down from the Altan Tepes; thus the Republic, and the city of Selenica in particular, grant Viscount Ferhan every help he needs to face this threat every time it arises again.

The Viscount's family dwells in **Karakerman Castle**, an old fortress watching the northern valleys settled by peasants and shepherds, often endangered by goblin raids; the castle defends the pass which, from those valleys, leads to the domain's heart, and it often has to bear sieges by the humanoids. The village of **Shiravan** (520 residents), set in a dale surrounded by pleasant pastures, is an important center of sheep herding, and an extremely welcoming village where both Alasiyan and Makistani immigrants are found. Eastwards, the paved road reaches the village of **Zemin** (850 residents), the last Darokinian settlement before the border with the Emirates of Ylaruam.

Zemin is the typical border settlement, where Darokinian residents mix with Alasiyan and Makistani immigrants, where mercenary companies in search of employment arrive, and where infamous characters hide from the law. The village is fortified, and a part of its wall is occupied by a small border keep manned directly by the Darokin government; there a small garrison of a hundred men is stationed, kept occupied by duties like controlling and taxing the trade passing through Zemin, and patrolling the surrounding countryside in search of bandits and goblinoids. Often, small tribes of Makistani herders camp outside Zemin, coming to the village to trade cattle and leather, or to smuggle various types of goods before setting again on the move with their herds.

The Heartlands Communities

Scabton

This village belongs to the Heartland region managed by the city of Selenica. Scabton (210 inhabitants) is the name of the small keep built in the 8th century AC, and then bought by the Darokin government; it watches the bridge crossing Tannens River. The keep is now manned directly by the Republic's army, and it hosts a garrison of 150 soldiers which defend the village of Valima, patrol the road crossing the Selinna Pass, and control the volume of trade flowing through it. With time, around the keep a small village by the same name rose, mostly inhabited by farmers and fishermen.

Valima

This village belongs to the Heartland region administered by the city of Selenica. Valima (950 inhabitants) is the last village of good size that caravans meet before going into the Selinna Pass; it's therefore provided with any genere of commodity useful to caravans, and to trespassing merchants: inns, taverns, many craftsman shops (artisans, and menders of wheels, carts, saddles, horseshoes), horse traders, and mercenaries. The countryside surrounding the village is scattered with peasant huts and manor-houses, whose residents often come to Valima to sell their goods to merchants in need of supplies. The village of Valima isn't fortified, and its defense depends on the garrison at Scabton.

The Karameikos Side

This area of the Altan Tepes is one of the least civilized regions of the Grand Duchy, having always been the domain of humanoid tribes, frost giant clans, and white dragons. During the course of centuries, Traladarans never managed to reach this area of the mountains, and till now the efforts of the grand ducal government have not spawned any better result.

In the years AC 980-990, Grand Duke Stefan Karameikos invested large sums of money to open the passes which crossed through the Altan Tepes valleys leading to Ylaruam, issuing the building of Castellan Keep (AC 982), driving away the humanoid tribes, and supporting the founding of outposts by pioneers and settlers. This attempt turned out to be a failure because

Gulmund Blueye

Gulmund Blueye is the leader of the White Peak frost giant clan, which lives in a complex of large caves in the glacier south of White Peak mountain. This rather young giant (he's 93 years old) owes his name to his frozen right eye, which has become useless and bluish in color after the giant's head was hit by a white dragon's breath (the dragon, Bloodfreezer, was later defeated and submitted by Gulmund – see below).

The very spirit of battle flows in Gulmund's veins: his aim would be leading his fellow to the conquest of humanoid tribes living south of the giants' territory, then uniting both giants and humanoids to launch a devastating campaign against Castellan Keep and the Karameikan lands beyond it. A charismatic leader and a fierce warrior, he's even likely to succeed if the following years' raids will confirm him as the unchallenged leader among the clans.

Gulmund Blueye: NA 1; AC 1; HD 10+31* (L); hp 88; THACO 7; #AT 1 battleaxe; Dmg 4d6+12; MV 120' (40'); Save F10 (with a +3 bonus on each save); ML 10; TT E×2 + 10,000 gp; Int 14; AL C; SA hurls rocks (range 60/130/200, for 3d6 damage); SD immune to cold; XPV 3,150.

In battle, Gulmund wears an old giant-sized chain-mail taken by his father to one of the giant leaders he killed in his past; Gulmund fights with a huge battleaxe.

Gulmund is always accompanied by Kalko and Bralko, his two favourite ice wolves. Moreover, Gulmund's wife **Gonda**, a beautiful female by giant standards, is also the White Peak clan's shaman (she's the equivalent of a 7th-level Cleric).

Last but not least, Gulmund also has a "pet" dragon (an 8 HD small white dragon) called **Bloodfreezer**. Gulmund defeated and submitted him after the beast took the giant's right eye with his breath weapon.

of the great distance between this region and larger Karameikan settlements, and because of the sheer number of humanoid tribes and giant clans, which outnumbered the grand ducal forces. Within a few years, all advanced positions conquered by Karameikos in this area were abandoned or destroyed, and the border withdrew back to area around Castellan Keep. Today, all that remains of this attempt are some barely visible ruins along a loose trail winding toward Lake Ludaš, almost completely disappeared under the green.

There, the Altan Tepes massif hosts some of the highest peaks of the whole chain; also there are to be found some glaciers, where white dragons, frost giant clans, and their snow ape slaves, dwell. Highest peaks are mountains of bare rock, impossible to brave for untrained climbers. As one descends from the rocky peaks, the Altan Tepes are covered by vegetation, meadows, and dense woods. Many wide gorges, created by slowly-moving glaciers in the course of past ages, plough these mountains, but many of these turn to be dead-ended against a mountainside. One only, the **Gap of Yebedeska**, passes through the mountain massif, leading from Castellan Keep to Ylaruam. It would be an excellent new trade route for the Grand Duchy, which would allow the trade with the Emirates to avoid passing through Darokin; but at the moment it's impassable because of the presence of humanoids and giants.

South of Castellan Keep it's possible to find lonely huts of pioneers, woodsmen, and prospectors, which one way or another manage to survive there. Sometimes two or three families have banded together giving birth to small settlements, but there are no true villages but Novaci. South of Novaci the Castellan River flows down to Karameikos proper; two old Traladaran domains are located there: the domain of Bergoi, ruled by the Kutinov family; and the domain of Veseya, ruled by the Miltchev family. However none of those two domains is featured on the map – they're found just south of it.

The Nonhumans Dwellers

Frost Giants

Up today, the uncontested masters of this region have been the frost giants. Currently, there are about 200 frost giants in this area, scattered in various clans of 20-30 members each.

Frost giant clans dwell only in the chain formed by the Giants' Horn, the White Peak, and Mount Gruža; sometimes it happens that the clans unite under the leadership of one jarl, bringing destruction on surrounding countries, both among humans and humanoids.

Among the giant clans, one of the most active is the White Peak clan, who lives in the glacier at the feet of the mountain bearing the same name. The leader of this

clan, the fierce Gulmund Blueye (see the azure box in the previous page), is the most likely candidate to become the next jarl of the unified clans.

Currently, the White Peak clan numbers about 40 giants, and two more clans totalling another 40 are closely allied with Gulmund. The would-be giant leader can certainly dispose of a fearsome giant army.

Unfortunately for Gulmund, the frost giants' favourite pastimes continues to be fighting among themselves. Almost in a sort of yearly ritual taking places during spring and summer, the clans challenge one another to battle. Each clan sends its best warriors to fight the rival clan's champions: the losing clan must submit to the winner (this submission is usually symbolized also by the sending of a tribute in females, treasures, or goods to the winner). The losers are now bound to serve the winners, at least until they manage to defeat again their champions in battle (or until their masters are defeated by a third clan – something more likely to happen).

The losing champions who survived the battle are considered outcasts by both the losing and the winning clan, and they usually become mercenaries in service of some other clan.

Sometimes it also happens that a number of allied clans challenge another alliance of clans to battle. These fightings are truly fearsome to behold, with a great number of giants clashing weapons together, and making the earth rumble under their feet. Some peoples at Castellan Keep or in the Borderlands domains of Darokin claim that the sound of these battles can be heard as far as their settlements.

Frost giants keep as allies many clans of snow apes living in this colder and higher part of the Altan Tepes. These brute creatures are usually sent by the giants to patrol their lands, and annoy the neighbouring humanoid tribes – or, in the worst seasons, given as dinner to ice wolves and white dragons.

Ice wolves are kept by the frost giants as pets. Sometimes hobgoblin traders belonging to the Bloody Head tribe come north to sell the giants the occasional trained ice wolf.

Sometimes, frost giants manage also to strike deals with white dragons to achieve their support for some raid against their neighbours. Sometimes it works, but more often the dragons don't easily obey to the giants' commands and the former allies end up fighting among themselves. Generally speaking, there's no love nor trust between frost giants and white dragons. From time to time, a powerful frost giant leader manage to submit a white dragon: this is a sign of great prowess for the other giants (in fact, Gulmund Blueye currently enjoys the company of a submitted white dragon).

White Dragons

A number of white dragons dwell in these savage lands. Their haunts are the highest peaks where frost giants can't annoy them, unaccessible glaciers, or underground caves always locked in ice.

While the Altan Tepes' white dragons usually favor preying upon humanoids and beasts (humans have the annoying habit to send scores of adventurers to hunt them down, after the dragons have eaten their cattle or killed a few of them...), once in a given time they perform also daring raids against human settlements and strongholds; in fact, they realize that very few would-be dragonhunters would like to brave bloodthirsty humanoid tribes, and fierce frost giant clans to bring back a dragon's head.

On the other hand, while the dragons are usually at odds with the frost giants, they're more likely to agree helping the humanoids if the bounty is good and the task not too risky; after all, humanoids are easier to control, and to frighten if things go wrong.

Of all the white dragons living there, two are worth mentioning. In fact, most white dragons living in this part of the Altan Tepes chain are bonded to these two dragon rulers as subjects of their draconic kingdoms.

The first one is **Orgonir**, a 13 HD huge white dragon able to speak and cast spells, 213 years old; Darokinian and Traladaran chronicles of some decades ago speak with awe of this powerful white, and also some of the older frost giants remember his name with fear. Orgonir, unknown to all, has gone slumbering since some decades during the Quest for Knowledge for his current Ceremony of Sublimation; most of the neighbouring races believe he's been killed, and only other dragons know the truth. He lays asleep in an underground cave sealed with ice, and guarded by some of his faithful subjects (large white dragons).

Orgonir controls a number of dragons along the southeastern side of the Altan Tepes (the part of the chain going toward Thyatis); he's on friendly terms with Blethinferelth (see below), but despises the dragon rulers of the eastern Altan Tepes, which allow their subject to serve humans as mounts in the Retebius Air Fleet of Thyatis. He doesn't like humans

The second important white dragon of this region is a female, **Coldcrest**. She's a 120-years old 11 HD white recently turned large, able to speak and cast spells; she's one of the rising powers of this area. Coldcrest controls an increasing number of whites in this area, and in the part of the Altan Tepes reaching southern Rockhome. She's quite beautiful by draconic standards, and has mated more than once with small ambitious whites. Time ago she barely escaped Snagglefang, the powerful black dragon living in Fenhold swamp (west of Selenica); fearing the cruel black, currently Coldcrest is considering allying with Argos, but she doesn't trust him fully.

The Karameikos Side

Cave of the Great Lizard

This deep cave dug into the Altan Tepes' stone is the lair of an extremely ancient female blue dragon, **Blethinferelth**, and of her young daughter Bluenstrinel.

Blethinferelth is a huge blue dragon with 21 HD, able to speak and cast spells; she's about three thousands years old and has fought in times most ancient against the hordes of the humanoid chief Akkila Khan; she's a dragon who holds great knowledge, and since centuries she has devoted herself to amass lore about Mystara's past and about the legends of the races which dwell on the planet (for example, she's one of the few beings to know the history of the fight between Iscranin and Yealetherveri).

Blethinferelth is not particularly hostile toward humans, but she doesn't like to be annoyed; the few nomad tribes which roam the arid area of Ylaruam east of her lair know that a terrible but wise blue dragon dwells in those mountains, and sometimes adventurers and heroes in search for informations and advice reach the Cave of the Great Lizard, bringing with them as gifts artifacts and magical items of great value, to trade with Blethinferelth's knowledge.

Blethinferelth is the ruler of a draconic kingdom encompassing a large portion of Ylaruam's Southwestern Highlands; she and her daughter (herself a 161-years old large blue dragon, able to speak and cast spells) rule over a number of blue dragons which live in this region. Blethinferelth is neutral toward Marudi, even if she doesn't trust that tricky blue dragon which rules over central Alasiya.

The Humanoid Tribes

Many humanoid of all tipes (mostly hobgoblin, goblin, and some orcs) dwell in this area. While their tribes live north of Castellan Keep, one of the humanoids' advanced position is located a few miles north-east of the Keep itself, in the site known as the Cave of Chaos (see below).

Regarding the humanoids who inhabit the mountain range, three are the main tribes in this area. The **Steel-warriors**, an hobgoblin tribe, dwells in the valleys south of Mount Gruz'a, along River Kas; they're fierce warriors and represent the main threat over the Altan Tepes region after the frost giants themselves. The **Bloody Head** is another hobgoblin and goblin tribe living south of Wolves' Height; they're infamous for their skill in training the vampire-bats and the ice wolves. Lastly, there's the tribe of the **Jagged Rocks**, made up by orcs, goblin, and hobgoblin, which dwells in the Gap of Yebedeska. Many more minor tribes roam this region, but often they ally with the strongest ones to try to survive. A fourth hobgoblin tribe, the **Killer Sands**, lives down the eastern slopes of the mountains bordering Ylaruam, where the Gap of Yebedeska reaches the Ylari highlands.

These tribes are well-detailed in Giampaolo Agosta's supplement *A Karameikan Companion*, and thus won't be further described there.

Caves of Chaos & of the Unknown

This well-known complex of caves inhabited by humanoid tribes and by Dark Triad cultists is described in detail in module *B2 – The Keep on the Borderlands* by Gary Gygax (TSR 9034, 1981).

The humanoid tribes dwelling in those caves were again detailed in Giampaolo Agosta's abovementioned work. They're the **Horned Heads**, a mixed orcish and gnollish tribe; the **Grey Rats**, a small kobold tribes; and the **Chaos Horde**, a mixed tribe of goblins and hobgoblins.

It's likely that some of the tunnels descending in the underground depths from the Caves of the Unknown are linked with the tunnels dug by Iscranin, the great anellid, millennia ago (see 'Iscranin's Path', later).

Oirtulev's Haunt

Nearly two thousands years ago, Oirtulev was one of King Halav's advisers; a powerful wizard, he created a large number of magical items, among them the famous *Oirtulev's Eye*, an amulet which enabled to scry faraway places and read the thoughts of those who were being scryed upon (see the box on the next page). Tenth of years after Halav's death, Oirtulev misteriously disappeared. According to the legend and to what the followers of the Cult of Halav tell, thanks to his *Eye* Oirtulev managed to commune with the now-Immortal Halav himself, and to embark on the path to Immortality on his own. The Cult of Halav worships him as a saint, while the Church of Traladara considers him an historical character.

The truth, however, is much different. The wizard, tainted by evil, managed to become a lich many years later, and built his own lair in the Altan Tepes; from there, he began to weave his plots of power.

Oirtulev's haunt is an underground complex which stretches vertically along the slope of a mountain, with some slits opening on the outside. The existence of a building inside the mountain is difficult to realize from the outside, unless the area is carefully examined. Among magical treasures, arcane tomes, and laboratories of every type, the dungeon also hosts many undead creatures – most of them were created from the corpses of the wizards lured here and killed.

Oirtulev the Lich

Oirtulev himself is a Chaotic 34th-level Magic-User lich, and one of the most powerful wizards of the Known

World; he has gathered a whole collection of spells dating back to ancient ages, and has increased it with a score of spells created by himself, and with many other he has taken from captive wizards. Oirtulev has agents working in Karameikos and Thyatis to advance his plots of power – he likely controls some political personalities in both countries; they're often involved into tracking and eliminating any follower of Halav who's collecting hints about him (indeed, Halav himself sometimes has given to some of his highest-ranking priests around the Known World the quest to discover and slay Oirtulev). Oirtulev also has contacts with the underground cults of Orcus and Thanatos in Karameikos and Thyatis. Currently, Oirtulev is gathering magical items and artifacts from various places of the Known World, working through his agents and mercenaries.

While he forgot anything he knew about the Nithian Empire after the Immortals' agents visited him after the destruction of the Empire (BC 500), in the following centuries Oirtulev managed to collect a number of hints regarding that ancient civilization, and now he has decided to ally with the Magian Fire Worshipers to gather even more clues about Nithia; he furthers some aims of the Magians, while planning to use the gathered informations to begin his path toward Immortality (Orcus or Thanatos would be his likely patrons).

Centuries ago, Oirtulev discovered the secret of Iunyt (see 'Ylaruam Side', later), only to be infected by a supernatural contagion which rots his undead body. In rules terms, each 1d4 months the disease drains one Hit Dice (and Magic-User level) from Oirtulev. While he's still trying to find a cure to his disease, Oirtulev has discovered that lifeforce taken from living magic-users can temporarily halt his physical decline. Thus, he's using the power of his *Eye* to keep his body whole (see below). Thus, thanks to the *Eye's* powers, Oirtulev arouses visions of power, future, or knowledge in the minds of the wizards of neighbouring regions, impelling them to come to his den in the Altan Tepes; there, Oirtulev traps them, and drains their lifeforce.

Oirtulev also knows about Barimoor and he suspects the existence of his underground empire; the powerful Alphantian mage tried indeed to win Oirtulev to his cause, and to take from him informations about Iunyt's secret, but the latter refused and, since then, they have become enemies and rivals. Nevertheless, Barimoor knows that Oirtulev can be a hindrance to his path in the Sphere of Energy, and soon or later he'll have to destroy the lich.

The Human Settlements

Castellan Keep

The last outpost of civilization in before the savage wilderness of the Altan Tepes, Castellan Keep hosts the

The *Eye* of Oirtulev

This macabre object resembles an amulet with an human eye set into it; it can be brought about the neck through a light chain, as the "eye" is only 4" in diameter. The *Eye* bestows upon its owner the same powers of a *crystal ball with ESP*, but can also used to commune telepathically with any intelligent target of the scrying (usually through the sending of visions).

Moreover, the *Eye* has an additional sinister power. If a living mortal comes into contact with the *Eye*, he'll be drained of an energy level per round in which the contact is continued (the effect is the same of a wight's energy drain). When Oirtulev (or another undead being, for that matter) touches the *Eye*, he can absorb up to one stored energy level per round; each energy level makes him immune to his disease's effects for 2d6 months. Alternatively, any undead touching the *Eye* can use each energy level stored within it to heal itself of 1d6+1 hit points.

The *Eye* can store a maximum of twenty energy level; note that only those taken from living magic-users can halt Oirtulev's disease.

"The Mountain Storm" guard battalion of the 4th Division of the grand ducal army of Karameikos. The battalion has the duty to keep in check the humanoid tribes of the mountains, and to closely watch the frost giants' activities. Ideally the battalion should work together with Darokinian and Ylari border garrisons to block the non-humans' raids, but that happens rarely because of the difficulty to preserve continuous communications through the impervious mountains. The garrison numbers 224 soldiers, and 20 officers, in addition to the Captain himself.

The Keep is reachable only by traveling on foot from Novaci; a narrow trail winds its way through the valley, up to the low crag upon which the stronghold is built. In spite of its insular location, the Keep sees a relevant amount of trade, which mostly regards the supplying of the garrisons stationed there; because of this, in addition to the soldiers, it's always possible to find there some civilians involved in the most different affairs (merchants, artisans, miners, travelers, etc.). From time to time, members of the Order of the Griffon come here to help the garrison fight the humanoid tribes.

The Officers of the Keep: The Keep's Castellan is Lord Karl-Heinrich Wolf (see the next page's box), who also is the battalion's Captain.

He's wisely advised by one of his Liutenants – who happen also to be his best friend –, Lady Alatiela of Gleymouril (Neutral 6th-level Elf), the scion of a Radlebb Woods Callarii clan who enlisted in the Karameikan army to avenge herself of humanoids (years

The Castellan

Lord Karl-Heinrich Wolf is the Castellan of Castellan Keep and the Captain of “The Mountain Storm” battalion. His family came in Traladara from Hattias at the beginning of the 10th century AC, and later married into Traladaran noble clans; currently, the Wolf family hold many lands southwest of Kelvin.

A younger son of the family, Karl-Heinrich was sheared, and went adventuring at young age. Among his many deeds was the heroic defense of a Callarii village in the western Dymrak Forest – after that he was gifted of his *elven boots* and *cloak*. Later, he enlisted in the army, swiftly rising through its ranks, reaching the rank of Captain, and finally the appointment as Castellan of the keep at the feet of the Altan Tepes. There, he has done a good job so far, keeping in check the humanoids’ raids, and earning the respect of the garrison.

Karl-Heinrich is a crafty characters, even if sometimes he may seem a little to hasty in taking his decisions. Nevertheless, his honesty and courage are unquestionable.

The last year the Castellan has begun a love affair with Irena, a married noblewoman belonging to the Traladaran Kutinov clan, which rules the estate of Bergoi (south of Novaci). The two meet rarely at Novaci or at the Keep, and they’ve managed to keep their affair hidden so far – but Karl-Heinrich could be in serious trouble if the thing was discovered.

Karl-Heinrich is 39-years old, and strongly-built, being 5’11” tall and weighing 179 lbs. His light-

chestnut hair reach a little under his ears, and he wears mustaches and a long beard. His eyes are blue.

Karl-Heinrich Wolf (8th-level Fighter): NA 1; AC 7 at the Keep, –3 in battle (H: –3 AC/3 with normal sword); HD 8 (M); hp 48; THAC0 15 (7 vs H targets with *normal sword* +2 [9 vs other targets], 12 with *dagger* +1); #AT 1 *normal sword* +2 or 1 *dagger* +1; Dmg 2d8+4 or 1d4+3; MV 120’ (40’), 90’ (30’) in armor; Save F8; ML 10; AL L; S 17, I 15, W 10, D 16, C 12, Ch 12; SA disarm (save +2) with normal sword, ranged attack (–/5/10 with normal sword, 10/20/30 with dagger); SD deflect (2) with normal sword; XPV 650.

Languages: Alignment (Lawful), Thyatian, Traladaran, Elven.

Weapon Masteries: Crossbow, heavy (BA), Dagger (BA), Lance (BA), Spear (BA), Sword, normal (EX).

General Skills: Etiquette 12, Knowledge (Karameikos) 15, Language (Elven) 15, Leadership 12, Military Tactics 15, Riding (Horse) 16, Survival (Forest) 15.

When he’s at the Keep, he always wears the seal of his charge, a silver chain studded with gems (1,800 gp of value), his *ring of protection* +1, and his *dagger* +1. In battle, he dons a *plate mail* +1, a *shield* +1, a *normal sword* +2. As said before, Lord Wolf also possess a pair of *elven boots*, an *elven cloak* (both of Callarii making), a *potion of levitation*, and a *potion of healing*.

ago she was taken captive by hobgoblins – and it wasn’t a pleasant experience for her). Sometimes Alatiela receives the consent of Lord Wolf to leave for a while her duties in order to go adventuring together with the “Ladies for Hire”, an all-female adventure group led by Lady Nina Pyotrev, the swashbuckling scion of a Traladaran noble clan.

The other Liutenants are: Lord Piotr Artho (Lawful 6th-level Fighter), a dumb Traladaran noble sent there by the plots of the Minster of State, Lord Zogrev Yarol, who favors his family; Fabius Osculantius (Lawful 6th-level Fighter), a tough veteran raised in the best tradition of Thyatian legionnaires; and Lord Sergej Malenkov (Neutral 6th-level Fighter), another Traladaran nobleman skilled in the use of the longbow, belonging to a clan with lands between Kelvin and Penhaligon.

Using *The Keep on the Borderlands*: Castellan Keep is described in great detail in module *B2 – The Keep on the Borderlands* by Gary Gygax. The material included in the adventure is fully usable with a few adjustment. First of all, you’ll have to adjust the number of soldiers

stationed at the Keep to match “The Mountain Storm” consistency.

Basically, the battalion’s 1st company under the command of Lady Alatiela is made up of heavy and medium cavalry, and heavy infantry, stationed at the main, inner keep of the stronghold.

The 2nd company under Lord Artho is made up of heavy and medium infantry stationed between the main keep and the inner bailey.

The 3rd company under Fabius Osculantius is made up of medium infantry stationed in the inner bailey and tasked with its defence.

The 4th company under Lord Malenkov is also made up of medium infantry, and its duty is to garrison the outer bailey.

Also, you’ll have to substitute the module’s “Castellan” (location 27 in *B2*) with Lord Wolf; his “Advisor” (loc. 26) with Lady Alatiela; the “Captain” and the “Sergeant of the Guard” (loc. 18) with Lieutenant Fabius Osculantius of the 3rd company, and his Sergeant Marius Fulcrathonius; the “Superintendent (or Bailiff) of

the outer bailey” (loc. 6) with Lieutenant Lord Maleknov; and the “Corporal of the Watch” with one of the Sergeants of the 4th company.

Moreover, the “Scribe” (loc. 26) is none other than Polibius Iphanikarius (Lawful 3rd-level Cleric of the Church of Karameikos), the Keep’s chancellor, and Lord Wolf personal scribe and chaplain. The Curate, instead, is Arcadius Metorigion (Lawful 5th-level Cleric), the rep-

The Ladies of Bergoi

Life in Castellan Keep is often boring and monotonous; the lack of female company only worsens this situation. The Keep’s location doesn’t easily allow “sellers of pleasures” to come there; moreover the Castellan is strict in preserving discipline and morality among his men, and so far has never allowed the building of a brothel within or near the Keep’s walls.

However Lord Wolf, following the requests of some soldiers and officers, had begun to fear nervousnesses and desertions among his garrison, and recently agreed to the proposal of an experienced prostitute from Kelvin, Jula Mankiewicz (Neutral 4th-level Thief), a woman about 40 years old leading a group of a dozen wandering prostitutes.

Jula offered the Castellan the services of her girls once every three months, under the condition that the girls are escorted from Bergoi (south of Novaci) to the Keep through the dangerous mountain path. The prostitutes’ group, called by the soldiers “The Ladies of Bergoi”, travels in three covered carts where the girls’ goods are carried. Usually, at least ten cavalrymen are sent each time to escort the unusual caravan.

The Ladies stay at the Keep for about a week, living at the Traveler’s Inn, in the Keep’s outer bailey. For the soldiers, the girls’ arrival is a chance of delight, feasting, and rejoicing. The girls’ services are sold at 3 sp per intercourse; the most beautiful girls usually service officers, which are charged even 3 gp per intercourse.

Lord Wolf has ordered to keep the girls out of the inner bailey or the main keep, and has commanded that they stay in the outer bailey only. Moreover, he always try to arrange with Jula the arrive of the Ladies in times when the Keep’s affairs are supposed to be quiet.

Needless to say, this agreement is greatly frowned upon by the curate Metorigion of the Church of Karameikos, and the Ladies are one of his favoured issues of discussion and criticism with Lord Wolf. The garrison, on the other hand, has greatly appreciated the Castellan’s decision to settle an agreement with Jula, and now the soldiers respectfully adjust themselves to the limitations he has imposed to this practice.

representative of the Church of Karameikos in this remote area.

Other characters living in the outer bailey (the jewel merchant, the smith, the trader, the banker, and the provisioner) can be used as described in *B2*. The “Guild House” (loc. 16) could belong to the Wufwolde United Traders, a medium-sized guild of merchants, traders, and craftsmen which serves the various communities along the Hillfollow River, and which currently does most of the trade going into and out of Castellan Keep.

Finally, the “Priest” (loc. 7b) should be considered a cultist of the Dark Triad which pretend to belong to the Church of Karameikos.

Ethnic and Religious Issues: About 50% of the Keep’s garrison is of Thyatian ethnicity; another 35% are Traladarans; and about another 15% is of mixed Thyatian-Traladaran or foreign heritage. Given the rather high percentage of non-Thyatian soldiers in the garrisons, at the Keep troubles caused by ethnic differences or discrimination are almost unheard of.

In spite of this, the only religious building of the Keep is a chapel of the Church of Karameikos, located in the outer bailey. Traladaran officers have recently raised the question of the lack of a Traladaran cult site in front of Lord Wolf, but things have never went so far as to propose the construction of a shrine devoted to the Church of Traladara, mostly because of Metorigion’s opposition. Currently, Lord Wolf allows the monks of the Monastery of St. Yakov (see below) to periodically visit the Keep to attend the Traladaran soldiers’ spiritual needs. Metorigion uses these occasions to entertain lengthy public debates with the Traladaran monks, trying to refute their heresies.

Outside the Keep: It’s possible to use also *B2*’s Wilderness Map to detail the area around Castellan Keep. Encounter locales can be used almost as they’re given in the module. The “mad hermit” (loc. 4) could be a former Church of Traladara missionary who went mad; the chaotic fighters of the “raider camp” (loc. 3), instead, could be simply bandits, or even members of an Iron Ring squad sent there to contact the Dark Triad cultists, the humanoids, or to spy on the Keep.

Monastery of St. Yakov

This monastery was built in the 8th century AC, and it’s dedicated to Yakov Ietulevič, a priest of Halav, member of the Church of Traladara, who was martyred by Altan Tepes’ humanoids which he had come here to fight. The building rises over a high ridge which overlooks the valley of the Castellan River below, and it can be reached via a tortuous trail which winds up through the woods covering the mountains’ slopes. The monks here give spiritual solace to the residents of Novaci, Castellan Keep, and even Bergoi – a Traladaran estate south of

The Karameikos Side

Novaci; in turn, they buy various types of goods from the inhabitants (tools, pottery, food, drinks, and other products).

The monastery hosts a rather numerous community of 14 monks, under the guidance of Abbot Laszlo Szovenenko (Lawful 8th-level Cleric). Other 33 laymen dwell in the monastery and in the surrounding lands administered by it, performing menial works (farming, herding, crafts). The monastery includes many different buildings: a main church with an attached refectory and kitchens, a dormitory for monks provided with praying rooms, a building devoted to the study of holy writings and meditation, and some other small buildings like storage areas, and workshops; the whole complex is enclosed within a low defense wall.

Novaci

Novaci is a small village (240 residents) located in the narrow valley of Castellan River, which winds between the Altan Tepes up to Castellan Keep. The village lays on the banks of Castellan River, which can be sailed upriver with barges up to a point a little north of Novaci. Novaci's main activity is the mining of silver from a mine located on a mountain ridge about three-quarter mile south-west of the village; some of the inhabitants work as prospectors around local brooks, and along Castellan River's course – nuggets are brought downstream by the course of the rivers which spring from northern mountains. Novaci is also a main stop between the estate

of Bergoi to the south, and Castellan Keep to the north; most people heading toward the Keep – soldiers, travelers, suppliers, merchants, and, naturally, adventurers – often stop there.

Some miles north of Novaci, along the Castellan River, a storage place for barges is found about the point after which it's not possible to go upstream through barges anymore. Often boaters and their passengers relax there, and they spend some time resting there before beginning the last part of the trip (on foot) to reach Castellan Keep. The storage place is also the starting point of the trail going westward to the Monastery of St. Yakov.

Novaci is sheltered by a wooden palisade, and many of its inhabitants – realizing the dangers of a border settlement like their own – are skilled in the use of weapons (mostly axes, spears, and bows). Even if the village – enclosed as it is in its narrow valley – is not a main target of humanoid raids, sometimes it's attacked by bands of goblinoid raiders or, more rarely, by groups of frost giants who have managed to go unnoticed beyond Castellan Keep.

Strange and Interesting Places

Iscanin's Path

About six thousands years ago, Iscranin was the most fearsome and large of the great anellids which spread terror among the surface dwellers, in an age when humanity and modern races were still young. This terrible monster, a wormlike being over 30' in diameter, dug many tunnels during the course of its life, until it found death by the hand of the great red dragon Yealeletherveri, when it inadvertently pierced into his lair.

One of the most tangled tunnel complexes dug by Iscranin is located in the very central part of the Known World. One of its entrances is found on the Altan Tepes' mountainside south-west of Parsa, and it leads to a series of underground tunnels which run up to various points of the Altan Tepes massif. It's rumored that one of those tunnels leads up to the area beneath Alfheim.

The Lair of Yealeletherveri

This large gorge's only access is a long crack on the mountainside, which goes down for many feet up to the ceiling of a wide cave. It's hard to spot the cave from the crack, unless one is able to fly. The cave is huge, over 50' high and nearly 100' long; it's filled with stalactites, stalagmites, and it's crossed by an underground river. A large round tunnel, over 30' across, comes into the cave's north side; around that area, parts of the cave's ceiling and wall are crumbled, stalagmites and stalactites broken,

The Golden Gem of Yealeletherveri

The *Golden Gem of Yealeletherveri* is a minor artifact of the Sphere of Matter. It was fashioned by Yealeletherveri with the blessing of the Moon Dragon itself, and – even if it has lost its bond with Yealeletherveri's soul – it's still a rather powerful item, coveted by humans and dragons alike. The artifact has the following characteristics:

Sphere of Matter

Minor Artifact: 100 Power Points. Four powers; 1 handicap; 1 penalty.

Vessel: A huge, pure, and smooth nugget of gold, the size of a watermelon (it has an encumbrance value of 2,000 cn).

Monetary Value: 10,000 gp.

Information Power: *Clairvoyance* (as magic-user 3rd-level spell, Range 60'; Duration 12 turns; Cost 25 TP).

Transformation Powers: *Produce fire* (as druid 2nd-level spell; Duration 2 turns; Cost 15 TP).

Defense Powers: *Antimagic 20%* (Duration 6 turns; Cost 35 TP). *Wall of fire* (as magic-user 4th-level spell; Range 60'; Duration Concentration; Area of

Effect 1200 sq.ft.; Cost 25 TP).

Activation of Powers: All powers can only be activated when the artifact is bathed in flames (or likewise heated), and touched by dragon skin (it needs not to belong to a living dragon, however). This means that any would-be user must have a *charmed* dragon touching the artifact for him, have dragonskin gloves, or something like that. When the user touch the artifact under these conditions, he'll know instantly all the artifact's powers, and he'll therefore have only to wish them to take effect.

Handicap: Attitude Change. The owner of the *Gem* becomes arrogant and aggressive; he'll try to impose himself to every other being, and to be obeyed as often as possible – up to the point of attacking outright.

Penalty: Spell Effect. Each time one of the artifact's powers is used, there's the chance that a *confusion* effect takes place (as magic-user 4th-level spell; Duration 12 rounds), centered on the artifact and affecting every living creature within 30' of it (owner included).

Total Cost: 101 PP.

and there's evidence of unnatural destruction.

Over six thousands years ago, this cave was indeed the lair of a fearsome red dragon, Yealeletherveri, lord of this whole region in a time before Blackmoor in which humanity was young. The red dragon perished in the battle against the greatest of the great anellids, Iscranin, who, digging one of his tunnels, stumbled by chance in the dragon's lair. Neither of them survived the battle. What survives today of the two colossal opponents are their skeletal remains, locked in a letal struggle along the cave; inexperienced viewers could even not realize that the remains belong to two different creatures, and they could mistake the two skeletons for that of a weird, huge, and dead monster.

At the time of the great battle between the two monsters, this region was very near to the North Pole; it was from this lonely region that Yealeletherveri ruled over a number of powerful and ancient dragons submitted to him, which spread terror in southernmost areas. In that age, the depths of Yealeletherveri's lair were crossed by a lava flood which created a pleasant habitat for the great red dragon; the cataclysms which followed the Great Rain of Fire, however, turned away the lava's course after that.

Yealeletherveri's treasure was taken away during intervening years between the dragon's death and the end of Blackmoor by dragons previously submitted to him, and by other renegade dragons which visited his lair. Of all valuable items which once laid there, one was of particular importance: the *Golden Gem of Yealeletherveri*. Realizing to be a threat for many, and foreseeing the possibility to be killed, Yealeletherveri, with the aid of the Moon

Dragon, created a receptacle from a piece of pure gold the size of a watermelon, to which he linked his life-force. If the red dragon's body would have been killed, his spirit would have survived within the *Gem*, ready to possess another dragon body. After the death of Yealeletherveri's physical body, the *Gem* was lost, likely passing through many different hands. Unfortunately for him, magical upheavals followed to the Great Rain of Fire destroyed the bond between the *Gem* and Yealeletherveri's spirit, forbidding it to possess other bodies and slowly burning it out.

The strong bond between the red dragon and the *Gem*, however, didn't allow Yealeletherveri's spirit to rest in peace. To those who visit his lair, the fearsome dragon's wraith still manifests once in a given time as a ghost dragon, trying to possess one of the visitors in order to begin searching again for the *Gem*, and bring it back to his lair.

Yealeletherveri's spirit can be considered a special undead haunt (ghost), with the following game stats:

Yealeletherveri's Ghost*: NA 1; AC -2; HD 14***** (L); hp 86; THAC0 8; #AT 1 touch; Dmg aging (1d4×10 years); MV 90' (30'); Save F14; ML 10; AL C; Int 16; SA breath of ethereal flames (see below); gaze (once per round within 60', in addition to other attacks; victims must save vs Spells or be paralyzed for 2d4 rounds); ectoplasmic net (within 10' of him, is effective 3 rounds after appearing; anyone touching it must save vs Spells or be pulled into the Ethereal Plane); *magic jar* against a victim within 30'; SD can only be hit by +2 or better weapons; immune to all spells save those affecting evil; turned as "Special" undead (may save vs Spells to avoid a 'D' result); XPV 5,500.

Yealeletherveri's ghost, thanks to its special nature, can only be turned as a "Special" undead. The ghost also possess a special "breath" attack consisting of ethereal flames. Breath sizes are the same of that of a huge red dragon; victims caught within it must save vs Spells or be overcome by fear (as per a *cause fear* spell). Yealeletherveri's ghost always holds an ethereal copy of the *Gem*; whenever the spirit possess another creature, the *Gem* begins glowing.

If the *Gem* is ever brought back to Yealeletherveri's lair, yhe dragon's spirit would find peace, and would disappear once and for all – but the *Gem* would also lose any power. The *Golden Gem* is indeed a powerful artifact of the ancient world, and anyone who finds it could acquire knowledge of its great powers (see the azure box, in the previous page).

The artifact's current whereabouts is unknown, but – given the fact it's a very old item – it could be found nearly anywhere on Mystara, or even in another plane. Anyway, an adventure regarding the *Gem* should be extremely difficult, and only suitable for characters of very high level.

The Ylaruam Side

In spite of its location far from the heart of the country, this border area of the Emirates of Ylaruam can appear to the casual traveler even more civilized and settled than Alasiya's deserts. Almost all these lands belong to the Emirate of Makistan, whose Emir appointed by the Sultan of Ylaruam rules the Emirates' western steppes and the highlands leading to Darokin and Karameikos. To honor the Ethengarian ancestry of his people, the Emir of Makistan styles himself a Great *Khan*. Many lesser hereditary *kbans* rule the various Makistan tribes and small villages, while areas of major strategic or economic relevance are granted to *beys* appointed by the Great *Khan* himself.

Most of Makistan's stable settlements are found in highland areas; they're inhabited by settled farmers and craftsmen, which from time to time welcome nomad tribes bringing there their herds, and trade their goods with them. In Makistan's settlements, above all in the highland ones, it's easy to find dwarven immigrants, and even gnomes (both devoted to various types of crafts). This region is also passed through by small lupin tribes belonging to the Fighting Fennec and Nithian Rambler breeds. Luckily, thanks to its hotter climate, the region is spared by the worst raids of the frost giants; nevertheless it's not disregarded by the humanoid tribes, which often penetrate into this area to ransack villages and attack lonely tribes.

Many nomad tribes wander those regions, mostly devoted to herding. Their number varies from a tribe to another. The DM can use the following table to determine how many peoples belong to a given tribe:

Ylari Tribes' Size Table

1d10 roll	Size	# of members
1-3	Small	1d6 × 25
4-7	Medium	(1d12 × 25) + 125
8-0	Large	(1d20 × 25) + 425

In every tribe, about 20-30% of the members are warriors, while the other are young, children, women, and old persons; to determine game stats of the nomads and characterize the tribes you can use the infos included in *Rules Cyclopedia* and in *GAZ2 – The Emirates of Ylaruam*. All in all, about 35% of Ylari population is made up by nomads.

The region south-east of Makistan, running parallel to the Altan Tepes along the Thyatian border, is known as Ennaej (or Southwestern Highlands), and it's managed by the Emirates' Vouchery of Provinces. Very few and very small settlements are scattered around this area, which mostly sees only the passage of nomad tribes with their herds. All this region teems with humanoid tribes (mostly orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears, kobolds, hill and stone giants, and trolls), which frequently clash with

the nomads, put a constant threat to this area's stability, and represent a serious hindrance to the strenghtening of Ylari power in this region.

Towns and Villages

Ab Mazar

This village (340 residents) is the only settlement of decent size in this arid valley; it's ruled by *Khan* Fethil Yildiz (Neutral 5th-level Magic-User). The village is made up by a series of stone and earth huts stuck to the mountainside, and linked together by wooden and stone ladders. This construction style is typical of this area of Makistan, and also of other areas of the Emirates. At the feet of the village a clear freshwater source springs from a reddish rock, around which a green meadow grows.

The spring is featured in the legend of Abu al-Aziz, a wandering Alasiyan healer of the times before Al-Kalim. One day Abu, in the course of one of his wanderings, used his powers to heal a wounded heron, which thanks to him took flight again. Years after, left for dead by hobgoblin raiders, Abu was crawling on the verge of death in this arid valley, without hope to survive; until one heron – the one that Abu had saved years before – came near him and persuaded him to follow it up to a red rock sprouting from the earth. Using its beak, the heron struck the rock a number of times, and a freshwater spring came gushing from it; a single sip of that water refreshed and fully restored the man, healing his wounds. Turning again toward the heron, Abu didn't see a bird anymore, but a djinni: the being foretold him that, if he would have found a settlement there, water would always have been plentiful, and the settlement's residents would have flourished until they would have taken care of all herons they would find. Abu did as the djinni foretold him, and thus Ab Mazar was born. The village grew in prosperity and happiness during the course of the centuries.

The figure of Abu the Healer is still venerated in the village today, and the story of the heron is still told. The village is the main market of this valley and at regular intervals the nomad tribes of these areas come here to celebrate the memory of Abu, and to trade their goods – mostly wool. Ab Mazar is also a flourishing farming settlement thanks to the spring sprouting from the red rock; the spring's water, while it doesn't have any of the magical properties the legend awards to it, is extremely fresh and pure.

A little more south-west of Ab Mazar a monastery was built, where dervishes reside; they're devoted to the worship of Abu's memory. It was Abu himself who founded this community of worshippers, to which he taught his arts of healer and wiseman. The monastery is also partly dug into the rock, as the neighbouring village,

and it's an important spiritual centre for this whole area of the highlands.

In spite of its proximity to the Altan Tepes, Ab Mazar has never been attacked by frost giants and humanoids in the course of its history. However, the lasting prosperity of the village has given birth in the younger generations to an increasing lack of devotion toward local traditions. Some weeks ago, just now that the economic competition of Hojambaz is beginning to shadow the role of Ab Mazar as the main local market, a dead heron was found on a rocky peak above the village. Many inhabitants have begun to speculate that the death of the bird is linked somehow to one of Ab Mazar's residents, and that the djinni's blessing on the village could be withdrawn, marking the beginning of a time of troubles for local peoples...

Bunyad

This is a small village (260 residents) located near a local spring; its inhabitants devote themselves to shepherding, farming, and iron mining from the nearby hills. It's ruled by *Khan* Hekzer Thennur, who also rules over the villages of Komisari (where he resides) and Uwayl. Bunyad is periodically hit by the raids of humanoid tribes coming from the Altan Tepes; the village was sacked and burned the last time only two years ago (then it had five hundred dwellers), and it's being slowly abandoned in spite of the presence of the well and of the mines.

Dupushta

Another village (380 inhabitants), mostly devoted to subsistence farming and shepherding; it's ruled by *Khan* Zihni Zafer, whose domains extend up to the village of Rabaturk, to the east.

Fort Ziraki

This fortification is the main toll station in this area of Ylaruam, and the point where all the trade coming from Darokin is watched and taxed. The fort is provided with a stone wall, towers, and a central stone building, where the *Bey* of Harunum, Besim Coskun resides. Besim was appointed by the Great *Khan* to defend this area from the giants' and humanoids' raids, to watch the border with Darokin, and to collect as much money as possible. The fort, in addition to a garrison of over a hundred soldiers, is surrounded by a large open space enclosed by a palisade, where the caravans can stop and camp for the night – at a price, obviously.

The *Bey*'s authority extends up to the valleys of Hojambaz and Ab Mazar, whose *khans* are more than happy to receive the help and protection of Ziraki's garrison. Unknown to the Great *Khan*, *Bey* Besim accepts sums of money from the Al-Azrad of Selenica to close an eye over some of their precious goods, which pass beyond

the toll station untaxed.

Recently, *Bey* Besim has increased the number of soldiers at the fort with another two hundred militiamen; that was necessary after the rise in humanoid activities and raids along the foothills of the Altan Tepes – mostly by a local hobgoblin tribe, the Killer Sands.

Gawdar

This village (560 residents) is found at short distance from Fort Ziraki, and it acts indeed as market and supply center for the soldiers garrisoned at the fort. It falls under the direct authority of *Bey* Besim Coskun (Chaotic 11th-level Thief), which resides at the fort. Being the last native settlement of some size for Ylari going to Darokin, it's provided with inns, gathering places for mercenaries searching for employment, equipment shops, horse traders, blacksmiths and weaponsmiths, cartmakers, wheelmakers, and basketweavers.

The length of road going from Gawdar to Dupushta is infamous for the presence of brigands and of some nomad tribes which don't dislike to perform raids from time to time. *Bey* Besim Coskun likes better to give sums of money to the more dangerous brigand bands so that they don't attack main caravans, rather than begin a bandit hunt in the impervious hills of this area.

Hojambaz

It's a border village (670 residents) whose activities revolve around mining and trade, ruled by *Khan* Tunkai Erbakan (Lawful Normal Man). The site of a stone quarry since a long time, Hojambaz has seen a recent influx of immigrants when gold was found in a nearby mine; now the gold is mined in quantity and brought under the escort of heavily armed patrols at Fort Ziraki first, then at Parsa to the Great *Khan*. The village of Hojambaz does a relevant amount of trade with the Barony of Flowerhill, in Darokinian land, and its rising importance begins to shadow the traditional role of Ab Mazar as main market of the area.

Komisari

This settlement (290 residents) is the residence of old *Khan* Hekzer Thennur (Lawful 14th-level Fighter), who also rules over the villages of Bunyad and Uwayl. An historical enmity runs between the *Khan*'s family and the Torumtay family, to which the Grand Visir of Great *Khan* Kamal belongs. Even if Hezker Thennur owns several lands in this inhospitable area of Makistan's southern highlands, he never enjoyed enough support from the Grand Visir to receive military aids and perform a thorough action to remove once and for all the humanoid threat from the region. *Khan* Hezker periodically visits the area of Bunyad and the wilderness to hunt humanoids, but these raids don't have lasting conse-

The Ylaruam Side

quences.

Hezker has recently appealed both to the Great *Khan* Kamal, and to the Sultan Mohammed in order to receive some help. The Council of Preceptors has charged the Vouchery of Provinces with the duty to find a solution to the problem in agreement with the Great *Khan* of Makistan – but at a price: Hezker has had to allow the grandson of the Vouchery’s chief to found a village at his lands’ border, on the site of an important local oasis, and to keep the title of *Qadi*.

Mamur Karez

The last village (300 residents) of the Makistani steppes, before the road to Ylaruam enters the desert. The village, under the direct authority of the Great *Khan*, includes a rather plentiful well, and indeed it represents a primary stop for caravans heading to Ylaruam and for nomad tribes – who in times of famine or drought often scuffle among themselves for the control of the village, challenging the Great *Khan*’s authority.

Parsa

Parsa (2,000 residents) is the capital of the Emirate of Makistan, seat of power of the Great *Khan* Kamal Mazin (Neutral 16th-level Fighter) and of his Grand Visir Guray Torumtay (Neutral 5th-level Fighter). In spite of its rank of capital of the Emirate, Parsa is little more than a huge village, devoid of fortifications, made up by low earth huts and tents, with some rare wooden (mostly the stabling for cattle and herds) and stone (the nobles’ dwellings, and the temples) buildings. Great *Khan* Kamal often travels around his domain in the Ust-Urt Valley, planning expeditions against brigands and monsters, keeping in check his *khans*, and enjoying hunts; his court of nearly five hundreds courtiers and horsemen moves with him.

Daily affairs of the “town” are managed by *Bey* Uyghur Shushud (Neutral 6th-level Cleric), who takes care of the Great *Khan*’s “palace” at Parsa: an oasis just outside the town, encircled by an earth wall strengthened with stone blocks and wooden posts, at the heart of which a square building in the typical Alasiyan style rises; the building is luxuriously furnished, and includes a great hall and some side rooms. When the Great *Khan*’s court stops at Parsa, on occasion it’s usually quartered in a number of tents set inside this large oasis.

Rabaturk

In the steppes south of Parsa this village (850 inhabitants), ruled by *Khan* Zihni Zafer (Lawful 7th-level Fighter), represents the main agricultural centre; wide agricultural plots developed thanks to the irrigation techniques used there and to the relative fertility of the local soil, and they produce a good deal of foodstuffs. Nomad

Makistani tribes often stop there to supply themselves with foods and to do some trade. This region’s *Khan* dwell in this village which, as it’s common around Makistani steppes, doesn’t have any defense.

Uwayl

This village (140 residents) has been recently founded on the site of a large oasis which, since centuries, is used as main meeting and watersupplying point by the nomad tribes of this region. Until few time ago the oasis, in fact, fell under the authority of *Khan* Hezker Thennur, but then he had to cede his rulership over this area in exchange for some favor by the Vouchery of the Provinces.

The grandson of the Vouchery’s chief, *Qadi* Faiz al-Jalal (Lawful 3rd-level Fighter, with Str 16, Dex 17, and Con 15) – a bold 25-years old man gifted with indisputable martial prowess who wish to become famous with some deed – received as present by *Khan* Hezker these lands, and led there many of his followers, founding a village in the oasis of Uwayl. The arrival of sedentary settlers has immediately spawned troubles with the nomads, which were used to exploit the oasis as their own since time beyond living memory.

The Great *Khan* has commanded *Khan* Hezker to keep quiet the nomad tribes, and these were forced to obey him – for the moment; nevertheless, tensions continue to run high, and sometimes brawls and settling of old scores happen at Uwayl between nomads and farmers, with various degrees of violence.

RUINS AND FORGOTTEN PLACES

Iunyt

Located at the heart of the infamous Thirst Hollow, an arid valley of inaccessible rocks wedged within the Altan Tepes, lay the ruins of the ancient Nithian city of Iunyt. At the time of the Nithian Empire, it was a prosperous mining center, devoted to the mining of gold, silver, and iron from the mountain veins. Suddently, in the 6th century BC, an horrible and lethal plague spread in this region from one of the mines, contaminating the city and swiftly decimating its population. A great many graves and mass graves were dug, with hundreds of corpses thrown into them. The death toll was so high that the city was completely abandoned, the mines sealed with magic, and buried under a level of crumbled rocks.

Even after the population had left the region, the land begun to dry up: water springs polluted and withered, animal and plant life slowly died. No one even knew what horrors the miners had discovered while greedily digging in the depths of the mountains – but it’s

obvious that something was still beneath there when the Nithians decided to seal the mines.

Being already totally uninhabited, this area was only marginally hit by the events which caused the destruction of the Nithian Empire, and because of this a part of the ruins of Iunyt is still visible, and perhaps they're the most precious surviving monument of the Nithian culture left in whole Ylaruam.

Unfortunately, Thirst Hollow is rightly considered a cursed place by all nomad tribes roaming the region, and the area around the ruins is also systematically avoided by humanoid tribes. Within a three-four miles radius around Iunyt there's no animal nor plant life, and a weird silence reigns over the area. No one of those who entered the dead city ever came back. Someone who is brave enough to go inside the ruins would discover amazing, almost untouched witnesses of the Nithian culture, and could even read the disturbing chronicle of the plague in ancient papyrs stored in some sealed chest.

The area around the ruins, and in particular the mountain peaks rising south-east of them, is inhabited by a group of sphinxes, which according to the nomads' legends are the keepers of Iunyt's secrets and eat everyone tries to come near the city.

Tedženkači Castle

This complex of ruins dates back to the 3rd century AC; at that time the Kingdom of Darokin ruled through its feudal lords over this whole region. One of those lords built Tennenkay Castle on the high grounds watching the passes leading from the Ust-Urt Valley to the foothills of the Altan Tepes. After the Makistans' revolt, the castle fell into ruin during the course of the 5th century AC. From time to time it was used by nomad tribes as a place to camp, but after some recent death happened within the ruins rumors are circulating about monsters or malignant beings hiding within those ancient towers...

Don't Open That Mine...

The truth is that in the depths of one of the mines lurks an horrid being native of the Nightmare Dimension. The creature was discovered by the Nithians in the depths of their mines; even is the horror is somewhat slumbering – perhaps an unsettling legacy of forgotten ages – its presence alone pollutes the air with a strange disease that slowly kills this dimension's beings, slowly transforming them into Nightmare creatures.

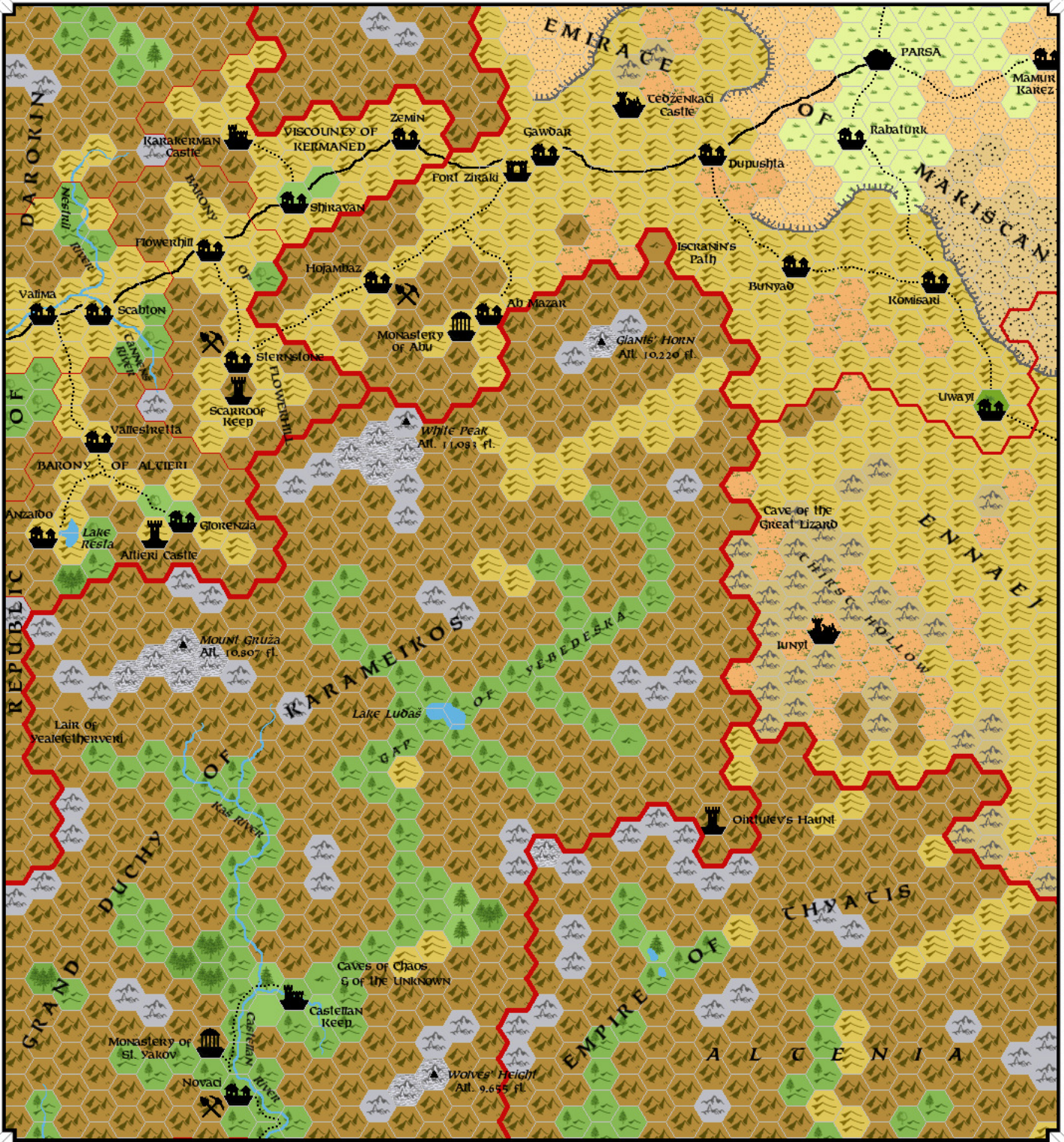
The disease can hit everything has some sort of intelligence, including undead creature; an infected creatures loses 1 HD for each 1d4 months, until its hit points reach zero or less; then, the subject is not killed, but instead changed into some sort of horrible, wicked monstrosity.

No known cures exist for the disease: its secret lays in the depths of the forbidden mine, or in the Nightmare Dimension itself.

Moreover, the creature instill dreams of madness and evil in the minds of living beings coming and resting near the area of Iunyt; each living creature must save vs Spells once per day spent in the area, or begin to behave strangely, experimenting weird visions and insane wishes – eating human flesh, talking with worms, begin chanting in unknown tongues, tell of weird, faraway places, and so on are all viable actions for “disturbed” characters.

Only one being discovered the truth behind Iunyt so far: Oirtulev, the ancient lich dwelling in the near slopes of the Altan Tepes mountains (see ‘The Karameikos Side’, above). Oirtulev managed to penetrate the magical wards put by the Nithians, and he was infected with the horrible contagion spread by the mine's creature, but wasn't able to fully explore nor take away valuable informations from the dead city.

Barimoor periodically sends agents to investigate Iunyt once per decade or so – but they regularly don't come back. However, the Alphatian mage knows that Oirtulev has discovered something about Iunyt; the lich has refused to give him any information so far.



THE CENTRAL ALTAN TEPES

Scale: one hex equals 2.7 miles

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|--------------------|--|---|
| | CLEAR OR FARMLAND | | MOUNTAINS | | GRASSLAND OR STEPPES | | RIVER OR STREAM | | RUINS |
| | LIGHT FOREST (DECIDUOUS) | | MOUNTAINTOP OR ROCKY PEAK | | SANDY DESERT OR SAND DUNES | | VILLAGE | | MINING |
| | LIGHT FOREST (EVERGREEN) | | GLACIERS | | ROCKY DESERT | | TOWN | | TRAIL OR PATH |
| | HEAVY FOREST (EVERGREEN) | | NAMED MOUNTAIN | | OASIS | | TOWER OR KEEP | | ROAD |
| | HILLS | | MOUNTAIN CAVES | | BADLANDS | | CASTLE | | EXTERNAL BORDER (KINGDOM, NATION, COUNTRY) |
| | FORESTED HILLS (DECIDUOUS) | | FORESTED HILL CAVES | | BROKEN OR BARREN LAND | | FORT | | INTERNAL BORDER (MAJOR FIEFDOM OR PROVINCE) |
| | FORESTED HILLS (EVERGREEN) | | PLATEAU | | LAKE | | RELIGIOUS BUILDING | | INTERNAL BORDER (MINOR FIEFDOM OR PROVINCE) |

- M I N I -

GAZETTEER

UNOFFICIAL GAME ACCESSORY

The Central Altan Tepes

by SIMONE Neri

The Altan Tepes.

A remote, dangerous cluster
of impassable peaks.
Giants, and humanoids rule
those mountain slopes.

Civilization clings to a few,
sparse outposts of brave pioneers.
Mysteries lurk in the wilderness.

This mini-gazetteer details the
central area of the Altan Tepes,
a savage and dangerous land
bordering three countries.

Inside, you'll find informations
about this region's settlements,
strange locales, and interesting places.

Brave the wilderness,
and discover the secrets
of the mountains!