



HEROES OF KARAMEIKOS



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Everything a player needs to create heroic characters
within the Grand Duchy of Karameikos



CHARACTER CREATION

USE THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES, IN CONJUNCTION WITH the *Player's Handbook*, for creating characters for this campaign. In the event of a contradiction, this guide takes precedence over the PHB.

ABILITY SCORES

Use the Standard Array to determine your ability scores: 15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8.

For more flexibility, you may instead choose to purchase your ability scores, using the method described on page 13 of the PHB. You have 27 points to spend on your ability scores.

RACES OF KARAMEIKOS

The following races are quite common within Karameikos:

HUMAN

The human population of Karameikos is divided into two main ethnic groups, the native Traladarans, and Thyatian settlers.

TRALADARAN

The Traladarans, descendants of the native Traldar tribe of legend, tend to be fairly small (men average 5'9", women 5'3") and light of build. They tend to have pale complexions, brown eyes, and dark hair (deep brown to black). In general, they are a very superstitious people—if you can call it superstition when it's based on truth. They are great believers in good luck charms, omens and portents (palm reading, the reading of tea leaves or sheep entrails, interpretations of natural phenomena — if it's a strange event, the Traladara consider it an omen), curses and evil eyes.

Outside the larger towns, education is widely-spread. In the more rural communities, most villagers are illiterate,

The Shearing Ceremony

The native Traladarans have a coming-of-age custom known as the Shearing Ceremony. When a young man reaches a certain age (typically between 14 and 19), a dinner is prepared. Afterward the youth stands silently while his family dresses him with travelling gear and equipment. Finally, the youth's cloak is sheared off at the hem, marking his status as an impoverished traveler in the world.

From this point on the youth is no longer considered a member of the family and must leave to make his own way in the world. Once a sufficient time has passed, or the youngster has proven himself, he is invited to re-join the family at a feast in his honor.

When the Thyatians arrived they saw the Ceremony as an efficient way of separating the wheat from the chaff in their own descendants and have adopted the Ceremony.

Women are not usually expected to be Sheared, but it is becoming increasingly common for young women to insist upon it — especially those who want to be treated as equals among their male siblings. The non-human races, however, do not practice this custom at all.

though often a village cleric will be lettered. (PCs being exceptional people, don't have to worry about this; if you have enough Intelligence to be literate, you can be literate if you wish)

For the most part, Traladarans don't care much for Thyatians. They see the Thyatians as the latest wave of bad luck which keeps the Traladarans from re-achieving their Golden Age. Since many of the original Thyatian arrivals were rotten land-grabbers, many of the Traladarans see all Thyatians as being the same.

Though the majority of the population of Karameikos is Traladaran, the court language is Thyatian. Thyatian is the language of official documents and trade and is basically the "Common Tongue" of Karameikos. Most Traladarans under the age of 30 speak Thyatian, usually with a distinct accent which marks their Traladaran origins.

Traladaran Names: (Male) Boris, Dmitri, Fyodor, Grygory, Ilya, Ivan, Mikhail, Pyotr, Sergei, Stephan, Yakov, Yuri; (female) Anya, Darya, Ecatrina, Ilyana, Irena, Katarina, Kuzma, Magda, Misha, Petra, Sula, Zandra; surnames can be created by adding one of a number of suffixes to given names. Such suffixes include "os," "ov," "ev," "nov," "e/ich," "escu," etc. Example: Ivan becomes Ivanov; Dmitri becomes Dmitros.

Languages: You can speak, read and write Common (Thyatian) and Traladaran.

THYATIAN

Most of the nobles in Karameikos are of Thyatian descent, as is a sizeable portion of the commoner population. Thyatians tend to be physically larger than Traladarans, men averaging around 5'11" and women about 5'5". The Thyatians have had centuries to interbreed with other nations, and so there is no one Thyatian look; hair ranges from dark blonde to dark brown, with occasional red-heads (including the Duke); eye color ranges from blues to browns and blacks. The Thyatians tan more easily in the sun than the paler Traladarans, who tend to sunburn easily.

The Empire of Thyatis is a large, flourishing empire with powerful armies, strong trade relations with the great nations of the world, lavish arts and entertainments, and a cultural standard equalled in few places in the world, so it's natural that many of Thyatian descent tend to feel superior to the native Traladarans. Among many of the Thyatians, there is a sentiment that Traladarans are superstitious and ignorant, and many feel that Thyatian spoken with a Traladaran accent denotes lack of mental ability (Again, this is a prejudice which you don't have to foist on your own character if you don't wish to.)

Thyatian Names: (Male) Varis, Alexander, Valerius, Titius, Claudius, Anastasius; (female) Varia, Alexandra, Valeria, Titia, Claudia, Anastasia; surnames tend to be strong, majestic sounding monikers; Karameikos, Penhaligon, Korrigan

MIXED ANCESTRY

In the last thirty years, since the arrival of Duke Stefan and his followers, there have been born many children of mixed Thyatian and Traladaran descent. Most of them are the children of Thyatian men who immigrated to the duchy, fought in the Duke's army, then retired to wed local women. Very few are children of Thyatian women and Traladaran men. A half-breed is likely to be somewhat taller than average for Traladarans, usually with dark hair and blue or light brown eyes. How he feels about Thyatians and Traladarans will depend on the way he was raised, but in most cases the half-breeds recognize that neither Thyatian nor Traladaran has any great advantage over the other; the half-breed gets along well with people of both backgrounds.

DWARF

The dwarves living in the Grand Duchy are either members of the hill dwarf Stronghollow clan in the gnomish community of Highforge, or are mountain dwarf professionals who have immigrated into Karameikos - often acting as professional soldiers in the service of the Duke or one of his barons.

ELF

Most of the elves in Karameikos are wood elves of the Callari clan, a merry and hardworking tribe proficient in river-boating, riding, horse-trading, hunting and foresting. Callari elves are robust and healthy, with very pale hair (blonde to white) and blue eyes. They tend to wear tunics or robes of green with leaf patterns embroidered upon them.

The reclusive Vyalia clan is a group of high elves found in the eastern-most forests of Karameikos, who seldom interact with the world outside their realm.

Drow do not exist in this campaign setting, and may not be selected.

GNOME

The largest gnomish community, called Highforge, sits in the mountain foothills several miles east of the human town of Threshold. It's a large and secluded community composed of rock gnomes (and one allied dwarven clan); it is mostly self-sufficient but profits from trade with the southern humans.

Forest gnomes, if indeed they reside within the borders of Karameikos, are almost unheard of.

"I'm not from around here."

While it certainly makes it easier to have all the characters' origins set in Karameikos, it is by no means required. The Known World is a very diverse campaign setting with many different kingdoms (most based on ancient real-world cultures) in impossibly close proximity to one another. You are encouraged to make a character from a foreign land if that is your preference, with the only caveat being that you come up with a reason why your character ended up in the small town of Stellanford in Karameikos (see "The Town of Stellanford", on the next page).

HALFLING

The halflings in the Duchy are mostly stout halfling immigrants from the Five Shires, drawn by the heavy trade in Karameikos and living as professionals within the human communities of the Duchy. There are many halfling traders, craftsmen and innkeepers in Specularum, Kelvin and smaller communities. While there are no large halfling clans in Karameikos, the halflings have their own subculture, and many frequent taverns and other facilities which cater only to halflings.

UNCOMMON RACES

These races are not well known in Karameikos, but might be encountered occasionally.

DRAGONBORN

Dragonborn are not native to Karameikos, and in fact, are considered rare most anywhere you go in the Known World. When they are encountered, they are often mistaken for a monstrous threat by common folk.

HALF-ELF

Half-elves are rare in the world, and rarer still in Karameikos, but are certainly possible. If you are a half-elf you may have grown up in or near the elven trading community of Rifflian.

HALF-ORC

Like half-elves, half-orcs are extremely rare within most of Karameikos. Most people would shun and fear a half-orc, and might be prone to attack on sight. Possible origins include western Karameikos, on the border of the Black Eagle Barony (Baron VonHendricks is rumored to employ orcs in his armies), or immigrants from the trade nation of Darokin to the north (which has a significant half-orc subculture).

TIEFLINGS

Tieflings are exceedingly rare in most of the world. They are said to be descendants of humans who made pacts with dark forces in ancient times, cursing their entire bloodline in the process. Occasionally, physical evidence of this curse manifests many generations later — horns, tails, and unnatural skin coloration. Tieflings do not breed true, and traits can skip entire generations.

CLASSES

All classes in the Player's Handbook are available.

Barbarian: While much of Karameikos is wilderness, barbarians are actually unheard of among the native populations. They are much more likely to be foreign visitors.

Bard: Bards are a common sight and can be found anywhere from dimly lit taverns to noble courts. Traveling entertainers are often well-received.

Cleric: Most villages have at least one shrine, and larger settlements typically have at least one church, tended to by a local cleric. Larger cities may even have multiple temples, with dozens of clerics.

Druid: Druids are rare in Karameikos. In fact, only one is currently known, in the wilderness near Threshold.



Fighter: Perhaps one of the most common classes to be found, from the Duke's armies, to caravan guards, mercenary companies, and adventuring groups.

Monk: No orders of warrior monks currently exist within Karameikos. Monk characters may have acquired their training in another land.

Paladin: Paladins are often found in the service of religious orders within Karameikos. Perhaps one of the most famous is the Order of the Griffon, the militaristic arm of the Church of Karemeikos.

Ranger: Rangers roam far and wide in the untamed wilderness of Karameikos, hunting the more dangerous beasts of the deep woods, tracking trespassing humanoids, or serving as scouts for the Duke's armies.

Rogue: Rogues are quite common in Karameikos, lurking in the darkened back alleys of Specularum, prowling the shadows of a lost ruin, or relieving some poor sod of his coin purse in a noisy tavern.

Sorcerer: Sorcerers are known to appear from time to time, often in the Traladaran population.

Warlock: Warlocks tend to keep their identities secret, especially among the superstitious Traladarans.

Wizard: Few wizards are found in Karameikos, as the Magician's Guild of Specularum is currently the only official place to seek training in the arcane arts.

ALIGNMENT

Good heroes are very much recommended. Please don't create evil characters without providing the DM with a very compelling argument.

BACKSTORY REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of how detailed or sparse your character's backstory is, each must include two things.

First, if your character isn't originally from the town of Stellanford (see below), you must provide a reason why your character is there. Your character should have at least some minimal level of investment in the community.

Second, every character must have a connection to at least one other character. This connection can be whatever you decide, but the player of the other character must agree to it. You're encouraged to work with the other

player(s) to come up with how they might already know each other.

Some examples could be childhood friends, siblings or cousins, professional rivals, former cell mates, serving in the same military unit, etc.

THE TOWN OF STELLANFORD

Stellanford is a small but busy town on the Duke's Road, just 20 miles north of the city of Penhaligon. The town is often a stopping point for travelers and caravans moving along the Duke's Road, which runs north to Selenica in the Republic of Darokin.

Stellanford is located at a little-used ford in the River Shuttergal. In years past, the ford was a convenient crossing of the river for miners who worked in the hills to the west of the river looking for silver, or travelers who wished to cut cross-country to Threshold, Verge and other communities. Growing populations of humanoids in the hills to the west eventually drove off the miners and other traffic from the ford, but by then the Duke's Road had been firmly established as a major trade route between the Duchy and nearby Darokin, and the survival of the town was assured.

Several farms can be found nearby, but the town's existence is mostly based on providing weary travelers with meals and bedding, and the town has two inns, as well as a tavern catering to all manner of clientele to be found on the long journey from Penhaligon to Selenica. A cleric of the Church of Traladara tends to the spiritual needs of the community from a small but cozy church near the center of town.

The population is mostly Traladaran humans, but a small family of halflings can be found running the Hungry Halfling Inn. Other races encountered are usually just passing through. The town's permanent population is only around 1000 or so, and that's including the neighboring farmlands. The town has no standing army, relying instead on patrols from Duke's Road Keep to the north and Penhaligon to the south for protection. In an emergency the town could assemble a militia of about 20-30 men armed with simple weapons and no armor - mostly farm hands and stable boys with no real training.

Stellanford will be the hometown of most of the characters, and the location where this campaign will begin.



PLAYERS' BACKGROUND

THE GRAND DUCHY OF KARAMEIKOS IS A YOUNG NATION, ITS current government having been formed just over 30 years ago. In that time, Duke Stephan Karameikos III has built many roads to unite the scattered towns and villages. He has created a respectable army. He has brought prosperous trade to the region.

But despite these efforts, much of the land remains only nominally under the Duke's control. Brigands and humanoid tribes scoff at the rule of law from deep within the nation's dark forests and treacherous mountain foothills. Every village has its legends of what evil lies within a nearby forgotten ruin and stalks the woods at night.

Throughout the land, evidence of a once-mighty civilization can be found - worn down to the foundations by the ravages of time. Was it a prosperous civilization? Do any of its treasures remain to be plundered?

This is the land that your characters will begin their quest for fortune and glory within.

HISTORY

This is the land's history as known to the peoples of Karameikos.

The first part of the history is recorded in an epic work of poetry of the Traldar (Traladara) people, "The Song of King Halav." This is an ancient work maintained by generations of bards before finally being committed to writing about six centuries ago.

THE SONG OF KING HALAV

In ancient times, the land now called Karameikos was the forest homeland of the Traldar, men and women so favored by the Immortals and allowed to live in these beautiful lands. The Immortals let the Traldar live happy, simple lives. The Traldar fished and hunted; the men spent most of their time sporting with one another and offering praise to the Immortals.

But the Immortals knew that the happiness of the Traldar was to end. Far to the west, a race of evil beast-men was preparing to march through the easterly lands in search of booty, prisoners and more hospitable homelands. These beast-men had their own Immortal sponsors equal in might to the patrons of the Traldar, so only victory between man and beast-man would determine the fate of the two races.

The Immortals descended to Lavv, a Traldar village, to find clever youths and give them secrets they could use to defeat the beast-men. They visited Halav Red-Hair, a maker of stone knives, and taught him to forge weapons and armor of bronze. They also taught him the arts of the sword and the strategy of warfare.

They visited Petra, a maker of pottery, and taught her art of the bow, the craft of medicine, the use of the potter's wheel, the spinning of flax and use of the loom.

They visited Zirchev, a huntsman, and taught him how to tame and ride and fight from horses, how to train dogs to fight for their masters, how to walk silent as the cat, swim as the fish, see as the hawk.

Halav, Petra and Zirchev told the people of Lavv of what the beast-men intended. The king laughed and tried to

drive the trio from Lavv. Halav, using the bronze sword given him by the Immortals, slew the king and assumed his crown.

In the years that followed, King Halav, Queen Petra and the Huntsman Zirchev taught their secrets to the people of Lavv and brought all the other villages of Traldar lands under their sway. Villages grew into mighty cities, and Halav was renowned for his fairness and wisdom.

Eventually, the beast-men attacked in numberless waves from the west. The Traldar in their glittering bronze armor stood against them. The irresistible force of the beast-men crashed into the unmovable object of the Traldar, and the war went on forever. Both sides lost great numbers of warriors; each Traldar fighter slew dozens of his bestial enemies before being slain.

Finally, King Halav managed to find the king of the beast-men alone on a hilltop. The beast-king was twice the height of a man, with the head of a wolf and a hairy body that was foul beyond compare. It brought its great axe against the sword given Halav by the Immortals. This was the final battle of man and beast-man.

It raged on from dawn until noon, both kings growing so tired that each could barely wield his weapon. In the "Song of King Halav," both take time to rest during the fight and each describes his resoluteness and unconquerable fighting ability. Evidently both were right: King Halav and the King of the Beast-Men perished upon one another's weapons. Their armies looked upon one another, the beast-men now fearful because their king had perished, and the Traldar resolutely raising their weapons and barring the beast-men from advancing.

The beast-men departed Traldar lands. Queen Petra and Zirchev took up Halav's body and returned home. Great was the lamentation in Lavv when they arrived, but, during the ritual burning of Halav's body that night, the Immortals visited, spiring Halav, Petra and Zirchev away. The Traldar mourned their king but turned their eye toward rebuilding their lands into a mighty empire.

THE DARK AGE

The time of King Halav has since been called the Golden Age of the Traldar, and (as all citizens of Karameikos know) the Traldar never did found a mighty empire or even fully recover from the devastation brought by the beast-men.

Why? Well, according to Traldar legends which have sprung up since this Golden Age, the land needs to have its king returned to it — King Halav must return to Traldar lands before this can become a mighty nation again.

Regardless, following the destruction of the Golden-Age Traldar, the peoples of this land descended into a dark age from which they didn't fully emerge until the last century. Individual villages survived, and the tribesmen eventually lived at greater than subsistence level. Trade soon commenced with Minroth and Thyatis peoples. The descendants of the Traldar, called Traladara, began inching their way toward economic recovery.

But the Traladara still faced many problems. In the centuries after the Golden Age, many evil things settled in the Traladaran forests and mountains. Some evil force



cursed the land with vampires, lycanthropes, and other beasts. Today, every Traladara village has its legends of a neighbouring ruin once occupied by a vampire-lord, or some village lad turning out to be a were-wolf and slayer of villagers. Often, the legends are true, and every good Traladara youth knows that the land has its vampires and were-beings still. Because there were horrid things in the woods, travel between inland villages was unsafe.

So, while the coastline villages prospered from foreign trade, only the bravest of traders would risk expeditions into the Traladara interior. As a result, the inland villagers tended to remain isolated and more ignorant than their seaside cousins.

During this dark age, clans of goblins, hobgoblins, and orcs also settled in Traladara lands—usually some distance from the human communities. They warred upon one another, and upon the humans, and in general made the land less congenial for everyone.

More peaceable tribes of elvish and gnomish settlers also came to Traladara, though. The elves settled in the central forests of the land, while the gnomes settled in the mountain foothills northward. Both races traded peaceably

with the humans and fought beside them against the less friendly humanoid tribes.

MODERN TRALADARA

Traladara, a century ago, was a well-known trading spot, particularly Marilenev, its chief city, built where the Volaga River enters the sea. There, Traladarans traded valuable furs for weapons, wines and other spirits, a profitable enterprise.

Most of the Traladaran profits stayed on the coast and the lands immediately inland. Few traders ventured inland; those that did included the annual Gnome Caravan, a well-armed force of gnomes who descended from the northern hills, traded a year's accumulation of craft goods in Marilenev, and made their way back to gnomish lands.

At about this time, the nations of Darokin and Thyatis began to view Traladara with increasing concern. The forest nation had never offered them any threat, so they had never erected any significant defenses against Traladara. But what if its people should be united under a powerful leader — or, worse yet, conquered by an enemy foreign power?

The Empire of Thyatis decided the matter by sending troops to the Traladaran capital, Marilenev, and conquering it, claiming all Traladara for Thyatis. Darokin shrugged and began steps to make sure its border was secure.

Thyatis took few real steps to secure Traladara for itself. It installed a garrison of soldiers in Marilenev. The military commander at the time renamed Marilenev “Specularum” (The Mirror City) after the reflective beauty of Marilenev’s bay. A tax collector took in revenues on all trade money which changed hands in the city.

Other than that, the rest of Traladara was left pretty much to itself. The more isolated communities were completely unaffected by the “conquest.” The traders suffered a Thyatian tax, but the greater Thyatian interest in Traladara meant that trade boomed, and they profited more anyway.

That’s how conditions remained until thirty years ago. At that time, Duke Stefan Karameikos III, a youthful nobleman of Thyatis, struck a deal with the Emperor of Thyatis. Karameikos, in essence, traded his valuable ancestral lands for Traladara—and a guarantee of autonomy. The Empire recognized Karameikos’ claim to Traladara, now renamed the Grand Duchy of Karameikos and recalled its officials from Traladara territory.

Duke Stefan traveled to his duchy, announced his assumption of rulership over Traladara, and put down the armed insurrection which resulted. After things had settled down somewhat, he began luring ambitious, landless nobles from Thyatis to help him rule this land in proper Thyatian fashion.

The early years of Duke Stefan’s rule were characterized by both good and bad results. On the bad side, many of the Thyatian settlers who poured into the country, swearing loyalty to Duke Stefan and receiving land grants, were ruthless men who literally stole lands from the Traladarans living upon them. Worst among them was Duke Stefan’s own cousin, Baron Ludwig “Black Eagle” von Hendriks.

On the good side, Duke Stefan himself was an exemplary leader, demanding fairness and honor in the men he directly supervised. He began using the trade tax revenues to build broad, good roads across the country, uniting the far-flung villages into a single nation. He built a substantial army, using native Traladarans, Thyatian immigrants, and even Callarii elves, to protect the Grand Duchy. In short, he began the long, slow process of building Traladara, a land of unfriendly villages and wolf-hovls in the night, into a strong trade nation.

Today, the Grand Duchy is still growing into that nation—it is still young, with its two halves of the population (Traladaran and Thyatian) largely unmixed and its interior mostly uncivilized. But it is growing stronger day by day, and most of the nations of the continent have representatives in Karameikos, a sign of the nation’s growing international importance.

GEOGRAPHY

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.

Specularum: Specularum is the largest city in Karameikos, with a population of about 50,000 at last count. Built just west of the point where the Highreach river enters the sea, Specularum is a trade city, with a good harbor, ample accommodations for traders and other visitors, and most of the comforts of civilization. The city is surrounded by the farmlands of the Estate of Marilenev, and the lands of Baron Vorloi border the Estate of Marilenev to the south-east.

Specularum is ruled (through subordinates) by Duke Stefan Karameikos III. Additional political power lies in the Merchants’ Guild, in the Church, and in wealthy families such as the Vorloi, Radu and Torenescu clans.

Kelvin: Kelvin, second-largest city in Karameikos (population 20,000), is built where the rivers Windrush, Hillfollow and Highreach (Wufwolde, Shutturga and Volaga) merge. Kelvin was designed to be a way-stop for entire caravans and a fortress defending the surrounding territories. It is a large, walled encampment. Inside the walls are a large field for caravans to set up and a secondary wall in which is the city of Kelvin proper; inside the city is a third walled area, the garrison fortress and castle of Baron Kelvin.

The city and surrounding baronial lands are ruled by Baron Desmond Kelvin II, son of the founder of the city. Baron Kelvin, though young for his duties, rules well, with military efficiency and impartiality.

Krakatos: Krakatos is a ruined stone-walled village of antiquity; some of the action in “The Song of King Halav” takes place here, and the site is of some fascination for Traladaran visitors. It has no inhabitants and should not be used as an origin-place for characters.

Luln: Luln, a town of about 5,000 citizens, is a ramshackle community of refugees who have fled the Black Eagle Barony and Fort Doom. It’s poised between the armies of the Black Eagle Barony and Karameikos, and is a small, struggling community.

Its townsmaster is Mistress Sascia; she is gradually organizing the village into a permanent, fortified community and there is speculation that she is trying to acquire a noble title.

Penhaligon: A fortified town halfway between Kelvin and the border pass leading to Selenica, Penhaligon was founded in 971 AC by the late Lord Arturus Penhaligon, a friend of Duke Stephan’s. Arturus’s daughter, Lady Arteris Cassandra Penhaligon, was confirmed in her father’s title upon his death in 996 AC and now rules.

The town acts as a way station for travelers coming to and from Selenica. It suffers its share of nonhuman attacks, but trade and travel revenues are brisk.

Threshold: Threshold is a logging community of about 5,000. Though small, it’s a decent place to live and is not as rustic as most communities of similar size. Threshold is ably ruled by Sherlane Halaran, baron and Patriarch of the Church of Karameikos.

Fort Doom: This town, once called Halag, was invaded and conquered by Baron Ludwig von Hendriks, Duke Stefan’s power-mad cousin. (He didn’t need to conquer it—he’d been granted the area as his baronial lands—but he want-

ed to conquer something.) It's a dreary, unhappy farming community of about 10,000, held in tight repression by the army of Baron von Hendriks.

Highforge: This is the gnomish community, including five clans of gnomes (totaling about 6,500) and one of dwarves (about 1,000).

Callarii Lands: The Callarii elves live in the central forests east and west of Kelvin and in the forested foothills south of the gnomish community. Accurate numbers for the entire elvish population of Karameikos are not available (the elves don't bother to keep them and the humans can't tally them), but a reasonable guess is that there are about 7,500 elves scattered through this territory, living in communities of 100-200.

Smaller Villages and Homesteads: Finally, though we won't discuss them in great detail here, there are numerous villages and homesteads all across Karameikos. There are several small villages given by name on the map but not described in the text above.

Additionally, there are literally hundreds of homesteads along the rivers and roads of the duchy. These are one- or two-family settlements, mostly farms and logging operations, with populations ranging from a handful of people to as many as 750 inhabitants.

RELIGIONS IN KARAMEIKOS

Below are brief synopses of the primary (human) faiths found in Karameikos. See me for more information on any particular faith.

THE CHURCH OF KARAMEIKOS

This is the official church of the Duchy, and many Thyatians are members of the Church (about 25% of the population of Karameikos). The philosophy of the Church is that the soul's destination in the afterlife is based upon how stained with sin the soul is at the time of death. No sin is so great that its stain cannot be removed by appropriate penance.

These are the beliefs of the Church of Karameikos:

- 1) The acts of assault, abuse, murder, theft, lying, adultery, and living together without the sanctity of matrimony are sins; that these sins require acts or ceremonies of purification (of severity appropriate to the sin) to cleanse from the spirit;
- 2) That an unwillingness on the part of a sinner to purify himself of a sin is itself a sin, punishable by separation from the Church, the eventual result of which is the sinner's spirit becoming too stained ever to be redeemed
- 3) That the individual's role in the afterlife will be determined by the amount of stain his spirit bears at the time of his death;
- 4) That it is the responsibility of members of the Church to bring the benefits of Church philosophy to the unbeliever, and to remain present even in hostile lands, so that the benefits of the Church be denied to no one who desires them;
- 5) That magic ritual with no confirmed basis in formal magic use or clerical ritual constitutes ignorant superstition, and therefore the use of lucky charms, tea-readings, palm readings, card-readings, and so forth are all valueless wastes of time and effort.

Patron Immortals: Asterius, Ixion, Kagyar, Koryis, Khoronus, Tarastia, Valerias, Vanya, etc.

THE ORDER OF THE GRIFFON

The Order of the Griffon is a military order of the Church of Karameikos. The Order is a very prestigious society of warriors; its members are constantly adventuring, going on quests to help the Church, the nation, and the common man. It's held to be a great honor to be a member of the Order, and so each year many young men and women attempt to gain membership.

In order to become a member of the Order of the Griffon, an applicant must:

- 1) Demonstrate a set standard of fighting ability;
- 2) Be a devout follower of the Church of Karameikos; and
- 3) Swear a holy oath to uphold the responsibilities of a member of the Order.

These are the responsibilities of a member of the Order:

- 1) The member must tithe 25% of his income to the Church during all the time he is a member;
- 2) The member must obey the dictates of the Church as regards sins and purification;
- 3) The member must accept missions and duties assigned by the head of the Church and his superiors within the Order; such missions are often adventures or military missions in the interest of the Church or nation.

THE CHURCH OF TRALADARA

This is the primary faith of the native Traladaran people (about 70% of the population belongs to this church). The basic philosophy of the Church is that people should not harm one another, and when they do the community should punish the wrongdoer in proportion to the degree of the sin.

These are the beliefs of the Church of Traladara:

- 1) That the acts of assault, abuse, murder, theft and lying are sins, brought on by weakness or the intrusion of bad-will from evil or animal spirits;
- 2) That the sins described above should be punished, in the manner that parents punish children: Physical punishment, imprisonment, and the withholding of rights (even death, in the case of extreme sinners who endanger others);
- 3) That the role of the individual in the afterlife will be determined by the individual's state of wisdom, strength of character, and good-will at the time of his death;
- 4) That the relationship of man to woman is a personal matter, not involving the philosophies of the Church unless one of the above sins is involved;
- 5) That common magic ritual such as the use of lucky charms, tea-reading, palm readings, card-readings and so forth are all declarations of man's curiosity about the world and determination to preserve himself from evil, and are often rewarded by the Immortals with the gleaning of facts about the future or nature of the world;
- 6) That the events of "The Song of Halav" are absolutely true; that King Halav, Queen Petra and Zirchev are now Immortals guiding the righteous and punishing the wicked in Traladara/Karameikos; and that the Golden Age of the Traladara will one day return to this land.

Patron Immortals: Halav, Petra, Zirchev

THE CULT OF HALAV

Only a fraction of the people of Karameikos belong to this cult. Members believe that Duke Stephan Karameikos III is the reincarnation of King Halav, and that he will forge the Traladarans into a mighty nation once more. Many consider cultists to be insane, but it is a fact that their clerics can perform miracles - indicating that they do have divine support from somewhere.

These are the beliefs of the Cult of Halav:

- 1) That King Halav, dead on the field of the Final Battle Between Men and Beast-Men, was taken up by the Immortals, returned to life, healed, and placed in the deepest sleep;
- 2) That the goal of the Immortals was to return King Halav to Traladara when it was time to restore the nation to the glory it held in its Golden Age; and
- 3) That the Immortals have decided that this is that time, and that they sent the spirit of King Halav into the newborn Stefan Karameikos, that he would grow up to be the next King Halav.

Patron Immortal: Halav

NON-HUMAN FAITHS

Dwarves, gnomes and elves do not worship the same Immortals as their human neighbors. Below are the primary Immortals of these races.

Garl Glitterlode: This Immortal is revered as the creator of the gnomish race, and is worshiped by gnomes in Karameikos. He is said to be friends with Kagyar, patron of the dwarves.

Ilkundal: Ilkundal is a legendary king of the elves, creator of the first Tree of Life, who ascended and is now worshiped as the patron of the wood elves.

Kagyar: Kagyar is the creator of the dwarvish race, and is their patron. Kagyar is also worshiped as the Immortal patron of craftsmanship, and is often worshiped by craftsmen of all races.

The High Heroes: The High Heroes are patrons of the halflings of the Known World.

THIEVES GUILDS

Most thieves operate independently, but three “Thieves Guilds” exist in Karameikos.

THE KINGDOM OF THE THIEVES

The Kingdom of the Thieves demands 15% of a member's income. However, that 15% pays for a cheap, reliable fence — most goods the character steals can be sold through the fence with no likelihood of being traced back.

The Kingdom also provides work for its members at crucial times; whenever the Thief-King has planned a mission, he chooses members of the Kingdom most appropriate to carry it out, and this means that the member will occasionally help execute high-paying jobs.

THE VEILED SOCIETY

The Veiled Society demands 15% of all member's earnings (other than those earnings for Veiled Society activities). It does provide a reliable fence for that fee. It helps the member by trying to spring him from jail or beating or killing

those who've done him wrong — the Society is loyal to its members.

However it often makes demands of members — such as “Go to the House of Silks near the Street of Dreams. Break in. Kill the old man and his daughter and then set the place afire.” This isn't a thieves guild for people with morals.

THE IRON RING

The Iron Ring is the most cruel and evil of the three thieves' guilds.

Its members aren't allowed to steal on a freelance basis—their only duty is to the Ring. They are spies, slavers, thieves and assassins serving the ends of the Iron Ring, and their only goals are to gain power for themselves and the Ring.

OTHER NATIONS

The Grand Duchy of Karameikos is but one nation among many in the Known World. Following is a brief description of other countries in this part of the world.

Principalities of Glantri. Glantri is a magocracy; that is, the princes and princesses who rule the state are all powerful arcane magic users. They live in Glantri City most of the time, though each ruler also has a castle hidden in some remote wilderness area. Actually, the rulers are more concerned with magical research than with ruling. Most decisions are left to the various local councils of elders and the princely stewards. The princes and princesses do not trust each other and live in a state of uneasy truce. In the face of invasion or rebellion, however, they are quick to unite. In extreme emergencies, they will select one of their number as “dictator”, to serve for one year.

Ethengar Khanate. The Ethengar are nomadic herders of horses, cattle, and goats. They are divided into small family clans. Usually the clans raid and quarrel with each other, but occasionally a strong leader (khan) emerges to unite the entire Ethengar people into a strong “nation”. However, with the eventual death of the khan, there is rarely an heir strong enough to hold the Ethengar together. They then break apart, and the family clans begin warring with each other once more. Their culture is similar to that of the horsemen of the central Asian steppes (Huns, Mongols, Magyars, Turks, and so on).

Heldann Freeholds. The Heldann are a barbaric, fair-haired people who hunt, fish, and raise crops on isolated farms. They are related to the people in the northeastern kingdoms but acknowledge no ruler among themselves higher than the individual household leader. Their culture is very similar to that of medieval Iceland.

Kingdom of Vestland, Kingdom of Ostland, and the Soderfjord Jarls. Each of these northeastern states is composed of many petty “kingdoms” that are loosely united under one ruler. In Vestland and Ostland the underchiefs are called “kings”; in Soderfjord they are known as “jarls” (pronounced “yarl”). Their culture resembles that of the vikings. The people of these kingdoms highly value individualism, physical strength and prowess in combat. They live mainly by fishing and by occasional raids on nearby coastal villages. Besides being fierce warriors, these people are explorers without equal, ranging far and wide in their wooden longships.

The Broken Lands. The “broken lands” are an area of rocky badlands and old volcanic lava beds. The land is extremely wild and inhabited mainly by outcasts and monsters.

Rockhome. Rockhome is the homeland of the dwarves. It stretches throughout the northern Altan Tepe mountain range. The dwarves have built and maintain a road through the mountains for caravans. They charge a toll from all who pass.

Atruaghin Clans. These grassy plateau, forest, and hilly regions next to the sea are inhabited by herders, hunters, and fishermen who live in small villages. All the villagers claim to be descended from the ancient hero Atruaghin. If threatened by war they will unite under a temporarily elected leader.

Republic of Darokin. This republic is centered around the capital, Darokin. Its wealth is based on trade from Lake Amsorak (a large inland lake), the Streel River, the eastern caravan route, and sea trade filtering in through the Malpheggi Swamp. Darokin is a plutocracy; that is, the government is run by the wealthiest merchant families. The culture resembles that of Venice or Genoa in medieval Italy.

Alfheim. As the name implies, Alfheim is the homeland of the elves. The elven king rules the great forest of Canolbarth. Because Canolbarth is tended by the elves, it is far larger than a natural forest in this area would be. Darokin pays the elves to protect the caravan route through the forest to Selenica.

Emirate of Ylaruam. Ylaruam is built in the midst of the largest oasis in the Alasiyan Desert. It is the center of caravan routes crossing from north to south and from east to west, and is controlled by the Emir of Ylaruam and his royal family. The culture is similar to that of the Arabic desert states or the Central Asian city-states of Palmyra, Damascus, or Samarkand.

The Five Shires. The Five Shires are the homeland of the halflings. The area is ruled by a council of five sheriffs who each control a shire. Four times a year the sheriffs meet at a great feast and there decide shire-wide policy by vote.

Kingdom of Ierendi. The trading ships of Ierendi rival those of Thyatis, and the kingdom sports a magnificent royal palace carved from pure white coral. The king and queen of the land are usually popular adventurer-heroes; however, they are without true power and serve only as figureheads. Actual rule is held by certain aristocratic families (making Ierendi an oligarchy).

Minrothad Guilds. The Minrothad island cluster is a syndicracy: the government is run by the heads of the various trading guilds. Minrothad is closely allied to Thyatis.

Empire of Thyatis. The empire of Thyatis is an autocracy. The emperor holds absolute power, but his decisions must allow for the desires of powerful nobles and for the threat of mob riots over unfavorable laws. The city of Thyatis is built beside a large canal that separates the southern peninsula from the mainland, so the city is a major trade center. The Thyatic culture is similar to the medieval Byzantine empire.

Thanegioth Archipelago. The archipelago is a cluster of islands about 1000 miles from the coast of the main continent. What little knowledge is available about Thanegioth is buried in myth and superstition.

Empire of Alphatia. Far to the east lies the Empire of Alphatia, ruled by a council of 1000 Wizards, it 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 center of the empire is the continent of Alphatia, a rich land of numerous independent nations.