

ATLAS OF THE JUNGLE COAST

Across the Sea of Dread lies the mighty continent of Davania. Its northern shores are covered with a lush, vibrant jungle teeming with life and dangers. Within these jungles are several clans of savages and barbarians, some humans, others not.

Most of the Jungle Coast is unexplored, and no one is exactly sure what can be found in the vast new territory. Rumors abound of strange primitive cultures with wondrous architectures, such as crystal pyramids or deep sacrificial pits.

The lands of the Jungle Coast are currently undergoing a mass colonization by the Empire of Thyatis. The natives, however, are none too pleased, and many battles arise from the competition for territory and defending of homeland. Still, the advance of civilization is steady, and there is much progress in the proper education of the locals.

It is a place where one can brave the new land, carve out territory for the settlers, and defend the poor farmer from the savage natives. All in all, if you enjoy exploration and the new frontier, the jungle coast is the place to go.

The Jungle Coast is a stretch of several hundred miles on the northern shores of Davania. Its exact size is still unknown as it is mostly unexplored. A rough estimate of its borders would be the Cestian Sea to the east, the Meghales Amosses Desert in the south and the Adakkian Mounts to the west.

Correspondents for the Jungle Coast

Here is our list of correspondents that give us detailed information on the nations, places, and events of the Jungle Coast:

Friedrich von Eisendorf

Every inch of him a professional military officer, Friedrich is Adjutant to His Most Exalted Templar and Humble Servant to Glorious Vanya, Heinz Kronenburg, who is Castellan of the fortress of Vanya's Rest itself, and by extension Governor of all Heldannic territories in Davania. Friedrich is extremely proud of his duties, but he is also more than happy to share with us what he describes as "The fearless exploits of the greatest military force Mystara has ever known" [obviously his own opinion. Ed.].

Friedrich von Eisendorf brings us news from the Heldannic Territory of Vanya's Rest, on the southern continent of Davania

Marina Takanitas

Marina Takanitas is another new correspondent. At 22, she is one of the youngest on our team, and she brings us news from the newly-discovered Milenian City-States located on the Meghala Kimata Plains. Marina is a trader who hails from Kastelios, one of the biggest, and fastest-growing, port cities in the region.

A cheerful person, her laughing brown eyes and bouncing golden curls are hard to miss in a crowd, but this exterior also serves to shield a very capable correspondent who will stop at nothing to get you, the reader, the ground-breaking stories of northwestern Davania as they happen. No danger is too much for her, and, believe you me, she knows how to use that short sword she carries!

Atlas

GARGANIN (City-State of)

Location: Continent of Davania, on coast of Sea of Dread Area: Approx. 550 sq. mi. (1,238 km²)

Population: 20,000 (around 2,000 live in scattered farms outside the city).

Languages: Hulean (Garganin dialect).

Coinage: Lira (gp), kurat (sp), piastre (cp).

Taxes: Citizens have their total worth assessed every year, and are taxed 20% of that amount.

Government Type: Monarchy.

Industries: Agriculture (wheat and vegetables), crafts, fishing, and sheep.

Important Figures: Mehmet II (Baron, human, male, F7), Kemal (Dockwarden, human, male, no class).

Flora and Fauna: The city of Garganin sits upon the fertile Garganin Grasslands, whose rich black soils yield bountiful crops year after year. Along with the typical crops found on the numerous farms scattered about the city, passers-by will notice many varieties of wildflowers and shrubs dotting the great expanses of flatlands. One can also find the occasional stand of oak trees as well, though these are scarce in the immediate area of Garganin. The frequent rainfalls year-round ensure that the flora is almost always luscious.

The animals one is likely to encounter here include all manner of grasslands wildlife, such as falcons, field mice, gazelles, gophers, hawks, leopards, salamanders, snakes, and wild horses. Also present in this region are scattered tribes of gnolls, goblins, and orcs, and the occasional griffon, though these tend to be found in the hills farther south, where the terrain is more suitable for nest-building.

Further Reading: AC 1012 - Poor Wizard's Almanac 2, AC 1013 - Poor Wizard's Almanac 3, and Champions of Mystara box set.

Description: by Marina Takanitas

I had the opportunity to venture to Garganin not long after accepting an offer from Joshuan to cover affairs as they transpire on Davania. I am a Kastelian, and Garganin is the closest large settlement to my home. My family routinely does business with the traders of Garganin, so the trade road to this city is not strange to me.

The Land

Garganin is blessed with beautiful terrain and rich soils, where there are no sharp angles; every terrain feature seems to gently mix into the next, until the land gradually slopes down to the Sea of Dread.

The weather is always fair here, with breezes from the sea constantly blowing in from the north, literally blanketing the city with the salty tang of sea air. The city itself is fairly large considering its population; it is the same size as Kastelios, yet my city has 5000 more people. Of course, the answer is clear once you enter any of Garganin's three gates - the buildings are low and expansive, with many having tiny vegetable gardens running along their sides and back. Once inside, though, it becomes clear that much of this city is taken up not by residential quarters; there are countless temples, shrines, and public buildings scattered within the city walls. Another thing you will notice is that Garganin is clean; it is forbidden, by order of Baron Mehmet, to leave garbage in the streets in public view. People will regularly come by and sweep the streets themselves with wide brooms, and every piece of litter is gathered up and carted away to be burned.

The People

Never have I met a single people so close-mouthed as those of Garganin!

I have been to the city many times, and I have done business with the same people, but they still insist on going through a ritual of coffee-drinking, during which no one may speak. It seems that "Garganinese", as the residents call themselves, strongly believe in formality and established traditions. Nothing is acceptable unless it has an established way of being done, and even then the prescribed ways of doing things must be followed. Even the way in which people socialize in the streets has a series of informal rules. Always use your right hand when touching others or eating. Never turn your back to another person. If offered a gift, politely decline and later offer a gift to the giver, when both of you can then exchange gifts properly. It is a good idea for any venturing to this city to learn the customs quickly - otherwise they will risk offending their hosts! Perhaps what is most bizarre about these people is that in many cases, they have

long forgotten the original reasons for their customs and traditions; they follow them regardless. Generally speaking, the Garganinese prefer not to deal with outsiders.

This is not because they despise foreigners; the people of Garganin simply do not wish to mix with others. Theirs is a history of freedom and relative isolation, and they are content with this. Visitors to the city will be directed to the Foreign Quarter, a collection of tiny buildings along the docks where all non-Garganinese can sleep and eat. Foreigners are forbidden from leaving the Foreign Quarter after sundown. Those that do so are immediately expelled from the city, and forbidden from returning for 10 years.

The people of Garganin are related to those of far-off Hule, though one would not know this by looking at them! I have been told by sailors from Yavdlom that the Huleans worship an Immortal named Bozdogan, who preaches deceit and conquest. Though I have seen some temples to this Immortal, many more are devoted to Halav, Petra, Zirchev, Protius, and Asterius. I have always found the Garganinese to be scrupulously honest, and interested only in what goes on in their own city.

Recent History

Garganin was founded circa AC 750 by Hule, in a bid to expand its holdings on Davania, which had been discovered only a century before by this nation. The settlement of Garganin slowly grew from a ramshackle collection of docks into a bustling town, and then into a city. Before this transformation was complete, Hule had lost interest in this colony, as the hoped-for mineral deposits and exotic animals were not present. Also, the colony was costing more to maintain than it paid in taxes, and Hule's rivalries with its neighbors were taxing its navy. Around AC 850, ships stopped sailing to Garganin, and the locals soon forgot about their homeland, and concentrated on surviving frequent humanoid raids, and building a livelihood for themselves.

Over time, the Garganinese began interacting with the Milenian City-States, especially Kastelios. The Immortals worshiped in Kastelios began to attract adherents in Garganin, who were beginning to see that Bozdogan was not looking after them. Today, there are more worshipers of these other Immortals than of Bozdogan, whose following continues to shrink.

By AC 950, Garganin was much like it is today, a city filled with people of Hulean descent, but sharing next to nothing in terms of culture and religion. Many of their customs, such as coffee-sharing, have their origin in Hule, though the reasons for them are long-forgotten.

Don't Miss

If you find yourself in Garganin, make your way to Solitude Square, which lies near the Great Market. Tastefully decorated with fountains and mosaics, this square is where musicians play every day for spare coins. The quality of the music is excellent, though it is almost always of a subdued nature. Occasionally people will sing ancient ballads, as well. These are almost always of an introspective nature, and are very thought-provoking if you know the local language well.

Another place to visit is the Great Market, where merchants from Kastelios, Kalavronti, Yavdlom, and occasionally Sind and Minrothad hawk their wares to passers-by. Though the locals do not wish to have extended contact with foreigners, they are not reluctant in the least to obtain foreign goods such as spices, precious and common metals, and wood.

Another place of interest is the Baron's Palace. In form it greatly resembles the palaces described by travelers who have ventured to Hule, with its graceful towers, domes, and curves. Baron Mehmet himself has opened part of his palace to the public, so that they may gaze upon and admire the rich carpets and adornments found throughout. For those interested in Hulean architecture, Garganin presents a much safer alternative than going to Hule itself.

Do Miss

The one section of Garganin that should be missed at all costs is called the Dark Quarter. This is where the poorest people live, and where murder and theft is rampant. Even Baron Mehmet cannot bring this part of the city under his control fully. Many of the people here think that foreigners are stealing Garganin's wealth and its livelihood, and outsiders who wander the Dark Quarter's narrow alleyways and shadowy squares for too long have been known to disappear. There are rumors that a Thieves' Guild runs this section of the city.

KASTELIOS (City-State of)

Location: Continent of Davania, on coast of Sea of Dread.

Area: approx. 600 sq. mi. (1350 km²)

Population: 25,000 (another 5,000 live in satellite villages and in the countryside).

Languages: Milenian (Kastelian dialect).

Coinage: Sun (gp), moon (sp), and heart (cp).

Taxes: All citizens pay 15% of their earnings twice per year (Klarmont 28 and Kaldmont 28), as well as 7% of the assessed value of their land once per year (Kaldmont 28).

Government Type: Democracy (citizens elect the town council, who then elect a spokesperson to guide discussions).

Industries: Agriculture (primarily wheat and corn), cattle, crafts, fishing, sheep, shipbuilding.

Important Figures: Benji Trumblehorn (shop owner, halfling, male, no class), Marina Takanitas (experienced trader, human, female, no class), and Xenthos Sarantakos (Council Spokesman, human, male, no class).

Flora and Fauna: The plant life present in Kastelios is atypical for the region, due to human intervention. Where there should be water grasses, reeds, mangroves, and bogs one finds instead grasses, bushes, and trees - such as cypress, oak, and pine. Many flowering plants are also in abundance, such as daffodils, orchids, and tulips.

The original animal life that was present here consisted of alligators, various amphibians, and water birds such as flamingos and spoonbills.

Due to the draining of the swamps, these have been forced north and south into the remaining swamplands. In their place have come the animals that the Milenians brought with them - primarily domesticated animals such as cats, cattle, dogs, pigs, and sheep. Also present are bobcats and wild boars. Kastelios is fortunate enough to be "monster-free", though this does not prevent the occasional sighting of blink dogs, displacer beasts, goblins, hippogriffs, orcs, and trolls (especially near the swamps in the latter case).

Further Reading: AC1011 - Poor Wizard's Almanac 2, AC1012 - Poor Wizard's Almanac 3, and Champions of Mystara box set.

Description: by Marina Takanitas

It is with great pride that I share with you, gentle reader, all that I can say of my home in a few scant pages! Ours is a city that is truly the gateway to Davania, perhaps rivaling even Raven Scarp in the Thyatian Hinterlands. Regardless, I have only what I see with my own eyes to show me that Kastelios is leading the way in opening ties with the outside world. My city has changed so much during my twenty-two years of life, I can hardly say whether it has been a dream, and just as much it is difficult to know where to begin...

The Land

The land upon which Kastelios was built was originally a swampy delta, which lay at the junction of the Amoros and Vasilios river systems. When the Milenians came, they used their engineering skills to drain the swamps, and then run sewers underneath the city foundations. This left an area with rich soils, upon which our city was built long ago. The lands immediately surrounding Kastelios are rich farmlands and plains, upon which the villages of Phossos and Kantrios are built. Both of these lie southeast of Kastelios.

Kastelios is itself broken into four pieces, though all of these are encircled by the city walls, and all sections are linked through the sewers and by ornate stone bridges. The smallest section consists of Uripidos Island, a triangular island bounded on the west by a section of city wall, and on the northeast and southeast by The Fork, which flows from the junction of the Amoros and Vasilios rivers towards the Serpent Strait, and the Sea of Dread. Uripidos Island holds the Docksides - the roughest part of Kastelios. Along both sides of The Fork are numerous docks and quays, which service the many ships entering and leaving Kastelios.

The second piece is called Northside; it is bounded along the south by the northern half of The Fork, and by the Amoros river, which, along with the Vasilios river, meet and then divide into The Fork before flowing into the sea. Northside is bounded with city wall along the north, and it has the Garganin Gate - the road from here leads straight to

that city. This part of Kastelios has many warehouses and businesses, as well as some residences towards the eastern end. The Great Market, and The Ruins, are in this part of the city.

The third section is called Southside; it runs south of the southern half of The Fork, and is bounded to the northeast by the Vasilios river. The south is guarded by the city wall, in which is the southern gate of Kastelios, called the Telosian Gate. The main road from here leads to the town of Telos Takesidhi. This section of Kastelios contains the Gymnasium, many small temples and residences, fine statues, as well as numerous pillared streets.

The last section is called the Old City. It is bounded on the east and southeast by city walls, on the north by the Amoros river, and on the west by the Vasilios river. This section contains the Great Temple of Halav, the Public Forum, the House of Antiquities, and many upscale residences. This section is the oldest part of Kastelios, and it survived the collapse of the empire relatively intact.

Due to its proximity to the Sea of Dread, Kastelios is blessed with a mild climate - the temperatures are never so extreme as those that can be experienced even a couple of miles inland. Also, cool breezes blow in from the east and north almost constantly, making the city a very pleasant place to live.

The People

The people who inhabit Kastelios are all of Milenian stock, though the blood of paler folk, such as the Hinterlanders, may have been added at some time in the distant past; for the men and women of Kastelios are decidedly fairer in complexion than those of nearby Kalavronti, or Ilioloosti. Despite this difference in appearance, we in Kastelios are no less Milenian than our neighbors. We honor the true Immortals - Halav, Petra, Zirchev, Protius, and Asterius among others - and we hold a deep regard for the honorable traditions of our ancestors.

Our dialect of the Milenian tongue is said to be the closest in form to that spoken by our people when the Milenian Empire was strong. Whether this is true or not may never be known, but one need only spend a day with us to learn what it is to be truly Milenian!

Unlike many of the other city-states, for example, Kastelios still follows the democratic principles of our ancestors. All citizens of Kastelios elect their representatives to the city council, who in turn elect a spokesperson - one who moderates council debates and represents the city to the outside world. We also regularly hold athletic games of skill, where adventurous souls may prove their mettle at wrestling, running, diskos throwing, and other events. These tend to draw great crowds, and are never dull to watch. Our people also have a deep respect for knowledge - those who are experts in philosophy or other arts are encouraged to share what they know of our world, and to debate with others. Such competition, both mental and physical, enriches our people, and allows us to be the best we can be.

My people are kind, and are always open to new ideas. This is why we are so eagerly opening up to the northern countries - so that knowledge and culture may be exchanged, and with them the forging of deep ties may come to pass. The people of Kastelios are also brave; we do not fear what lies across the sea, nor are we afraid to test ourselves. In doing so we become stronger, and we are able to broaden our horizons.

This, gentle readers, is what awaits you should you come to Kastelios. On behalf of my city, I bid you come experience what we have to offer - the memories alone will be well worth the voyage!

Recent History

Kastelios was founded circa BC 650 by Milenian colonists pressing westwards across northern Davania. The Milenian Empire had already been established, but some yearned for the sea, and desired to live on the coasts as well as expand the empire while retaining some autonomy. As a result, a large group of Milenian settlers descended upon what was once a large swampy delta at the junction of the Amoros and Vasilios river systems.

Within a few years, the swamps were successfully drained by engineers, revealing rich loamy soil that yielded bountiful crops. Tiberios Andrasos, who led the expedition, decreed that at the very junction of the river systems a great port city would arise. So it was that Kastelios was founded on that spot.

The settlement grew quickly, and as time passed, more swamplands were drained to accommodate the need for more farmlands. Eventually, an area 15 miles across, with Kastelios at its center, was drained. Many homesteads and villages cropped up in this territory, all under the jurisdiction of Kastelios. By BC 150, Kastelios was a sprawling city of 60,000, with great aqueducts, statuary, and paved boulevard leading from the sea to the inland territories of the empire. By this time, the Milenian Empire had largely retreated inland, except for this one city, its one great port. Many Milenians who left Davania in search of new lands passed through Kastelios, and so this city was also seen as a springboard to adventure and new lives elsewhere.

This era, which modern Kastelians call their Age of Joy, came to an end in BC 30, when the region fell into civil war and anarchy during the collapse of the Milenian Empire. Marauding soldiers and barbarians, some possibly from the modern Thyatian Hinterlands, passed through Greater Kastelios several times, looting and burning as they went. The city militia managed to fight off the worst of the incursions, but the damage had been done. What was once a beautiful city of 60,000 was now a third in ruins, with only 10,000 people within its shattered walls. Most of the citizens fled during the chaos, though few returned.

The true spirit of the people showed through in the aftermath. Realizing that they could only depend on themselves for survival, the survivors banded together, and elected a council to lead them in the times ahead. A spokesperson was elected by the council to ensure that discussions would not degenerate into petty rivalries, and that survival and the common good remained priorities. This system of leadership was quite similar to the old governmental system of the empire before it fell into decadence, and it has remained in place ever since.

The Kastelians also kept in mind what made them great in the first place - a willingness to persist, reverence for their Immortals, and openness to new ideas combined with a respect for tradition. Thus, the old Milenian ways were maintained and enshrined, and with them remained reverence for the traditional Immortals of the Milenians. Since they had not fared so poorly in relation to other cities, the Kastelians kept their faith, and they were able to draw on the knowledge of their forefathers to rebuild their city.

The people of Yavdlom also played an important role in Kastelios' regrowth. They brought in food when it was needed, and helped the Kastelians repulse invaders during those first difficult years. Because of this, a close relationship has existed between the two nations ever since.

By AC 300, Kastelios was once again a beautiful city. The population had slowly grown to 15,000, and the vast majority of the buildings had been rebuilt and restored. New buildings were also built in the old style, but newer techniques were used as people uncovered new ideas over the years. The villages of Phossos and Kantrios had sprung up in the periphery, and these were added to the growing city-state. Looking at the city at this time, one would never have guessed that it suffered any damage during the collapse of the empire.

Today, Kastelios has some 30,000 people living within its territory, and it is continuing to grow in leaps and bounds. Though there have been some setbacks over the years, Kastelios has emerged from the collapse of the Milenian Empire as one of the few city-states that actually came out reasonably intact, and flourished.

Don't Miss

The Public Forum is always worth a visit when in the city! Here one can listen to philosophers, scientists, and other thinkers put forth their ideas on the front steps of this lovely white marble building, graced with massive columns and engravings along its front. It is especially lively when debates begin - these tend to draw crowds, depending on the topic. Inside is the Grand Chamber, where the thirty elected counselors debate issues of the day, guided by the Spokesperson. Most meetings are open to the public, though important issues, such as declarations of war and the like, are always held behind closed doors.

Another sight worth seeing is the Great Temple of Halav! This structure has remained undamaged since its construction in BC 250, and daily services in honor of this Immortal have never been interrupted or stopped for any reason since that time. Elegant white columns, with a massive red slate roof, encircle and cover the temple itself. Inside the temple is one large room, dominated by an immense altar - reputedly made from a single piece of quartz! Regardless, the intricate carvings depicting the great deeds of Halav and His many heroes are truly inspiring to the observer.

The Gymnasium is where all sporting events in Kastelios take place. A running track encircles a modest rectangular building, in which are baths, supply rooms, and indoor recreation areas. At least twice a year the city holds great athletic events here for all to see, where events such as running, diskos throwing, archery, and wrestling are held.

For those seeking necessities or luxuries, the Great Market is the place to go. Here one may find traders from places such as Yavdlom, Kalavronti, Ilioloosti, Hrissopoli, Sind, and increasingly Minrothad, Ierendi, Darokin, and Thyatis. Whether you seek common foodstuffs, weapons, or other goods, or more exotic items from deeper within the continent, this is the place to find them. The Great Market is increasingly becoming a meeting place for people of different cultures, too. It is no longer unusual to see adventurers come off the boats, and meet locals here to hire out as guides.

Of course, a visit to Kastelios would never be complete without a thorough tour of the many public baths, small temples, bridges, public buildings, theaters, and other reminders of this city's Milenian heritage. Graceful columns, imposing statues, and paved streets all date from the Milenian Empire, and everything from that time has been well maintained. It is also interesting to compare the different building styles through the ages, for, while the basic Milenian building patterns have been maintained, different architects added unique elements of their own.

Another thing worth seeing is something in Northside called The Ruins. This is a collection of rubble and half-collapsed walls that stood here even before the Milenians first came to the area. No one knows who built them, or what purpose they served, but they serve as an interesting attraction, nonetheless.

Finally, anyone wishing to learn more of the old Milenian Empire need only stop at the House of Antiquities. Here, proprietress Helena Demetrina has painstakingly collected, catalogued, and restored thousands of relics dating from the days of the empire. Tiny amphorae sit with statuettes on the many shelves in this building, while mosaics grace the walls and floors. Helena has also collected a large number of scrolls during her adventuring days, and she is more than happy to share them with visitors. Truly a treasure trove of history!

Do Miss

Newcomers to Kastelios would do well to avoid the Docksidés. This is the seedy part of the city, a veritable maze of damp alleys and derelict buildings on Euripidos Island. This area is run by the local street gangs and thugs, who, fortunately, spend too much of their energies beating each other to seriously threaten the rest of the city. Various governments have tried to clean up the Docksidés, but the locals always put up strong resistance. Now the city concentrates on keeping the nasty elements inside this part of Kastelios. This is perhaps the greatest blot on our city's record.

POLAKATSIKES (City-State of; Heldannic Dominion)

Location: Continent of Davania, eastern Meghala Kimata Plains.

Area: approx. 336 sq. mi. (756 km²)

Population: 8,400 (includes 300 Heldannic Knights), approx. 1,500 in the countryside.

Languages: Milenian (Polakatsikan dialect), Heldannic, Thyatian Common (Hattian dialect). Thyatian is the official language.

Coinage: Groschen (5 gp), gelder (gp), erzer (ep), markschen (sp), and fenneg (cp). All other coins are illegal.

Taxes: Every citizen's worth is assessed annually, and is taxed at a rate of 20%.

Government Type: Currently occupied by the Heldannic Knights, although the local Council has some power.

Industries: Agriculture (mainly wheat, potatoes, and other vegetables), cattle, crafts, sheep, smithing.

Important Figures: Chancellor-Warlord Wolfgang Stemmél (human, male, P13 of Vanya) and Trimos Sortiropolis (human, male).

Flora and Fauna: The plant life that is to be found here is typical of that in subtropical plains. One can find sturdy grasses of all forms (including the more exotic types - such as grab grass), as well as bushes and shrubs, and occasional stands of cypress and other tropical trees.

The animal life is no less typical. Here one may find all forms of birds, including vultures, co-existing with antelopes, boars, elephants, gazelles, giraffes, hyaenas, lions, monkeys, snakes, and wild horses.

Among the more exotic animals to be found here are blink dogs, the occasional chimera, displacer beasts, and purple worms (though these are thankfully rare).

Description: by Friedrich von Eisendorf, servant of Her Glorious Lady Vanya

In the 1015th year after the crowning of the first emperor of Thyatis, the mighty armies of Vanya plunged their swords deep into Davania, and struck a death blow against the people who caused our Patroness much grief in life - the Milenians! We were commissioned by Vanya Herself to prove our devotion by conquering land in the heart of the continent, and by defeating a people She has long disliked. Although outnumbered, our superior arms, armor, and training won the day against the defenders of the town of Polakatsikes. The town has been added to the Heldannic Territories, and is henceforth the Heldannic Dominion of Polakatsikes!

The Land

Polakatsikes lies in the heart of the Meghala Kimata Plains, and is itself not too far from the Meghales Amosses Desert. The town itself is surrounded by good farmlands, and a range of hills known as Larnian Hills lies to the east. Of these hills, Pelmos Hill is the tallest in the group, and was the site of the greatest battle in the conquest of this town. Out of respect for our fallen enemies, and our own, a monument was built to the dead of both sides atop that hill. Towards the north, the grasses become taller, as one nears the great forests of the Jungle Coast. Towards the south, the land becomes hillier and more arid, until the Meghales Amosses Desert takes over. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this land lies in the Larnian Hills, where many great springs literally burst from underground, spouting water which slowly flows northwest. Various tiny rivers also run from the hills, and these join up with this flow from underground. By the time one reaches Polakatsikes, these flows have merged into the beginning of the Meghalo Fithi River, a tremendously long waterway that is said to flow into the Sea of Dread itself, slowly gathering strength as it presses northwestwards. Despite the relative closeness to the desert, northern winds bring a great deal of humidity from the Jungle Coast - surely a blessing for the farmers!

The People

The people of our newest dominion are of Milenian stock. The average citizen of Polakatsikes is rather short, but stocky. They tend toward olive complexions, and many of the men are bearded. All of the able-bodied are in excellent physical condition; their lives before we righteously conquered them were simple, but hard. They would make fine warriors for our armies.

They have a surprisingly structured society for such an isolated people - every citizen of the town has a specific profession, and there is a definite hierarchy in their society, such that the town leaders, the generals, and the most skilled craftspeople carry the most influence.

Still, this system makes for mob rule; their town council was little more than an arena for shouting matches when we arrived, and I am surprised they managed to agree with each other long enough to resist us as long as they did. Be that as it may, our form of government for the town, under the wise leadership of Templar Wolfgang Stemmell, and in co-operation with Trimos Sortiropolis, the original town council leader, is not oppressive for them. I have heard of no complaints.

These people, despite their heritage, have little regard for history.

Most of them are concerned with everyday survival, and there are too many pressing concerns to worry too much about where one comes from and how one's heritage affects current events. They maintain their buildings, they speak their language, and follow some of their ancient customs and celebrations, but little more. They simply do not have the time or the energy to devote to rebuilding Milenian culture. This is just as well for us, as it would make them rather difficult to rule if they were prone to romanticizing their past, but I digress.

Despite their shortcomings, the Polakatsikans are a very independent-minded and steadfast people. They have always had to depend on themselves for survival, and judging from the town itself, they had done admirably. They are quite disciplined and organized, and seem to be receptive of outside ideas, especially if they prove themselves to be better than those that currently exist.

Recent History

Polakatsikes was established around BC 100 or so, not long before the collapse of the Milenian Empire itself. In fact, it was among the southernmost Milenian settlements at the time, and was quite isolated.

When the empire collapsed, the townsfolk simply retreated within their walls and waited out the next thousand years, tending to their farms, and defending their lands in times of need. Existing town records tell tales of recurring invasions on the part of desert and humanoid tribes from the south, but all of these were too disorganized and poorly-equipped to succeed in conquering Polakatsikes. As a result, the Polakatsikans looked after themselves, and seldom had contact even with the other city-states.

The only outsiders who managed to conquer this town to date have been the Heldannic Knights. The fact that the town is no longer independent has shocked all but the most stalwart citizens of this tiny land, making resistance in the near future improbable. Some of the town's youth have become enamored by the novelty of the Knights, and some have begun to emulate them to a degree.

Don't Miss

Those who are interested in classical Milenian architecture and culture will not be disappointed in Polakatsikes. One can find public buildings with graceful pillars and statues, fountains, beautiful groves, clean paved streets, and a functioning sewer system. Many of the larger buildings were constructed when the town was first established, which means they date back a thousand years at least. One can also see changing building styles over the ensuing centuries simply by walking down a street. The weight of history is present in Polakatsikes.

One interesting place to see is the Town Forum, a sort of indoors amphitheater where the town council, and now the Heldannic governors as well, discuss important policies and ideas. Most such meetings are open to the public, and citizens are free to ask questions. Discussions have been much more subdued of late, as the town council and the Knights seek ways to work together.

Another place worthy of visiting is the Library, the only source of written knowledge locally. Here specially-trained caretakers have maintained a collection of scrolls and books, some centuries old. Many of them recount local events over the past thousand years, but others are collections of tales concerning Milenian legends and lore. Surely a wealth of information lies within for those so inclined!

In the coming years, visitors will want to see the Cathedral of Polakatsikes, when it is completed. Needing a suitable place of worship, the Knights have taken over an abandoned house for now, but already the foundations are being laid for what will be an average-sized, but grand, cathedral devoted to Vanya. It should be completed within the next couple of years, and will be a sight to behold in comparison to the local buildings.

Finally, the professional displays of martial skill on the part of the Heldannic Knights stationed here are always a sight worth seeing. Every day there is a parade in front of the Town Forum, with shining swords and armor flashing, and banners billowing proudly. Some of the locals have come to watch these soldiers from a far off land display their prowess, and have always walked away impressed.

Do Miss

While there is no place within Polakatsikes that should be avoided due to danger, thrill-seekers would do well to avoid the central marketplace of the town. The chaos that is to be found there every day is sufficient to drive even the most balanced mind insane. Gesticulating hawkers compete for the attention of unwary shoppers, while pickpockets glide through the crowds. If you want to experience a dreary market, go to Hockstein or some other backwater town.

VANYA'S REST (Heldannic Territory of)

Location: Continent of Davania, eastern coast by Gulf of Mar.

Area: 48 sq. mi. (108 km²)

Population: 4,000 (does not include around 500 farmers supplementing local rations).

Languages: Heldannic, Thyatian Common (Hattian dialect). Thyatian is the official language.

Coinage: Groschen (5 gp), gelder (gp), erzer (ep), markschen (sp), and fenneg (cp).

Taxes: None.

Government Type: Military Dictatorship.

Industries: War, some agriculture (mainly grains and vegetables).

Important Figures: Governor-General Heinz Kronenburg (human, male, P15 of Vanya).

Flora and Fauna: The vegetation found around Vanya's Rest is typical of that in a damp coastal region. Along the cliffs there are numerous forms of mosses and hardy grasses, while further inland the grasses tend to predominate, with the occasional gnarled bush breaking the undulating fields. No trees can grow here - the winds would likely blow them over near the coast, and the soils are too poor to nourish them further inland.

The animals found here are just as hardy as the plant life. Gulls and other sea birds nest among the cliffs, managing to feed themselves by catching fish in the Gulf. Also present in the cliffs are various rodents who feed off of the eggs of the various birds. Further inland one can find foxes, groundhogs, numerous kinds of insects, rabbits, and the

occasional snake. Some giant spiders are known to inhabit the region, and in the lower levels of the fort it is possible to find giant rats.

Further Reading: Voyage of the Princess Ark, Part 4 (in Dragon Magazine #156).

Description: by Friedrich von Eisendorf, servant of Her Glorious Lady Vanya.

As Adjutant to His Most Exalted Templar, Herr Kronenburg, it is my pleasure and my honor to be able to serve Vanya at this fortress - Vanya's Rest. Only the elite of the Heldannic Order are ever permitted to serve here, charged as they are with guarding the remains of our Patroness Herself! Recent developments have also allowed us to take on another duty, that of expanding our domains on this continent for the greater glory of Vanya!

The Land

The land upon which this great fortress has been built is largely an unforgiving one. Harsh winds from the Gulf of Mar gust in from the east, forcing great waves to crash against the low cliffs along the coast constantly. Further inland, and beyond the fort, the land descends gradually into the Aryptian Savannah, a largely arid, empty expanse of land. Even within our fort we are not completely immune from the elements, for the very winds that smash the shores with waves also bring dampness that chills everyone in this region to the bone. As a result, there is a microclimate here that makes the area feel more like a stretch of land in the Northern Reaches, even though we are not far from the great Aryptian Desert.

The fort itself is built atop the highest of the cliffs, such that we have a commanding view of the countryside and the Gulf in all directions. Due west of the fort, no more than two or three miles distant, lie several small farms, tended by eager colonists. The soils here are relatively poor, but over time good crops have been coaxed from the reluctant earth. These souls assist in supplying the Knights, who would otherwise have to rely totally on supplies brought from home.

When there is little action, many Knights will assist the farmers in harvesting and sowing, as it is in everyone's interest that there be enough food for everyone.

The People

You will not find better people than those at Vanya's Rest! Only the most disciplined and stalwart Knights are allowed the privilege of a five-year tour of duty here, and all who come are drilled mercilessly and give top performance at all times. It is said that many of the top members of the Order had a tour here, such that time spent at Vanya's Rest is almost a prerequisite for would-be commanders. The people who farm outside the fort are also dedicated to Vanya, and wish to assist in expanding Heldannic holdings by tilling the soil here. No doubt the promise of free land was also an attraction! The farmers also have some training with weapons, and many can be called upon as auxiliaries in times of need.

Recent History

Around 925 AC, certain Hattian worshippers of Vanya - promising fighters and clerics - received dream messages from their Immortal. She told them to secure their birthright, a land of their own where they could live as they chose. Before this could come to pass, they had to secure for Her a sanctified place, where Her earthly remains could be protected from infidels.

This place in question lies in Davania, on the coast of the Gulf of Mar.

The boldest and most pious, eager to prove their worth to Vanya, and to show respect for Her mortal remains, made a great pilgrimage to that region, as foretold in a dream. They landed after weeks of sailing, and as one force, they stormed the shores, only to find a small settlement, populated by indigenous human tribespeople descended from the Milenians.

These people were driven out, their village destroyed, and the entire region was searched until the remains of Vanya were found. The tribespeople, known as the Meghaddara, were forced to wander the Meghales Amosses Desert and the Aryptian Savannah in search of a new home - and have been the sworn enemies of the Heldannic Knights ever since.

The remains were then reverently placed under a stone cairn, upon which was built the great fortress now known as Vanya's Rest. Once the fort was complete, in 935 AC, Vanya visited Her faithful and told them they had done well, and

secured her rest from unbelievers. She then told them that they had to marshal their forces, and return to Hattias, there to bring all who were true to Vanya's Path to the ultimate victory, a home of their own. Most of the Heldannic Knights, as they began to call themselves, returned to Hattias, but they left behind a garrison of elite soldiers to guard the fort.

Don't Miss

The one thing visitors must not miss is the fort itself! Those who come to Vanya's Rest will immediately notice how massive the structure is.

The outer walls themselves are at least 1,5 meters (five feet) thick, and are 9 meters (thirty feet) in height. At regular intervals along the walls are stout square towers, each mounted with heavy catapults and ballistae. Finally, the most breathtaking structure within the fort is the Great Cathedral, which houses Vanya's remains and is decorated by stained glass windows, numerous sculptures, and tall archways, all in a gothic style.

Do Miss

In the territory claimed by the Knights, the regions immediately to the north should be avoided. These northern territories are inhabited by the Meghaddara, who have been sworn enemies of the Knights since they were pushed out of their own lands when the fort was built. Those wearing the insignia of the Heldannic Knights, or who travel in their company, will be attacked on sight by the Meghaddara.