

The Newbie's Guide to

MYSTARA



A FAN CREATED GUIDE
TO THE ORIGINAL D&D KNOWN WORLD

Introduction

The Newbie's Guide to Mystara is a netbook project written and compiled by members of the Mystara Mailing List and Mystara Message Board. It is designed to give players who do not know the world of Mystara a simple overview of the major nations in the Known World.

Mystara is the world where most of the Original D&D modules were set, and therefore is one of the oldest D&D settings alongside Blackmoor and Greyhawk. It is however much more than that and is

in fact an entire setting that is loved by many, and we wish it to be shared with others. This guide is designed primarily for players, although we advise DM's to read through it to ensure that there is nothing that you wish to keep secret from your players in here.

For more information about Mystara Check out the official Mystara homepage at :

pandius.com

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About the World of Mystara

The Known World of Mystara is a diverse melting point, it's a world of high fantasy and high magic, it's a world of immortals who shape the world to their own ends, it's also a coherent and consistent world.

The Known World today is fit to burst with pressures between the civilizations and external threats mounting. It is one thousand years after the crowning of the first emperor of Thyatis (1000 AC) and the small corner on the southeast corner of the continent of Brun, the

Known World, which has already undergone much recent change is going to change the face of the whole planet - and perhaps even more than just the face.

Here is your gateway to new adventures.

*Happy gaming,
from the Newbie Guide team.*

The Empire of Thyatis

"We're not conquering the world, we're civilising it!"
- Thyatian Legionnaire stationed in the Hinterlands

The Land

The Empire of Thyatis is composed of several nations, separated by the Sea of Dread and Sea of Dawn, the core of the nation is the Thyatian mainland where the capital, Thyatis (pop. 500 000) - the biggest city of the Known World, lies. The region is known for its warm and hospitable climate, and its good farming land, where corn and wine are produced in abundance, and horses and cattle are raised. Directly to the south of the mainland lays the Isle of Hattias where the Hattians, relatives to the Thyatians, live. To the southeast of Hattias are Ochalea and the Pearl Islands, while to the east is the Isle of Dawn, traditional fighting ground between the Thyatians, who hold its western part, and their eternal enemies, the Alphatians. Recently, the Thyatians have occupied the Hinterlands, a heavily forested area on the northern tip of Davania, the southern continent. Some native Hinterlanders conduct guerrilla action against the invaders.

History

The Empire of Thyatis is probably the most important and influential nation of the Known World, and one of the most ancient, too. Thyatis' history dates back to 2 BC, when Lucinius Trenzantebium overthrew the Alphatian invaders that had occupied the lands of Thyatis, Ochalea and the Pearl Islands. The three nations declared independence, and after a victorious war were reunited by General Zendrolion in the form of an Empire, which soon annexed the western half of the Isle of Dawn.

In its centuries of existence, the borders of the Empire have changed much; at various times, the Empire has occupied several nations of the Known World, like Ierendi, southern Ylaruam, Traladara (now Karameikos). Thyatians have influenced directly Glantri's history, as Lord Alexander Glantri, founder of the nation, was himself a Thyatian. Recently, a group of Hattians known as the Heldannic Knights have left the Empire to conquer the lands of Heldann, to the north. Thyatians have been fighting with Alphatia for about a millennia for possession of the Isle of Dawn. Thyatis has imposed their traditions and language on the Known World's nations, that still resort to Thyatis for their common tongue and calendar.

The People

Thyatis is mostly home to humans of the Thyatian stock tending to have a light olive skin tone, with hair ranging from light to dark brown and are of medium height. The Thyatians see fighting ability

and efficiency as the founding values of the Empire, and believe in the superiority of their civilisation, although they also think that they enrich their culture by absorbing the traits of the conquered cultures. The Hattians belong to the same racial stock, but believe exactly the opposite: that they are the greatest race ever to be, and other races are of little worth - to avoid decadence they believe that the Thyatian Empire should follow the Hattian traditionalist ways.

Thyatians are a treacherous race. They give a tremendous importance to politics and power, and to reach an end they resort to any means. It is common knowledge that Thyatians easily break promises if this can help them to achieve a goal. As it is often the case with generalisations, this is an exaggeration, but it's a matter of fact that the Empire builds itself, and finds the roots of its decadence, in the mixture of efficiency and corruption that is generated by the obsessive pragmatism of its people.

There are also other human races in the Empire: the Pearl Islands are settled by the Nuari, a black-skinned people that believe in the values of self-development; Ochaleans are descendants of pacifist Alphatians and are of coppery skin tone. They believe in non-violence, disrespect magic users and can be rather sexist; Hinterlanders are of fair skin tone and of light brown, blonde or red hair and are very warlike. Moreover, on the Thyatian half of the Isle of Dawn there are several people of Alphatian origin, and in the cities of Tel-Akbar and Biazzan, on mainland Thyatis, more than half of the population is of Alasiyan origin.

In addition to the humans, dwarves and elves have their own personal dominions on the Mainland: respectively in the Barony of Buhrohur, a rich mining land, and in the County of Vyalia, where an elite fighting organisation of humans known as the Foresters was formed under the patronage of the elves and their Immortal protector Ilsundal.

Government and Religion

Religion plays an important role in the Thyatian way of life; however, like many aspects of their lives it is a mixture of formal acts and of a *do ut des* attitude: Thyatians see religion as a contract of mutual benefit between the worshipper and the divinity. Among the most important Immortals are Vanya, Patroness of Conquerors; Tarastia, Patroness of Justice; Korotiku, patron of the Nuari; Koryis, worshipped in Ochalea but mostly sneered at by Thyatians because of its pacifism; Protius, whose importance is directly linked to that of the sea in Thyatian life; Diulanna, patroness of the Hinterlanders and many others.

The Grand Duchy of Karameikos

"Why should you ever want to go to Karameikos? There's nothing there – no comfort, no big cities, no luxury, no good food nor wine. Just superstitious natives, humanoids and stupid Thyatian soldiers."

- Boris Gorevitch-Woszlany, Glantrian nobleman

The Land

Karameikos is a deep, dark land; mostly wilderness which man throughout recorded history has tried to occupy. Karameikos sits on the south shore of the continent of Brun, west of Thyatis and east of the Five Shires; to the north, broad mountain ranges separate the nation from Darokin and Ylaruam.

Most of Karameikos is covered with thick forests, hardwoods and softwoods, and is largely unexplored. There are broad patches of rich soil, especially beside the broad Highreach River where farming is good.

The capital city of Specularum is a thriving and very active seaport with around 50 000 inhabitants; other notable sites are the city of Kelvin and the town of Threshold, in the northern hill country, a haven for adventurers surrounded by humanoid-inhabited wilderness.

History

In ancient times the land of Traldar was home to a heroic civilisation of barbarian-like people. About two thousand years ago, a massive army of beast-men attacked the Traldar people. The war raged for years and spawned countless legends (chief among them the stories of Halav, Petra, and Zirchev, the later patron Immortals of Traladara); but eventually, the gnolls were driven out, leaving the glory of the Traldar heroes in ruins. The people, now calling themselves the Traladarans, then founded a nation of loosely allied, small communities in the deep woods.

About a century ago, the Thyatians, on one of their periodic conquest sweeps, moved an army into Traladara, conquering the coastal regions and some inland communities and declaring the nation to be a protectorate of the Empire.

Some thirty years ago, a Thyatian Duke named Stefan Karameikos traded his vast family fortune and homeland, the prosperous Duchy of Machetos, to Emperor Thincol I for clear, autonomous title to what was considered the uncivilised lands of Traladara. He moved in with his own army and followers, taking over where Thyatian governors had ruled, and began an aggressive program of road building, citadel construction, and other fortification.

The People

There are several distinct cultures present in Karameikos. The Traladarans, a pale, dark-haired people, have lived here for thousands of years. Energetic, romantic, artistic and superstitious; they are descendants of the Traldar. The Traladarans are ruled by a conquering class of Thyatians brought here about thirty years ago by Duke Stefan Karameikos.

There are also two elven clans here: the vigorous Callarii in the central parts and the Vyalia in the northern parts of the eastern forests. In the north is a community of dwarves and gnomes called Highforge.

There are many frictions between the Thyatians and Traladarans, but increasingly they are coming to think of themselves as a single nation. Despite the exploitative nature of many Thyatian nobles, who see the Traladarans as a work resource to be used for maximum profit, Stefan has enforced many laws to ensure Traladaran equality.

Government and Religion

Karameikos is officially a Grand Duchy for political reasons, but is effectively a monarchy. Stefan Karameikos, the ruler, chose to be only (Grand) Duke as a political signal to other nations that his nation has retained its ties to the Thyatian Empire, and that to invade Karameikos would therefore be to invade Thyatis. The nation also has several semi-autonomous baronies.

In the western part of Karameikos, on the Gulf of Halag facing the Five Shires, is one of several semi-autonomous baronies, the Black Eagle Barony. Duke Stefan's black sheep cousin, Baron Ludwig von Hendriks, rules it. Von Hendriks' minions have raided into Karameikos, Darokin, Ierendi, Minrothad and, especially, the Five Shires, wherever they could slaughter and rob for the greatest profit. Nominally protected by Duke Stefan's inability to believe such horrid stories of one of his own relatives, Baron Ludwig acts with impunity in this part of the world.

The patron Immortals of the Traladarans are Zirchev, Petra and Halav, the heroic leaders of the Traldar war against the "beast-men". The so-called Church of Traladara worships them. Thyatians for the most follow the Church of Karameikos, founded by Thyatian priests about thirty years ago.

The Principalities of Glantri

“A land of darkness, where all the enemies defeated by the Prophet brood. Yet, these heathens possess a disturbing degree of knowledge in the science of nature and magic. No doubt, a knowledge derived from the gifts of demons.”

- Hakim ibn Yezeed al Nisr, Dream of the Desert Garden University, Ylaruam

The Land

Glantri is enclosed between two major mountain chains, the Khurish Massif and the Wendarian Range through which several major rivers have carved wide valleys, which are densely inhabited. Forests cover the majority of the mountain lands, while the hills are a herbalist's treasure trove, rich in plants that range from the uncommon to the legendary. The valleys, on the other hand, have been cleared for farming.

The capital, Glantri City, is a town of 50 000 built partially on a set of islands at the confluence of the Isoile and Vesubia rivers. The city is known for its fantastic buildings, the widespread use of magic in construction and for public convenience including public lighting, its maze of channels, as well as for the foremost school of magic in the Known World.

History

The Highlands, for such was the original name of the region, have been settled since before the Great Rain of Fire. The first settlers were elves, but they were forced to flee, or destroyed, in the wake of the great cataclysm. Then, from another plane, came the Flaems, a people that shows a notable affinity with the energies of Fire. The Flaems founded seven duchies in the region, and clashed with their neighbours from the plains of Ethengar.

In time, other colonists arrived, first elves, then humans from Thyatis and Traladara and even Alpathia, then dwarves from Rockhome. Other, more mysterious, colonists came in through magical ways, the Klantyrans and the Averoignians.

There was a time of wars, as the Flaems resented the intrusion. The colonists fought back, until the distant Empire of Alpathia tried to take control of the region, with the help of dwarven colonists. The humans and elves, not willing to let their freedom be taken away, allied with the Flaems, chased the Alpathian troops and their dwarven allies and founded a Republic, which later took its name from the most prominent war hero, Alexander Glantri.

Nowadays, Glantri is no longer a true Republic, since a council of hereditary Princes and a parliament of minor nobles rule it.

The People

There are several distinct human cultures present in Glantri. The most relevant are those found in the individual principalities, such as the Caurenzans, the Alpathians of Blackhill, the Aalbanese, the Flaems, the Ethengarians of Krondahar, the Averoignians, the Klantyrans, and the Boldavians.

Moreover, two different clans of elves, the Erewan and the Belcadiz, live in the southernmost Principalities, and a number of weird creatures can be found within the borders of Glantri. A good number of lupins of various breeds and a few rakasta and goblinoids complete the population. No dwarf or halfling resides in the Principalities, since the local law hunts down these demihuman people.

Most of these ethnic groups are fiercely regional when domestic matters are concerned, but cooperate when facing an external enemy--be it Alpathia, dwarves, Ethengar, or the goblinoids.

Government and Religion

A Council of Princes rules the Principalities of Glantri. Only when a decision cannot be taken, due to the lack of a clear majority, the issue is brought to the Parliament, an assembly where each noble has voting power proportioned to his title.

Formally, the head of state is the Chancellor of the Princes, currently Prince Volospin Aendyr of Blackhill, but in the Glantrian mindset the Headmaster of the Great School of Magic one Étienne d'Ambreville, the foremost centre of magical training and research, has more authority--which is mirrored by his higher power in votes.

Behind the scenes, a large bureaucracy works to enact the rulings of the Council and Parliament, while nobles maintain nearly complete authority in their fiefs.

Perhaps the most peculiar characteristic of Glantrians is their lack of faith. No Immortals are openly worshipped in this land, and, moreover, clerics are outlawed. Only some forms of mysticism, like the worship of Magic itself preached by the Shepherds of Rad, or the reclusive mystics of Lhamsa, are allowed.

The Republic of Darokin

"Darokinians claim to be peaceful merchants against war, but the difference between them and us is that they pay others to fight their battles, and they use their speech to convince them they are right in their abuses."

- Sempronius Gallo, Thyatian diplomat in Darokin

The Land

Darokin is one of the wealthiest nations of the Known World – but its wealth is not so noticeable as that of other nations. In Darokin, the wealth is spread a bit more evenly throughout the population; with Darokin's peasants far better off than peasants all over the Known World.

The land is rich: the Streel Plain, the heartland of Darokin, where half the nation's residents live, dominates the centre of the nation. The farmers of the Streel Plain are able to grow enough grain to feed the whole nation twice over. Near the plain is the mighty Lake Amsorak, a freshwater lake that provides a rich bounty of fish.

The abundance of agriculture is half the source of Darokin's wealth; the other half is the nation's formidable merchant class, which hauls the excess food to most of the nations of the Known World and returns with trade goods from these distant places. Darokin has just one major port, Athenos, so merchants are usually involved with land travelling caravan ventures, and resort to adventurers and mercenaries for their protection.

There are several major cities in Darokin: most notable are the capital, Darokin, that acts as the middle of the web of Darokinian trade; Selenica, in the southeast, centre of the caravan activities toward Karamaikos, Ylaruam, Rockhome and Thyatis; and Corunglain, a very warlike city on the border with the dangerous humanoids of the Broken Lands.

A notable feature of Darokin is the fact that the whole Kingdom of Alfheim is encircled by Darokinian territory. Relationships between elves and humans are on good terms. Dangerous areas include the Malpheggi Swamp in the south, where monsters thrive, and the Orclands, on the far side of Alfheim which is officially part of Darokin but in fact in the hands of humanoid raiding bands.

History

Darokin was a land of conflict between humans and humanoids for a long time, until elves migrating from the west reached the region and settled down in what would become known as Alfheim. With the help of the elves, the balance in the region was tipped, and the Eastwind clan of humans got the upper hand, and founded the Kingdom, that later took his name from one prominent member of the clan, Ansel Darokin. Later, the power went over to the Attleson clan, but

decreased contact with the elves resulted in misunderstandings and eventually into the Elfwar. Orcs took advantage of the situation, and Corunglain was besieged and sacked before elves and humans put an end to a fruitless war.

After the death of the last King of Darokin, Santhral II, in AC 723, political unrest spread through the land, until, around AC 927, the richest merchant houses and families agreed on a central government for the entire country.

The People

The Daros are a heterogeneous population, made up of several peoples, and this has resulted in a population of light olive complexion, with hair and eyes that can be of almost any colour, with brown hair and eyes being the most common. They are a notoriously hard working lot; most are driven by the desire of success. Each generation wants to live in better surroundings and clothe and educate their children better than the last generation did. Darokinians as a people are notoriously opposed to war and other violent solutions, but prefer to settle things by diplomacy. There is a national diplomatic service known as the Darokinian Diplomatic Corps, whose function is to try to solve internal and foreign policy problems peacefully.

Government and Religion

Although nominally a Republic, Darokin is a plutocracy – ruled by the rich – but a very long sighted one. The plutocrats believe that keeping the standard of living high and keeping the laws fair throughout the social levels makes workers enthusiastic – so far, they have been successful.

The merchant houses are the true political powers within the nation: the Merchant's Guild has the monopoly over trade, and non-members are not allowed to trade with members, so not being a member means no trade, no business, no money. The ruler of the nation is the Chancellor, who acts as the President of the Merchant's Inner Council, and thus controls the Merchant's Guild, supported by the leaders of the most important Trading Houses.

Owing to the cultural diversity that makes up the Republic, the religions followed by the people are similarly heterogeneous. There is no official religion in Darokin and nearly all religions of the Known World are practiced here.

The Kingdom of Alfheim

“Alfheim is a land of elves, made for elves and by elves. Legend says they raised their home forest out of a wasteland using the most powerful sorceries. Although Alheimers happily engage in trade and let foreigners come and live in Alfheim Town, the rest of their nation is shrouded in mystery and they do not take any interruption lightly.”

- Leonard de Fausseflammes, Glantrian Wizard in a class at the Great School of Magic

The Land

The lush Canolbarth Forest spans a roughly triangular area in the eastern part of the Republic of Darokin, and is completely contained by Darokin's borders, in the basin formed by the Dwarfgate, Altan Tepe and Cruth Ranges. The thick woods intermix with gently rolling hills and a rich network of small waterways and lakes. The only major cleared section of the land is the site of Alfheim Town, all the remaining Alfheim population centres are scattered through the thick of the forest and built in the elven fashion of tree houses, well above ground. The huge and unique Sentinel and Home trees of Alfheim are grown for the sole purpose of creating dwellings and keeping the continuous forest mantle. Other than the seven main clan enclaves, the nation does not follow a standard division into regions and dominions.

History

Most of the facts about elvish and Alfheim origins are shrouded in mystery and myth, but it can be established that some 2000 years ago, they roamed across southeastern Brun until they found a barren land, devoid of any population and using magic of colossal proportions they raised Canolbarth Forest out of bleakness. The surrounding lands ultimately reacted to the presence of elves: the still young Darokin initially allied with elves and both parties profited from collaboration and trade, though, some 500 years ago, Darokin-Alfheim border hostilities escalated to a war whose fast resolution in favour of the elves made Darokin reconsider its attitude and, since then, see Alfheim as a traditional ally. Others coveted the virtue and magic secrets of Canolbarth forest, and a powerful wizard even attempted an invasion of Alfheim with the aid of extraplanar beastmen. Alfheim has survived these ordeals, and the last five centuries have been relatively peaceful. Dwarf-elf antipathy is well known, though it normally takes the form of “mischief incursions” from and into Rockhome, more a matter of hurting prides than of open hostilities.

The People

Elves are marked by two facts: fidelity to their clan and long lifespans. An 800-year life expectancy causes elves to waver between gentle complacency and lack of urgency and, in contrast, a feeling of angst

and a wish to live life to its fullest to avoid the pains of boredom. Nevertheless, shorter-lived races can have a hard time in understanding the irregular and slowly maturing processes of economic and political decision-making among elves. The idea of clan expands the human concept of family to the whole group and links the present-day Elves to a whole line of history that leads to the mythical hero founders of the clans. Seven major clans are known in Alfheim: Chossum and Erendyl, traders and artisans respectively, and the most likely to engage in business with outsiders; Red Arrows, warriors and wardens; Grunalf, with a reputation as rangers and monster slayers; and the mysterious Feadiel, Mealidil and Long Runners, keepers of magic and lore about which foreigners can just wonder.

Most of the population of non-elves in Alfheim are limited to Alfheim Town itself, where humans are a majority. This unique settlement is built in two levels: a standard town on the ground and a tree-town for the elves who dwell and trade in the community. For such a secretive realm as Alfheim, this town is a true melting pot: there are quarters representative of major and neighbouring nations (Glantri, Darokin, the Shires, Minrothad, Karameikos and the Empires of Alpathia and Thyatis) and even dwarven and orcish communities.

Government and Religion

Alfheim has a king, Doriath of Clan Erendyl, though his role and power of decision is subject to the Clan Council, made up by the Clanmasters of each clan. The king gets one regular vote in the council, and his main responsibilities are leading the army and making decisions that affect the nation as a whole. A Clanmaster is the oldest active member of his clan; he works hand-in-hand with the mysterious Treekeepers, the spiritual leaders of Alfheim. The rumoured “Way of the Tree” cares for the spiritual and magical needs of the elves, who don't have a standard clergy and temple structure to speak of, through the nurturing of some kind of relic that is said to be a living testimony of the elven Immortals, amongst which are two of the ancient migration leaders, Ilsundal and Mealiden. Elven “tree magic”, as it is called, isn't as flashy as the displays of human wizards, but is nevertheless powerful and the subject of many rumours, like the creation of magical elven blades, cloaks and boots, which light the fantasies and greed of many adventurers.

The Kingdom of Rockhome

“Dwarves? We don't serve that scum here! They're a bunch of troublemakers. Sure, they are good warriors, and they make strong axes and sharp swords -- not that they would part with them for a fair price, though. Too many will just go around drinking and bashing heads and destroying fine establishments...”
- Ingjald the Stubborn, landlord in Norrvik, Vestland

The Land

Mountains and lakes are the major features of the land of the Rockhome Dwarves. The three chains of Altan Tepes, to the west, Makkres, to the east and Denwarf's Spur, at the centre of the nation, are interleaved by two large lakes, Stahl and Klintest.

The mountains, while not exceedingly tall, are rugged and often impassable, and only a handful of well-guarded passes give access to Rockhome. At the centre of the nation, built both on the surface and in the caverns of Rockhome's tallest mountain, is the city of Dengar, the heart of the dwarven kingdom, rivalling in size and surpassing in strength the cities of humankind. Three other major cities exist in Rockhome: Stahl, Evermur and Smaggeft, each crowded with busy dwarven craftsmen and engineers.

History

Rockhome and the dwarves have been around for longer than historians can remember. When the first Emperor was crowned in Thyatis, the Dwarf Kings of Rockhome were already well established. In the following centuries the dwarven merchants and wandering tinkers started an age of exploration of the lands of humankind, creating colonies in mountainous regions and opening political and trade relations with their neighbours.

In hindsight, this policy explains why the dwarves are either more welcome than other foreigners or hated enemies in many countries, depending on whether the dwarven colonisation attempts resulted in peaceful cooperation with the local populations, as in Vestland, Ylaruam and Ethengar, or in armed clashes, persecutions and war, as was the case of Glantri and the Five Shires.

Nowadays, dwarves still enjoy friendly relations with the Ylari, Ethengarians, and Northmen, while they are feared and often hated by the Hin. Glantrians and dwarves hate each other, and dwarves often take part in Ethengarian raids in Glantri, while the wizards of Glantri try to kidnap dwarves to further their studies on the dwarven resistance to magic.

The People

Rockhome is the nation of the dwarves, and most Known World dwarves can trace their heritage back to one of the seven clans of Rockhome. Each clan is composed of a large number of families, each numbering scores, if not hundreds, of individual members, and is centred around a stronghold, built in the depths of one of the four

cities. Each clan is mostly known for one trade or career that is often pursued by its members and that defines the spirit and nature of the clan, but individual dwarves are free to choose their own profession.

Clan Everast, one of the oldest clans, includes most bureaucrats, diplomats and the current royal family. Clan Buhrodar supports the Everast kings, but its theocratic philosophy sometimes clashes with the Everast's ideas of aristocratic rule. Torkrest, a large militaristic clan, completes the strongest power bloc of Rockhome. Opposed to Clan Torkrest is Clan Wyrwarf whose make-up includes many lower class, non-conformist dwarves and farmers. Clan Hurwarf is another smaller clan, whose isolationist, xenophobic ideas clash hard with the two remaining clans, Skarrad and Syrklist. The latter is a large clan of traders, bent on expanding trade between Rockhome and the foreign nations, while the former strives to accelerate the development of technology, and supports trade as a way to promote the growth of technological knowledge.

Other than dwarves, few people live in Rockhome, mostly diplomats from the neighbouring lands, traders and a handful of non-Glantrian wizards-for-hire. Almost all of them remain within the walls of Upper Dengar. Goblinoids roam the unsettled border regions, both above and below ground, while frost giants live in the eastern Makkres Mountains.

Government and Religion

The Dwarf King, Everast XV, rules Rockhome. Theoretically, all powers belong to the king, and the title passes to the king's heir after his demise. In practice, each law passed by the king is then voted by the Senate, a body composed by the heads of large families. When at least two thirds of the Senators vote against a law proposal, the king usually retires it, rather than risk being ousted and replaced. The Senate also devises and submits new laws to the king, who finds it impossible to turn down proposals supported by two thirds of the Senators.

Within the Senate, the clan leaders control the votes of their faction, and a refusal to conform to the clan leader's vote is usually considered a challenge, which ends with one of the two (usually the lesser Senator, but sometimes the clan leader) replaced.

Dwarves don't like to speak about their myths or beliefs, therefore little is known of the dwarves' religious practices. Nevertheless, it can be safely assumed that most dwarves revere the Immortal Kagyar, patron of crafts and artisans, as the creator of their race. Whether they worship him as humans do their Immortal patrons or not cannot be said for certain.

The Five Shires

“When you reach the Shires remember that despite their appearance, the halfings are not children. Many of the traders you will deal with are at least twice your age, with all the experience that gives. Deal well and sharp, but don't try any dirty tricks, the last merchant of ours who tried that was found out before he finished his first trade. Deal fairly with them, and they will deal fairly with you.”

- A senior merchant of House Mauntea to a junior, before his first trade at Hinmeet

The Land

This land is the homeland of the hin (or, as they are known to others, halfings). It is roughly triangular, situated on the continent's southern shore, bounded by Karameikos to the east and Darokin to the north and west. It is a rich land, covered with fields, hills, and forests. Three major rivers cross the Shires from the north to the sea. The northwestern border traces along the Cruth Mountains. As the name implies, the country is divided into five Shires. The northernmost of the Shires, Highshire is also the wildest and least populated. It includes the highest region of the Cruth Mountains in its northern tip. Its southern part tends to be mostly open, with hills and forests. Mining is a major industry here. Eastshire, on the eastern border, is more settled, mostly covered by rich farmlands. To the southwest of Highshire is Heartshire. This rural Shire was once the centre of mining activity in the Shires, and is mainly hills and mountains, with forests and farmlands to the south and east. To the south of Heartshire and Highshire is Seashire. This is the largest and most populated of the Shires. The land here is mostly open, with few hills or forests. This Shire contains three ports, including Shireton, the capital of the Shires. The southwestern tip of the Shires contains Southshire. Legend says that this was the first settled area in the shires. The majority of the land here is farmland.

History

The original home of the hin is unknown. What is known, is that hin arrived at this region over two millennia ago; this event is recorded as The Coming of the Hin, and is the beginning of their history. They lived peacefully for a few centuries; in contrast, the following millennium is a chronicle of strife, conquest and suffering. Orcs, dwarves, and more orcs successively conquered the hin; each time they overthrew their conqueror and established an independent realm, which then fell to the next conqueror. Roughly 1,500 years ago, the various invaders were repelled, and eventually the current structure of the Shires emerged. Since then, the Shires have mostly been at peace, barring sporadic orc attacks and border trouble with the Black Eagle Barony.

The People

Most non-hin tend to view hin as being childlike, merry, naive, and non-too bright. However, those who truly know the hin know the

truth is a different matter. The common view has a kernel of truth; in that hin tend to be quite cheerful in disposition compared to other races. Few, however, can be described as naive. For the most part, they tend to be inquisitive, curious, and straightforward. Hin also have an unsavoury reputation for mischief and larceny. This reputation mostly stems from the yallaren, young hin who have left their homes to wander the world. Almost every hin has been yallaren at one time in his life. These young hin enjoy both thieving and pranks, but such behaviour is most atypical of Shires-dwelling hin. Major pastimes of hin are storytelling and music (especially singing). Many of these are tall tales; others may preserve bits of local skill and lore.

Hin society is clan-based. By tradition, there are no more than 100 clans. Almost all hin in the Shires belong to one of the Hundred Clans, except for a few who were born outside the Shires. To a hin, the clan is the focus of their life. No hin will harm their own clan under any circumstances whatsoever. Each clan has its own territory in the Shires.

In addition, there are a few non-hin in the Shires. Most are human, but there are also elves and a very few dwarves. Most of the non-hin are traders, dwelling in the larger towns.

Government and Religion

A Sheriff heads each Shire. Candidates may be proposed by any hin when a seat is open; the candidates are investigated by the other Sheriffs, who also choose among them if there is more than one, and if found suitable are privately invited to the post. The current incumbents are Jaervosz Dustyboots of Seashire, Multhim Greybeard of Highshire, Maeragh Littlelaughs of Eastshire, Delune Darkeyes of Heartshire and Sildil Seaeyes of Southshire. The Sheriffs oversee the general condition of their territories, and are in charge of justice there. Each Sheriff has deputies known as Krondar, who serve him as police, messengers, and bodyguards. Sheriffs may judge and sentence any offender. Offenders may also be judged by their Clanmaster (usually depending on whether their crime was against their clan), who is responsible for any judgements and punishments that need to be made.

Hin follow the High Heroes, the Immortals Nob Nar, Coberham Shadowglint, and Brindothin. These Immortals are virtually unknown to non-hin, and whatever religious practices the hin have, if any, are likewise unknown.

The Emirates of Ylaruam

“The Ylari are more honourable than the other humans, you can also expect them to be reasonable to some extent too. Now, if they could only avoid wasting your time in endless bartering, I could even like doing business with them...”
- Dvalur of Clan Syrklist, weapon dealer in Deeran, Emirate of Alasiya

The Land

A desert nestled between the peaks of the Altan Tepes, the Emirates suffer from the harshest climate of the Known World. The Ust-Urt river, starting somewhere in the mountains of Rockhome, blesses only the Emirate of Makistan with water, disappearing under the sands beyond the town of Parsa. Here and there an oasis large enough to support a village becomes the basis for the little agriculture of the Emirates of Alasiya and Abbashan, while great works, partly of dwarven making, provide water from the deep reserves to the larger towns and cities. To the north, the Emirate of Nithia sports higher, but only slightly less arid, terrain, rich in minerals and in natural and supernatural hazards as well. Bandits and pirates plague the coastal area near the Emirate's capitol, Surra-Man-Raa. To the south, along the Thyatian border, the Emirates of Dythestia and Nicostenia sport the best fields of the nation, and Tameronikas, the capitol of Nicostenia produces fine wine and other luxury goods.

History

The desert of Alasiya is the ancestral home to fierce desert nomads. For a long time, they have been forced to retreat deeper and deeper within it, away from the more prized coastal territories, which fell to the hands of Thyatian and Alphatian colonists. A century ago a great leader appeared among the nomads, uniting them to fight the invaders. Taking advantage of the light cavalry and mounted archer tactics of the desert warriors, this man, Suleiman al-Kalim, was able to beat the Alphatian armies, and later the Thyatians as well, even enlisting the help of the Makistani tribes and dwarven mercenaries.

al-Kalim established a new religion, the Eternal Truth, preaching his Dream of Justice and Honour, which spoke of a respect to be showed to the fellow believer, and later the Dream of the Garden in the Desert, asking the Ylari to cooperate in transforming their desert into a true garden. al-Kalim was named Caliph of the Emirates, and in turn he appointed Amirs to rule over the tribes, and recognised the ancestral rights of the Maliks, Sheiks, and Qadis. He named an adopted heir to rule after his retirement, and this line of adoptive descendants still rules the Emirates today.

The People

The Alasiyans are a honourable, if harsh, people. They value loyalty, piety, respect for the traditions and wisdom above all. They are shrewd merchants, great caravaners and masters of oration, but above all they are courageous warriors and great horsemen. A substantial minority of the Emirates' people are of Alphatian or Thyatian descent, but they have completely integrated in the Ylari society. A much smaller minority in the northern Emirate belongs to the Nithian people, a race of short, red-skinned, red-haired savages.

Every Ylari town has a dwarven quarter, and dwarves are the most common foreigners in the Emirates. They are not considered friends by the Ylari, but the people of the Emirates do respect many of the dwarves qualities. Other foreigners are uncommon, and Glantrians are attacked on sight, while elves are mistrusted and suspected of practicing dark magics.

Government and Religion

The Emirates are ruled by a Caliph, advised by a Council of Preceptors. The local rulers, Amirs and lesser nobles, swear fealty to the Caliph, and receive their power from him. Each ruler keeps a large bureaucracy, supervised by viziers, who act as ministers. The central bureaucracy in a gigantic machine, whose efficiency is surprisingly high, considered the great deal of corruption among the bureaucrats.

Most Ylaris are followers of the Eternal Truth, the faith created by al-Kalim, based upon the traditions of the dervishes of the Alasiyan desert. To these, al-Kalim added his Dreams, which constantly push the followers to part from the worst habits of their ancestors, like banditry and raiding, and to work for the betterment of the nation.

The followers of the Eternal Truth are often intolerant towards non-believers, and the Kin faction, based in the Emirate of Abbashan, openly asks for foreign trade to be interrupted, fighting the ruling Preceptors faction, and supporting the claim to the throne of the blood heirs of al-Kalim against the adopted heirs named by the Council.

The Kingdom of Ostland

“Ostland is a staunch ally of the Empire, though it cannot be trusted as an asset in diplomatic endeavours. When it comes to blows however, these Northmen are greatly effective, despite their evident lack of discipline they make a perfect complement to our legions.”

- Manius Popilius Demades, officer of the XXVI Legion in Westrouke

The Land

Ostland is composed by two large quite fertile and populated islands just off the shores of Vestland, Noslo and Kalslo. Two minor islands, Osterslo and Kunslo hold the remaining population, but they are little more than large rocks. The weather is mild in the good season, but harsh and stormy in winter. However, fish is abundant in the seas around Ostland, and there is enough pastureland for livestock.

The two major islands are politically divided into many clan holdings. Towns developed from the sieges of larger clans and serve as quarters for the royal or clan armies and navies.

The land is almost entirely settled, and there are nearly no natural dangers except storms, and no monsters or other intelligent predators save for the local Northman raiders and pirates.

History

Ostland has a history of piracy and raiding. It was the first Northman kingdom, and from it Vestland and Soderfjord were colonised. Cnute of the Zealand clan founded the Kingdom, back in the fifth century AC. His sons settled the mainland near Norrvik, in modern Vestland, and, at its maximum expansion, the Kingdom of Ostland included a region larger than the lands currently held by the Kings of Ostland and Vestland.

However, it took only a century for the descendants of Cnute in Vestland to rebel and gain independence from their Ostlander relatives. Ostland Kings concentrated their action in the southern lands, raiding the coastal Soderfjorder jarldoms and the Alpathian colonies in Nithia.

When the Jarls of Soderfjord created the Nordhartar League, fifty years ago, and allied with Ylaruam and Vestland to discourage Ostlander raids, the Ostlanders allied in turn with the Thyatian Empire. This alliance still stands, and the Ostlanders have been recently associated in the Thyatian effort to conquer and settle the Isle of Dawn. Three Northman colonies have already been established on the northern coast of the great island.

The People

Ostlanders epitomise the Northman warrior, practicing piracy as their way of life, and measuring everyone by his personal strength and fighting prowess, and by the strength of his clan. They hold sorcery,

and to a lesser extent most forms of scholarship, in contempt, when they do not fear it outright. Skalds are their only scholars, and they are warrior-scholars, adventurers, and keepers of the traditional lore contained in the songs of the heroes. Thievery is not practiced nor welcomed, not because they have compunctions about taking someone else's property, but because it is considered dishonourable to do so through guile, as opposed to force.

There are three social classes in Ostland: jarls, karls and thralls. Jarls are clan leaders. Their power is absolute. Within their territory, even the King must impose his will upon them through a show of force, to the extent that he must collect his taxes personally. Karls are freemen, as long as they remain on good terms with their jarls. They aren't able to get much wealth, as there is nearly no trade in Ostland, and the jarls get the largest share of the plunder from the raids. Thralls are slaves, either prisoners of war, or descendants of thralls, or karls who have outlived their usefulness to the jarl.

Priests, or godar, are well respected, though only those of Odin and Thor wield any real power. Thor's godar are mostly berserker-like warriors, prone to violence and showing little interest in erudite pursuits, while the priests of Odin are the real minds behind the jarls' thrones. Powerful godar of Odin also called Ravens of Odin, and act as judges and advisers for the jarls, and the High Priest of their order, Asgrim the Bowed, is the main adviser to King Hord Dark-Eye.

Government and Religion

The Cnute clan, under the leadership of King Hord Dark-Eye, strongly controls the clans of Ostland. The King selects the best young warriors from each clan for his Royal Houseguard, which helps to keep the Cnute clan strong whilst weakening the minor clans. The staunchest opposition to the Cnute clan comes from the Ostman clan of Kalslo, which periodically rebels against the Kings.

There is also a religious rivalry between Kalslo and Noslo clans, as the latter support the official cults of Odin and Thor, while the former are followers of Frey and Freyja. Moreover, the Ostmans are known for their non-conformist behaviour, and their clanhold of Ostmanland is nearly the only place in Ostland where foreigners are welcome, and where one could find a wizard. On the other hand, their town, Ostmanhaven, has a larger share of cutthroats than most Northman ports. Currently, the rivalry is not open, but with the raise of stronger nations in and around the Northern Reaches, it is conceivable that the Ostmans could receive some help and support from these foreign powers.

The Soderfjord Jarldoms

“The Soderfjord Jarldoms are a useful buffer state between Ostland and us. Moreover, should the Jarldoms fall in the hands of King Hord, our trade routes to the north would be crippled. Sure, we could still use Sardal Pass Road, but the wise would rather have two strings for his bow, than risk to be left with no strings at all.”

- Yasir al Najid, tutor of Selim, nephew of the Malik of Sulba

The Land

Soderfjord's territory is not terribly suited for settling. It is composed of a large coastal plateau, broken by the valleys of the Saltfjord and Otofjord rivers. The plateau is covered by patches of wood and grasslands, and is the best farmland of the country. The river valleys are densely populated, and the towns of Soderfjord and Backwater are built there. Two other regions are settled; the northern border with Vestland, and the southern mountain town of Castellan which also serves as a trade post on the route to Cinsa-Men-Noo in the Emirates of Ylaruam.

Mountain and hill ranges unsettled by humans compose the western and southern borders of Soderfjord. Nomadic gnoll herders inhabit the Gnollheim Hills, and the Hardanger Mountain Range is home to kobold clans. These regions, while considered part of the Jarldoms, are not controlled by the Soderfjord clans.

At the centre of the nation lies a vast marsh, dotted by small areas of fertile land. Few settlers live in the Great Marsh, mostly guardsmen in the fortified shelters that serve the Marsh Road to Castellan. The Marsh Road is part of a trade route that cuts through the nation from north to south, bringing caravans from Vestland to the Jotunvalk Pass, which signals the border with the Emirates of Ylaruam.

History

Soderfjord existence as a nation dates back only to AC 950, when the Nordhartar Defence League was formed through the Treaty of Allied Dominions signed by the most powerful jarls of the region. Before that time, the Soderfjord jarls constantly waged war on each other, but every time one of them looked powerful enough to establish himself as a King, his rivals would band together to overthrow to upstart monarch. Frequent Ostland raids only made things worse.

After the formation of the League, treaties were signed with both Vestland and the Emirates of Ylaruam, which were interested in securing the Overland Trade Route and in avoiding any attempt by Ostland to conquer Soderfjord. As the Kings of Ostland turned to Thyatis for help, a stalemate was reached, which has allowed the League to survive up to this day, despite the widespread infighting among the powerful jarls.

The People

The people of Soderfjord uphold the values on independence and self-reliance, and the democratic tradition of the thing, the legislative assembly of all freemen.

The society has formally only two classes, the jarls and the freemen, since slavery is illegal, and the merchant class is not nearly as developed as in neighbouring Vestland. However, jarls are the only law in their own domains, so there are some regions where freemen are actually kept in servitude by the local jarl.

The towns of Castellan and Soderfjord stand out as exceptions to the common population mix of the Jarldoms. The latter is a port full of those shady characters common in the southern lands, but rare in the Northlands, and houses the only large, permanent military force of the Jarldoms, Ragnar's Brigade, quartered in Ragnar's Fort, the residence of the current war leader of the Nordhartar Defence League.

Castellan has a large share of foreigners among its residents, including a dwarven quarter, and a number of Ylari merchants. A fairly large native merchant class has grown here, and the influx of money due to the presence of the Overland Trade Route has sped the transformation of the town, which now sports a stone fort of dwarven making, and many more stone buildings than the rest of Soderfjord's towns.

Other than humans and dwarves, the only inhabitants of the region are hostile humanoid tribes. These include mostly gnolls and kobolds, but also frost giants and the mysterious moulder dwarves.

Government and Religion

Soderfjord's rulership is divided among the Council of the Great Jarls and the war leader, currently Ragnar the Stout, the jarl of the Soderfjord clan. The Council meets twice a year, and has the power to issue laws and policies, and to select the war leader, who is responsible for defence, but has no other powers. Even though the Council can make laws, it cannot enforce them, since within a dominion the local clan leader or jarl is the only authority, and it is actually illegal for anyone else to police the domain, even if the jarl does not apply the Council's laws.

The people of Soderfjord mainly worship Frey and Freyja, though jarls and warriors honour Odin and Thor instead. The worship of Loki is widely tolerated, and even followers of Hel can allow themselves to relax their secrecy standards, if they are powerful enough, since the central government is too weak to enforce the ban on these cultists.

The Kingdom of Vestland

"Vestlanders are more civilised than other Northmen, and their jarls are good customers. I even heard they had enough sense to set a dwarf as the mayor of one of their cities."

- Oinn Stonehand, dwarven adventurer in Soderfjord, no clan affiliation declared

The Land

The western half of Vestland is occupied by the Trollheim hills. These granite highlands are mostly barren and battered by strong winds, except for the deep, densely wooded valleys that lead to boggy lowlands. The northern hills are the traditional hunting grounds of the trolls, who, despite the efforts of the Vestland army, are still able to prevent the colonisation of the region by humans, and make travelling a dangerous undertaking.

The eastern half, and the most densely populated, is a plateau rising from 100 to 300 feet above sea level. This region enjoys a mild climate, and offers suitable terrain for grazing. Woods and forests occupy a large portion of the land, and fjords provide a fast way to reach the interior from the sea. The largest of these Vestfjord and Landersfjord, are navigable by rafts and longships, nearly up to the Rockhome border.

Vestland's capitol, Norrvik, is the larger town in the Northlands, and the most modern. Landersfjord and Rhoona, at the end of the navigable part of the two major fjords, are both major trading centres, as is the Haverfjord, which controls the overland trading routes that run through the nation.

History

The sons of King Cnute of Ostland first settled Vestland. Vestland remained an Ostland colony for more than a century, but the continuous increase of the Kings' demands for tribute led the colonists to rebellion. It was a descendant of Cnute, Ottar the Just, who led the Vestlanders against his distant cousin King Finnbogi. The King of Ostland was defeated and captured at the Battle of Bridleford, and was forced to acknowledge Vestland's independence.

Since then Ottar's descendants have strengthened and modernised their Kingdom, outlawing thralldom, inviting dwarven craftsmen to settle in Vestland, and signing defence or trade treaties with various nations, including Soderfjord, Ylaruam, Ethengar and Rockhome.

Thirty years ago, King Harald Gudmundson started issuing the Trollheim Homesteading Acts, granting ducal status and land grants in return for expeditions to be organised by the prospective duke, in order to secure his new fief from troll raids. The Acts have been a failure, as most dukes have proved unable to keep their forts garrisoned against the trolls, and many settlers have fallen victim to raiders. Recently, in the wake of a series of especially successful troll raids, the King has revoked the benefits of the Homesteading Acts

from the incompetent dukes, and units of the Home Guard, the standing army of Vestland, have been sent to retake the lost forts.

The People

Vestlanders are a more varied lot than other Northmen. There is a fair share of frontier men, holding to the traditional Northman lifestyle and society, with jarls being the absolute leaders of the clans. On the other hand, the urban areas see a much different society, with wealthy merchants and craftsmen having a much greater influence, to the point that guilds have become the major power in the towns. In general, the freemen of Vestland are proud and independent, keeping a strong military tradition and ready to fight in defence of their rights.

While wizards are still uncommon in Vestland, there is a tradition of openness to the southern magic style, and the Uppsala College provides formal education to students in the magical arts. Many more wizards learn their craft through traditional apprenticeship, providing the nation with a number of competent magic users.

Government and Religion

Vestland is a feudal monarchy, with jarls who often style themselves as "dukes", owing loyalty to the King. Actually, the power of the aristocracy and of the King is limited, since the wealthier clan members are no more under the political control of the jarls. The King is advised by a Royal Council, which, while composed by figures selected by the King himself, represents the different power groups of the nation, including the merchant and craft guilds, the freeholders, and the clergy. This Council has no formal power, but the King is wise enough to follow its advice, since the groups it represents are quite able to overthrow him.

The jarls of the most powerful clans have reacted to the menace of the modernisation in different ways. The head of the Rhoona clan tends to distance himself from the central authority of the monarch, but has taken the southern title of Duke, and maintains an ever-growing castle and court. On the other hand, the Landersfjord jarl fully supports the merchant class, and are rivals with the House of Ottar in his munificence towards wizards and scholars. Haverfjord is torn in a power struggle between the conservative jarl and the town council.

The most popular gods here are Frey and Freyja, while only the aristocrats and their retainers worship Odin and Thor. Worship of Loki is allowed, though rare, and many lesser cults, catering to the new social classes, are rising to prominence, like Forseti's or the White Whale's.

The Ethengar Khanates

"How could I stand those stinky horse riders? By the beard of Kagyar, how else, if not for the pleasure of bashing a few Glantrians' heads? That's the reason why we Brothers of the Bolt join the Golden Khan's army - well, and there's the Khan's gold, too."

- Bifur Magecrusher, former Brother of the Bolt, now a resident of Vestland

The Land

The Sea of Grass is the name given by the nomadic Ethengarians to their land, a huge grassland crossed by the River Stree and its tributaries. The best grazing lands, like the Sea of Flowers or the Land of Purple Grass, attract competing tribes, and are the theatre of inter-tribal skirmishes. The Great Khan keeps two court sites, Chagon-Nah and Bargha, moving an entire town of pavilions and tents twice a year. Chagon-Nah serves as summer court, and Bargha is reserved for winter.

The most impressive landmark of Ethengar is the so-called Land of Black Sand, a blasted expanse of dark sand and rock, mostly avoided by the nomads, who believe the region to be cursed or haunted by evil spirits. Despite its reputation, this is also the place where previous Great Khans are buried.

The Ethengar steppes are subject to an extreme climate, due to their high altitude. Summers are hot and windy, while the long winters are freezing and snowy. The steppes' autumn is marked by frequent rainstorms, and the only pleasant season here is spring, when the melting snow provides plenty of water, and the winds and temperatures are moderate.

History

The origin of the Ethengar clans is lost in the mists of time. Their myths speak of the first Great Khan, Baka, who is considered to have brought the Ethengars their lifestyle. After his death, the clans fought for supremacy in what is known as the first War of Succession. The Ethengar clans do not appear into the history of the Known World until the first century AC, when a warlike Khan drove the Makistan clan south, through the Dwarven lands. Five centuries later, two attempts were made to invade the western lands of the Flaems, which would later be known as the Principalities of Glantri, each resulting in a sound defeat as the Ethengar horse warriors found themselves unable to apply their hit and run tactics. The Flaemish armies retaliated, but, caught in the open terrain, were crushed. Since that time, the two nations are locked in a stalemate, each unable to overcome the enemy on their own turf. Espionage and subversion have become the weapon of choice, with Ethengar brataks matching their skills with Glantrians' magic.

The last Great Khan, Toktai, died in the battle of Hayavik in AC 926, after an ill-fated attempt to invade the Heldann Freeholds. A new War of Succession began, lasting until Moglai Khan was recognised as the Khan of Khans in 996.

Moglai's career started as heir to the Murkit tribe's Khan, Huptai. At the death of his father, Moglai was only twelve, and his uncle Atikai

easily usurped his throne. Moglai escaped, living alone for years in the Sea of Grass, and later adventuring south to Rockhome and later to Ylaruam, Thyatis and other lands. Later, he returned to Ethengar, declaring himself Khan of the Murkits. With a small force he was able to escape Atikai's warriors, achieving more and more victories. In the end, the majority of the Murkit clans switched allegiance, and Atikai was captured and executed.

In two years, the united Murkit tribe under Moglai Khan wiped out the divided Maghurs and Hajiks clans. In reaction to the new threat, the other clans gathered into tribes, but Moglai was able to exploit intertribal feuds to get a few tribes join him for protection, then he used his newfound strength to force the remaining Khans into submission.

The People

The Ethengarians are proud and savage horse warriors, living off their yak and horse herds. The clans are able to move fast, bringing along all of their possessions. These "possessions" actually belong to the Khan, who gives them to his subjects to use on a yearly basis. Men and women are both trained in archery and horsemanship, but women usually handle trade, while they seldom become shamans or hakomons. The Ethengar males often marry more than one woman, and are bound to marry the wives of their close relatives upon their death.

Besides tribal warriors, the Ethengar society knows only few social classes. The Keshak are elite soldiers in the direct service of the Golden Khan, and have therefore relinquished their clan standing. Hakomons, the traditional Ethengar magic users, also leave their tribes, but are often employed by the Khans, since they need wealth to support their magical research. Since there is no private property among the Ethengars, there is no thievery too. Instead, there is a tradition of spies and scouts, called brataks.

Government and Religion

Moglai Khan is the undisputed ruler of the Khanates. He directly controls his own tribe, the Murkits, and an elite military force, the Keshak. The lesser Khans keep absolute authority over their own tribes, but have no power over the Great Khan, although they can influence the Great Khans decisions by giving him their advice.

The Ethengars worship a large number of Immortals through the clergy, but they also revere animal spirits from the Spirit World through the shamans. Both types of priests also serve as advisers, loremasters and storytellers.

The Atruaghin Clans

“Children of Atruaghin, bah, they’re just a bunch of savages! Not able to appreciate the difference between a cheap rug from a fine Dythesthenian tapestry. It is better to push further west, and reach the markets of Sind, where you will find better customers.”

- Ahmed ibn Farouk, caravan master from Sulba, Ylaruam

The Land

The lands of the Atruaghin Clans cover three different regions: the Atruaghin Plateau; the forested coast of the Sea of Dread; and the rough, swampy terrains along the western banks of the Streel. The Plateau is a vast region of fertile grasslands and waterways in the west, where the Horse clan lives, more dry to the north-east, occupied by the Bear clan and covered by a forest in its south-eastern reaches where it is inhabited by the Elk people. The land is generally fertile, with the notable exception of the Bear clan lands, but it is not intensively cultivated and retains much more wildlife than any of the eastern lands of the Known World.

Few ways exist to reach the Plateau, which explains why the Children of Atruaghin have been able to keep their isolation from the neighbouring nations. A single trade route reaches the villages of the Bear clan from the Darokinian city of Akesoli.

History

The Atruaghin Clans have always lived in their current territories. They have never been interested in dealing with foreigners, and they have been ignored in turn by their neighbours for centuries, as these more powerful nations were locked in internal struggles, or worried by external threats.

Only the goblinoid hordes have scoured the clans-lands, in the legendary Quest for the Blue Knife, and even this event is so remote in time that only the historians of the longer-lived races remember it as anything but legend.

The People

The Children of Atruaghin are divided into five clans, each identified by its totem animal. There are the Bear, Horse, Elk, Turtle, and the renegade Tiger clan. The tribes of the first three clans live on the Plateau itself, while the latter two clans have settled in the coastal areas.

The Horse clan is composed by horse-mounted buffalo hunters, whose most unusual trait is the absence of a spoken language, replaced by a silent form of body language. The members of the Bear clan tribes have more dealings with the merchants of Darokin than the

rest of the Children of Atruaghin, and are prominent for their craftsmanship, especially pottery and weaving. The Elk clansmen are primarily farmers, favoured by the good climate of their lands, but they rely also on hunting and craftsmanship to survive, although their products are mostly for their own use. The Turtle clan, due to its tribes’ location, supports a large number of fishermen, and is known for its courageous whale hunters. The last clan, bearing the Tiger totem, is composed of renegade followers of entropic powers fond of violent games and practicing human sacrifices, bloody rites, and raids against the neighbouring clans.

The Children of Atruaghin have a limited technological knowledge, and are usually unable or unwilling to use or craft metallic tools or weapons. They don’t use armour, though customs vary wildly from clan to clan. Their masonry is usually limited, and most clans use either wood or clay in the construction of their villages. It is noteworthy that the Tiger clan enjoys a higher technological development, which gives them a vital edge over their more numerous relatives.

Government and Religion

There is no central government to bring together the Children of Atruaghin. Chiefs, advised by shamans, guide the tribes. However, each clan has its own traditions concerning the choice and powers of the tribal chiefs, and the role of shamans.

While the warrior Horse tribes are lead by the strongest fighters, Bear clan villages elect their chiefs, and practice a form of democracy. Turtle clan have a complex political form based on family honour, while the Elk clan is united under a Great Chief, selected by combat. The clergy rules the Tiger clan tribes with an iron fist.

The Atruaghin pantheon includes the stern hero, Atruaghin, and several other deities, each the patron of a specific clan. Shamans, who act as healers, advisers and loremasters, serve these Immortals. The Tiger clan has fallen long ago under the sway of the Entropic forces, and its cults are totally different from those of their cousins.

The Children of Atruaghin also believe themselves to be kin of certain animal species, which are taboo for them to kill, but which can provide help, both magical and mundane, to their human relatives. They have multiple totems of various degrees of importance, related to themselves, their tribe and clan.

The Minrothad Guilds

“Over the sea, east of Ierendi and west of Thyatis... The people of the major islands banded together to form the Minrothad Guilds, the nation that controls most of the sea trade in the world today. These guilds have built an unsurpassed merchant fleet to carry their exotic goods... They are secretive about their crafts... But the secret of their trading success lies in two other factors. Minrothad maintains strict neutrality with other nations... The second factor is the Minrothad merchant-princes: captains and masters of magic that keep their vessels safe at sea.”

- A sage from Specularum

The Land

The Minrothad archipelago is formed by six major islands and numerous smaller ones, most volcanic in origin. Trader's Island is the largest; on its northeast shore rises Minrothad, the capital, and major trade city of the guilds. Alfëisle is the home of wood and water elves, located here are the trade city of Verdon and the fortified elvish port of Seahome. Blackrock Island is dominated by an active volcano: Halfpeak; on this island there are a few fishing villages, far away from the volcano. Northwest of Trader's Island there is Fortress Island: home of the dwarvish guilds of Minrothad and their city of Stronghold. Open Isle is a flat and treeless island home to the halfling town of Malfton; the industrious halflings have turned the area around Malfton in a region of tended gardens, limited orchards and pasturage. Far to the northwest lies Fire Island with its dangerous volcano Redtop; the area around the island has been declared off limits to all shipping traffic. The last major island is North Isle; the fortified town of Gapton was built here as a colony of refuge for members of the guilds in case of calamity; a great number of clerics and scholars live here.

History

Gregus Verdier founded the Minrothad Guilds in AC 691. The responsibility for crafts, manufacturing, trading and sailing were assigned to specific clans and family groups so that each race had equal power. Then, in the following years, a number of miscellaneous guilds came into being which provided services rather than manufactured crafts. These families will be known as the Political Guilds.

In earlier times the country was fervently isolationist: forbidding immigration and strictly controlling travel and trade practices. But this policy has altered with a change in government, and the Minrothad Guilds have opened their doors to trade, travel and interaction with the folk of other nations.

The People

Minrothad is a polyglot society, it constantly incorporates new elements encountered and borrowed by Minrothad traders abroad; the main culture is a blend of native human, elvish, halfling and dwarvish practices. The language is the Minrothad Patois, which is a mix between the original speech and many other tongues, old and new. The same things could be said for dress: a pastiche of elements from all over the Known World.

Minrothaddans do not discuss guild politics or problems with outsiders. Ships come and go in Minrothad ports and the most important arrivals and departures, or the launching of new ships, are observed with a “docking party”, sponsored by a guild or a ship master; foreigners invited to such events are especially privileged.

Government and Religion

The Minrothad government is much more than groups of self-serving craftsman trying to gut each other. The family guilds and political guilds are the primary counterweights on the political scene; they are separated by the ruling guild master, but he can do very little if both the family guilds and the political guilds oppose him. The national government, in matters of taxes, and the military aren't under his personal control: so the balance remains stable as long as all three factions are strong.

Religions and philosophies in Minrothad have even been reinterpreted to accommodate the modern commercial bent of Minrothaddans; these ethical outlooks are rationalised as being similar to the purpose of the Minrothad Guilds, even where that was not originally the case. Elendaen philosophy honours Calitha Starbrow a water elf ascended to immortality; adherents of Elendaen believe the ocean is cradle of all life. Ordana, a wood elf who ascended to immortality, inspired Dainrouw; those who honour her call her “Forest Mother”. Augrism was created by Wildeye Auger, a dwarf cleric of Kagyar, the creator of dwarvish race; whose philosophy exhorts its followers to perform their best at all times. Minrothism, the fastest growing religion in Minrothad, derives from Minroth, who was the leader of the first peoples to colonise the islands, the followers of Minrothism must live in peace and occupy themselves with useful work.

The Kingdom of Ierendi

“You want to know about Ierendi? It’s a nice place, I guess, and the locals are certainly friendly. But Ierendi always seemed a bit... odd to me. I mean, picking their King and Queen through a tournament? Doesn’t make any sense. Plus, there are all those pirates down there. Buy me another, and I’ll tell you about some of the fights I’ve had with those...”
- Derek Alson, Darokinian ship captain in service to Linton House

The Land

The Kingdom of Ierendi is made up of a collection of islands in the Sea of Dread lying to the south of the Five Shires. There are ten main islands, of which the largest is Ierendi Island, which boasts Ierendi City, capital of the kingdom. Safari Island is famous for its wilderness reserves and its “adventure parks”, or simulated dungeons. Alcove Island is an infamous pirate haven, while Utter Island is well known for the unusual sand architecture built by the albino natives. The mysterious White Island hosts a small community of druids, Whitenight Abbey, that permit few visitors. Roister Island, in the southern portion of the kingdom, lies in some of the richest fishing grounds in the Sea of Dread. Aloysius Island, plagued by the mau-mau, a type of disease-carrying mosquito, serves as a penal colony. Elogy Island boasts mysterious ancient burial grounds. Fletcher Island is a tourist magnet, producing many works of art from the feathers of the native birds. Last but not least, Honor Island is home to a mysterious group of mages, who deal harshly with intruders and build the famed ironclad fireships of Ierendi.

History

Ierendi was first settled as a prison colony of the Thyatian Empire in AC 570. The Five Shires also followed suit, sending some of their own political dissidents to the islands. These prisoners discovered the islands already inhabited by natives, called the Makai. History does not record the origins of these natives. In AC 600, a pirate called Mad Creeg raised a revolt among the prisoners, driving Thyatis from the islands and establishing the Kingdom of Ierendi. Over the next hundred years, the Ierendians fended off a series of attacks by the Empire, until it was finally recognised as a sovereign nation. Ierendi’s history has been fairly stable since then, as the kingdom slowly became more civilised and established itself as one of the pre-eminent naval powers on the Sea of Dread.

The People

Though the vast majority of Ierendians trace their heritage to the mainland, Ierendi’s social customs are based on those of the Makai, which promotes a slow, easy pace of life. The islands are home to a large number of pirates, though in recent years the government has attempted to drive them away. Ierendi has in the past hundred years promoted itself as a centre for the Known World’s growing tourist trade, and the economy of many of the islands is centred around that industry. Ierendi also boasts a famous naval academy which draws skilled warriors from all over the Known World.

Government and Religion

Though Ierendi has a King and Queen, the real business of running the country is done by the Tribunal, a cabinet of representatives from the most influential aristocratic families in Ierendi. The King and Queen are mere figureheads, chosen every year in the Royal Tournament of Adventurers, with the winners of the male and female divisions taking the throne. Obviously, the King and Queen are not necessarily married to each other.

The two largest religions in Ierendi are the People’s Temple and the Eternal Truth of al-Kalim. The larger, People’s Temple, is an informal religion that worships no specific Immortal, though its clerics do receive spells. Its precepts are based on the Hope Stones, three pieces of stone that were inscribed by its founder. The original stones are believed to have long since been destroyed. The Eternal Truth, on the other hand, is a militant and demanding religion imported from the Emirates of Ylaruam. Yavi, head of the Eternal Truth in Ierendi, constantly strives to bring down the People’s Temple and establish his own religion as pre-eminent.

Undersea and the Sunlit Sea

“The sea is a vast place with a great many races in it. But the sea people are content to live life at a slower pace than you surface dwellers. A mere glance at the history of this region will show you the difference; while intrigue and war riddle the chronicles of the dry nations, the sea’s history has been shaped more by natural events. Where in the surface world can you find eight races living together in relative peace? However, don’t make the mistake of assuming that the sea people are complacent or weak. They can fight as fiercely as anyone else at need, and not all are truly peaceful. Be especially wary of the shark-kin; they will rob you blind without a thought...”

- Kellendon, an Aquarendi trader, to a Meditor adventurer

The Land

The Sunlit Sea is the northern portion of the Sea of Dread, stretching from the mainland to the edge of the continental shelf. Its name comes from the fact that its waters are relatively shallow and warm. It contains the surface nations of Ierendi, Minrothad and part of Thyatis, and its waters are home to many aquatic races.

The largest underwater realm is Undersea, the underwater kingdom of the tritons. It is located in the waters around the western Minrothad and eastern Ierendi islands. Directly to the northeast of Undersea is the Deep Water Pool of the Kna, where the kna breed their mashers; this area is off-limits to non-kna and is the closest they have to a nation. To the east of Undersea live the Aquarendi, the aquatic elves, mostly around the island of Alfeisle.

The sea floor is dotted with volcanoes, as well as ruins of the ancient Taymora culture. Kelp forests cover wide expanses, and large oyster beds can be found around the islands. Some areas contain whirlpools; coral and rock formations create most of these, but triton legends claim the largest lead to the lairs of terrible undead monsters. No one who has investigated the latter whirlpools has ever returned.

South and southwest of Undersea, the waters begin to deepen; in order of depth, the areas are known as the Terraces, where many of the shark-kin tribes live; the Twilight, where sea giants as well as various large monsters live; and the Abyss, where kraken, and other legendary monsters dwell.

History

The waters of the world have been inhabited since time immemorial, the oldest race in the region is the aquatic elves. Following the Great Rain of Fire, after making contact with their cousins in Minrothad, they settled the area around Alfeisle. Three thousand years ago, cataclysmic upheavals rocked this region, destroying the land-dwelling Taymora culture and sending its settlements to the sea floor. These upheavals also destroyed many deep-ocean merrow’s* territories, and many primitive merrow tribes arrived in the Sunlit Sea three centuries later, looking for a home. Later tritons, fleeing the devilfish, arrived and established the kingdom of Undersea.

More recently, a rash of lycanthropy broke out in Minrothad and spread to Undersea; the following purge was known in Undersea as the Night of the Long Knives. Many lycanthropes are suspected to have escaped the purge. The last two centuries have seen brushes with the devilfish, which have lately become more frequent.

The People

The majority of Undersea’s inhabitants are tritons. Over 10 000 of them live in this watery realm. They have a high level of culture and art. Coral-shaping is considered a high art in Undersea; the dwellings are made of coral, and are of breathtaking beauty; a triton settlement appears as an underwater coral fairy grotto. All tritons are either clerics or magic-users; both of these factions live in peace with the other, though there is a certain amount of mutual suspicion. Many other sea races live here as well. 30 tribes of merrow have sworn themselves to Undersea, and many of the nomadic merrow tribes pass through. They often clash with tribes of shark-kin, whose sharks prey on the merrow’s and triton’s fish herds. The shark-kin also occasionally raid the Aquarendi for magical items. The kna, the traders of the sea, are also a frequent sight in Undersea, bringing goods from Ierendi, the mainland, and farther locales. They do not trade with Minrothad because the Minrothad Guilds violently discourage other traders; ever since, some kna have turned pirate against Minrothad shipping in revenge. Small groups of kopru inhabit the volcanoes, smelting and trading steel. As mentioned above, many Aquarendi live to the east; their culture is similar to their land-dwelling cousins’. They are a frequent sight in Undersea, along with nixies and the occasional allied sea giant.

Religion and Government

Undersea is divided into eight baronies. Each baron is responsible for his own territory; the borders of the territories tend to shift according to the population. However, the borders never expand south of the edge of the Terraces. In practice, each baron controls the territory around his or her castle. Weekly courts are held, where citizens can bring grievances and disputes before the baron; any resolution may be appealed to a jury of 21 citizens. Though technically a hereditary post, barons can be replaced with the approval of a majority of their barony’s citizens. The eight barons are presided over by Queen Tarovra, who lives in the castle of Smaar at the centre of the kingdom. Four times a year, the barons and queen meet in council, where they discuss events; any major decision of the queen’s may be vetoed by any of the barons. By tradition, dating to the Night of the Long Knives, the ruler must be both a cleric and a mage. In theory, the post is granted to the highest-level cleric/mage available when the former monarch dies; in practice, the ruling Farmarva family has always groomed its children for the post, making them the preferred candidates.

All of the sea races follow Manwara, the Old being; either Triton, Merrow, etc according to the speaker’s race; of the Sea. In addition, each of the races reveres its own heroes, each of whom is credited with giving the race some of its special abilities or skills.

*Note to AD&D players: the merrow are the equivalent of AD&D merfolk – not aquatic ogres.

The Empire of Alphatia

“Oh to have been born with the gift for magic.”

- Common saying of the non-magically gifted in Alphatia

The Land

The Empire of Alphatia is the most significant nation to affect the Known World. It has two complete continents under its sway and has territories on three others, and a thousand years ago it held most of the territories that now belong to Thyatis as well. The centre of the empire is the continent of Alphatia, a rich land of numerous independent nations. In the southwest it is sunny and temperate with prosperous farmland and pastures. The southeast is much the same if not more densely populated because of its rich farmland. The northeast and mountainous northwest are wild and cold and only sparsely populated. This however affords many of the countries wizards much privacy and so the land of the northeast is dotted with their towers or summer villas for the nobles that require more luxurious privacy. The central regions are thick with deep forests littered with dangerous beasts and monsters, many of whom are the result of some evil wizards experiment for it is here that those that require the most privacy to conduct their wild experiments come.

Other regions of the empire have been conquered and settled so as a buffer to protect the motherland from foreign incursion and disruption, for the wizards do not like to be disturbed from their work. To its southwest Alphatia holds the eastern half of the Isle of Dawn which is the site of constant struggle for power with Thyatis, Alphatia's nemesis of a thousand years. To the southeast lies the continent of Bellissaria, with its rich soil and low mountains, where life is much the same as the Alphatian mainland except it tends to be quieter and more peaceful. To the north of the Known World is Norwold, a harsh and sparsely populated land. Its climate is chilly but temperate, although the north is bitterly cold in winter with its Great Bay often completely freezing over. Most of the land here is an untouched wilderness of evergreen hills and steep mountain ranges and still clear lakes. Finally to the east lies Esterhold which is a broad peninsula of the eastern continent of Skothar. It is a barren waste of rolling grassland dotted with light scrub and forest. The two settlements here are kept going mainly by slave labour of the Jennites who account for well over half the population.

History

Alphatian history on Mystara dates back two millennia, when the first Alphatians arrived on Mystara fleeing from the destruction of their world in a war between their two greatest schools of magic; air and fire. However in their flight much of their magic was lost but still superior to those the peoples that they encountered on their arrival. Within a short time they had brought their new land under their sway and conducted trade with the neighbouring lands. About twelve hundred years ago they began to grow concerned at the growing

strength of the Thyatian peoples and decided to bring them under the sway of the empire. Two hundred years later they rebelled and have been struggling against each other ever since. About sixty years ago after another broken Thyatian treaty they almost managed to conquer Thyatis again only to be repelled at the last minute. Fifteen years ago Alphatia began to colonise Norwold to prevent the Thyatians from doing the same. It appears that it is to become another point of contention between the two empires.

The People

The Alphatian Empire as a whole has around eight and a half million subjects. Because of this there is a vast variety of places and peoples under its sway from pale skinned “Pure” Alphatians and the more copper skinned “common” Alphatians, and descendants of all the peoples that they have conquered. In Alphatia however the use of magic is held above all else. Those that have the ability to use magic are automatically an Aristocrat, and those that can't wield magic are treated as second class citizens or worse. All children are tested at birth for magical talent and those with potential are trained in the arcane arts receiving many benefits. While it is possible for anyone to become rich and powerful those without magical abilities can never attain the highest levels of society. There are however a few countries in the empire that are friendly to those of non-magical persuasion, particularly the dwarven Kingdom of Stoutfellow. Outside the mainland itself non-magicians are generally treated better and society is more tolerant, even if magic users are treated better. While in most countries in Alphatia only humans and demi humans are regarded as citizens, in the Kingdom of Limn any sentient creature may be one. Here those creatures that can use magic even hold Aristocrat status, so one cannot simply slay a monster here as it could result in a conviction for murder!

Religion and Government

The Empire is ruled by the Empress Eriadna and a council of one thousand of the most powerful magic users of the Empire, while the individual kingdoms are semi autonomous and run by a King or Queen, which is usually hereditary.

Many immortals are worshiped in the empire but the most notable of them are Alphatia, Patron of the Arts and the Empire, and Razud, Patron of Magic. Koryis, Patron of Peace and Prosperity, is also worshiped by many merchants in Alphatia.

The Broken Lands

"Ma 'n da saiz the Legion'll do me good, they sez if'n I do right in duh Legion duh Legion'll do me right. It'z allf'r the glory o'High Gobl'ny,I duzn't see da glory o'High Gobl'ny havin' ta mu'ch up and dawn theze caverns all day. Two, four dayz until we raid the horse lovers to the north, yaaaah!"
- Tomppff-Cliff-Hanger, Goblin Wolf Rider in the Tharian Legion

The Land

The Broken Lands is the most inhospitable and treacherous of environments in the Known World, the landscape is one of constantly shifting grounds due to ever present earth tremors, volcanoes spewing forth lava or noxious gases, geysers, scalding mud pits and dust storms. The air is heavy with the fumes blown from sulphuric puddles and fissures venting often toxic gases from deep underground. The land itself is a region of rugged hills and mountains incised by narrow canyons, the Vesubia and Streel rivers cut through the area although the areas of dangerous rapids make them unnavigable to all but the foolhardy. Caravan trails pick an unsteady course beside these rivers. The climate of the Broken Lands is equally as fierce with the surface being blasted by the sun throughout summer or frozen by fierce winds during winter. The Broken Lands is bordered by the Principalities of Glantri to the north and west, the Republic of Darokin to the south and east and the Ethengar Khanates to the northeast.

Some 800 to 1 600 feet below the surface of the Broken Lands is a totally different world, a complex array of underground passageways connect various caverns in a myriad fashions. Rivers of water flow underground into lakes, although far more breathtaking is the Lava Flow, a lake of molten rock in a vast cavern. Rivers falling into the Lava Flow fills the cavern with a thick fog and a thunderous roar. In the middle of the Lava Flow on a floating island of rock sits the ancient city of Oenkmarr.

The volcanic nature of the area and the hot and humid conditions created by the numerous interactions of lava and water have made the soils of the caverns exceedingly fertile. Fungal vegetation blooms constantly and grows with speed on most surfaces with ease.

History

Many moons ago King Loark raised a Great Horde in the legendary Quest for the Blue Knife. Whilst ravaging every culture along the way on the quest but in 1709 BC they reached and settled in what is now the Broken Lands, with their quest unfulfilled. Then the Great Rain of Fire came devastating the area of the Broken Lands, killing King Loark and breaking apart the Great Horde.

Over time more humanoids made their way to the Broken Lands, and one or more leaders tried to raise the Great Horde again to threaten the surrounding lands, and despite some successes, they were always beaten back. Still the hold on the Broken Lands is strong, and has never been tested, yet raids on surrounding lands are a constant threat.

The People

Despite the inhospitable nature the surface of the Broken Lands has rarely been seen by humans or demi-humans alike, but it is far from uninhabited, a mistake that very few people get a chance to make twice. The Broken Lands is divided into ten tribes each under the command of a tribal chief who in turn is under the powerful orkish chief, King Thar. Each tribe controls a portion of land both on the surface and underneath the Broken Lands. The ten tribes, and the predominant humanoid population are Bugburbia, bugbears; High Gobl'ny, goblins; Hobgobland, hobgoblins; Kol, kobolds; Ogremoor, ogres; Orcus Rex, orcs; Red Orcland, orcs; South Gnollistan, gnolls; Trollhattan, trolls and Yellow Orkia, orcs.

Government and Religion

In AC 975 King Thar rose to prominence uniting the Broken Lands. He enforced the Tharian Code of Conduct and created the Tharian Legion. His rule has been strong, but he is also a thoroughly charismatic individual, and despite also being a megalomaniac, he is also the more threatening because of it.

Many of the tribes in the Broken Lands predominantly worship a specific immortal, except for the trolls of Trollhattan, they're too busy trying to eat things to take time out worshipping things. Bugburbians tend to worship Bartziluth, patron of strength and bravery; High Gobl'nyians tend to worship Wogar, patron of predators and monsters; Hobgoblanders and Yellow Orkians tend to worship Yagrai, He-Who-Always-Rises, patron of the dead or those close to death; Citizens of Kol worship the Shining One, patron of hierarchy and kobold warfare; Ogremoorians commonly worship Jammudaru, patron of fear and nightmares; Rexians worship Karaash, patron of war and destruction; most faiths are practiced in Red Orcland although Wogar is the most common; Ranivorus, patron of influence over the weak is worshipped in South Gnollistan.

Lands of the Shadow Elves

"I'm delighted that you've taken an interest in our local folklore. The Shadow Elves are indeed an interesting tale - cursed elves, banished underground during the Great Rain of Fire, who will return to destroy us all. It's the sort of thing that elven mothers tell their children when they want them to behave, and nothing to worry yourself over. I'm sure the attack on your men was mere bandits, probably of Clan Feadil. They dislike outsiders, you know. More wine?"

- Counsellor Carlisan of Clan Chossum, Alfheim, speaking with a Darokin merchant friend

The Land

Far beneath the Broken Lands, in the tunnels where even the humanoids fear to venture, are the lands of the mythic Shadow Elves. Pale and xenophobic, their lands actually cover networks of tunnels directly underneath Alfheim itself, and running as far as Glantri and Darokin. These tunnels are miles beneath the surface, and few outsiders ever set eye on them, none have returned to tell the tale.

The shadow elves make their homes in large caverns, where they have constructed entire towns and cities. There are four major cities, each one belonging to a different clan. The largest of these is the City of the Stars, home to the shamans and the King. Although shadow elf holdings are spacious, they are by no means safe. Humanoids above and strange monsters below hedge in the elves. Sinkholes, cave-ins, magma flows, underground rivers, fungus forests, and even weather patterns (in the larger of the caves, which are often the size of feudal dominions) can all prove hazardous. Life in this land is hard, and its inhabitants have become hard as a result.

History

Things weren't always like this. Long ago, the shadow elves dwelt on the surface, and enjoyed bright sunlight and prosperous living. Then came the Great Rain of Fire, a cataclysm that forced the four clans underground. They wandered for a long time, eventually coming to a huge cavern. There they found, carved in stone, the 14 verses of the Way of Rafiel. They settled in the cavern, proclaimed a new king, and took Rafiel as their new Immortal.

Occasionally, the shadow elves sent expeditions up to the surface. These parties always arrived in the Broken Lands and, seeing the desolation, concluded that the surface was still uninhabitable. Millennia passed this way. Then, almost 800 years ago, they stumbled on a group of humans from above and learned that the surface had been safe for several centuries. Worse, they learned that there was an entire nation of elves above, who had apparently forgotten their unfortunate cousins.

The shadow elves, now quite numerous, sent a diplomatic party to the elves of Alfheim. Unfortunately, the surface elves cared nothing for the hardships of their kin, and the shadow elves were banished back into the caverns. Saddened and angered, the shadow elves swore to drive out these treacherous elves and reclaim their rightful homeland. Two subsequent invasions failed, so the shadow elves have adopted a new

tactic - that of infiltration. They are slowly placing the pieces for their next invasion, and soon hope to regain their ancestral lands.

The People

It should be stressed that the shadow elves are not evil per se. True, they hate the surface elves, as well as dwarves and humanoids and almost any outsiders. They have traditions that may seem savage when viewed from the outside. Within their own society, however, the shadow elves are honourable and supportive of each other. Crime is practically unknown, and for one shadow elf to betray another would be a sin worthy of the worst surface dweller.

Due to their time spent underground, the shadow elves are white-haired and pale of complexion. Their eyesight is keener than that of normal elves, and they can see quite well in complete darkness. However, they are unable to stand bright light, especially sunlight.

There are four clans of shadow elves - the Celebryl, the largest clan; the Porador, who are the main farmers of fungus, slugs, and giant bat mounts; the Felestyr, who mine the magical soul crystals; and the Gelbalf, who are craftsmen especially suited in harvesting spider silk cloth. A vigorous trade exists between these cities, but there is little to no exchange with the surface world. Overall, shadow elves are hard working, devout and peaceful. If however they are threatened or crossed, then their anger is quick and merciless.

Government and Religion

King Telemon of clan Celebryl currently rules the shadow elves. His daughter Tanadaleyo is an accomplished warrior, and both are well loved by the people. However, the Radiant Shaman Porphyriel, high priestess of Rafiel, holds a great deal of political power. Shadow elf life revolves around the worship of Rafiel, who is considered to be their saviour when they were lost underground. The Way of Rafiel dictates the proper food and clothing, the times to plant, hunt, and harvest, and even the destiny of children at birth. Rafiel marks his chosen children in the womb, and those that he wishes as shamans bear special facial markings. When one of these children is born it is considered a great honour, and the child is taken to the temple to be raised. The balance of these gifts, though, is that some children are born crippled and deformed, and Rafiel demands that these be abandoned in caverns far from home, and he promises to take them up to himself.

Beyond the Known World

"I want to ... I need to leave home"
- Teenager, Threshold, Karamaikos

Heldannic Territories

This forested region, formerly known as the Heldann Freeholds, is located just to the north of the Ethengar Khanates. The land is inhabited by the Heldann, a fair-haired, light-skinned folk, who fish, farm, and hunt. The Heldann traditionally acknowledge no ruler higher than the individual household leader, but this has changed in the last generation. About 50 years ago, an army of elite clerics, who took as their name the Heldannic Knights, imposed their rule over the land. The Heldannic Knights are Hattians from the Empire of Thyatis, devoted to the warlike Immortal, Vanya.

Wendar

North of Glantri, the elven Wizard-King, Gylharen, rules the peaceful realm of Wendar. The kingdom lies within a large valley, with rich plains breaking up great tracts of evergreen forest. The population is made up of roughly equal numbers of elven foresters and human farmers. It is said that Wendar prospers due the presence of a magical artifact, the Elvenstar. Despite this, Wendar must defend itself from the shadowy land of Denagoth, which borders it on the north. Little is known of this dark land.

Norwold

This is a vast wilderness area north of the Known World and the Heldannic Territories. The Empire of Alpathia has claimed Norwold, but little of the region is actually under the control of King Ericall, who rules from Alpha, a fortified northern city. Ericall is actively seeking capable rulers who wish to assist him in taming this unsettled land. Other civilised areas include the independent city of Oceansend, the squalid criminal town of Landfall, and the hin clanhold of Leeha.

Sind

This kingdom forms the western border with Atruaghin, Darokin, and Glantri. It is comprised of several lesser kingdoms, called mumlykets, united under Rajadhiraja Chandra ul Nervi. Sayr Ulan, the capital of Sind, is a centre of trade with neighbouring lands, especially the merchants of Darokin. The common people live an impoverished life, while the rulers enjoy wealth and luxuries. A rigid caste system is the basis of Sindhi social standing and customs.

The Great Waste

West of Sind, lies this huge expanse of desert and wasteland, which stretches to the forbidding and impassable Black Mountains. The Sind

Desert, a rocky, arid region of harsh temperature extremes, comprises much of the Great Waste. It is inhabited by desert nomads, both human and otherwise.

Hule

The Great Hule is a large, mysterious land lying far beyond the Black Mountains populated by chaotic humans and humanoid tribes. The diverse populace is held together by the someone known only as the Master of Hule, the highest of Hule's many holy men.

Yavdlom

The Yavdlom are a nation of tall, ebony-skinned men, ruled by sages and prophets, located in the tropics of the western Sea of Dread. Yavdlom covers Thanegia Island, as well as parts of the Serpent Peninsula, which divides the Sea of Dread from the Izondian Deep and the Gulf of Hule.

Savage Coast

Beyond the Serpent Peninsula, the Savage Coast stretches from the Gulf of Hule to Orc's Head Peninsula, 2000 miles to the west. The area around the Gulf of Hule is made up of various city-states and "Savage Baronies", which are afflicted with a curse upon their lands. The nations beyond are a rugged frontier inhabited by barbarous men, canine lupins, feline rakasta, reptilian turtles, and other unusual humanoids.

Thanegioth Archipelago

This is a cluster of tropical islands across the Sea of Dread to the south of the Known World. In addition to primitive tribesmen and pirates, the islands are home to all sorts of jungle creatures, both mundane and monstrous. The fabled Isle of Dread lies within this island chain. Little else is known of these islands, but for myth and superstition.

Isle of Dawn

A massive island to the east of the Known World, the Isle of Dawn is the frontline of territories contested by the Empires of Thyatis and Alpathia. The western coast is comprised of Thyatian provinces and allies, whereas the eastern side consists of Alpathian colonies. The island's terrain is hilly and forested, with many bogs, especially in the northeast. A large, unexplored escarpment (claimed by both empires) lies in the south.

Map of the Known World (AC 1000)



Daniel W Eustace
April, 2002

Key to Waterways

- ① Streef River
- ② Vesubia River
- ③ Red River
- ④ Isoile River
- ⑤ Dol-Anur River
- ⑥ Krandai River
- ⑦ Lake Stahl
- ⑧ Lake Klintest
- ⑨ River Highreach
- ⑩ Vanya's Girdle

Legend 1 Hex = 24 miles

Clear	Desert	Village
Farmland	Broken or Barren Land	Tower
Forest	Black Sand	Fort
Hvy Forest	Badlands	Castle
Pine Forest	Beach	Town
Hvy Pine	Plateau	City
Jungle	Cliff	Capital
Oasis	Hills	Mines
Forested Hills	Mountains	Monster Lair
Steppe	Heavy Mountains	Road or Pass
Grassland	Volcano	Trail
Swamp	Lighthouse	Border
River	Coastline	
Deep Water		