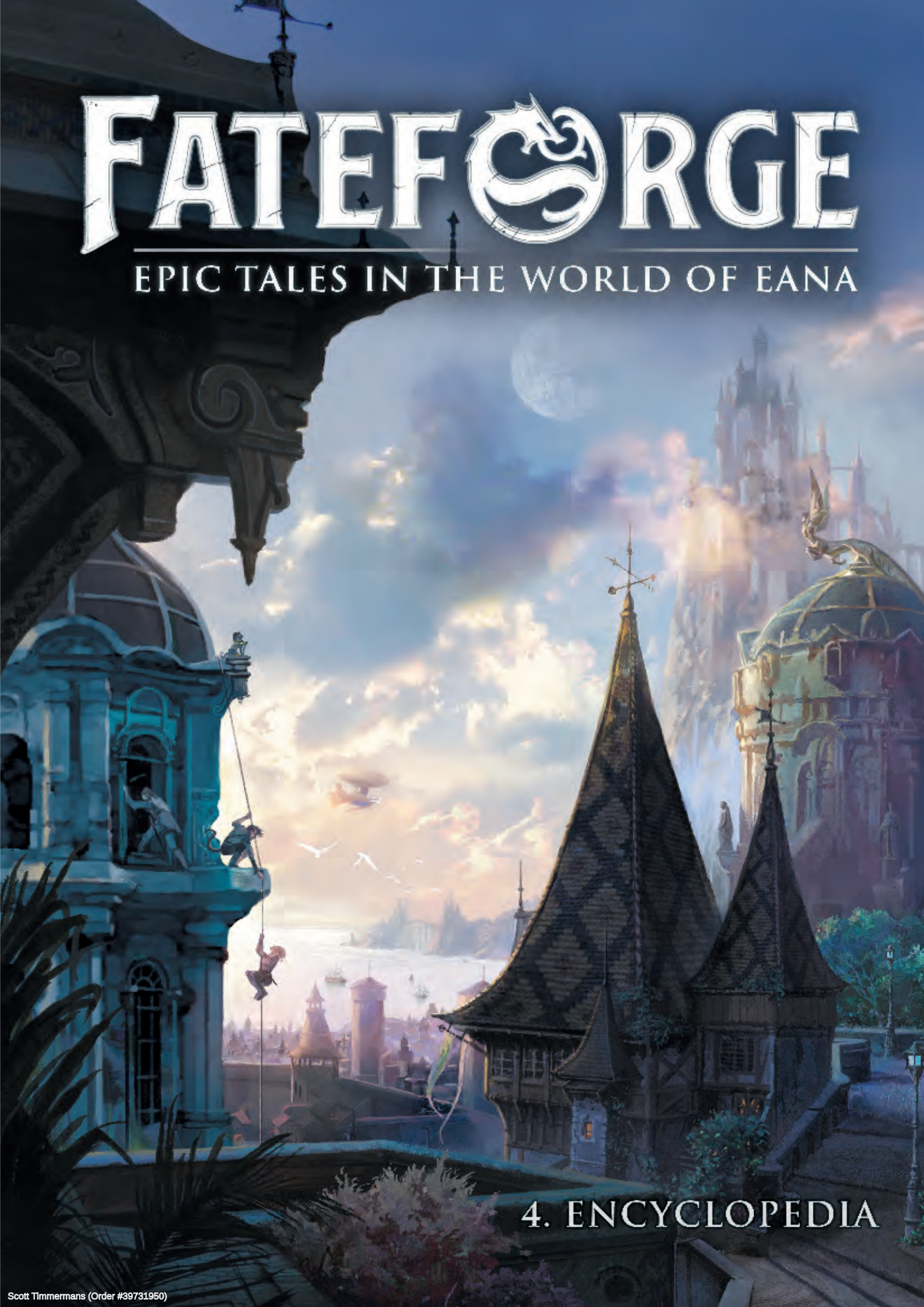


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FATEFORGE

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Foreword

Dear reader,
You hold in your hands the **Encyclopedia**, which details four major civilizations of the world of Eana. A world of legends, rich and complex cultures, colorful characters... the perfect stage to plan and play great adventures!

This book is split into three parts: the Free City, the Drakenbergen, and the Great Kaan—the latter including not only Kaan proper, but also the Septentrion, as these two lands are only separated by a river and share many cultural aspects. Each part follows the same organization, making for easier navigation through the contents:

- **Chronicles.** This chapter is, for the most part, written from the subjective point of view of well-informed people. It goes over the history of the region and highlights prominent arcane, religious, or political aspects that still influence the present.
- **Culture.** The common aspects of a civilization's daily life—such as its iconic activities or the organization of society—are detailed here. The purpose of such information is to provide insight into peoples whose habits and norms differ greatly.
- **Territories.** Each of the districts, monuments, valleys, and ruins covered in this chapter has potential for adventure, whether for trading, resupplying, information-gathering, investigation, or exploration. Maps of regions and towns are provided, alongside descriptions of major figures and noteworthy locations.
- **Wonders.** This chapter details objects typical of a given culture, both everyday mundane goods and extraordinary artifacts of legend.
- **Appendices.** Rules on using magic items, including variants and options related to the modular system. A lexicon is also included, providing a convenient reference for your adventures!

We are very happy to invite you on this first grand journey through these lands. Welcome to Eana, and let the adventure begin!

Iris

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Modular System

Fateforge makes use of a modular system that lets each game leader define the atmosphere they wish to create for their stories. In **Adventurers** and **Grimoire**, each of the symbols listed below indicates related optional rules, which the leader can choose to make use of within a given campaign.
Throughout the present **Encyclopedia**, certain icons of the modular system also provide an idea of the general nature of a piece of text, and, in particular, of related adventure hooks. The purpose is to help the leader get their bearings and easily handpick the ingredients they wish to include in their creations.



Action

This icon indicates all the rules, magic items, and situations that offer epic options and emphasize the characters' feats and achievements.



Corruption

The Corruption icon shows situations and magic items that lead to corruption, or which are only relevant to a corrupted creature.



Dark

The optional rules, magic items, and situations indicated by this icon are all related to horror, madness, or corruption.



Gritty

This icon indicates all the rules, magic items, and situations synonymous with hardships, shortages, danger, cold, and vulnerability.



Intrigue

Optional rules, magic items, and situations bearing this icon focus on interactions between the characters, on schemes and plots between factions, and on anything that highlights the characters' aspirations and encourages role-playing.



Life Lock

Magic items signaled by a Life Lock can save lives in dire situations. By restricting or even removing access to these healing aids, the leader will make the game more dangerous.



Magic Lock

A magic item associated with a Magic Lock requires large quantities of magical energy to function and will most likely stop working in an area of weak magic. The leader determines how prevalent the Magic Lock is in their campaign. The more restrictive the Magic Lock, the more down-to-earth the campaign.



Mind Lock

Magic items indicated by the Mind Lock icon greatly facilitate access to information, thus making investigations much easier. If the leader wants the campaign to be focused on intrigue and mystery with no possible shortcuts, they can restrict or even remove access to these spells.



Mystery

This icon designates rules, magic items, and situations associated with mysteries, supernatural elements, and anything related to secrets, revelations, and arcana.



Dragon

This icon is not part of the modular system proper, but highlights particularly important information that should not be skipped.

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Part 1
The Free City

The Free City is both origin and destination for ships and convoys from all known civilizations. People arrive on foot as much as by horse, boat, or nefelytron. Knowledge of the vast world spreads as much through the word of merchants and sailors as by art and books. This knowledge inspires journeys by land and sea, underground, and through the sky. A nexus, the Free City is a world in itself, and a dizzyingly rich one at that, where stories and encounters can be found by the thousands.



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- **Chronicles and History of the Free City.** In this chapter, you will learn more about the history and legends of the city. These past events are the stuff of bardic epics, but they could well influence current and future adventures.
- **Powers and Factions.** On a daily basis, citizens gather in groups, whether within districts, parties, or guilds. The Free City's wealth begets covetousness, while inequality produces more unsavory trades.
- **Districts.** Here, you will learn about the major districts of the Free City, the opportunities they offer, and the dangers they conceal.
- **Wonders and Poisons.** An overview of the local specialties, be they typical treasures of the Free City or the many poisons that Aïpio's activities (see **Powers and Factions: Criminal Underworld**) make rather easy to procure.

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Chronicles and History of the Free City

Like many important cities around the world, the Free City has a long history. The current houses were built on the ruins of palaces and temples. Most know only bits and pieces of this history, and some details, lost to oblivion, escape even the most learned scholars.

A Memory from Before the Free City

Geeranhuggen, the venerable gnome, stood behind the lectern, preparing to begin his lecture on the Free City. His students didn't know what to make of the history class or their teacher. He seemed as old as the Republic itself! Surely he'd been around to witness most events, as an archivist, columnist, and historian. Students had been prompted to go to the library and study the bibliographical reference for his class: all 20 tomes of Patient Chronicles of the Free City. Who among them could have taken this advice seriously? Probably no one...

During the Travelers' Era

"How can we talk about history before history? For history is made of writings, and we have no chronicles of the Travelers' era. All we have are legends, unreliably passed down by the survivors of the cataclysm. The Eolian Isles had been propelled into the skies, and the Ateak portals buried. The former masters of the world were no more.

"What was the situation in the Free City at the time? We can only speculate, and our theories are often based on hopes and wishes. According to one legend, an Ateak is buried deep beneath the city itself, or in one of its provinces. The legendary epic of Adala the tiefling describes the discovery of this portal, north of the Cys prairies. The popularity of this work—a work of fiction, to be clear—drove many a naive adventurer to scour the territory in search of treasures. Many made a fortune... for innkeepers, who even today urge bards to spread rumors which might draw customers."

Magic Intensity and Ateak

In the fifth row from the back of the lecture hall, Wily, Terro, and Rudolph listened to the teacher. Wily and Terro whispered excitedly between themselves.

"Ateaks are supposed to be gigantic, so they couldn't have disappeared just like that, right? I read they were buried and hidden because they couldn't be destroyed. Can you imagine?"

"Honestly though, searching for ruins... is it worth risking your life for or going mad? My father says that's the only thing waiting for adventurers who get obsessed with all that!"

Rudolph was obviously at a loss.

"What are Ateaks?"

The other two giggled, drawing the teacher's attention. He paused his speech for a second. Terro slipped a piece of paper to Rudolph.

"Here, look at this. I made crib notes. Rumor has it, Teach likes surprise quizzes!"

Terro's Crib Notes

- **Ateak**: Magic portal built during the Travelers' era; allows passage to the most remote countries, planes, and worlds.
- **Canker**: Corrupting entity with god-like powers that seeks to spread its nefarious influence. Some creatures are innately tied to Canker, collectively referred to as ravagers. Canker can bestow powers on mortals, corrupting their essential essence and ultimately turning them into ravagers. Canker is both a plane and a power; its very nature defies classifications. It thrives in the depths of the Netherworld.
- **Cyfand Empire**: An empire, and an associated culture of druidic tradition. Estimated dates of existence: -5000 to -2000. The Cyfand alphabet dates back to this period; the continent of Cyfandir was named after it.
- **Cyrillane**: Until recently, this empire was ruled by the Kadmeid dynasty from their palace in Kratéïra. It stretched from the east of the Free City to the south-east of the Drakenbergen. A civil war currently plagues its lands.
- **Dawn War**: The first major manifestation of Canker. It destroyed the elven civilization, wreaking havoc on the continent and beyond. Canker wasn't defeated, merely driven back. Since then, guardian dwarves watch over the Netherworld to prevent its return.
- **Dvaergen**: Name of the dwarves in their language. Only utter it in front of them if you can pronounce it correctly! Guardian dwarves keep watch on Canker's activity in the Netherworld; builder dwarves hold important roles in economics, especially in the Steinbank.
- **Ellerìna**: The country to which the elves migrated when they left Cyfandir, after the Dawn War.
- **Kaan**: A great continent, east of Cyfandir. The Horde of Tamerakh the Destroyer came from Kaan and led to the downfall of the Stopstep Empire in -980. Tamerakh and his mother, Xonim, became gods.
- **Netherworld**: Refers to everything below the surface of the world (caves, tunnels, etc.). The place where the dwarves (dvaergen) mine, Canker grows, and many others live.
- **Steinbank**: The main bank of the Free City, it was built in the Mountain District and is managed by builder dwarves (dvaergen).
- **Stopstep Empire**: An empire that spanned the Drakenbergen and the Free City region from circa -2000 to -980. It left many roads, bridges, and aqueducts.

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Key Dates in the Free City

Pre-Republic

- **Circa –9000 to –5000:** Macillero (palatial elven city) where the Free City now stands.
- **Circa –5000:** Dawn War.
  Circa –5000: City of Resgrande Riporte where the Free City now stands.
- **Circa –5000 to –2000:** Empire of Cyfandir replaced with the Stopstep Empire.
- **–980:** Fall of the Stopstep Empire, destroyed by Tamerakh's Horde.
- **–980 to Year 0:** Drae dynasty, vassals of Cyrillane's emperor.
- **Year 0:** Death of Alexis Drae III, leading to the Free City's Declaration of Independence.

Republic

- **Year 0 to 30:** Free City's war for independence against Cyrillane, with a front in the Histe Hills.
- **99 to 103:** Highly controversial Emperor Actéon Kadmeid IV launches the second Cyrillan war to resolve an internal crisis; conflict ends with the creation of the kingdom of Sharprickle, a buffer state in the Histe Hills.
- **127:** Year of the flight of the red dragons.
- **128 to 133:** Third Cyrillan war, marked by the blockade of the port.
- **197 to 212:** During the Iron War, many dwarven clans battle each other; Cyrillane attacks the Free City; halfling-led negotiations end with the Mie peace treaty and the creation of Myetea.
- **230:** Extremely harsh winter resulting from the incursion of an ancient white dragon.
- **286:** The Sharprickle plot fails: the Histe Hills are reintegrated into the Free City's territories.
- **287:** The Treaty of the Fifty leads to the creation of the Cyrillan District and a consolidated peace with Cyrillane.
- **300 to 311:** Taurëlman War, an attempt by the Free City to conquer the elven woods.
- **311:** Halfling negotiators sign the Issure Peace Treaty; Myetea's privileges are extended.
- **330:** Fall of the Kadmeids (Cyrillan dynasty); the start of a civil war.



The Elven Spring and the Dawn War

"In fact, the history of the Free City begins with the elves, whose presence is well documented, and who mention the site in their chronicles. However, you will not find the original texts here, as the scrolls that weren't destroyed in the Dawn War were taken away during the great migration to Ellerìna. Our contacts in Varnaïrello send us copies, which you can study in the Academy's library."

Macillero's Golden Age

"At the time, the site was called Macillero, a name that invokes the legendary sword of its founder, a talented elven blacksmith. Keep in mind that we are talking about the early days of the Renewal. The peoples who had taken shelter in the Netherworld reemerged as the surface became habitable again. Many such migrations originated from large refuges, the most famous of which must be the Pillars of Creation, in the far northwestern part of Kaan. Elves and dvaergen were the first to build cities and lay the foundations of civilization as we know it.

"We know very little about this period, its exact duration, or the number of ancient surface or underground cities. The most renowned ruin is the old pass connecting the Woods of Taurëlma—north of Issure, I will come back to it—to the Woods of Arataurë, in the current north of Cyrillane. This road, now almost entirely in ruins, and which sometimes disappears under vegetation, was a gift from the dvaergen to the elves, a majestic structure that allowed them to cross the Drakenbergen via bridges, carved paths, and a few tunnels.

"Returning to the topic of Macillero, it was already a port from which maritime expeditions departed, such as the ones that discovered the continent that would become Ellerìna. Picture not a great, oversized city as it is now, but rather a large palace and its outbuildings. Today, some say that the Star District, which is marked by a strong elenion presence, is located on the historic site of Macillero… but I disagree. For I, and others like myself, theorize that the elven palace is located beneath the current Assembly. The site is less exposed to storms, is protected from the rise of the River Dispende—which, obviously, had not yet been canalized—and contains natural water sources."

The Dawn War

"In any case, this period, which we readily consider to have been blessed, came to a sudden end with the Dawn War. This tragic and epic conflict is detailed in other lectures that deal with Canker, as one cannot be separated from the other. Commit to memory the fact that the elven population was largely exterminated. It was a disaster beyond comprehension: entire cities were destroyed throughout Cyfandir. The first catastrophe occurred when the elves were attacked by Nightmare. Many went mad, some were possessed by larvae, and in the end, part of the carnage took the form of a civil war. Only afterward did the legions of ravagers swarm the surface.

"Macillero was one of the last elven cities, a final refuge. When the war ended, it turned out that the fleet had been largely spared from the events. The whole conflict had taken place, as you know, on land, both above and beneath the surface. The survivors decided to leave Cyfandir and start a new life in a land untouched by the horror they had seen here. Thus, we estimate that the elenion and a few aldaron tribes left these lands in the fifth millennium before the Republic."



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The Age of Fated Kings

"After the elves left, a long, heroic era began, of which very little is known. For our subject, we will focus on the Cyfand and Stopstep empires.

The Cyfand Empire

"Of the Cyfand Empire, which gave its name to the continent and designed the alphabet we use today, there are surprisingly few remains. We believe the buildings were essentially made of wood and clay, two materials that are not meant to last. Only burial mounds and raised stones remain as the true markers of this ancient age. On the latter, we still find the main traces of Cyfand writing. In fact, there is such a stone in the Palace Terrace District, and I encourage you to go gaze upon it, as it speaks to the presence of an ancient Cyfand site in the very heart of the Free City. Several elements, including the arrangement of the raised stones, seem to indicate that their civilization was based on the druidic religion. Some scholars suggest that the barbarian chiefdoms living north of Lothrienne are their most faithful heirs when it comes to their way of life, but I don't believe this theory is supported by any convincing evidence.

"This rather simple picture is made more complex by evidence of surprising stone constructions in some valleys of the Drakenbergen. But such questions are outside the scope of this class."

The Stopstep Empire

"We will take a more lasting interest in the Stopstep Empire, whose capital was Athenaise, the ruins of which are located in the heart of the Drakenbergen. The site is easily accessible and is right next to the current small town of Varmbad, famed for its hot springs. We believe that the ensuing cultural shift was encouraged by the development of a cult organized around five divine concepts, to the detriment of older religions. This "Cult of Ages" honored time in the context of the following cycle: Beginning, Growth, Peak, Decline, and Cessation. The cult was very well organized around stone temples, with strict hierarchies.

"The Stopstep rulers relied on the new religion, the spread of their stone sanctuaries, Dvaergen trade, a central government, and a communication network that is still perceived as modern by our current criteria. Many of the routes now used by merchants and travelers were built then.

"At the time, the Free City was the Resgrande Riporte. In old Cyfand, this refers to an important and developing port. It was built around the current Shipowner's Port. The Academy District, where we are now, is one of the oldest but is not the only one with ancient roots. The Old Necropolis District, southwest of here, at the foot of a Death temple carved into the cliff, is a remnant of this period. It is also likely that we inherited the first major canalization works of the River Dispende from the Stopstep Empire, but the remains are almost nonexistent, as the works have constantly evolved over the years and after every great flood."

Adventure Outside the Lecture Hall

Terro handed a folded page to his friends. It was a job offer like so many others in town, and it read thus:

"Looking for: middleman, good historical knowledge, physically fit. Payment in the form of a percentage of the value of discovered goods. Additional bonus for the discovery of a complete set. Your job will be to scour antique markets, to look for and complete a collection of antique statuettes. Beware of counterfeits! Sellers are not always helpful. You and you alone will be responsible for the means you use. Contact the Blue-Red Cube shop."

The students looked at each other and smiled. This job seemed tailor-made for them and would earn them a pretty copper. There were so many offers like this one around town. One collector, fascinated with art from a particular era, might seek a legendary treasure; another might be interested in simpler, yet still rare, items...!

There was an entire market for fakes and copies. Reproductions of antiques, creations telling the story of a myth, or works of a more sinister nature. At one point, there was talk of fake mummies that were fashioned in clandestine workshops using the bodies of unfortunate assassination victims!

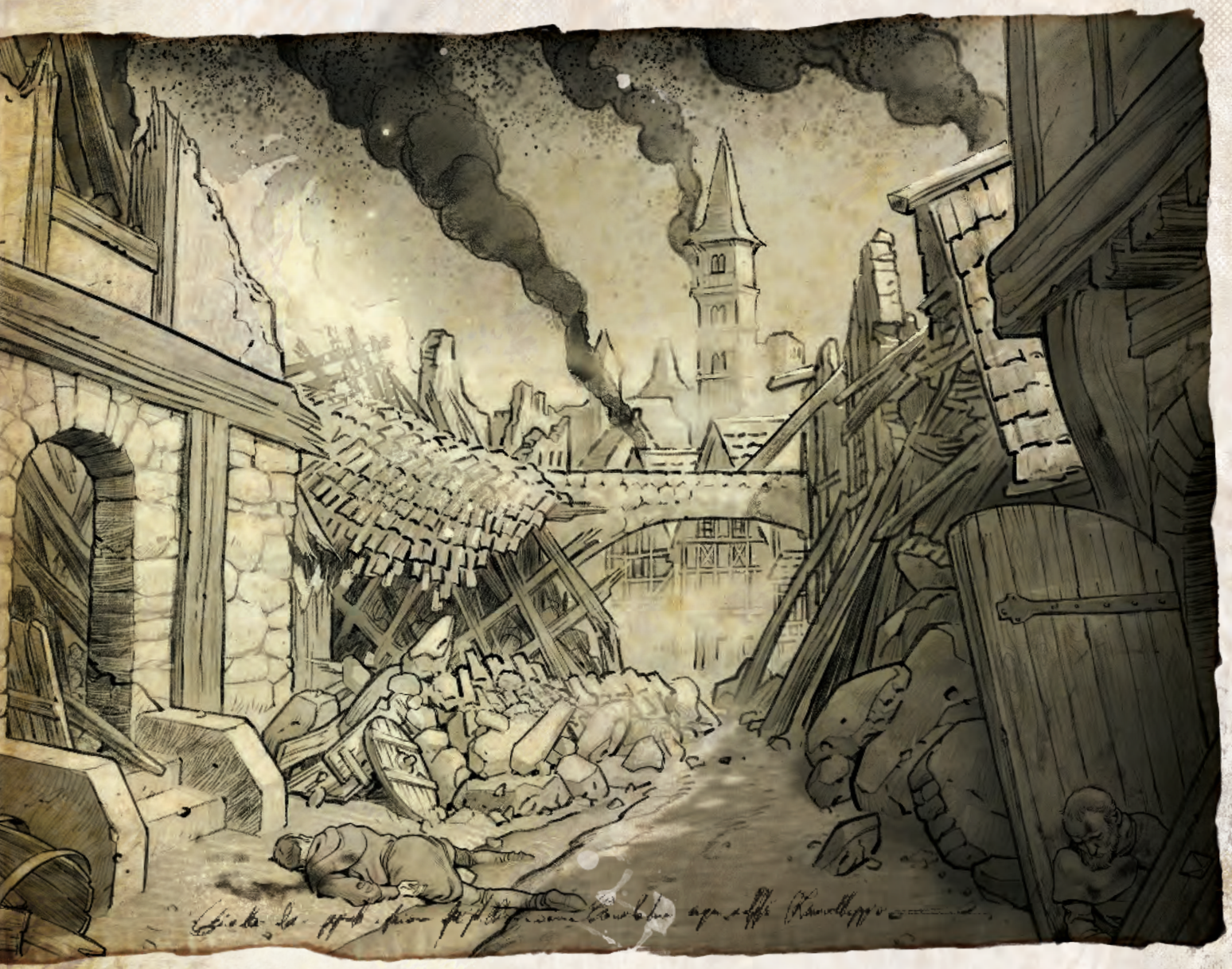
Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Tamerakh's Horde

"Formally, the fall of the Stopstep Empire dates back to 980 before the birth of the Republic, when the troops of Tamerakh the Conqueror, leading the first Horde, lay waste to Cyfandir. On a side note, a legend states that a prophet of the Ages had announced the inevitable demise of Stopstep, meaning the population was prepared for the collapse of the world. The armies burned down the great cities, and all the archives in Stopstep went up in flames. All that remains are second-hand sources of the era, despite the fact it was a radiant millennium. Sometimes, treasure hunters discover ancient manuscripts in forgotten tombs, but more often than not, our knowledge comes from trading partners of the Stopstep Empire. Such is the case for the dvaergen: all their chronicles are engraved on thin mineral tablets. A difficult material to handle, but certainly the most durable of them. You can read about it in the library, in *Chronicles of Stopstep: a Compendium of the Stalfelt Clan*—Stalfelt meaning Field of Steel, for those of you who do not speak Dvaerg.

"Another side note: to this day, aldaron of the Woods of Taurëlma still pride themselves on repelling the Horde and driving back the invasion. My thoughts on the matter are that their survival owes less to their martial worth than to the disinterest of an avid conqueror for a territory devoid of gold… not that it matters.

"Like all other cities, the Resgrande Riporte was looted and ransacked by the Horde. It was the end of an era."



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One Kingdom After Another

The End of Tamerakh's Empire

"Tamerakh's empire, which he built through his conquests, was divided into provinces, each one controlled by a governor appointed by the conqueror himself. At the time of Tamerakh's divine ascension, the most important personalities from all over the empire were invited to his capital, east of old Kaan. According to legend, none returned. Everyone died—the capital's population, as well as all the enslaved prisoners of war. A carnage of such magnitude defies imagination.

"In the imperial provinces, there remained only subordinates, as well as a few governors who had been cautious enough to feign illness and had sent envoys in their stead. The Resgrande Riporte was part of the Barruna province (roughly equivalent in size to all the lands currently under the control of the Free City), but the decision had been made to erect the provincial capital in Malachaï, in the Histe Hills."

The Kingdom of Barruna

"After the fall of Tamerakh's empire, Barruna became a kingdom, and the governor proclaimed himself king. His reign lasted for about twenty years, but he failed to establish his dynasty through the ages. His successor was overthrown by the leader of the resistance, Sheena the halfling. She founded a new kingdom, whose capital was the Resgrande Riporte."

The Kingdom of Westree

"This new kingdom was named Westree, a literal translation of the Kaani term, Barruna! It didn't last long, but the great principles on which it was founded left their mark on history. Freedom, fortitude, initiative, equality, merit: these are the seeds of the Republic to come. In fact, Westree elected their royalty. Unfortunately, its leaders lacked strategic acumen."

The Drae Dynasty

"Cyrillane readily seized the opportunity. A clever arrangement of marriages and alliances, coupled with a long-term power policy, allowed them to take control of Westree. A dynasty of half-Westrian, half-Cyrillan vassal rulers, the Draes, ruled for most of the period, leading to the birth of the Republic. Almost all royal ruins you may come across date back to this period. The same is true of families of renown. Today, those who still bear a title acquired it under the Draes.

"The Resgrande Riporte grew considerably under their rule, as they gradually shaped it into the city you know today. They inaugurated the Cathedral of Flora and Frostelle, as well the Great Shrine of Blacksmith. It was then that people started to desert the Old Necropolis in favor of the Plains Cemetery, and it was also then that the Steinbank opened."

The Demise of the Draes

"Despite its unquestioned strength, the kingdom wasn't without flaws, and it was these very flaws that led to its fall. Guild families, in particular, were dissatisfied with the indirect tax policy imposed by the Cyrillan crown. Several factors fueled the budding revolution: resentment at being a vassal country, economic pressure, memory of the ideals that had led to the collapse of the Barruna Kingdom, as well as Cyrillane's relative weakness—Cyrillane having found itself caught up in an unfortunate attempt to conquer the Kingdom of Ghardat.

"The ultimate triggering factor was a combination of circumstances, as a series of tragic accidents and deaths led to Alexis III's coronation. He was a young and kind ruler, but he misjudged the succession of events that he would set off. Concerned for the well-being of his people, he decided to make his plea to the emperor and, accompanied by a delegation of guildsmen, he went to Kratéïra himself.

"There exist several contradictory versions of the events. Nevertheless, Alexis III Drae died during the trip—either from illness or poisoning—and some guild members were arrested and executed for sedition. A point of note: even today, the Skyce guild—which controls the spice trade—and the alchemists' guild are suspected by some to have murdered the ruler to incite a rebellion against Cyrillane, and thus obtain independence.

"Assembled in the former palace, the population solemnly voted for the founding of the Republic."

The Ruins of Conquests

The chattering trio in the fifth row from the back was more eager to hear about legends and treasures than the contents of an actual history class, especially one which many would have branded as sleep-inducing.

"Do you know about the rebellious generals?"

"Who were they?"

"Military leaders who disagreed with the sharing of the spoils. I heard they deserted, but knowing they faced punishment—like, y'know, being burned alive—if caught, well, they went into hiding."

"Where to?"

"Story goes, some went to the Drakenbergen, in the valleys, as well as in Meanderise and Taurëlma. They took with them what shares of the treasure they could carry, and then they died."

"How?"

"Most likely, those in Taurëlma got killed by the elves. But maybe they hid in the Netherworld, or old dwarven cities?"

Scott Timmerman (Orlo - 3973950)



The Crown of the Draes

In the fifth row from the back, assassinations and coups aroused both interest and the irritation of the more diligent students. After the umpteenth "Shhh!" the trio kept up their chatter with quiet and passionate whispers worthy of history's best schemers.

"They never found the treasure of the Draes!"

"Really?"

"I swear! Things got wild for the Draes. Revolutionaries killed some; others managed to give them the slip through the catacombs, taking the crown, jewelry, and jewels—basically anything precious and easy to carry."

"And where did they go?"

"I haven't the faintest clue. Maybe they were betrayed by their guides in the tunnels."

"You think the crown is still there?"

"Might be! It never reappeared."

"Word on the street is that people pining for the return of royalty want to find the crown and put it on the head of some distant great-grandnephew of the last Drae king..."

couronne des Drae ?

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Republic

Geeranhuggen paused to drink some water. Immediately, the students resumed their chatter, filling the auditorium with a light background noise. A welcome, if short, break. The old gnome tapped on his lectern with a wooden stick. Nothing magic to it, but the sound, although light, was distinctive enough to draw the attention of his audience. Gradually, silence returned.

"Now, on to the Republic as you know it. Year 0 was the year of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the citizens, who had gathered in the former palace—now the Assembly. The city was renamed the Free City to validate this decision more firmly. The territory is still called Westree by the nostalgic and foreign, but today, the capital is definitely center stage, to the point that the surrounding lands are mere provinces."

"Founded on the ideals of justice and freedom, the Free City was to become a paragon of all things, engaging only in just wars. More often than not, they were defensive. For Republican historians, the many conflicts that set us against Cyrillane resulted from the imperialism of the Kadmeid dynasty. Surely they are partly responsible, but the Free City also had its share of deliberate provocations."

The Cyrillan Wars

The First Cyrillan War

"The early days of the Republic were difficult. Most notably, it had to defend itself against Cyrillane. The war lasted almost thirty years and led to the building of many forts in the borderlands of the Histe Hills. My own father served as an artificer. He hailed from the Eolian Isles, but had settled down as a craftsman, taking up the cause of the Republic. I grew up to his stories of heroic battles, sieges, and the decisive victory that was ensured by the support of the dvaergen armies!"

The Second Cyrillan War

"The second Cyrillan war lasted from 99 to 103. The rule of Emperor Actéon Kadmeid IV was disputed due to the circumstances in which he had taken power. A war of conquest to avenge an old humiliation—the Free City's Declaration of Independence—seemed an appropriate distraction. The conflict ended with the Sharprickle Treaty, which gave birth to the eponymous buffer kingdom. Its rough location was marked in the Histe Hills, stretching over sixty miles on either side."

The Blockade

"In 127, the Free City had suffered terrifying attacks from a whole flock of red dragons. Using the city's weakness to its advantage, Cyrillane attacked in 128. Most notable about the conflict was the blockade of the port. The war ended in 133."

The Mie Peace Treaty

"In 197, a serious crisis broke out in the dvaerg clans that led to the Iron War—although the ore itself was but one facet of a much more tortuous problem. The dvaerg troops who were supposed to defend the Free City either tore each other apart or returned to their respective clans. Cyrillane, led by Theodora Kadmeid, seized the opportunity. The war was very complicated, taking place on several fronts, and did not end until 212. The essential role of halfling mediators led to the Mie Peace Treaty and the creation of Myetea."

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Geeranhuggen the Venerable

Scott Timmermans (Order #99731950)

The Secret Cankerous Epidemic of 271-272

For reasons of discretion and to avoid a panic, we entrusted scouting operations to the Steel Crown company of adventurers, whose members are: Arxtrude, guardian dwarf; Cylle, lightfoot halfling of Myetea; Tamina, surefoot halfling of Mibu; and Efraïm, gnome of the Eolians.
The investigation confirmed our fears. The increase in atypical cases of what the population calls scratches is actually linked to a Cankerous epidemic. The source of it comes from the depths, the network of ancient tunnels and catacombs that delve into the Netherworld.
The adventurers followed the trail and confirmed the presence of a growing Cankerous nest. Given its extremely rapid onset, they had to act without delay to avoid the emergence of a ravager horde that would have swarmed the streets of our city.
We avoided disaster this time, but must remain vigilant and organize underground patrols; otherwise, our city may face obliteration.

Excerpt from a confidential report, archived by the Council of Strategists

The Sharprickle Plot

"The Mie Treaty ensured lasting peace until 286. In secret, members of Sharprickle's ruling family began to worship fiends, and they set up a complex and extensive plot. Many details are still confidential or unknown to this day, but we can thank the brave adventurers of that time who dispelled the threat looming over both the Free City and Cyrillane. Peace between our two countries was strengthened in the ruins of the now fallen kingdom of Histe. On this occasion, the region was split in two and a large part of it was placed under the authority of the Free City. Nowadays, some people believe that the collapse of the Kadmeid dynasty in 330 was a consequence of the harmful undermining that had been undertaken by the Sharprickle cabal."

The Treaty of the Fifty

"In any case, 287 marked a tightening of bonds between the Free City and Cyrillane, leading to the Treaty of the Fifty, allowing the foundation of a Cyrillan District within our walls. The Fifty refers to the first Cyrillan families who officially gathered there and were authorized to organize their Vigent Guard, council, etc."



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The Taurëlman War

"I told you earlier that the Free City was built on nonintervention, respect, and justice in its relations with its neighbors. As we study the Taurëlman War, you will understand that reality was not as simple. To be brief, in 300, under the insistent pressure of its dvaerg allies, the Free City declared the Woods of Taurëlma a desert, i.e., an area without sustainable population, buildings, and organization. As a result, anyone was free to claim it—and the Free City and the dvaergen clans did so. As you probably know, Taurëlma is inhabited by fierce aldaron clans who are determined to protect the woods, as they are sacred to them. The war lasted eleven years and was marked by the clearing of trees, fires, ambushes-turned-bloodbaths, and settlers who were systematically exterminated or forced to flee.

"In 311, halfling mediators managed to broker a compromise that put an end to the conflict, to the Free City's disadvantage. An exchange of prisoners sealed the Issure Peace Treaty—there were not many prisoners, and they cut quite a sorry figure. To this day, the city of Issure is still divided into two parts: the northern bank is a ruin where nature gradually reclaims its rights; the southern bank is a fairly prosperous town that allows rapid transportation of goods from Myetea to the Free City. Officially, no one ever goes to the ghost town that is Northern Issure, but the most hardened criminals in Issure know that they can conceal their loot or find shelter in this part of the city, which guarantees them some amount of tranquility.

"Myetea's halflings took the lion's share from the conflict. Notably, they gained extensive autonomy and tax privileges that enabled many of them who previously lived off the land to become rich."

Taurëlma's Treasure Hunters

It had been a little while since Wily, Terro, and Rudolph had stopped taking notes. Now, they relied on their excellent memory and their ability to persuade more focused students to share their notes:

"We always say elves are this or that. Well, I'm telling you: there's no such thing as sacred woods. It's just like with the Star District: the Vigent are their puppets. They're no better than us, they just want to pass off as neat and tidy."

"Why are you saying that?"

"Because everybody deals in something. Some aldaron let through treasure hunters. It's not true at all that they kill anyone on sight."

The Meanderise Massacre

"While the war raged in Taurëlma, another crisis was brewing around the sources of the River Vaquensirë. Today, Meanderise is gloomy and desolate; at the time, though, it was a wet yet prosperous forest region, with beautiful cities like Acesme. As is often the case, Canker knows how to take advantage of the weaknesses of its enemies. Cankerous nests grew, and there weren't enough fighters to destroy them properly. From 306 to 311, the attacks grew stronger and stronger, leading to nearly all inhabitants leaving the region behind. In many cases, the weary veterans of the Taurëlman War had to keep on fighting in swampy ruins. As if that weren't enough, from 310 to 313, a great number of undead were reported. The situation seems to have stabilized, but it remains worrisome.

"After sailing back up the Vaquensirë, Eolian gnomes came to settle in great numbers—relatively speaking—and made a home for themselves in several cities. They set up modern fixtures like streetlights and machinery, which make for a strange environment, a mix of ruins and modernity. The street of one district may be as lively, rich, and clean as one in the Free City, while an alleyway a little further on might lead to a sinister dump."

Geeranhuggen would have liked to continue, but the bell rang, and the gnome began to put away his things. Carmine and Augurate agents, easily recognizable by the distinctive colors of their clothes, were waiting outside the lecture hall. The venerable gnome was a little surprised to see them, but their stern expressions showed that the Free City needed him, once again, for an important matter.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773145)



Emblem of the Free City

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Powers and Factions

Deciding the fate of a metropolis like the Free City means providing a guiding and fostering hand, a position of dangerously intoxicating power. In this chapter, you will discover the movers and shakers who wield power unseen: institutions, guilds, law enforcement agencies, and gangsters.

A Materialistic Republic

The Free City is a tolerant, politically moderate republic, eager to give its inhabitants a great amount of autonomy since they are as proud of their freedom as they are of their entrepreneurial spirit and culture.

The Free City is a melting pot where one can meet important figures from every region and species of Eana. The population is made up of varied peoples, who are often multilingual and worship a variety of different religious cultures. The result is a city united by its love of freedom, the arts, and the promotion of merit. The latter is one of the foundations of the social hierarchy, and the prevailing convention is to measure one's merit in terms of their wealth.

Major Governing Bodies

The majority of representatives, civil servants, generals, and magistrates are chosen at random, but some positions require elections. In either case, a candidate is chosen from a list of citizens who are considered apt and able, and who meet many criteria, including: being born of two citizen parents or having received honorary citizenship through a vote by the Assembly; the ability to read and write; no criminal record (murder, rape, high treason, etc.).

The structure of the Free City's government is complex, and many foreigners—and even some natives—can have a hard time understanding the details of its inner workings. The city is run by several assemblies and councils, each of which theoretically holds authority in a specific field. However, arguments over jurisdictional matters are common, as the groups often struggle to determine who should handle a specific case. Disputes can be about seemingly trivial points of law, dragging on and on, ultimately leaving adventurers and schemers to operate at their leisure.

For that matter, it's not uncommon for councils and administrations to hire adventurers or mercenaries to enforce their decisions when the army or the Vigent Watch are powerless or overwhelmed.

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Main Institutions	Members	Color of the Vigent	Authority	Means of Action
The Town Council, or "The Hand"	5 Assembly members elected for a period of 6 years; they each choose a team of assistants.	Golden	Always found in official buildings, the members are the first persons warned in case of trouble. They handle everyday business and prepare the main points of the Assembly's agenda.	Convening the Assembly; suspension of institutions.
The Aelist	100 elite fighters, the aelists are chosen at random from a list or nominated by the Town Council.	Golden	Watching over the Town Council.	Fighting; has authority over all other Vigent Watches.
The Council of Strategists	9 magistrates appointed by the Assembly from a list of able citizens. A member remains in office until the Assembly votes that they be removed.	Crimson	Launch military or diplomatic actions in the name of the Free City; request that the Assembly declare military intervention; give instructions to Crimsons.	Sending diplomats and ambassadors abroad; keeping a network of spies; giving orders to armed forces.
Crimsons	Vigent members who serve the Council of Strategists.	Crimson or none (plainclothes)	Intelligence and counterintelligence.	Special actions by order of the Council of Strategists: sabotage, kidnapping, theft, murder, etc.
The Assembly	111 citizens chosen at random every six years.	Lapis blue	Pass laws, levies, and taxes; declare war and vote for peace; final judgments; refer to another council to request intervention.	Public or private debates; sending representatives on investigations; voting on laws and budgets.
The Council of the Guilds	1 representative per guild and merchant company, appointed via procedures specific to their organization.	Emerald green	Ensure professional training; guarantee quality standards; regulate the establishment of shops and businesses.	Writing customs specific to a trade; presenting reports of the economic situation to the Assembly.
The Court of Accounts	Judges, bailiffs, procurers, etc. chosen by the Council of the Guilds from a list of citizens with a legal background.	Emerald green	Mediate and judge conflicts between professionals, as well as crimes of the pen (fraud, forgery, etc.).	Rendering court decisions at first trial and on appeal.
The Council of the Dragons	1 representative per major religion or temple, appointed via procedures specific to each religion or temple; each representative can have up to fifteen assistants with various functions.	Black and white	Represent the cults of the city, organize religious festivals; at first trial, judge crimes committed within the precincts of sacred places or by members of the clergy; at first trial, judge misdemeanors and crimes involving the use of magic; judge crimes on appeal; practice divination in the name of the Free City.	Rally the faithful; call the Assembly; judge and banish perpetrators of serious profanation and blasphemy, or misusers of magic.
Augurate's Office	Variable number of inquisitors and protectors, acting overtly or covertly.	Black and white (or plainclothes)	Investigate crimes involving the supernatural; fight and apprehend magical creatures and spellcasters; escort members of the Council of the Dragon; ensure order during trials; secure holy sites.	Investigate; authority over other Vigents if mandated by the Council of the Dragons.
The Councils of the Districts	15 representatives, chosen via procedures specific to their district.	Yellow with the symbol of the district	Ensure the health and safety of the district, especially by organizing and financing a local Vigent Watch; judge crimes and offenses at first trial; vote on development projects and local regulations.	Vigent Watch; district tribunals; decrees.

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Power Struggles

Keeping Power at All Costs

In theory, members of the Assembly are chosen at random; however, the law allows a citizen whose activities are too time-consuming to hand over their office to a person of their choice. Over time, this clause has led to a market for Assembly positions, with both a legal side (such as selling to the highest bidder) and an illegal one (such as blackmailing a representative to relinquish their office, or other threats and means of pressure). Sometimes, a randomly appointed citizen may freely give their mandate to another citizen whom they deem to be more competent.

Due to this system, power usually remains in the hands of the same groups and families, which has gradually given the Republic the appearance of an oligarchy. The shamelessness of a select few, assured of their impunity, is a source of growing tension and fuels the extremist speeches of preachers who dream of "freeing" the inhabitants from tyrants, much like in Cyrillane.

Citizens from all walks of life, aware of the deviancy of their institutions, are calling for reform. But can the Assembly reform itself when so many of its members stand to lose so much?



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Plenary Powers

Should the Republic face a crisis and imminent peril, the Assembly may grant plenary powers to a single magistrate called the Absolute. This person will then rule for one year, with complete freedom and control of all armed forces. This institution has hardly ever been used during the Republic. Its abolition has often been called for, but never voted on. Its defenders argue that if Cyrillane had had an Absolute, the empire would never have collapsed.

Get Rich at All Costs

For many in the Free City, material possessions are both a means and an end. Money flows freely, and many citizens try to hoard it, sometimes to excess. Stories of trade empires that were built or collapsed in a matter of days are always popular, and most inhabitants play an economic or political role in the city. In fact, the two are very closely tied. There are several ways for the Free City inhabitants to reach high social status:

- **Entering politics.** Obtaining political responsibility through election in the institutions of the city, or of one's district. In the Republic, however, the decisions of the Assembly are as likely to lead someone to a dizzying rise as they are to cause their ultimate downfall.
- **Making a career.** Moving up in the hierarchy of a guild, a Vigent, the army, a clergy, etc. Some adventurers start off as simple apprentices or acolytes, earning their stripes along the way.
- **Founding a business.** Creating an organization from scratch, such as a merchant company, managing it, and making it flourish. Adventurers who create a treasure hunting company will likely reach the higher rungs of society this way.
- **Receiving annuities.** Earning money—a lot of money—by any means, then pretending to have just arrived in town and investing, either in real estate or in long-distance trading. This is a good way for some criminals to reintroduce themselves to polite society.

The Great Houses

Benefiting from ancient fortunes and flourishing businesses, some families are well-established in the upper echelons of the Republic. Whether they built their fortunes amid the city's independence, or they inherited it from the times of the nobility, their activities revolve around their merchant empires, patronage of the arts, politics, and conspiring against rival families. Sometimes, old family dynasties tend to see themselves as the legitimate owners of the city, behaving like the nobility of old. Here are some of these houses:

- **Agnadelle.** This house was founded by ship owners and sailors as talented as they were daring. They are involved in the exploration and mapping of distant territories; in return, they negotiate rights of exclusivity and monopoly for the sale of exotic goods. Even today, they put together expeditions that travel the world.
- **Izreal.** The only halfling house of importance. Their income is derived from trade related to Myetea's productions, but also from the bustling flow of negotiators, mediators, and informants—in a word, spies.
- **Ipato.** This house of Cyrillan origin specializes in the import of goods from the fallen empire, such as expensive essential rose oils, or entire ships full of amphoras of wine and olive oil. Since the beginning of the civil war, the Ipatos have sought both to maintain imports from the regions least affected by the conflict and to open up new avenues by prospecting in other countries.
- **Gemona.** This newer house, officially founded by a fortunate adventuress, is said to have connections with slave traders from the Netherworld. Nevertheless, it maintains strong relations with the Palace of the Star District, the main elenion community in the city. Many wonder about the true nature of the exchanges. Could it be a sign of a push to bring together surface elves and those from the depths?

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Names in the Free City

In the Free City, names come as much from Cyfandir as from the rest of the world, depending on the fashion of the day and one's parentage. Laudable values, precious stones, flowers and plants... first names take root in all these aspects and are freely created or reimagined by parents.

Feminine Names

Agate. Alya. Alynn. Amarande. Ambrine. Amity. Anthea. Ariane. Auralie. Aveline. Belle. Benedite. Brunelle. Camelia. Carmelle. Cendryn. Cetherys. Coleen. Coralie. Cornaline. Dalia. Daphne. Dina. Elia. Elona. Emmelyn. Ermesande. Evangeline. Fidelia. Fiorella. Florentine. Gala. Garance. Geltrude. Ginevra. Giselle. Honorine. Hostella. Hyacynth. Isea. Jenelyn. Jolene. Justina. Leana. Liserone. Lormelle. Maeva. Malvina. Melisandre. Meredice. Mina. Narcissa. Oceane. Orlane. Opal. Pernelle. Peridote. Quintia. Queenie. Roselyn. Satine. Sefira. Sibel. Sylvane. Trinity. Urielle. Varda. Violet.

Masculine Names

Abelard. Adil. Adrial. Agrippus. Alador. Alekyn. Alery. Amory. Ancelot. Antar. Artemon. Arys. Beryl. Breval. Callistus. Celm. Chlorys. Ciryl. Clovis. Comely. Creylen. Deasley. Eduin. Favor. Gareth. Gerald. Gion. Gregory. Gyles. Harmen. Helicent. Ivar. Jackery. Kingsley. Larimar. Lovmore. Lucas. Lunarion. Lysander. Marcian. Melwyn. Nemo. Onorio. Onyx. Parsam. Perciful. Reysen. Rock. Sailer. Sim. Sky. Steel. Sunny. Tristan. Tristifer. Urban. Valeric. Veno. Victorius. Wiser. Zephyr. Zircon.

Family Names

One's family name solidifies at the time of one's wedding, taken from whichever partner is older, or whichever has higher social status. In the Free City region, names often express a value or an aspiration of the family founder—such as "Fortunate" for someone wishing for good fortune. It can also be a heroic nickname that a person earned during their adventures, or the name of the family estate, whether a small farm or a vast domain.

Here are some examples:
Aster. Beniscus. Celestine. Charter. Cobbler. Deathcheater. Decys. Destined. During. Endow. Fate-Blessed. Flora-Blessed. Forester. Fortunate. Frack. Glorian. Happy. Histian. Honored. Hopgrow. Luckard. Meanderer. Precious. Rebony. Smith. Starred. Tanner. Thrush. Valiant. Vitalis. Windfacer.

Private Militias

Every guild, major merchant, shipowner, and other wealthy burgher who can afford it maintains a private militia at their own expense. In some cases, said militia can become as powerful as the official forces of the district. Theoretically, militiamen do not have more rights than other inhabitants, but the power and influence of their employer potentially gives them more leeway to enforce said employer's private "law".

District Wars

Despite the supremacy of the Assembly and the Councils of the Republic, each district is organized autonomously. Therefore, the city is a patchwork of communities with more or less friendly relations. Here are some of the most common causes of conflict:

- **Border tensions.** Two districts struggle for control of a common shopping street, or a square that stretches over both. Nobody knows which council to refer to, taxes must be paid twice, or, on the contrary, a "problematic" place is left completely unsupervised... to the inhabitants' great despair.
- **Interference.** A powerful district council uses its power, Vigent, and influence, to intervene outside of its jurisdiction, in an adjoining district (to arrest a criminal who operates in their own district, for example).
- **Enemy Vigents.** The Vigent Watches of two districts are so hostile toward each other that their conflict turns into open warfare in the streets. The Iron Company is asked to mediate and ensure each district keeps its distance from the others.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773450)

Companies and Guilds

A Free City saying goes: "Trade is the only true religion in the City." Indeed, everything can be bought, transformed, and resold in the warehouses on the docks and the anterooms of shipowners' palaces, in pawnshops, and at dodgy dealers. This flourishing activity brings great wealth to the city, in the most diverse forms: gold and silver from Acoatl, amber from the Septentrion, and silk from Shi-huang, but also coffee from Ghardat, tea from Men-hong, sugar from the Barbary, cinnamon from Ajagar, ivory from Mibu, and many others.

All Free City citizens have the right to establish a trade or guild in order to defend their interests collectively. Almost all crafting trades possess their own guilds, which ensure that manufacturing standards are respected and help regulate competition by issuing rights of practice. As representative bodies of the profession, they base their authority on the great privileges and monopolies they negotiate for their members.

Letter from a Young Glass-Blower

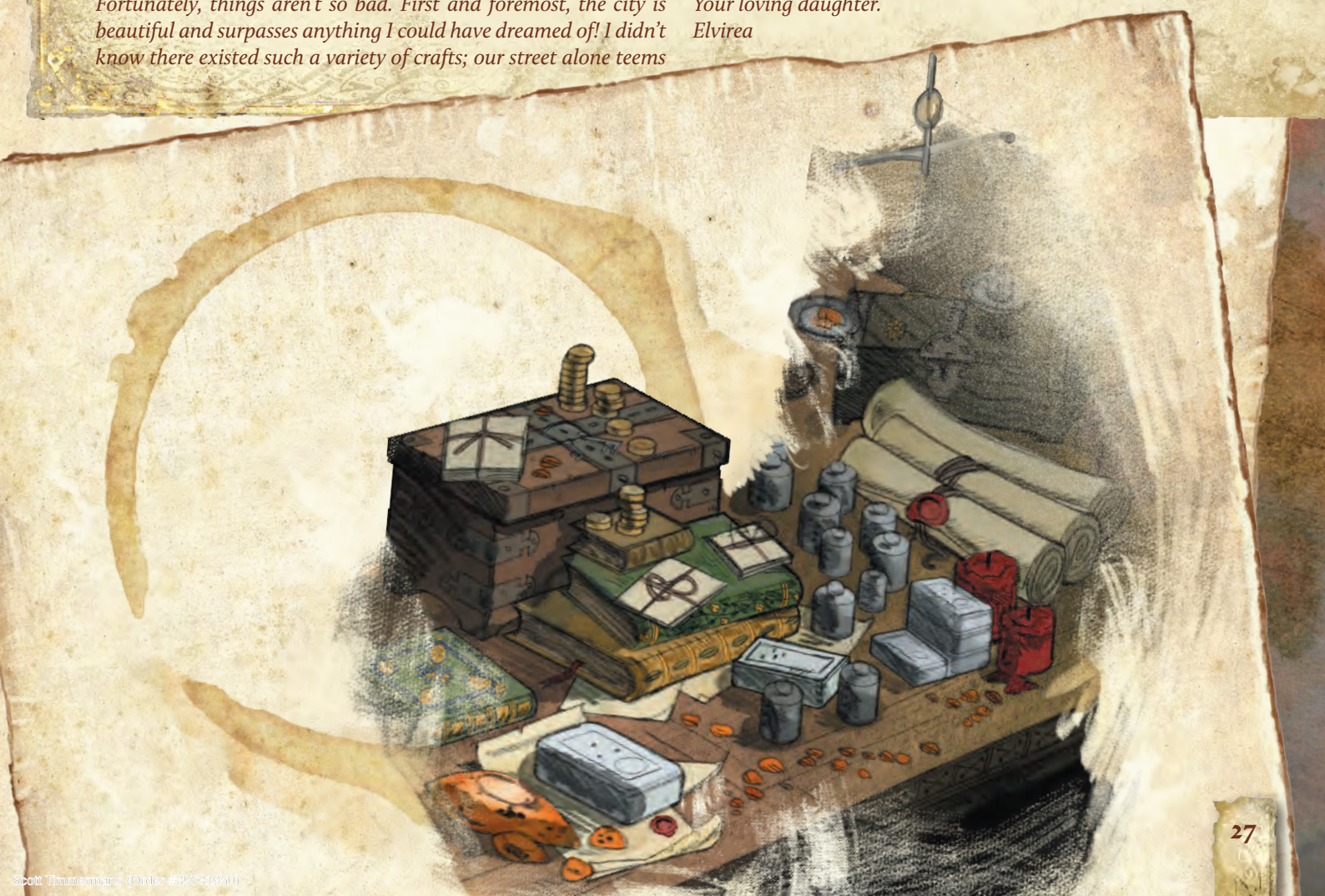
Dear parents,

I arrived in the Free City last week, in the Artificers' District, in the house of Master Nicophas, who agreed to sponsor me thanks to my letter of recommendation. I am relieved, of course, and I am very much looking forward to starting work alongside a master of the stained-glass guild. It seems that the Free City never sleeps and, given the thickness of its walls, neither do I! Master Nicophas's workshop abuts a forge where dwarven metalworkers sublime their materials, imparting them with almost impossibly delicate flair. I wouldn't have believed it when I saw the thick black smoke and noise coming from their workshops, as well as the loads brought in by the coalmen, who jostle each other in the street, creating mass disorder. Master Nicophas told me that several fires were narrowly put out this year. I think he's just saying that to frighten me.

Fortunately, things aren't so bad. First and foremost, the city is beautiful and surpasses anything I could have dreamed of! I didn't know there existed such a variety of crafts; our street alone teems with glassmakers, mosaic artists, upholsterers, and sculptors. At the crossroads, there are silk merchants, around which all the artisans of the district flock. They make a creative competition out of their clothes, wearing eccentric hairstyles and precious fabrics. Even their houses look like small palaces (sometimes not so small!), allowing them to flaunt their success when they invite all the high-society sorts. It seems nothing is too elegant for them. Already, I am a regular at the shop of an elven illuminator who lives next to the workshop. He practices bookbinding and calligraphy, but also heraldry for guilds and large families. Each of his pages looks like a bocage full of animals, and I'm almost certain that I saw one moving! I could talk about it for hours, but parchment is expensive, and I am expected somewhere. I can't wait to start my apprenticeship!

Your loving daughter.

Elvirea



Scott Thompson's Order #9723930

Guild Bounty Boards

Most guilds display simple missions on their doors or walls. Merchant guilds stick to loading and unloading shipments, or escort and protection; the Iron Company offers missions that require more brawn.

Looking for insomniac ratters. Night work. You'll have to watch the flour stocks in the bakery and eliminate giant rats. Any damage to the craftsman's equipment will be deducted from final payment. Contact the Flour Guild.

Looking for an investigator with good eyes and an unrefined nose. Filthy work. You will have to find a set of pearls that was lost in the sewers by a clumsy apprentice who has been properly castigated. The Bakers' Guild has reported a resurgence of giant rats, so make sure to bring proper safety equipment. We cannot be held responsible for injuries or infections resulting from searchers that were too slow, unlucky, or careless. Contact the Jewelers' Guild.

Looking for brave and meticulous samplers. Working outside the city. You will have to find ingredients of animal and plant origin, store and dry them properly, then bring them back. Spoiled materials will not be paid for. Contact the Alchemists' Guild.

Looking for a replacement gravedigger and caretaker. Night work. Possible ghoul or sect activity. Permanent integration into the guild is possible. You will have to restore graves that were desecrated many times over. Religious knowledge appreciated. Contact the Gravediggers' Guild.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39781950)

A Few Famous Guilds

Unlike other professional groups, such as merchant companies, guilds imply craftsmanship that requires progress from apprentice to journeyman, and finally to master. Only a master may start a business. Technical expertise is essential for career development, but insufficient on its own. A talented journeyman with poor relations with their guild can become stuck for years in a position unsuited to their abilities.

In reality, guilds only control permanent businesses. In theory, they can review the activity of street vendors, but it is a difficult task, one they often give up on. In addition, some areas, such as the ports, have longstanding privileges that allow certain businesses to operate there without having to report to the guilds.

Here's an overview of some famous guilds:

- **Alchemists' Guild.** It controls the making of potions and the teaching of the craft. Their headquarters are located in a series of small towers in the Crystal District. It maintains very close relations with arcanists who are not members of the Academy, so much so that the Alchemists' Guild is sometimes easily mistaken for the Guild of Independent Wizards. The latter occasionally find missions and job offers there.

- **Skyce Guild.** Very active in the spice trade, it gathers apothecaries who are not members of the Alchemists' Guild. Indeed, there exists a long-standing rivalry between the two guilds. The headquarters of the Skyce Guild are located just north of the Shipowner's Port.

- **The Iron Company.** This is the name of a large group of mercenaries organized as a real army—mostly comprised of dwarves. They are the heart of the Free City army. The organization is located in the Sext Fort, just east of the lighthouse. Their generals are members of the Council of the Guilds, but they also have access to the Council of Strategists and the Steinbank. Company members are allowed to make short-term commitments as long as they abide by the laws of the Free City; in case of a crisis, they must report in as soon as possible, immediately forsaking any other activity. The Iron Company is one of the most powerful Guilds in the city, also acting as a Warriors' Guild and assigning missions of law enforcement outside the walls. It is based on an ancient principle, which consists of gathering all armed forces under the same flag to better control them.

- **Builders' Guild.** It maintains extensive networks all over Eana and includes specialists who pass on valuable secrets from one generation to the next. They learn how to design deadly traps, capable of confounding even the most skillful rogues, and have access to grimoires containing spells that make buildings stronger or give them the protection of gargoyles. Builders are different from craftsmen in that they hold a thorough knowledge of history and arcana, making them experts at building wizards' towers, or temples with strong magical defenses.

Behind the Scenes of the Builders' Guild

The Builders' Guild has a long history and an exceptional archive of architectural history, glyphs, and traps. Access to this knowledge is exclusively reserved for its members, and even among them, only those of high rank are allowed full access. Much like the boots of a master duelist or the secret recipes of an alchemist, a Master Builder has their own style and personal secrets. Their traps or hidden passages constitute their own architectural grammar, whose secret they often take to the grave.

Builders are often involved behind the scenes of important events, causing them to lead a life halfway between light and shadow.

- **Blackmail.** Thieves' Guilds have watched and harmed builders in the past. To extract building secrets, criminals have kidnapped children or threatened to reveal information that could ruin someone's life.

- **Double life.** There are rumors about builders getting richer by working both for their guild and for criminal groups. Maybe they are traitors, or maybe they are double agents trying to uncover a mole at the risk of their own life.

- **Renegade.** Builders absolutely forbid the sharing of guild secrets. Anyone who breaks this rule—regardless of whether they are guilty or slandered—may face death. In this case, it is customary to hire an assassins' guild to correct the situation. Although such actions are illegal, Master Builders cannot tolerate a threat to the guild's existence.

- **Archaeologist.** Builders often take on the role of archaeologists—or simply looters. Since ruins belong to no one in particular, anyone can visit them (at their own risk). An archaeologist justifies their exploration to the guild with the plans and analyses they bring back: are traps still operational after three centuries without maintenance in a tropical climate? Are the gargoyles ready to fight to the death? This feedback is valuable and well worth some risk-taking, and is often compensated by the treasures that the adventurous builder hopes to find.

- **Fulfilling the contract.** Builders work for good or bad people, with no qualms whatsoever as long as contract clauses are respected. Unfortunately, there are always some clients who refuse to pay. Worse still, some tyrants decide to kill all the craftsmen who aided in the construction of their tomb in order to protect it from thieves. In such cases, the guild doesn't hesitate to send adventurers to claim payment, or to hire the services of an assassins' guild. Builders are scrupulous people who take the secrecy of their trade very seriously, but they are also determined not to let potential clients believe that they can exploit or swindle them.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731930)

Street Food Vendors and Other Odd Jobs

Dear parents,

Yesterday, I went to the Council of the Guilds for the first time. It is as majestic as in Aunt Nolwen's descriptions. You access it through the forum square, which is also where the most amazing goods are exchanged. People come from far and wide to buy, sell, and broker future contracts. I don't get involved in these activities. People sometimes glance at me for a second: I see their eyes linger on my ochre ribbon, which marks me out as a glassmaker's apprentice—a desirable situation.

In the square, you'll find carriers of drinking water who resupply workers and modest houses, two-wheeled palanquins which, unlike hand-carts, are quick enough to go everywhere (gnomes are so amusing, with all their clever inventions), bread merchants who resupply street food vendors, and many others.

The street food vendors remind me of home, of course, but the ones here are more frequented and offer more diverse foods. The smells wafting from their cooking pots evoke distant countries and unknown spices: what a change of scenery! The people here come from all over the world, and so there's no better opportunity to sample foreign specialties. The flatbreads stuffed with onion relish or meat, the plum or fish turnovers, steamed or cooked in spicy oil. As for the fritters... everything can be fried, even the most bizarre seafood (I don't like it so much), so you're never really sure of what you're eating. Needless to say, it is a nice change from the simple broths I drink at the workshop! On occasion, I lend a hand in the kitchen; I've even learned how to make stuffed dumplings: meat and dried plums, "meat assortment" (the name given to a blend of sausage meat, offal, and more...), spicy vegetables, apple, red plums... You can cook them in advance because they're just as delicious when they're cold.

In short, I eat my fill, don't worry. Maeva and I are careful not to spend too much of our daily wages, and we're very mindful of pickpockets.

I hope to get time off for the spring harvest. With love.

Elvirea

Judgments

Tribunals

The Free City, ever concerned about the operating costs of its institutions, seeks to streamline profitable departments as much as possible. Sentences are few and far between, while investigators and magistrates are encouraged to find a guilty party quickly to close cases.

- **Fine.** The sanction for common offenses without serious consequences is a fine: fights, damage, insults, etc. Fines can be minor (7 gp), serious (30 gp), major (180 gp), or extreme (365 gp). In case of damage to public property, the cost of repairs is added to the fine. If an offender lacks the means to pay the fine, they may be locked up until a friend or family member pays it for them.
- **Prison.** In the Free City, prison is a rare punishment that is mainly used as a security measure. The central prison of the Free City is the Anvil, whose reputation is rather sinister. Here, prisoners await judgment or serve their sentence to its term. The prison is expensive, so the duration of imprisonment is kept as short as possible. Prisoners receive only the barest of essentials: biscuits and water or broth—often in insufficient quantity. They must pay for the privilege of actual meals, wine, blankets, healthcare, or even sexual company. The rate is even higher than in a hotel.
- **Galleys.** Sentencing someone to serve aboard a galley is the same as enslaving them. Galley slaves embark as oarsmen, chained to their benches, and travel to countries seeking slave labor in large numbers: Mibu, the Sand Kingdoms, the Kartaçöl Empire... Once they reach their destination, galley slaves are sold.
- **Death.** The death penalty is only used if a criminal simply cannot be released into the city, nor can they be made to disappear on the galleys. This may be the case for political criminals with many supporters whose return is feared, crippled criminals who are of no value to slave traders, or if the members of the Assembly are particularly agitated.

The Voice of the People

Public debates can interfere with the course of justice. For example, the Assembly may take up a particular case and discuss reducing or enhancing the sentences. A galley sentence can be replaced by a fine or the death penalty. There is no regulation limiting the scope of the Assembly's intervention: the "people" can interfere in everything. Some take advantage of this and spread rumors to stir the public, to tip the scales one way or the other, and thus obtain a decision convenient for them.

Common people may also become involved in scandalous cases, sometimes defending a likable criminal or seeking to make an example of a disagreeable innocent. The authorities are unfailingly cautious, for riots are a dire threat. They are difficult to control, and the public never forgets the deaths that occur when things grow out of control. The Assembly and its members can be intimidated, and even attacked in times of crisis.

Scott Timmermans (Order #3

Law Enforcement

Officially, law enforcement agencies serve the Republic and protect its inhabitants. However, they also seek to adapt to the diversity and creativity of criminal organizations. Some are organized for a specific district, while others operate across the whole city—an arrangement that gives rise to the occasional jurisdictional conflict.

The Vigent Watch

The communal watch of the Free City is known as the "Vigent" and is made up of vigilant Vigents—who have little patience for jokes about their name. The name itself comes from an old term for a certain quality that expressed vigor and liveliness. The old term sounded like "vigil," which is likely why it was chosen for the police force. Each district has its own Vigent, funded and sponsored by the council of that district. Members are often recruited from the residents, which can lead, simply out of a sense of esprit de corps, to a particular overzealousness toward strangers and a particular leniency toward homegrown troublemakers.



Because of disparities from one district to the next, not all Vigents are equal in terms of skill, manpower, and equipment. Wealthier shopping districts have actual regular troops who train in their Vigent's fortified headquarters, while some districts can only fund a small, poorly trained band, with unremarkable, second-hand equipment. Unless the Assembly frees up exceptional funds to enforce the law, these districts are left to themselves.

Districts Without a Vigent Watch

The Thorst and Sludge districts are not considered part of the Free City. Their inhabitants are, accordingly, not citizens: without Vigent or taxes, these areas theoretically fall under the jurisdiction of patrolmen, who consider the City outside of their territory. In the end, it falls on the shoulders of the Iron Company to maintain a semblance of order. However, its members deem these missions unworthy of their skills, leading them to outsource such work to adventurers.

Scott Timmerman's (Order #35731950)

Bounty Hunting

All Vigent Watches put a price on the heads of notorious criminals in their area. Be careful not to bite off more than you can chew: the more well-paid a mission, the more dangerous it is.

Turf Wars

Every Vigent wants to control its own turf, and local authorities can become very touchy when a neighboring district seeks to enforce the law in their stead. Such petty rivalries—and the sprawling local conflicts they engender—make the jobs of thieves easier. These problems scale upwards, for if petty offenders are already troublesome, organized crime becomes a serious burden. Only the Assembly can resolve such issues, and it does so on a case-by-case basis by organizing a temporary committee of inquiry with the extraordinary power to settle a case spanning several districts. The mere fact that the deliberations to establish such committees are public makes life considerably easier on criminals, especially when their accomplices occupy important positions.

The Usual Suspects

Baldine tightened her large scarf and took a deep breath. Darkness was settling in, and the district Vigent would start patrolling soon.

"Chop chop! If you'nt espy nothin', crack on!"

The barbarian woman looked at their halfling guide with an air of utter confusion.

"Hurry up, then! Getting in's the easy part. Find what you're looking for, or clear off. We're right in the middle of the patrol route!"

"I have it!" the wizard said with delight.

"Let's bolt," Baldine said.

Even after closing the suspect's door, she was as restless as before.

"What's wrong?" the ranger asked.

"What's wrong is that here, the Vigent is fussy and night has fallen. You're strangers. That's enough reason to keep eyes on you. As if that weren't enough, you've got a hood over your head and two of you are walking around with ropes. Also, you're armed to the teeth. Like you're expecting a fight. You look ready for trouble, so the Vigent will think that trouble follows you. Honestly, when y'all said you wanted to sneak a look at a pad, that's really not what I had in mind..."



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Augurate's Office

In the Free City, magic is monitored as closely as in any other big city. People rightly fear malefactors, and well-trained agents are needed to spot false leads or thwart illusions. This role falls to the inquisitors and protectors of the Augurate's Office. Clad in black and white, they serve the Council of the Dragons.

Inquisitors oversee investigations, while protectors are armed to battle dangerous opponents. Together, and equipped with *Xonim's bonds* (see **Treasures of the Free City**), they fight against warlocks, demented cultists, summoned fiends, and, sometimes, Cankerous nests. An augur has a number of different responsibilities:

- **Surveillance of dangerous individuals.** All arcanists and Awakened are potentially dangerous. Surveillance is usually routine and random, but if suspicious behavior is detected, it rapidly focuses.
- **Advisor to the Vigent.** When a Vigent Watch encounters abnormalities, it may call upon the Augurate for help, whether it be simple advice or active intervention.
- **Bills of law.** If faced with difficulties, or if it has spotted a new threat, the Augurate can propose new rules and laws to the Council of the Dragons; in turn, the Council may submit them to the Assembly if they involve significant changes in customs.
- **Secret investigations.** The Council of the Dragons is authorized to organize secret investigations, especially to shed light on the activities of dangerous cults. As the Council of Strategists is in a position to request secret investigations as well, the Augurate and the Crimsons may have to deal with similar cases without knowing it, sometimes with different imperatives or personal rivalries.

Patrolmen

Outside the Free City, in the regions under its jurisdiction, order is maintained by patrolmen. Their members are horsemen, scouts, and rangers. They differ from simple adventurers by the coat of arms of the Free City, which they wear sewn on a piece of clothing, often on the right shoulder or over the breast. Centralized and organized like a real, regular army, patrolmen lead missions of escort, law enforcement, border protection, and repression of possible revolts. They observe, gather information, and help the population organize its defenses.

Patrolmen are not numerous enough to cover all provinces, so they may recruit mercenaries to solve problems when they require reinforcements. In theory, all persons outsourced by patrolmen wear an orange scarf.

Hiring Adventurers

For most missions, patrolmen rely on parties of adventurers. However, in hopes of reducing the strain on the Free City's coffers, they're required to pay them as cheaply as possible. Patrolmen often negotiate by offering the adventurers whatever loot they obtain in lieu of payment, or by encouraging village councils to participate financially. When collaboration with a party of adventurers bears fruit, patrolmen spread the party's name, recommending them to peers.

Few Prisoners

Patrolmen take few prisoners. From their point of view, nothing is more irritating than an outlaw who surrenders as a prisoner, because all judgments are handed down in the Free City. It therefore becomes necessary to go through a tedious and legal transfer process. To spare themselves the trouble, they kill all suspects during a fight or release them after payment of a fine. Whether a suspect is subject to a fine, the death penalty, or a transfer for trial depends largely on the patrolman.

The Rare Intervention of the Iron Company

Everybody knows that the Iron Company is expensive. In some cases, however, patrolmen call upon them when no other solution is viable—which never fails to rekindle the political debates about the costs of just funding an actual, non-mercenary army. Of their own initiative, a patrolman captain can mobilize up to thirty members of the Company in case of an emergency.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Criminal Underworld

Although illegal, the so-called thieves' guilds can be quite well-known to both the local inhabitants and the authorities. The term "thief" covers a very broad spectrum, and everyone potentially has a good reason to break the law. It can point to organizations as diverse as street gangs, corrupt financiers, leagues of burglars, or groups of tax-dodging shipowners. All of them thrive by diverting resources from the Free City and weakening it like parasites. Above all, these organizations seek to make a profit. Other clandestine groups have similar methods but possess more ideological motivations.

Turf Wars Between Rival Gangs

Several districts of the Free City are currently the battlefield of rival gangs looking for more influence or seeking to defend what they already have. Simply put, there is no shortage of scores to settle:

- **Artificers' District.** The largest marketplace in town attracts many a greedy eye.
- **Sisters District.** Located between the original territories of the Tridentine and the Raqisa, this seemingly peaceful district becomes a lethal battlefield at nightfall.
- **Crystal District.** This area lies at the crossroads of the Kleidi-Kleidaria's, Raqisa's, and Tridentine's influence. It is contested on principle, but also because it yields control to a part of the Dispende—and thus, to the arrival of goods by flat-bottomed boats.

A Game of Cat and Mouse

Thieves' guilds greatly benefit from the organization of Vigent Watches by district, whether through corruption of members of a sector or in taking advantage of their lack of overall coordination. When power is corrupt, failing, or brutal, the population adapts and creates fragile alliances.

- **Dubious protectors.** Although unappreciated as a whole, thieves' guilds tend to "protect" people in their district from other criminals. Provided there is no interference with their affairs, they may even stand in (to some extent) for a deficient Vigent.
- **The enemy of my enemy.** When the authorities are corrupt, or employed by a biased or tyrannical district council, criminal groups may act as a counter-power, or even as the sole supporters of rebels.
- **See no evil.** Local thieves' guilds sometimes make agreements with the Vigent, agreeing to operate only in adjacent districts in exchange for impunity.
- **The lesser evil.** For the authorities, allying with a local gang is sometimes necessary to prevent the emergence of new criminals or guilds that are more violent, or more difficult to contain.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39791950)

Brewing Trouble

A gust of wind made the shutters slam while the rain drummed on the lattice windows. It was a violent storm: streams were forming in the sloping streets of the Free City, flowing all the way down into the canal or the port. Seasonal storms were always impressive, but the inhabitants knew how to handle them.

Baldine the halfling remained undisturbed. The adventurers for whom she served as a guide had been in good spirits and paid her well. Now, she was enjoying a warm, fragrant syrup, dozing in front of a small milk roll cut in half. Weariness dulled her senses: she barely kept herself from jumping in her seat when a brown-haired man clad in discreet hues sat at her table. He must have been between 25 and 30 years old, with a fairly innocuous face. But something in his stance and the way he looked at her immediately put her on her guard. Baldine thought he looked like a freeman. A professional assassin, perhaps?

"Kids know their place and let the adults game."

Halflings were commonly given nicknames that referred to their diminutive size. His words were meant for the world that stirred in the shadows. Even though she understood their meaning, Baldine had no idea what she could have done wrong.

"My kin and I may be a bene sort, but don't mess with us! Hurry up and get!"

"You're knocking about town with a bunch of pigeons."

"That's my grind."

"Come day's-a-dawning, you'll feed them some gammon, say you can't do it anymore, and that a mort of yours will take care of them."

"And why's that?"

"Mind your own."

"Belt up."

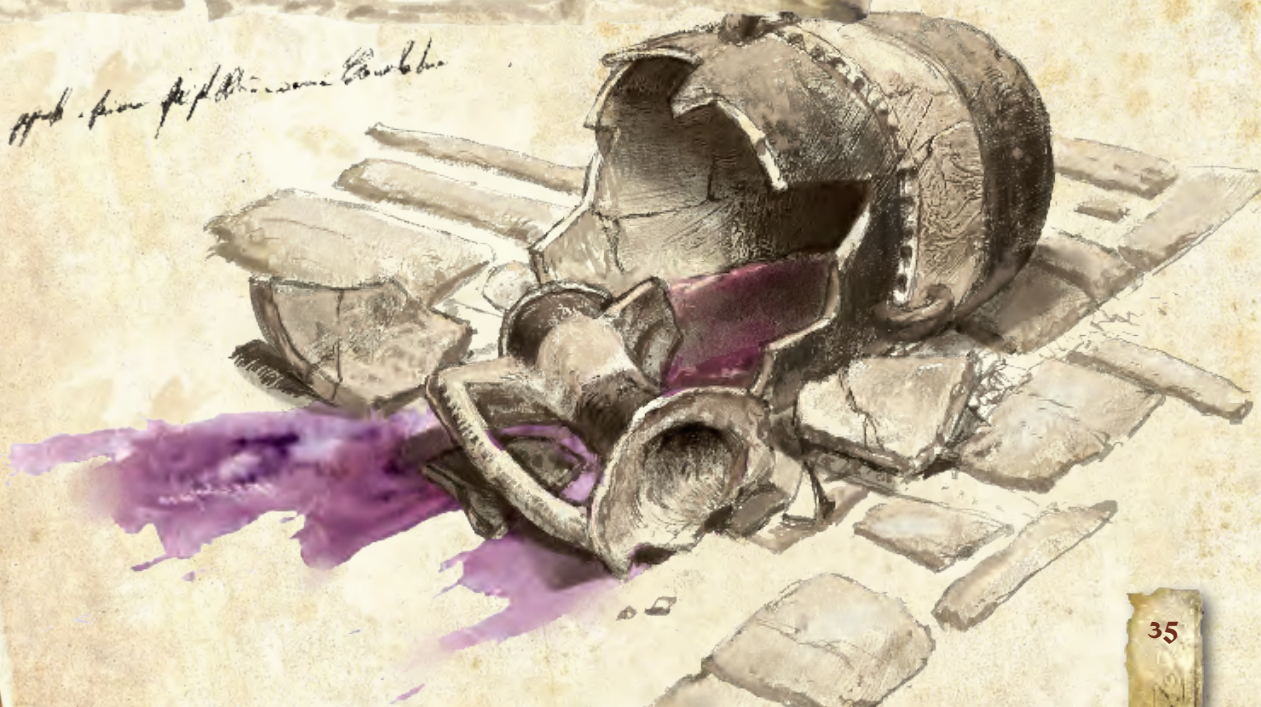
She answered without thinking, sharply. Fear made her aggressive. The man stood up.

"Your funeral."

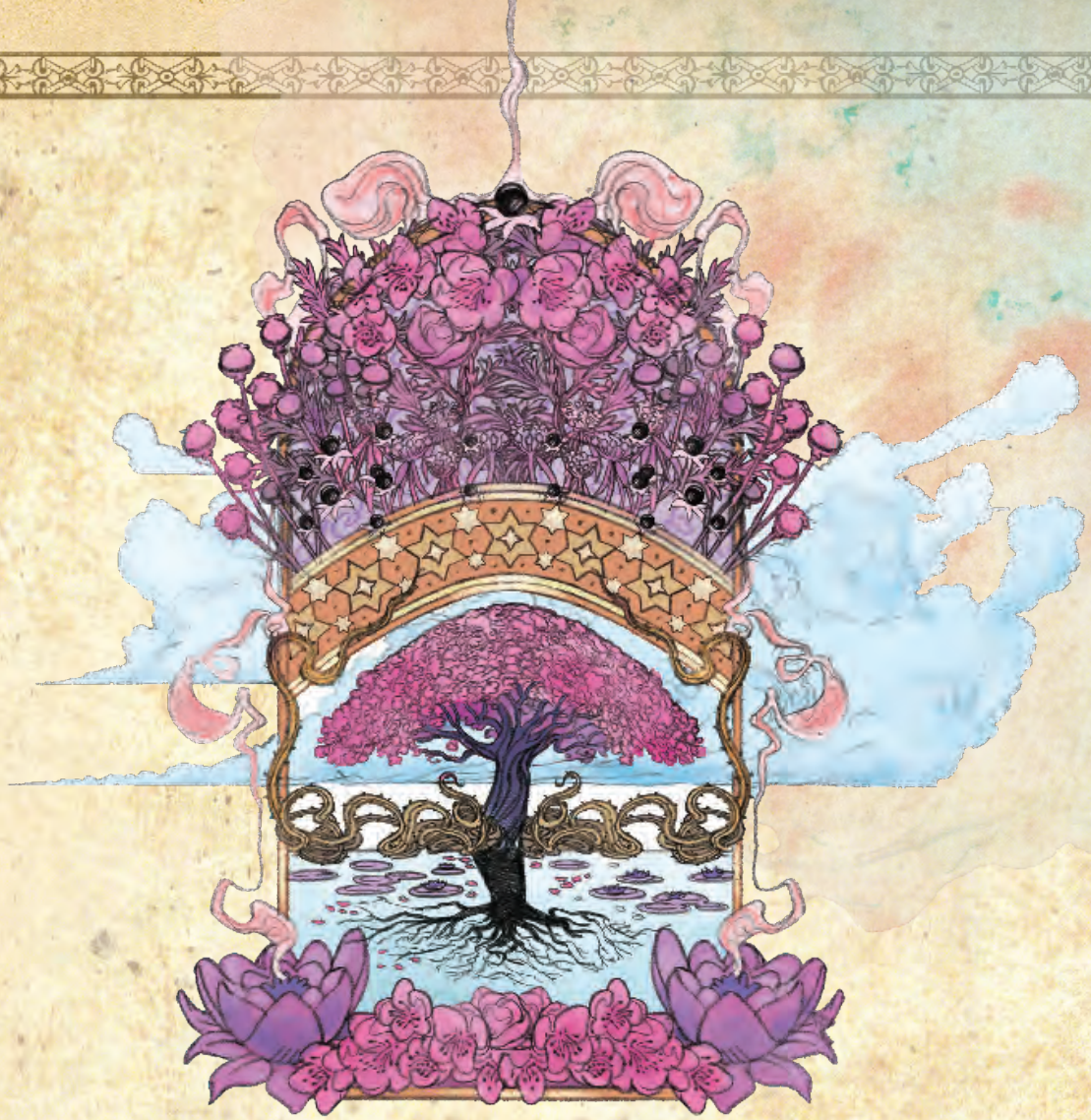
Was that a warning or a threat? Too late to think about that. The milk roll made crumbs on the table. Baldine knew she was insignificant, yet she refused to just roll over.

What had the adventurers stumbled upon? Obviously, they had pissed off people who were after their skins... but those same people also wanted to keep things hush-hush. Her syrup was getting cold, and since she would hate to waste it, she drank it. She had a choice: disappear to avoid trouble, or help those patsies who were already stepping on the feet of crooks and didn't even realize it. And then what? Become an adventurer, too?

She gobbled her roll.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Aïpio

- **Leadership**: Council with rotating leadership, located in the Star Palace.
- **Sources of income**: Drug and poison trafficking; crimes of the pen.
- **Symbol**: Cherry tree blossom.
- **Members**: All important members are elenion.
- **Location**: Star District, city-wide influence.

Aïpio is a criminal organization that does not fully identify as such. It is more of an association of elenion dilettantes with a kind of indolent elegance. It controls all the smuggling from Ellerìna, especially the arrival of drugs and poisons that are then spread to other districts.
In addition, Aïpio is very active in crimes of the pen: fraud, forgery, blackmail, etc. In general, its members keep away from brutal violence and bloody crimes. Nevertheless, they can and will defend themselves if necessary and willingly use sophisticated methods.
In the Free City's criminal underworld, Aïpio also has the idiosyncrasy of providing a setting for negotiations between criminals. When one wants to talk with a dangerous person, the ultimate neutral ground is an establishment in the Star District. There, the Vigent Watch arrests only physically aggressive individuals, zealously enforcing the peace. Thanks to this unnatural association with law enforcement, Aïpio is respected and well informed. In return for this service, members of Aïpio enjoy great immunity from members of all the thieves' guilds.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

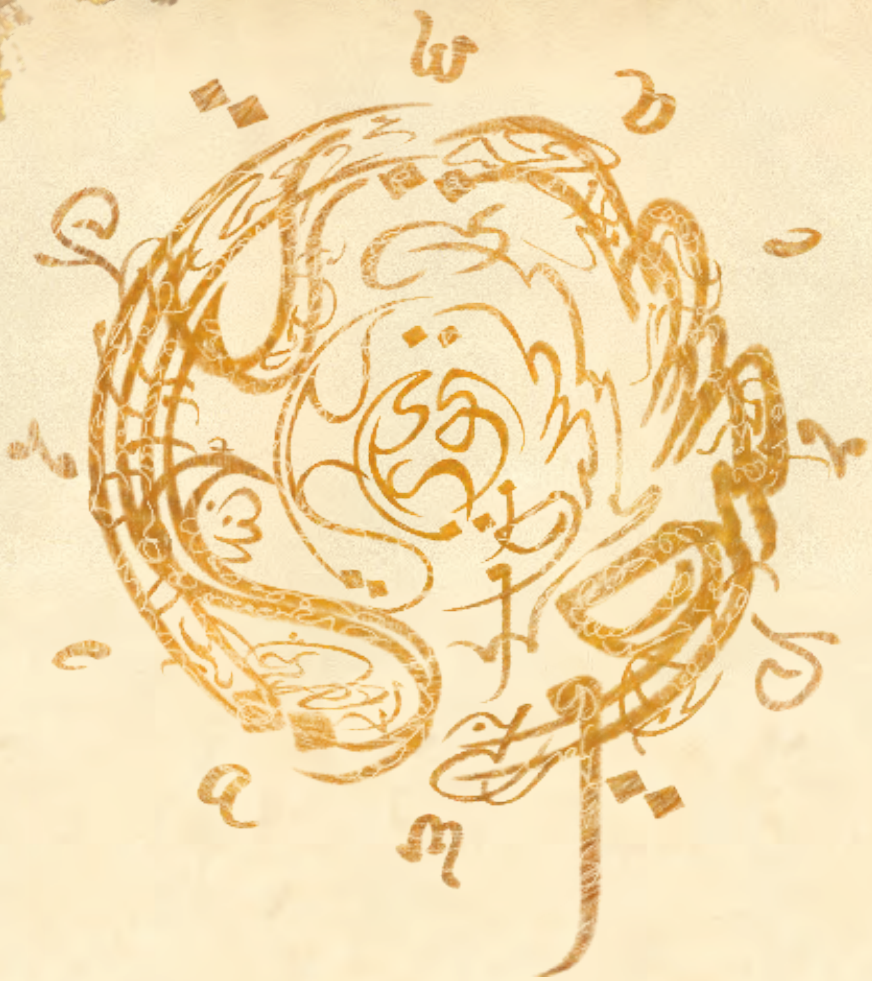


The Tridentine

- **Leadership**: Council of leaders, comprised of the heads of each of the Tridentine's specialties; members choose a new leader among them every three years.
- **Sources of income**: Pickpocketing, smuggling, burglaries, extortion, whoring, illegal gambling, etc.
- **Symbol**: A trident, the traditional weapon of fishermen, alluding to the port origins of its members.
- **Members**: Dockers and inhabitants of poor districts near the harbor.
- **Location**: Old Port District; Sisters District; Artificers' District; Terrace districts; Foundry District; Eolian District; Old Necropolis District; Cyrillan District; Crystal District.

A true wharfs' gang, the Tridentine has full control over the (numerous) illegal activities of the Shipowners' Port. They are more than a gang of thugs, as all members are involved in a wide range of criminal activities, from simple merry sailors (underground fighting, prostitution, gambling, alcohol) to the captains of merchant companies (escort, extortion). Overwhelmed by this hydra, the Vigent Watch in the Old Port was all too happy to be bought off, letting the Tridentine fight the Raqisa, which is trying to get a foothold in the district. The Tridentine had to give ground because of its artisanal operation, but it remains a powerful and formidable enemy nonetheless.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



The Raqisa

- **Leadership**: A leading circle and one secret leader.
- **Sources of income**: Burglaries, ambushes, violent robberies, smuggling, extortion, and blackmail.
- **Symbol**: A simplified calligraphy of the gang's name.
- **Members**: All sorts of delinquents and criminals, all of them obedient and ready to shed blood. The assassin Lysandre (see **Creatures, In the Shadows: A Thousand Faces**) is a distinguished member.
- **Location**: Spice District, a.k.a. Ghardat's District; Lighthouse District; Crystal District; Sisters District; Artificers' District; Cyrillan District.

The Raqisa, also known as the Dancer, is one of the main thieves' guilds in Ghardat. Its distinctive feature is the fact it is organized in concentric circles. In the first circle are occasional or regular collaborators who respect the authority of the guild and pay a percentage of their earnings to be allowed to work. Access to the second circle comes through an initiation with mystical overtones and the swearing of a solemn oath. Members of the Raqisa who attain this status have access to secret caches and clandestine taverns, but cannot leave the organization until their death. The third circle is the leading circle. Only they know who among them is the head of the guild.

Thanks to a secret agreement with the council of Ghardat's District, the Raqisa allows local merchants to obtain information on their competitors in exchange for a certain impunity. This close association between a district council and a criminal organization goes beyond the limits of simple bribery. The Raqisa seeks to expand into all districts by eliminating rival gangs or bringing them under its yoke.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



The Kleidi-Kleidaria

- **Leadership**: Adolphos Quèro "Nimble Fingers" a.k.a. "The Invisible" a.k.a. "The Mask."
- **Sources of income**: Smuggling, trafficking, shipping of illegal goods, trespassing.
- **Symbol**: A key on a great, open arch.
- **Members**: Locksmiths that were cast out of their guild, fake chimney sweeps and real burglars, door breakers and smugglers.
- **Location**: Cyrillan District; Crystal District; Terrace districts; Artificers' District; Cyrillane.

The Kleidi-Kleidaria (the key—the lock), or "Klei," is a criminal association from Cyrillane that specializes in trespassing via fascinating methods. As a rule, Klei members do not know each other, which allows the organization to diversify its operations, including in the service of competing interests. If someone desires a door be opened, the Kleidi-Kleidaria are there to provide a key.

The charismatic leader of the Klei in the Free City dreams of his activity becoming legitimate, maybe even official. Perhaps as an agent for the clandestine activities of the Council of Strategists? In Cyrillane, members of the Klei hold serious doubts toward such plans. Some even entertain radical plots to get rid of this popular but overambitious leader. Within the Free City itself, plans are further complicated by the Klei's involvement in the exfiltration of wealthy refugees toward the City, and by their strong and steady relations with their country of origin. It's hard to obtain secret missions from one state while being heavily involved in those of another. In addition to these issues, the Klei is also provoked by the Tridentine, who remain on the defensive, and by the Raqisa, who seek to hold hegemonic power.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



The Salt Circle

- **Leadership**: Inner workings are unknown to anyone who is not a member; leadership is ensured by a select council of accountants, lawyers, and philosophers.
- **Sources of income**: Contracted revenge and looting of victims.
- **Symbol**: A white circle.
- **Members**: Secret assassins and fighters who follow a strict code of honor.
- **Location**: The whole City; foreign actions are possible.

The Salt Circle is the only assassins' organization still active in the Free City. The Circle is entirely dedicated to carrying out the vengeance of scorned victims; this utterly secretive group follows a strict sense of honor in pursuit of a certain idea of justice.

The Salt Circle hunts down and executes, without trial, notorious criminals who have not been tried, and do so with no concern for the concepts of diplomatic or political impunity. Its anonymous members are as elusive as their hits are fearsome. They use a wide variety of poisons, attacks, and staged accidents to achieve their aims. Their sole interest is carrying out the victims' revenge.

There are several urban legends as to how one can contact the Salt Circle: a message folded in four and slipped between the stones of a particular fountain, a prayer made in front of the statue of a specific saint in an old chapel, a letter given to beggars who wear a special sign, and so on. Some say that the Circle simply keeps abreast of all crimes and contacts certain victims to offer its help. In any case, the decision lies with the Salt Circle alone, and it systematically investigates all cases to ensure the guilt of its targets.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Moles of Thorst



- **Leadership**: No unified leadership; four, small rival gangs compete for control of the territory.
- **Sources of income**: Racketeering, fencing, all-around exfiltration.
- **Symbol**: None at present.
- **Members**: Inhabitants of the Thorst slums who seek respect, power, or wealth.
- **Location**: Thorst slums.

The name "moles of Thorst" refers to the inhabitants of the eponymous slums. They know the sewage system, disused quarries, and catacombs beneath the slums like the back of their hand, and use their knowledge of the area to smuggle in and out black market or stolen goods, as well as anyone wishing to avoid the guard posts at the town's gates.

Beware! Without a capable guide, the underground networks are a genuine labyrinth leading to all sorts of dead ends and similar mazes without an exit. The moles use them to shake off possible pursuers.

Due to the potential of this location, other criminal organizations court the moles hoping to get their hands on the underground entrances to the city. The total absence of organization and hierarchy in these four gangs, as well as their tendency toward violence, has made dialogue complicated. Foremost of all, there is no such thing as a lasting agreement: each time, negotiations must start again from scratch (or thereabouts).

Scott Timmermans (Order #3873950)



The Moochers' Guild

- **Leadership**: His Lordship the Marquis de la Godriole.
- **Sources of income**: Mooching, racketeering, scandal blackmail.
- **Symbol**: An ironic coat of arms consisting of a fat pig wearing a jester's hat.
- **Members**: Troubadours, dancers, singers, storytellers, musicians, and actors, women and men of ill repute, thieves, and professional moochers.
- **Location**: Eolian District and high-class districts in general.

As self-proclaimed "Monarch of the Great Buffoonery," the Marquis de la Godriole presides over a motley, festive-looking court. His fake guild practices a relatively gentle form of racketeering by infiltrating the most prestigious celebrations, bourgeois weddings, and communal parties, enjoying them to their full extent in exchange for pleasant company and harmless frolicking. They cheat at games, extort drinkers by forcing them to pay for rounds of drinks, cut the purses of sleeping guests, and challenge people to duels as often as possible. Try to chase them away, and they will surely make a cacerolazo, throw rotten eggs and meat, and so on. The Moochers are especially good at cuckolding spoilsports or revealing very well-sourced rumors about them. This "guild" has completely spoiled some parties. When faced with such menaces, most hosts grit their teeth and allow an extremely provocative Marquis to hold sway over them, even as he flatters and kowtows, all while trying to seduce the bride under her husband's nose. The threat of scandal is a far greater concern than these humiliations.

The Marquis is a mysterious gnome who uses incessant jokes and puns to hide a weighty past. He lives out in the open, going from parties to taverns, and from mansions to luxurious brothels, always sponging off others, which he expertly turns around, so they are the ones indebted to him. He is protected at all times by a large merosi: face hidden by a helmet with a wrought nose guard, he wears a jester's outfit with slashed sleeves and is referred to by the Marquis as "Sir Deadpans-a-lot". His appearance generally deters victims who would want to bring the Marquis a bill.

Although the Moochers are well accepted in the Eolian District, they know danger awaits them on the territories of Aïpio and the Raqisa. Their taste for provocation may well lead them to tragedy.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Rag Kingdom

- **Leadership**: The Rag King.
- **Sources of income**: Waste collection and sorting; sale of information.
- **Symbol**: None.
- **Members**: Ragmen.
- **Location**: Located in the Sludge slums, they are vital to the entire city's hygiene standards.

With over a million inhabitants who eat, drink, and work, the Free City spews out a lot of waste. The waters of its canals and port are often murky, even downright putrid. There are many types of refuse, even carrion. As a general rule, the ragmen are made up of halfling beggars, and recently, Cyrillan refugees. They collect refuse bins, sort the waste, try to sell what can be sold, and sometimes find valuable objects in the middle of it all. Ragmen go absolutely everywhere, from palatial courtyards to the darkest alleyways. Thanks to them, some of the refuse can be recycled, but many others dump their haul in mounds of waste at the gates of the Thorst and Sludge slums. Normally, this organization is enough to contain most waste-related problems, but all it takes is one hot summer day for the air to stink up nearly every waterside district, resulting in the inhabitants shutting themselves up in their homes.

After going through the trash for so long, the ragmen finally created an unofficial corporation with a high degree of solidarity among its members. They form a very impressive intelligence network in all districts and for all inhabitants of the City. This "rag kingdom" is organized and governed by the "Rag King," a halfling from the Sludge slums. He lives under various aliases and sells his information to every corner of the Free City, from high society and the Vigent to thieves.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39791950)

Other Criminal Organizations

In addition to well-established criminal groups, the city also includes:

- **District gangs.** More or less ambitious, the lifespan of district gangs often lasts a few years. Members are usually teenagers and young adults who gather around a charismatic leader. Violence, justice, and adulthood often put an end to the careers of these would-be thugs. Some, however, go on to become career criminals within a more structured organization.

- **Shared interests between powerful public figures.** The values of freedom and merit, being closely tied to one's wealth, can cause some influential merchants to forget about ethics. Punishment is only doled out to those caught breaking the rules. These cabals are often small in size, sometimes rallying around a particular project, such as blocking a specific trade route, or anonymously blackmailing a competitor. They generally shy away from physical violence as much as possible. However, some grow so close to thieves' guilds that they become a funder, or even an arm, of such a guild.

- **Cults.** Although the Free City is very permissive in terms of ideas, it is bad for business to display one's worship for a diabolic hospodar publicly. For some, such practices are a means of gaining access to new powers and bringing plans to fruition. Others seek the thrill of the forbidden. A minority are motivated by a true desire for destruction or sadistic revenge. Members of a cult can be just as diverse as they can be specialized.

- **Intelligence networks.** All embassies in the Free City perform "intelligence" functions. For foreign powers, the city is the perfect neutral ground for keeping each other in check, negotiating, information gathering, and settling scores discreetly. For more discretion, native agents of a country look to hire or use people sympathetic to their causes.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Districts

The city developed amid a rich, rocky nest surrounding a cove. Walls, bridges, docks, and artificial headlands were progressively added, while new dwellings connected old villages.

In time, wealthy merchants arrived, who would buy entire districts only to demolish and rebuild them to their liking, creating a sort of competition between districts, each trying to outdo the others in expanding their territory. Thus, the poorest were gradually pushed back toward the fringes, and even into outlying regions, considered to be outside the city proper. They suffered just as much at the hands of new, large embassies as they did by gentrification, as the mighty would take over territories and reshape them to their liking.

Coming from Ellerìna

Arwen Uvëa was an old friend who lived in Varnaïrello, in Ellerìna. Despite the years and the ocean between them, she and Mirë Lelyen had continued their correspondence. It was in one such letter that the scholar learned that Manyen, Arwen's son, had just reached the age at which elenion traditionally travel the world. The young man would arrive aboard the Stormy Dancer *and make his first stop in the Free City.*

As soon as the ship's arrival in port was known, Mirë Lelyen left his home in the Crystal District to meet the newcomer. On this early autumn morning, the air was still mild and the sky clear. He made his way briskly down the docks along the Dispende to reach the Dawn Bridge. From there, he hopped in one of the small dinghies that allowed inhabitants to reach opposite districts more quickly, and which made the trip back and forth at almost all hours of the day and night. They were needed to supply the entire western part of the city, which was pushed back against the rocks, without a single road leading outside. Farm produce, cattle, craftsmen... people came from every direction, causing perpetual traffic jams and regular accidents.

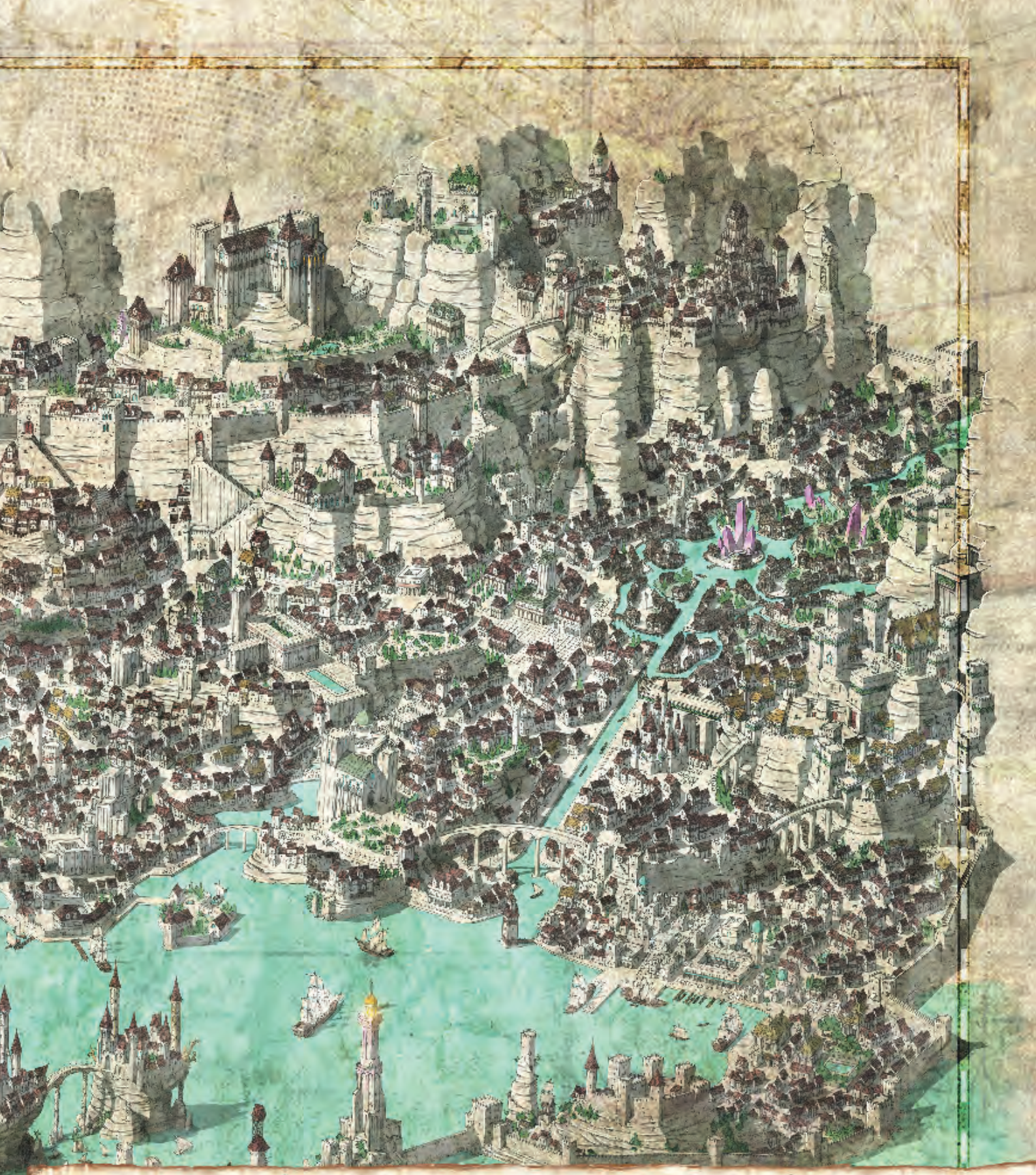
The crossing to reach the Sentinels' Port, which lay in the Star District, took about half an hour. The Stormy Dancer *had had the time to slowly navigate the overcrowded harbor to reach her destination. The passengers had disembarked. Some waited for their luggage, while others were already going through red tape at the harbor master's office, including the payment of entry taxes into the city. Manyen Uvëa was among the former, eager to discover the Free City.*

Scott Timmerman (Order #3973195)

Free City



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Legend



1. Thorst Slums
2. Temple of Blacksmith
3. Eolian District
4. Builders' Guild
5. Council of the Dragons
6. Council of Strategists
7. Assembly (former royal palace)
8. Council of the Guilds
9. Temple of Flora and Frostelle
10. Temple of Maker
11. Cyrillan District
12. Sludge Slums/ Oozing Suburbs
13. Steinbank
14. River Dispende
15. Ghardat's District
16. Lighthouse
17. Elenion District (aka Star District)
18. Temple of Death

Scott Timmerman (Order #6978139)

The Star District

Originally, elenion only lived on the tips of the rocky promontory where their palaces were built. Over time, they came to own more and more buildings and plots of land. In 306, a great landslide destroyed the city ramparts and a great number of houses. With their immense wealth, the elenion were able to buy back the ruins at low cost and gradually rebuild the district. With the exception of a few hardliners, all inhabitants are now "palatial tenants," as the saying goes. Local organization increasingly resembled that of a small kingdom, with an elenion minority as the nobility, and representatives of all other peoples as the commoners.

The Sentinels' Port

When ships enter the harbor after a tricky maneuver by the lighthouse, the first port to the east is the one called the Sentinels. Named after the large statues at its entrance, it is the main access point for ships coming from Ellerìna. Their holds are always loaded with valuable—if sometimes illegal—goods, such as works of art, medicine and cosmetics, drugs and poisons, liquors and fine wines, magic items, and purebred sercëpoica horses. Occasionally, after a rough crossing, the horses are taken to nearby meadows to recover from the trip.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)





The Star District

Greetings

As soon as the young man met Mirë Lelyen, he put his right hand on his heart and bowed; then, he spoke in practiced Elvish:

"Thank you for your welcome. My mother told me a lot about you, and I thoroughly enjoyed the travelogues you published. I am happy and honored to have you as my guide in this city. I will strive to be a diligent student and a respectful visitor."

His host responded in kind, in the fashion of their people, but his manner was a more lively one, a development of years of life in a teeming city. Once the formalities were over, the two men took a few steps into the Star District before the elder invited his young kinsman to stop at a tavern. They walked through the elegant common room, through its hues of ashen blue, and sat down at a table in the small courtyard decorated with flowers and asters.

"To be perfectly frank, I was a little surprised to learn that you don't live here, or even at the palace on the point."

"Around here, our people often stay among themselves and live as in Ellerìna, speaking almost nothing but Elvish on a daily basis. I preferred to move to a more cosmopolitan area, one closer to the libraries, both private and public."

"I understand. Why move so far away, if one is to live exactly the same way as back home? I'm not nostalgic yet. I'll be happy to live among Cyfands. I've learned the language, but I know nothing of the customs. Please teach me, so that I don't shame you with my bad manners."

Mirë Lelyen bowed and slipped away to place their order, holding back an amused smile. As if the young stranger had anything to fear from offending anyone with his ignorance of customs! A light meal was brought to them, and the discussion resumed.

"The Free City inhabitants have different ways of greeting each other. They could be classed in two groups: physical greetings, which are perceived as a sign of sincerity, and other, more distant forms of greetings, which show respect and dignity.

"The most common greeting, done by clasping hands over one another's right forearm, is said to be an ancient custom hailing from northern Cyfandir. In some regions, a greeting is almost always followed by an embrace. It's as if to say, 'I am not your enemy, thus I offer you my fighting hand to prove that I have no desire to quarrel.' In everyday life, when in a rush or in passing, common Cyfands simply raise their right hand briefly.

"Among the refined elite, some took to the Elvish greeting, hand over heart. Here, it means something like, 'If I am dishonest, let my heart stop beating.' People influenced by Cyrillan and Sand Kingdom cultures have a similar gesture: after placing their hand over their heart, they make a flourish with the other hand, evoking an invitation. The Ajagar and Rachamangekr citizens bow with joined hands. The meaning of the gesture seems to be, 'I respect you and show you my bound hands, I do not seek to act against you.'"

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

A Nightlife Hotspot

The Star District is particularly well-known for its bustling and refined nightlife. The fact that elves only need four hours of daily trance to rest allows them to keep shops and establishments open at all times. The golden youth come here to have a good time in peace and quiet. Ferries allow them to come and go from the district at the oddest hours. The squares are enchanting, illuminated all night long, decorated with water displays and carefully arranged flowers. Architecture and interior decoration are of Ellerìnion inspiration, and contribute to the muted, magical atmosphere.

Aïpio's Invisible Influence

At a glance, order prevails in the Star District. The streets are clean, the people polite, the guards helpful, and the pickpockets strictly reprimanded. A traveler would be amazed by the organization, rigor, and discretion of the officers serving in this district. Visible crimes—theft, damage, violence—are so tightly kept in check that, even late at night a lone stroller has virtually nothing to fear. Here, the most minor aggression causes a scandal.

Despite all appearances, which undoubtedly contribute to the quality of life in the district, those who are well informed know that the situation is less clear-cut. The ease with which drugs and poisons pass through customs at the Sentinels' Port leaves little doubt as to the corruption—or even direct involvement—of the local Vigent Watch in all sorts of trafficking. In fact, "low-key" criminality flourishes with almost complete impunity: the selling of drugs and poisons, illegal betting, gambling (rigged or not), blackmail, swindling, and so on. All these activities take place under the control of Aïpio (see **Powers and Factions: Criminal Underworld**).

Strict violence control, coupled with tolerance for other illegal activities, makes private rooms in the Star District the neutral grounds where members of thieves' guilds can negotiate without fear for their safety.

Aïpio's knowledge of all the city's dubious affairs makes it a leading power, capable of influencing politics, commerce, and crime with equal effectiveness. This association is constantly strengthening its influence, strategically placing its pawns with a long-term vision typical of a people with a long lifespan. Observant and skilled in arcana, members of Aïpio stand among A Thousand Faces' opponents.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Using the Waterways

Manyen Uvëa looked at the dinghy with some reluctance. He had crossed the ocean in a real ship; from its deck, he had seen the small, flat-bottomed boats that cluttered the harbor. He whispered his doubts in Elvish.

"Is it safe to sail in such a frail skiff? There are so many of them and they seem to be going every which way... Isn't there ever an accident?"

"Oh, there is!" Mirë Lelyen smiled, embarrassed. "Most often, they occur in windy or foggy weather. Then, it's a bit dangerous. But today, conditions are good, so there's nothing to worry about. People are used to it. Besides, the Dispende is canalized and under total control, and the tidal flows are limited by the narrowness of the Lighthouse passage, which means there is almost no current in the harbor. This poses its own problems, such as the stench of brackish water in summer and the fact that the harbor is sinking in the sand, but this is of little concern to us. The most important thing is that dinghies are much faster at reaching the Crystal District from here. The way around is long, and the streets often congested."

"Are the waterways always the fastest?"

"No. In fact, although many districts have a view of the sea, the cliffs or the water depths limit our possibilities. The Eolian District is characterized by these two constraints. This is also the case on the doorstep of the builders' guild.

"Tall ships coming from the ocean can moor at the Sentinels' Port in the Star District, the Shipowner's Port to the south of the Academy, and the Spices Port in Ghardat's District.

"Flat-bottomed boats, on the other hand, can go as far as the Thorst slums in the west, the forum market at the foot of Maker's temple, and all along the canalized part of the Dispende.

"Many parts of the city, which are stranded atop the steep heights, are very difficult to access. Since Eolians have strengthened their presence, there is room on roof terraces for the nimble nefelytrons. Bloatships, on the other hand, are rare. Currently, there is a bridge under construction between the Eolian District and the Academy. They plan on making jetties suitable for these large flying boats."

"It seems like everything is subject to a certain improvisation."

"The Free City has grown without any real master plan, and the districts do not always consult with each other before deciding on their development. The city is alive and offers many opportunities, but you will find neither moderation nor rest here."

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Old Necropolis District

A peaceful district closely surrounding the silent temple of Death, the Old Necropolis stretches against the Vultures' Cliff. The first constructions date back well over a thousand years and the remains bear witness to power struggles, both religious and political.

Layers of Bone Dust

The Vultures' Cliff was used long before the construction of the temple of Death. At the time of Cyfand culture, which bore resemblance to the current ways of druidism, inhabitants of the region used to place their dead at sacred sites so that the scavengers living on the escarpments would eat them. According to legends handed down by the inhabitants of the Old Necropolis district, ancient Cyfand believers also had places of worship buried deep under the earth, in tunnels leading to the Netherworld. There, it is said that they honored Eana's roots as underground sources of renewal, the symbolic counterpart of heaven.

When the Stopstep Empire expanded in influence, it built stone sanctuaries to the glory of the deities. The Free City's temple of Death—at the time, the temple of Cessation—was one of them, and it replaced the ancient, sacred sites. The access to the ancient tunnels was sealed, and new underground networks were dug over the centuries. The necropolis housed all the dead from the surrounding area, becoming a genuine underground city, a vast catacomb. Inside, the richest had mausoleums built, while others, more modest, were content with a simple alcove. The precise extent of the thousand-year-old tunnels is unknown. Earthquakes and water infiltration caused damage, creating or closing accesses over time. Ancient workers regularly had to dig ventilation tunnels to continue their work. These shafts—usually discreet and hidden by the many plants on the rocky edges—can be found almost everywhere in the heights of the Old Necropolis District.

The first Drae rulers were buried in the Old Necropolis, but an obscure conflict between them and the clergy of Death led to radical changes. The Plain Cemetery was inaugurated, and the catacombs were abandoned.

Tombstone Garden

For a long time, the surroundings of the Old Necropolis were inhabited by craftsmen in charge of making tombstones, by acolytes of Death, and by their families. In the name of the many services rendered to the dead in the past, the inhabitants of the district were allowed to continue burying their own in what became the graveyard known as Tombstone Garden, at the foot of Castle Graey. Available space being limited, this led to the graves being dug next to each other. Sometimes, old bodies are dug up and placed in the ossuary, which stands near the center of Tombstone Garden.

The macabre atmosphere of the place, with its cypresses and yews, is particularly striking on foggy nights. In the city, the young like to challenge one another to spend the night there, steal personal belongings from the deceased, or skulls from the ossuary. Oftentimes, these games are of little consequence... but there are frightening urban legends about ghosts or abominable fiends who supposedly appear on certain nights to feed on the reckless.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Castle Graey

Built on a rocky rise, Castle Graey shares its main entrance with the first courtyard of the temple of Death. To reach it, one must climb the great stairs leading to the sanctuary, then cross a bridge guarded at both ends. It is likely that some underground accesses and hidden passages also allow access to the castle.

At the time of the Drae Dynasty, the Graeys were a line of fighters comprising warriors, hunters, paladins, and priests of Death. Building the family palace so close to such a sacred place was a reward for their many services. When the monarchy fell, and during the troubled times that followed, the Graeys were badly affected and many perished. It is said that their line was ended but, in the Free City, many believe that descendants still exist and may someday try to claim the legacy of their ancestors.

The castle was abandoned and remained empty for some time. After deliberation, the Council of the Dragons bestowed its ownership upon the clergy of Death. But the castle, being remote, difficult to access, and in direct competition with the Plain Cemetery (which received all donations), was sold at an auction by the temple of Death in 328. The buyer kept their identity a secret, but in view of the ongoing renovations, they likely possess significant funds. Is it a Graey descendant, returned to their ancestral home? A wealthy eccentric, fulfilling a whim? Or perhaps the leader of a thieves' guild, using the castle to launder income, and preparing to give their business a veneer of legality?



The Old Necropolis District

Scott Timpermans (Order #39731950)

The Thorst Slums

The Free City overlooks the River Dispende and has continued to expand into new areas as it spreads past its once limited borders. The Thorst slums stretch around the astonishing rocky structure that is the Giants' Bridge and as far as the bottom of the Keyhart Cliff.

A Complicated Daily Life

Thorst is not really a part of the Free City, as the district doesn't officially exist, and its inhabitants are not citizens. There is no one to uphold their rights, not even when it comes to hygiene or safety. Since the Dispende's tributaries were diverted for the benefit of "actual" city dwellers, only the rains allow the few remaining plants to grow. Thorst inhabitants install cisterns and must constantly save water. This constant struggle for water has led to the nasty nickname used by the Free inhabitants, a cruel play on "thirst," from which the region draws its name.

The district is without a council or a Vigent Watch, and residents are forced to pay the local gangs a "security" tax. In fact, the only advantage of living in Thorst is the absence of rent.

Although criminals are well-established in the slums, the majority of the population simply tries to survive by working in the city. Slum dwellers are at the very bottom of the social ladder, but they're also necessary for the smooth running of the city because of the hundreds of thankless jobs they work. They are ignored by public figures but often targeted by preachers of marginal or revolutionary cults who promise them either salvation in the afterlife, or a revolution that will put an end to the injustice of this mortal world. Some inhabitants lend them an interested ear—under the anxious eye of the Council of Strategists' spies, who worry about this trend.

For the inhabitants of Thorst, reaching the city is difficult and involves many checks by Vigent soldiers at the gates. To work around this, they can board a dinghy to reach the center of the Free City, or enter on foot, through the Aqueduct Arch. From there, they can easily reach the Old Necropolis, the Star District or the Eolian District. To get to the city center, one must go around the mound of the temple of Blacksmith and reach the Swan Bridge, which leads to the immediate vicinity of the Council of the Dragons.

An Abandoned Land

In times past, the Thorst region was watered by the Keyhart Waterfall. This source, which originated from deep within the eponymous cliff, irrigated crops and allowed noble families to live pleasantly in beautiful homes. The ruins remember this peaceful, agricultural past. Many people owned a basement comprising cellars, cisterns, and a family mausoleum, sometimes connected to the networks of the Old Necropolis.

These basements have since been invaded by gangs who seek to keep law enforcement out of their affairs. Many local criminals are also prepared to disappear into the tunnels of the Old Necropolis if necessary. For those who want to leave the Free City at all costs and escape the authorities, Thorst is a desperate bid, with its own dangerous secret passages leading to the Netherworld and beyond the plateau, somewhere in the plains.



The Thorst Slums

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Eolian District





The gnome district is the most modern in the city. After purchasing the aging buildings and hotels in the area, the Eolian gnomes who settled there gradually built a solid reputation for this "district of inventions," where nefelytrons run under the light of gas streetlamps. The district council is marked by a clock tower, decorated with a chime that tells time to a different tune every hour. Most visitors must mind their heads, as many of the facilities and buildings here are small. Another place of renown is the printing house of the gnome Baltusia Nodil. She purchased an old scriptorium and radically changed its appearance. Now, it is occupied by the company's large hydraulic presses, which run all day and all night long, printing books, posters, and gazettes for the entire city.

Scott Thompmare (Order #39731450)

The Foundry District

The Foundry District is named after the great temple of Blacksmith. This god is arguably the most worshiped in all the city. He inspires warriors—and not just paladins—craftsmen, and any who aspire to live in a harmonious society, safe from the destructive forces of fiends and Canker.

The Anvil

The Free City prison was nicknamed the Anvil because of its proximity to the grandiose temple of Blacksmith and the legions of his followers among the court administration. It used to be the fortress of a feudal lord who owned lands south-west of the city, but it became a place of confinement in the early days of the Republic. One of the prison's peculiarities is its two entrances: one is in the Foundry District, the other is a raised masonry road which acts as one of the boundaries of Thorst. A bridge was built to prolong this path, which leads to a department of the prison carved into the very stone, where only Awakened prisoners are locked up.

According to urban legends, the castle belonged to a debauched and sadistic lord who doled out the worst kinds of abuse within his walls and did so with complete impunity. It is said that some instruments of torture date from his time, and that there are hidden basements which hold secrets so horrifying they were simply walled off.



The Foundry District

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Terraces

Each terrace is a district with its own institutions and an urban village atmosphere. The people know each other and live right next to palaces, monasteries, and temples. Everyone has the same trouble bringing in their furniture, grain, and water. All stairs are bottlenecks, even more so when a shop gets its deliveries, or when a procession follows a coffin to the Plain Cemetery. Burglars have it particularly rough, as the options for escape—unless through ancient tunnels—are few and far between.

The Giants' Terrace

The closest terrace to the Giants' Bridge, this large, geological structure separates the city from the Thorst slums. The inhabitants are few, living in a quiet, almost secluded atmosphere as they enjoy the view of the city from above.

Posh District, Pricey Life

Food is brought in either by porters passing through the Palace Terrace or by bloatship. In both cases, this complicates daily life and increases the price of goods. With the exception of a few inhabitants whose families have lived on this terrace for centuries, most people are members of the upper middle class. Many members of the builders' guild in particular live right next to their workplace. Living on the Giants' Terrace is synonymous with peace, quiet, and near-absolute security against thieves. Here, crime is almost non-existent.

The Monastery of Perfect Balance

The martial-looking building at the very top is the Monastery of Perfect Balance. This place of study and meditation welcomes both warrior monks and ordinary citizens in search of inner peace. By retreating for a few days or longer, they escape from the hectic life of the Free City—all the while staying close to it.



The Giants Terraces

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Palace Terrace

The Palace Terrace is majestic and rich, and it houses part of the builders' guild and the Assembly—formerly, the royal palace of the Drae Dynasty. Most institutions, offices, and councils essential to the smooth running of the city are located here.



It is also the home of powerful families and their servants. With the small, well-stocked but expensive market, one can do most of their shopping without having to leave. Numerous porters, messengers, and day laborers stand ready to take jobs throughout the day. If something is missing, they will scour the city looking for it. Their comings and goings set the rhythm of the day and create many traffic jams.

In the evening, all gates to the district are closed. The passes that allow people through at night are always carefully checked. At these late hours, the district inhabitants can stroll through the gardens, enjoying the calm and refinement of their surroundings.



The Palace Terrace

Scott Timmermans (Order #3973)



The Terrace of the Dragons

Near the heart of the city's activity, the Terrace of the Dragons is under the influence of two major institutions: the builders' guild (see **Powers and Factions: Companies and Guilds**) and the Council of the Dragons. The Court of the Dragons and the Augurate's Office (see **Powers and Factions: Law Enforcement**), which both deal with sacred and supernatural cases, are located nearby and share certain areas. A tunnel connects the detention rooms of the Augurate's Office to the Anvil, making it possible to transfer convicts directly without having to cross the outside bridges.

The Terrace of Shelter

The Cyrillan District is located on the Terrace of Shelter. It is said to be the oldest inhabited place in the Free City. Its oldest towers, wells, cellars, and crypts date back to the very early days of the city. It is densely populated by craftsmen and small traders who live in buildings designed to maximize every available square inch. The half-timbered houses form small streets and squares. Here, you can enjoy typical Cyrillan dishes and speak the language of the country with nostalgic people. The situation has clearly deteriorated since the fall of the Kadmeids.

Protected by the cliffs from the threat of attack, the inhabitants have converted defensive works into granaries and storehouses. Access to the town is complex and tedious. One must either go over the bridge leading to the Palace Terrace, or use the stairs dug into the cliff that go down to the entrance of the Crystal District. These stairs are dark and stuffy, leading to small tunnels of improbable design, and look like a cut-throat alley. Many beggars and underprivileged people come here to seek shelter for the night.

With the civil war, the Cyrillan District welcomes many refugees who have come to the Free City to be reunited with their families. Failing this, or because the houses were full, they ended up setting up numerous camps in the streets and house courtyards. The unceasing influx of new families worries the Assembly, which allows people to stay in this district only. Everyone fears the rise of an epidemic as much as the presence of support for the Nihilians, an extremist cult worshiping Tamerakh as the Destroyer, the Storm and the Liberator. Nihilians are one of the factions involved in the civil war in Cyrillane. They preach the liberation of the oppressed through the destruction of institutions and oppressive power, and in the Free City, there is no shortage of miserable people, whether in the Terrace of Shelter, or in the Thorst and Sludge slums.



The Terrace of Shelter

Scott Timmerman (Order #3973193)

The Spice District (Ghardat's District)



Kartaçöl versus Ghardat

Also known as Ghardat's District, the establishment of this trading post is a sign of the power of this Sand Kingdom. Indeed, the Free City offers special benefits to its favored partners (lower taxes, freedom to control ships at will, etc.). More and more, Kartaçöl's Empire—located on the Kaani continent—seeks to reduce Ghardat's influence by any means possible. Since the Raqisa (see **Powers and Factions: Criminal Underworld**) are very close to the public figures of the district (who are themselves agents of Ghardat's power), Kartaçöl wants to weaken its enemy by striking covert alliances with those who seem likely to expose the corruption of said public figures. This is not for justice's sake, but so that the Assembly can withdraw Ghardat's privileges, and ideally surrender them to Kartaçöl.

Underground Arenas

A true urban legend, the arena is a fairly small, clandestine battleground, bearing little resemblance to those of Sefikibi in the Sand Kingdoms. Nevertheless, it bustles with life, offering thrills and a grand display of those who dare face wild beasts or gladiators from the four corners of the known world. Gamblers also have the opportunity to try and win a few coins by betting on the right pair of legs and arms... but those who flaunt their wealth should beware, for such places have few witnesses.



The Spice District (Ghardat's District)

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



The Artificers' District

The Artificers' District is named after the strong presence of craft trades, as well as that of the Council of the Guilds and temple of Maker. Here, you can find the largest market in the city.

Maker's Faces

Each of the one hundred and nine altars of the temple, all of varying sizes, depicts a different face of the god beneath the heaps of offerings made to him: money, handicrafts, carved gems, pieces of jewelry or clothing, all sorts of food, etc. While some appear benevolent and show the face of a jovial and creative bard, others show monstrous monkey faces, parodic dragons with carnivorous smiles, and many other organic or artificial facets that are less than agreeable.

There is also a hundred and tenth altar, which has no face. It is said that all of these aspects of Maker have been collected in ancient temples around the world. The last one, being blank, supposedly evokes future creations. Legend has it that each of these faces—including the missing one—has a secret name. Were one to chant a litany of these names, they could bring forth great creative power. There is much speculation as to what it would make possible.

The Vigilance of Merchants

Cether had left the Steinbank, wrapped in a large, brown coat. The dark-haired dvaerg was anxious not to attract attention. Accompanied by her secretary, she wanted to verify a hunch. The employee she suspected of selling information had gone straight to the large forum in the Artificers' District. He had no idea he was being followed. The main problem was to avoid being noticed by the man's employers.

All of the world's merchant—and criminal—powers had at least one trading post in the Free City. The city was a place of negotiations both formal and discreet, where all networks could be found. Many guildmasters, shipowners, and bankers kept an eye and ear out for strategic and mercantile news, and then discussed it at length in the forum, in the Assembly, and at dinner parties. Knowing a piece of information before anyone else was a precious, sometimes decisive, advantage. Thus, it was not uncommon to pay informants here and there, such as a quillpusher in the Steinbank or a maid in a shipowner's mansion.

This was precisely what Cether feared. This dull employee had had his ear to too many doors and had too often been found in places where he shouldn't have been. He was now meeting with what, judging by their looks, were Ghardat nationals.

The dvaerg asked her secretary to summon the Vigent for a spy in the Steinbank. It was not her district, but craftsmen and bankers shared the same distaste for stealing secrets related to their business. Even if the shoddy man's employers weren't investigated, Cether preferred to arrest the spy and send a clear message to these people: "I know who you are, and next time, I'll use more expeditious means to teach you about the confidentiality of dvaerg business!"

Following the exchange between the employee and the Ghardat people, Cether felt a hint of guilt. Had he been blackmailed, or was he acting out of sheer greed? How many unlucky gamblers had had their debts paid off, only to learn such favors carry a price?

Scott Timmerman's (Order #39731950)

The Sisters District



The Sisters District is one of the smallest in the city. It is located between the Autumn Bridge and the Dawn Bridge. It comprises the temple of Flora and Frostelle, as well as a number of dwellings on the right bank of the River Dispende, up to the limit of the Crystal District. Since it abuts the Artificers' District, the Sisters owes its existence entirely to the actions of the goddesses' clergies, who fought hard to obtain their autonomy.

The temple itself looks very different according to the seasons. A veritable palace of greenery and flowers in summer, its walls of plants weave vines and ivy far above ground, below the stone arches. In winter, the atmosphere is a more glacial one and the temple takes on the appearance of a snowy ice palace where edelweiss flowers grow.

Gang Wars

These days, the meditative and soothing atmosphere of the district is frequently disturbed by the fighting between the Tridentine and the Raqisa (see **Powers and Factions: Criminal Underworld**). At dawn, corpses turn up in fountains, the wounded take refuge in cellars to escape their pursuers, young thugs armed with bloody daggers hide in the temple, and so on. It is difficult to contain this crisis, as the rival gangs are particularly determined to win what they consider a vital war. The believers' attitude toward the fighting varies greatly: some show unconditional compassion, others attempt to convert them to a more virtuous and meaningful way of life, and some simply call the guard.

Debates in the Temple of Flora and Frostelle

In the Free City, the goddesses Flora and Frostelle are honored together as "the Divine Sisters of Spring and Autumn, the Ladies of Dawn and Dusk." The church insists on the elevation of the soul through the practice of the arts and hope sustained by fortitude. While all followers accept these values, there are nevertheless growing tensions concerning the major decisions which must be made for the future.

- **Charity.** For this branch, the essential thing is to lead with a compassionate and charitable attitude, especially via selfless help to the Cyrillan refugees. Some leave for Cyrillane in order to help the innocent in distress, victims of a terrifying civil war.
- **Contemplation.** What matters for members of this branch is to act justly where one can. However, it is pointless to try and change the world, because crises follow one another like the seasons. One must learn patience and stoicism, as well as improve their knowledge, in order to earn their salvation.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

- **Dawn.** The followers of this branch believe that the current crisis can be put in a parallel with the Dawn War. Benevolence and contemplative exemplarity are intrinsically good—or at least, they do not lead the world to disaster—but they are passive and naive. Survival is not a given. One needs only look back to the ancient elven glory and that, more recent, of Cyrillane to realize it. Alleviating the pain of those who suffer does not solve anything: one must fight the cause of the suffering. In the Free City, criminal gangs are thriving; inequalities between the rich and slum dwellers are glaring; threats related to the civil war in Cyrillane loom over the city. Action must be taken.

What lays at stake are the decisions within the clergy's influence: welcoming refugees into the Sisters' District; taking action against the Nihilian sects coming from Cyrillane; demanding that the Assembly makes concrete decisions on a scale commensurate with the crisis; using the donations of wealthy followers to obtain real results, and more.

The Poetic Arts

Cyfandir bards compose works in a variety of genres. Some specialize in one, while others freely switch between them. The Temple of the Two Sisters houses a school of music and poetry, which greatly contributes to the training of bards.

- **Ballad.** The ballad is a poem intended for dancing, set to music, made of equal stanzas and interspersed with choruses. Composers of famous and cheerful ballads have many admirers. Their greatest hits are played by many—talented or otherwise—musicians and spread all over the continent. Playing a famous ballad in a tavern frequently ensures the good will of one's audience. The composing of a successful ballad leads to dizzying celebrity throughout the city, with a variety of effects: guards asking for autographs and forgetting to actually check the artist and their companions; easy access to the homes of powerful people; getting an interview with a music-loving mob boss, etc.
- **Cantilena.** The cantilena is a lyrical song with soft and simple harmonies that sometimes takes the tone of a lover's lament. One sings a cantilena for oneself, or in moments of peaceful reverie, at home or in the garden for example.
- **Héroïde.** The héroïde is a poem whose composition is attributed by the author to a hero or heroine, making them speak in the first person to narrate their origins, hopes, exploits, disappointments…
- **Odelette.** The odelette is a short ode that tackles light, unimportant subjects. It is appreciated in courts and at parties.
- **Treasure Rhapsody.** The treasure rhapsody is a genre derived from the humorous epic. It describes the existence of a magic item, its creation, its relationship to its various owners, and the exploits accomplished with it. It is often about the tragic deaths of the owners of these treasures, or about the decades they spent in boredom in treasure rooms, counting gold coins that come and go as they waited for a hero to steal them. These stories are said to regularly inspire new adventurers. Countless young people, fascinated by this or that rhapsody, become eager to discover the treasure, wishing to add their stanza—perhaps even the last one—to a tale that always felt incomplete and enticing.
- **Sirventes.** The sirventes is a political or satirical song. Some are composed at the request of a faction leader, others at a bard's own initiative, using their eloquence to denounce something. Most often, a sirventes serves as criticism against corruption or morals (adultery, uncommon sexual inclinations, etc.). Sirventes are gleefully sung in the streets. These songs are frequently used to spread slanderous rumors or reveal scandals.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731450)



The Crystal District



The Crystal District is easily recognizable due to its mineral monuments along the canal of the River Dispende. Long ago, they were offered to the Free City by its dwarven allies. These marvels are considered ornamental to the city, and only vandals would dare carve out a piece of them. Some like to imagine that these jewels hold special powers, but their presence merely contributes to the day-to-day well-being of the inhabitants by their beauty and soft luminescence. One can walk through winding alleys, between the quaint half-timbered houses of bright colors, many of which are lucky enough to possess an ornamental garden. Travelers happily stroll through the Crystal District simply for their viewing pleasure, with roses, jasmines, and orange and lemon trees filling the air with the scent of their flowers. At night, the crystals give off a soft, ethereal light, and it is not uncommon to hear private concerts, music floating pleasantly through the evening air.

From Master to Student

The district brings together alchemists, craftsmen, musicians, and arcanists who do not appreciate the overly bureaucratic or overly modern—depending on the critic—management of large institutions. It is almost the opposite of the Academy, whose atmosphere is much more muted.

A master chooses a student and trains them to the very end. The relationship is very personal and involves a lifelong commitment to each other. Loyalty is as prized a virtue as discretion, and for good reason: the secrets revealed by a master to their student will eventually enable the latter to surpass the former, taking their art even further. Locals often have secrets—recipes, craft processes, ideas for works—and only share them with respected peers.

Scott Timmermans (Undeadly.com)

The Old Port District

The Fishing Port and the Shipowner's Port

The Old Port District includes the fishing port and the Shipowner's Port, which welcomes ships of all origins, whether they come down the river or by sea. Cramped houses piled atop each other are interspersed between large warehouses, some of them carved into the rock of the cliff.

The Old Port District bustles with activity at all hours of the day and night, and is renowned for its dubious taverns, its gruff porters, and the scattered but all-encompassing presence of the Tridentine (see **Powers and Factions: Criminal Underworld**).

The Academy

A stone's throw away from the sea, buildings are still very dense, and the Free Academy—the town's university—stands amidst centuries-old half-timbered houses. This institution, extending over several buildings separated by alleys and courtyards, is full of corridors, classrooms, museums, scriptoriums, libraries, and dormitories for its thousands of students and professors.

The surrounding area is characterized by a collegiate atmosphere: a mix of studies and long hours spent in taverns. Students try to stay in the vicinity as much as possible. They come from far away and are taught in the auditorium for the first few years, all with a certain amount of pomp and circumstance.

Scholars Clashing

The city holds two competing scholarly districts: the Academy and Crystal districts. The Academy far outweighs the Crystal District in the number of people it trains, even if most of them are only taught basic knowledge.

Representatives from either district never miss an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of their approach, sometimes using bad faith and pettiness. The trivial little wars fought by members of both groups feed the local gossip, and delight the spectating scholars, partisan and moderate alike. It is not uncommon for great scholars and their students to put on a show and ridicule themselves in an attempt to ridicule their rivals: booing, jokes, blockades, theft of paper or ink, supposedly fair-play (yet no-holds-barred) races in toga, etc. Some spend more time belittling the work of others than making progress in their own.



Scott Timmerman (Order #3772435)

The Mountain District

The Mountain District is full of dwarves and extends onto the surface as well as into the cliff it abuts. One of the most powerful private institutions stands here: the Steinbank. Without it, many expeditions and businesses would not be possible. Officially, the Steinbank is apolitical, but when a choice must be made, the bank favors dwarven interests and acts as an instrument of Free City influence in faraway countries. Wherever it has taken root, it follows standards that are certainly practical for exchanges, but always to the advantage of its founders. If it should also benefit other civilizations and peoples, then so much the better, but this is not its primary objective.

The Grain Crisis

Cether opened the report her secretary had brought her. As she did every week, she studied the average prices from all markets in the city. The change was minor, but it was in line with the trend of the previous weeks. In fact, you didn't have to work at the Steinbank to realize it. Every housekeeper in the city could feel it. The price of grain was rising.

Although Myetea and the banks of the Dispende were fertile, they were not enough to feed the whole of the Free City. This was made all the truer by a significant part of Myetea's production departing from the port of Issure toward Ellerìna—a customer that paid better than most Free City intermediaries. It had long been the custom to import surpluses from the large farms of Cyrillane. This was not the only common product that needed to be brought into the city from far away: barley beer, wine, or olive oil almost always came from abroad. Cattle was brought in alive and still standing, sometimes from the Drakenbergen, to be slaughtered on-site. Fishing was supplemented by smoked fish, mainly from the Fjordkungden.

However, the Free City's population had rapidly grown with the massive influx of refugees from the civil war in Cyrillane. These people were numerous, and most of them were poor. They were not the only ones, though: the rise in prices was also hitting hard the inhabitants of the Thorst slums and, gradually, the more modest households in town.

The Free City was an ogre that attracted wealth, talent, and food, but its insatiable appetite constantly challenged it to reinvent itself. Its situation was a precarious one, forcing it to move forward so as not to fall.

For Cether, one of the present risks was speculation. If someone started to buy grain on a massive scale, it would make prices rise faster, allowing one to sell back their stock and make a hefty profit.

The crisis would soon reveal itself, but how would it be resolved? A civil war? Violently suppressed riots? The persecution of scapegoats, such as hoarders, profiteers, or foreigners? Lessened privileges for halfling farmers of Myetea? A military intervention in Cyrillane to take control of agricultural territories?



Scott Timmermans (Order #9973)



The Lighthouse District

Named after a famous ship of yesteryear, the Vivacia Lighthouse is visible from almost everywhere in the city. At night, its powerful lantern casts light on the entrance to the port for ships on the open sea.

The lighthouse alone is a beautiful work of Free City architecture, a masterpiece by master builder Armand Cërend. Wild rumors abound about the secret passages and hidden rooms that the lighthouse allegedly conceals. It is said that the interior is entirely built according to a dynamic plan of interlocking staircases that move in rhythm with the tide; supposedly, the heights of the tower contain an ancient conch capable of controlling the ocean itself. The lighthouse is run by the Vivacian Brotherhood, who live in relative isolation, which they seek to preserve. Primarily composed of former galley slaves and repentant hoodlums preparing for reinsertion into society, the Brotherhood garners a poor reputation.

Sludge Slums and Oozing Suburbs

The course of the Dispende splits in two. One half is canalized, controlled, and reaches the Free City; the other remains largely wild, forming a vast delta with ephemeral sand islands that are covered in high reeds and inhabited by many birds.

The Oozing Suburbs are located right where the river splits. They house many warehouses and factories, including dyeworks and tanneries that use toxic products. Nowadays, an area called the Sludge Slums, which is pushed up against the walls of the city, connects with the region. Unlike their dried-up counterpart of Thorst, the Sludge Slums and Oozing Suburbs do not suffer from a lack of water. On the contrary, they are regularly flooded.

Scott Timmerman (Order #9773459)

Wonders and Poisons



In the Free City, wonders abound, both those imported from all across the world and those fashioned locally by skilled specialists. The Crystal District is a gathering place for craftsmen and alchemists who are capable of countless marvels. With significant effort, the Awakened among them can even create magic items.

The Subtle Influence of the Lady of the Night

Asayanga, clad in black, came at dusk to the Augurate's Office. Always dusk, never earlier or later. With her, she carried the Xonim's bonds that her disciples, Awakened craftsmen, had made under her supervision. This high priestess of the Lady of the Night had no temple, nor did she desire one. She showed herself only when she had something to do or say, and would disappear just as abruptly as she came, returning to this or that believer's parlor or cellar to worship the goddess anew.

And yet, her connections in the Free City would have certainly afforded her a place of worship. Without her, what means had the Augurate of disarming spellcasters? What was it she got from the exchange? Perhaps it was part of a greater plan, or perhaps she was simply accruing favors, waiting to state her desire when the time came. By opening doors, she could pass through those which suited her.

At the Augurate's Office, there were a number of people who knew that Asayanga was more than she let on. She had a male identity—the one she was born with, which she (or he) donned to go about her duties incognito—and a female identity. The latter, being especially alluring, was a credit to the Lady of the Night.

Scott Timmerman, Omier #3979980

Treasures of the Free City



The treasures you will discover in this section were either fashioned in the Free City or are typical of it. Some are the stuff of urban myths, coveted by collectors, criminals, and arcane students alike. But such items also arouse the vigilance of the Augurate's Office, who seek to locate and secure them so that they don't fall into the wrong hands.



Armband of Decisive Effort

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

When the wearer of this armband makes any roll based on Strength or Dexterity, they can choose to have advantage on the roll. After the wearer has used this property twice, they must take a short or long rest for the item to regain expended uses. The wearer can continue using this property after the second use, taking a level of **exhaustion** after each additional use.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39791950)

Armlet of Weak Magic

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

An area of weak magic emanates from the wearer of this armlet over a 40-foot radius. There are several types of armlets, each of them generating a specific weak magic (see **Grimoire**, **Geomagic: Catalog of Geomagical Phenomena**). Once per round during their turn, the wearer can cancel or reactivate the aura. After using this property twice, they must take a long rest for the item to regain expended uses.

The Augurate's Office owns a number of these armlets, which are entrusted to officers during interventions against particularly dangerous spellcasters.



Armor of Purity

Armor (any), uncommon

The wearer of this armor has advantage on saving throws against corruption.

Boots of Long Stride

Wondrous item, uncommon (5 ft.), very rare (10 ft.)

The wearer of these boots has their speed increased as determined by the boots' rarity.



Doppelganger Mask

Wondrous item, uncommon

This magic item, which looks like a masquerade mask, allows the wearer to use their action to benefit from the Change Appearance effect of the *alter self* spell. The effect does not require concentration and is not limited by duration. If the user so wishes, the mask can blend into their new appearance.

Once this power has been used, the wearer must take a short or long rest before they can use it again.

The mask can only be removed once the wearer has returned to their original appearance.

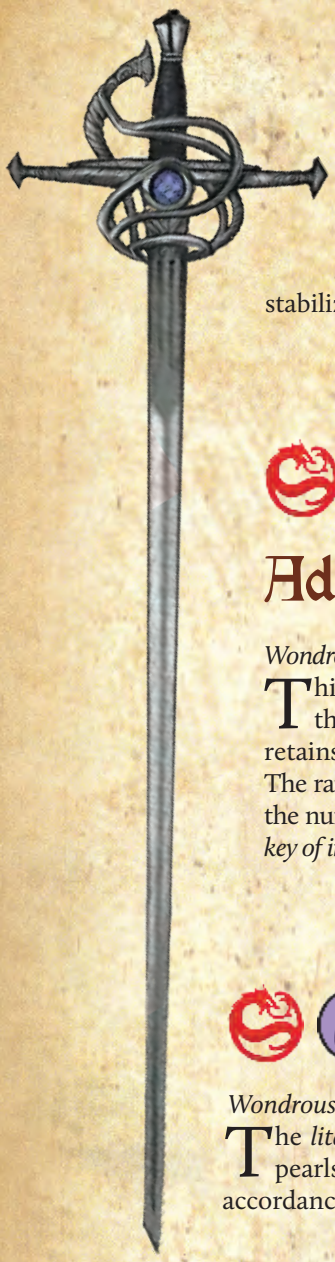
Flora's Ring of Grace



Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

When the hp of the wearer of this ring drops to 0, they immediately regain 6d8 + 25 hp and acquire resistance to all types of damage until the start of their next turn. Once this power has been used, the wearer must take a long rest before it can be used again.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Frostelle's Mercy

Weapon (rapier), rare (requires attunement)

This *rapier +1*, which is icy to the touch, deals an extra 1d6 cold damage on a successful attack. Any creature that drops to 0 hp when hit by *Frostelle's mercy* is automatically stabilized. The weapon's wielder can also use their action to automatically stabilize a dying creature within reach.



Key of Instant Adaptation

Wondrous item, common (10), uncommon (15), rare (20), very rare (25), legendary (30)

This common-looking key only reveals its power when it is slid into a lock, no matter the size. Then, the key changes shape to fit that of the lock and permanently retains this shape.

The rarity of a *key of instant adaptation* determines the complexity of the locks it can open: the number following the key's rarity corresponds to the DC required to pick the lock. If the *key of instant adaptation*'s power is insufficient, nothing happens.

Maker's Litany of Faces

Wondrous item, legendary

The *litany of faces* is a rosary with 110 pearls. When the user of this item handles the pearls while chanting its command words, they can create the item of their choice in accordance with the following specifications:

The Power of Creation

- The creation cannot be formed where an item or creature already exists.
- The creation appears on the ground within a 30-foot radius from the litany's user but can stretch farther than that from there.
- The creation occupies a maximum volume of a cube with .5 inches at each edge. For each additional round of chanting, the maximum volume increases by .5 inches per edge. Each round of chanting requires the user use their action to continue. If interrupted, they must start again from the beginning.
- The creation can be of any appearance or material that the user can imagine.
- The creation cannot be magical.
- The creation is subject to the laws of reality. For instance, an unstable structure will immediately collapse due to gravity.

After 120 rounds of chanting (12 minutes), it is possible to create a 5-foot long mithral sword (if the user knows of the material).

A user that wishes to create a 42 ft. × 42 ft. marble house must chant for 1,000 rounds (1 hour and 40 minutes).

The Price to Pay

The litany acts as a direct link between the user and the primal powers of creation, and manipulating such powers is not without danger. Every 10 rounds of chanting, the user must make a successful DC 17 Constitution or Charisma saving throw (user's choice) or take 1d10 psychic damage.

In addition, the creations that come forth do so with a caveat. A creation can only exist as long as it remains free. If someone manages to claim exclusive ownership of the item, the item immediately turns to dust. For this reason, the *litany of faces* is only used to create items for the common good. In fact, it was created for this very purpose.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Necklace of Secret Communication

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

Through mere effort of will, and by focusing on the creatures concerned, this plain and unadorned necklace makes the wearer's words unintelligible to any other creature than the targeted ones. One must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to realize that the wearer is speaking in incomprehensible gibberish. On a failure, the creature simply doesn't pay attention to what the wearer says.

Personal Torch

Wondrous item, varies

A *personal torch* comes in the form of a small stick engraved with magic glyphs. By uttering a command word, it emits a light that can be perceived only by the creature who activated the torch. The rarity of a *personal torch* depends on the following factors:

Rarity of a personal torch

	The torch remains active for 1 hour, then loses all magic	The torch can be activated and deactivated at will (requires attunement).
20-foot radius of light	Common	Uncommon
40-foot radius of light	Uncommon	Rare



Seal of Blacksmith

Wondrous item, uncommon (+1), rare (+2), or very rare (+3)

A *seal of Blacksmith* can be applied to or removed from any weapon during a short or long rest. Afterward, the seal can be activated by a command word. For a duration of 1 minute, the weapon becomes magical (if it isn't already) and gains a bonus to attack and damage rolls according to the seal's rarity. This bonus has no effect if the weapon already provides an equal or higher bonus to attack and damage rolls. The seal regains this property after a short or long rest.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731930)



Silencer

Weapon (dagger), rare (requires attunement)

When a creature is dealt damage by this dagger, it must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or become unable to produce any sound (not only orally, but also through hits or the use of noisy items) until the start of the attacker's next turn.

Twin Gems of Alarm

Wondrous item, uncommon

When one of these gems is activated with a command word, it detects the presence of any Tiny or larger creature in a 5 to 20-foot radius (chosen upon activation) and signals it through the other gem. The signal depends on the creator's preference: change of color, vibration, sound, telepathic warning to the gem bearer, etc.

Upon activation, it is possible to designate creatures that won't trigger the alarm. Once the gem is activated, the person who bears the twin is warned if it is moved. Once moved, the gem becomes inactive and must be activated again.



Weapon of Arrest

Weapon (any), uncommon (requires attunement)

When a creature is dealt damage by this weapon, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, its speed is halved until the start of the attacker's next turn.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Xonim's Bonds



Wondrous item, uncommon

Xonim's bonds are a set of cuffs and chains, decorated with motifs reminiscent of the Lady of the Night's pearl crown. Known and feared by spellcasters, any creature that wears these handcuffs loses its ability to use magic.

These items are relatively common on Eana and are often used by law enforcement representatives to arrest or capture individuals whose mastery of magic makes them dangerous.

The manufacture, trade, and use of *Xonim's bonds* are strictly regulated; even so, some still end up in the hands of illegal organizations through theft, fraudulent manufacture, or discovery in ruins. If one is found in illegal possession of *Xonim's bonds*, they usually face heavy fines and prison sentences, or even death if the circumstances are particularly damning or the justice system is especially draconian.

Though *Xonim's bonds* may seem like an unstoppable way of shackling a spellcaster, they're not as convenient as they seem.

Condition to Bind a Creature

To bind an unwilling creature, it must be afflicted with one of the following conditions: incapacitated; paralyzed; petrified; restrained; stunned; unconscious.

If a creature is grappled, it can be bound as an action with a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the creature's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Availability

Generally, guard patrols have only one pair of *Xonim's bonds* at their disposal, which is typically held by the officer in charge. Of course, if the guards know beforehand that they must intervene in a place with several spellcasters, they will prepare accordingly. Elite or specially drafted units—such as the feared Augurate's Office—are likely to have one pair of bonds per member.

Size of the Bonds

The size of *Xonim's bonds* must be suited to the target. The common designs are for two-handed Medium prisoners. Any other body configuration (size, number, or shape of limbs) cannot be restrained by standard *Xonim's bonds*. Gnomes and halflings, for instance, must be restrained with cuffs designed for Small humanoids.

There are adjustable *Xonim's bonds* that can restrain Small to Large creatures, as well as limbs slightly different from humanoid arms and legs, but these are rare instead of uncommon.

A large city like the Free City has at least a few *Xonim's bonds* designed for creatures of unusual size and physiology. Most cities only have access to half a dozen standard models, while smaller cities only have one pair of bonds available, at best.

Even if the bonds are not suited to the size of a creature, they can still be held in place with a successful Dexterity (tinker's tools) check. However, a creature bound this way may free itself by making a successful Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check against a DC equal to the result of the Dexterity (tinker's tools) check mentioned above.

Xonim's Bonds in Your Campaign

Xonim's bonds are powerful magic items, yet they are relatively common on Eana. Consequently, they make spellcasters much less dangerous, especially at high levels. Coordinated, well-equipped, and determined soldiers could capture spellcasters by surprise, who would have otherwise laid them low with a single spell.

If you're aiming for a more heroic narrative, in which *Xonim's bonds* will not be used as such an obvious solution, simply change the rarity of this magic item to rare, or even very rare.

Scott Timmermans (Order #3973930)



Poison

Owing to the Free City's abundant population, rivalries, and power struggles, poisons are unfortunately common goods within its walls. This section details their mechanics.

Poison: a Definition

A poison is a substance that, when used at a particular dosage and under specific conditions, proves toxic to a creature. It can cause faintness and bodily harm, and is potentially lethal.

Dosage

A dose is a quantity that is easily or conveniently delivered all at once, and in such an amount as to induce the effects specified in the poison's description.

A dose of wyvern venom is equal to the quantity of poison which the creature injects into its victim with one attack. Given the size of a wyvern, a dose is several milliliters. Conversely, a dose of venom from a rainforest poisonous frog is only one or two drops.

Different Types of Poison

Poisons come in the following four types.

- **Contact.** Contact poison can be smeared on an object and remains potent until it is touched or washed off. A creature that touches contact poison with exposed skin suffers its effects. This means that any contact poison can also be delivered through injury or ingestion.
- **Ingested.** A creature must swallow an entire dose of ingested poison to suffer its effects. The dose can be delivered in food or a liquid.
- **Inhaled.** These poisons are powders or gases that take effect when inhaled. Blowing the powder or releasing the gas subjects creatures in a 5-foot cube to its effect. The resulting cloud dissipates immediately afterward. Holding one's breath is mostly ineffective against inhaled poisons, as they affect nasal membranes, eyes, and other parts of the body.
- **Injury.** Injury poison can be applied to weapons, ammunition, trap components, and other objects that deal piercing or slashing damage and remains potent until delivered through a wound or washed off. A creature that takes piercing or slashing damage from an object coated with the poison is exposed to its effects.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Using Poisons

A character can use poison to make a weapon more dangerous or to covertly get rid of an enemy. Poison is typically perceived as an assassin's tool, but some adventurers use them to boost their efficiency in combat or to vary their arsenal. Below is a list of different means and methods of using poisons, which can come into play at the leader's discretion.

Buying Poison

Poisons are toxic and difficult to detect by nature, making them a commodity that is frowned upon and often illegal. Usually, anyone caught dealing with them is liable to suffer harsh punishment and may even be sentenced to death.

Among the variety of available poisons, some substances are sought because they have no nonmagical antidote, or because they are so rare and precious that a healer will struggle in identifying and neutralizing them.

The prices in the table below apply to the black markets of the Free City and take the aforementioned factors into account. The leader may vary the prices depending on the adventurers' current location. In the middle of Acoatl, for instance, rainforest frog poison may cost only a tenth of the standing price. Conversely, the same poison is utterly unobtainable in the heart of the Septentrion.

Poison Prices in the Free City

Name	Type	Price per Dose
Assassin's blood	Ingested	150 gp
Astral Essence	Inhaled	300 gp
Box Jellyfish Sting	Contact	150 gp
Burnt Othur Fumes	Inhaled	500 gp
Cockatrice Venom	Injury	300 gp
Exhaustum	Contact	250 gp
Giant Centipede Venom	Injury	400 gp
Giant Scorpion Venom	Injury	1,000 gp
Giant Spider Venom	Injury	250 gp
Malice	Inhaled	250 gp
Midnight Tears	Ingested	1,500 gp
Oil of Taggit	Contact	400 gp
Pale Tincture	Ingested	250 gp
Phase Spider Venom	Injury	350 gp
Purple Worm Poison	Injury	2,000 gp
Ravager's Blood	Contact	800 gp
Serpent Venom	Injury	200 gp
Torpor	Ingested	600 gp
Truth Serum	Ingested	150 gp
Wyvern Poison	Injury	1,200 gp

Poison Preservation

Magic potions differ from poisons and other nonmagical concoctions in that their properties are made to last, sometimes indefinitely so. When it comes to products of a natural origin, the user must take extreme care to preserve them. For instance, a substance may lose all of its effects if heated or if left exposed to the open air for too long. Generally, the vast majority of animal or botanical substances will expire within a year, even when perfectly preserved.

- The necessity of preserving poisons can help direct an investigation. If the adventurers discover poisons with a limited shelf life in a dwelling, this means their owner either trades in them, or intends to use them in the short term—a few months at most. In either case, poisons are usually kept with a specific intent, one that is rarely laudable. Nobody can credibly pretend that they came to own poisons "by chance": they are incriminating evidence and their mere presence can justify an arrest.
- An active poison-based trap suggests regular maintenance; otherwise, the substance would have expired with time. The presence of such traps constitutes a clue in itself, especially in places that are supposedly deserted, like antique ruins or a condemned dwelling.

Scott Timmermans (Order #

Dosage Variations

Depending on circumstances (dosage error, a victim eating unexpected quantities of poisoned food, dilution, etc.), the victim of a poison may ingest it in smaller or greater quantities than the standard dose, suffering modified effects.

- A **partial dose** will have reduced effects, such as allowing advantage on the saving throw, dealing only half damage on a failed save, reducing effect duration by half, etc.
- Conversely, an **increased dose** will have increased effects, such as giving disadvantage on the saving throw, dealing half again as much damage, increasing the duration by half, etc

Homebrewed Poisons

A character proficient with the poisoner's kit can brew their own poisons. This only applies to synthetic poisons: substances secreted by a creature, such as serpent venom, cannot be brewed.

To create a poison, one must spend half the poison's standard price and dedicate a number of days equal to the poison's standard price in gp divided by 100. The character must then succeed on an Intelligence (poisoner's kit) check with a DC equal to the poison's. On a failure, the poison is ineffective and the character has lost both their time and money. On a 1 on the d20, the poisoner is exposed to the reduced effects of their own poison.

For his next deed, Black Fingers the assassin brews a dose of torpor. The standard price for this poison in the Free City is 600 gp, so the materials needed cost about 300 gp. Thus, Black Fingers must spend 6 days crafting his poison and, at the end of this period, must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence check using the poisoner's kit.

Poison Economy

Setting the actual price for a poison is difficult. A large part of the average price of poisons in the Free City is owed to the illegal nature of said substances, and the risk incurred by trading in them. Even so, obtaining certain ingredients can be particularly difficult, especially those of an exotic nature. In the Free City, the cost of a poison's ingredients ranges, on average, from a quarter to half the selling price of the poison. A poisoner who wishes to gather ingredients themselves will need to dedicate time, effort, and risk to the task, but the effective cost will be far lower.



Scott Timmerman (Order #39731430)

Infamous Poisons on Eana

Poisons have been circulated and used on Eana since time immemorial. The following is a list of the most common or infamous substances, which are especially likely to be found in the Free City. Depending on the geographical area, poisons may have different names, or even different properties (see **Poison Variants** below).

Poison Variants

The present list gathers poisons with standard DCs, damage and duration, which the leader can use as inspiration to create new variants. For example, all spider bites are venomous, but some are much more dangerous than others, depending on the size and species. Further, some poisoners refine already existing poisons by modifying some of their properties. Here are a few ideas to create variants:

- Decrease or increase the DC of the Constitution saving throw.
- Decrease or increase the poison damage.
- Remove or add reduced effects on a successful Constitution saving throw.
- Substitute the Constitution saving throw with another ability save, or switch poison damage to another type of damage. This will make the poison especially extraordinary, which will suit esoteric creatures.
- Remove or add conditions on a failure, or if the saving throw fails by a certain margin. For instance: **blinded**, **charmed**, **deafened**, **exhaustion** (one or more levels), **paralyzed**, **stunned**, **unconscious**.

Assassin's Blood

- **Type:** Ingested.
- **Effect:** The creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 6 (1d12) poison damage and is **poisoned** for 24 hours. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and isn't poisoned.

Assassin's blood is one of the most common and notorious poisons on Eana. It is named for its blood-red color, which only adds to its notoriety. Whenever a case of food poisoning arises, suspicions fall on this substance. Consequently, assassin's blood is rarely used by professional poisoners, who favor less infamous substances, more difficult to identify and cure.

Instead, assassin's blood is frequently used to target an entire group rather than a single person. Unscrupulous tacticians use it from time to time, sending saboteurs into the enemy's camp to poison the soldiers' food. With half the enemy troops unable to fight, victory is but a formality.

Astral Essence

- **Type:** Inhaled.
- **Effect:** The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become **poisoned** for 8 hours. The poisoned creature is **unconscious**. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Someone that has been exposed to astral essence isn't unconscious per se; their body simply becomes insensate as their spirit travels to the Astral Plane. This drug was originally created and ingested by mystics, spellcasters, researchers, and curious thrill seekers, but its properties eventually drew the attention of poisoners, and it is now used for nefarious and criminal purposes.

Astral essence comes in the form of a thin, achromatic powder, which is to be inhaled through the nose. A creature which snorts it in this way is automatically exposed to its effects without a saving throw. Astral essence can also come in the form of a paste or liquid to be burned, releasing a heady smoke. Criminals favor the latter, though it can also be inhaled by groups looking for a collective experience.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Box Jellyfish Sting

Type: Contact.
Effect: The creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Box jellyfish sting comes from a dangerous cnidarian (a type of jellyfish) that lives in tropical waters, relatively common in Torea. To make it fit for use and preservation, it must undergo a special process that results in a slightly oily liquid.
This poison can be diluted in bath water, poured in a drink, sprayed on a moist towel, or laced into perfume. One can even soak an entire item of clothing using a vaporizer. Depending on the method used, the box jellyfish sting loses its properties after a period ranging from a few hours to half an hour, meaning it must be rapidly administered to the victim.

Burnt Othur Fumes

Type: Inhaled.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage, and must repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On each successive failed save, the character takes 3 (1d6) poison damage. After three successful saves, the poison ends.

Burnt othur fumes are especially virulent and cruel, infiltrating the victim's mucous membranes and destroying the body from within, causing the victim to spit and sweat blood. Even after they have been removed from the fumes, what they inhaled continues to eat away at their insides, until they either overcome the poison or succumb to it. When an assassin doesn't want to leave its duty to chance, they seal off all exits, trapping the unfortunate soul in a room where the fumes build, increasing the effect.

Othur isn't a natural substance, but a concentrate of several toxic plants and particulates, condensed into a ready-to-burn paste. It is popular among assassins due to its compact size, easy use, and striking efficacy. For the professional killer, it opens the door to a number of possibilities. For instance, a known tactic among veterans is to lace a candle with othur and secretly introduce it into the target's belongings, sentencing them to eventual death.

Exhaustum

Type: Contact.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take one level of **exhaustion**. Exhaustum cannot make a creature go over an exhaustion level of 3.

Exhaustum is an alchemical poison from Cyrillane. It comes in the form of greyish dust, greasy like soot, with a metallic, acrid aftertaste. It causes migraines, cramping, and drying of the mucous membranes, inducing a generalized fatigue.
According to legend, it was invented by an alchemist who worked for the wicked Mégare of Cyrillane. The goal was to facilitate control over the monstrous creatures that were created in her laboratory, such as **chimeras** and **lamias**. Since then, the formula has spread and is generally used in less-than-savory ways, namely by assassins, kidnappers, and other captors who want to ensure the compliance of their victims.



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Malice

Type: Inhaled.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become **poisoned** for 1 hour. The poisoned creature is **blinded**.

Malice is a black powder that releases a thick smoke upon exposure to air. For this reason, it is usually stored in sealed clay jars or small cloth balls to be thrown at one's target.
Due to its effects and the method of transmission, malice is perfect for assassins who perform the deed directly, weapon in hand. They surprise the victim, exposing them to the poison's effects before striking. A blinded target is easy prey for a skilled killer, who can dispose of them in mere seconds and leave the scene just as quickly.



Midnight Tears

Type: Ingested.
Effect: A creature that ingests this poison suffers no effect until the stroke of midnight. If the poison has not been neutralized before then, the creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 31 (9d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A rare and expensive mystical poison, midnight tears are usually seen as more of a fanciful curiosity than anything else. Most assassins can't afford such a precious commodity, or else prefer to stick to less costly tools. When a poisoner uses midnight tears, they usually do so to boast of their organization's or of their own power and means.
Still, due to being undetectable and perfectly precise, the substance is a poison as efficient as it is rare. A colorless, odorless liquid, not unlike distilled water, it is particularly easy to slip into a drink or meal. Some poisoners make use of it to play sadistic games or to ensure a person's cooperation, with the victim having to fulfill their blackmailer's every demand if they hope to get their hands on the antidote before the twelfth hour strikes.
Curiously enough, even if the recipient changes locations—or even planes—the poison will trigger at midnight or the closest thing to it in that new location or plane, in accordance with its solar cycle.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Oil of Taggit

Type: Contact.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become **poisoned** for 24 hours. The poisoned creature is **unconscious**. The creature wakes up if it takes damage.

Oil of taggit is a synthetic poison whose origins are a mystery. No one knows if "taggit" references the name of the forgotten inventor, or if it refers to a beast, a plant, a mineral, or something else that used to be part of the formula and has now disappeared. Yellowish in color, with a slightly viscous texture, the oil has a subtle but distinct smell that is both sweet and unpleasant.
Regardless, use of the oil has remained quite widespread. Its ease of preservation, especially, makes it particularly appreciated as a trap component. Countless inattentive thieves have met a sudden end to their career after they were rendered unconscious by a dart coated with oil of taggit.

Pale Tincture

Type: Ingested.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) poison damage and become **poisoned**. The poisoned creature must repeat the saving throw every 24 hours, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save. Until this poison ends, the damage the poison deals can't be healed by any means. After seven successful saving throws, the effect ends and the creature can heal normally.



Contrary to what some may think, pale tincture doesn't take its name after a white hue. In fact, it has a purplish color. Instead, "pale" refers to the fate of the victim, who progressively loses all color as a slow and painful hemorrhage drains them of life.
Using this poison will surely doom one's target to a particularly cruel death, since only the hardiest, luckiest, or well-cared-for individuals can survive it. In most cases, the creature dies within days or weeks, depending on its resistance. During this period, it is feeble, has trouble sleeping, and struggles to eat.

Ravager's Blood

Type: Contact.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or catch cankering (see **Adventurers**, **Health, Diseases: Cankering**).

The name of this substance is no hyperbole: ravager's blood is the blood of a ravager, alchemically treated for increased preservation and efficiency. The high price is due to the product's absolute illegality, with only the most corrupt, insane, desperate, or indifferent of individuals daring to sell it. If a person were found carrying this corrupting poison, they would certainly be summarily executed.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Truth Serum

Type: Ingested.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become **poisoned** for 1 hour. The poisoned creature can't knowingly speak a lie, as if under the effect of a *zone of truth* spell.

Although this substance isn't toxic, it is as heavily controlled as any other poison due to its effects that, in the eyes of the law, are too much like magical coercion. Adventurers found to possess doses of truth serum wouldn't be convicted on the spot, but they would be asked to provide a serious justification.

Ironically, guards and investigators use it in the same way as criminal organizations, when the success of an operation lies in the confession of a stubborn suspect. Merely having a truth serum at hand can also act as a means of pressure, for if a person knows their interrogators can resort to this option, they may realize the futility of resisting.

Torpor

Type: Ingested.
Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become **poisoned** for 4d6 hours. The poisoned creature is **incapacitated**.

Torpor is the kidnapper's tool of choice. On average, the victim remains inert for the better part of a day, giving the poisoner the freedom to take their target wherever they wish... as long as they can transport them! As such, a prepared professional brings outside help not only to abscond with their victim, but also to build a strong alibi, potentially using disguises, papers, and specific roles. "Yes, my poor master is feeling ill. I blame this dreadful weather. We're bringing him home as we speak."
Torpor comes in less potent variants, usually brewed by apothecaries and prescribed as sleeping pills.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Creature Poisons

The following poisons are all secreted by more or less monstrous creatures. In general, they are more affordable than costly alchemical preparations, but remain expensive since they are both illegal and difficult to procure. Indeed, the retrieval of such substances requires not only that one slay the monsters that produce them, but also that one has the knowledge and expertise needed to extract and preserve the poison glands.
Many an unscrupulous adventurer has bolstered their earnings through the opportunistic dealing of such poisons, but few actually make it their bread-and-butter, not unless the profits outweigh the risk and effort. Bold entrepreneurs have tried their hand at monster farming, but the endeavors have inevitably failed, sometimes catastrophically so. There are rumors of drow breeding giant spiders (and other similar creatures) for their silk and poison, but the secrets of their trade are well-guarded. In the case of particularly powerful monsters, like the mighty wyverns and the legendary purple worms, the challenge lies in finding and slaying them, hence the astronomical prices. To purchase such poisons, one needs to contact specialized networks, the precious toxins being sometimes preserved for generations after being procured by extraordinary adventurers.
Below is a list of poisons from Eana's most common or famous creatures, but the leader can include other secretions that daring poisoners could procure from fallen monsters.

Cockatrice Venom

- **Type:** Injury.
- **Effect:** The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw against being magically petrified. On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to stone and is **restrained**. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is **petrified** for 24 hours.

Giant Centipede Venom

- **Type:** Injury.
- **Effect:** The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage. If the poison damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, the target is stable but **poisoned** for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is **paralyzed** while poisoned in this way.

Giant Scorpion Venom

- **Type:** Injury.
- **Effect:** The creature must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Giant Spider Venom

- **Type:** Injury.
- **Effect:** The creature must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, the target is stable but **poisoned** for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is **paralyzed** while poisoned in this way.

Phase Spider Venom

- Type: Injury.
- Effect: The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, the target is stable but **poisoned** for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is **paralyzed** while poisoned in this way.

Purple Worm Poison

- **Type:** Injury.
- **Effect:** The creature must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Serpent Venom

Type: Injury.
Effect: The creature must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Wyvern Poison

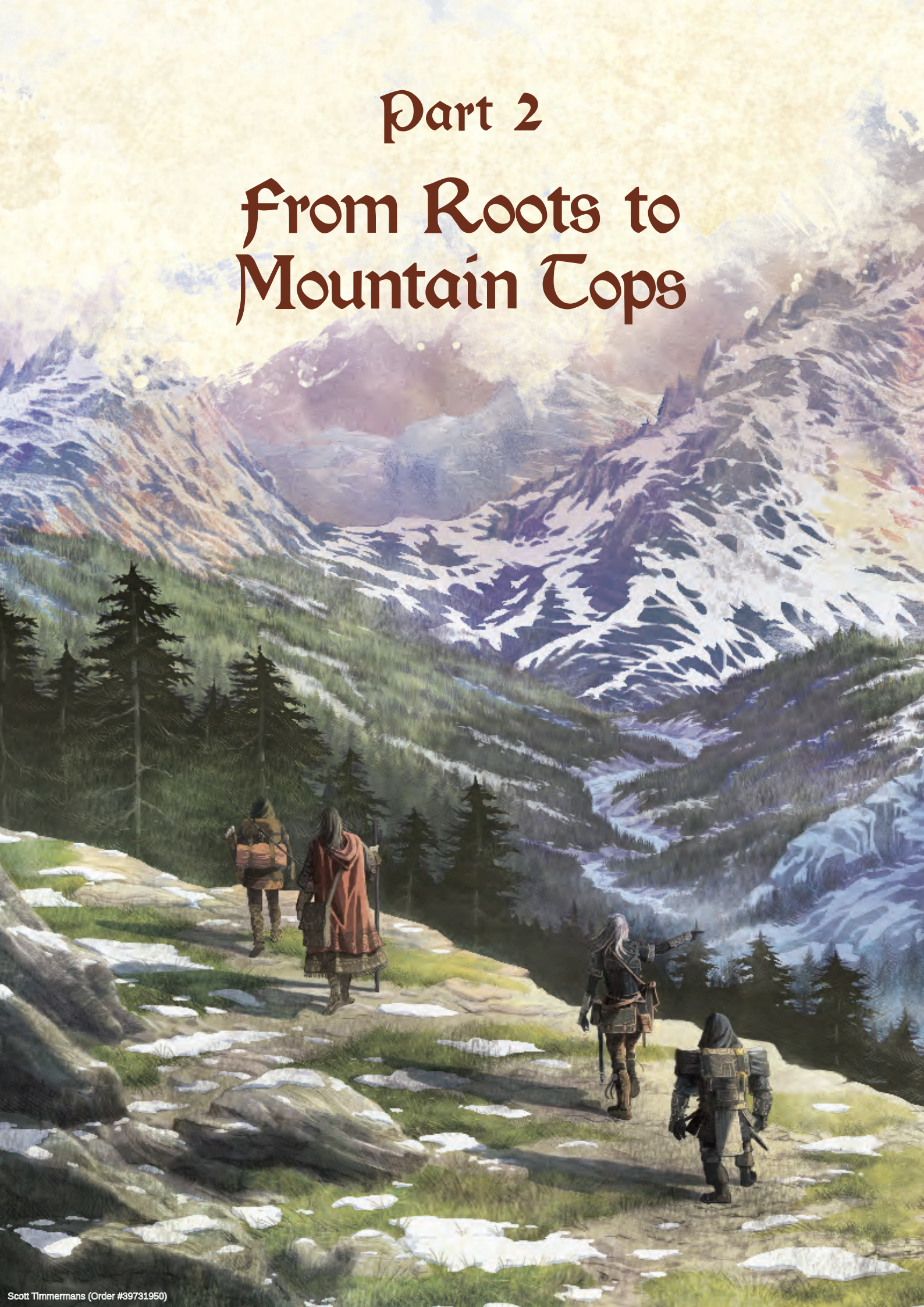
Type: Injury.
Effect: The creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Scott Timpermann (Order #39731450)

Part 2

From Roots to Mountain Tops



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

As the heart of Cyfandir, the Drakenbergen are united by rough terrain and dvaerg culture. The dwarves ensure efficient communication and the transport of goods from mining towns to the neighboring regions: the Free City, Cyrillane, Arolavia, and Lothrienne. Harsh winters and strong defenses—both natural and man-made—deter the powerful from using their resources to conquer these lands and the riches that lay beneath them.

- **The Memory of Stone.** The dvaergen assert that mountains never forget, and Drakenbergen mountains have witnessed many events, leaving marks and scars.
- **The Dvaergjord.** The Drakenbergen are marked by several peculiarities and unique local cultures, and are governed by regimes from across the entire political spectrum. Still, the Drakenbergen also share commonalities, thanks mainly to the spread of dvaerg culture.
- **Territories.** There are too many valleys, mountains, ravines, caves, and fjords to name! Those detailed here are but a glimpse of the landscapes and atmospheres that adventurers will discover.
- **Treasures of the Drakenbergen.** This chapter lists many wonders and magic items lost in the ruins of the Drakenbergen. Adventurers beware: many perils surround these lost marvels of the mountains!

Using the Drakenbergen in a Campaign

From the Fjordkungden to the most inaccessible of peaks, through gorges and fertile springs of the River Dispende, the Drakenbergen are a patchwork territory, where one can easily craft an independent story or a personal campaign. It is an open fantasy setting, allowing the leader to place kingdoms or farms as they please, hidden in lost valleys.

Opportunities for adventure are varied: exploring the ruins of past empires and kingdoms, escorting a merchant convoy, fighting against monsters in the wilderness, containing the growing influence of wights in the service of Kentigern the vampire, facing off against slave traders from the Netherworld, or even uprooting Canker's expansions.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Memory of Stone

Rumors and Threats

Vergel, Octavia, and Tremelung waited at the Golden Fountain for their guide to join them. The shrewd dwarf and the eloquent Cyrillan woman were, once again, reviewing the information they had gathered. Like many, the adventurers were organizing their expedition from Blömiane, at the confluence of the Rivers Dispende and Sorphaug. The Drakenbergen were crisscrossed with old routes from the Stopstep Empire, by dwarven tunnels and bridges, and by many paths known only to a select few. Octavia had searched thoroughly, but there was no complete map of the mountains that could be trusted. Merchants could join a caravan protected by dwarven patrolmen, but those who left the main roads could only rely on windwalker rangers.

With all they had heard, the adventurers preferred to err toward caution and rely on a sworn member of the guild. The mountains were always dangerous, but in recent years, there had been increasing reports of travelers attacked by ghouls, wights, and bleeders. It began near Gleannceò, in regions one would prefer to avoid, but the threat was getting closer and closer to Varmbad, near the Dispende springs. Now, there were rumors of attacks north of Blömiane.

The shy priest of Xonim preferred to keep his eyes on the other guests, only taking part in the conversation if he was explicitly asked to do so. It was in so doing that he noticed a melessë of drow blood who had just entered the establishment and was heading toward them. She introduced herself and showed them her windwalkers' brooch. So, she was Zidnia! The adventurers had already noticed the presence of a few of her kind in Blömiane, but they did not expect their guide to be one.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

It had been two hours since the three adventurers had broken camp. Their guide, Zidnia, had assured them that the stone hut was not far, but Tremelung was struggling more and more. Vergel followed him closely, bringing up the rear. He and Octavia had already relieved Tremelung of the bulk of his gear. They would never leave a party member behind.

The sun had blazed all afternoon. Now, the light was fading rapidly, shadows stretched down walls and slopes, and the cold was getting worse. The news that they would soon reach shelter brought relief to everyone. Even Tremelung's step seemed lighter. At last! The adventurers afforded a mere glance at the clear night that had settled on the summits. Melancholia had risen and shone brightly. The light it cast turned the silhouettes of rocks into grotesque shadow creatures. An echo carried the song of wolves.

How lovely it was to be inside the hut! A small fire was quickly lit, and everyone spread out their beds. Zidnia had already placed a pan on the fire to heat some lard, an onion from her rations, and a bunch of aromatic herbs she'd picked along the way.

"Well, that was impressive! For outsiders, you got by just fine!"

The drow-blooded melessë smiled encouragingly at Tremelung. The priest felt no pride; everyone was tougher than him. Still, they hadn't blamed him for slowing them down. He possessed other talents, after all, and had already proved his worth on several occasions.

"I'll need a little while longer to prepare the meal, and we won't go to sleep right away, so let's play a game," Zidnia said, pouring spring water over the fried onions.

"What kind of game?" Octavia, the Cyrillan poetess, asked.

"In the Drakenbergen, the evening is an important time when people gather around the fire with stories. There's always a theme, and we take turns telling them, whether they're real or imagined. Since you've come to explore the ruins of the Boreal civilization, I thought you must have studied the chronicles and legends."

"Indeed," Octavia confirmed while Tremelung nodded.

"So, why don't we take turns telling the history of the Drakenbergen? Who wants to start?"

Historical Eras

The dates below are listed following the Republican calendar of the Free City.

- **Era of the Travelers (starts at -10,000?)**: Reign of the Giants and the Travelers; ends with the Fall of the Travelers.
- **Era of Renewal (-8,000? to -5,000?)**: Elven golden age; ends with the Dawn War.
- **Era of Fated Kings (-5,000? to -980)**: Age of the kingdoms and empires of Eternity's chosen ones; ends with the divine ascension of Tamerakh and Xonim.
- **Era of the New Kingdoms (-980 to Year 0)**: The world is rebuilt, and the present great powers are established; ends with the foundation of the Free City Republic (at least, from the point of view of Freemen).
- **Era of the Republic (Year 0 to now)**: Golden age of the Free City Republic; many believe that a new era is beginning with the fall of the Kadmeid dynasty of Cyrillane, in the year 330 of the Republican calendar.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731930)

The War Between Giants and Travelers

Vergel raised his hand.

"I'll go first; it's easier. The Era of the Travelers!"

"We have almost no reliable knowledge of it," remarked Octavia.

"Precisely, I've always loved rumors and wild theories!" The wily dvaerg laughed before taking a deep breath. "I even know stories that the clergy of Verndari—Blacksmith, as you call him—hates!"

The Sharing of the World Between the Old Masters

"It happened a long time ago; that much, pretty much everyone knows. Travelers and Giants were the masters of Eana. The giants of today are split into a bunch of different peoples—hill giants, frost giants, fire giants, cloud giants, storm giants. The Giants back then were something else. The two powers shared large chunks of continents. Kaan and Mibu belonged to the Giants. Ellerina too—though, obviously, it wasn't called that at the time. The Travelers were in Acoatl, in the Sand Kingdoms, and far to the south, so far that the lands are icy, farther even than Rachamangekr. Cyfandir, well, it wasn't clear, and they disagreed.

"Everybody knows that when two mighty powers are too close to one another, they'll want to pick fights. That's why the dvaerg clans always keep a safe distance from their neighbors. Tactical depth, some people call it."

Peoples and Creatures

Ancient peoples, still shrouded in the mystery of legends, bear similarities to other creatures surviving in the present, but are not quite the same. To better differentiate them, the names of these ancient peoples are capitalized:

- **Travelers**: creators of Ateaks and powerful forms of magic.
- **Giants**: main rivals of the Travelers; today's giants are their distant heirs.
- **Devils**: a fiendish people of whom little is known and who were allegedly involved in the destruction of one of Eana's moons; today's devils are their heirs.
- **Demons**: a fiendish people who have become natives and rulers of Melancholia, descended from rebellious servants of the Travelers and Giants; today's demons are their heirs.

Forgotten Powers

Ancient Magics and Mystics

The dvaerg rogue continued.

"Giants had palaces with columns so tall that they could hold up mountain peaks. A bit like the Pillars of Creation in the far northwest of Kaan. Their magic was the link between great and small, above and below, macrocosm and microcosm.

"Travelers would carve their epics on the sheer cliffs, and their words had the power to change reality. They made the stones glow with their enchanted sentences! They were like flaming embers erupting with power from the heart of the stone.

"It was a time when Blacksmith and Maker were young gods. Each had been chosen by a particular people. Blacksmith watched over the Travelers, and Maker was the patron of the Giants. People like us either didn't have gods yet, or just worshipped their masters' gods. Elves didn't even exist yet."

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731350)

An Ateak

After a short pause to take a sip, Vergel resumed:
"The Travelers and the Giants finally clashed in the Drakenbergen. Major mystical sites like the Ateaks were all built in places of great power. You've all heard of geomagic. You know that the valleys in the region are a patchwork of dense, arcane flux. There are areas of strong magic, and as soon as you go through a mountain pass, you enter a normal or weak magic area. That's already more than enough to attract beings seeking power! But the Travelers were fighting for something stronger. A kind of extreme magic area which, in comparison, made known geomagics look like nothing.

"At the time, they could create Ateaks, portals that allow you to visit distant worlds, entirely unlike ours. A lot of the shit ruining our lives today came through them. All the monsters, all the aberrations, they were like pets for the Travelers. They kept them in menageries of a sort. Of course, they've escaped since then. But apparently, there are still some left, ignoring the passage of time thanks to enchantments, remaining in stasis until the day comes when someone unleashes them as new plagues on Eana!

"So where are the Ateaks and these places of ancient power? Hidden by perpetual illusions. Geomagics that create perpetual mirages to prevent anyone from going there. Who did this? Perhaps ancient mages, or the dragons themselves! Well, that's another story. At least it's effective. The places appear ordinary, and we pass quietly through them, walking right by the metaphorical front door. We think we see a nice mountain view and not the cyclopean ruins right under our noses! How to lift the veil, you ask? If I knew that, I'd be rich!"

Vergel bellowed in laughter, and his companions looked at each other, torn between disbelief and reverie. Something was fascinating about the idea of being at the heart of a reality that escaped their senses, hidden beneath the one they perceived. Zidnia came back from the cabin entrance. She had finished preparing the groundhog they had killed earlier in the day. Deboned and cut into pieces, the rodent would give flavor to the stew, and the stew would, in turn, tenderize the meat a little—hopefully.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Spawn of Demons

Happy with his showmanship, the dvaerg carried on with his story.

"During the Travelers' era, the sky shone with the light of Melancholia, Eternity, and the lost, nameless moon—the one later destroyed by Devils. But at the time, there were no fiends on Melancholia. She was different then. The Fateforge, on the other hand, did exist. It was the instrument of the gods. Through it, the Travelers sought to master the very fabric of reality.

"The small peoples of those days—that's us—were not all servile slaves, and some rebelled against the great masters. As Giant and Traveler fought each other in the Drakenbergen, the heroes of that time went to the Fateforge and changed Melancholia. They created Demons. And the first battlefield of the Demons was the Drakenbergen. Demons couldn't be killed on Eana, and so they made mighty opponents for the old masters, Travelers and Giants both. As the embodiment of rage, Demons of old fought on two fronts, against both great powers. They wanted to free the world from tyrants. When you put it like that, it all sounds well and good, but you can't forget the means they used.

"Nowadays, as you know, fiends can't freely come to Eana. There's always a silly sod who, thinking himself a big fish, summons one. In the old days, the same wasn't true. Demons had created a sort of sanctuary in a valley of the Drakenbergen: The Gate of the Furies. It's a place that looks a bit like Melancholia. They say demon princes still fight for control of the passageway.

"You could say that's a bit silly, since demons can't cross the border of the Gate of the Furies anymore. But who knows? Maybe some demented sectarians will find the place someday and bend over backwards for their noble lord who doesn't give a damn about them, and we'll end up with a horde of demons that'll come bite us in the ass. Mind you, it'd be a change from Canker..."

The End of the War and the Desire for Revenge

"Before I went off on one too many tangents, I started my story with a war in the Drakenbergen between the Giants and the Travelers," Vergel continued. "To sum it up, the Giants lost and withdrew to the north of Cyfandir, and then to Kaan. But for them, the war wasn't over. They never accepted defeat.

"As some would tell it, the frost giants who attack the Septentrion in Cyfandir every winter on their ice ships are seeking revenge. These descendants of Giants have lost their ancient magic and have become... I could almost say degenerate barbarians, by comparison. Yet, we must remain vigilant, because giants are as tenacious and resentful as the dvaergen. They have already tried invading several times. The chronicles of my people are full of such incursions, during the long winters..."



Scott Fairbanks (Order #39731950)

The Era of Renewal

Silence fell over the cabin. The fire crackled under the pan. Their smiles expressed the serene joy of sharing this moment of rest and dreams, safe and together. The windwalkers had established these shelters all over the mountains, allowing travelers off the beaten paths a respite from unpleasant surprises. The subtle magic that enchanted the place ensured that Zidnia the ranger would be immediately warned of any intrusion.

The Harsh Heritage of Drow Blood

The drow-blooded melessë had white hair, an ashen complexion, and black eyes. Such a heritage was not always easy to bear, and her companions didn't know whether she was the fruit of forbidden love or the violence of drow attacks. She wasn't an isolated case in the Drakenbergen. Zidnia was regarded with either pity or contempt, depending on whether people thought of her as more akin to surface dwellers or the Netherworld.

There were stories of melessë like her who were undercover agents for slavers, accomplices, amoral opportunists, and traitors. Even if the melessë themselves did not actively seek such an alliance with the worst dark elves, the latter could use blackmail or even magic—such as *geas* spells—to impose their will. On occasion, drow tried to make contact with the surface, describing themselves as renegades or idealists. Some also came to seek help and warn of a new threat related to Canker. Alas, all it took was one scout with a talent for lying, taking advantage of the naivety of surface dwellers before betraying them, for mistrust to return. The temptation to go back to the light had always existed since the fall, but crossing over was difficult after a long history of betrayals, abandonment, and other things better left unsaid.

Leaving the Shelters of the Netherworld

Zidnia offered to continue the story.

"The Netherworld stretched everywhere, beneath earth and ocean. Supposedly, it is rarely as close to the surface as here in the Drakenbergen. We look at snow-capped peaks while chasms delve into the darkness of the abyss. Beneath our feet, beneath the rock, in the tunnels dug by dwarves and purple worms, there is another reality, that of Eana's roots and Cankerous nests.

"Today, we think of the Netherworld as a place of horrors, the depths from which the earth spews out the most fearsome perils. When the Travelers fell, however, the caverns were a refuge. Except in a few places protected by powerful magic, life on the surface had become impossible. The Triad of Renewal—the alliance of Death, Frostelle, and Flora to defend Eana—was especially worshipped. In its sanctuaries, stone giants and humanoid peoples united in harmony, in a way we can now only dream of. The wise stone giants opened the underground gates, and the peoples found the sun again."

The Dawn War

"On the surface, new forests, different from those of the Era of the Travelers, covered the new world. They were inhabited by fairies and the first generation of elves. At the time, they could still experience and travel through wonderful dreams, from the roots of the maelossas to the Astral Plane. The world belonged to them; they were the guardians of its beauty and order. The first cities were theirs, palatial islands amidst a majestic and preserved nature.

"In those days, there was a luminous and benevolent god, and one of his symbols was a majestic falcon. He had been one of the first elves, but today the memory of his name has disappeared. This forgotten god stewarded the first great surface civilization of the Era of Renewal. It is said that, in ancient elven cities, there are still ruins of temples and places of worship in his honor.

"But a dark, poisonous mist was spreading over the Astral Plane. It grew, swirled, raged, and darkened. It broke things apart and devoured them. Nightmare was the echo of a new evil, the seed of which had been planted when the Travelers fell. It had taken root and strengthened itself in Eana's most inaccessible depths, far, far away in the bowels of the Netherworld. It had woven and knotted tunnels of living substance, and grown its deformed body, arteries, organs, cartilage, bones, and armies of ravagers.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

"The forgotten god was absorbed by Nightmare, paving the way for the terrible events that ensued. While elves were tortured by madness, abominations sprang forth from caves, caverns, and crevices.
"Battles took place throughout Cyfandir. Forests were razed. Only a few maelossas escaped disaster, in Taurëlma, Lothrienne, and Arolavia. The Drakenbergen had to be reclaimed one valley at a time, mountain pass by mountain pass."

Bardic Hymns

Across the continent, bards and scholars sing the deeds of heroes of yesteryear, those who faced the first manifestations of Canker during the Dawn War. Several hymns and poems celebrate them. To this day, their deeds are known, and parents name some of their children after them. These epics describe a period that spanned more than thirty years, with many protagonists. They still inspire today's adventurers, and many places are named after their feats of arms or periods of their lives:

- **Araucë**, the orphaned tiefling girl who saved the elenion palatial city of Falquaturia on the shores of the freshwater sea of Sendaïrë, and was adopted by Queen Niwenn.
- **Asëamordo**, the elenion hero, an extraordinary swordsman with a legendary radiant blade, supposedly a *holy longsword*. His tomb is said to be hidden in the hills that border Gleannceò.
- **Ceuranar**, the visionary druidess, the first to warn of the threat, who guided her companions into the most hostile regions. She was buried in Astrea's Garden, and today's druids continue to honor her memory there, considering themselves her spiritual heirs.
- **Nulnyrë**, the wizard, who disappeared into the depths of the earth during the final battle. She is believed to have been corrupted, becoming the mother of all drow. Before her fall, she supposedly made a habit of keeping a diary on an indestructible medium. She hid her notes somewhere safe after each key moment of the battles against Canker in the Drakenbergen, describing ravagers, their abilities, and her thoughts about their nature.
- **Ehtelon**, Nulnyrë's brother, equal parts guide, cunning archer, and joyful soul, who was torn apart by a 100-headed hydra. Today, windwalkers claim him as their own, and this bond is recognized by the aldaron of Taurëlma. While this ancestral forest is forbidden to any non-elf, windwalkers are tolerated.
- **Wolstan**, the dwarf blacksmith who designed exceptional weapons and armor, as well as the first alloy capable of resisting Canker's secretions. He is credited with forging techniques for *adamantine armor* and *mithral armor*. According to legends, he also invented *dwarven plate*.
- **Durian**, Wolstan's half-brother, disappeared into the depths and is allegedly one of the first duergar traitors.
- **Nikôni**, the merosi, who rallied human and orc tribes to fight in Kaan.
- **Wuyôma**, the halfling orphan, raised as Nikôni's brother. An eternal wanderer, a tireless guide and scout mounted atop a giant wolf. He is the second founding patron of the windwalkers. The aldaron of Taurëlma have sworn never to attack halflings when settling scores because of his friendship with Ehtelon. This is one of the reasons for the success of halfling negotiators during the Mie peace treaty between the Free City and the elves of Taurëlma.
- **Qunokân**, a warrior giantess. Alone, she covered a desperate retreat and fell in combat while halting Canker's troops in a narrow pass. Her body was later revived in the blasphemous form of a hideous, two-headed ettin.
- **Myrsky**, the tempestuous Nordic barbarian, who could allegedly shapeshift into a giant bear. In her honor, the barbarian mountain tribes do not hunt bears, fighting the creatures only as a last resort.
- **Neevalis**, the genius gnome engineer who, with her family, designed all sorts of machines and explosives that were used in underground battles. The gnomes who settled in the Meanderise claim her as their own, even though their settling happened much later and, in fact, has no connection with the life of this heroine.
- The brothers **Lykos**, **Iolaos**, **Nauplios**, **Ankaios**, and **Kreios**, each equipped with a different giant weapon. Among them, only Lykos, the youngest, survived the war. They are considered saints of Blacksmith in Cyrillane and the south-eastern Drakenbergen.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Celebration of the Sad Dawn

The dead of the Dawn War are still honored on the winter solstice at dawn. For the whole day, activities and displays of liveliness are avoided. No fires are lit: the cold evokes sadness as much as absence and mourning. Morning and midday meals are frugal. At dusk, candles are placed on the headstones in memory of those who have passed away. People talk about those who fell in battle, against Canker of course, but also in all other conflicts. At nightfall, the people gather together, light large fires in their houses, and keep them burning all night long as they revel, drink, and sing about the missing heroes.

Peoples of the Netherworld

The drow continued with the origin of her people.

"The most frightening battles happened underground. The source of the evil had to be found. Those who would become drow, duergar, and svirfneblin were members of the legions who sacrificed themselves to find the primordial nest.

"Those who survived could not return and were changed forever. Confined in darkness, perpetual witnesses to Canker's immortality, they became bitter, cynical, ruthless predators of the surface dwellers. Not a year goes by without looters and slavers from the Netherworld coming to seize food and wealth, dragging prisoners back into eternal darkness.

"They attack, mock, and despise, but they also yearn for light and the dizzying sky. They miss the stars and the hope they represent. They live elsewhere, yet are close. They are a threat, but perhaps also the answer to some of our most ardent questions."



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Era of Fated Kings

Zidnia sounded melancholic when she ended her story, and everyone could imagine how much her doubts and hopes must torment her. Vergel brought some wood near the fire. Octavia made her bed and checked the state of her equipment, preparing it for the next day. The silence would have dragged on if Tremelung hadn't taken upon himself to break it.

"Uhm... Sorry, I—yeah, I know, I have to stop saying that all the time, uh, I mean..."

Half amused, half embarrassed, he smiled at Octavia, who was teaching the young, black-clad priest about basic eloquence, and then closed his eyes to concentrate. Free from their eyes, free from having to wonder what they thought of him, he took on a more assertive, steady, and measured tone. He raised his right hand and sometimes moved his fingers briefly, as if he were reading a book, turning the pages of his memories.

The Flight of the Dragons

The Drakenbergen owe their name to a period during the Era of Fated Kings called the Flight of the Dragons. Before that time, there were no dragons. Thousands of eggs, stored in the Netherworld under the mountains, hatched into a myriad of dragons over a short period of time. The creatures soon scattered all over Eana, but the memory of this prodigious time, when all species of dragons were present in a single place, left a lasting impression on the collective mind. What caused the Flight of the Dragons? The dvaergen still have some engraved archives and lore. The dragons are said to be the last creation of the Travelers, moved to safety during their fall. For reasons unknown, stone giants supposedly watched over them for thousands of years—or were they trying to prevent the Flight of the Dragons? A persistent rumor insists that there remain many unhatched eggs from that time. If one were to find these supposed nurseries, they could determine the identity of the current dragons, and the role played by the stone giants. Such places may contain something akin to a testament that the Travelers left to their heirs.

Silver Dragons and the Drakenbergen

If there is one remaining dragon breed in the Drakenbergen that has become their symbol, it is the silver dragon. Of course, a few such specimens can be found elsewhere on Eana, but it is in the heart of the Drakenbergen that travelers will most likely meet these majestic creatures. Over time, silver dragons have become the protectors of this region.

Vayviirsudaik

Vevir (Vayviirsudaik in Draconic) is a Drakenbergen legend, probably the wisest and most powerful of all silver dragons. Vevir embodies the balance of the Drakenbergen and ensures that it is respected. She believes that each of its inhabitants is part of its ecosystem. Over the decades, she has become more and more solitary and no longer interferes in the affairs of those who inhabit this part of the world. She has tried to be a mentor to the younger silver dragons of the Drakenbergen. She passes on what she has learned and what she believes the mission of her species is: to protect this wild region of Eana from anything that could profoundly alter it, be it the proliferation of undead, Canker, or even the surface-dwelling humanoid communities.

Rather than the young silver dragons, who are more impetuous and more curious about the surface dwellers' way of life, the true allies of Vayviirsudaik are the schatz, chief among them the oldest of them, a creature at least as old as the ancient silver dragon: Shaaris, also known as Moon Scale. At first glance, the schatz are like giant snakes whose bodies are studded with jewels. These wise defenders of Eana are greatly respected and honored.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731350)

The Chaos of Predetermination

"As the Era of Renewal came to an end (an era which was also a time of glory for the elves throughout Cyfandir and beyond), the one we know of as the Era of Fated Kings began," Tremelung continued, in a now completely controlled voice. "The very name refers to the Fateforge and to the choosing by the moon Eternity of those who would bear the gift of bending the course of events, marking history with their unfailing will.

"This period is so rich and so long that a dozen nights—praised be the Lady—would not be enough to cover the subject. Everywhere, kingdoms and empires were built, founded by the chosen. Alas, when they reached their peak, when their legitimacy was no longer contested, when they were at the height of their greatness, the gift disappeared, and they became mere mortals again. Kings or tyrants, they were preyed upon by new chosen, those whose hearts brimmed with ambition: if being selected by Eternity gave them the right to rule humanity, it didn't matter whether they were thieves or peasants, they had to conquer the throne.

"Death spares neither heroes, nor chosen ones, nor rulers.

"Death was the ultimate judge, the ultimate adversary, and the unsolvable question. It compelled everyone to act. I'll tell you about the answers they came to: the tomb, the demonic ascension, and divinity."

The Tombs of Forgotten Kings

"If you go by the Free City calendar, the Dawn War took place around -5000; the Cyfand Empire then spread over the entire continent, and by around -3000, it was replaced by the Stopstep Empire, which eventually collapsed under Tamerakh's armies. That much has been transmitted down the ages, as written in a few, short lines in books. It mentions the druidic faith of Cyfandir, and how it lost ground against the proselytism of the Cult of the Ages.

"The Stopstep Empire went through several dynasties and many coups. Its name remains in history entirely because of its curious rules of succession. A new sovereign was considered legitimate if they killed the former one in a fair fight in the throne room. The entire administration would immediately put itself at the service of the newly-chosen crown bearer. Abdication was possible but came with a considerable loss of prestige for the former emperor, leaving them exiled to a sort of prison castle in a remote valley until their death. It is said that these places still exist and are often haunted, for fallen rulers and their families were frequently murdered. Their murderers were either agents in the service of the new king or former ministers who sought to curry favor with the new masters of the country.

"When several of Eternity's chosen killed an emperor, the empire was temporarily divided into several kingdoms, all united within Stopstep. Each king could be challenged according to the rules that applied to the emperor. This tradition carries on in the small kingdoms of the Fjordkungden.

"The lords of Stopstep grew proud of the power conferred upon them by Eternity... and, in turn, terribly bitter at the thought of losing what was part of them. They tried to cement their place in history by other means: bardic hymns singing their glory, tailor-made magic weapons, and above all the erection of lavish tombs. As it's told, new emperors and kings were desperate to prepare their mausoleums from the very moment they took the throne. As soon as the treasures in a mausoleum were offered to Death—who, at the time, was honored as Cessation—it was forbidden to touch them. Of course, this never stopped thieves and other unscrupulous individuals. The traps, curses, and monsters laid out by the forebears of the Free City builders' guild were—and still are—ready to attend to the vanity of corpses that have long since turned to dust."



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The First Demonic Cults

There was so much to say about the Drakenbergen! For Tremelung, it seemed a fitting time to bring up the presence of demons in the region.

"Vergel has already talked about Melancholia. The demons were very active during the Era of Fated Kings.

"Since the blue moon became their lair, the very cycle of souls and supernatural energies has been disrupted. When a being dies, its state of mind and location determine its destination. For everyone, it is a succession of choices. If you're in tune with nature and you die in the wilderness? Then, you join Eana or become a fairy being. If you're tormented, denied funeral rites, or are a victim of misused necromancy? You become the living dead. Otherwise, your soul reaches the Ethereal Plane and seeks a final destination or a new beginning. And if you still rage and fume over your death, you'll see the beacon of the damned: Melancholia.

"Now, though Eternity's chosen ones can perform great miracles, their blind excess and pride also make them dangerous. Both they and their nemeses are deeply sensitive to the influence of the blue moon. Demons remember parts of their personal history and are driven by their most violent passions: hatred, revenge, ambition, obsession. They are ready for anything. For them, the end always justifies the means.

"Thus, in the Era of Fated Kings, many fallen rulers, or adventurers who perished before fulfilling their dreams, became demons. Melancholia is filled with such chosen—forgotten, and now despised. Many of today's great demon princes were saviors in an age of rage and mayhem. They fought tyrannical Travelers and Giants but, to gain the strength they needed, they became as monstrous as those they opposed.

"For those who bore witness to the power struggles of these chosen—veritable superhumanoids, if I can use that term—life was at times very difficult and deeply unfair. If one chosen wanted to steal, rape, burn, or kill, only another chosen could realistically oppose them, and perhaps only to rob them of their spoils. Under such conditions, how could one not be tempted to make a pact with a fiend? Demon princes have goals that may seem comprehensible. Akhlitôl helps the victims of injustice take revenge; Gegaôr bestows brute strength; Liridem favors embittered destroyers... The first organized cults honoring demons date back to this age and have existed ever since. Their adherents are constantly hunted, and have adapted by using hidden sanctuaries and undertaking dark pilgrimages."

The Sense and Nature of Adventure

Why does Eternity grant her gift to some and not others? Why, despite powers both arcane and divine, do hunger, sickness, and misery still exist? During my stay in the Free City, I asked High Priestess Asayanga about this. We talked at length about the abilities and spells of the chosen ones and the Awakened. Very few bring happiness or health to the common man. The rage of a barbarian only serves to kill, as does the inflict wounds *spell. All of it is for the sake of fighting.*

Asayanga told me of an enigmatic theory. Apparently, the mystical power of Eternity can be channeled through the Fateforge to force reality to take a particular course. The moon itself may be linked to the deep essence of magic that manifests itself through the arcane analogy. According to this principle, similarity implies relation: simply put, one uses something cold as a component for a cold spell, and vice versa for a fire spell.

I imagine that Eternity's choosing functions in the same way: it is representative. It carries a deeper significance. I have thought a lot about this question since then. Combat is omnipresent in the skills granted to Eternity's chosen ones, so perhaps conflict itself is the deeper meaning. I wonder if the key is to consider physical conflict—the one we wage against the undead, Canker, and aberrations—as a metaphor for existence. Life is a struggle in which we must make decisions based on partial information; we have to put ourselves in danger, dare to leave our familiar surroundings to become stronger and wiser.

In that case, adventure would be the image and quintessence of life.

Killing monsters is not essential: the most important thing lies in the choices we make and the deeper meaning we give to our actions. Eternity's chosen remain mortal like everyone else. Our actions are simply more visible, louder, but that does not give us the right to behave like... demons.

Excerpt from the diary of Tremelung, priest of Xonim

Scott Immormino (Order #39781950)

The Divinity of Tamerakh and Xonim

"The merosi High Priestess Yaria-shöniin was the first chosen to receive visions of the Lady of the Night, Mistress of Mysteries and Aberrance, who was snatched from death by the glory of Her son, Tamerakh the Liberator. She learned from Her the reality of Her divine Ascension by walking the Cathedral—Her divine domain—after a journey through the Ethereal Plane. Thanks to the *Midnight Verses*, we, her priests and faithful, know the Lady's wisdom and riddles, as well as her path in the deepest darkness, beyond space and time, where the mute lament of the lamentrope echoes, immortal and eternal.

"As a mortal, Xonim was a human priestess of Death and a wizardess, initiated in the greatest secrets of Kaan. Visions and research allowed her to understand the profound nature of Fate. Her studies led her to convince the orc ruler, the powerful Khüch'adal, to make her his third wife and the mother of his fifth child, the one who would become ezen, leader of the Horde, and a conqueror: Tamerakh.

"Armed with her mastery over chaos and the intertwined coincidences that form the tangled web of destiny, Xonim advised and guided Tamerakh on the path to timeless glory. Both knew their nature as Eternity's chosen and the fragility of that gift. Some exegeses of the *Midnight Verses* believe that certain conquests were driven by the search for ancient sites of power. As the Fateforge was the work and instrument of the Travelers, it was necessary to understand the studies of this ancient people on reality, will, inertia, chains of causality, and the complexity of interdependence, to be able to push back the final limit: death itself.

"Xonim and Tamerakh went to the Septentrion, crossed the Drakenbergen, and stayed there for three winters, leaving their ongoing conquests to their generals. There, somewhere amid the Drakenbergen, they found the answers to their questions. Those answers still exist. The Lady did not destroy the source of this knowledge. She left it for those who persevere, those astute and lucky enough to discover it.

"Alas, the efforts and trials therein were too much for Xonim's earthly form. She died before she could return to Mangulik. Her son, in the prime of life and at the height of his glory, knew what to do next. He threw all his strength into a new battle. The master of an exceptional empire, he now had to overcome fate and death. He went to Eternity, crossed the Maze, reached the Fateforge, and became a god. However, the fruit of Xonim's years of work gave him an advantage that no mortal or god had; not only was he able to wrest the Lady from death, but he also managed to make her a goddess.

"With the divine Ascension of Xonim and Tamerakh, the Era of Fated Kings came to an end. The number of Eternity's chosen dwindled. Magic itself has cycles and laws. It would seem access to divinity, in particular, became impossible for a long time.

"But things are changing again. The visions of Asayanga, High Priestess of Xonim in the Free City, are clear. The collapse of the Kadmeid dynasty in Cyrillane is the beginning of a new era. Eternity shines brighter. The web of Fate is tangled, knotted, woven tightly. Even the demented Nihilians know it: soon, mortals will once more have access to divinity. This transfiguration can only take place at the end of major crises and profound changes in our world. We are fortunate enough to carry a fragment of this radiance. It is up to us to forge our destiny."

The Horde's Descendants

When Tamerakh's Horde swarmed over Cyfandir, some of his generals and soldiers fell in love with it and refused to leave. Today, the descendants of these deserters form a more or less integrated minority. Goblins and bugbears especially are still considered violent by nature, despite the efforts of some of their matriarchs to prove their worth. In the Drakenbergen, barbarian tribes also exist that are mostly human. These crossbred descendants lead a semi-nomadic life as hunters, fishermen, and gatherers, similar to the peoples of the Septentrion.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Secrets of Ancient Ruins

The Drakenbergen are teeming with ruins buried beneath vegetation, screes, and sometimes newer buildings. Each era has its secrets and treasures, but also its curses. It is said that grave robbers sometimes become ghouls, ghasts, or wights who haunt the scenes of their crimes.

Untouched by the Passage of Time

Places teeming with magic hold many surprises. Not the least of these is discovering upon entry that the ruins appear more and more recent, as if time had no hold on them. Outside, one may only see a collapsed hole, but the inside is almost intact, as if it had been abandoned or sealed the day before. Only the magic's exhaustion can make the lost years catch up with them.

The Many Ruins of the Drakenbergen

In addition to the ruins of little towns, abandoned farms, and small kingdoms, any scholarly traveler will be happy to discover the marks of a past rich in historical events, both happy and tragic.

Ruins of the Travelers or Giants. Protected by powerful illusions that conceal them, these constructions are similar in their excessive proportions and the use of powerful magic capable of bending the laws of nature, for better or for worse.

Elven civilization. There are few remains dating back to the golden age of the elven civilization. A coupling of plants and minerals characterizes these constructions. When the aldaron know of such places, they make sure to protect them against looters. Alas, many elven ruins were corrupted during the Dawn War and remain favored places for Nightmare's manifestations.

Dvaerg civilization. When the stone giants left the Cyfand Netherworld, the dwarves became masters of the tunnels near the surface. They mined, dug, carved, and shaped the mountain with passion. They left—voluntarily or not—numerous ruins, the entrances of which are usually hidden, and left even more of the air shafts that are so essential to life in the depths. Their abstract and refined style, largely based on geometric purity, is recognizable at a glance. Ancient dvaerg installations are sometimes inhabited by other humanoid populations—those in search of a safe and concealed shelter. Refugees, rebels, bandits, and Netherworld slavers all appreciate these constructions. They can also be abandoned, becoming almost natural environments, like the characteristic caves of the Netherworld, or be haunted by **ghosts**. Finally, Canker seems to take a malign pleasure in taking over the former habitats of guardian dwarves. Whatever the case, though the dwarves may abandon mines that have run dry without a second thought, they never leave their artfully sculpted cities and palaces without reason.

Boreal civilization. Little-known in the Drakenbergen, this culture of the Septentrion held outposts amid the mountain tops. The Boreans were characterized by their great mastery of magic, especially over cold and sheer force, as well as their keen interest in astronomy. This civilization is reputed to have appeared very early and to have flourished by using occult knowledge dating back to the Era of the Travelers. One can discover observatories in the heights, surrounded by ice caps, which sometimes house teleportation circles to reach other, similar sites. **Schatz** and **silver dragons** sometimes make it their mission to forbid access to these sites, which they consider to contain dangerous knowledge.

Cyfand culture. The ancient Cyfands, practitioners of a druidic religion, considered wood to be linked to life, and stone to death. Their dwellings were built of perishable materials and have therefore left very few traces. It is possible to find some of them in the peat bogs and marshes of the Meanderise. Still, for the most part, the only ruins from this age are monuments and sites of worship dedicated to the dead, such as tumuli, menhirs, dolmens, and tombs dug into the stone. The lords of the time would stop at nothing to display their power, undertaking major earthworks and the construction of artificial hills. These hills held mazes composed of tunnels designed both to trap intruders and put their creator's excesses on display. Slavery was a widespread practice, and such unfortunates frequently accompanied their masters in death, becoming regiments of **skeletons** defending the premises.

Stopstep Empire. Dominating the Drakenbergen from its capital Athenaise, the people of this country laid the foundation of engineering. They built roads, bridges, and aqueducts that are still in use. Temples of the Cult of the Ages were systematically erected, honoring aspects of the present gods as a succession of time periods: Beginning (Maker), Growth (Flora), Peak (Blacksmith), Decline (Frostelle), and Cessation (Death). Divination was highly prized, and diviners of the time sought to predict the course of world history for several centuries, delivering abstruse revelations which sometimes became self-fulfilling, or bordered on the insane. The lords of Stopstep vied to be the most creative and daring in the construction of their ornate mausoleums.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Unlife of Kentigern of Gleannceò

Groundhog broth for all, followed by a spoonful of honey for dessert, and the meal was over. As a digestive, and in anticipation of a good night's sleep, Vergel drank a few gulps of genepi. Octavia wrapped herself in her large shawl of fine wool and silk, the intricate floral patterns coming alive with every movement. She wore it both during the day, to shield herself from the harsh rays of the sun, and at night, to keep warm. Speaking softly, the Cyrillan poetess began her story with a slightly provocative look:

"Since Tremelung told us about heroes who refuse to die, whether they want to remain in history, in the blue moonlight, or in our fearful prayers, I will continue with a fourth solution: unlife.

"Kentigern was heir to the small kingdom of Gleannceò, a large valley where a hot spring gushes forth—in the wintertime, it shrouds the surroundings in a persistent mist. In this land of snow and mud, the new king decided that his life would be different from that of his predecessors. He would reign beyond the evergreen woods that ran to the mountain pass. A skillful warrior and a stubborn, hardhearted hunter, Kentigern forged his skills according to a rigorous plan. He learned everything he felt he needed to defeat his opponents. He studied their flaws, their weaknesses, what they cared about the most, and he exploited it all without hesitation, defeating them through blackmail, threats, or brutal conquest.

"He married, in circumstances which remain unclear, an aldaron princess named Rossën of the Rain, who gave birth to three sons. Each of them then married a princess: the first married Matilda of Lothrienne, the second married Evgenia of Arolavia, and the last married Niobe of Cyrillane.

"Kentigern grew old while Rossën remained as beautiful and unflappable as the rest of her people. Their sons had become men. The kingdom had grown, but it was still fragile. What was to be done? The king summoned his family to name his heir. Who would inherit the crown? Who would be worthy to succeed him? He looked at his sons, again and again, without finding any worthy of his esteem. They were vile, spineless, vain, and pretentious. What was to be done? He looked at his daughters-in-law, attractive and cunning, but certainly not loyal to him. What to do? His long, dark-haired wife smiled at him: her eyes twinkled like stars; her smile was as cold as the sky, that firmament which would see the death of all those it watched over.

"Kentigern bit his lip; he had a taste for blood and a thirst for iron. Let blade cut short his indecision and bring an answer to his questions! He would read the future in the bowels of those unworthy of his line.

"That night, the sons died and served as a meal for their father, consumed under the horrified gaze of their wives who were locked in the great hall. To survive, they abandoned life itself; as undead, they swore fealty to he whom in life they would have betrayed. A crimson-tinged and murderous orgy, deliberately transgressive and demented, went on until dawn. Blackness so deep could bear neither its own reflection nor the dimmest light, and so, the monsters took refuge in darkness and madness.

"The people fled, the servants broke oaths of allegiance, and the kingdom collapsed. The monsters lost everything that had theretofore driven them. No one thence went to the valley of Gleannceò; roads were swallowed by brambles, and then in turn by high trees. Having plummeted from on high, the wretches were reduced to preying on lost travelers. But it is said that Kentigern and his daughter-wives have returned from the abyss, and into that abyss, they shall cast the world. They dominate, manipulate, charm, conspire, and rebuild their nameless kingdom. The glory of Kentigern will be heard again when his fanatical or subjugated servants are strong enough to choke all opposition with blood.

"And what of Rossën? Some say that she still haunts the dark forests of Gleannceò; others claim that she died of old age, and with each new moon, Kentigern visits her grave."

Outside the cabin, the constellations followed their nightly course, marking the passage of time. Everyone had spoken in turn, traveling across thousands of years. The fire's embers still cast their gentle light around the inside of the cabin. It was warm, and they were safe, and yet something deep inside them had grown cold at the mention of the vampire. They had witnessed strange things—little things that made sense against the backdrop of this story. Was it their imagination, or was something serious about to happen?

Kentigern's Blasphemous Anointing
Tremelung, Vergel, Octavia, and Zidnia face off against the vampire in Askamor's forge

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Gods in the Drakenbergen

Every cult, every religion, has its own traditions and myths. The main gods can be found in the cultures of the Drakenbergen, with their own peculiarities.



Blacksmith

First of the gods, once related to the Travelers, he is now the major deity for most peoples who consider themselves civilized and organized. To the dwarves, he is Verndari the Defender, and their primary deity in the Drakenbergen. Chapels, altars, and temples are dedicated to him, honoring his luminous, solar, forceful, and harmonious aspects. He is celebrated in summer, between the solstice and the harvest, with local variations. The schatz Shaaris, known as Moon Scale, and the silver dragon Vevir, are considered daughters of Verndari, the patron saints and protectors of the Drakenbergen.



Maker

The second of the gods, once related to the Giants, his form is more chaotic, creative, and transgressive. In the Drakenbergen, this deity is almost exclusively worshipped in private. The dwarves call him Leirkerasmi the Potter, and he is a disturbing god that is worshipped by few. The dwarves' reluctance has spread to some extent to other mountain peoples, who also know him as Beamir. The only real celebration in his honor is the Carnival, which takes place at the very end of winter, when the air is mild but spring has not yet come.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Death

In the Drakenbergen, he is known as one of the three heroes who claimed divinity when the Travelers fell, the one who brought about the end of the old world, killing it to allow its renewal. Death appears under the name Narfor on some ancient dwarven tablets, the same name that is used in the Drakenbergen to refer to him. Paradoxically, the cult of Narfor is practically nonexistent in dwarven culture in the Drakenbergen. However, other peoples of the region highly revere him, and his temples are very widespread. They are peculiar in that all of them have a bottomless well, filled to the brim with water.

All of Death's wells are connected to each other, wherever they are: the bottom of one is the surface of another. Those who submit to Death's judgment or place their fate in his hands plunge into a well: if they are beyond forgiveness, they drown; if not, they emerge from another well, near a place where a trial awaits them, placed upon their path by fate.

In Drakenbergen folklore, he is associated with the color black and the hope of finding loved ones in the beyond. His main celebration takes place on the winter solstice. In the region of Gleannceò, Kentigern is considered a saint of Narfor, touched by his grace giving him eternal life—a heresy to the priests and believers of Death from neighboring countries and regions.

Frostelle

The second heroine of the triad that reached divinity when the Travelers fell, she is the one who allowed the coming times to take deep root despite the gloomy appearance of winter, which is her season. Her cult is a minor one: her followers especially revere her for her dominion over fertility and pray to her in the hope that the cold will not be too cruel. In Drakenbergen folklore, she is associated with the color white, hence her nickname, White Mother. She is celebrated when the ice of the lakes is thick enough to walk on.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731450)

Flora

The third heroine of the triad of renewal who became gods when the Travelers fell, she embodies rebirth, as well as hope and perseverance. Myths often tell of her complicated love affair with Death. She is a favored deity for any with a connection to the earth. In practice, she is often confused with Eana—much to the chagrin of druids. The great celebrations of Flora take place between the spring equinox and the summer solstice, with local variations.

In Drakenbergen folklore, she is associated with shades of yellow or gold. She is celebrated interchangeably under the names of Flora or Edwen among humans, and Edwur among dwarves; this division serves as a pretext for many arguments—good-natured ones, luckily—between these two peoples.

Her faith is considered a cult in the Gleannceò region, where she is seen as the cursed daughter of Narfor, seeking to kill her father and plunge the world into darkness.

The Red

This character, mysterious and despicable, is only rarely mentioned, appearing at most in the background of horrible tales and legends. Supposedly, he was a hero who accompanied Death, Frostelle, and Flora to the Fateforge. The stories about him are very vague. Some sects describe him as Death's sworn enemy. On an esoteric level, he is said to be opposed to both the black god and the golden goddess. One thing is certain: if he exists, he grants no divine spells. However, the few who study him consider him as extremely powerful—and extremely dangerous.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Forgotten One

An ancient elven lord and the first major victim of Nightmare, his fall was one of the causes behind the Dawn War. The absorption of his essence was so complete that his myths and even his name disappeared from memory. The only remaining detail is his association with a luminous falcon. Some believe that by freeing him, it would be possible to put an end to Canker's hold on the world, but to do so would require much more information. There is no consensus on this theory, and others believe that recklessly pursuing such a purpose could create a new disaster.

Night and Storm

The cults of Xonim and Tamerakh never took root in the Drakenbergen—perhaps out of collective memory of the Destroyer's conquering armies, and their part in the fall of the Stopstep Empire. They have neither public celebrations nor temples. At best, a few private chapels in their name may exist.



Scott Timmerman (Order #39731830)

Night

Of late, it has seemed the Lady of the Night's influence has grown. She has faithful followers in the Free City and Cyrillane, her faith spreading in scholarly circles along main trade routes. She is honored as the one who answers questions and unveils mysteries. She is a deity of individual transformation and development, encouraging everyone to follow their own path. She does not ask for unity or brotherhood from those who pray to her.

The birth of vampirism is attributed to her, which raises questions among her believers. Some in the Drakenbergen consider joining Kentigern to serve the will of the Lady of Mysteries. Others reject this reading as naive, believing that Kentigern's path is his own and that opposing him isn't forbidden if it is deemed appropriate.

The followers of Xonim in the Drakenbergen find themselves in a delicate position, caught between the desire of certain zealots to get close to the vampire lord out of religious conviction, and the deep-rooted fear that the creatures of the night arouse in the local people. They risk being treated as fiend worshippers and arrested, banished, or burned at the stake.

Storm

Tamerakh, as "Storm" or "Fury," is celebrated by some tribes and clans, those with harsh traditions. He is considered the source of the sacred rage of barbarians and berserkers. He supports any who strive to surpass themselves and break down the obstacles preventing them from reaching their goals. For this warrior god, one's objectives are less important than the courage, audacity, and intelligence one implements in pursuing them. It is said that he listens to the prayers of those who have impressed him. He is especially celebrated on the days before and after a battle. It is customary to offer part of the spoils to him by burning it on a great bonfire.



Scott Timmermans (Order #5[illegible])

The Dvaergejord

The dwarves maintain the main roads and shelters necessary for the smooth operation of trade, thus protecting their extraction activities. For this reason, dwarves call the entire mountain range "Dvaergejord" (pronounced Dvai-r-ge-yo-rde), i.e. the domain of the dwarves.

A Few Dwarven Names

Female Names

Adeleid, Ahmga, Algegeba, Annedra, Apfalia, Bauma, Bergma, Dazika, Digride, Ebhma, Erdalia, Ewohera, Fenstera, Framka, Fremdike, Fristure, Fumutti, Gaufska, Geldanna, Gilda, Haltme, Hamda, Haupta, Heidische, Hildige, Irgena, Jomma, Karobina, Karza, Kirscha, Leschere, Lezoga, Mawike, Merwina, Minauge, Rittere, Sandfliege, Schaula, Sternsee, Sussige, Thura, Tutmale, Tutschene, Verzoge, Vogela, Weltke, Werdene, Winka, Zerka, Zermene.

Male Names

Atverg, Barmangel, Bertholder, Besieger, Blaugel, Diedorich, Eikwert, Engelborg, Euraus, Fritzig, Frowind, Ganther, Gorgrim, Gottfreud, Grimmstig, Gunterig, Heinreis, Heissig, Helmanz, Herrischt, Hunskal, Jahrmal, Karlmut, Karwind, Kerle, Kleidaus, Kormengel, Krieger, Lohnmauer, Lutherg, Mehrkal, Munchmar, Reimden, Relf, Repurt, Rottensachs, Siegberg, Sigmond, Stefhans, Stermund, Ulreisen, Verheim, Vontrett, Waffenmar, Weinerein, Wolfmond, Wolhalm, Wulfgeng, Zeitank, Zugsterg.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Clan Name and Coat of Arms

One's clan name honors one's founder. These mythical clan ancestors are honored as spiritual guides. Dwarves often get annoyed with the way other peoples butcher the pronunciation of their words, so they developed the habit of translating their "clanym" (clan name) in Cyfand. It also serves to make strangers understand the nobility of their origins, condensed into a single, meaningful word. Dvaerg and Cyfand names are constructed in the same way.

Example: a dwarf's clanym could be Stalfelt, and he would introduce himself as "Ironfield."

Origin of the Clan Name

Roll 1d20	Create clanym (in dvaerg, add –i for singular and –en for plural)
1 to 8	Name based on the founder's first name (even: a woman; odd: a man).
9 to 12	Name based on the founder's mastered craft.
13 to 14	Name based on the founder's favorite weapon.
15	Name based on a natural element in the domain (source, deposit, etc.).
16 to 17	Name based on a foe defeated in the clan's early days.
18 to 20	Name based on one of the founder's qualities (courage, honor, etc.).

The history of a clan is reflected in its name and coat of arms. A clan founder's greatest achievement is often represented. The two tables below offer a dominant color and a type of object, both of which can convey a message.

Color of events associated with the founding of a dwarven clan

Roll 1d20	Color	Examples of events associated with the founding.
1 to 3	Black	Mourning, struggle against Canker or some Netherworld horror.
4 to 9	Red	Battle, epic fight against a dragon.
10	White	Spirituality, vision, mysticism, prophecy.
11 to 15	Gold	Mercantile fortune, dragon treasure, banking establishment.
16	Green	Alliance with elves, fey, or druids.
17 to 18	Copper	Exceptional craftsmanship, rare skill.
19 to 20	Silver	Alliance with surface-dwelling people (often humans or gnomes).

Nature of items associated with the founding of a dwarven clan

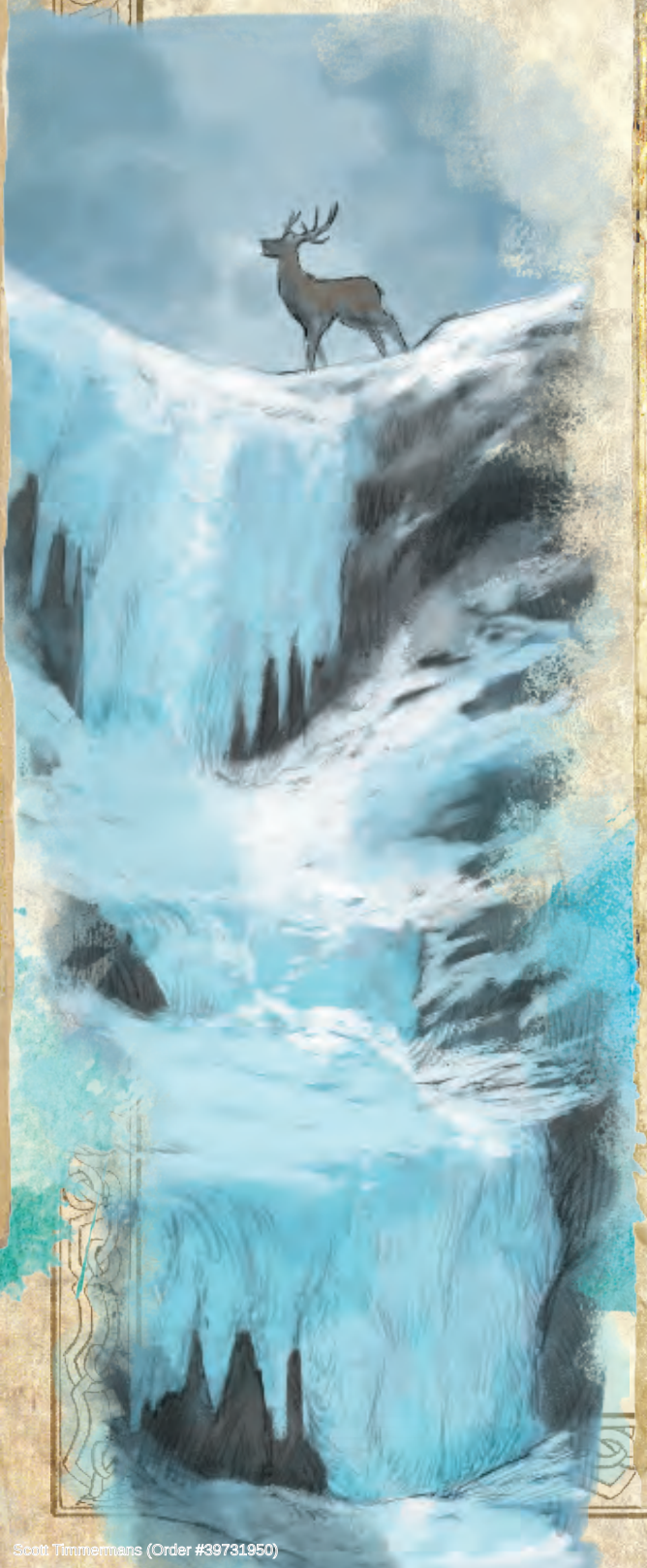
Roll 1d20	Symbol	Examples of items associated with the founding
1 to 3	Treasure	An essential element from the royal treasury (a scepter, a relic, etc.).
4 to 9	Weapon	The clan founder's favorite weapon.
10	Feat	Depiction of a legend (legendary ambush, fateful duel, etc.).
11 to 15	Crafts	The clan founder's favorite tool.
16	Oath	Depiction of a founding oath.
17 to 18	Location	Depiction of an important location for the domain (its main resource or a major ruin site).
19 to 20	Home	Elements depicting the comfort or security of a dwarven Home.



Scott Timmermans (Order #9973)

Travel in the Mountains

Many travelers (messengers, merchants, or adventurers) cross the Drakenbergen in summer. Some prefer the main roads, patrolled by dwarves, while others venture off the beaten path, where there are more surprises.



Sparsely Populated Regions

Octavia still couldn't believe it. The largest nearby city was less populated than even the outskirts of Kratéïra, the capital of her native Cyrillane.

"It's quite true," Zidnia explained, "the Drakenbergen are sparsely populated, and the harsh lifestyle in some valleys can't fully explain it. Every generation, farmers come from neighboring countries to clear trees and settle to start a new life. The dwarves have been here for ages as well and are very well organized. So why aren't there more of them?

"The other night, we talked about the key moments in the mountains' history, but there are also many isolated events of limited duration and scope, which have had dramatic consequences.

"Just think about the Netherworld sprawling in every direction beneath our feet. There are not only drow and duergar slavers, but the abominable grimlocks, and other predators that come out at night from chasms and caves to hunt on the surface. Canker never gives up either, taking advantage of the sparse population to set up nests on the surface, from which it sends its ravagers.

"Moreover, every winter, the inhabitants fear that the blizzard will bring white dragons from the Septentrion. Some even make their lair in icecaps and endless snow, hunting in cool weather.

"But that's not all. Ancient tombs always hold surprises, and all it takes is an earthquake for things that were once locked up to come out at night.

"These are but a few of the many perils that await the inhabitants. At night, many things lurk in the dark that ought to be dead. They seem more common now, and better organized. Some say that the lord of Gleannceò decided he would build, in unlife, the kingdom he couldn't complete in life. It is not surprising that many villages are fortified and that most people are armed.

"As you can see, when one's daily life is full of struggles and dangers, it is difficult for communities to settle down and prosper the way they might anywhere else. And of course, you can see that the terrain doesn't lend itself to building cities like those of the great kingdoms!"

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Large Roads of Cyfandir

The oldest roads in the Drakenbergen seem to date back to the Boreal civilization. Later, the Stopstep Empire—whose capital was Athenaise—was the main builder of Cyfandir.

Most of these roads are still in use today. They are wide, well maintained, and can be seen from afar due to the trenches they mark in wooded valleys. They are often reddish (metallurgical waste from the forges) or white (limestone), sometimes covered with sand. The center is designed for carts, while the sides are for horsemen, animal herds, and pedestrians. Roads are only paved—when they are paved at all—at town entrances.

Regional clans maintain the main roads, so their condition is dependent on whether one finds themselves in a trading area. Over time, some have been completely lost and forgotten, along with the places they once led to. Swarmed by plants, they can only be spotted by a trained eye. Overall, the strength and quality of the infrastructure make it possible to travel in good conditions. The dwarves watch the roads, especially around their towns and guesthouses.

Dwarven patrols mount sturdy *krófthestur* (or "kroft ponies") with dark, plain, woolly coats. These large and hardy animals are muscular and easily shrug off bad weather. Krofts usually patrol from one town or guesthouse to another in squads of four to six. They are well equipped and trained and can serve as an escort for their clan's guests.

The Reign of the Creatures of the Night

Nevertheless, the distances involved are great, and patrols cannot cover their entirety. It is ill advised to linger on the roads at dusk without a good escort. There is more to fear than wild beasts or highwaymen prowling for unprotected caravans. While the thick walls and watchtowers might reassure strangers, they are not enough for the mountain dwellers, who frequently add more essential protections to them, such as religious symbols. Blacksmith the sun bringer, guardian of the divine fire and the light of dawn, is deeply revered. People wear his amulets and rosaries, paint or sculpt his emblem, and sing psalms in his honor. They entreat him to look upon his believers and protect them from the creatures of the night. The people use any means possible to defend themselves against the monsters of the dark: **giant spiders**, **bleeders**, **ghouls**... and **vampires**.

Rest and Resupply in a Guesthouse

Guesthouses are safe places but extremely pricy. By visiting such an establishment, a traveler knows that they will pay about 25% more than in the Free City (see **Adventurers: Daily Life**), but they are sure to be very well treated and protected.

My Stay in a Guesthouse

One of the main institutions of dwarven clans is the guesthusid or "guesthouse." This dwarven custom has spread widely across the Drakenbergen, and they have replaced the traditional inn. After a long day on the road, there is no feeling more pleasant than reaching one of these fortified, sturdy, rustic, and comfortable buildings. There, a traveler will find everything they need: shelter for themselves and their animals, tasty and nutritious food, a sauna and baths to relax in, and a warm, cozy bed. Skilled craftsmen often have their workshops abutting these structures, which sometimes resemble small castles. In fact, they are just as safe as any real citadel: the dwarves who run such establishments all know how to fight and are remarkably disciplined.

On top of that, they often ensure the safety of the main roads by patrolling them with valiant ponies. Of course, quality comes at a price. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I was bled dry, but the weight of my purse was greatly lightened after my stay. The rates are almost reasonable when you choose the minimum services (soup of the day and dormitory), but getting your equipment repaired is not a decision to be taken lightly.

Excerpt from the memoirs of Mirë Lelyen, elenion explorer

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Windwalkers' Cabins

One of the difficulties of going off the beaten path is the lack of guesthouses where travelers can rest and regain their strength. When they look to make camp, travelers hope to find natural caves, shepherds' huts, and above all, windwalkers' cabins.

This group of guides set up hidden cabins in the wilderness. These shelters can be used temporarily and provide varying levels of protection. Some only have solid walls and a roof, while others have beds, blankets, fuel, and sometimes even food. Each cabin has its own unique seal buried under its threshold.

When a windwalker ranger uses the *locate object* spell, they can focus on the seal of a cabin to learn its exact location. The windwalker seals are designed to be easily detected by those who know them. When a windwalker searches for a seal, the range of the spell increases to 2 miles. In addition, when a windwalker sleeps in a cabin, they automatically receive the benefits of the *alarm* spell, which warns them of the approach of any creature.



Scott Timmerman (Order #3773430)

A People Between the Surface and the Depths

Builder dwarves spend most of their time on the surface doing engineering work, of course, but can also be found in many other economic trades, such as trading, banking, shepherding, farming, and crafting. They fully embrace the life of surface dwellers, living in villages, participating in councils, joining their armies, etc.

The guardian dwarves have many underground activities, including the extraction of minerals, the construction of complexes in the Netherworld, the fight against Canker, and other underground perils. They are in a near-permanent state of war with the drow and even more so with the duergar.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Why do Guardian Dwarves Hate the Duergar?

Vergel gave Tremelung an embarrassed look. How could he explain to his comrade the age-old hatred that divided the members of his species? He wanted to say, "It's been like this for 6,000 years," but that wasn't very satisfying. So he thought for a moment:

"I'm not sure. I think there are several reasons. You know, I'm from a family of builders, so I don't know everything that goes on in the Netherworld. I think the problem started during the Dawn War. The lost legions had disappeared in their attempt to bring down Canker's primordial nest once and for all. Everyone thought they died in battle, but when the duergar, svirfneblin, and drow appeared, it was clear that there were quite a few survivors, and something had happened to them. No one knew what exactly, and their black skin probably made it look as if they had been corrupted. People must have thought they had joined Canker to survive.

"The guardian dwarves constantly risk their lives and souls fighting against the resurgence of Canker, so it's difficult to have any love for people who wear their—supposed—betrayal like a mask. And let's be honest, the little I've heard of the duergar or drow societies doesn't really make me want to fraternize. They may not be worshippers of Canker, but they don't seem to be doing much to defeat it, and as if that weren't enough, they raid the surface to capture slaves and loot our reserves.

"So maybe the animosity between our people could change, but I wish good luck to those who'd like to try!"



Dvaerg Crafts

Craftsmanship is the pride and reputation of many Drakenbergen clans. Even in neighboring countries, their skill and the quality of their wares are well known. The works are inspired by a wide range of highly refined ancient techniques, although today, they are challenged by the new manufacturing methods of the Eolian Isles.

At the forefront of dvaerg crafts are the arts of forging and jewelry making. Both are of equal refinement, transforming raw material from the mountains into masterworks of design or combat. Dwarven blacksmiths are among the few who know how to work mithral or adamantium without breaking their tools, and their technique is a closely kept secret.

These same tools have enabled them to dig the mountains with determination and skill since ancient times. Masonry is a superior art of the dvaerg people, whether used in building or digging. Their cities are unique in that they can be built high or low, and sometimes both; the masonry of the foundations is no different from the art of bas-relief, which allows them to carve and build at the same time. The magnificence of some of their homes clearly demonstrates this skill!

For dwarven artisans, reputation is a very serious matter. Each clan generally relies on dedicated craftsmen whose reputation is linked to that of the entire clan. Attacking the reputation of an artisan by criticizing their works or know-how can become a very serious matter, leading to duels of honor, or even trial by the clan's authorities.

Excerpt from the memoirs of Antonin of Cyrillane

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731850)



The Clans

The clan is a close-knit group. The members all bear the same family name, which is associated with a stronghold called a "Home" that contains all family tombs. It is not necessary to be a member of the clan to have the right to live in a community dominated by the dvaergen—whether a fortified village or underground city—but only members of a clan have civil rights. Dvaerg culture honors the ancestors, encouraging its members to be proud of their identity, their history, and their founders—those who gave their name to the clan and whose deeds inspired the coat of arms.

The rights of outsiders vary and depend on a clan's attitude and disposition. The clans of guardian dwarves, who fight on the front line against Canker and the predatory peoples of the Netherworld, are reputedly more distrustful and very reluctant to reveal their defensive might or internal organization.

The Clan System

Often revolving around the family of a heroic ancestor who forms its elite, a dwarven clan has less to do with blood ties and more with an oath of fealty and sense of community. Clans are extended families, the largest of which comprise several thousand members, and who may include both builders and guardians. The smallest clans are made up of only one or the other.

Family Dynasties

Each clan is structured in its own way, but the notion of family is always fundamental. While each clan is made up of several bloodlines, the members consider each other family. There are two traditional clan structures:

- **Patriarchy or matriarchy.** Clans organized around a strong, heroic, or ancient character. The single patriarch or matriarch decides everything, arbitrates conflicts, makes decisions, and can request counsel. Succession can be a tempestuous process, and it is not uncommon that in the absence of an obvious candidate to rule the clan, the clan organizes a council of families.
- **Council of families.** Some clans are organized around a council of families that brings together the heads of each family in the clan. While less autocratic than the patriarchal or matriarchal organization, this can sometimes bog down the community in family rivalries and interfere with decision-making.

Clan Justice

Each clan has a place in which justice is dealt and councils are held, called the Great Circle. It can be a simple stone circle on a high plateau in the middle of the village or, for the richest clans, a large and ornate hall.

Dwarven clans follow a form of swift justice that is practiced exclusively among themselves. It is not uncommon for a clan to present a united front to protect one of its own against outsiders, only to condemn them in private. In important cases, sentences are passed by the clan chief or an assembly of the council of families. The most common sentences are the following:

- **Community service.** The convicted offender must perform a certain amount of mining work. They are used to explore new resource veins, vermin-ridden caves, or for particularly arduous or difficult excavations.
- **Exile.** The condemned has their beard and hair shaved off and is then thrown out of the community with orders not to return until they can hold their head high—that is, after several years, when their hair has grown back sufficiently. This punishment is particularly brutal on a social level and is greatly feared; some dvaergen prefer to resort to dueling or the death penalty rather than bring this disgrace upon their family.
- **Death.** The death penalty is pronounced against the most hardened criminals and, even then, only sparingly, with it generally being reserved for traitors who have killed members of their own clan. Hanging is used symbolically to "separate one's feet from the earth on which they were born," as the saying goes.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Duels of Honor

The duel of honor takes place in a variety of situations, all of which must involve two parties who can't reach an agreement. Whether the cause is a humiliation, a conflict between competitors, or a criminal case in which there is insufficient evidence to pass judgment, the accuser and the accused duel to settle their scores.

Conditions

In clans, traditional duels are a valued and recognized form of justice available to dvaergen when their honor is at stake. A dvaerg challenged to a duel can choose to be represented by a champion, but the challenger must enter the arena and fight for themselves. Only family members can fight for a challenged dwarf, but the definition of "family member" is rather lax: all it takes to be considered part of a challenged dvaerg' family is to live with them.

Forms of Duels

The opponents face each other under the watchful eye of the clan (duels are open to all), within the Great Circle itself. The trials that can await them are as follows:

- **Dvaerg Strength.** A peaceful form of duel, this is a series of five trials of sheer strength: carrying heavy loads at arm's length, running with weights, shot put, etc. The trials are generally a matter of skill and have the benefit of injuring almost no one.
- **Pankration.** In the traditional trial of dwarven wrestling, the goal is to make one's opponent submit on the ground without the use of any weapon. This sport is very technical and very popular outside the judicial framework among young dwarves, some of whom are so well-trained they sell their services for duels, thus turning justice into miniature competitions.
- **Weapons.** Armed duels are rare because they are always to the death and the opponents cannot be represented. The two competitors sometimes clash for hours at a time within the clan's Circle. Traditional axes are the only weapons allowed in such a confrontation.

The Consequences of Dueling

Duels are a trial through which truth and the will of Blacksmith-Verndari are made manifest. The winner's cause is recognized as righteous, while the loser's cause is declared wrong. The judges who preside over the duel must, if necessary, deal out the necessary consequences. They are generally minor, but can sometimes also be very serious.

For instance, if a duel-proved accusation was "the family of blacksmith Ökker is guilty of treason and of feeding intelligence to the enemy," such a crime is rarely committed alone; moreover, it harms the clan as a whole. Under these conditions, the death of blacksmith Ökker in a duel would not protect her family from having assets seized, fines imposed, her closest associates banished, etc.

For these reasons, not all dvaergen think highly of the duel of honor, and clan leaders are sometimes cautious when they receive such duel requests. They know that this method of conflict resolution favors the strongest and richest, and can be used to remove rivals in a cabal.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Creation of Clan Homes

Originally, at least, the Home was the place where a deposit was mined. Eager to avoid fraternal conflicts and concerned about the exclusivity of territorial mining rights, clans usually settle 20 to 30 miles from each other.
The dwarven peoples are divided between the builders who settled on the surface and the guardians of the underground cities, sometimes deeply buried in the Netherworld. Clans can be mixed, claiming both builders and guardians as members, but one of the two will usually be predominant.

Temporary Installations

In addition to its Home mining operations, each clan can prospect and build temporary installations, which will be abandoned when the veins are exhausted or in the event of mining difficulties. Deep mines present considerable logistical challenges concerning ventilation, water control, tunnel reinforcement, and safety from Netherworld creatures. And, of course, all workers must be supplied with fresh products that largely come from the surface. The dwarves exploit a deposit, build infrastructure on the surface and underground, and when there is nothing more to be done, they leave, abandoning ruins that blend harmoniously into the landscape.

Rivalries for Underground Resources

The Drakenbergen dwarves believe that the mountains belong to them and that they have the right to dig wherever they want as long as they don't encroach on another clan's mining area. However, they show little interest in occupying the surface, and many other inhabitants choose to live there. As long as farmers, villagers, or shepherds do not interfere in any way with underground activities—no matter how profitable—relations with the dwarves can be cordial.

Relations with Human Lords

As soon as they come into power, human lords consider themselves masters of lands above and below ground. They can accept that people can rent plots and work for them, but they cannot bear the presence of a mine that does not bring them any profit. They can establish themselves via friendly pressure, such as insistently offering to buy ore and minerals at an honest or reasonable price, or with threatening incentives, including ridiculously low purchase prices or outright violence.

Hidden Miners

Surface gnomes often maintain more or less distant contact with their cousins from the Netherworld, the svirfneblin. Svirfneblin mining operations may compete with dwarven ones. The installations of these two peoples do not necessarily follow the same rules, and rivalries sometimes escalate. More often than not, the gnomes—who are not as numerous—opt for discretion, which can give rise to undeclared mines encroaching on territory held by the dwarves. Even when they are the first to arrive on-site, gnomes are cautious and tend to keep their activities as secret as possible.

The Ore Wars

Although anyone is theoretically free to plunder the region's resources, the most accessible veins are already largely claimed by organized and mighty clans. The fierceness of the dwarves in battle and the reputation of their well-defended fortresses are often enough to dissuade neighboring lords from trying to annex these claims through military force.
Clans mining or producing the same type of resource may decide, after negotiations, to sell their merchandise to different customers... or to engage in a trade war. Although these conflicts sometimes degenerate into armed warfare, the dwarves prefer to settle dvaerg affairs as amicably as possible, with treaties that take into account the balance of power.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Territories

The rough terrain in the Drakenbergen has never, since the fall of the Stopstep Empire, allowed a kingdom to unite again. The mountain range is left fragmented between different domains, mining or commercial interests, and large, wild valleys. Many areas are unmapped, whether they are too far removed from trade routes and only accessible through high mountain passes, or are lands steeped in powerful, dangerous geomagics.

Within the Drakenbergen, travelers can find large areas with a strong identity. Here, you will discover a glimpse of this dizzying world of peaks and chasms. Many more wonders are still waiting to be explored!

In this chapter, you will travel west to east, through the Fjordkungden, along the course of the Dispende, through the Maze of Mirages, across the shores of the freshwater sea of Sendaïrë, and up to the Fortress.



Scott Timmerman (Orde - 39731950)



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Scott Timmerman (Order #3973195)

The Fjordkungden

The eastern part of the Drakenbergen is split into many fjords that cut deep into the land. This particular geographical landscape has led to the appearance of several small kingdoms, with almost one for each hill or valley. Found between high mountains and the sea, they offer enchanting vistas that would delight poets and travelers alike. Two goddesses are particularly honored there: Flora and Frostelle. It sometimes seems that they have blessed these lands, as the winter is of icy magnificence, while summer overflows with brightly colored flowers. The economy mixes fishing, agriculture, mining, logging, livestock, and crafts.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Ridge

Although associated with the Drakenbergen, the Fjordkungden are difficult to access from the valleys of the Dispende or the Maze of Mirages. A series of high mountains capped by thick glaciers blocks the way. This formation is referred to as either the Hidrun or the Ridge. Crossing it is a challenge, and no road is truly safe. The Old Pass is the best known and, supposedly, best protected route from the dangers of the Netherworld and the mountains. It used to connect the Woods of Taurëlma to those of Arataurë. It is made up of a series of tunnels, paved roads, and bridges, of which only a few sections are still maintained. Since this road ends in the territory of the Taurëlman aldaron, who are notoriously hostile to visitors, merchants usually prefer traveling to the fjord kingdoms by sea rather than by land.

The Dangerous Toys of the Fjords

Dynamic and inventive, the Fjordkungden craftsmen create more elaborate toys than anywhere else in the world: automatons, delicate dolls, puzzles... These objects are not always intended for children and can be used for decoration or as good luck charms. It is not uncommon for them to be enchanted, either with a boon or a curse. Fjord wizards and scholars often hide enigmas or secrets in rhyme-like texts, or within the intricate mechanisms of music boxes that destroy their contents if they are not opened correctly.

The Fjordkungden are also reputed to be the source of strange items such as *bags of devouring*. It is said that a gnome with a dubious sense of humor created these items along with *handy haversacks* and *bags of holding*. Initially, it was a way to play tricks on penniless adventurers who came to steal his stock. Over time, these evil magic items spread throughout the Drakenbergen, serving as traps or instruments of revenge.

A King's Sacred Duty

Despite its appeal, the fjord region is influenced by powerful magic imposed on anyone who becomes sovereign, regardless of circumstances. The sovereign may be of any origin: male or female; young or old; born in the ruling family; elected by the vote of the citizens assembled in the main square; a hero rewarded for a dangerous mission; a citizen drawn by lot; the assassin of the previous king; a newly arrived traveler chosen for their good looks, etc. In fact, adventurers are often called upon to assume the high office after they have accomplished some high deed.

In any case, the aspiring king or queen is influenced by magic linked to the symbols of their power: the *crown of the Fjordkungden*, the throne, and border markers (see **Treasures of the Drakenbergen: Crown of the Fjordkungden**). Fate is spurred and attracts ever-increasing perils, which the sovereign will have to face until their death. Hauntings take shape, monsters grow closer, extraordinary coincidences occur and attract danger. As victims of this blind fate, the rulers of the different fjord kingdoms are rarely aware of what is going on. Carried away by a passion for greatness and the encouragement of public praise, they embark on risky endeavors and complex plans, seeking to overthrow their neighbor or marry an heir, to gain power, to get rich by becoming a pirate lord, etc. Sovereigns inevitably suffer a tragic fate, whether they are swept away by monsters or they succumb to their hubris. The history of the Fjordkungden is thus extremely rich in intrigues, love stories, betrayals, assassinations, revenge, illegitimate children, family secrets, and great tragedies.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Iconic Locations of the Fjordkungden

Herlighet

Herlighet is one of the many small kingdoms of the Fjordkungden. Its history is lost in the mists of time, but it has risen from its ashes after one of the many tragedies that invariably plague the reign of the cursed Fjordkungden rulers.

Himmelk, a halfling priest of the Star, is the new king of the fjord. A selfless man, he actively helped rebuild the destroyed city, then had a sanctuary built before even considering the construction of a palace. For the time being, he lives in an annex of the place of worship. The wooden temple is the pride of the king and his subjects. The future looks bright, with new shops opening in town every week.

Everyone seems to want to forget the recent past. No one speaks of what happened, and especially not of the underground prison in which the thing that destroyed the kingdom and killed the previous king is still locked up.

Heiadark

The kingdom of Heiadark is currently in crisis. Much of its territory has become a moorland tainted by foul magic and the direst madness. The new king, the gnome archmage Dontedekker, also turned out to be infected by Canker, and has now reached a critical stage of corruption (see **Grimoire: Corruption**). Is a new Cankerous prince soon to rise?

His subjects have abandoned several hamlets and villages, and now live in the Peak Community, at the edge of the land, near the stormy seas, exposed to the harsh elements. Terrified, they hesitate between leaving the fjord for good or holding out hope for the arrival of a hero capable of taking back the crown and striking down the current ruler, who has become a blight on his own lands.

Treblad

The kingdom of Treblad is covered with vast, majestic forests. They are said to be as beautiful as those of the elves, and some aldaron apparently come here from time to time to keep watch over them, the reason being that the site contains a maelossa (see **Grimoire: Geomagic**).

King Nesper is a melessë with great admiration for his elven ancestors. Under his rule, many measures have been taken to convince the fierce aldaron that they are in friendly territory.

Alas, this progressivist reign is endangered by a disease that eats away at the ruler. For the time being, he has kept his illness a secret, but he needs help. In addition, he has been facing a new crisis. A band of violent robbers is on the loose, ransoming and brutalizing both locals and travelers. Their leader, the mysterious Red Arrow, seems to have great ambitions.

Tapstein

This fjord is shaken by a violent and cruel power struggle. Members of the royal family form a large clan, bound by marriage to other small kingdoms. The Tapstein House aspired to rise and grow into a prominent political entity. Over the years, however, this promising territory has accumulated small cracks, poisonous secrets, and stubborn grudges.

In the capital of Losian Clif, the mad queen Amienne dwells, surrounded by her faithful. The small, surrounding town is cheerless, and the locals hold their breath, awaiting the next tragedy.

What is the strange mysterious cult that attracts followers into the mountains? Is it true that the queen's son, who was thought to have died at sea, has returned? What happened to the wizard who taught in the castle and seemed so wise? Before leaving on a journey, he had mentioned a possible method of purification; had he understood the secret behind the crowns of the fjord kings?

Scott Timmermans (Order #3973139)

Ugivelse

The kingdom of the Ugivelse fjords seems, at a glance, the very embodiment of all that one expects from the region. After arriving by sea at a small, lively port, travelers are greeted by smiling and welcoming locals. After being helpfully shown around, they can wander through the cobbled streets, between lovely houses decorated with window boxes in the warm seasons. Around the square, shops offer quality goods at reasonable prices. Lunch is served on sunny terraces where people chatter idly, discuss music or literature, and sometimes comment on news from far away countries.

Something is missing, however: the sovereign. Those looking can find traces of an old wooden palace in the heights, but a second castle, made of stone, was built inland at a later date, in an abandoned region that has become wild and hostile.

Some of Ugivelse's inhabitants had grown dissatisfied with their queen, but unlike other kingdoms, they had begun to understand that most of the problem lay with the crown. The cursed item, the queen, and her followers were all locked up in the castle, the idea being to contain the evil and prevent anyone from donning the crown ever again. To that effect, the inhabitants act as if everything was normal and dodge all questions. But to conclusively solve the problem, the evil magic that influences the destiny of the kingdom will probably have to be destroyed once and for all.

Iskrem

The kingdom of Iskrem is towered over by a large glacier that descends from the mountains, offering a majestic sight and feeding rivers as clear as they are cold. The winters here are harsh, and the sea within the fjord freezes hard enough to be crossed on ice skates or skis.

Iskremia, the capital, is a charming little town benefiting from many gnomish inventions. The population is quite large and well educated, living at a level of comfort that attracts jealousy. The dwarven regent Forsikt rules the country on behalf of the two heiresses, human twins who are now teenagers. Seeing their cheerfulness, warmth, and elegance, one can hardly fathom the tragedy that struck them as children, when their parents perished at sea.

The kingdom's crown was lost in the shipwreck, sinking below the dark waves, but a disquieting seer has announced that the symbol of power would return. According to him, that day would mark the end of the sisters' friendship and reveal the curse that one of them is unknowingly carrying. After announcing this prophecy, the seer was never seen again. Today, despite the happiness of Iskrem's inhabitants, people fear that the omen will come true and that dark days are coming.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Course of the Dispende

When it comes to the immense territory of the Drakenbergen, most people are only familiar with the thin strip of land that runs along the River Dispende, which flows into the sea near the Free City. It is one of the largest trade routes in the mountains, with many roads, paths, and trails leading to it.

Titles

At the Good Luck Inn, a courier from Baron De la Brunelle was waiting for them. They had left word that they could be reached there, but they did not expect news from a man of whom they knew nothing. Octavia studied the letter again and again, as if it would suddenly offer an answer.
"A baron? How can this be? Is there a king around here?"
"Many old families in the Free City area and near the mouth of the Dispende kept the title they had under the Drae dynasty, even if they no longer have all the privileges that come with it," Zidnia explained. "There are also adventurers who claim ownership of a valley and simply declare themselves barons or counts. Baroness Florimande of the Wooded Valley appeared out of nowhere, along with her title."
"Did she?"
"Yes, it happens all the time. You could do it too: declare yourself Duchess of a valley. If no one comes to contest it, that would be your title now."
"Duchess? Why not Queen?"
Zidnia merely smiled back at her.



Emblem of the Wooded Valley

The Wooded Valley

As the name suggests, the Wooded Valley is a large reserve of timber, mainly beech, pine, and ash. Isilde Florimande rules with an iron fist over her domain, supported by troops, some of whom partake in activities that border on robbery. The barony is divided between three fortified villages and numerous lumber camps and mills that are built directly in the forest. The region and its infrastructure are entirely organized around the forestry activities. The three villages of Sawburg, Ashbeech, and Smithtown are established around logging and carpentry, while the Dispende allows the transport of goods and offers essential access to water. Local buildings are made of wood, even the imposing castle of the baroness in Ashbeech, right next to a wooden Blacksmith church.

The Florimande barony is contested on many levels. Although relations between the so-called Forestwoman and the surrounding dwarven clans are rather cordial, the baroness plays a dangerous game, gradually sending her lumberjacks to colonize the neighboring valleys, even though they officially belong to other powers. Isilde Florimande is at loggerheads with the druidic communities of the region, the representatives of which she did not hesitate to banish, weapons in hand.

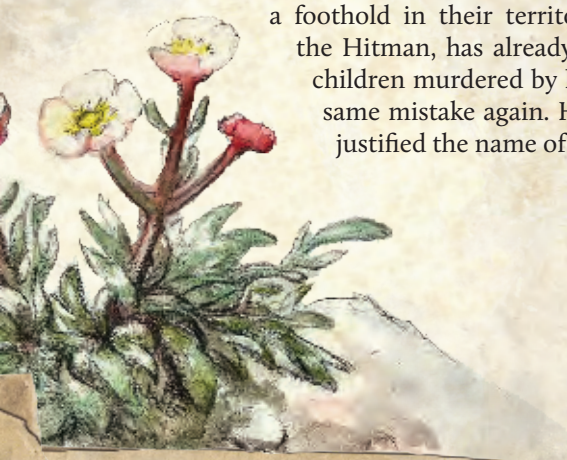
Scott Timmermans (Order #9773139)

The Town of Blömiane

The area where the Dispende and Sorphaug rivers meet is called the Motum. It is dominated by Blömiane. This flourishing city-state benefits from a desirable position, with a temperate climate and a steady flow of goods. Travelers often have pleasant memories of their stay, charmed by the bold, vivid colors of half-timbered houses, whose hues contrast with the black stones used for public buildings and fortifications. The herbalists, apothecaries, and perfumers of the region are well known for their preparations, as well as for the precious *herbalist's cases* they use.

With the town ruled by a council of guilds, politics are closely linked to the decisions of the Stalfelt clan (also known as Ironfield) and those made in the Free City. The Blömiane Council aims to protect local interests while taking advantage of its powerful neighbors.

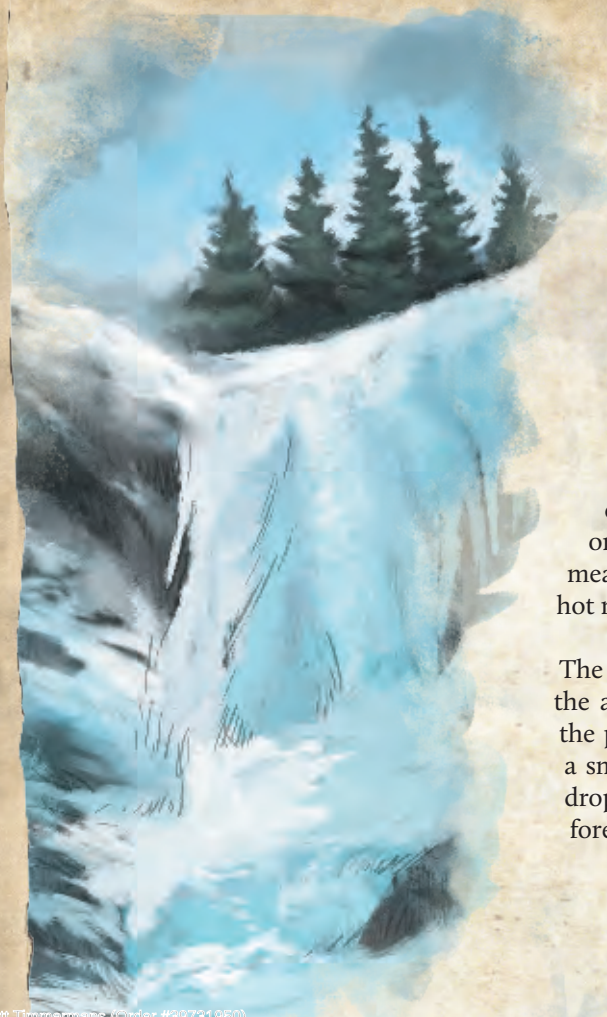
The situation is much the same for illegal organizations. Blömiane's Red Throats are careful not to let Free City thieves' guilds gain a foothold in their territory. Their leader, whom they call the Hitman, has already seen his first wife and one of his children murdered by his rivals, and he will not make the same mistake again. His revenge was merciless and fully justified the name of his gang.



Buttercup



Emblem of Blömiane



The Dispende Springs

The sources of the mighty River Dispende are the glaciers of the Ridge; the water then carves out the valleys from Varmbad to the Free City. The ancient capital of the Stopstep Empire, the beautiful Athenaise, is located in the heights, towering over a majestic mountain panorama.

Varmbad is a quaint little town that welcomes visitors from far and wide to its two main attractions: its proximity to Athenaise, which draws adventurers and curious travelers alike, and its unique baths and thermal treatments. There are many bathing establishments in the city, thanks to the plethora of hot springs and volcanic geysers. People come from all over the world to treat their illnesses or injuries in the dvaerg thermal baths. These can be either modern and half-timbered, or traditional, low stone houses. The proximity of the springs and geysers means that most of the private houses and inns have their own saunas and hot running water.

The ruins of Athenaise are a point of interest for travelers, who enjoy visiting the ancient esplanades, imagining themselves listening to the speeches of the prophets of yesteryear. The known and easily accessible ruins are only a small part of the whole site. Some buildings are suspended above steep drops into the valley below, or covered by the vegetation of the surrounding forests. There is never a shortage of treasure hunters in the vicinity.

Scott Timmerman's Order #39731950)

Norrastjär, the Underground Jewel

Located at the junction of several veins of ore, including the famous gold mine of the Drakenklaed clan, Norrastjär is an underground crossroads and a major center for dvaerg arts and crafts. The town is nestled in a huge underground cavern in which natural crystals sprout. These are used by dwarves to reflect light, casting a blue hue over the town, which contributes to its reputation as an enchanting place. The various districts of the city abound with the stores of jewelry makers and stonemasons, and the cave dwellings of miner guardians. From the outskirts of Agate, one can reach the gold mine of the Drakenklaed clan, several underground roads that lead to nearby mines, and some guarded passages to the Netherworld.

The Tomb of Thralüin

A true legend of the Drakenklaed clan, Ancestor Thralüin is revered throughout Norrastjär. His precious marble bust overlooks the Great Circle of the clan. My dvaerg guide told me that Thralüin had the honor of being buried in the clan's Dragon Mausoleum. There, he rests beside the silver dragon Reyliiksuleik, late brother of the dragon Vevir, who is considered to be the embodiment of Verndari the Defender. Dragons are said to never die of old age, and only fall in epic battles. The entrance to the mausoleum is located in the gold mine beneath the city. Unfortunately, in recent years the battles against Canker have made accessing these caves more difficult and dangerous than before, and the tombs of famous people located in the mine—including the Dragon Mausoleum and Thralüin's tomb—have been lost. It would seem that many Stalfelts and Drakenklaeds alike fear that drow plunderers may have come up from the Netherworld to rob these graves. Considering the wealth of the city itself, I can hardly imagine the priceless treasures that Thralüin's clan and the grateful dragons may have entrusted to him in the afterlife... and I can only imagine how many people must covet them. In any case, I wouldn't risk it myself. The absence of sunlight weighs me down quickly in these depths, and the place seems far too dangerous. I imagine the dwarves must hope to reconquer it; perhaps they have already sent scouts ahead?

Excerpt from the journal of Antonin of Cyrillane



Gentian

Scott Timmermans (Order #3973180)

Stalfelt, or Ironfield



- **Patriarch**: Blürin Stalfelt
- **Emblem**: Two gloved hands holding a hammer and pickaxe against an iron field
- **Home**: Norrastjär

The Stalfelt clan is the largest in the Drakenbergen in terms of number of families. Its members are builders and guardians, spread over a dozen valleys from Norrastjär to Varmbad.

The Stalfelts are settled near the source of the River Dispende, which makes them one of the main partners of the Free City. They welcome foreigners and even recognize gnomes, humans, and some elves as honorary members of the clan—an intermediate status between that of full members and foreigners—when they represent Stalfelt interests in their home communities. Thanks to these special members and the clan's commercial talents, the Stalfelts have built up a solid economy based on the art of forging and the trading of resources, be they obtained from other clans or extracted by their own members. The clan takes its name from ancient history, especially after the feats of Wolstan Stalfelt, the famous blacksmith whose name is sung in bardic hymns throughout the continent. Although the Stalfelts are not as talented as some of the great blacksmith masters in the Drakenbergen, their relationship with the Free City serves the reputation of all dwarven blacksmiths.

The Stalfelt clan brings together and protects a dozen smaller clans who recognize it as an ally, as stated by mutual protection treaties. In fact, most of them are under its protection in exchange for mutually beneficial commercial exclusivity (such as the Drakenklaed clan, for instance).



Drakenklaed, or Portdragon

- **Patriarch**: Ighrar Drakenklaed, defeater of the Great Wyrm of Bloody Crag
- **Emblem**: A silver dragon against a field of gold
- **Home**: Solhamarki (Sunny Crag)

Few dvaerg clans are as famous as the Drakenklaed clan, whose members number only a few hundred. Allied to the Stalfelt clan, the Drakenklaed became famous for their alliance with the silver dragon Reyliiksuleik centuries ago. Thralüin Drakenklaed, a legendary hero and founder of the clan, was a Stalfelt who fought Canker alongside the dragons before forming a brothers-in-arms friendship with them. His tomb is located in Norrastjär. The Drakenklaed clan exploits an extremely rich vein of gold, which ensures the clan's fortune and has enabled it to develop recognized expertise in jewelry and minting.

Despite the legend, the Drakenklaed dwarves do not actually ride dragons but have excellent relations with them. It is said that Ighrar regularly meets with Vevir, the dragon who is considered to be the daughter of the god Verndari.

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The Maze of Mirages

Traveling through the Maze of Mirages means taking the risk of never knowing for sure if what you see is real. Many people know that the valleys of the Drakenbergen are rife with powerful geomagics, and that illusions hide the ruins most affected by ancient magic. These features are increased a thousandfold in the Maze of Mirages. There, visions and hallucinations are never harmless and do more than lead one astray: they can be lethal.

However, the mountains appear much the same as those that border the springs of the Dispende, further south. One can find farms, remote communities, and isolated outposts on the few roads known to be reliable.

Natural Senses

Although one often hears of travelers who fall into the abyss after stepping on a broken or non-existent bridge, the fatal illusions of the Maze of Mirages do not seem to affect beasts. Scholars discuss the phenomenon, often without observing it themselves, making do with second-hand accounts. Here are a few theories:

- Creatures of the plant, beast, and ooze types are immune to these illusions. They are not consciously aware of the anomaly, acting on instinct to avoid danger. Since they are unaware of the problem, a beast cannot express it through *speak with animals*.
- A shapeshifted creature is only immune to the illusions of the Maze if its original form is a plant, beast, or ooze type.
- The power of the illusions varies, as several illusions follow one another. Generally speaking, they are similar to the effects of the *hallucinatory terrain* spell.

The Gate of the Furies

One's proximity to the Gate of the Furies can be felt through a geomagic of Melancholian Chaos (**Grimoire: Geomagics**). The mythical Gate of the Furies stands on a high, dry plateau of the Maze of Mirages. For those who can see it, the path leading to it is lined with pale columns engraved with Demonic letters, tragic poems, sad and absurd songs, and celebrations of one demon prince or another. The ascent takes the form of a pilgrimage highlighting the pain of existence and the questions that come with it, all leading to the nothingness of despair.

Accessing the plateau of the Gate of the Furies is a disturbing experience that puts one's sanity to the test. Illusions, horror, and madness await travelers in search of revelation. They hear whispers, growls, and strange melodies that fade away as soon as they are noticed. Here, one should fear not only demons, but also the **ghosts** of those who sought them, and sinister **ghouls** with a mad passion for arcana.

The Gate of the Furies looks peaceful. It stands on an island in the middle of a vast lake of clear water, its silhouette sometimes blurred by a cold breeze. On the shores, ancient ruins speak of a small town dominated by a palace, and temples honoring the demon princes—those we know, and others who have since disappeared or no longer seek to be summoned by mortals.

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People come here to learn secrets held by demons, to ally with them, or to obtain magic items. Some seek to pass through the Gate. There's nothing impressive or frightening about it. All one has to do is reach the island and cross the threshold. It is a decision to be carefully considered, however. Reaching Melancholia may be easy, but coming back is another story.

There are two keys associated with this portal:

- **The Key of Location.** This key determines where the linked portal is on Melancholia. A demon prince guards it, the holder varying depending on eras and power struggles. It is said that the current key holder is Liridem the Bitter.
- **The Key of Passage.** This second key is in the vicinity of the Gate of the Furies. It cannot be destroyed as long as the gate exists, and cannot be moved more than a few miles away from it. It is supposedly hidden somewhere on the high plateau. People are said to have spent years searching for it in vain, becoming mad hermits left wandering through the ruins.



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The Sendaïrë Region

The waters of Sendaïrë do not form a river: instead, they flow into a deep valley that has become an actual inland sea. This immense lake, whose opposite shores are often not even visible, is completely frozen in winter, becoming a route for sleighs. The region is accessible from the Belleview Pass, near the springs of the Sorphaug, the river that flows into the Dispende at Blömiane. From the Sendaïrë, you can reach several valleys and the slopes encircling the Fortress.

The Falquaturia Ruins

The ancient elven palatial city of Falquaturia used to spread out harmoniously on the shores of the Sendaïrë sea-lake. Although saved during the Dawn War by the tiefling heroine Araucë, the city was eventually abandoned. Travelers never cease to be impressed by the strange lake mausoleum, built from the banks. The stone tombs can almost be seen below the surface, going deeper and deeper. On beautiful summer nights, when the stars are shooting in the sky, one can almost hear ghostly songs and music coming from the depths. The most daring adventurers apparently see silhouettes dancing while the palace of Falquaturia relives its hours of glory.

The Shooting Stars of Falquaturia

On nights of shooting stars, the many dead of the lake return as nostalgic **ghosts**, reunited in a mirage of their happiness in life. The funeral rites practiced in Falquaturia created an underwater afterlife, allowing them to return to haunt the surface. Once, these rites' purpose was to allow the living and the dead to be eternally connected. The ghosts of the palatial city are aware of their condition and still retain a strong individuality, along with their knowledge.

The bottom of the lake is rich in burial deposits, among which some magic items are still in perfect condition. Few people venture down to plunder the ruins, owever, because the ghosts can turn the surrounding animals and plants into **haunted** creatures that attack looters. Once dead, the thieves become **wights** bound by a *geas* spell to the will of the ghosts.

The situation is complicated for the ghosts because their lake paradise can only exist if it is infused with enough energy. To accomplish this, they can either depend on the living to perform rituals and maintain the ruins of Falquaturia, or rely on more expeditious methods such as stealing the vital energy of victims. Kentigern of Gleannceò, who is also undead, understands the crux of the matter and intends to solve it. He has offered to provide sustenance for the ghosts of Falquaturia in exchange for mystical knowledge, treasures, and the transformation of beasts into haunted creatures. In this way, he gains terrifying hounds and steeds for his troops.

Gleannceò

The Falann, a bloody river, flows from the valley of Gleannceò, the stronghold of Kentigern the vampire. For a long time, this territory has been a den of vampire spawn who hunt at nightfall and hide during the day in the shade of thick, tormented woods filled with sick and disturbing silhouettes. Haunted animals and plants are common here.

The Strange Community of Greimnead

Despite the haunted woods and vampire threat, some of the living still choose to live here on farms or in the town of Greimnead. They serve a terrible master, but their condition is not without benefits. Some become vampire spawns of their own free will—their families know it, and sometimes even approve of it. Others believe that this harsh lord is no worse than any other, and all they have to do is follow his rules to be spared his terrible wrath. The laws are strict: one fears not the rope, but rather being drained of their blood in a sinister display. Vampire spawn who break Kentigern's law are put to the solar pyre. The meticulous severity of the local rule and convoluted trials ensure the survival of a community of both living people and bloodthirsty predators.

The Sway of the Dorchadas

The few merchants who venture into Greimnead are welcome, provided they do not express any dissenting opinions. As a precaution, they are always assigned a guide, even when they know the town. Every guide is a member of the secret police, the mysterious dorchadas,

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who ensure that nothing unexpected happens. If politeness is not enough to control their charges, the guides can always resort to intimidation, kidnapping, torture, and, if necessary, assassination. Their ranks aren't comprised solely of vampire spawn, wights, and ghouls; mortals are also useful because of their ability to go out during the day. While the senior officers are still fanatical vampire spawn devoted to the blood of Kentigern, many valued **spies** and **assassins** are well and truly alive. Anyone can be an informer for the dorchadas, from a ragged child to a priest of Blacksmith. The climate of widespread suspicion helps to subtly control this society.

The Art of Making Allies

Kentigern doesn't work alone. Powerful as he is, he knows he can't fight on all fronts. He won't turn all of his opponents into vampires, but he can reduce threats through intrigue. That's how he's winning territory: in silence, in the shadows. The challenge is understanding exactly what people want.

- **Dwarven clans.** Convincing the dwarves is less difficult than it sounds. While the guardian dwarves fight Canker with determination and honor, they are often more indifferent, neutral, and uninterested in surface affairs. Most clans simply want to preserve their mines and trade routes. Many have already agreed to turn a blind eye to the actions of the vampire lord in exchange for favorable rates and the promise of immunity for dwarven locations (inns, guesthouses, and fortified villages).
- **Druids.** Kentigern's sway extends to druidic circles, including Astrea's Garden. Did he use blackmail? Was he in a position to make an offer that could not be refused?
- **Ambitious folk.** Everywhere, there are people who thirst for power but who cannot better their lives because of some obstacle. Kentigern introduces himself to them as their best friend. He is willing to send members of the dorchadas to solve the problem in exchange for influence, troops, wealth, or information.

The Vampire's Enemies

Kentigern could be considered the future master of the Drakenbergen. Such is his ambition, but silver dragons and schatz prevent him from extending his power. These legendary creatures protect the balance of the Drakenbergen. Although their mission is not to eradicate the undead, they won't let them proliferate either. Kentigern knows this, and he continues to search for a way to defeat the last two defenses that prevent his eternal rule from spreading over this part of the world.

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Iconic Locations of Gleannceò

Pengarlaett Mine

For his ambitious projects, Kentigern needs quality minerals. His prospectors have discovered a particularly promising vein in the now closely watched Pengarlaett Mine. Officially it is a silver mine, but in reality, it is the only active mithral mine in all of the Drakenbergen!

Close to the site is an eponymous surface village, dirty and muddy, in a seemingly perpetual building cycle. Deep down, the tunnels have reached natural galleries of the Netherworld.

Murgroena Forest

One of the main wooded areas of Gleannceò is Murgroena Forest, named after the endemic ivy that covers the rocks and the undergrowth of thorny trees, and hangs from the branches in vine curtains. The ivy seems to cling and connect to everything. Many consider this region to be repulsive and sinister. Some go so far as to imagine that the pungent smell of ivy leaves floating in the air is an insidious poison, sure to kill those who venture into the woods.

Actually, most of the forest is an area of weak magic, shunned by the undead serving Kentigern. This makes it a refuge for his opponents, who have dug an underground village where low tunnels connect dwellings and public places. Any enemies of the vampire tyrant are sure to find help among the refugees. Despite all the members of the small community having experienced tragedy, the atmosphere of the place is warm and supportive.

Even with the agents of the undead lord staying away from the area, caution is exercised, as the trained **blood hawks** of Gleannceò can recognize humanoid presence. They hover all day long over the valley. Whenever one of these birds of prey alerts its trainer or does not return (typically because it was shot down), a well-armed patrol checks out the area.

True Peace Cemetery

The True Peace Cemetery is located just outside the town of Greimnead. It is quite large, beautifully designed, and surrounded by towering, old evergreen trees, including a great yew. The rows of graves are strictly laid out and well maintained by the locals.

This area of dead magic is avoided by the undead, as they suffer within it the same penalties as if they were **poisoned**. For this reason, those afraid of these monstrous creatures sometimes come here to rest among the true dead. People can often be seen walking among the graves.

A local legend—only told to trustworthy people—claims that Asëamordo, the elenion hero of the Dawn War, was the first to be buried on this site. His mausoleum is said to be buried somewhere, accessible via a secret passage in an ancient vault. According to the stories, it is filled with deadly traps and contains Amaurëa, the hero's *holy longsword*, a weapon that could be used to take down the fearsome Kentigern!

Skalle Hill

Skalle Hill is a bare hilltop with lichen-covered granite rocks. The only greenery is a heather moorland with tall grasses, brambles, and broom shrubs.

Until recently, it was frequented only by shepherds and their hardy goats. But now, not even they go to Skalle Hill anymore. Something terrible happened there on a dark autumn night, something caused by some of Kentigern's servants, among them arcanists. The locals don't know what transpired exactly, but many theories are exchanged. Since then, people have disappeared, and the official explanations are very vague. The rumors say that the place is sullied, cursed, and extremely dangerous. Engraved steles charged with powerful abjuration magic form a boundary that prevents something from leaving the place.

Ijutvard's School of Combat and Magic

Ijutvard's School is run by the fighter of the same name and her daughter Sonya, a war mage. It is one of the most prestigious places in Greimnead. This large and beautiful building stands next to a fish pond, lined with reeds and covered with water lilies. People are often greeted by the cheerful singing of frogs, contrasting with the grimness of an engraved monolith bearing the names of former students who died weapons in hand.

The garden in front of the building gives an idea of the wealth of its owners. Their success is growing, and people come from far and wide to study here, whether for several years or just a few days. Students seek to improve their offensive or defensive techniques through a

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better understanding of the laws of magic—especially evocation—and warfare. It is a place where many people of character gather and meet, and it is said that many beautiful friendships are born here.

The dorchadas, Kentigern's secret police, always has at least one undercover agent among the students, but so do the enemies of the vampire lord. Both sides are looking to recruit promising individuals.

Ijutvard and Sonya regularly receive missions from locals or merchants, usually escort requests, but sometimes more complex cases. They offer them to their students as training and as a source of income to pay for classes, lodging, and food.

Greimnead's Covered Market

Greimnead's covered market stretches over a large area. Every fifteen feet, a thick, seven-foot-high stone column rises, supporting the entire roof structure. Merchants attend the place every day. They offer a wide range of goods, including smoked cheeses typical of the area. Every region of the Drakenbergen is proud of its local specialties, and this one is no exception! The stalls form a dense and noisy maze, providing the perfect setting for people who want to organize a secret meeting right under the dorchadas's nose. There, they can talk without being heard, easily hide out of sight, or exchange objects without appearing suspicious.



Scott Timpanaro (Order #39731850)

The Fortress

Located in the western part of the Drakenbergen, the Fortress is a vast, compact, and peculiar rock formation. Indeed, no valleys pass through it; instead, there are several circular depressions reminiscent of craters or the calderas of gigantic volcanoes. These circular depressions are called Gardens.

Askamor

Askamor is the only active volcano in the Drakenbergen. It overlooks the Kratær Garden, which is named after a small fortified town. It is also close to the white forest of Arataurë, which owes its appearance and nickname to a large eruption that covered the entire eastern coast with ash. Few people dare to live near Askamor; earthquakes are frequent, ash clouds darken a glowing red sky, and storms are fiery.
Despite these destructive forces, in certain places, Askamor is adorned with a strange flora, born of maelossas (see **Grimoire: Geomagics**) that evade the flames. Gardens of extravagant lichen and silica reeds grow near pools of boiling acid. The properties of this unique flora justify taking many risks to acquire them. The local fauna is just as unique, with strange, dog-sized arthropods, giant spiders, and various reptiles.

Kratær's Living Forge

In Kratær, craftsmen use the "living forge" technique, which consists of working the metal directly from the volcanic magma to extract its power. All blacksmiths admire these enchanted weapons and armor, but the risks of crafting them are great due to eruptions and **fire elementals** that can appear in the area.

An Uneasy Mystique

For millennia, the raw powers of nature that manifest in Askamor have inspired mystical endeavors. For example, a temple was built in honor of Blacksmith in his form of Verndari the Defender, who is also the patron saint of the arts of fire. In Askamor's rocky mazes, a traveler may also discover signs engraved in a secret code, allowing those who understand it to find caves that serve as shelter and sanctuary. Those afflicted by cankering (see **Adventurers: Diseases**), often fleeing persecution, are drawn to the vile whispers they hear coming from the Netherworld and use this secret code to find safety in the mazes. No doubt, those who give in to the call of Canker will rapidly dispatch Blacksmith's followers living nearby before attacking the other Gardens.

Dörtharo's Lock

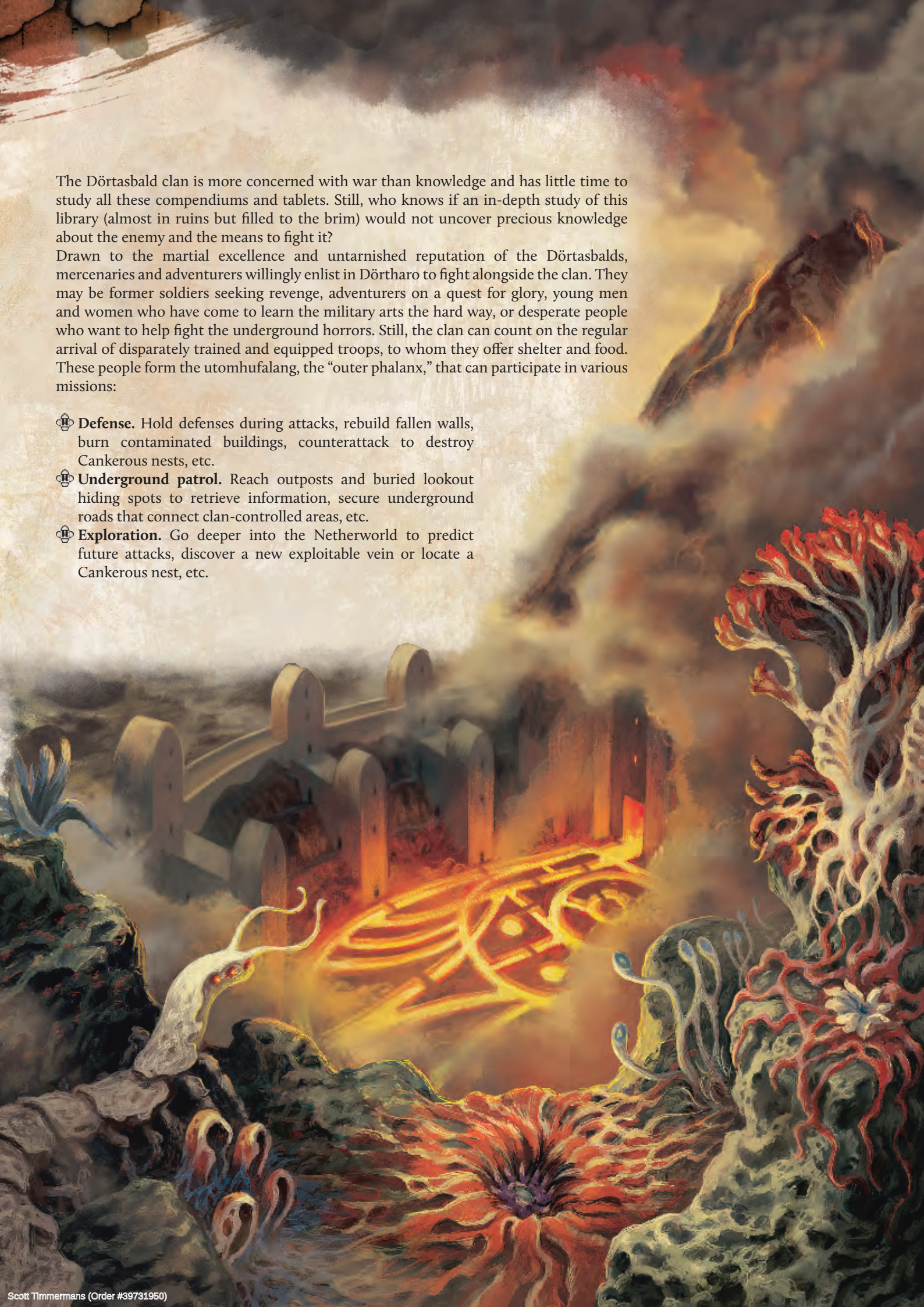
The Lock is built above a dizzyingly deep chasm into which one can descend via stairs, ladders, and, in certain sections, precarious elevators. Due to seismic and volcanic activities, this is not an ideal place to establish a city: Dörtharo symbolizes this precariousness, between dealing with Canker's attacks and the damage caused by lava, heat, and regular tremors. The dwarven builders knew that the rift was not a stable place to settle. The fortress was originally founded in an emergency during the Dawn War. The intention was to find a place from which they could quickly reach great depths in the Netherworld. The Lock was never dismantled, and now, due to the lava, other natural hazards, and Canker's increasingly frequent attacks, it risks total collapse. The Dörtasbald clan inherits a long tradition of warfare and great knowledge of the enemies below. Over the years, many scientists have traveled to the Lock to study the Cankerous enemy. Although they are welcome, they must leave a copy of their research due to a law passed by Patriarch Kurdüm Dörtasbald. It is thanks to him that the fortress now houses the Dörtharogær: one of the largest libraries in the Drakenbergen, and perhaps the greatest repository of knowledge on Canker throughout Eana.

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The Dörtasbald clan is more concerned with war than knowledge and has little time to study all these compendiums and tablets. Still, who knows if an in-depth study of this library (almost in ruins but filled to the brim) would not uncover precious knowledge about the enemy and the means to fight it?

Drawn to the martial excellence and untarnished reputation of the Dörtasbalds, mercenaries and adventurers willingly enlist in Dörtharo to fight alongside the clan. They may be former soldiers seeking revenge, adventurers on a quest for glory, young men and women who have come to learn the military arts the hard way, or desperate people who want to help fight the underground horrors. Still, the clan can count on the regular arrival of disparately trained and equipped troops, to whom they offer shelter and food. These people form the utomhufalang, the "outer phalanx," that can participate in various missions:

- **Defense.** Hold defenses during attacks, rebuild fallen walls, burn contaminated buildings, counterattack to destroy Cankerous nests, etc.
- **Underground patrol.** Reach outposts and buried lookout hiding spots to retrieve information, secure underground roads that connect clan-controlled areas, etc.
- **Exploration.** Go deeper into the Netherworld to predict future attacks, discover a new exploitable vein or locate a Cankerous nest, etc.



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Dörtharo's Lock

1. To the Surface
2. Smœrblomma's Jewelry Shop
3. Holdstone Palace
4. The Steamy Angande Armory
5. Dörtharogær, The Great Library
6. Guardians' Fort
7. Fœrsdœd Catacombs
8. To the Netherworld



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Iconic Locations of Dörtharo

Holdstone Palace

The clan's headquarters is quite small, and in dire need of better maintenance. Still, the sturdiness of the construction and its refined austerity make up for the decoration's lack of shine. Matriarch Brinhilde is content with the ancient severity of this small palatial fortress, and she only pays for bare necessities.

Visitors walk between large, low, black columns, and the place is lit only by a few continual torches. Many rooms are windowless, but as elsewhere in the city, crafty networks of chimneys, pipes, and filters ensure a stable temperature and clean air. The furniture (benches, tables, nooks, cupboards, etc.) is mainly made of cut stone. Wood and fabrics are rare. The clever design of the rooms compensates for their plainness.

Relatively few people have business inside the palace, since most of the city's activity is concentrated in the Guardians' Fort, where war decisions are made. Civil policies are reduced to their bare essentials. No new laws are made, and in case of a real problem, matters are fairly and speedily judged to avoid them dragging on.

But not everyone enjoys this way of doing things, which equates to living in a sort of perpetual state of emergency. Matriarch Brinhilde is too obsessed with defending herself against the threats of the Netherworld to see the much closer danger posed by traitors. Meanwhile, Kentigern, Lord of Gleannceò, is quite apt at identifying the malcontents and approaching them with enticing offers.

Dörtharogær

The great library of the city is built a stone's throw from the palace. In the beginning, it was modest in size, but in time it was given underground extensions. This configuration and the chronic lack of space make it a maze overloaded with shelves and piled up reports, with the old dwarf archivist Utanord as its sole organizer. Her sorting methods are so confusing that many suspect her of having lost her mind.

Guardians' Fort

A bold construction standing above an abyss and towering over the network of ladders and elevators that go down into the depths, the Guardians' Fort is the heart of the city and the very reason behind its existence. Heroes and veterans meet there to prepare for new dangers and, hopefully, overcome them one day.

Foersdoed Catacombs

The network of the Foersdoed ("the first dead") Catacombs dates back to the Dawn War. It stretches over a vast labyrinth of dark, gloomy, and oppressive corridors. The atmosphere even dissuades city authorities from carrying out maintenance work. The place is so disquieting that people would rather forget about it.

Unfortunately, things are not so simple. Worrying faults have been identified, suggesting that major consolidation work will be needed to secure everything above the catacombs... which means a large part of the city!

Parts of the catacombs are used as shortcuts to reach certain sectors of the Netherworld faster. Patrolmen have reported hearing echoes of something like prayers, spoken in an unknown language, but they were unable to find the source. After a while, the chanting stopped, and horrendous cries rang out. Chapels are known to have been dug into the rock for ancient masses in honor of the dead. It is assumed that one of them was used for some evil ritual, but why couldn't the patrolmen, who know the place well, find out where the voices came from?

The Steamy Angande Armory

The great Steamy Angande Armory was recently founded by a dwarf adventurer dubbed Lycksalig the Lucky. Together with his companions, he fought the hostile peoples of the Netherworld and Canker while searching for riches. His stubbornness paid off, and he accumulated enough wealth to fund his business.

Angande's customers come for the many services it offers. Aside from everyday custom orders and repairs, one can buy goods typical of the Netherworld, including drow-made weapons and ropes woven from giant spider silk. Customers can even request very specific items: if it is not in stock, the owner will do his utmost to find a lead on it. Future buyers can place orders and wait for adventurers to bring the items back, or simply buy the information that will point them to the source, and go there themselves. The shop even includes a small bar where regulars can exchange news.

As welcoming and lively as the shop may be, it holds many valuable items, and security is substantial. The traps set up at night are but the first line of defense.

Smoerblomma's Shop

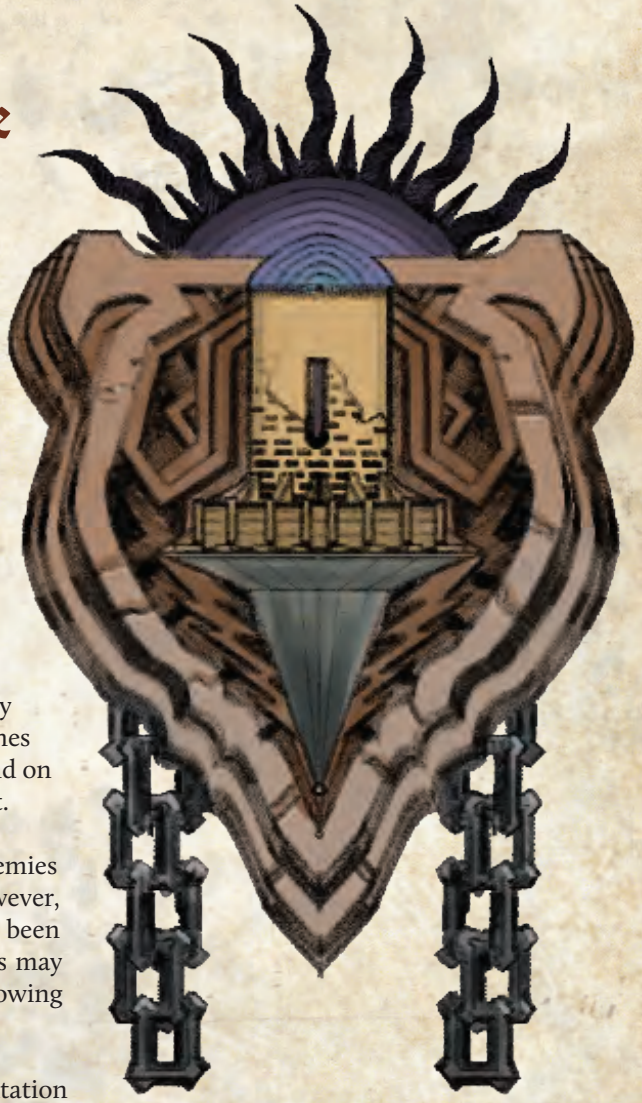
Located in an impoverished area, Smoerblomma's jewelry shop is shrouded in mystery. The master craftsman, his family, and the employees who lived there were all slaughtered on the same night.

Town rumors are fed by both credible accounts and overactive imagination. Some people say that just before the tragedy, the jeweler had received a strange customer asking him to cut a magnificent stone, a jewel of exceptional quality the size of a fist. The stone is said to have come from the Maze of Mirages, or perhaps even from the Gate of the Furies! It was engraved with symbols incomprehensible to the craftsman, which seemed to come and go as if something was radiating energy from the inside.

After the crime, a fire broke out on the upper floors, and the house now lies in ruins. Teenagers playing chicken explored the place and discovered a trapdoor leading to an apparently ordinary small cellar. They swore that everything seemed normal, but when they tried to climb the stairs to leave the house, they arrived "somewhere." It was like a nightmare, with footbridges floating in a stellar void, impossible stairs... a genuine maze, the worst of which was the haunting call they heard within their own minds. They eventually found the cellar hatch again and managed to get out for good, but no one who descended into the cellar afterward experienced this phenomenon.

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Dörtasbald, or Holdstone



Matriarch: Brinhilde Dörtasbald

Emblem: An inverted watchtower against a black field

Home: Dörtharo

Often called "oldstones" by foreigners who do not speak Dvaerg (which typically infuriates clan members), the Dörtasbalds are among the oldest dwarven families of the Drakenbergen. Their name comes from an old term meaning "watchmen" or "guardians" in Dvaerg, which translates to Holdstone. This is a reference to their Home: Dörtharo's Lock, a fortress and lookout post onto the Netherworld, which is also the only passage offering a fast and deep descent.

As guardians of the first passage to the deeper Netherworld, the Dörtasbalds are warriors first and foremost, and they stand proudly as a bulwark against the underground horrors. They don't dig for riches; they maintain the entrances or create new ones where necessary. In exchange for this public service, they depend on other clans, such as the Stalfelts, for food, labor, and equipment.

Since the clan does not participate in trade wars, it has no enemies among the other clans but is totally dependent on them. However, the maintenance of these passages is very costly, and it has been some time since the Lock has been of service. The other clans may be wondering if their support is worthwhile; are they just throwing resources into a bottomless pit?

The Dörtasbald clan is led by Matriarch Brinhilde, whose reputation is well established in the Drakenbergen. It is thanks to her shrewd negotiation that this clan benefits from the support of the others; she knows just how to convince them to continue to provide assistance. Brinhilde is so well-regarded that no one would dare to reprimand her during her regular diplomatic visits. Still, the other clans are finding more and more excuses to reduce their support.



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Astrea's Garden

Named after a former empress of Stopstep who was the first to claim it with her army, Astrea's Garden is a deep, wooded valley where thick, wild vegetation grows. High mountains and steep cliffs surround it, and access is difficult as only two roads lead to it: the Dinnhög Pass in the north and the Wooded Pass in the south. The Garden is legendary thanks to Ceuranar, the visionary druidess of the Dawn War who was born and buried here, and whose memory is greatly honored by all peoples. Despite the dark and heavy atmosphere of nearby Gardens such as Askamor, Astrea's Garden is an earthly paradise, a natural wonder with magnificent geysers and numerous hot springs.

Sis-Tanaïs

The village of Sis-Tanaïs is mostly inhabited by elves and humans united by their rustic way of life and druidic traditions. The village itself was built in a forest of thorns and brambles; its houses are either green cocoons hanging from trees like bird nests, or huts and tents hidden in the vegetation. There are no shops or guest houses, but the community is open to strangers who respect their way of life and—above all—the places they visit.

The White Cromlech and the Circle of Eternal Snows

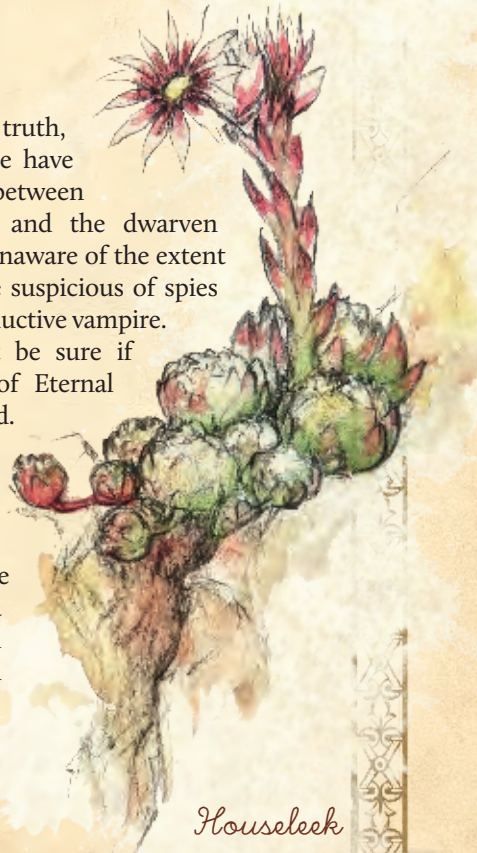
The druids of the Circle of Eternal Snows watch over their sanctuary of the white cromlech, a sacred place of pilgrimage since ancient times. Even the dwarves, who honor Blacksmith as Verndari above all other deities, come here to pray and meditate.

The cromlech consists of ten large raised stones, some of which are almost falling over. The skeleton of a great white dragon rests inside the circle, the witness to an ancient battle. Now, the creature's rib cage houses the ceremonies of the Circle. The large skull is covered with multicolored ribbons brought by pilgrims.

The Garden of Rage

While the druidic communities are generally welcoming, the same cannot be said of the wild creatures of Astrea's Garden. Over the past few years, many of them have become inhabited by a nameless rage that makes them extremely aggressive, even toward Circle members. Many travelers have been killed, and several caravans made the difficult decision to abandon their pilgrimage to the white cromlech, for fear of being torn to pieces by hordes of sometimes gigantic rabid wolves, bears, and boars. The members of the Circle of Eternal Snows fear that a Cankerous nest may be growing below the Garden and driving animals of the valley mad—though some also wonder if it is the Ice Circle seeking to unsettle the peaceful druids. Junior members of the Circle lead this clandestine group. Their credo is: *"We are the cold that clutches hearts. We are the frost that extinguishes the forge."* They are described as fanatical enemies of the dwarves, accusing them of wounding the earth by drilling, cutting down trees, and drawing the blood of its riches for trade.

Things are not so simple. In truth, members of the Ice Circle have learned of an agreement between Kentigern of Gleannceò and the dwarven clans. However, they are unaware of the extent of this agreement and are suspicious of spies sent by the corrupt and seductive vampire. In addition, they cannot be sure if members of the Circle of Eternal Snows are also involved. Not knowing who to trust, the members of the Ice Circle close ranks and hide their actions, hoping to turn the tide before it's too late. Eana must be preserved from the creeping shadows at all costs.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731350)

Treasures of the Drakenbergen



The Drakenbergen are famous for the wonders they contain. Gates to the Netherworld, lost valleys hidden by powerful geomagics, tombs of forgotten kings... all these and more are opportunities for adventurers to test themselves and seek fortune at the risk of their lives. While some develop a fascination for the past and dream of lost powers, others turn to the wonders crafted by dvaerg minds. No one else has mastered so perfectly the forging of mithral and adamantium.

The treasures in this section are either fashioned in the Drakenbergen or are typical of them. Most are the stuff of legends, such as the disturbing *crowns of the Fjordkungden* or some of the magnificent armors that will accompany the adventurers onward to new and epic victories. Many of the items presented here are the work of dwarven master craftsmen, empowered by the Awakening, and to own one brings both pride and prestige.

This section also presents a new type of magic item: the enchanted *gem*, which will allow you to customize the adventurers' gear and introduce a new approach to magic items.

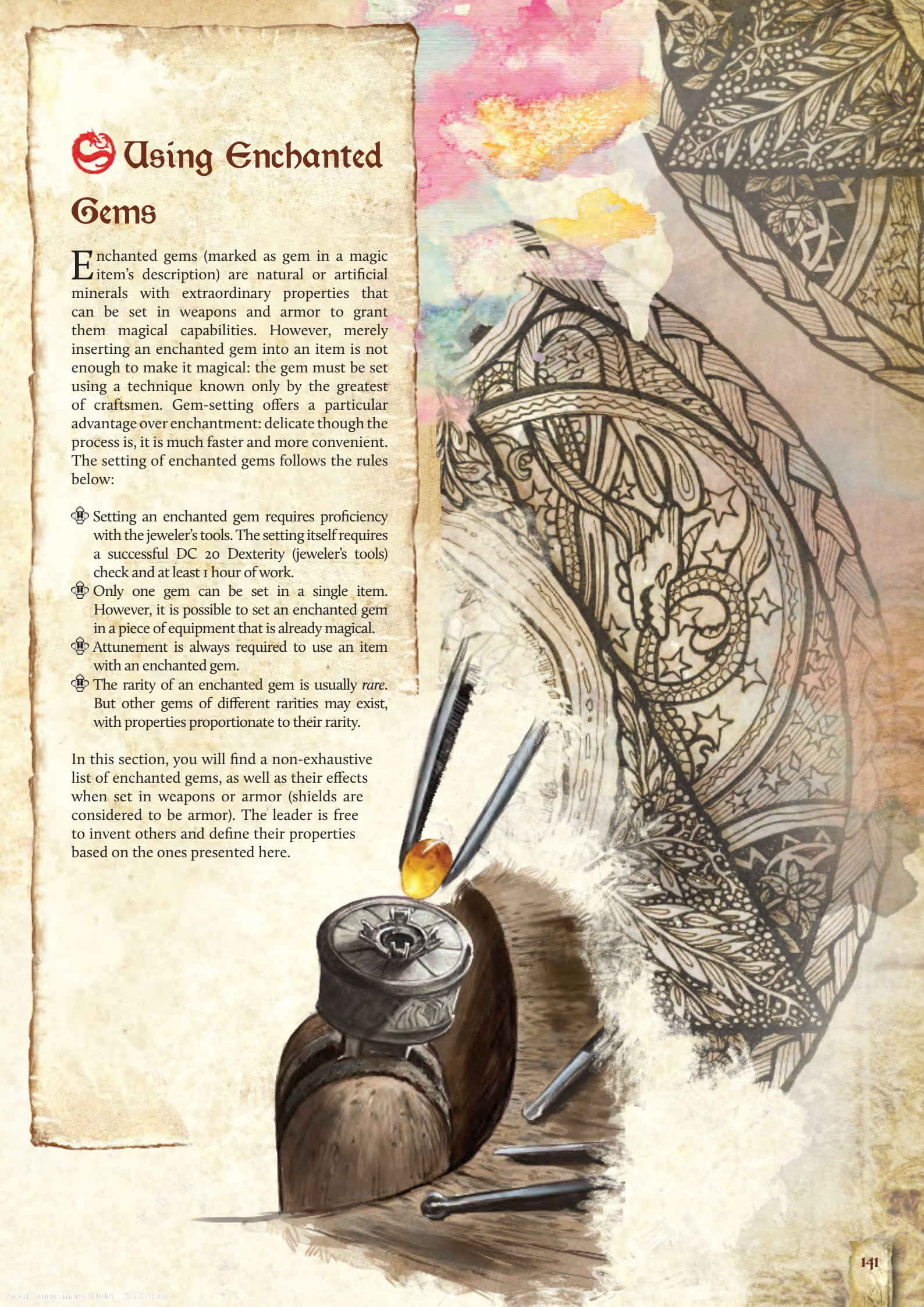
Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Using Enchanted Gems

Enchanted gems (marked as gem in a magic item's description) are natural or artificial minerals with extraordinary properties that can be set in weapons and armor to grant them magical capabilities. However, merely inserting an enchanted gem into an item is not enough to make it magical: the gem must be set using a technique known only by the greatest of craftsmen. Gem-setting offers a particular advantage over enchantment: delicate though the process is, it is much faster and more convenient. The setting of enchanted gems follows the rules below:

- Setting an enchanted gem requires proficiency with the jeweler's tools. The setting itself requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity (jeweler's tools) check and at least 1 hour of work.
- Only one gem can be set in a single item. However, it is possible to set an enchanted gem in a piece of equipment that is already magical.
- Attunement is always required to use an item with an enchanted gem.
- The rarity of an enchanted gem is usually *rare*. But other gems of different rarities may exist, with properties proportionate to their rarity.

In this section, you will find a non-exhaustive list of enchanted gems, as well as their effects when set in weapons or armor (shields are considered to be armor). The leader is free to invent others and define their properties based on the ones presented here.



Scott Tannenmaus (Order #39731950)

Magic Weapon Sheaths

A magic weapon always requires a sheath (or any other sort of receptacle) of superior quality. Generally, the sheath is also enchanted and attuned to the weapon in order to avoid any damage. If you use this optional rule, all magic weapons must come with an appropriate receptacle (sheath or otherwise). Without one, the weapon may cause harm to the bearer or have uncontrollable effects. A sheath may itself have magical properties.



Adamantine Armor

Armor (medium or heavy, but not hide), uncommon

This suit of armor is reinforced with adamantine, one of the hardest substances in existence. While you're wearing it, any critical hit against you becomes a normal hit.

All dwarven master blacksmiths are proficient in the forging of adamantium, which is a prerequisite for their rank. There was once a rich mine in Ökerjord, in the Maze of Mirages, but it had to be hastily abandoned three centuries ago due to a violent earthquake and a particularly dreadful night attack. The Ökerhakke (or "Ochrepick") clan was almost completely exterminated and lost control of the place. To this day, the illusions in the region have thwarted the search for the lost mine.

Ammunition +1, +2, or +3

Weapon (any ammunition), uncommon (+1), rare (+2), or very rare (+3)

You have a bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this piece of magic ammunition. The bonus is determined by the rarity of the ammunition. Once it hits a target, the ammunition is no longer magical.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39781950)

Armor +1, +2, or +3

Armor (light, medium, or heavy), rare (+1), very rare (+2), or legendary (+3)

You have a bonus to AC while wearing this armor. The bonus is determined by its rarity.

Bag of Devouring

Wondrous item, very rare, blasphemy

This bag superficially resembles a *bag of holding* but is a feeding orifice for a gigantic extradimensional creature. Turning the bag inside out closes the orifice.

The extradimensional creature attached to the bag can sense whatever is placed inside the bag. Animal or vegetable matter placed wholly in the bag is devoured and lost forever. When part of a living creature is placed in the bag, as happens when someone reaches inside it, there is a 50 percent chance that the creature is pulled inside the bag. A creature inside the bag can use its action to try to escape with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Another creature can use its action to reach into the bag to pull a creature out, doing so with a successful DC 20 Strength check (provided it isn't pulled inside the bag first). Any creature that starts its turn inside the bag is devoured, its body destroyed.

Inanimate objects can be stored in the bag, which can hold a cubic foot of such material. However, once each day, the bag swallows any objects inside it and spits them out into another plane of existence. The leader determines the time and plane.

If the bag is pierced or torn, it is destroyed, and anything contained within it is transported to a random location on the Astral Plane.

The Origin of Magic Bags

Bags of devouring, *like* bags of holding *and* handy haversacks, *are typical Fjordkungden creations. It is said that the first gnomes who settled here were nostalgic of the Eolian Isles. When one of them went back to see their family and friends, they would carry these miraculous bags with them to transport as many mementos as possible, and bring back just as many.*

The craftsmen who made bags of holding *were victims of their own success and were frequently robbed. To punish the wretches who came to steal their stock, they designed the* bags of devouring. *These items were often sold many times over to naive adventurers who thought they had found a good deal. They are now scattered all over the Drakenbergen.*

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Bag of Holding

Wondrous item, uncommon

This bag has an interior space considerably larger than its outside dimensions, roughly 2 feet in diameter at the mouth and 4 feet deep. The bag can hold up to 500 pounds, not exceeding a volume of 64 cubic feet. The bag weighs 15 pounds, regardless of its contents. Retrieving an item from the bag requires an action.

If the bag is overloaded, pierced, or torn, it ruptures and is destroyed, and its contents are scattered in the Astral Plane. If the bag is turned inside out, its contents spill forth, unharmed, but the bag must be put right before it can be used again. Breathing creatures inside the bag can survive up to a number of minutes equal to 10 divided by the number of creatures (minimum 1 minute), after which time they begin to suffocate.

Placing a *bag of holding* inside an extradimensional space created by a handy haversack, portable hole, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it to a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

Bracelet of Fire Immunity

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

As long as you wear this bracelet adorned with many garnets, you are immune to fire damage.

Salamanders from the volcanic region of Askamor designed the bracelets of fire immunity *for their visitors or prisoners, who might otherwise immediately succumb to the elemental blaze.*

Bracers of Defense

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing these bracers, you gain a +2 bonus to AC if you are wearing no armor and using no shield.

Crown of the Fjordkungden

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement), blasphemy

The Fjordkungden, a fjord-filled region of the Drakenbergen, is split into a number of kingdoms. Each kingdom has one crown, which only the rightful ruler can wear safely. Any other person attempting to crown themselves must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or take 7d10 necrotic damage, and must repeat the saving throw every day at dawn.

The crown gives the wearer advantage on all Charisma checks, as well as invulnerability to one of the following types of damage: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, radiant, thunder (each crown has its own associated type).

When donning the crown for the first time, the wearer (even if they are a legitimate ruler) must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or fall under the effects of a *geas* spell cast with a 9th level spell slot. On a success, the wearer must repeat the same saving throw on the anniversary of their coronation. For this magic item, the *geas* ends at the same time as the wearer's reign, which can only occur when the crown is transferred. In other words, if the king dies before having appointed a successor, they remain somehow bound by their duty, such as in the form of a **ghost**.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773450)

The mission attached to the *geas* spell requires the sovereign to fulfill the duties of their station:

- To ensure the security of their kingdom, even at the risk of their life.
- To do everything in their power to promote the prosperity of their citizens.
- To never leave the kingdom.

Additionally, the magic of the spell inevitably attracts unending misfortune, constantly forcing the wearer to face terrifying powers and opposition. At least one serious threat occurs during every reign. This usually leads to the sovereign's early death, somewhere between 40 and 50 years of age in human years.



The Origin of the Fjordkungden Crowns

Long ago, there lived a magical hero who was disgusted with politics. His name was Moland, and he was skilled at enchanting items. Humble and unassuming, he was known only to a few bards under the nickname "Gold Weaver." To him, all leaders seemed corrupt or selfish, cynical or cowardly.

He thought of a great project: to create a kingdom in which the king would have to care for his people, even if it meant sacrificing himself for them. For all eternity, all those who came to power would devote themselves to the happiness of their fellow citizens. His utopia would become real in the sparsely populated valleys of the fjords.

Alas, the powerful magic he brought into play had a dark side too. It came with a curse for the crown wearer and for the kingdom's inhabitants, who were all struck at least once in a generation by extraordinary and tragic events.

In order to create new crowns using the process of the Gold Weaver, one must find his sanctuary, hidden in the mountains. His forge contains the facilities and notes that would allow a wizard to continue this work.

Defender

Weapon (any), legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The first time you attack with the weapon on each of your turns, you can transfer some or all of the sword's bonus to your Armor Class, instead of using the bonus on any attacks that turn. For example, you could reduce the bonus to your attack and damage rolls to +1 and gain a +2 bonus to AC. The adjusted bonuses remain in effect until the start of your next turn, although you must hold the weapon to gain a bonus to AC from it.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731959)

Dragon Scale Mail

Armor (scale mail), very rare (requires attunement)

Dragon scale mail is made of the scales of one kind of dragon. Sometimes **dragons** collect their cast-off scales and gift them to **humanoids**. Other times, hunters carefully skin and preserve the hide of a dead dragon. In either case, *dragon scale mail* is highly valued.

While wearing this armor, you gain a +1 bonus to AC, you have advantage on saving throws against the Frightful Presence and breath weapons of dragons, and you have resistance to one damage type that is determined by the kind of dragon that provided the scales (see the table).

Dragon	Resistance
Agate	Psychic
Black	Acid
Blue	Lightning
Brass	Fire
Bronze	Lightning
Copper	Acid
Gold	Fire
Green	Poison
Red	Fire
Silver	Cold
White	Cold

Dwarven master blacksmiths pride themselves on mastering the art of fashioning armor from dragon scales. Silver dragons are sacred in the region, and the owners of armor made from their scales better be able to state its precise origin. Woe betide anyone suspected of wearing the skin of a slain silver dragon!

The same mistrust applies to other types of metallic dragon armor. On the other hand, chromatic dragon armor can be displayed openly and ensures undeniable prestige. The welcome is immediately warmer when people recognize a true hero and defender of civilization!

Dragon Slayer

Weapon (any), rare

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you hit a **dragon** with this weapon, the dragon takes an extra 3d6 damage of the weapon's type. For the purpose of this weapon, "dragon" refers to any creature with the dragon type, including dragon turtles and wyverns.

Ighrar Drakenklaed, founder of the clan of the same name, was armed with such a weapon. However, as his successors have since made peace with the dragons (and honor silver dragons especially), these weapons have become very unpopular. In order to discourage their use without destroying them outright, out of consideration for the power of their enchantments, they were often buried with the remains of their bearers and are now found in dwarven necropolises.

Dwarven Plate

Armor (plate), very rare

While wearing this armor, you gain a +2 bonus to AC. In addition, if an effect moves you against your will along the ground, you can use your reaction to reduce the distance you are moved by up to 10 feet.

Wolstan, the dwarven blacksmith hero of the Dawn War, designed a collection of dwarven plate *armor. The members of his lineage of master blacksmiths sign their works with a mint mark reminiscent of a wolf and lightning bolt. This is a token of quality, but dishonest craftsmen have forged the symbol in the past. The vengeance of Wolstan's heirs is ruthless, and one better not earn their ire or stand in their way!*



Scott Timmermans (Order #9973450)

Dwarven Thrower

Weapon (warhammer), very rare (requires attunement by a dwarf)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. It has the thrown property with a normal range of 20 feet and a long range of 60 feet. When you hit with a ranged attack using this weapon, it deals an extra 1d8 damage or, if the target is a giant, 2d8 damage. Immediately after the attack, the weapon flies back to your hand.



Today, the Drakenbergen are controlled and populated largely by the dwarves. In the chronicles of their people, there is mention of a great war pitting them against the frost giants, who tried to build an empire in Cyfandir after landing in the Septentrion. The dwarves delight in boasting of their victory in the mountains, as they gradually repelled the invader. Tribes of frost giants now roam the taigas of northern Kaan, only coming occasionally to pillage the vulnerable shores in the winter.

According to a prophecy of uncertain origin, the next great war against the frost giants will be heralded by the rediscovery of a dwarven thrower.

Taken from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Gem of Dracopal

Gem, rare

Dracopals come from fossilized dragon bones, making them extremely rare gems. The dracopal of a metallic dragon has iridescent reflections and exudes a soft warmth. The dracopal of a chromatic dragon, however, is unpleasant to the touch and captures the light in a disturbing way. Dracopals are used as components for spells related to the Astral Plane, or for magic items imbued with radiant (metallic) or necrotic (chromatic) energy.

- **Armor.** The armor grants resistance to radiant damage in the case of a metallic dracopal, or necrotic damage in the case of a chromatic dracopal.
- **Weapon.** The weapon deals +1d6 radiant damage in the case of a metallic dracopal, or +1d6 necrotic damage in the case of a chromatic dracopal.
- **Special.** The dracopal can replace any spell component with a value less than or equal to 1,000 gp.

There are several small dracopal mines in the Drakenbergen, notably in Gyldenscala, Pendrage, and Beinopal.

Gem of Elemental Condensate

Gem, rare

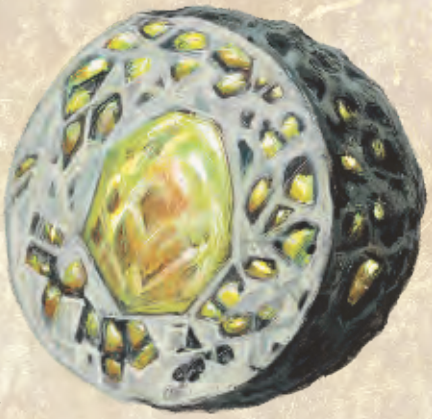
Condensates exist mainly in three forms: fire, cold, and lightning. In theory, nothing precludes the existence of other types (such as radiant or acid condensates), but they would be exceptionally rare. These vivid, luminescent minerals appear naturally in places where the elements rage and magic is strong. Such areas are dangerous, and yet some adventurers still scour for elemental condensates near active volcanoes or the dens of slumbering white dragons.

Also, when a powerful elemental is destroyed, the resulting implosion of primordial energy sometimes leaves behind an elemental condensate. Gnomes from the Eolian Isles sometimes use condensates as an energy source for their machines.

- **Armor.** The armor grants resistance to damage of the same type as the condensate's element.
- **Weapon.** The weapon deals +1d6 damage of the same type as the condensate's element.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731430)

Gem of Eternite



Gem, rare

Also known as a "fragment of Eternity," eternite is literally a piece of the moon Eternity that fell to Eana, as if a heavenly gift. In fact, moon fragments only turn into eternite if they fall from the sky. Heroes who have gone to Eternity have concluded that its soils hold no intrinsic extraordinary properties. With its gray-blue hue, eternite may look like an ordinary quartz fragment, except that its reflections seem to conceal fleeting and incomprehensible visions. Those who wear eternite are granted vague intuitions and premonitions. Some astronomers even claim that if it were properly channeled, this incredible material could unlock the secrets of the future and fate.

- **Armor.** The wearer of this armor can inflict a -5 capped penalty to an attack roll that targets them, before or after the d20 has been rolled, but before any effects of the attack are applied. The wearer must finish a short or long rest to use this feature again.
- **Weapon.** The bearer of this weapon can add a +5 capped bonus to an attack roll made with the weapon, before or after the d20 has been rolled, but before any effects of the attack are applied. The bearer must finish a short or long rest to use this feature again.

Many treasure hunters believe that eternites fall on the highest peaks of the world, as these are naturally closer to the stars. For this reason, their search for the stone fragments often takes them to the icy heights of the Drakenbergen.

Giant Slayer

Weapon (any), rare

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you hit a **giant** with it, the giant takes an extra 2d6 damage of the weapon's type and must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or fall **prone**. For the purpose of this weapon, "giant" refers to any creature with the giant type, including ettins and trolls.

Souvenirs of the assaults of frost giants, dwarves keep these weapons in treasure rooms comparable to museums. If the threat ever arises again, an archivist will no doubt remember that they are stored there.

Hammer of Thunderbolts

Weapon (maul), legendary

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

- **Giant's Bane (Requires Attunement).** You must be wearing a *belt of giant strength* (any variety) and *gauntlets of ogre power* to attune to this weapon. The attunement ends if you take off either of those items. While you are attuned to this weapon and holding it, your Strength score increases by 4 and can exceed 20, but not 30. When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon against a giant, the giant must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or die.

The hammer also has 5 charges. While attuned to it, you can expend 1 charge and make a ranged weapon attack with the hammer, hurling it as if it had the thrown property with a normal range of 20 feet and a long range of 60 feet. If the attack hits, the hammer unleashes a thunderclap audible out to 300 feet. The target and every creature within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be **stunned** until the end of your next turn. The hammer regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Daega Headstrong was a clan leader in the Drakenbergen during the great war between the dwarves and the frost giants. A skilled warrior, she was even more so with her enchanted belt and gloves that granted her tremendous strength. According to legend, during a decisive battle between her clan and a formidable warlord, the fight took a critical turn when the dwarven troops were overwhelmed by hordes of undead controlled by giant necromancers. At that moment, lightning struck Daega's weapon, enshrouding it as a sign of Verndari's favor. With this incredible weapon, she turned the tide of battle and defeated the warlord.
Later on, Daega disappeared. It is said that she traveled the Maze and was deified, becoming Blacksmith's privileged agent, and that she will reappear for the next war against the frost giants.

Taken from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, by Magister Aria Malachai

Handy Haversack

Wondrous item, rare



This backpack has a central pouch and two side pouches, each of which is an extradimensional space. Each side pouch can hold up to 20 pounds of material, not exceeding a volume of 2 cubic feet. The large central pouch can hold up to 8 cubic feet or 80 pounds of material. The backpack always weighs 5 pounds, regardless of its contents.

Placing an object in the haversack follows the normal rules for interacting with objects. Retrieving an item from the haversack requires you to use an action. When you reach into the haversack for a specific item, the item is always magically on top.

The haversack has a few limitations. If it is overloaded, or if a sharp object pierces it or tears it, the haversack ruptures and is destroyed. If the haversack is destroyed, its contents are lost forever, although an artifact always turns up again somewhere.

If the haversack is turned inside out, its contents spill forth, unharmed, and the haversack must be put right before it can be used again. If a breathing creature is placed within the haversack, the creature can survive for up to 10 minutes, after which time it begins to suffocate.

Placing the haversack inside an extradimensional space created by a *bag of holding*, *portable hole*, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Herbalist's Case

Wondrous item, uncommon

This case is 20 inches long, 15 inches wide, and 8 inches high. It has several compartments and drawers to store fragile or perishable ingredients, keeping them intact for a long time. An item placed inside the *herbalist's case* for 1 day looks as if it only spent one hour inside. A plant left inside the case will dry in a day, and never rot as long as it is stored inside it.

In herbal medicine, a plant loses most of its properties after 1 year. With the herbalist's case, stored components can be used more than 20 years after they were picked. Herbalists often pass on these boxes from master to disciple, from one generation to the next, with each heir discovering the treasures of their mentor.

Due to its subtle properties, this item can easily go unnoticed. On Eana, there are doubtless a number of *herbalist's cases* forgotten in storage rooms, or used as simple storage boxes without their owner even suspecting their properties!

Although herbalist's cases *are today mainly used for commendable purposes, their origin is supposedly more questionable. Indeed, their creation may be connected to magical experiments aimed at modifying the effects of the passage of time on living beings. After their success with plants, corrupted wizards, who refused to accept their mortal condition, continued their research on animals and even humanoids. Failure would eventually lead them to embrace vampirism.*

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731930)

Holy Weapon

Weapon (any), legendary (requires attunement by a paladin)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a **fiend**, an **undead**, or a **ravager** with it, that creature takes an extra 2d10 radiant damage.

While you hold the drawn weapon, it creates an aura in a 10-foot radius around you. You and all creatures friendly to you in the aura have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. If you have 17 or more levels in the paladin class, the radius of the aura increases to 30 feet.

The most famous holy weapon *of the Drakenbergen is the sword of Asëamordo, an elenion hero of the Dawn War. His weapon was called Amaurëa, an ancient elven term for the very first light of the sun. The tomb of this formidable swordsman is said to be located among the slopes that border Gleannceò, the domain of the evil vampire Kentigern.*

Luck Blade

Weapon (any sword), legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While the sword is on your person, you also gain a +1 bonus to saving throws.

- **Luck.** If the sword is on your person, you can call on its luck (no action required) to reroll one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you dislike. You must use the second roll. This property can't be used again until the next dawn.
- **Wish.** The sword has 1d4 – 1 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 charge and cast the *wish* spell from it. This property can't be used again until the next dawn. The sword loses this property if it has no charges.

It should come as little surprise that the first to carry this weapon was a halfling hero, or so the stories go. They say that he was a one-eyed paladin who traveled all across Cyfandir, guided only by his adventure-seeking intuition. He showed constant, if foolhardy, bravery, long owing his survival to his lucky star.

Taken from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Mithral Armor

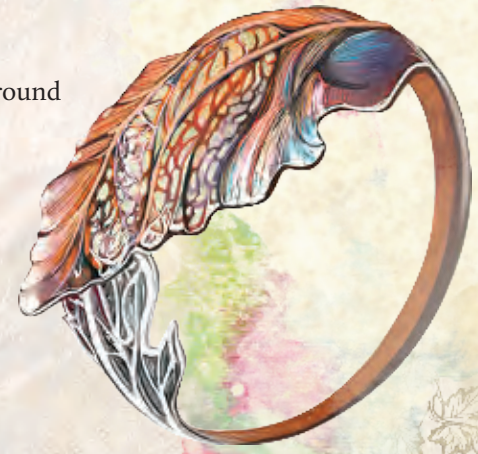
Armor (medium or heavy, but not hide), uncommon

Mithral is a light, flexible metal. Mithral chain mail or breastplate can be worn under normal clothes. If the armor normally imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks or has a Strength requirement, the mithral version of the armor doesn't.

Old mithral deposits are now exhausted, though rumors regularly mention precious nuggets found here and there. Every prospector dreams of discovering a new vein in the Drakenbergen. This metal would no doubt sell for at least the price of gold! For now, mithral armor *is mostly inherited or acquired as a result of looting.*

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Ring of Feather Falling



Ring, rare (requires attunement)

When you fall while wearing this ring, you descend 60 feet per round and take no damage from falling.

It is said that rings of feather *falling appeared when gnomes settled in the Fjordkungden. Accustomed to risking fatal falls in the Eolian Isles, many of them wore such protection. Travelers walking along dangerous ravines or climbing cliffs found a new application for them.*

Ring of Protection

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws while wearing this ring.

Ring of Regeneration

Ring, very rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, you regain 1d6 hit points every 10 minutes, provided that you have at least 1 hit point. If you lose a body part, the ring causes the missing part to regrow and return to full functionality after 1d6 + 1 days if you have at least 1 hit point the whole time.

The druids of the Circle of Eternal Snows fashion and enchant one such ring for every cycle of Eternity, every 21 years. These treasures are entrusted to heroes and to the most eminent members of their order, who pass them on to each other at every handover of power.

Ring of Resistance

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

You have resistance to one damage type while wearing this ring. The gem in the ring indicates the type, which the leader chooses or determines randomly.

The azers who toil in the forge of Askamor's sanctuary are in charge of making many rings of resistance. *This is one of the main magic items offered to pilgrims who come to seek Verndari's blessing. The name of the pilgrim is engraved on the inside of the ring.*

d10	Damage Type	Gem
1	Acid	Pearl
2	Cold	Tourmaline
3	Fire	Garnet
4	Force	Sapphire
5	Lightning	Citrine
6	Necrotic	Jet
7	Poison	Amethyst
8	Psychic	Jade
9	Radiant	Topaz
10	Thunder	Spinel



Rope of Climbing

Wondrous item, uncommon

This 60-foot length of silk rope weighs 3 pounds and can hold up to 3,000 pounds. If you hold one end of the rope and use an action to speak the command word, the rope animates. As a bonus action, you can command the other end to move toward a destination you choose. That end moves 10 feet on your turn when you first command it and 10 feet on each of your turns until reaching its destination, up to its maximum length away, or until you tell it to stop. You can also tell the rope to fasten itself securely to an object or to unfasten itself, to knot or unknot itself, or to coil itself for carrying. If you tell the rope to knot, large knots appear at 1-foot intervals along the rope. While knotted, the rope shortens to a 50-foot length and grants advantage on checks made to climb it.

The rope has AC 20 and 20 hit points. It regains 1 hit point every 5 minutes as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If the rope drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Shield +1, +2, or +3

Armor (shield), uncommon (+1), rare (+2), or very rare (+3)

While holding this shield, you have a bonus to AC determined by the shield's rarity. This bonus is in addition to the shield's normal bonus to AC.

Many of the enchanted shields of the Drakenbergen bear the symbol of Verndari, the embodiment of Blacksmith in dvaerg culture. Although this blessing does not add extra protection, it gives adventurers extra courage.

Weapon +1, +2 or +3

Weapon (any), uncommon (+1), rare (+2), or very rare (+3)

You have a bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. The bonus is determined by the weapon's rarity.

The azers of the sacred forges of Askamor's sanctuary are known for their ability to enchant the weapons of the Fate-chosen who come on a pilgrimage. While +1 enchantments are relatively common, great feats are required to deserve an enchantment of +2 or +3.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731350)



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Great Kaan refers to the vast territory stretching from Ulkanijer, in the south, to the Septentrion, at the northern edge of the continent. In this part, you'll discover details of the cultures that make their home anywhere from the Septentrion to the mountainous borders between Kaan and Ajagar.

- **Chronicles.** Bekasi, advisor to the current Kaani emperor in the capital of Khaalgany, is gathering texts and accounts on the history of the continent. Knowing the past can help better prepare for future troubles.

- **The Septentrion.** The proximity of cultures along the northern edge of Kaan and Cyfandir means they're often considered to be one: the Septentrion. The Septentrion peoples do not have unified politics and are instead united by the rigorous climate, under the rule of Frostelle, the Winter Crone.

- **Kaan.** The borders between what are commonly called the Septentrion and Kaan have shifted throughout history. Currently, the northern border of Kartaçöl's Empire, the new rising power of the continent, forms the northernmost extremity of Kaan. The Clay Cities and scattered communities look upon the new great capital of Easafir with a mix of fear and envy.

- **Wonders of the Great Kaan.** Handcrafted and magical creations of an innovative culture, adapted to a continent stretching from the polar circle to the equator, are presented in this chapter.

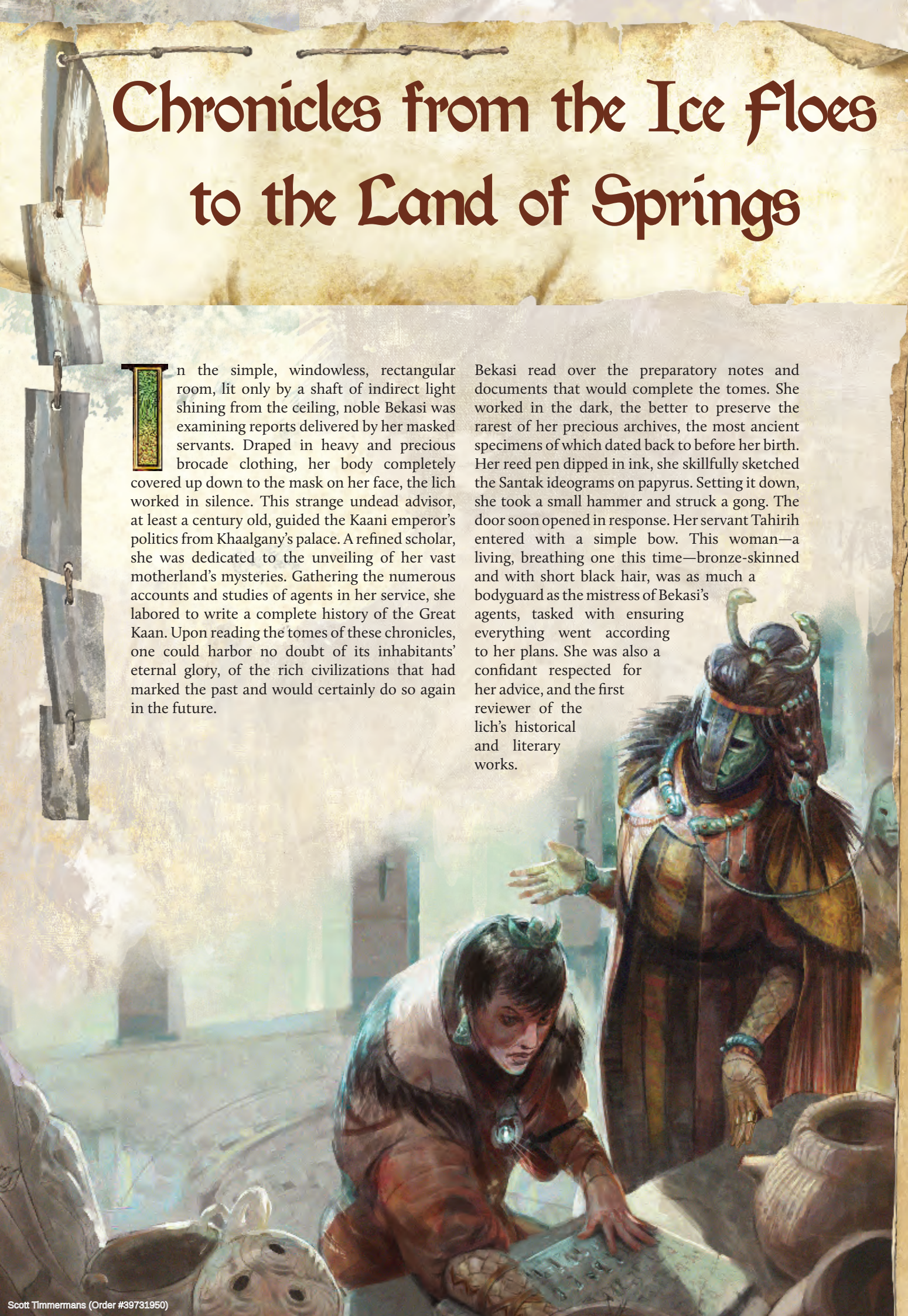


Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Chronicles from the Ice Floes to the Land of Springs

In the simple, windowless, rectangular room, lit only by a shaft of indirect light shining from the ceiling, noble Bekasi was examining reports delivered by her masked servants. Draped in heavy and precious brocade clothing, her body completely covered up down to the mask on her face, the lich worked in silence. This strange undead advisor, at least a century old, guided the Kaani emperor's politics from Khaalgany's palace. A refined scholar, she was dedicated to the unveiling of her vast motherland's mysteries. Gathering the numerous accounts and studies of agents in her service, she labored to write a complete history of the Great Kaan. Upon reading the tomes of these chronicles, one could harbor no doubt of its inhabitants' eternal glory, of the rich civilizations that had marked the past and would certainly do so again in the future.

Bekasi read over the preparatory notes and documents that would complete the tomes. She worked in the dark, the better to preserve the rarest of her precious archives, the most ancient specimens of which dated back to before her birth. Her reed pen dipped in ink, she skillfully sketched the Santak ideograms on papyrus. Setting it down, she took a small hammer and struck a gong. The door soon opened in response. Her servant Tahirih entered with a simple bow. This woman—a living, breathing one this time—bronze-skinned and with short black hair, was as much a bodyguard as the mistress of Bekasi's agents, tasked with ensuring everything went according to her plans. She was also a confidant respected for her advice, and the first reviewer of the lich's historical and literary works.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

"Tahirih, I'd like your thoughts on these first drafts and on the latest documents I intend to incorporate into the corpus."
"I thank you for your trust, but would you not prefer the feedback of historians or poets?"
"Most people are too afraid of me to give an honest critique. They flit between oily spinelessness and defiantly odious rage."
"What do you need of me?"
"Read this over, and tell me what is lacking in clarity. Point out the parts whose tone or possible interpretation might be an issue; those that are weak or lacking and need improvement. Ask me about what you would want to learn as the reader."



The Historical Eras

Some References Using the Republic's Calendar

The following dates are provided in the Republic of the Free City's calendar. This measure of time is fairly common throughout the world, but other civilizations generally use their own calendar.

- **Era of Travelers (origins to -10,000?)**: Reign of the Travelers and Giants; ends with the Fall of the Travelers.
- **Era of Death**: Intermediary and imprecisely dated period between the Fall of the Travelers and the Age of Frostelle. It's characterized by an intense struggle against undeath and other forms of dark magic threatening the Renewal. Humanoid populations and many other species hide in shelters, the most famous of which are the Pillars of Creation in the Septentrion.
- **Era of Renewal (-8,000? to -5,000?)**: The exact dates of this period are difficult to determine. Kaani scholars distinguish two ages within this era.
  - **Age of Frostelle**: Characterized by great cold, immense glaciers, and a lower sea level than the present day. The Boreal civilization dominates in these times.
  - **Age of Flora**: Second age of the Renewal, characterized by a much milder climate. It is the golden age of the Cyfand elves, and ends with the Dawn War.
- **Era of Fated Kings (-5,000? to -980)**: Age of the kingdoms and empires of the Fate-chosen; ends with the divine ascension of Tamerakh and Xonim.
- **Era of New Kingdoms (-980 to year 0)**: The world rebuilds itself and the great powers of the present day take form; ends with the founding of the Republic of the Free City (at least in the eyes of the Freemen).
- **Era of the Republic (Year 0 to present day)**: Golden age of the Republic of the Free City; many believe a new age is now beginning with the fall of the Kadmeid dynasty of Cyrillane in the year 330 of the Republic's calendar.

Comparison of Calendars

The Kaan's chronology begins with the oath of the clans and tribes of the Steppe, swearing to follow Tamerakh to the ends of the world in his conquests.

A Few Points of Reference Between Freemen and Kaani

Event	Date in the Free City Calendar	Date in the Kaani Calendar
Oath of the Steppe	– 991	Year 0
Fall of the Stopstep empire	– 980	Year 11
Founding of the Free Republic	Year 0	Year 991
Fall of the Kadmeid dynasty in Cyrillane	Year 330	Year 1321
Present Day	Year 331	Year 1322

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Era of the Travelers and Giants

Tahirih took a seat without waiting for Bekasi's invitation and settled down to read the first draft of the chronicles of the Great Kaan.

In the beginning was the living world of Eana and the cosmic dance of its moons, which deeply influenced magic and fate.

The Travelers and the Giants, both peoples of great builders and masters of the arcane, rose to prominence and divvied up the emerging lands. The Septentrion and Kaan were the domains of the ancient Giants, beings comparable to the current giants, but also different in many ways.

The bodyguard paused her reading to ask:

The Travelers' Strong Magic

"Do we know how different the ancient Giants were from those of today?"

"Merely in speculation. Most notably, the ancient Giants built sites charged with powerful magic such as the Pillars of Creation. I've written about it a bit further in. The frost giants are no longer capable of such a feat today, nor are their stone brethren. Scholars assume the ancient Giants spoke in Tumiit, a language most frost giants have forgotten, speaking now a dialect mixing this tongue of old with words taken from Kaani vernacular."

"The technical knowledge of a people does not come from their nature, but from their culture."

"Indeed. The culture of the Giants has been lost, along with their strong magic. The most rigorous scholars studying the current giant peoples believe they are all descendants of a singular lineage. Understanding what those primordial Giants were like would require deeper insight into the legends and traditions of the current giants."

"That's rather vague. Besides, the only concrete thing we know about them seems to be their strong magic. What did it consist of?"

"Continue reading. I've attempted to elucidate the differences between the strong magic of the Travelers and that of the Giants."

Mastery of the Ateaks and the Importation of New Species

Of the Travelers, we know that they built the extraordinary Ateaks and brought strange creatures back from their journeys. The basilisk and gorgon, predators of the steppe, are descendants of these specimens. Considering their common ability to turn flesh to stone, scholars surmise that they came from the same extra-Eanan world, poetically dubbed "World of the Stone Serpent". Many monstrosities and all aberrations are supposedly from beyond the Ateaks.

Creation of the Fateforge

The other major accomplishment of the Travelers was the construction of the Fateforge on the moon Eternity, as a way to channel the celestial body's influence on chance, coincidences, and heroic aptitude. Thanks to this instrument of unimaginable power, it had become possible to create gods and to warp the path of fate as well as the very fabric of reality.

Attempts to Limit an All-powerful Tool

Many scholars affirm that Blacksmith—the first major deity—was once a Traveler, and that the second—Maker—was once a Giant. Divine ascension changed their outlook on the world and greatly distanced them from partisan considerations, but current theologians persistently see them as rivals. Presumably, the Travelers hadn't anticipated other peoples making use of the Fateforge. Since it wasn't possible to reduce its power nor area of effect, how could they keep it from being used in a way that might be harmful to them? It can be assumed that the Maze leading to the Fateforge was built with that goal in mind: a way to prevent the unworthy from accessing its wondrous powers.

As time passed and the room grew darker, Bekasi remembered to conjure a source of light for the human. Tahirih interrupted her reading:

"I heard scholars speaking with a Dvaerg diplomat from the Drakenbergen. He said that the Fateforge might be the cause of Canker's appearance."

"The temptation of absolute power creating an immortal and absolute evil. I've heard it before.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The most terrifying hypothesis says that Canker might persist as long as the Fateforge does."
"So it would be impossible to vanquish it?"
"I don't believe in the impossible."
Bekasi had embraced eternity by becoming a lich. To her, absolute certainty was a challenge to overcome.
The august advisor grabbed a bound book near her desk. Judging by its appearance, it had seen a lot of use.
"Let's complete our discussion on strong magic first, but after that, I believe this text will be of interest to you."

Hymn to Afirînerê—Maker, the Father of Peoples

By the blood that molds the flesh,
By the mud that the potter shapes,
O Afirînerê, Father of Peoples,
You offer life and knowledge,
Praised be Your creation!
By the hand and the mind,
You inspire and You guide.
Your divine seed
You did mix to the lands of Kaan,
From the mineral core are born the people of blood:
Çan the Dust, mother of orcs;
Dîlketina the Humus, mother of bugbears;
Eseptöçü the Quartz, mother of ulkani;
Ilay the Red Ochre, mother of hobgoblins;
Shavarlag the Green Clay, mother of goblins;
Zanar the Schist, mother of kobolds.
Your love and Your benevolence support us,
Your genius inspires us,
May we live and act in Your image!

The Giants' Strong Magic

Patiently, Tahirih resumed her reading of Bekasi's work notes. Magic was very far removed from the warrior's expertise, but the text leaned toward simplification of its complex notions… and interacting with an undead mage on a daily basis meant she had some degree of familiarity with the subject.

Creation and Transformation of the Living

Once again, silence fell in Bekasi's office as Tahirih read the notes on the next papyrus. Focused, she took the time to properly accomplish her task. In service to the lich, quality was paramount to any other consideration.
One of the areas of the Giants' magic was the mastery of the up and down, the big and small. They could design models at one scale and build them at another. Moreover, their art was not limited to objects—sometimes miniature, other times massive—but also touched on the transformation of the living.
At this point in the manuscript, Tahirih stumbled several times on medical concepts. Bekasi was surprised at first, but acknowledged that mortals could not be experts in all domains. She added a few notes in the margins, so as to remember where to make additions. Pushed to continue without stopping for the technical elements, Tahirih vaguely understood that the body was conceptualized as a machine animated by secret instructions, written infinitely small within the building blocks that made up living matter.

Maker, the Creating Father

If Bekasi's notes were to be believed, the Giants' knowledge was far beyond the power of wizards that specialized in transmutation. Thanks to their mastery of this art, they were able to create new species.
"If I understand correctly, when believers affirm that Maker, the creating father, made the natives of Kaan, it would in truth be the Giants' work?"
"Indeed, I think this is how it occurred."
"Is it such a big difference? After all, Maker was once a Giant."
"Most importantly, this means religion has nothing to do with this seminal act. Humans resemble miniature giants, and I would go as far as to posit that this species was initially designed as a 'living toy', similar to how humanoid children play with dolls today."
Tahirih remained silent for a moment, trying to imagine the world before the Fall of the Travelers, an epoch in which humanoid people might have been used as things, for entertainment, or as small and dexterous tools for experiments, packed into cages, tiny in comparison to the laboratories of Giant arcanists.

Scott Timmerman (Orde - 39731950)

Interpretation of Myths

"So what do you make of the mothers of the native peoples?" asked Tahirih.
"It's a difficult question and I haven't yet managed to develop a firm idea on the matter. They may simply be a fictional construct. In the quest for wonder and comfort, or to create an artificial unity between very different humanoid species, the populations of ancient times may have imagined this story to make all people into half-brothers."
"Some tribes honor them with more respect than they show toward Afirînerê."
"Yes, and this leads me to a second hypothesis, that of syncretism. The 'mothers' would be spirits drawn from druidic tradition, tied to a territory. To promote the worship of their god, the priests of Afirînerê the Maker found a way to intermingle the myths."
"Both these explanations would suffice to explain the myth of Afirînerê without the Giants being involved."
"Do you doubt my interpretation?"
"You asked me to point out any weakness I could find in the reasoning and the story I read."
Bekasi was momentarily staggered by this questioning of an idea she had ended up taking for granted. She pondered intensely. Tahirih kept quiet, waiting for the lich to speak:
"There are ways of checking if my theory is correct. We'd have to study the ruins and traces of the Giants. I'm thinking of the stone giants' magic; it has a link with the big and the small. Remains in frost giant lands should be studied too. Hmm, mastery of Tumiit will be essential for that, or we won't be able to decipher any writings we may find there. Beyond our continent, learning more about the cloud and storm giants could confirm or deny my first conclusions. Word is those two peoples have kept many secrets and traditions from ancient times..."
Silent once again, the lich picked up her pen, dipped it in ink, and started noting down these leads. She could only affirm her ideas with conviction if she held the most solid evidence to support her claims. Only then could she accuse the Afirînerê clergy of deceit.
Tahirih watched her, trying to understand why her mistress was so intent on spreading an iconoclastic truth. Was it simply a question of principle, or did Bekasi see in this a way to undermine the power of Kartaçöl's emperor? That country was Kaan's most dangerous rival, and its propaganda relied heavily on religion.

Official Celebration of Kartaçöl's Solar Emperor

Glory to the eternal Süi Kartaçöl!
Sublime sapient,
Learned in arts and industries,
Master of the quill and sword,
Last-born and prophet of Afirînerê,
Father of the nation and of new peoples,
Guide us to the snows crowned with nocturnal auroras,
Lead us to the depths of Manbalarer at the rivers' sources,
Let us follow with you the path of the divine celestial to the west,
And let the sun never set on your empire!

Scott Timmermans (Order #3773195)

Memory of the Ancient World

Remembering that her servant was mortal, Bekasi suggested taking a break to drink and enjoy a few fruits that were brought in. The lich took this time to organize some of the papyruses and complete her notes with ideas she had in mind. Satisfied with this first phase of work, she returned to the book she had promised to talk about:

"The druids of the primal Ündsenoin forests, in the Septentrion, gather the lessons of Yksittäinen, an extraordinary tree and one of the rare living witnesses to the fall of the Travelers. I don't even know if there are any other such witnesses on Eana, at least on the Material Plane. Those druids gathered her answers to their questions in a tome named *Lessons Translated and Betrayed from Yksittäinen*."

"I was unaware the druids held such a tome."

"They don't make much ado about it. According to them, the vegetal language of Yksittäinen, full of imagery, is too rich and complex for her revelations to be propagated."

"I don't understand."

"As the old saying goes, 'translating is betraying'; the druids are afraid of reducing Yksittäinen's thoughts to crude fragments of their original message, tainted by the political ideas of their translator, even were it one of their own. Still, a number of them believed that at least part of Yksittäinen's truths should be transmitted to combat certain evils. Partial translations have thus been in circulation for a long time, referred to as *Breath of the Aspen*, *Prophecy of the Roots*, and other such titles. It took me some time to gather the fragments until I could put together my own version of *Lessons Translated and Betrayed from Yksittäinen*."

"What can a tree teach us about ancient times?"

The Breeding Grounds of Canker

Seemingly immobile, Yksittäinen spread her roots into the Netherworld and her boughs toward the sky. She had neither eyes nor ears, but perceived light, vibrations, fluctuations of magic, rain, and life around her.

It was based on Yksittäinen's testimonies that Bekasi affirmed that the Travelers radically transformed this energy by creating the Fateforge.

In the beginning, the moon Eternity had properties influencing the currents of magic on Eana. Canker didn't exist. At the time, Yksittäinen couldn't dream of what would occur, but in hindsight, she would understand some details that had troubled her. The conditions that would allow the birth of Canker were already there, brought together by the Travelers at the same time as the Fateforge. This unease was similar to a precariously balanced weight; the slightest change could tip the scales, bringing it down like the snow of an avalanche.

Cankerous Sprout

The change started with an echo of dark magic the likes of which Yksittäinen had never felt before. It came neither from the Giants' art nor from that of the Travelers, but from another power, radically different in nature. It was like a bloodcurdling cry from the void, toward the heavens. It ended in a shock of incredible violence hitting Eana, destroying the land at the scale of entire countries. The destructive blast occurred very far from Kaan, which was fortunate for Yksittäinen. Otherwise, she would have been completely destroyed in the disaster, like almost every other form of life. A dark and scalding wave spread across the sky, depriving the world of any light, and fell back down in a rain of fire. The blaze consumed the entire surface. No forest escaped the inferno. Only those with deep enough roots—able to go through dormancy and rebirth—and those with well-buried seeds were vigorous enough to withstand the long night of ashes, dark, cold, and acid.

Just as Canker's breeding grounds had been created by the Travelers, the collapse of their world spawned the immortal and destructive sprout of what now gnaws at the bowels of Eana. It appeared just after a powerful blaze from the moon Eternity. Someone must have been Granted something, but what?



Scott Thunemann (Order #39731950)

Era of Renewal

Troubled by what she read, Tahirih didn't know what to say. That Canker could result from a Granting was unthinkable. No one could want the existence of the horror lurking in the depths of Eana! The warrior also pondered on the long periods of time in history. The Era of Renewal started after the Fall of the Travelers and ended with the Dawn War. Essentially, for this entire period of time described as blissful in myth, a terrifying evil had been growing ceaselessly, perceived only by certain beings such as Yksittäinen, but without anyone actually trying to understand the nature of any appearing anomalies. Nothing had been done to anticipate disaster.

After the Fall of the Travelers, a troubled era charged with dark magic briefly dominated Eana. Three heroes went to the Fateforge to become Death, Frostelle, and Flora. The first ensured that the old world was no more, whether by undeath or other sorcery; it needed to be culled to allow rebirth. The second called forth a purifying winter that completed Death's work while preparing for the future. Finally, the third allowed new life to blossom, different from the old while being its continuation.



Soul Immortals Order #3763849

The Pillars of Creation

The Greatest Shelter

If life had been able to survive the ordeal of a long and cold night of acid ash, it was thanks in part to the existence of shelters. Many were in the Netherworld, but one of the greatest was on the surface. The Pillars of Creations had been the work of the Giants.

"But then," said Tahirih, surprised, "if the Giants made such efforts to protect the humanoid peoples during the Fall of the Travelers, they must have loved them! No one goes to such lengths for mere toys."

"A fair point," conceded Bekasi. "Giants and Travelers were not a homogeneous group. There must have been some among them who tried to protect not only the humanoid peoples but many other species as well. To defend the complex diversity of the universe..."

"I don't understand."

"It matters little. Let's just say that it's an ethic that transcends the banal question of good and evil. It's important to protect diversity and rarity. If there were only a dozen moths of a particular species left whereas there are tens of thousands of orcs, merosi, and humans, the death of even a hundred humanoids would be acceptable to defend these last moths."

Even hidden from view behind a mask, Tahirih could guess that an enigmatic smile was on the lich's face, proud of her ideas that separated her from so many of her predecessors. The warrior thought that this ideal of protecting life's complexity couldn't explain everything. Rather, it seemed to her that Giants and Travelers had acted as parents, ready to sacrifice themselves so that life could endure through their children. She herself would have no hesitation in doing the same for her son. Cut off from the cycle of life and death, could the lich understand?



The Great Migrations

Whatever their motivations, the Giants had allowed their descendants to survive, both the current giants and the humanoids they had supposedly created. A long migration started then, each looking for their own place on the new Eana. Bugbears, goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, ulkani, and kobolds traveled down the coasts of Kaan, gradually populating it. Meanwhile, the dwarves left toward Cyfandir. The Strait of Bruisadur between the two continents had been a land bridge at the time, and could be crossed on foot. The humans of the Pillars of Creation chose to remain in the far north for a time. Afterward, journeys and exploration would allow people to mingle again, giving birth to the merosi in particular.

A Place of Pilgrimage and Meditation

Bekasi resumed her commentary on the chapter that Tahirih was reading:

"From what I've been able to glean, the Pillars of Creations are now inhabited. It's still a place of pilgrimage for some giants and adepts of Maker. They go there to meditate on the history of the world and its destiny. It's said that the tall columns there touch the sky and hold up the physical laws of Eana. I'm sure such a location holds much knowledge about the Giants and the nature of magic."

The lich affectionately unfurled a large map, revealing what was known of the Septentrional regions. Jagged coastlines, lakes, powerful rivers, vast forests, and several presumed locations of Boreal ruins.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



The Boreal Civilization

"The Age of Frostelle is not studied much in Cyfandir. Their scholars are obsessed with the Age of Flora and the grandeur of the elves. It seems to me that there is an interesting connection between the giants of the Renewal and the Boreal civilization. It's still quite a mysterious period. I'm very curious to know more."

The lich's enthusiasm piqued Tahirih's curiosity, who continued her reading in order to understand what intrigued her mistress so. Today, the Boreal civilization was known to adventurers for its impressive ruins lost in the ice. Their supernatural aura granted these places a surreal and mystical serenity, and they were filled with a polar cold in all seasons. They calmed some, terrified others, and attracted a lot of attention.

The Icy Renewal of an Ephemeral World

During Frostelle's icy reign, the climate that is currently exclusive to the Septentrion reached far lower latitudes and the fauna of the far north flourished across vast expanses. This was the time of saber-toothed smilodons, cave lions, woolly rhinoceros, mammoths, bison, musk oxen, and many other mighty animals. These creatures roamed throughout wide grassy steppes that now lie at the bottom of shallow seas. In those ancient times, the sea level was indeed much lower than present days, its water trapped in immense glaciers that shaped valleys and fjords.

"If I'm reading correctly, this all happened around 10,000 to 8,000 years ago? Or 10,000 to 5,000 years ago? The Age of Frostelle would cover this period?"

"Perhaps. I don't imagine the eras' duration are as exact as some scholars would like to believe. But I don't think it is of much importance. Whether the Fall of the Travelers occurred 100,000 or 10,000 years ago, does it change any of the events as they transpired?"

Tahirih didn't bother responding to the rhetorical question. The Boreal civilization was the fruit of an alliance between the northern humans and frost giants of old. An initial renewal had taken place on the ice, under the benevolent yet unyielding gaze of Frostelle. A mysterious time, destined to vanish with the necessary arrival of the Age of Flora.

Mysteries of an Ancient Strong Magic

"Frost giants are now known to be hostile to any sort of sedentary civilization. What happened for them to change so much?"

"I'd very much like to know that as well. Unfortunately, I only have meager clues. They allied with humans to build a civilization made up of a myriad of city-states protected from the cold by magical fortifications and domes. Some locations were mostly human, some mostly inhabited by frost giants, and others had a mixed population. This has resulted in strange ruins, mixing monumental ramps and secondary staircases at our scale. In those days, a strong magic was mastered, perhaps not as powerful as that of the Travelers and Giants, but no less remarkable."

"In what ways does strong magic differ from regular magic?"

"To give you a brief answer, our magic allows a singular arcanist—myself, for instance—to wield ritualistic spells following nine stable levels of increasing power, with relatively few constraints.

"Our magic was inherited from the culture of Eben-chekwa, in Mibu. It's possible that the individual magic of the Boreal civilization was very different from what we currently know.

"Strong magics are techniques associated with locations built specifically for such a use and involving multiple participants, even if they do not all have the same level of experience. Together in these dedicated places, they can produce prodigious results that would be impossible otherwise. Nowadays, I think only the elves of Ellerìna still master a similar art, though I know too little of their practices to tell you more."

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

"So there are sites dedicated to the use of Boreal strong magic, then?"
"Indeed, such is the theory. Many arcanists are searching for the ancient human academy from that time. It's thought to have been founded in the mountains of the Septentrion, but which ones? On the northern faces of the Hevitur Mountains? Or in the Kupatwacuw Mountains, in frost giant lands?"
"Supposing this place were found, what could be done there?"
"We only have speculation to go off of. According to legend, the peoples of the Boreal civilization sought to restore knowledge lost in the Fall of the Travelers. They studied ruins and places of power. With the help of descendants of the Giants and Frostelle's chosen—rumored to be numerous back then—they were supposedly able to mix knowledge of the cosmos, the nature of life, time, infinity, and raw magic."
"What is raw magic?"
"It's a way of referring to pure energy. The idea behind this concept is that there are similarities between arcane and divine magics. This lets us imagine the existence of a more primordial form of magic, beyond these artificial labels. Some elements lead me to believe that the Borealis successfully started to harness it. Perhaps there lies the cause of their vanishing."

An Indecipherable Language

Madam,
I hope this report reaches you. Kartaçöl's corsairs roam the Ustalva Sea to pounce upon any ship from Arolavia. Losing their beachhead in Moramiek was very costly for them and everyone is expecting hostilities to resume soon. The city has suffered under occupation and remains dangerous. Luckily, several of my old contacts are still alive. They allowed me to meet a couple of scholarly archivists who worked to shelter innumerable precious writings from the wartime raids.
You'll find attached a more complete summation of my research, including copies of the texts that seemed the most relevant. Here is a summary.
The only remaining Boreal writings appear to be mural inscriptions found in ruins and the archival tablets contained within. These texts are absolutely indecipherable by magic. Death's Ban hangs over all objects from the Boreal civilization. In and of itself, this is already an indication of an important event that even the gods wish to keep hidden.
Back to the texts themselves, they were written in an as-of-yet undeciphered syllabary. We would need a complete compendium of symbols, numerous texts, and finally, a key. We would also need to form lexicons of related languages. The most solid candidates are the current tongues of the northern peoples living on the ice floes, such as the Denisovas. Tumiit spoken by some giants may be the closest language currently in existence. Hiemal's profanation may explain the hostility held by frost giants toward humans. I have attached a study on the subject.
We will soon resume our journey toward the north of Arolavia and the southern flanks of the Hevitur.

Letter sent by the agent Basil White

The Epic of Hiemal, Renegade of Frostelle

In Arolavia and Lothrienne, bards sometimes sing the epic of Hiemal, the renegade of Frostelle. "Hiemal" means "the one belonging to winter". It's clearly a translated name, as it doesn't have a Tumiit phonetic.
Details vary between versions, but the main narrative weave seems a certainty. The tale always involves a moral lesson, denouncing blasphemers full of hubris or criticizing the omnipotence of the gods, depending on the teller.
Hiemal was a paragon of the goddess's adepts, but at the peak of his power, he made a mistake. He ignored divine warnings received as terrifying nightmares and scorned the reprimands of supernatural messengers. Persisting in his error, he should have lost all power, but that wasn't the case. No one knows exactly how, but he continued being able to wield divine magic. There was a great split in Frostelle's cult, between traditional followers of the goddess and those viewing the renegade as their guide. He may have been perceived as a god-to-be, or, on the contrary, as the one who might emancipate humanoids from divine supervision.
Divine magic is channeled by the gods to their priests. Scholars posit that Hiemal had found a way to draw directly from the source of divine magic, bypassing the approval of the goddess who could then do nothing to deprive him of his power. He may have discovered how to draw on primordial energy, beyond notions of arcane or divine magic.
The fate of Hiemal at the end of this civil war isn't known, but many believe he is one of the most closely guarded prisoners of Gemoniae. Another consequence of the conflict was a deep rift between humans and frost giants.

Notes from the agent Basil White

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Aldaron of Ündsenoin

In time, the Boreal cities vanished under the waves, the ice, and the snow. Meanwhile, to the south, in the much milder Cyfandir, the elves flourished. Created by the new fey, they were meant to watch over the maelossas and Eana.

"I'd heard about the fey ancestry of the elves, but I didn't really know what it entailed."

"It's likely that many elves and melessë today don't know of their origins. To understand this legacy, we must remember what fey are. They are intermediaries between our mundane reality and the living nature of Eana, in all her splendor on the Astral Plane. Fey are made in the image of nature and vice versa. During the Fall of the Travelers, the ancient fey disappeared almost entirely, along with most other life on the surface of Eana. If there are still ancient fey around, they're somewhere in the Netherworld or in the oceanic depths.

"When plant life flourished once again, slowly in the Age of Frostelle and explosively in the Age of Flora, the fey of Cyfandir were born again from young maelossas on the surface. Only fey are bound to those places, with no freedom to travel. Creating the elves was a way to have agents capable of coming and going on the Material Plane.

"Current aldaron meticulously perpetuate their original mission, defending the most ancient forests. They came from Cyfandir to find Ündsenoin. They are now a large community, followers of the druidic tradition, and globally on good terms with the bugbear tribes of the region. Unlike the Cyfandir aldaron, those of Kaan are quite open-minded and much less prone to attack without warning."

"I haven't heard of any fey presence in Kaan. Why is that?"

"Hard to say. There are many wild spirits; perhaps their presence makes Cyfand-type fey less necessary? Perhaps Kaan has suffered less natural destruction, so Eana's manifestations there take different forms? After all, Yksittäinen survived the Fall of the Travelers. Moreover, the Dawn War ravaged Kaan less than Cyfandir, meaning they are two different environments, naturally and mystically speaking."



Scott Timmerman (Order #3731950)

Echoes of the Dawn War

Tahirih knew from reputation about the Dawn War that had devastated Cyfandir and caused the downfall of the glorious elvish civilization of that time, but this conflict was less prominent in Kaani minds. She examined Bekasi's notes on the subject.

Luckily for Kaan, Cyfandir had been Canker's first target. Through Nightmare, it sought to destroy or subjugate the elves. At that time, there existed a thriving mixed Kaani civilization of merosi, named Dalain'khumus, meaning 'the people of the sea'. These fishermen and pirates alternated between diplomacy and raids on the elven cities of Cyfandir. They witnessed the horror striking at their splendid rivals and understood that the threat was exceptionally dire.

Some of these merosi took part in battles in Cyfandir, which earned them the honor of being included among the core peoples. Others returned to Kaan to warn of the danger. The druids of Ündsenoin had also felt a great disturbance, but they couldn't comprehend the gravity or nature of it, as it was so far beyond anything known. News came from every direction. Stone giants were the most knowledgeable on the Netherworld, followed by the kobolds. These peoples were the first to take notice of the occurrences and understand the cataclysm.

Battles against the hordes of ravagers happened mostly underground, in the stone giants' domain. The war cost these people greatly, but the sacrifice was worth it in the end, for the tragedy of the Dawn War in Kaan seemed almost bearable compared to what happened in Cyfandir.

"I imagine the tale of the Dawn War from the stone giants' perspective would be far more somber. The near-extermination of their people in order to save the surface would only earn them a passing gratitude from our part." remarked Tahirih.



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Era of Fated Kings

As the sun set outside, Bekasi illuminated her office. Tahirih appraised the next leaflets, trying to evaluate the remaining time of reading and analysis that they represented. She went to the door to ask the servants outside to bring her a light meal. A few minutes later, a knock on the door heralded a tray of coffee, flatbread, goat cheese, and pickled bull-horn peppers, as well as a few small honey-and-cinnamon cakes. Working for a being that had not known fatigue in decades sometimes meant late studying.

Successive Empires

"I'm reading here that the short-lived empires and kingdoms of the Era of Fated Kings were very numerous, with complex relations of oaths, betrayal, marriages, and incessant war. Do you intend to list them all?"

"That would be quite remarkable, but it would surely take me decades—perhaps even centuries—of work to write exhaustive chronicles of all the city-states, all the kingdoms, all the empires of Kaan." The lich let out a dry chuckle at the idea. "A traveler braving the desolation of Khoosrol visits a once-prosperous land, fought over by the people of the Steppe and those of the mountains. The lands of springs in Manbalarer constitute a huge and rich fortress, the many valleys of which shelter sacred sanctuaries, kingdoms of vassals to the rajah of Ajagard, and the domains of dragons worshiped as gods."

"Would it be appropriate to describe a few, just to give the reader a sense of the diversity of their fates?"

The Clay Cities

Bekasi commented even as she scribbled down her ideas for a dedicated chapter:

"The nearest to us are the Clay Cities, nominally belonging to the Kaani Empire. They were independent political entities, then. Some of them look back fondly on that independence, but act cautiously. They were all rivals, trying at any cost to outdo one another by building temples and ziggurats each more magnificent than the last. The cities were proud to have their own vision of honored deities, even celebrating a local god, a hero who reached the Fateforge. Sometimes, diabolical hospodar were given a place of honor. Some rulers thought they could gain more from these beings than from the gods.

"The black magic of the desolation, that which animates specters and golems, comes from this period. Some arcanists hoped that summoning fiends would provide weapons granting a decisive advantage. Xonim herself studied the necromancy and enchantments of that time."

The Bail Empire

As Bekasi wrote about the Clay Cities, Tahirih was reading a papyrus describing the little that was known about other empires. The Bail Empire spread across the seas and had only slightly affected Kaan, in some coastal cities. It worshiped a deity associated with fate, apparently named Bhaagykabail, with the body of a man and the head of a bull. He was one of the minor gods of the Era of Fated Kings, a hero that had become a god, but who hadn't been able to claim dominance or last through the ages. In the end, the Bail Empire was known mostly for building sanctuaries, including mazes for initiations and trials by ordeal. The minotaurs were the last witnesses of this religion. Since then, they were welcomed among some sects worshiping Tamerakh.

"What became of the forgotten gods?" asked Tahirih.

"Some were devoured by Nightmare. It's assumed that some joined the essence of other gods. In

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the Astral Plane, there are also fossilized remains of divine domains, the corpses of dead gods—if the notion of death can apply to such entities. I don't know what could slay a god... Perhaps their Grantings from the Fateforge were imperfect and their end was brought on by a flaw in their formulation? Perhaps they tried to manipulate power beyond even them? I've heard of a mysterious dimension in which the lamentrope roams, an eternal and immortal monster that relentlessly chases whoever tries to change the course of time and space. All arcanists learn to fear it."

"So there are things that can defeat gods!"

"The Fateforge is 'something' that creates them, so why could they not be destroyed?"

The Epic of Tamerakh

The epic of Tamerakh ends the Era of Fated Heroes. After him, the moon Eternity shone less brightly... until very recently. Everyone knows of the merosi who had become a god and brought his mother back from the dead to offer her divine ascension. The peoples of Kaan each possess their own anecdote or tradition referring to the first great ezen and the heroes of his Horde. For centuries, preciously kept swords and jewelry have been passed down through generations, whether they were enchanted or not.

A large part of what is known of Xonim and Tamerakh comes from the sacred book *The Midnight Verses*, the fruit of revelations given to the goddess's chosen. Once a human priestess of Death, she sought to forge her fate and that of her son by becoming the third bride of the orc ruler Khuch'adal, and mother of his fifth child, Tamerakh.

In time, with the mixture of oral tradition and the religious preachings of Xonim's and Tamerakh's adepts, it became difficult to separate truth from myth.



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A Relentless Conquest

If no one doubts Tamerakh's efficiency—always advised by Xonim, until her death—his moral sense has always been greatly questioned.

Even according to his followers, his story abounds in slain opponents, or others who only survived by fleeing. Stone giants and the orcs of the Iruuls are known to have refused to obey and were forced into hiding, in the Netherworld or in the most remote locations within the mountains.

Within his own family, Tamerakh killed or arranged the killing of all those who could make a legitimate bid for his position. His large brotherhood quickly split between those who accepted becoming his generals and those who thought—wrongly—that they could stand up to him.

Once the tribes of the Steppe had united under his banner, the Clay Cities and city-states of Kaan fell one by one to Tamerakh. The tragic example of Megem was a lesson to all, and more and more regions were willing to surrender, negotiating tributes to save their populations' lives.



The Lesson of Megem

Megem was a rich and prosperous city, with solid defenses as well. When its inhabitants heard tell of Tamerakh's Horde, they dismissed them as mere Steppe raiders. No matter how numerous this Horde was, they trusted in their army and the strength of their defenses.

Tamerakh came to lay siege to Megem, and ordered them to surrender. Too proud to recognize the glory of the one who would become a god, they treated him with arrogance and scorned him from atop their tall fortifications.

Furious and determined, the ezen made sure none of their allies would come and crucified every messenger, every reinforcement, every deserter. From the city could be seen roads marked by the agony of those who wanted to enter or leave.

Could Megem have held out under siege? In any case, it was betrayed by some who thought they could buy a place of importance at Tamerakh's side. The highborn Lakhmis family opened the doors with the promise of being placed at the top by Tamerakh's own hand. Alas! The city was pillaged and the entire population slaughtered. A pyramid of chopped heads was formed at the entrance of the city. The Lakhmis were outraged, but Tamerakh then told them: "I have no use for traitors and cowards, but I'll keep my word. I will behead you and place your skulls at the top of the pyramid myself."

The conqueror kept his promise, climbing the macabre pile to place the chopped heads of the Lakhmis at its summit.

Oral tale of the Lesson of Megem

Versions of the Fall of Mangulik

Being native of Kaan, Tahirih had heard tales of Tamerakh's history many times. She quickly read through the battles, the strategic coups, and the drama of the ruler's intimate life.

"There isn't anything written yet about the destruction of Mangulik," said the warrior, surprised.

"Yes, I was wondering which version to favor in my work. There are several and they are all equally credible, given a lack of complementary data."

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731459)

Choosing the Version of the Capital's Destruction

There are several versions of the story describing the fall of the capital, Mangulik. The truth will be relevant for an adventurer who is a cleric of Tamerakh, as this will influence their perception of their deity. At the game leader's discretion, some options can be combined.

A Population's Sacrifice to Gain Double Divinity

It's only possible to reach the Fateforge once, for a singular Granting. Tamerakh acquired divinity for himself but also wanted to grant it to his mother Xonim, who had passed away and resided in Death's domain. The massive slaughter of Mangulik was necessary to ensure his mother's divinity. The purpose of this terrifying act was, depending on the leader's choice:

- **Using life energy.** The simultaneous death of an entire population gives off as much energy as asking for a Granting at the Fateforge. Should this ritual be known, it could incite madmen into accomplishing it for their own gain.
- **Diversion.** The instant death of a population causes a major upset in the divine domain of Death. Thanks to this extreme diversion, Tamerakh was able to free Xonim from where she was kept. In this option, Tamerakh knows how to cause the ascension of a soul of his choice. Therefore, he could create new gods in the future.

The Rivals' Betrayal

In this variant, Tamerakh disappeared from the surface of Eana to go to the Fateforge, unbeknownst to those of his time. A great chaos and struggle for succession ensued from this sudden departure and the resulting power vacuum. When Tamerakh finally reached the Fateforge after crossing the Maze, he understood that his followers didn't believe in him.

- **Objective betrayal.** In this variant, Tamerakh had prepared for his ascension, but it had been sabotaged by his generals and servants. He still managed to survive the Maze, but he was furious. Seeing that not only had he been betrayed, but that his heritage was subject to despicable quarrels, he destroyed the mortal city to show his newfound power.
- **Divine wrath.** Tamerakh in this version was deeply shaken by his ascension and saw the world very differently than in his mortal life. He saw his successors, the imperfection of his earthly work, and struck the city to destroy it.

Necessary Destruction in the Service of a Greater Good

Becoming a god deeply changes a being. Tamerakh was struck by a new understanding of reality. He could see possible futures, direct fates, and understand how chance and willpower mingle to weave events. By studying the signs appearing to him, he understood with horror that something was wrong in Mangulik.

- **Destroy the weapons.** He had to destroy some of the city's most powerful artifacts to protect the world from a catastrophic escalation that threatened to cause the loss of much more than just a few cities. Tamerakh had to sacrifice his beloved capital Mangulik to protect Eana.
- **Destroy the knowledge.** In Mangulik, Tamerakh's servants had acquired an expertise for destruction. Their knowledge and experience were reaching a critical state beyond which there was no return. To avoid the catastrophic escalation he foresaw and to ensure no one would spread even the idea that such power was possible, he needed to sacrifice all of Mangulik.

Loss of Control Over the Tarrasque

Although the devastation is credited to Tamerakh, it could also have been caused by another force. In these options, the **tarrasque** is at the heart of these events.

- **One of Tamerakh's weapons, deprived of its master.** In this version, the tarrasque was one of Tamerakh's weapons, but control over the creature was disturbed by the ruler's departure. Perhaps because of a quarrel between successors, or a deeper issue, the basis of which was that the tarrasque could only be mastered by a creature of exceptional power. In any case, the city of Mangulik was in truth destroyed by the monster, and not Tamerakh. The latter may have even intervened to stop the carnage, by sending the tarrasque back to sleep.
- **An enemy attack.** Tamerakh had conquered a vast territory, but he still had many enemies, determined and in hiding. Some had prepared a weapon they hoped would be fatal to the bloodthirsty tyrant. They unleashed the tarrasque on Mangulik. The city, deprived of its charismatic leader, was vulnerable and struck by the cataclysmic attack in full force.

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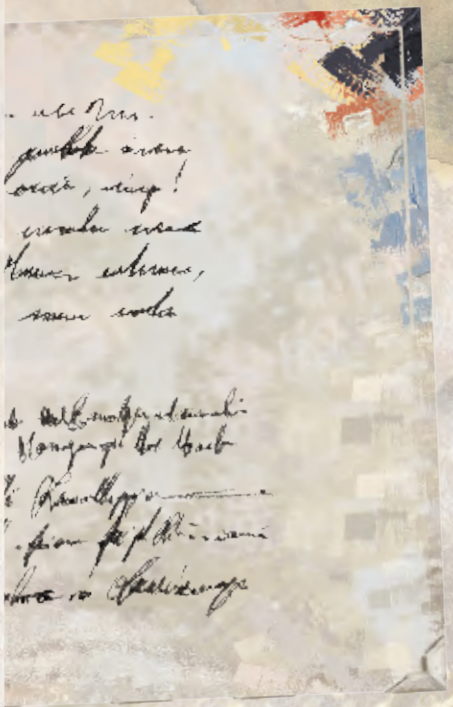
Era of New Kingdoms

Bekasi was still noting down things to clarify or develop for her text's editing and dismissed Tahirih. Night had fallen and perpetually lit lanterns marked the path. More than a thousand years separated the end of Tamerakh's empire from the present day. Since those times, the descendants of eminent members of the first Horde had kept positions of importance among tribes or in the Clay Cities. Their nobility of the sword mixed with that of the ancient kings, those who often had the lion, **griffin**, or **hippogriff** as their emblem.

As things were, the lands of the Great Kaan were broken up. The self-proclaimed heirs of Tamerakh reigned in Khaalgany, their authority spreading especially over the coastal Clay Cities and along the riverbanks. The Steppe, meanwhile, had always followed its own path. There was still a Kaani emperor, but his power was only a shadow of the country's founder's.

The main power was the empire of Kartaçöl, which aspired to conquer all of Kaan, from the springs of Manbalarer to the frozen expanses of the Septentrion. The current situation was only a precarious balance that Bekasi and Tahirih tried to maintain, with no way to eradicate the threat.





Septentrion

The Septentrion, domain of Frostelle the Winter Crone, extends from the permafrost taiga forests to the northernmost ice floes battered by arctic winds.

Despite these regions' difficult living conditions, many communities—mostly humans and bugbears—have adapted to their harshness. They live in tribal societies with strong traditions inspired by their necessary symbiosis with nature. They all have in common a fierce sense of freedom, tying their groups together around tribal cells of a few dozen people. Their character and sense of honor are forged by being confronted with the awe-inspiring, wild power of nature.

In this chapter, five lands living under the gaze of the Winter Crone are detailed:

- **The Colony of Boreïa**, founded by Cyrillane;
- **Ündsenoin**, the primeval forest and sacred land of the druids;
- **Kokciqusqacu**, called the Far North, the domain of reindeer breeders and frost giants;
- **Yotumkupatunsh**, commonly abridged as Yotum, a country of raging blizzards and hungry ice;
- **Gemoniae**, an evil plane ruled by hospodar Askinos.

A Few Typical Names in the Septentrion

Several cultures live side-by-side in the Septentrion, with differing ways of life depending on latitude. These people often speak several languages, the most common simply being called **Nordic**, but there are a myriad of dialects. Some of these stem from the ancient Boreal civilization's spoken language: **Tumiit**.

Female Names

Agda, Ajke, Alfdis, Astrij, Bera, Calda, Carja, Daghild, Digrid, Drifa, Ebba, Eldrid, Erkja, Finna, Ganhild, Gudrun, Gunna, Hellny, Huldjis, Idjis, Inge, Ingva, Janike, Jigrid, Katja, Kerhild, Lertrud, Lojda, Magda, Magnhild, Mirja, Nanhild, Nudrun, Olga, Olja, Orva, Paivi, Pihlaya, Qullik, Reidun, Rikke, Rita, Sigbritt, Signhild, Siri, Sivanu, Sivja, Solveig, Svea, Tanja, Turid, Udrun, Urja, Vega. Vibeke, Vilma, Ylva, Yrhild.

Male Names

Anautak, Ansgar, Arvid, Asbjorn, Bjarn, Bror, Carl, Cromir, Dalgrik, Dekleif, Egill, Ekbjorn, Erling, Finkel, Frejof, Gjerson, Gudmar, Gunner, Hagen, Halvar, Holmfried, Hrafn, Illutak, Ingmar, Ivarr, Jarl, Jorgan, Kjell, Knutt, Leif, Leifson, Melker, Mjoll, Naring, Nils, Olaf, Oovaut, Orjan, Orvar, Osbern, Patulik, Ragnar, Rikvir, Rorik, Qinuajuak, Sigvard, Skeggi, Styrbjorn, Sverker, Torkel, Ulfson, Ulvar, Vagder, Valdemar, Vidar, Wilfrid, Yngve, Ysmir.

Family Names

Nordic people have various naming conventions, depending on the tribe they belong to. A tribe is an expanded group sharing the same customs, traditions, and laws. It is split into clans—the smallest cultural unit—and families.

- **Tribal totem.** In these groups, the totem is used as the surname. For instance, one might be called "Yngve of the White Bear". Such a custom is a mark of how much importance these people give to sacred matters, placing their existence under their totem's guidance.
- **Gender lineage.** Among certain groups, lineage is traced back from parent to parent, back to the founding ancestors. Women are the "daughters of" their mother, herself daughter of her mother, and so on; similarly, men are the "sons of" their father, himself son of his father, etc. It's required to know the accomplishments of each ancestor in one's lineage, so that each generation can fit into the tribe's living story. It's up to each individual to show themselves worthy of the tale written since the clan's origins.
- **Location's name.** The members of this tribe are particularly attached to a place they live in, which might hold sites sacred to them. For example, one might speak of the tribe of Miqunuk Falls.
- **Name taken from a famous ancestor.** The bond between tribe members is based on their relation to a glorious ancestor who is believed to have become a protective **sednae**—a celestial able to return to the Septentrion with the aurora borealis, and who watches over their descendants. The common usage of creating a tribal name after a common ancestor is to add a suffix: -ide or -him in astral lands, and -ak for languages more influenced by Tumiit. For example, a tribe may be called the Ôkatuqnupak.

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Colony of Boreïa

For centuries, attempts to establish an urban civilization north of the River Asmandariya—the current northern border of Kartaçöl's Empire—would inevitably fail. But even amidst dire internal tensions, the Cyrillan Empire was determined to prove their continued might and set about conquering these lands. They organized an expedition that established a colony, which remains standing to this day, but whose incredible cost may have been one of the reasons for the fall of the Kadmeid dynasty. Cut off from a motherland plunged into civil war, Boreïa is essentially an independent country and its population must survive without aid. General Atreus and his legion must defend their lands against both frost giants and the ambitions of Kartaçöl (see **Kaan: Kartaçöl**).



A Few Typical Names in Boreïa

Most of Boreïa's locals get their names from their native Cyrillan. However, some have adapted their identity to their new land, sometimes by altering the endings or surnames.

Female Names

Admete, Aglaia, Aithra, Aithilla, Alekto, Alkyone, Althaia, Amalthea, Andromeda, Antigone, Antiklea, Arachne, Ariadne, Arisbe, Arsippe, Asteria, Atalanta, Atropos, Avila, Briseis, Chryseis, Creusa, Cyrene, Danae, Daphne, Deidamia, Dione, Dirke, Eidothea, Elara, Electra, Endeis, Enyo, Eos, Ephyra, Eris, Eurydice, Hesperis, Ida, Ilia, Ino, Io, Iole, Iphtime, Kassandra, Keto, Killa, Lachesis, Lamia, Laodike, Leda, Leto, Licinia, Maia, Mettie, Myrrha, Nais, Nausikaa, Nephele, Niobe, Nykteis, Nyx, Octavia, Pasithea, Peitho, Phylira, Psamathe, Sophia, Thalia, Theia, Themis, Themisto.

Male Names

Aietes, Agrippa, Akamas, Akarnan, Akastos, Amyklos, Amyntor, Appius, Arcadius, Aspar, Aulus, Borea, Caius, Carinus, Constantine, Derkynos, Dryas, Eryx, Faustus, Haimon, Hostus, Itys, Kadmos, Kalais, Kalchas, Julius, Leto, Lucius, Lykos, Magnus, Mamercus, Marcus, Marius, Maxentius, Maximus, Menas, Mettius, Numerius, Octavius, Ophis, Opiter, Orestes, Pelias, Phineas, Phoinix, Quartus, Quintus, Rhakios, Secundus, Septimus, Sertor, Severus, Sextus, Skiron, Talaos, Tantalus, Telamon, Tertius, Thersites, Titus, Valentinus, Vibius, Volesus.

Scott Timmerman (Order #3773139)

Family Names

One's family name can be an old surname handed down from generation to generation. The name usually ends in -us/-er for a man or -a/-ix for a woman. Here are a few examples of common names:
Acilius/Acilia, Aelius/Aelia, Albinus/Albina, Anicius/Anicia, Atius/Atia, Caelius/Caelia, Decius/Decia, Gellius/Gellia, Horatius/Horatia, Julius/Julia, Laelius/Laelia, Melissener/Melissenix, Mucius/Mucia, Skleros/Sklera, Terentius/Terentia, Ulpius/Ulpia, Valerius/Valeria, Vibius/Vibia.
Aristocrats usually prefer to display their lineage's name. To that effect, the suffix -ide is added to the founder's name. For example, the Kadmeids are the descendants of Kadmos.

Lost Colonies

Ever since my arrival, I've often wondered how Boreïa was able to prosper—despite some setbacks—where all previous attempts have failed the test of time. There are others pondering the very same question in Fort Anoigma. Atreus, the governing general, must believe it more prudent to anticipate trouble rather than find it at the worst possible time.
Even though the legion is well organized and enjoys great prestige here, it never shies away from calling upon adventurers for auxiliary missions. In particular, forward exploration and scouting may be assigned to non-military people of trust.
Rumors abound about the lost colonies. There are tales of ***white dragons****, the mere presence of which would have caused a mysterious illness named the ice-bound slumber. Or frost giants coming down in their ships of ice or over land, killing people and raising them as monstrous* ***gaunts*** *attacking their own kind under the orders of the possessor of an evil amulet... Not to mention famine and madness, claiming unfortunate souls in the heart of winter. To survive, the desperate make pacts with the diabolical hospodar Askinos the Pain Drinker, lord of Gemoniae, sacrificing their relatives to save themselves... or so the tales go. Others are said to have offered their soul to the demon prince Gegaôr the Furious Beast. It is said they roam the wild lands under the guise of monstrous wolves, eaters of humanoid flesh. As for the victims of their assaults, they are cursed and join their ranks.*
As soon as something goes wrong, people will believe warlocks and fiend-worshipers to be behind the incident. A few years ago, this only worried a small part of the population, but ever since the fall of the Kadmeids in Cyrillane, the paranoia has grown. An identity must be given to the fear, a shape that can be mastered and killed.

Excerpt from the journal of Lysidike, a scholar, merchant, weaver, and adventurer, proprietor of the Brocaded Linen shop in Katafygia

Notable Events of Boreïa's Colonization

The following dates use the Free City's calendar:

- **299.** The adventuring company of the Golden Arrow explores the area around the River Uposkesio and the place that will eventually become Katafygia. They map out the area as much as they can and identify nearby resources and threats.
- **301.** Following the Golden Arrow's report, Boreïa's colonization is decreed. It starts with the establishment of small contingents—twenty men here, fifty there. These first settlers are tasked with confirming the viability of prospective colonization sites. Almost every year following the proclamation of colonization, groups of settlers try their luck with varying degrees of success. Some camps are destroyed by frost giants, others don't survive the winter; some groups disappear without a trace.
- **316.** The mixed results of the first settling attempts do not dissuade the empire, instead pushing it to resort to drastic measures. General Atreus and the 8th legion are called upon to deploy permanently in the Colony of Boreïa. Their mission is to strengthen the borders and expand them as much as possible, building up a network of forts and roads. 5,000 legionnaires are supported by civilian troops of at least 20,000 craftsmen, farmers, and merchants. These settlers are freely given land to reclaim and develop. In the following years, the population increases as adventurers and families arrive to make a new life for themselves.
- **331.** Present day. The colony no longer has any contact with the motherland, which is embroiled in civil war after the fall of the Kadmeid dynasty.

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Katafygia

The colony's capital is a strict harbor city built like a military fort. The bay offers ships shelter from storms, and its solid defenses are meant to stand up to frost giant or white dragon attacks. Mostly built out of wood, the city stretches from the shore, along the River Uposkesio, up to the nearby hills, overlooked at its summit by Fort Anoigma, the colony's first fort where general Atreus lives.

Water in Katafygia's Daily Life

I'm woken up every morning by the sound of rag-pickers collecting garbage and loading it up into special carts. The racket shouldn't still be bothering me after all this time, but it does. Then again, there are no sewers or running water here, so things would quickly become pestiferous without them. Working under the legion's supervision, they bring the city's waste to the landfill near the harbor.

There used to be creeks in the forest where Katafygia was built. Fort Anoigma's well is still supplied by those springs, but the amount of water is far too little for a growing population.

Even though a large river flows nearby, it's not always easy to obtain water. Cisterns collect the rain, and they can be found scattered all over, at the corners of houses or at the bottom of gutters. One of the locals' greatest fears is to be poisoned by hostile tribes or fiend-worshipers... even though, as far as I know, this fear has never substantiated itself.

In addition to these private supplies, water carriers go down to the river several times a day to collect water and sell it in town. They also fill up the cisterns near the ramparts, meant for firefighting. The city is almost entirely built out of wood, so arson is just as feared as poisoning.

Excerpt from the journal of Lysidike, a scholar, merchant, weaver, and adventurer, proprietor of the Brocaded Linen shop in Katafygia

The Structure of the 8th Legion

The 8th legion is 5,000 soldiers strong, divided into 10 cohorts with as many commanders. In Boreïa, each cohort is assigned a particular territory to watch over, and these areas expand as the country does. Each cohort holds 5 centuries led by centurions. These groups may be specialized in certain types of missions, or be generalists. A century is split into 10 decuries, each led by a decurion. Finally, the smallest unit is the squad, composed of 4 to 6 members. Parties of adventurers are typically considered squads by the legion.

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Katafygia, Capital of Boreia

1. Village of Psaras
2. Rocks of Sorrows
3. Toward the village of Koila
4. Forest on the Western Bank
5. Katafygia's Harbor
6. Landfill
7. Covered Forum
8. Soul Brewery
9. Kartaçöl's Embassy
10. Fort Anoigma
11. Fire District
12. Tent Camp
13. Temple of Flora
14. Temple of Blacksmith
15. Temple of Frostelle

Iconic Locations in Katafygia

The Village of Psaras

The village of Psaras can be reached by taking a ferry from Katafygia. This place is mostly inhabited by fishermen and gatherers. From a young age, they are sent to the Rocks of Sorrows, to the southwest, or toward the river or coast.

Rocks of Sorrows

Mussels and other shellfish are abundant here, as well as edible seaweed usually served in soups, and lobsters collected in traps. The gatherers are a hardy, good-humored bunch, but their cheerfulness mustn't blind one to the location's danger.

This place owes its name to the many terrible shipwrecks caused by the nearby reefs. There was a plan to build a lighthouse, but the initial preparations for the project were burdened by an increasing number of issues and accidents. To this day, Boreïa's limited means have prevented the project from being completed.

There are tales of **ghosts** and other undead roaming the area come nightfall, hidden in numerous underwater caves during the day. More rational minds believe these monsters to actually be smugglers, thieves, and cultists setting up hideouts and places of worship.

The Village of Koila

To reach Koila, one must climb the hill following a steep and winding path. Established by farmers and artisans belonging to a strict religious movement called the Soulforge, it appears as a welcoming community where all the locals follow the same dress code out of a sense

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of equality. Their doctrine preaches fighting chaos through the application of discipline and righteousness to all aspects of daily life, whether it be one's speech, craftsmanship, garden, or virtues.
The village is organized around two intersecting main streets. Four important locations can be distinguished: the main gate to the south; the "manor" (the fortified home of the village chief Antonia Cistera) to the north; the smithy (also a temple to Blacksmith) to the east; and the cemetery to the west, where torches are regularly lit to pray for the safe passage of departed souls toward their great god's divine realm.

The Forest on the Western Bank

While the woods to the east of the River Uposkesio have mostly been cleared, a large part of the western side has been spared, due to the rough terrain. The lumberjacks' efforts are focused on more accessible forests.

Katafygia's Harbor

The harbor is almost a village of its own, with its fish market, its warehouses, and fortified towers outside the ramparts—one of which is used as an extra lighthouse. Ships are moored to wooden piers, some of which are reserved for the Psaras ferry and others for the fishermen. Fish and seafood are significant parts of local cuisine. Many people own a small fishing boat.

Landfill

East of the harbor is a landfill where the entire city's waste is dumped. Rag-pickers are responsible for collecting the garbage, under the legion's orders. There is no sewer system, so each morning they gather waste and clean the streets as much as possible.

Covered Forum

Katafygia's market is located in its approximate center. Called the "forum", it was designed in a way reminiscent of distant Cyrillane, but adapted to the rigors of the local climate. The rectangular building has four large entrances. Inside, permanent stalls and shops line the entire perimeter, sheltered from the weather. Like in many structures in Katafygia, lighting is diffused through waxed hide windows. A colonnade surrounds a small yard where jugglers and musicians perform in warmer seasons.

Soul Brewery

There are few dwarves in Boreïa, but the Leghal sisters saw the settlement as an opportunity. Their purpose was both to craft beers with uniquely Septentrional flavors, and to welcome people in a tavern of their own. They were able to set up their establishment on a street corner between the forum and the garden of the Flora temple. The Soul Brewery is one of Katafygia's most popular places of gathering, and many legionnaires gladly spend their free time there. It's the ideal setting to meet new people and hear the latest gossip, all while staying nice and warm.

Kartaçöl's Embassy

Kartaçöl's ambassador is Inci of Easafir. The embassy itself is a rich multilayered building, tastefully painted in golden yellow tones. Many aristocratic refugees from Cyrillane are lodged there, or simply spend their time in its salons. The subdued atmosphere of the publicly accessible rooms gives the feeling of stepping into an exiled noble court. Politics are often discussed and plans hatched, from the pragmatic to the idealistic, from the most straightforward to the most devious, and adventurers are often called upon to set them into motion.

Fort Anoigma

A city above the city, Fort Anoigma is highly secure and always prepared to react to white dragon attacks. It has wells, dormitories, supply stores, a smithy, and a small temple dedicated to Blacksmith, the legion's protector and patron to all those setting out to tame the dangerous wild lands. Here, it is decided where to build new forts, what resources should be allocated to them, and which adventurers should be recruited for which missions.

The Fire District

The city fears uncontrolled blazes, so the workshops of fire-using trades are kept separate from houses and close to the cisterns. Blacksmiths and potters—there are no glass-blowers in Katafygia—are grouped near the city's main gates. The Vigilant Century regularly patrols the district, immediately springing into action at the slightest sign of trouble.

Tent Camp

Along the Settler's Road can be found an unofficial district dubbed the Tent Camp. Tribe members who have business in town live here, as well as patrolmen and trappers. In short, this is where to find guides well versed in the lay of the wild lands.

Emblem of Boreïa



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Worship at the Temple of Flora

Flora is the favored deity of most Cyrillans, alongside Blacksmith, the guardian of order. She brings abundance, beauty, and joy. The temple dedicated to her in Katafygia is lavishly cared for. Ornately painted, it has a decorative garden that holds the city's last trees. This enchanting glade, artfully enhanced with flowers, is a balm for the soul. People come here to pray and find the strength to persevere against their daily struggles. All births and weddings are celebrated here, so there's a ceremony happening almost at all times. Spring and summer festivities are also prepared here: every year, as the first flowers bloom at the start of spring, a wooden carving of the goddess is brought out and paraded in a large procession with chants and revelry—a rare occasion where the legion will tolerate excess.

The Worship of Blacksmith

The legion honors Blacksmith above all other deities. He supports the conquest of wild lands and aids in the fight against monsters of the Septentrion. He guides his followers in bringing civilization to these dangerous lands.
The settlers who clear forests and laboriously plow new fields also offer thanks to the god of order who transforms the world, bringing it into an era of progress and structure.
I understand their feelings. This land can be scary, such is its scope and mystery, and how different it is to what we know from Cyfandir. Nevertheless, I worry about the fervor of some followers, who sometimes take very harsh attitudes toward those who worship Eana in particular.

The Worship of Frostelle

At first, the Cyrillans weren't too keen on worshiping the Winter Crone, but their lives in such a rugged land seem to have given them some faith. The temple is outside the city, on the Settler's Road. The place is surrounded by a palisade and its yard is austere, only decorated with rocks in an aesthetic of dispossession and contemplation. Newcomers are surprised to find that it's also a cemetery. Influenced by the beliefs of the Septentrion's tribes, some have taken to praying to Frostelle rather than Death. If I understand correctly, they hope to become a kind of celestial of the aurora borealis. It's still a fairly fringe cult. However, the entire population gathers to celebrate the goddess at the start of winter and implore her to ward off the season's worst.

Notes from Berguin of the Free City on the year of the establishment of his fur trade

The Capital's Centuries

Katafygia's five centuries are specialized to ensure the capital's security and smooth working:

- **The Scale Century** is trained in heavy weaponry able to bring down a white dragon in flight. Its members are skilled in both engineering and siege weapon use.
- **The Vigilant Century** is tasked with keeping Katafygia safe at night, and with firefighting.
- **The Urban Century** maintains order in the capital's day-to-day operation.
- **The River Century** is equipped with four small sailing ships, the same kind merchants use. They also patrol the western bank of the River Uposkesio.
- **The Coastal Century** only has two lightly armed ships. They watch over the harbor and assist ships in distress.

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Iconic Figures in Katafygia

General Atreus Akastide

A man of 45, married and the father of two boys—one of whom was born in Boreïa—general Atreus comes from the Akastide family, known for its loyalty to the Kadmeids. He's a strict, honest, and pious man. Deeply loyal, he bases his decisions on principle rather than personal interest.

Lieutenant-Commander Charybdis Viridix

Charybdis has served alongside general Atreus for many years. When she departed from Cyrillane, she left behind a husband reluctant to journey north, and children who were already adults. She's been unable to contact any of them since, and doesn't know where they are or even if they're still alive. She's responsible for most of the fort's stewardship and coordinates the centuries while keeping an eye out for strange happenings or problems.

Centurion Julian Skleros of the Scale Century

A friendly sort, this giant of a man is a follower of Frostelle, stoic, down-to-earth, and critical. He's faced dragons before and is ready to do so again. He's prepared to use his own money for the destruction of young white dragons.

Centurion Julian Aelius of the Vigilant Century

This commoner, shy of 30, was able to use his Cyrillan connections to establish himself as a non-commissioned officer. He comes across as carefree and superficial, but is very skilled at gauging those around him. Pragmatic, manipulative, ambitious, and unscrupulous, he appears to have caught the eye of Inci of Easafir.

Centurion Arisbe Phineide of the Urban Century

A middle-aged woman, Arisbe has no apparent weakness and is a consummate diplomat. She knows how to solve problems by working around obstacles and adapting to who she's dealing with. Under her guidance, the Urban Century is close to the citizens, giving her access to a lot of knowledge, even through mundane small talk. Jokesters call her workplace the "office of rumors", since the information reaching her isn't always reliable.

Centurion Nyx Albina of the River Century

This woman in her thirties owes her rise in the ranks to a series of strokes of luck (all her predecessors were killed in action against monsters and beasts of the Septentrion), and to her ability to put herself forward at the right time, with a sense of opportunism that echoes her excessive taste for gambling and bets. Ever since she became centurion, Nyx spends part of her salary on ostentatious clothing and accessories. It is said she no longer speaks to her old drinking mates, but only to notables, as if she already fancied herself part of the upper crust.

Centurion Marcus Atius of the Coastal Century

No one wants to cross Marcus Atius, with his explosive anger. Even his most loyal soldiers are scared of him. Still, he is a courageous man, very concerned with his sailors' survival. He's constantly ranting about the awful state of the Coastal Century's resources and can no longer stand to simply patrol near Katafygia. The situation in Cyrillane is unbearable for him; he wants to return home and fight.

Ambassador Inci of Easafir

A former enel (the representative of a territory among an assembly of advisors) to the Immortal of Kartaçöl, Inci is an ambitious woman. After her service in the empire's capital, she asked for a diplomatic position. Inci is aware that she has the opportunity to strengthen her country by decisively expanding its influence.

Daphne of the Rose, Priestess of Flora

One's first impression of Daphne is that of an exuberant, joyful, even comical person. People greatly enjoy the ceremonies she leads. However, upon spending time one-on-one with her, one finds that she harbors a destructive nostalgia, rooted in her love for an adventurer named Lucilius, who went missing during a mission of exploration at the source of the River Uposkesio. While she preaches hope and renewal, she is unable to find them herself. No one can say to what lengths she might go to reach for even the slimmest sliver of hope, or what impact her actions might have on the community.

Thersite of Nives, Priest of Frostelle

As a merchant, Thersite journeyed far to the north in winter, and survived a frost giant attack. He never forgot the horror and violence he experienced then, which gave new meaning to his life. He devotes his energy to the service of the community, and his example has earned him respect, from former Cyrillans and tribesmen alike.

Freeman Patroller Tantalus Bearskin

Tantalus is an eccentric man with a fairly intimidating appearance, his eyes painted black. He also has the reputation of being an excellent guide, able to avoid the dangers of the Septentrion. Secretly, he is a follower of Gegaôr the Beast...

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The Territory's Layout

Boreïa extends out from the Evnoïka peninsula, a Cyrillan name related to good fortune and favorable conditions, meant to bring luck to the settlers. Its borders are ever shifting, the colony pushing further inland every year.

River Uposkesio

Named after a Cyrillan word referring to promise and hope, this river irrigates the entire colony and is the main waterway for inland exploration. There are many hamlets, villages, and forts along its banks. Its violent swelling at the start of spring generates large floods, so nothing is built near the water aside from a few utilitarian buildings. Structures are as sturdy and tall as possible, for defense against the winter's perils.

Fortified Farms

The richest and most persevering settlers build farms, fortified within available means. They settle in mostly wild regions, close to the few native populations of bugbears and aldaron. As a result, they are practically left to their own devices once winter comes. Those that survive increase in size, progressively growing into little castles. With time, their owners may form a sort of feudal nobility.

Forts

Several forts of various sizes, sometimes near hamlets, are built to expand the colony. They are all linked by paved roads, and alarm systems allow neighboring forts to be warned in case of trouble.

An Isolated Colony

Far from the main trade routes, Boreïa may one day become a land full of life, but for now, it is very isolated, especially ever since ships from Cyrillane have become very rare.

A Refuge for Loyalists

As cold and distant as the Colony of Boreïa may be, it seems like a promised land to many desperate Cyrillans. Among those who flee civil war, general Atreus and his legion are praised to the skies as the country grows into a land of abundance and opportunity. Many loyalists of the fallen Kadmeid Empire voyage there to find shelter with their family. Unlike the first settlers who came with know-how and tools, these newcomers are for the most part formerly wealthy city folk who aren't prepared for the harshness of local life. They must quickly adapt or seek protectors.



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Ambassador Inci of Easafir

The Sitarides gladly disembarked on the edge of Katafygia after their difficult sea voyage. They had been immensely rich in the past, but now only had what they could carry themselves. They had lost their lands and hundreds of servants. After all this misfortune, would they finally be allowed to rest and rebuild their lives?

As they were wondering where they could find the house of general Atreus, a well-dressed and distinguished fifteen-year-old boy approached them:

"Welcome to Katafygia. My name is Ector. You must have gone through terrible hardships, but they are at an end now."

"Thank you. Where might we find general Atreus's palace, if you please?" asked Leto Sitaride, the family's elder.

"Up there, near the legion's garrisons, but even if he grants you an audience, there isn't much he can do for you. The army's scope is limited and it no longer has the support of Cyrillane, as you unfortunately know all too well!"

"Mother, I am exhausted," young Oino intervened. "Could we at least rest in an inn and consider our options?"

"Inns are expensive and you don't know how long you'll need to endure this situation," answered Ector. "For today, you may find shelter at the residence of ambassador Inci of Easafir."

"An ambassador of Kartaçöl?" said Leto, surprised.

"Yes. The empire considers Boreïa as an important part of Cyrillan territory. The ambassador is a charitable woman. She asked me in person to greet refugees and ensure that everyone could find decent lodging without being ransomed by the innkeepers. If you so wish, I can lead you to her. You'll have time to recover and gather your strength before meeting general Atreus. Boreïa is a majestic land, rich in natural resources, but still quite harsh, as you'll soon see."

Exhausted by the voyage, the Sitarides followed Ector. They were initially suspicious, ready to refuse being led into sinister alleyways, but the teenager only used large and busy roads, bringing them as promised to Kartaçöl's embassy. To their great surprise, they found old acquaintances in the salons. Many nobles in hiding had found shelter here, and though money was an unpleasant topic, the hospitality was free... At least monetarily speaking.

A Gateway to Adventures in Wild Lands

The great forests in the north of Kaan are inhabited, for the most part by nomadic bugbears and aldaron. They are curious about newcomers, and give crucial aid to the settlers not yet accustomed to their surroundings, though they also sometimes come into conflict with them for access to some resources. Thanks to them, legionnaires and adventurers have a better idea of the continent's vastness and its mysteries. For those that wish to discover this new world's secrets, Katafygia is a gateway to the unknown and all the riches of the Far North.

- **Greed.** Rich merchants need armed escorts to find new resources and establish fortified settlements near them. Adventurers can be tasked with escort duty, patrols, surveillance, reconnaissance, negotiations, and sometimes the elimination of threats. The latter can come from nature, tribes, ruins, or fiend-worshiping cults.
- **Geopolitics.** The 8th legion occasionally hires adventurers for scholarly missions involving exploration, cartography, and sometimes archeology. The goal is a better understanding of the territory, far beyond the current borders of Boreïa, to know potential threats and possible allies. Learning about the history of these immense lands would help understand why the population is so sparse, why frost giants are so hostile, what happened to the Boreal civilization, and what caused the first colonies' downfall.
- **Arcane power.** A few treasure hunters specialized in arcane secrets have settled in Katafygia. They come from various countries, pushed by the same obsession: the discovery of the Boreal civilization's academy of magic.
- **Struggle against the grasp of fiends.** Most of the Septentrion follows druidic religious traditions. To the most fervent adepts of the Star (see **Adventurers**, **Clerics: The Star Pantheon**) these new lands must be given a chance to convert. People must be warned against the false gods and in particular saved from the grasp of great fiends. To the most zealous, animist cults are too primal and make their followers vulnerable to submitting to these evil creatures. As such, totems depicting animal spirits are seen as demonic or devilish idols. More moderate clerics are still preoccupied by the activity of two powerful fiends in particular: the demon prince Gegaôr the Furious Beast and hospodar Askinos the Pain Drinker.

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White and Silver Dragonborn Clans

Blue and Lyra stood out in the main hall. How had these two halflings gotten lost here, in the middle of nowhere? Yet the two adventurers felt they were where they were meant to be. They confidently sat down at a table, setting down cushions to raise their seats. In a region that rarely received strangers, their presence sparked curiosity. The owners' daughter, shadowed by a five-year-old, came to take their order and chat. All surrounding ears perked in their direction:
"Milady, Sir, what will you be having?"
"The daily special, please." said Lyra, followed by Blue's nod.
"Lentils and potatoes, then! So, to what do we owe the pleasure of the visit of... gnomes?"
"Halflings!" Blue corrected amicably, though with some surprise. How could the two be confused? Lyra spoke, loudly enough for everyone to hear, and smiled at the assembly, encouraging the other guests to join in the conversation:
"We heard that Boreïa and the North attracted those looking for mystery and adventure! Most of all, we heard that there were white and silver dragonborn!"
The clients, almost all of whom were locals, answered enthusiastically, though not as helpfully as the halflings had hoped:
"Ah! So... Well, actually we don't really know if they were dragonborn."
"No one has ever seen any!"
"But they did look like dragons walking on two legs!"
"They spoke a language we couldn't understand, so we tried communicating with gestures. Apparently, they came from far away to the east, and were headed back. We think they were on a pilgrimage to the Pillars of Creation. Groups from Kaan regularly pass through on the way there. But they come from the south, via roads along the coast. There's merosi, hobgoblins, goblins, sometimes even kobolds."
"None of that seems like dragonborn to me..."
"I talked to an aldaron hunter the other day. He said that white and silver dragonborn fought in the Dawn War in Cyfandir, and were almost wiped out. Those remaining were half-mad and couldn't sleep anymore. So, guided by a mystic chosen by Frostelle, they went into the Far North in search of a cure. Afterward, it's said that they joined a sanctuary-city from the Boreal period, somewhere to the north-east. They're guardians of sorts."

Riches to Discover

Some wonder what drove Cyrillane to invest so much into the Colony of Boreïa. Was it merely pride, or were they hoping to get rich from the resources of these frozen lands?

- **Secret riches.** The ruins in the Septentrion, whether they are remains of the ancient Giants, the first frost giants, or settlements of the Boreal civilization, contain impressive quantities of alecrith. In Cyfandir, scholars believe this gem to be an artificial creation, but adventurers in Boreïa have discovered crystals not far from old constructions, as if the ancient magical aura had eventually decomposed into alecrith or created it. Harvesting these extraordinary gems would provide a valuable export, or a way to reinforce the equipment of the 8th legion, so as to better defend the country. Until recently, discovered alecrith was secretly sent to Cyrillane, but since the civil war, it has been stockpiled in Fort Anoigma's vault.
- **Wealth of the wild.** Among the natural resources that could be valued abroad are pelts (mink, white and blue fox, etc.), gray amber gathered on the coasts (a precious component of perfumes), sweet maple sap, fish (cod, herring, whale, etc.), and the high-quality wood of very ancient forests.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9973)



Report of Scout Potius Terrentide

My general,
I have taken the liberty of sending you this report directly, due to the sensitive nature of some of its contents.
While bugbear and aldaron tribes have welcomed settlers with relative friendliness, the exploitation and especially destruction of their environment will be very badly perceived. Parts of Boreïa encroach upon the lands of the sacred forests of Ündsenoin. Settlers are already harvesting from places seen as holy: the site of Wuyacasq was partially exploited, the trees cut down and the ground burned, provoking outrage from local tribes.
For now, centurion Octia Perrontide of Fort Kedros maintains a balance. The local tribes have been exercising diplomacy in an effort to avoid conflict, but I fear we may be approaching a breaking point. The risk lies less in a war with the tribes—though ambushes are not to be excluded—and more in the intervention of large troops of frost giants. They've already wiped out the previous colonies, and Boreïa can count itself lucky to have only suffered isolated attacks.
We know the frost giants are not natural allies with the natives of the Septentrion. In fact, these creatures have prevented the establishment of any urban civilization for thousands of years.
However, if we push them too far, the tribes may form a circumstantial alliance with the frost giants. I have heard from my informants that debates on this very question are occurring in the aldaron tribe of Morcak. This would be catastrophic. Frost giants have a great council in the city of Akomuk where their king resides, the only one able to unite and coordinate his people's tribes against a common enemy. We must avoid becoming their target at all costs.
Thank you for the attention you will bring to these topics,

Scout Potius Terrentides, assigned to Fort Kedros

The Time to Choose One's Allies and Fate

General Atreus had been chosen for the colonization mission by virtue of his complete loyalty to the empire and its values. A stoic and learned soldier, he was respected for his integrity and courage. With such a man at the head of the new colony, it was hoped it would prosper through any hardships and that it wouldn't be tempted to sever ties from the motherland's control.
For many legionnaires, the catastrophic news from Cyrillane is a moral quandary. They want to put an end to the crisis, help to resolve it, but returning home would mean abandoning Boreïa's civilian population to the perils threatening them.
From a strictly practical standpoint, return is not currently possible. Transporting an entire legion, or even only a significant portion of it, would require many ships, which are lacking. Katafygia's harbor only has a few fishing boats. Only the intervention of a stable naval power could provide the means to cross the Ustalva Sea.

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Below is a list of countries able to act, the reasons that could push them to help Boreïa, and the probable consequences of an alliance:

Arolavia

The kingdom of the Karalievae is just coming out of a war with Kartaçöl, but no one doubts that the conflict will soon pick up again. Nowadays, Arolavian sailors are in a constant struggle against corsairs hired by the empire. News of the creation of a Kartaçöl embassy in Katafygia could soon be followed by the coming of an Arolavian ambassador to avoid Boreïa falling under the influence of their enemy.

- **Intervention to reestablish order at its borders.** Arolavia has a common border with Cyrillane and would have an obvious interest in reestablishing order to protect its territory from the conflict spilling over.
- **Intervention to prevent Kartaçöl from expanding its influence in Cyfandir.** Kartaçöl set up a bridgehead in Cyrillane, asserting control under pretense of bringing relief to the civilian population. This means the empire could threaten Arolavia more easily in the future, now able to attack from the sea as well as from the south. If Arolavia wants to avoid this situation, it needs to act before Kartaçöl's position in Cyrillane is consolidated. Putting in place a faction favorable to them—or simply indebted to them—would be one solution to protect themselves.
- **Consequences of an alliance with Arolavia.** Calling upon Arolavia to return to Cyrillane would automatically mean Boreïa declaring themselves enemies of Kartaçöl. Naval attacks would follow, with the risk of ground-based assault as well. Aside from these attacks, schemes from ambassador Inci of Easafir would be feared as well. If political assassination would allow her to further the interests of her nation, she would act without hesitation.

Ghardat

A naval and merchant power, Ghardat is a rival of Kartaçöl in many respects. Skirmishes between the two nations are currently limited to small sea battles and spy games—including assassination.

- **Intervention to counteract the development of Kartaçöl's power.** Ghardat's main reason to act would be to limit Kartaçöl's expansion by any means available. The Sand Kingdom could be tempted to act covertly, for example by financially supporting an official alliance between Arolavia and Boreïa.
- **Consequences of an alliance with Ghardat.** Anyone who is not an ally of Kartaçöl is its enemy. Allying with Ghardat would cause trouble—though less quickly than allying with Arolavia.

Kartaçöl

Kartaçöl owes its expansion as much to its military might as to diplomatic maneuvering. Here it conquers, there it subjugates. Many vassal states are actually pleased with their lot. For now, Kartaçöl tries to win over the colony of Boreïa with a carrot rather than with a stick. Their ambassador, Inci of Easafir, helps recently arrived Cyrillan refugees, especially former administrators of the empire. Even destitute, they could be useful to influence general Atreus and Katafygia's population. If Kartaçöl manages to keep its military hold over eastern Cyrillane, having the support of the natives would serve its long-term implantation.

- **Intervention to consolidate its grasp.** If general Atreus asks it, Kartaçöl's Empire will gladly help part of the 8th legion to return triumphantly in Cyrillane, while simultaneously helping to protect Boreïa.
- **Consequences of an alliance with Kartaçöl.** What remains of Cyrillane would lose its independence and its sovereignty to become part of a new ambitious empire. This political outcome is such that general Atreus, loyal to the fallen empire of Cyrillane, cannot resign himself to it. It would mean giving up on any possibility of restoration.

Khaalgany

Old Kaan is not an obvious ally for Boreïa, being so far away. On the other hand, in Khaalgany, the lich Bekasi carefully watches the growing influence of Kartaçöl. She knows that Kaan and the Clay Cities are prey for the ruler of the new empire. Acting too openly would no doubt cause more problems, so Bekasi's agents act to defend the medium-term interests of their country by secretly sapping Kartaçöl's games of influence.



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Ündsenoin, the Primeval Forest

A vast wooded territory extends north of the River Asmandariya that marks the accepted border between the Septentrion and Kaan. Ündsenoin is a millennial primeval forest. It is said to have existed since the very beginning of the Era of Renewal. Very precious to the druids, it is not devoid of inhabitants.

Peoples of Ündsenoin

City-dwellers believe that places like Ündsenoin are devoid of population; that the very notion of primeval forest implies the absence of any humanoid. This couldn't be farther from the truth.

Nomadic bugbear and aldaron tribes roam its expanse. Some live off of hunting and gathering—foraging and fishing—whereas others are reindeer breeders. Among them, there are some that follow the seasonal migrations toward the taiga and tundra, further to the north, into the domain of the frost giants.

In this nomadic world, though communities are sparse, they exchange news, goods, ideas, and legends over hundreds, if not thousands, of miles. The nomads of Ündsenoin connect Kartaçöl, Boreïa, the Far North, and the spirits.

Boundaries are uncertain, whether from a geographical, cultural, or religious standpoint. Druids of the Circle of Spirits are the favored advisors of the populations, but tribe founders are also honored under the form of **sednai**—celestials associated with the cold and aurora borealis—and the founding mothers of the continent's peoples are revered as well. Maker—in the form of Afirînerê the creating father—and Frostelle the Winter Crone also often are given respect.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Wisdom of the Druids

Primeval Forests

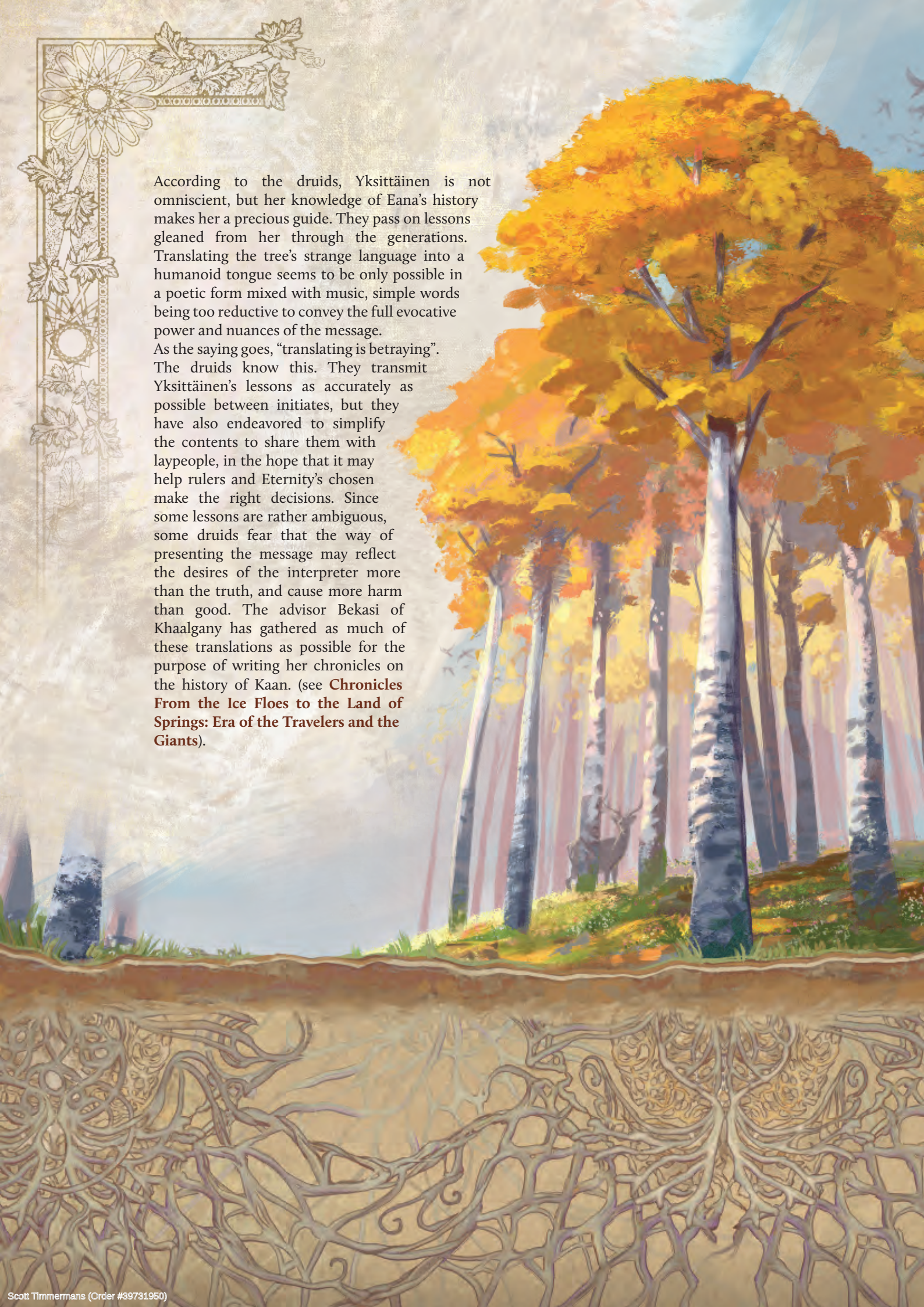
Primeval forests only exist in regions that have never known agriculture or urbanization. An outstanding difference from other forests is the coexistence of age-old trees with much younger ones. No one removes dead wood that falls there, so it gets covered with moss, and shelters colonies of millions of tiny life forms. Here, all trees are linked together, whether directly through their roots or via underground fungus networks. The forest communicates silently. It warns of intrusions and aggression against trees. It supports and nourishes young sprouts growing in the shade, or great lightning-struck ancients that remain alive thanks to the sharing of nutrients through the leaves of tree friends. In addition to those deep links between what grows on and under the earth, primeval forests show astounding biodiversity, to a degree surpassing the imagination of most humanoids, who only see the surface without grasping nuances or thinking of invisible interdependence.

Inspiration of the Druids

For the druids of Kaan, the northern primeval forests are a treasure. They express the deep truth of Eana. Many wish to visit them as pilgrims at least once in their lives, withdrawing to meditate and reinforce their bond with the world. Upon their return, they describe the wonders they caught glimpses of and narrate stories the heroes of which are tiny beetles, or facetious dormice, or patient ash. The druids' fables and tales take place in the primeval forests, a world the urbanites of the Clay Cities or Kartaçöl's large towns struggle to imagine, unable as they are to tell the difference between a warbler and a nightingale, a finch and a sparrow.

Traces of Ancient Times

While the northern forests are untouched by the bite of axes and fire, they too have a history. The first seedlings sprouted in the great Renewal following the destruction of the Travelers and ancient Giants. The oldest living being of Eana seems to be the inhabitant of Yksittäinen Hill. The druids describe her as colossal, but the few travelers that have braved the region to see this wonder of nature have often been disappointed. It is only a wood of trembling aspen, with almost white trunks, their foliage golden in fall. A neophyte can wander through it with no idea of what is so extraordinary. Yksittäinen was born before the Fall of the Travelers, and survived thanks to her network of roots. All the trees there are a single being that spread underground before emerging in multiple sprouts. Some may die, but the whole remains, with her memory of past millennia.



According to the druids, Yksittäinen is not omniscient, but her knowledge of Eana's history makes her a precious guide. They pass on lessons gleaned from her through the generations. Translating the tree's strange language into a humanoid tongue seems to be only possible in a poetic form mixed with music, simple words being too reductive to convey the full evocative power and nuances of the message.
As the saying goes, "translating is betraying". The druids know this. They transmit Yksittäinen's lessons as accurately as possible between initiates, but they have also endeavored to simplify the contents to share them with laypeople, in the hope that it may help rulers and Eternity's chosen make the right decisions. Since some lessons are rather ambiguous, some druids fear that the way of presenting the message may reflect the desires of the interpreter more than the truth, and cause more harm than good. The advisor Bekasi of Khaalgany has gathered as much of these translations as possible for the purpose of writing her chronicles on the history of Kaan. (see **Chronicles From the Ice Floes to the Land of Springs: Era of the Travelers and the Giants**).

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The World of Spirits

While in Cyfandir, the intermediaries with nature are often fairies, in Kaan and the Septentrion, druids of the Circle of Spirits primarily interact with spirits (see **Adventurers**, **Druid: Circle of the Spirits**).

An Animist Culture

A large part of the population of the Septentrion believes in animism. Everything that exists contains a deeply respectable soul. The cycle of life and death applies to all, but dignity demands that fellow spiritual forms be respected. One should only kill or destroy as strictly necessary, and the creature must be thanked for its sacrifice in allowing one's own existence to continue.

For druids of the Septentrion, the Ündsenoin forest is alive and powerful. The creatures and plants growing within it possess intelligence and will. The spirits, which connect the material and cosmic worlds, are careful to keep a balance in the momentum that allows life to exist. It's very possible for subtle signs of nature to actually be messages.

Signs From the Spirits

By using this option, the presence and will of spirits go beyond simple legend and become reality. A sign is a rare phenomenon that occurs at a momentous time for its witness.

Albino animals are rare. Encountering a completely white deer when one must choose whether to go left or right at a fork in the path may mean the spirits are encouraging the person to follow the path indicated by the animal.

Spirits do not offer explanations, they do not speak. They can be ambiguous and cryptic. Their domain does not follow the moral codes of urban civilizations. Here are a few situations where they may intervene:

- **Canker and large destruction.** Anything brutally threatening the integrity of Ündsenoin is bound to bring spirits to alert the protectors of Eana.
- **Spirit guides.** Some spirits take interest in their connection with humanoid mortals. They watch the paths and lives of individuals, sometimes for their entire lifetimes. Humanoids often believe that spirits are all gifted with farsightedness, but some of them are naive, playful, or just curious. Of course, they know more about Eana than mortals, but they are far from being omniscient.
- **Pacts between mortals and spirits.** Spirits sometimes choose to closely tie themselves to a humanoid mortal. These pacts are set with duties for either party and may involve a series of favors. While spirits are generally completely committed to these relationships, mortals may break them off for circumstantial reasons or because they have changed their minds. The consequences are often dramatic and affect entire communities. The mistake of a single person may have repercussions on an entire group.

For the most part, signs tend to be directed to those most likely to take notice, in other words those closest to nature, whether they are druids, rangers, or wise and open-minded individuals.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9973145)



Iconic Locations of Ündsenoin

The Well of Alders

The Well of Alders is located in a shadowy wood growing in a gorge. A creek winds through the trees and flows into a circular pond with calm, clear, and yet almost black waters. The sides are rocky, and despite the continuous influx of water, the surface never flows over. Some say this site is a natural well of Death.

Here, people in mourning will spend a few nights, convinced their dreams will carry messages from or about the deceased.

It is also said that those who dive into the well can't reach the bottom, but Death accepting, will emerge from the surface of another well of Death somewhere on Eana, where they will undergo trials and find a new meaning to their existence.

The Wood of Eana's Fireflies

Each night, these woods are overrun by small motes of light imbued with the essence of Eana. The druids claim that they are the souls of the departed, broken down into particles of radiant elemental energy. The presence of these fireflies of Eana is said to signal the proximity of a portal leading to the spirit realm of World, in the Astral Plane.

Pilgrims come here looking to renew their ties to the essence of life itself. Infertile couples meditate to receive a long-awaited child. Those intent on fighting Canker pray, hoping for a blessing.

The Cloud Woods

This region is made up of strange granite structures similar to irregular pillars or small plateaus with sheer vertical sides, some of which rise above the clouds. The area is often covered in clouds and enjoys abundant rain, feeding into many creeks, some of which eventually flow into Asmandariya, the Heavenly River. Druids seeking to withdraw and challenge themselves sometimes settle on one of these summits, alone or with students. A few tribes, mainly bugbears, have adapted to this environment of heights and chasms, clouds and pines. They're described as peerless acrobats.

The Hill of Entangled Trees

This place is mostly covered in trees with twisting trunks that seem to intertwine. Their dark evergreen foliage suggests they are related to the boxwood tree. This species grows nowhere else than in this area of temporal distortion (see **Grimoire**, **Geomagic: Temporal Distortion**).

It seems followers of Gegaôr the Beast have made a well-protected lair here, from which they hatch bold plans.

Yksittäinen

The woods of Yksittäinen are a sacred place of unmatched importance to the druids, sheltering the most ancient form of life they know of, a witness to the Fall of the Travelers.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731930)

Kokciqusqacu, the Great Cold

The Great Cold—"Kokciqusqacu" in the local tongue—also typically called the Far North, is a permanently frozen land. It is traveled by nomadic peoples, hunters, and reindeer breeders. This population includes many bugbears, human descendants of the Boreal civilization, and former Maker pilgrims who stayed after visiting the Pillars of Creation. It is also a land where the unwary can encounter frost giants, white dragons, and remorhaz—gigantic, monstrous arthropods of fire and ice.

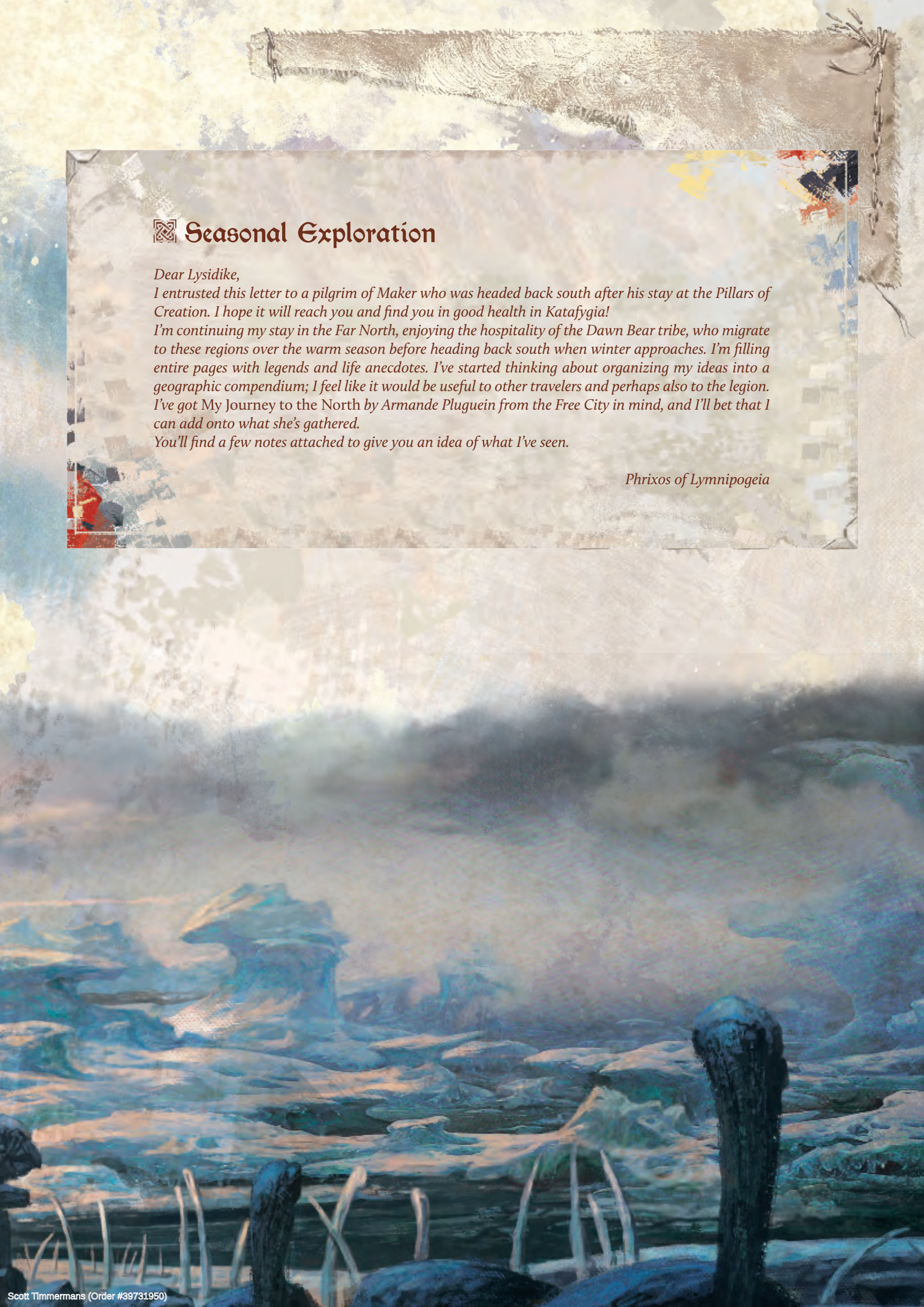


Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Seasonal Exploration

Dear Lysidike,
I entrusted this letter to a pilgrim of Maker who was headed back south after his stay at the Pillars of Creation. I hope it will reach you and find you in good health in Katafygia!
I'm continuing my stay in the Far North, enjoying the hospitality of the Dawn Bear tribe, who migrate to these regions over the warm season before heading back south when winter approaches. I'm filling entire pages with legends and life anecdotes. I've started thinking about organizing my ideas into a geographic compendium; I feel like it would be useful to other travelers and perhaps also to the legion. I've got My Journey to the North *by Armande Pluguein from the Free City in mind, and I'll bet that I can add onto what she's gathered.*
You'll find a few notes attached to give you an idea of what I've seen.

Phrixos of Lymnipogeia



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Noteworthy Locations of the Great Cold

Akomuk

The frost giants' capital and home of their aging ruler is in the far east of the Great Cold, at the foot of the Kupatwacuw mountains. That is where this people's only forges are.

Baths of the Mad She-Wolf

A network of caves containing hot springs, the Baths of the Mad She-Wolf were used by a crazed mother who became a witch of Askinos to escape her pursuers during winter. There are many legends about this place.

Cairn of the Newborn

The Cairn of the Newborn overlooks a lake that freezes over in winter. According to legend, the parents of a newborn, wracked by hunger and cold, could do nothing to prevent his death and interred him here. They then returned each year to place new stones on the monument. It is said the members of the family became **sednai** after their deaths, but continue to come by the region now and then out of nostalgia, and secretly help out distressed travelers.

Menhir of the Stalker

This strangely sinister standing stone is said to attract creatures aligned with the diabolical hospodar Askinos. Warlocks are rumored to come here to swear their evil pacts, and it is said that kûshus—**ice devils**—visit the place to heed prayers to their lord.

Kupatwacuw mountains

A mountain range stretching at the far east of the Kaani Septentrion. It's a largely unexplored land, the object of many legends about frost giants, white and silver dragonborn, and the Boreal civilization's magic academy.

Omki

Located in the Kupatwacuw mountains, the sacred city of Omki, hallowed by Frostelle, dates back to the Boreal civilization. White and silver dragonborn, purified survivors of the Dawn War, found shelter there. They stayed removed from the world for a long time, but recent troubles among the frost giants and the increasing activity of hospodar Askinos's minions have made them come out of isolation.

Pillars of Creation

An excessively huge place built by the ancient Giants that allowed the survival of many humanoids. It is a major place of pilgrimage for followers of Maker. Secrets of the Giants' ancient magic may lay dormant there.

Trophy of the Long Hunt

This cursed place is where the adepts of Gegaôr gather, whether **werewolves** or **frost giant warlocks**. Together they celebrate the full moons of Melancholia. Humanoid hunts and wild slaughters are organized there.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Nomadic Life

The Clear Season

The Thaw

The snows melt between the spring equinox and the time just before the summer solstice. The thaw is one of the most dangerous times of the year. Ice that covered riverways and seas is weakened and washed away. Everything gets damp. Whereas in winter, thick felt boots let one walk easily through snow while keeping one's feet dry, the ground is now sodden with water and mud is everywhere. The brilliant winter landscape, twinkling with reflected light off the snow and ice, gives way to a gloomy and drab environment.

The Arctic Summer

Once snow has melted, summer begins almost right away with the triumphant return of light and life. In addition to countless flowers, the country welcomes millions of migratory birds. Days are long, to the point that, at the northernmost latitudes, the sun never sets. Herds enjoy fresh pastures, while hunters of all kinds feast on eggs and birds.

Heroic Hunts

The inhabitants of the Far North are the Septentrional population most exposed to monstrous creatures like **winter wolves**, remorhazes, or white dragons. Some threats can be avoided with vigilance and stealth, but the hunters of the north do not live perpetually in fearful wait of attacks by these powerful enemies. They take advantage of summer to find the lairs of some creatures and bring them down when the climate leaves them at their weakest.

These hunts are extremely dangerous and are planned down to the last details. Fighters and druids of several clans, or even several tribes, gather to track down a lair often well hidden and difficult to access. The element of surprise is important to ensure the best possible outcome and the return of as many hunters as possible.

Victories enter into the legends of the northerners and trophies are used to craft new armor adapted to fighting in these lands.

Summer Reunions

Each summer, various groups gather. Some meetings are borne of chance, others are customary, always occurring in the same places, plentiful enough to provide sustenance to many. The boundaries of these ephemeral villages are considered sacred, and drawing blood within is strictly forbidden. One comes here to trade news and items, or to find a new clan to travel with.

The clan elders talk business, settling marriages and trials. Justice is generally based on consensus, trying to maintain harmony within groups that need solidarity and trust to survive. The worst punishment is banishment, and even then, the individual is sometimes given a chance to be reaccepted, on the condition that they bring back an item found in a far-off and dangerous place: fruit from a tree, Boreal civilization pottery, sednae tear, etc.



Scott Timpemare (Order #3773)

Time for Marriages

During the brief summer when I had the pleasure of sharing their journey, my friends set up tents next to those of another clan from the same tribe for several weeks. We were soon joined by a third clan, and up to seven by the end of their short summer! For the tribe my hosts belonged to, these reunions were of great import.

I quickly understood that the business the tribesmen were engaged in was also a time of courtship and negotiations, where each clan could meet young people from other groups to get engaged to. These marriages mostly involved the parents and clan chiefs, who presided over the exogamic exchanges. The negotiations were intense, as young blood is a great asset for a clan, ensuring its survival through future generations. And so tribal chiefs deliberated among themselves to decide who would marry who, for the sake of the clans.

Despite these unions being arranged, the ensuing celebration was admirable in its joy-filled simplicity. Before my eyes, five couples were formed and married at the same time in this beautiful summer. Around a sculpted altar, useful presents were gathered to equip the tents of the future spouses. The newlyweds themselves were wearing finery made from beautiful red and white fox pelts, as well as their clan's jewelry, which was mostly sculpted out of animal bones. For three days and three nights, the festivities were intense, between the music, songs, and great feasts, as if no care was being given to the seasons to come! I participated as if I had always been one of them, and everyone resumed their journey on the morning of the fourth day. Then I understood that my young friend Saqqaq, with whom I had bonded over the winter, would not be continuing the journey with us. I felt like I was more affected than her own parents. As we were parting ways, I thought I felt some resignation from her... After all, she had just been married to a complete stranger.

My Journey to the North *by Armande Pluguein of the Free City*

The Dark Season

Winter Destination

Fall is brief: the nights get longer and longer—even permanent at some latitudes—and the cold becomes intense. Some families and clans stay in the tundra, others move a bit south, taking shelter in the taiga.

Some groups build winter camps that they return to every year. They're villages of sorts, ideally located near resources accessible during the dark season. Some buildings are partially dug out, made out of stones with earth-covered roofs, so that grass can grow during the fair season and help keep the heat in during the harsh winter. Others look like permanent tents in the shape of small domes with a structure made out of heavy mammoth tusks.

Near the sea or large lakes, prey is typically fish, seals, or walruses. Camps can also be placed along the migratory routes of large herds. The meat can be stored in the permafrost to remain edible over long periods of time.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Daily Life in Winter

Though many foreigners imagine Septentrional winters to be long nightmares during which the inhabitants stay permanently cloistered in their tents, reality is not so stark. Daily life follows the rhythm of necessities: food is caught via ice fishing (which is quite simple and even an appreciated leisure); wood is gathered on a daily basis to heat the tent; shepherds watch over their animals to ward off wolves; etc.

Traveling Through Snow-Covered Landscapes

Populations are well adapted to both ice and snow. For groups who mainly rely on hunting, traveling is a necessity, since large herds are always on the move and must therefore be followed. In the case of others, trips are made to resupply the winter camp or to meet with other communities. Although nature is harsh in winter, it also offers new opportunities. When rivers and channels are frozen, they can be safely crossed, making it possible to walk from the north of Kaan to the north of Cyfandir. An isolated individual may use snowshoes—to avoid sinking into the snow—or skis. Well-trained Septentrional sledding dogs can cover over 60 miles in a single day, so as long as the sledders travel light and have enough frozen or dried meat, they can go fast and far.

Frostelle's Hell

...vile pea soup, never lifted in twenty days!
...finding my way through this white hell... a hell... hellish country, cursed mongrel of Night and Frostelle... they said and I followed the trail... that...
...dogs died yesterday, not enough food to carry on... should've kept some in the salt... might have missed the cairn marking the entrance to... won't make it unless...
...saved! ...saw the light of...
...damn storm, damn hail... harried... going to take a break, will leave in an hour... just an hour...

Remains of a damp journal, found in the wreck of a sled from the Eifjülliukiiplüten steppes

Words of the Far North

Permafrost

Even at the mildest latitudes, deep soil remains permanently frozen—this is referred to as permafrost. As a result, the ground is stone-hard.
We found the corpse of an unfortunate man, mangled beyond recognition, and I wanted to bury him so as not to leave what was left of his body to the scavengers. My companions recommended against it, but let me try. I almost broke my rudimentary tools, and was only able to scratch the surface of the ground. In the end, we gathered some stones to build a cairn.
After my misadventure, I thought it was best to give up on any notion of digging. Yet I saw a hole once: a real tunnel, with multiple underground chambers. It was the middle of summer, but just a few feet beyond the entrance, the walls were covered with frost and ice. I don't know what its use was, but I imagine it would be easy to stock grain or food there, to keep them frozen and intact.

Taiga

Taigas are not homogeneous. Mostly made up of conifers, such as larches, spruces, pines, and firs in the Septentrion, they can also include a lot of birches and other trees adapted to the cold such as maples, poplars, and willows. Many berries (blueberries, lingonberries, cranberries, chokeberries, etc.) can be gathered over the short summers. Wild fauna is abundant and more numerous than the humanoid population. Among the predators are bears, lynx, smilodons, Septentrion tigers, wolves, wolverines, foxes, etc., as well as subspecies adapted to specific environments. They hunt lemmings, snow hares, moose, caribou, and reindeer. In addition to these animals, there is an abundance of fowl, mostly migratory. The waters of rivers and seas are particularly rich in fish, with some species being present year-round and others being seasonal.

Cold Steppe

I have been told that in some places, mostly in frost giant lands, there are frozen steppes with many tall grasses adapted to dry cold weather. This is the domain of massive herbivores such as mammoths and wooly rhinoceroses, with many kinds of predators such as large **wolves**, *powerful* **bears**, *or* **arslanikhs** *adapted to the climate.*

Tundra

Further north, where even the taiga cannot grow, there is only the tundra, a steppe of lichen that stretches over hills and cold plains. In valleys sheltered from the cold wind, a few scattered woods can still be found. These regions are covered with a thick, immaculately white cover of snow for nine months a year, and night in the dead of winter lasts several weeks, during which the moons and aurora borealis provide the only light. Summer ends as soon as August, when the meager vegetation already takes fall colors.

Travel notes by Phrixos of Lymnipogeia

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Mysteries and the Sacred

The sacred and spiritual are perceived as a constant presence by the people of the Great Cold. To them, beasts and natural places have a soul. Spirits, both good and bad, are present in many locations. Frostelle's rules express themselves through chance events and encounters.

Creatures under the orders of Frostelle are allowed to attack travelers and may be tasked with defending important locations such as ruins of the Boreal civilization. In the same way that they can attack furiously for no apparent reason, they may also retreat with no explanation. Moral and physical ordeals go hand-in-hand. It is thought that tenacity in the face of danger sometimes is enough to convince the Winter Crone to let an adventurer continue on their way, because they showed themselves worthy of reaching a normally forbidden place.

The Cycle of Souls According to Frostelle

The three types of afterlives as described in Frostelle's doctrines are directly visible to the inhabitants of the Septentrion. Someone dying is obviously a painful event for the deceased's loved ones, but they also firmly believe that the dead are still present in a different form.

- **Blessed.** When an individual who led a measured and just life passes away, they return to Eana, or are called through the aurora borealis, guided by the sednai up to the goddess's domain. Valorous individuals become **sednai** in turn and may sometimes return "in the flesh" to assist their tribe.
- **Tested.** Those whose merit is less certain become wails of the wastes, also called **nowohtam**—the sad ones. These incorporeal undead who seem to emerge from cold mist remain in a sort of eerie wintry purgatory. It is also said that the furious selfishness of the bewolfed, those who behave like ferocious wolves toward their own kind, is punished by being reincarnated as **winter wolves**.
- **Damned.** The **remorhazes** are considered terrifying manifestations of the evil dead, doomed to forever live a horrific existence as a cautionary tale to the living. And those who committed the most terrible and unforgivable crimes risk being taken away by the **ice devils** to Gemoniae.

Animal Tales

The tales and legends told to children to put them to sleep or teach them essential moral lessons have heroes different from those of temperate regions.

Lemming

The lemming is one of the emblematic animals of the arctic circle. This small rodent with brown fur and black highlights lives under the cover of snow most of winter. It digs tunnels to reach moss and lichen to feed on, and occasionally springs out, throwing itself into impressively fast crawling slides. In the spring, lemmings go through a difficult time: there's too many of them, and they are deprived of their precious snowy shelter. They look for hiding places all over. Anything will do: a hole, a crack in a rock, or even an adventurer's bag!

In these areas, lemmings are the prey of all predators: arctic foxes, great crows, snowy owls, long-tailed skuas, bears, and adventurers running out of meat. This perpetual danger is at the heart of many tales, repeated or improvised, starting with "Once upon a time, there was a lemming..." The wit or recklessness of the animal is a lesson for the young audience.

These small mammals are famous for their abundance of predators, their appearance, and some mysteries of their lifestyle. Every four years or so, lemmings surge in great numbers and start a great migration during which they follow a direction for no visible reason, showing great boldness in colonizing new territory. They bafflingly expose themselves, leaving their protective natural habitat and entering the domain of predators.

Arctic Fox

Smaller than its temperate cousin, the arctic fox has short ears and changes color with the seasons, being white in winter and smoky gray in spring. A clever beast, it can hunt lemmings and store them in an icy larder in anticipation of lean times.

Its ability to survive with few resources makes it an emblem of Frostelle, and some clans of the Septentrion consider the killing of arctic foxes taboo. They look quite poorly upon the activity of trappers who supply the wealthy of Lothrienne and Arolavia in pelts. Shamans also look out for any strange behavior from these animals, seeing them as divine messengers.

Travel notes by Phrixos of Lymnipogeia

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Strange Alliance Between Frostelle and Hospodar Askinos

Scholars know of the pact between Frostelle and the diabolical hospodar Askinos, a powerful fiend. While this agreement is certainly beneficial to the goddess, it also lets the devil send its icy minions to roam the lands in the worst of winter to capture lost travelers or convince mortals to sign unholy pacts. More snow witches and diabolists plunge into despair and cruelty each year. They have their places of sinister worship and rumors abound about them. Although most are unfounded, some are unfortunately true. For example, it is said that after nightfall, cries ring out, so bloodcurdling that the ice keeps their echoes for entire days.

To clerics and druids, the impunity apparently enjoyed by the fiend's servants is troubling. Why does the pact allow such horrors? Might the goddess Frostelle herself be evil and corrupted by her devilish associate? Or does she tolerate its actions as long as they remain within limits difficult for simple mortals to recognize? Should the warlocks be seen as monsters with humanoid faces, tasked with making certain places and knowledge inaccessible, much like winter wolves?



Long Winter Nights

Celebration of the Last Lights

Before they invited me to take part in it, my hosts explained to me that the Celebration of the Last Lights is intimate, and is done at variable dates depending on when a group decides to settle down for the winter. My hosts placed torches around the camp to form a circle of light. In preparation for the dark season, meals are frugal. The vigil isn't grim, however, and may last all night, with tales and songs. Dried flowers, odorous branches (like pine), and late berries are left outside the torch circle to remind Frostelle to bring back spring.

Legends of Sacrifices to Frostelle

In the dead of night, when winter is at its darkest and longest, in the middle of "full-dark", as the tribes call it, hope sometimes falters and madness takes hold of men. Questioned on this subject, matriarch Kelikaluu reluctantly confessed one day that some practice horrible rituals, sacrificing members of their family and spreading their blood in the snow. This ritual is supposed to call the White Stalker from the depths of the blizzard-haunted night, to grant their wishes. I admit that these stories made me fearful each year, during the endless night my hosts called the Heart of Winter.

Celebration of the First Light

Among my hosts, Flora was particularly celebrated during the Festival of First Light, which is the first day the sun once again weakly illuminates the sky. In waiting for this moment, we gathered at the camp and stayed silent for a long while, until the expected time of sunrise. If the weather was bad, the celebration was pushed back and the same ritual repeated the next day. When light appeared, there was an explosion of joy. The clamor reflected the relief of seeing an end to the night and praised the daytime celestial body that also brings life.

My Journey to the North *by Armande Pluguein of the Free City*

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Boreal Ruins

Boreal ruins are mostly located in the Septentrion, both in Kaan and Cyfandir. Outposts and traces of this culture's apex can be found all the way into the Drakenbergen.

Exploring Vestiges

Explorers pushing far north can find practically intact Boreal ruins, as if frozen in the ice. As a result of the rise of the sea level since the Age of Frostelle, there are also many ruins partially or entirely submerged. The spectacle of dark waters contrasting with the eroded engraved marble of a monumental door frame yawning into the unknown can be breathtaking.

These are magnificent landscapes, both fascinating and fearsome, in which one may encounter supernatural guardians. Out of precaution, Nordic tribes stay away from known ruins. At the first sight of an altar or mausoleum, they walk away.

The proximity of a Boreal ruin can almost systematically be identified by the cold. In those places, it even sometimes snows in the middle of summer. Vegetation has adapted itself, offering a spectacular sight: within only a few hundred feet, a traveler can go from a temperate forest to a taiga! Some ruins are half-buried, almost invisible from the surface; they can also be hidden in huge mountainous caverns, like in Hevitur or Kupatwacuw. Ruins are sometimes at human scale, sometimes meant for giants, since the ancient civilization saw the blossoming of an alliance between these two peoples.

Some legends speak of sanctuary-cities that survived the fall of Boreal civilization and are still inhabited, far to the east, perhaps in Kupatwacuw. It is likely based on such tales that Cyrillan explorers have assumed lost lineages of white and silver dragonborn still live on in these secret places.

The Legend of the Academy of Magic

It is believed that Boreal civilization instituted a control of arcane magic, the academy of magic being one of its pillars. Legends speak of a tall tower held up by colonnades and buttresses, leaning against a mountain side on the edge of a sea or a large frozen lake. If they were found, the ruins of the academy would answer many questions currently debated by the greatest scholars.

Boreal Magical Arts

The ancient Boreal arcanists' magical knowledge is the subject of speculations and fantasies. Here is an overview of what impassioned spellcasters hope to discover:

- **Mastery of alecrith.** The mysterious gem is thought to be a crystallization of pure magic. It is theorized to be extremely rare in nature, but possible to manufacture. Alecrith can not only be used to identify spellcasters, it also features in complex mechanisms powered by magic, among which are the protective domes of Boreal cities, and rumored towers that could fire beams of energy. Understanding how to produce alecrith and use it on such intricate magical machines would be a great step forward in arcana and engineering.
- **Aether liquor.** Another masterpiece from the Boreal civilization, aether liquor appears as a viscous liquid, luminescent and highly toxic. This substance might be condensed pure magic—not only arcane magic, but truly primordial, indiscriminate magic—allowing one to wield both arcane and divine powers. The use of aether liquor is very dangerous. The power it might grant is seemingly unlimited, and would be devastating in the hands of someone inexperienced or ill-intentioned. It is said to allow for a premature or normally impossible awakening to magic, or the opening of interplanar portals leading to places populated with terrible creatures.
- **Great library.** Centuries of studies and accumulated knowledge! If the great library of the Boreal empire's magic academy has endured, even partially, its rediscovery would be a major event. It is said to hold all sorts of unknown spells, or perhaps variants of existing spells using force or ice. What would a *force bolt* or an *iceball* look like?

Possible Leads

Convinced that the legends are based on truths, many adventurers follow various leads in search of the academy:

- ***Visions of the Blizzard.*** This text is a collection of mystical and poetic visions of the Winter Crone's chosen. A lot of what is known—or presumed—about the Boreal civilization comes from it.
- **Observatories.** The ancient academy of magic built observatories. They were places dedicated to research and magically connected to the academy. Many believe that the academy was never found because of powerful enchantments concealing it.
- **Tribal witnesses.** Humanoid nomads and giants are the most familiar with the Septentrion, and know where many ruins can be found, although they usually carefully avoid them.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Flight of the White Dragons

Tuhkayuw and Kiskutuw

Long ago were born Tuhkayuw and Kiskutuw, the first white dragons, lords of the ice floes and blizzards. They hatched from twin eggs under the eyes of the first frost giants, and set to making the icebound immensity theirs. The first of their terrible kind, they were a source of dread and inspiration for the Septentrion. Though they received the teachings of the wise giant Awana, they were wrathful and impetuous. Their instincts spurred them to hunt, and they set their sights on seals and reindeer, then on wooly rhinoceroses and mammoths. They developed a taste for blood. Young and powerful, childhood friends and fearsome predators, they quickly stopped answering Awana's calls. They had become wild and free.

Signs Deciphered by the Ôhqamamus

Now free of Awana's influence, they met the humanoid peoples. The tribes were in awe of these creatures of scale and ice. Were they messengers of Frostelle? A plague from Gemoniae? Some claimed that the gods had the shape of these creatures, and that these monsters were their terrible children, descending upon the world. The appetites, destructions, and moods of the young dragons were seen as signs to be interpreted.

Those who deciphered these signs were called the Ôhqamamus, the pain tellers. They are those who divine the course of fate from the pain of the direst ordeals. For centuries, they have gathered once a year in Kucusuto on the fall equinox, when the dark season begins. They share the memories of devastations and cruelties, because it is in tragedies and in the blood of Eternity's chosen that lie the deepest secrets of Eana. In their eyes, white dragons are messengers of the divine. Their instincts echo the cycles of the golden moon. When the wheel of fate is at rest, these titans slumber in their lairs; when it spins, they rouse and fly out into the world. They are an echo of bygone times, before even the Pillars of Creation.

The Ôhqamamus learn tales of past sufferings. They repeat them, hand them down from one part of the Septentrion to the next, from one millennium to another. Eternity speaks to them and grants them messages through the weave of coincidences and repercussions.

The Deaths of the First White Dragons

Tuhkayuw, she of the imperious cold, and Kiskutuw, he of the arrogant wrath, were now adults. They knew each other and enjoyed each other. They seduced each other as they clawed and bit at each other at Aponahak, along the jagged cliffs of black stone. These rocks jut out of the sea, high and sharp. Woe betide anyone who approaches them! A misstep will send them to a certain death. From the passion of the first white dragons, the first nests were born, among these brittle, flimsy grottoes.

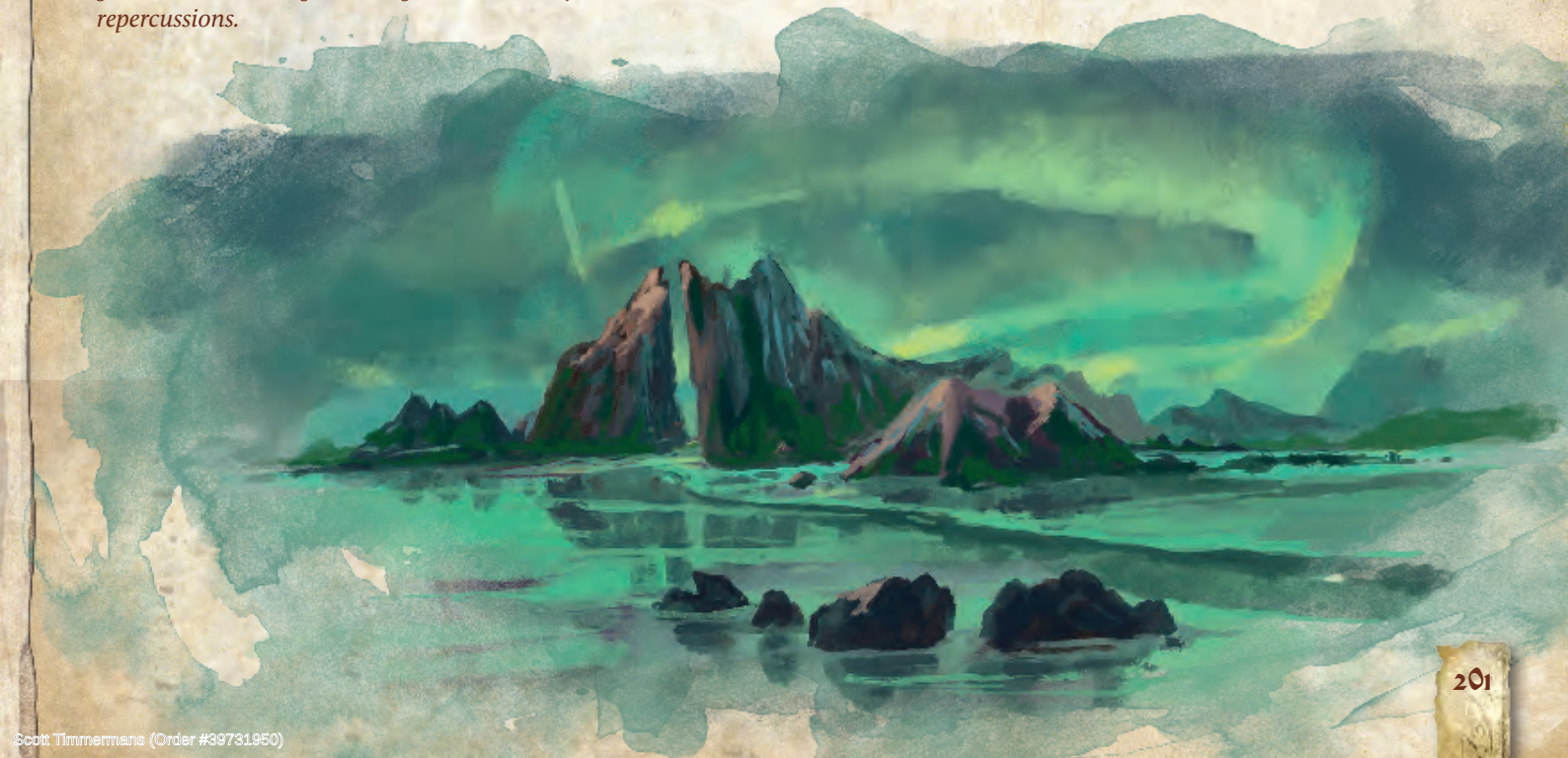
On certain years, Kiskutuw hunted young white dragons and devoured them. On other ones, he seduced his daughters. He also met with Tuhkayuw to growl, conquer, ask for forgiveness, and start over. Tuhkayuw hid her nests in the Septentrion, then abandoned them.

Supremely old and powerful, their rule was one of terror. Never could they remain together, and never could they remain away from each other for more than a century. They demanded that humanoids worship them and do their utmost to honor them. Standing stones, cyclopean cities, barrows, and treasures were given as offerings. Only amber and opal, the sap and bones of a foregone era, brought a form of comfort to Kiskutuw and Tuhkayuw.

Though most tribes bowed before them, others refused to bend the knee. Hounded, they feared the sky and the dragons' followers, until the rise of Nefera the Liberator. A bugbear heroine, a Fate-chosen, she devised a ruse, sowing distrust between the two elder dragons. To get rid of them both, she drove them to a fratricidal war, then single-handedly defeated the survivor, Tuhkayuw.

Many tribes forsook their worship of the white dragons, but today still, some argue that these messengers of the gods and fate must be honored. They are few, and they loathe those who hunt young white dragons to exterminate them. Sometimes, they protect nests to defend the order of the world.

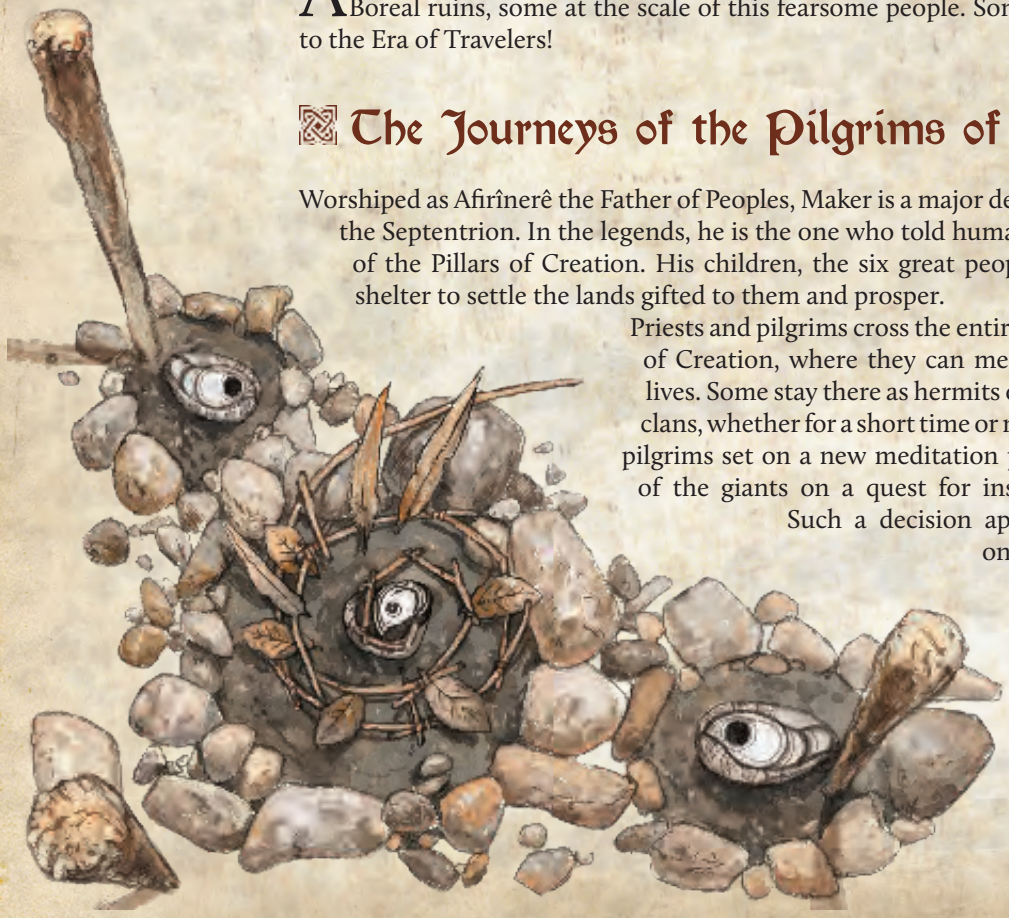
Legend of the White Dragons, an oral tradition of Septentrion committed to paper by Moria in the city of Katafygia



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Frost Giant Lands

A large part of the Septentrion is considered frost giant territory. These lands contain many Boreal ruins, some at the scale of this fearsome people. Some ruins might even date back to the Era of Travelers!



The Journeys of the Pilgrims of Maker-Afirînerê

Worshiped as Afirînerê the Father of Peoples, Maker is a major deity throughout all of Kaan and the Septentrion. In the legends, he is the one who told humanity to come out of the haven of the Pillars of Creation. His children, the six great peoples of Kaan, left this original shelter to settle the lands gifted to them and prosper.

Priests and pilgrims cross the entire continent to reach the Pillars of Creation, where they can meditate on the world and their lives. Some stay there as hermits or join the surrounding nomad clans, whether for a short time or more permanently. Sometimes, pilgrims set on a new meditation path, venturing into the lands of the giants on a quest for insight on more ancient times. Such a decision appears particularly bold when one knows of the unbounded violence the great guardians of the north can display. Fortunately for those mystics, Maker is a deity that, much like Frostelle, enjoys great respect from the frost giants.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Memories of Frost Giant Epics

Frost giants weren't always so crude. Once, they allied with Septentrional humans and built a civilization together, wielding a strong magic of force and ice. The events that led to the downfall of Boreal culture left a bitter taste for the giants. Afterward, following a period of isolation and doubt, they followed a more ascetic way of life, supposedly more authentic, and took it upon themselves to fight against all the excesses of civilization.

This originally noble approach was undermined by the schemes of powerful fiends. Prince Gegaôr the furious beast replaced Frostelle and Maker as the patron gods of many clans. Hospodar Askinos the pain drinker tried to compete with him. Their followers found a purpose to their existence in destruction and terror.

Akomuk, the Old City

Akomuk is the only remaining frost giant city, the last standing sign of their past grandeur. Here, at the foot of the Kupatwacuw Mountains, palaces, temples, and archives still stand. The only forges of this people are also found here. Frost giants gather around the time of the summer solstice to trade and negotiate. When their king dies, the giants elect a new ruler, looking for the wisest or most worthy among them. King Wawotam is an old man, the eldest of his people, and the guardian of the frost giants' ancient history. As the younger generation violently assault and pillage the humanoid settlements for no apparent reason, the reclusive ruler gladly guides those who come before him. Though he still commands respect among the elder, his influence is in decline, to the point that fiend-worshiping clans are considering open rebellion, perhaps even killing him, to symbolically mark a rupture from the past.

Over the winter, the old king stays practically alone in a ghost town, with only a few loyal followers to help him. Most giants would be outraged if they knew that the age-old ruler also receives aid from white and silver dragonborn from the Kupatwacuw Mountains.

Omki and the Kupatwacuw Mountains

A place of legend for the humanoids of Kaan and the Septentrion, the Kupatwacuw Mountains are located in the far-flung reaches of the north, and are the domain of frost giants. Ancient sites of Boreal civilization have remained intact here, hidden from the world's view.

The sanctuary-city of the Icy Dawn, Ômki ("she-who-gets-up"), is one of these sites. After a purifying walk through Yotumkupatunsh, the extreme north, dragonborn survivors of the Dawn War were welcomed here. They became servants of Frostelle in her most noble and wise form. They learned from and traded with frost giant kings, unknown to all, guardians of the vast knowledge remaining from the Boreal civilization. Unrest among giants, under fiendish influence, is alerting the sentinels of Ômki that the time has come for some things to change. For example, some believe that the best way to serve Frostelle would be to rid her of the corrupting pact binding her to Askinos the hospodar by defeating it in its domain of Gemoniae and destroying it for good.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Yotumkupatunsh, the Hungry Ice

Yotumkupatunsh is the furthest north, a land of eternal ice where even lichen cannot grow and where ice floes dominate the landscape in a perpetually white spectacle. Yotumkupatunsh is a Tumiit word difficult to pronounce for foreigners, leading to the shortened "Yotum" that travelers may hear.

The Denisova Tribe

The denisovas are the only humanoids living in merciless Yotumkupatunsh. Smaller, with brown hair and tanned skin, they're easy to tell apart from the other tribes. Wrapped in clothing stitched together from reindeer and seal skins, complete with boots, pants, and parkas, they face one of the harshest climates known to Eana. Experts on the extreme north, they are capable of forecasting the weather, enduring storms, telling apart the shades of white in the ice that would indicate risks of breaking, and many other skills vital to surviving in such an unforgiving climate. Denisova societal organization is the result of a very harsh environment. For example, marriage and child-making are necessities. Populations are very small, and their entire culture could die out if there aren't enough births. And of course, a lone individual couldn't handle all the tasks required for survival. Members of the Denisovas take on two main roles: hunter-fisherman or homekeeper. These positions are not permanent, with the hunters sometimes helping the homekeepers, and vice-versa.

Hunters can only marry once they've shown their ability to bring back game on their own. The homekeepers, meanwhile, can be wed when they're able to build a home. This includes crafting clothes and tools, as well as demonstrating their ability to handle the meat from a big hunt over one year on their own, preparing it, building a shelter to stock it, then cooking it and distributing it among the community.

Each adult unit (couple, family, etc.) must include at least one hunter and homekeeper. As long as this fundamental rule is kept, any composition or re-composition is accepted, including polyandry and polygamy, or even spouse swapping.

Cuisine of the Far North

It is revolting, but I must take specific note of this, so people can realize. At least, I would like them to realize, but I fear that it may be impossible to truly fathom without experiencing it oneself. The cuisine of the Far North is an ordeal. One must clearly be a native and have never known anything else to appreciate it.

To be fair to the cooks, resources are scarce in the extreme north that the Denisovas live in. While reindeer shepherds may feast on predigested lichen (removing its bitterness) cooked in the stomach of the beast, the people of the ice floes must make do with only fish, seals, and birds. Meat is seasoned with more meat, cooked with almost no fuel. As an additional hurdle, it''s also vital to gather supplies over the summer so as not to overly depend on difficult fishing and occasional hunting in winter time. A hole can be cut in the ice to find some fish in the arctic night, but flying birds are mostly migratory and leave before the fall equinox.

Given all these challenges, the inhabitants of the Far North have proven themselves remarkably creative:

- ***Lutefisk.*** *Dried fish is left to soak in cold water for several days, with the water changed every day. During the process, brine made of birch ashes and lime is added so the fish regains its volume and acquires a typical taste (for better or worse, depending on the consumer). Everything is then left to soak again for two more days, with the water changed daily. At the end, it should melt in the mouth like gelatin while remaining firm.*
- ***Hakarl.*** *This specialty food is made from a shark with toxic flesh. Through a lengthy preparation that spans several months, and includes being buried then left to dry, it is made fit for consumption... though it will keep a very strong smell of ammonia.*
- ***Kiviak.*** *This winter dish is prepared by stuffing a number of birds into an emptied seal carcass. The technique lies in keeping the air inside to a minimum, so that a safe fermentation can occur. Indeed, if there is any error in the procedure, whoever eats it risks catching botulism.*

Travel notes by Phrixos of Lymnipogeia

Scott Timmermans (Order #39781450)

Madness-Inducing Whiteness and Peace for the Soul

Icy Purification

If you make use of this option, traveling through the icy domain of Frostelle can cure Canker's corruption (see **Grimoire**, **Corruption: Purifying Corruption**).

To that effect, one must survive Yotumkupatunsh without using magic to find shelter, food, or warmth. Allies may leave the region and bring back supplies. Frostelle may also send her most fearsome servants—including **ice devils**—to test the penitent's will.

Once the icy pilgrimage is concluded, the pilgrim is rid of all permanent and temporary corruption points. This only occurs at the ritual's conclusion, which must be carried out without interruption. If the journey is cut short, the ritual fails and must be started over from the beginning. The length and results of the journey depend on the extent of the pilgrim's corruption, following these guidelines:

- **Minor corruption.** The pilgrimage must last a week.
- **Serious corruption.** The pilgrimage must last a month.
- **Grave corruption.** The pilgrimage must last a year.
- **Critical corruption.** The individual is too far gone for the ritual to have an effect. However, if the pilgrim stays in Yotumkupatunsh for a year, **sednai** may come and open an aurora borealis portal that will take them to Eternity, to cross the Maze leading to the Fateforge.

Accessories and Clothing

Most denisova clothing is made from leather and furs. They are prepared with patience, then hand-sewn together and richly decorated with various adornments: bone pendants engraved with pictures of animals, pierced teeth, drilled seashells, ends of polishing stones, harpoon points, ivory statuettes, etc.

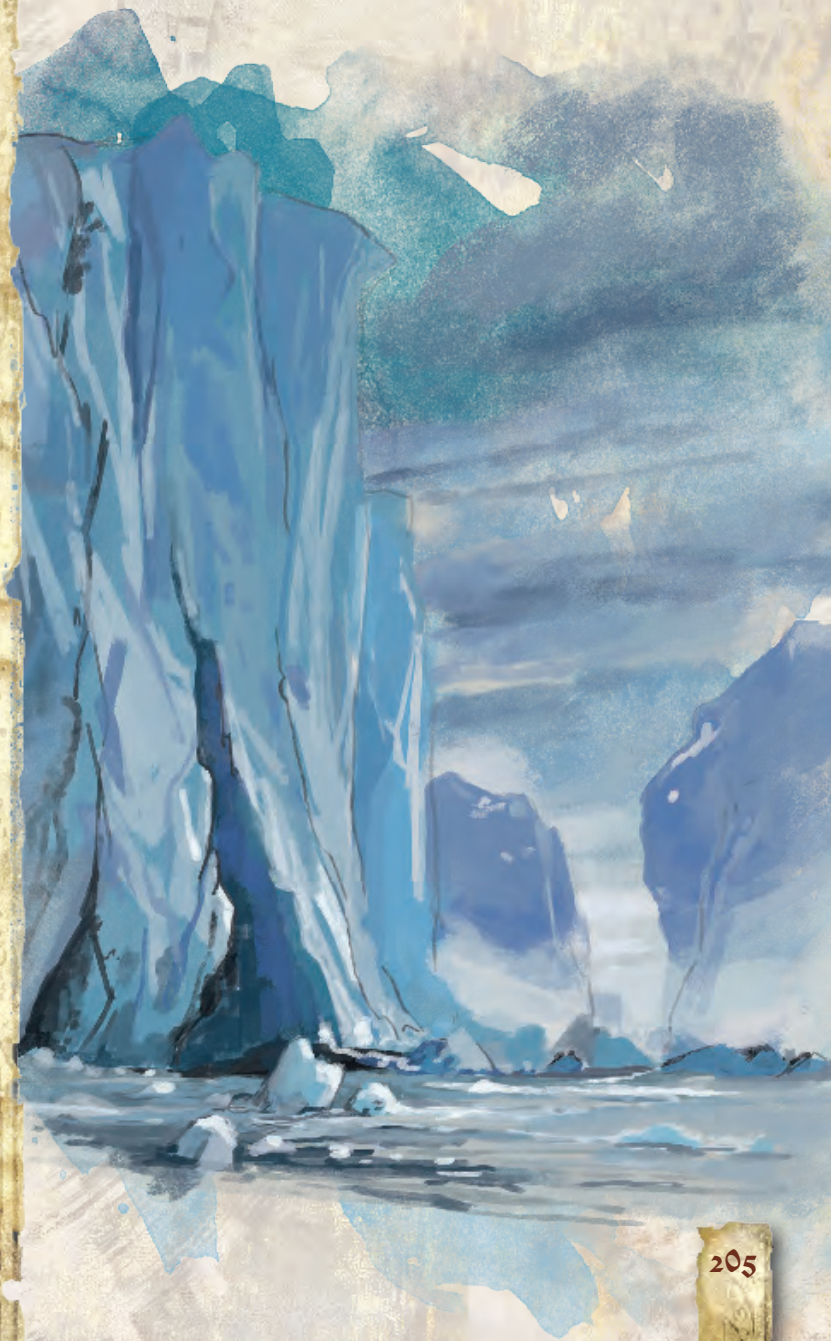
All this time spent making decorated clothing gives it great value. Each detail has a meaning related to a memory.

Travel notes by Phrixos of Lymnipogeia

The extreme north tests the entire body. The intense cold—even in summer—and the absence of any source of food or heat will surely kill any traveler who hasn't carefully prepared for their journey.

The soul is likewise challenged. The brilliant, blinding whiteness of polar summer takes its toll on the mind, as does perpetual night. A person is left to contend with themselves, with their own inner demons. Memories, trauma, doubts, and emotions burst forth from the immaculate canvas of eternal snow. **Inanes** are illusory creatures that feed on cracks in the mind and can turn an icy desert into an oasis both wonderful and nightmarish. On this strange pilgrimage of the self facing itself, one must find the answers to free oneself, or be engulfed.

Crossing the hungry ice of Yotumkupatunsh either kills or purifies.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39791350)

Gemoniae

Few paths lead to Gemoniae, and no one wants to visit it. There is a permanent portal granting access to it in the extreme north of the Septentrion. It opens onto icy lands, swept by violent winds carving out a rugged, magnificent, and perilous landscape. But the omnipresent ice isn't always made of water. There is nothing for mortals here. The crystalline blocks reveal the violence of that world. Here and there, enclosed in icy sarcophagi, Gemoniae's prisoners remain trapped, their sentence neverending. Who would be mad enough to attempt to wrest one of them away from their punishment?

Gemoniae's surface is diverse, alternating plains, ice floes, high plateaus, steep mountains, gorges, networks of icy or rocky caves, and cryovolcanoes. These sometimes reach 13,000 feet high, and instead of lava, they expel a kind of muddy water that freezes into a rain of icy crystals. This indicates the presence of liquid water in the depths, at a very high temperature compared to the surface cold.

These perpetually snow-covered lands are ruled by the **ice devils**—the kûshus—and their ruler, hospodar Askinos. Pact-bound with Frostelle, the hospodar takes in all prisoners sent to it according to ritualistic methods, regardless of whether they are good or evil, innocent or guilty.

Origins of the Agreement Between Askinos and Frostelle

Such a long-standing agreement between a powerful devil and a deity is rare. How did it come to be? Looking to answer this question, some have pointed out that every other devil has settled in Furnace, a plane of fire, the exact opposite of Gemoniae. Perhaps devils originally came from a different plane with a greater variety of environments. Askinos would have been reluctant to inhabit a place completely counter to what it is, finding itself in a position of weakness compared to the other devils. Should adventurers want to learn more about the origin of devils, Askinos may be the best source of information. But even pact-bound to Frostelle, it remains a deeply evil and dangerous being.

Journal of Astolophe, scholar of the Free City come to Boreïa to learn more about the mystery of the pact between Askinos and Frostelle

The Exiles' Gate

One's first contact with Gemoniae is the Exiles' Gate, officially the only permanent portal connecting this plane to any other. Many arcane protections forbid temporary portals or *plane shift* spells from leading anywhere else. Everything is arranged to keep comings and goings under control.

When a traveler arrives, they initially only see a cold desert that might give the impression they are still somewhere in the Septentrion. However, a more careful observation reveals that the cliffsides around them have actually been dug out. Those are fortresses, in which a legion of kûshus watch over the entrance. These mighty devils are numerous and powerful enough to deal even with a determined fiendish army.

If the new arrivals appear harmless, the ice devils won't move. A **sednae** and a kûshu will welcome them with a *down coat* to protect them from the cold, and will ask them the reasons for their visit. The welcoming committee is thus made up of a single devil and a single celestial, as dictated by the pact between Frostelle and Askinos. Most of the newcomers are prisoners to be locked away, but chosen of Frostelle are sometimes sent on a quest to follow, taking them to the Observatory of Cold Stars or to Glacius. The visitors' word alone will determine their fate. If they have come this far, it means they have somewhere to go. Their destination will then depend on how convincing they can be.

- **If the kûshu believes what it is told**, it will take the visitor to where they must go: to an ice prison, on the road to Glacius, to the Observatory, or someplace else. The sednae may leave the *down coat* to the visitors or take it back.
- **If the kûshu doesn't believe the visitor**, it will immediately assume that they are a prisoner to be imprisoned in the ice. It will call for backup to proceed to the sentencing, which is encasement in a block of ice by default. The sednae will ask for the *down coat* back and leave to let the devils officiate.

The Celestials' Role at Gemoniae's Entrance

I was deeply troubled to see devils and celestials working together, and it makes me think to this day. I also wonder about the way the welcoming of visitors is organized. At first glance, the fact that the kûshu is the one assessing the mortal's truthfulness and adjudicating the consequence seems to indicate a devilish rule. When one thinks about it, it would have been simpler for the rule to be: "Any mortal stepping through the portal must be imprisoned in the ice, unless they can prove they are here with Frostelle's blessing." With the current organization, if they are a good liar, a prisoner-to-be has a chance of escaping their fate. They won't be able to leave Gemoniae, but they can run away, and risk dying to the cold. This is so strange. What is the meaning of this? Is this but a facet of a vast plan of the goddess?

I was told the story of a heroic wife who came to Gemoniae to find her imprisoned husband. Upon arriving at the Exiles' Gate, she managed to trick the kûshu that interrogated her, thanks to the spontaneous collusion of the sednae in charge. Seemingly supportive of her endeavor, the celestial had helped her through this first challenge. I don't know if she ever found her beloved. I fear it all ended quite poorly.

Journal of Yulia, chosen of Frostelle authorized to visit Gemoniae to report on it

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Glacius, Askinos's Citadel

Carved into the ice, Askinos's capital is half-buried, protected from the worst of Gemoniae's atmospheric conditions. Its layout is based on complex geometric patterns, with fractal embellishments.
The population is mainly made up of kûshus, but a few celestial sednai on long missions and humanoids can also be found there. The latter are, for the most part, chosen of Frostelle undergoing a test, or talented craftsmen who were spared the ice prison to put their skills to use. Snow warlocks, bound to Askinos, are also sometimes invited to be rewarded or punished for their actions. It is said that Askinos is more concerned with its followers' success than other powerful devils, who only seek to trick and collect souls.
As humanoid survival requires heat and food, pockets were dug into the ice to set up small farms within, with magical light to grow plants.
Although far removed, Glacius is involved in events related to Eana and Furnace.

Diabolical High Politics Seen From Afar

Askinos avoids any encounters with its peers, but keeps an eye on all devil activity, whether direct (in Furnace) or indirect (on Eana). It is always eager for news and tries to infer the other hospodar's plans based on the most tenuous of clues. Incorrect interpretation is always a possibility, and may lead to useless countermeasures, motivated only by paranoia toward an imaginary threat.

Askinos's Secret Fears

I was very surprised when I learned that the portal was under constant guard by a military contingent of kûshus. They seemed like soldiers watching out for an invasion. During my stay in Gemoniae, I cautiously tried to learn more about this threat.
I was told in confidence that Askinos cleverly declined every invitation to go to Furnace to visit its hospodar peers. It was a kind of tradition in Gemoniae. Upon each invitation, the court of Glacius and its ruler fret about finding a pretext. This sometimes meant organizing entire campaigns of disinformation on Eana or other planes, so the excuse would seem truthful.
I was given such an excuse as an example: "Askinos is possessing a noble of Ajagar and is about to convince the local high priests to become warlocks; it cannot turn away from this endeavor for the moment." After this response was sent, Askinos's devilish servants and warlocks went to great lengths for the events to closely match the lie. Everything must be done to avoid the lord of Gemoniae being caught trying to refuse its participation in devilish schemes.
At the moment, I felt clever for being privy to infernal schemes, but then I second-guessed it. If this was obvious to me as a newcomer to Gemoniae, then surely, the devils who knew of this little game for centuries, if not millennia, must also be aware of the subterfuge. Perhaps their plans were much more complex than I thought? Or are fiends so formal that they pretend not to notice unless they have blatant proof? Or maybe this trickery is actually beneficial to other hospodar, who take advantage of it to push their own agendas?

Journal of Yulia, chosen of Frostelle authorized to visit Gemoniae to report on it

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Difficulty of Creating New Kûshus

First of all, the process of creating a devil implies that a soul accepts its obliteration to the stage of diabolic **lemure**. In Furnace, torture is the usual method employed to push the prisoners' despair until they resign themselves to this horrible fate. Once a lemure is created in a pitch pool, a hospodar can raise it little by little into more powerful forms... and, conversely, demote it.

For Askinos, the situation is delicate: pitch pools used for the creation of larvae do not exist in Gemoniae. The hospodar can avoid meeting its peers, but cannot at the same time hope one of them will send it lemures to shape. This leaves it in quite a bind.

Creation of New Devils

The number of kûshus has remained stable ever since the pact between Askinos and Frostelle, the hospodar lacking access to pitch pools. One might thus believe the ice devils doomed to a slow extinction—even if actually destroying one requires killing it in Gemoniae. I have been given to understand that there are in Glacius secret quarters dedicated to research. It seems like Askinos is looking for a way of creating servants without depending on the inaccessible pitch pools. I wonder if it hasn't had the idea of mixing science and arcana to make a kûshu from a humanoid. I dare not think of the extremes this idea might lead to. Even if nothing comes of it, how many atrocities would be committed before the research concludes?

Journal of Yulia, chosen of Frostelle authorized to visit Gemoniae and report on it

Askinos's Aspiration to Godhood

To Askinos, the only way to truly be safe from the other hospodars' schemes would be to become a god. Unfortunately for it, many fiends have tried over the centuries, to no avail. The basic idea guiding the hospodar's quest could be summed up as such: "A god has followers worshiping them; I am worshiped and honored as a god, so I could become one."

To this end, it presents itself as a generous patron to warlocks inclined to form a pact with it. It tends to its reputation, shows trustworthiness in its rules and the rewards it offers. It encourages its mortal servants to organize cults that may be ruthless, but are much closer to a religion than any of the other devils' sects. Thanks to this approach, it has the most warlocks. Nevertheless, divine ascension still escapes it.

So a new idea has begun to form in its mind: tasking a fanatically devoted warlock to go to the Fateforge and ask for a Granting on its behalf—since it is unable to go there itself.

If this doesn't work, or if an opportunity presents itself, assassinating Frostelle to absorb her essence seems like another promising lead.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Observatory of Cold Stars

Sometimes, diviners favored by Frostelle are invited to study cosmic destinies by coming to the Observatory of Cold Stars. It is managed by celestials, mostly sednai, who study the cosmos alongside mortals, whether chosen of Frostelle or a privileged few allowed to seek answers as part of a quest. Mystic astronomer-diviners are on the lookout for terrible dangers. The Observatory watches for activity in the dark sky, hoping to anticipate potential catastrophes, but by the time the corresponding celestial movements are visible, perhaps it will already be too late…

The Observatory is a complex dedicated to sciences and arcana. It includes gigantic telescopes, innumerable star charts, and libraries filled with mystical visions and divination reports. There are also rooms containing a particular type of teleportation circle. They are similar to ateaks, but far less powerful, allowing travel to nearby worlds visible from the Observatory.

Aside from these working areas, there is also everything necessary for mortals to live there. The place is not luxurious, but well-designed and comfortable. It feels all the safer once they find that devils are not allowed to enter.

Only proof that members of the Observatory have broken the pact between Frostelle and Askinos would grant access to the kûshus. Spies of the ice devils therefore watch from afar, waiting for a mistake. Are sednai sheltering escaped convicts to grant them asylum? Are they plotting against the hospodar? If anything of the sort were found out, the refuge would be mercilessly destroyed.

Fears of the Sentinels

Safe in the Observatory, I spent a few of the strangest days of my stay in Gemoniae. My initial enthusiasm far too quickly gave way to unshakeable worry. Here, I discovered the existence of threats that may wipe out all life. They were watched over, but there was no available solution to combat them.

Antheros

The first one was the entity called Antheros. Only known by arcane and religious experts, it might be one of the most powerful and evil beings in existence: the archdevil master and creator of all hospodar and lower-ranked devils. Some rare texts speak of its prison somewhere on a metal moon, near an immense, cold, stormy star completely devoid of any ground. Betrayed by its creations, Antheros survived, but remains a lone prisoner. As long as the hospodar do not elect a new archdevil, Antheros keeps great power, but devils are far too embroiled in their mutual distrust to unanimously elevate one among them. Besides, Askinos avoids all meetings in Furnace, so there cannot be a unanimous vote, abstention counting as a vote against.

Blackwater

The second major threat comes from a dark and living world, despite the void and extreme cold through which it moves. Among the stars visited via the ateaks in ancient times, this one is moving, getting closer to Eana. Blackwater is the homeworld of most aberrations. Prophets of Frostelle, speaking the goddess's word, say that these creatures fled from the surface just before the catastrophe that annihilated the Travelers. For millennia, they have been a threat only to the Netherworld's inhabitants, but with their infinite patience, they are surely plotting terrifying plans. They wield a peculiar type of mind magic and are able to shield themselves from any magical investigation. At Frostelle's behest, members of the Observatory are on a constant search for a dark, moving celestial body, almost invisible in the void.

Ateaks, Portals, and Passageways

Over time, the presence of portals intrigued me. I remembered the tales I had read about ateaks and came to wonder how other worlds could be explored without an entry point and an exit. I asked my hosts, who explained that an ateak-type portal—or one like the Observatory's—opens passageways that are either temporary or remarkably stable and long-lasting.

- ***Temporary passageway.*** *It can only lead to a location visible from the Observatory. Opening the pathway requires an enormous amount of energy, and it takes several days before it can be reactivated. Creatures sent through must return within hours, or be left to their own devices.*
- ***Long-lasting passageway.*** *In this case, a structure similar to the entry portal must be built, and they must be connected. This means the builders of the other portal must initially stay at the construction site with no contact with their home base. For the duration of the entire construction, no temporary passageway must be activated. All of this means a significant investment. In addition, once the portal is set up, it will work just like the Observatory's, so it must be ensured that it won't be used toward nefarious ends. No need to point out that no one wants Antheros nor the creatures of Blackwater to take advantage of these structures to move about.*

Journal of Yulia, chosen of Frostelle authorized to visit Gemoniae to report on it

Scott Timmermans (Order #99731450)

The Ice Rebels

Tens of thousands of prisoners, maybe more, have remained trapped in the Gemoniae ice since the fall of the Boreal civilization. For the most part, they come from Eana, and most of them are humanoids. Among them are criminals and unlucky opponents of the merciless chosen of Frostelle. From time to time, a series of coincidences, sometimes provoked by an opportune sednae, allows a creature to escape. But how do they survive? Must they simply be glad to die free?

The Frozen Plains

Almost circular, the Frozen Plain is the lowest point of Gemoniae. To reach it, one must scale down several mile-high cliffs. The plain is made of near-flat ice as far as the eye can see. A heavy, literally weighty fog often covers it. Traveling through this environment gives the feeling of walking through molasses crushing anything under it.

At the heart of this desolate expanse, there are, unexpectedly, wells violently spewing geysers of water. Near them, one can sometimes find well-hidden trapdoors leading to a tunnel that descends into the bowels of this world, bringing the explorer to a sea of freshwater.

Once, the first escapees found refuge here, toward Gemoniae's milder depths.

Surviving on a Prison Planet

While Frostelle caused the presence of many of Gemoniae's prisoners by allowing the ritual that opens a portal to this prison-world, she is also the reason the rebels can survive. Indeed, she sent a sednae to secretly join them and offer them the snow ivy. This strange plant now grows in the depths of Gemoniae. Eating one of its cherry-sized white berries is enough to sate hunger just as well as a full meal. Its leaves are fibrous and can be spun into thread, and its wood is easy to shape. This abundant plant can also feed animals, allowing refugees to have more varied resources.

In addition to these resources granting the bare minimum, clandestine resistance networks have allies even in Glacius. Tools and materials are embezzled and brought to the depths with infinite precautions. With them, tunnels are dug out to create an increasingly vast network.

The Underground City of Bitter Freedom

For millennia, freed prisoners have supported each other and endeavored to secretly help those still trapped in the ice. Doomed to stay on Gemoniae, they try to build a society as best they can. Bitter Freedom is their gathering place, located under the Frozen Plain. Having many different origins, they rarely spoke the same language, so with time, they created their own tongue: Gemonian. Some sednai involved in the secret war also speak it. In time, as the network grew more structured, techniques were honed. The rebels now have more confidence in their ability to go beyond mere survival.

Leaving Gemoniae?

The true challenge for the rebels and escapees is to find a way off Gemoniae. Only extreme solutions have been considered so far:

- **Overthrow Askinos.** According to the devils' complex rules of succession, a hospodar may be replaced by anyone who defeats them in their palace and sits upon their throne. Since the laws don't forbid a hospodar from being multiple beings, a group can become a collective hospodar. Therefore it would be theoretically possible to fight Askinos and become ruler of Gemoniae. From there, the kûshus could simply be ordered to let the rebels leave.
- **Take the portal by force.** Infiltrating or attacking the fortress guarding the Exiles' Gate may allow a small group of experienced fighters to leave Gemoniae by force. However, this solution leaves little hope of freedom for weaker people, like the elderly and children.
- **Create a new portal.** The portals of the Observatory of Cold Stars allow passage to other stellar places hostile to life. By using these portals or creating new ones—as experimental as the first ateaks!—it should be possible to leave for a mysterious elsewhere... and then, through twists and turns, maybe make it back to Eana?

Scott Timmerman (Order #3773135)



Kaan

A land of contrasts, Kaan is home to the famous steppes that have made such an impact on foreigners, as well as dense forests, vast swamps, and mountains that rise toward the sky. The countries of Kaan experience both freezing cold and torrid heat.

In this chapter, you will discover the large territories of the continent, from north to south:

- **Kartaçöl's Empire.** A rising power, led from Easafir by an emperor who is said to be immortal, Kartaçöl threatens Arolavia, Ghardat, and, of course, the Old Kaan.
- **Tili's Gulf.** Controlled mainly by hobgoblins, the gulf is a place of considerable pirate and corsair activity. City-states of varying importance maintain troubled relations with Kartaçöl.
- **The Telhika Mountains.** The birthplace of the goblin peoples, these mountains stretch to the outskirts of the accursed ruins of Mangulik, the destroyed capital of Tamerakh. It is a harsh region, often cut off from the rest of the world. Here, exiles and runaway slaves come in search of an impregnable refuge.
- **The Old Kaan.** The heart of Tamerakh's Empire was the great steppe that stretches for hundreds of miles from the coast to the last mountains to the east, near Mangulik. Along the River Nubil lie fertile crops and the Clay Cities. Once thriving city-states, they were all defeated and conquered by Tamerakh. Today, Khaalgany is the capital of a fragile territory, shaken by the call of war drums, an bvious prey for Kartaçöl. The East is an inhospitable region, covering the haunted surroundings of Mangulik and the deserts. The mountains beyond are said to contain many ruins of the Era of the Giants. Manbalarer, or the Land of Springs, refers to the mountains of the southeast and the forests that stretch nearby. The Ulkanijer, birthplace of the ulkani, lies in this region. It is also said to be regularly visited by dragons of all kinds.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Typical Kaani Names

The Kaani receive a first name at birth, but its usage may be replaced by a nickname reflecting an individual's deeds or talents.

Female First Names

Alsetseg, Amtyaluu, Ardanachimeg, Biyetei, Bolormya, Buyony, Chanamakh, Denzanve, Duuzoil, Edach, Edsetseg, Egveenluv, Ekhjargal, Enkhteya, Gbelsembu, Godogjim, Henbesh, Honmedhav, Idralyn, Khagookhan, Kharkhuni, Khavdarga, Khogjimduu, Khuitikhan, Khungoddyn, Khusetseg, Khuuralkh, Khybarmon, Mergensoo, Mokhsetseg, Nansetseg, Narantsetseg, Nogoobor, Nogoonerga, Orekduu, Oroinsetseg, Saikhangii, Saikhanyag, Sakhokh, Sarengaral, Shanebileg, Shiboroo, Shinesh, Todokhson, Todorkhavar, Tsatsagaan, Tsemirlog, Unabish, Uyonchimeg, Vsheesalkhi, Zulzamod.

Male First Names

Akhlakh, Ariunulyn, Azochne, Batbeyar, Bot-Erdega, Borokher, Changis, Daichinse, Erdmin-Tulhur, Ereedleger, Evdersenild, Gambaatar, Gantsulga, Gantzorig, Günoi, Jevtsun, Kharankhoi, Khar-Morin, Khatuusan, Kholuulyn, Khurtsild, Kubilai, Lhagvasur, Najankaatar, Neleenar, Nergoi, Kerogokh, Nogoonoi, Oiroltsulyn, Orgadol, Otgonbar, Saaral-Tarkhi, Sathiul, Sonoogch, Burentar, Sutukhan, Tamomsdog, Tomorbaar, Tsagaankher, Tsenkhertsus, Tsusnyild, Tsusnykhu, Tynkhalga, Ulaanild, Ulanuneg, Uulyn, Uulynoi, Yavakh-Arga, Yaraaldelger, Zevseg, Zunkhalga.

Nicknames and Dialects

Nicknames are neutral and can apply either to a man or a woman. Kaani is the vehicular language, but there are many dialects, almost one for every great tribe. Therefore, some nicknames may appear to be names simply because the original dialect is not understood. Three valiant archers might meet, one nicknamed Tez, the other Kharvaach, and the third Kamonchi, and none of them may know what the nickname of the other two means.

Bloody (Tsust), Brave (Zorigtoï), Chosen one (Saylangan), Cunning (Zalitaï), Dauntless (Erelkheg), Dexterous (Tez, Kharvaach, Kamonchi), Generous (Ögömör), Immortal (Ükheshgüi), Loyal (Ünench), Magic (Sehr), Pleasant (Saikhan), Rider (Chavandoz), Tempestuous (Shirüün), Strong (Kuchli), Triumphant (Yalalt), Warrior (Jangchi), Wise (Mergen), Wolf (Bo'ri).

Family Name

The use of the family name is subject to many variations. The following cases are most commonly encountered:

- **Birthplace.** The person is referred to by their birthplace, such as Besime of Kömirqala.
- **Filiation.** Sons may refer to themselves as sons of their father, with the father's first name and the suffix –khüü (-ogul in Kartaçöl); daughters may refer to themselves as daughters of their mother, with the mother's first name and the suffix –okhin (–kiz in Kartaçöl).
- **Lineage.** Families boasting a glorious ancestor happily refer to themselves as their descendants. In this case, the family name is based on the name or nickname of the ancestor, to which is added the suffix –qon or –tsus (blood of), or –nesil (usually in Kartaçöl).

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Kartaçöl

Located in a temperate zone, with plenty of fresh water, arable land, deep woods, and migratory game, Kartaçöl has many assets on which to build its future. Under the leadership of an immortal emperor, Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, it took a century for the empire to evolve from a simple city-state into a leading power. Its northern border is currently the Heavenly River, the Asmandariya, while in the south, the country stretches into the valleys of the Telhika Mountains. From his capital of Easafir, the emperor prepares his conquests with a mixture of ruthless ambition and idealism.

Some Points of Reference

Lexicon of Kartaçöl's Empire

Here are some typical Kartaçöl terms:

- **Afirînerê.** Name of Maker, as the Father Creator of all people and the main deity of Kartaçöl.
- **Egilmez.** Literally meaning "the unyielding", this name is given to the army of Kartaçöl. It is known to be accompanied by musicians using drums and brass instruments to play rhythmic melodies, both resolute and threatening. Its troops are diverse, incorporating talented warriors of all kinds. In particular, they include many hobgoblins. Prisoners of war sometimes pledge allegiance to the ruler of Kartaçöl and join his army.
- **Enelergurnama.** The enelergurnama, or "assembly of mothers", is also simply called gurnama (the assembly). Foreigners translate this as the Immortal's harem, or the great harem. The Ölümsiz is considered the father of the empire and, like Afirinerê, he has several wives to dispense his blessings. Representatives of each region of the empire (the eneler) are sent to the palace to join the gurnama, with the double duty of defending the interests of their community and promoting its harmonious inclusion into the empire. The number of eneler increases as the empire grows. Back when Kartaçöl was but a small kingdom, there were far fewer.
- **Gül.** Name of the local currency. 1 gül is equal to 1 copper coin; 10 gül are equal to 1 silver coin; and 100 gül are equal 1 gold coin. The gül competes with other currencies wherever Kartaçöl asserts itself.
- **Ilkral.** Literally means "king of first rank", or "first king among kings". It is the title of the ruler of Kartaçöl and implicitly emphasizes that he is destined to rule the world. Abroad, the title is translated as "emperor". In everyday life, ilkral is sometimes simply used to refer to the ruler.
- **Kartaçian.** What used to be one dialect among others in the vast continent of Kaan is gradually becoming a structured and distinct language.
- **Nesil (plural: nesiller).** This term means "generation" and refers to tradition. This is also a priesthood rank in the Church of Afirînerê in Kartaçöl. One may be a First, Second, Third, through to Eighth nesil. The nesiller of a given rank must respect and obey the nesiller of a higher generation. The highest rank is held by Patriarch Saglama, the First nesil.
- **Ölümsiz.** Literally means "immortal". This nickname specifically refers to Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, the current ruler. It is used as a mark of respect. Foreigners prefer the translation and more commonly use "the Immortal". Traditionally, one can have multiple titles, for example "Ilkral Ölümsiz, Sublime Sapient".
- **Pâdi.** A high-ranking officer and lord in the service of the empire. The term "pâdis" is sometimes used collectively to refer to the highly centralized and bureaucratic administration of the country. Pâdis may have civil (e.g., ambassador), military (general), or mixed (governor) functions. The title comes with privileges, including judicial protections. A pâdi can only be arrested by another pâdi, and can only be tried by the ilkral himself. The rank of pâdi is comparable to that of a nobleman, but is not transmissible to one's heirs. Additionally, much of the wealth of the pâdis is not personal, but instead attached to their office.
- **Sadik.** A civil servant in the service of the empire. Sadiks enjoy less exceptional protections and privileges than pâdis, but those they do receive are appealing enough to make it a very popular career. A sadik can hope to reach the rank of pâdi if they display enough competence and zeal.
- **Vizier.** A minister in the service of the sovereign.

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Key Dates

The Kartaçöl calendar is always based on the reign of the current ruler. The year 331 of the Free City Republic (the current year) corresponds to the year 88 of the Ölümsiz.

- **150 years ago.** Conquest of Easafir, a wealthy Ghardat trading post, by a horde led by the human Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl, creating a long-lasting enmity with the thalassocracy of the Sand Kingdoms. While the territory of Easafir is relatively modest, the conqueror Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl nevertheless decides to declare herself ilkral. In the following years, tensions between Ghardat and Kartaçöl continue to grow. Today still, Ghardat accuses Kartaçöl of heinous and inexcusable crimes, which the empire absolutely denies, instead blaming the former masters of Easafir for their depraved rule.
- **138 years ago.** Conqueror Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl dies of illness and leaves the throne to her youngest son, Parlak Aygir Kartaçöl, who is only 10 years old at the time. The child's father is unknown. Later, royal propaganda makes him the son of Afirînerê-Maker. The reign of Parlak Aygir Kartaçöl is divided between the early years, largely dominated by his advisors, and the later years, which see him come into his own.
- **102 years ago.** Birth of the current sovereign, Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl.
- **88 years ago.** The present ruler ascends to the throne. Rumors spread by traitors to the empire speak of the young man's ruthless ambition, and of his alleged involvement in the untimely deaths of many dignitaries and family members. According to official historians, these tragic passings were the result of a tormented era during which Kartaçöl was almost destroyed by the blows of its infamous enemies. More independent scholars agree that some of the deaths were accidental or war-related, but a few remain rather suspicious.
- **80 years ago.** Revelation of the immortality of the ruler Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, who takes the title of Ölümsiz, in addition to that of Ilkral. The country enters a phase of economic, political, and military expansion. What was once a small, prosperous city-state becomes a formidable armed power. Several wars follow one another and lead to the annexation of nearby tribes and small kingdoms.
- **Six years ago.** The ilkral Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, with his newly built navy, decides to extend his empire across the sea. He sets his sights on Arolavia and conquers Moramiek. He believes he can quickly defeat the troops of the karalieva and her disorganized vassals, but is thwarted by the unfailing determination of the Moon Guard.
- **One year ago.** Loss of Moramiek; this is the ruler's first defeat since the beginning of his reign. Start of the civil war in Cyrillane.
- **Eight months ago.** Opening of an embassy in Katafygia, capital of Boreia (see **Septentrion: Boreia**).
- **Six months ago.** Establishment of a powerful base at Delfini, in eastern Cyrillane. Officially, its purpose is to help the victims of the civil war, and it has, in fact, saved many lives. It is also a way to establish a bridgehead on this continent.



Scott Timmermans (Order #3973950)

Peoples of the Empire

A hobgoblin merchant speaks to bugbear and merosi soldiers about the misdeeds of pickpockets. They move aside to let human and orc children run and play together. Close by, a goblin musician plays the dombra. Such scenes are common here. The peoples of the empire are as varied as they are united.

United by a Shared Ideal

The Free City may see itself as the largest city in the world, and the richest when it comes to diversity, but Easafir is convinced it will overtake it in the near future. There is a major difference between the two cities: in the Free City, there are established community districts, while in Easafir, cultural homogeneity prevails. Ultimately, intermixing is much greater in the capital city of Kartaçöl.

Some people come from distant civilizations, but in order to live in Kartaçöl, they are encouraged to learn the local language, dress like the locals, and participate in the semi-civic, semi-religious celebrations that honor the reign of the Immortal. The empire is open to all, but cultural integration is a duty.

In light of this, one might think it an odious imposition; in reality, this cultural integration is relatively well accepted, even highly appreciated. The glory of Kartaçöl spills over onto everyone who takes its identity. Here, people are proud to be led by an immortal ruler, elected by the greatest of gods—Afirînerê—and are happy to support his campaigns.

A Closer Look

Easafir is an exception: because it attracts residents and visitors from all over, it does not accurately reflect the state of peoples in the empire.

- **Hobgoblins.** Hobgoblins form one of the largest populations. They are mainly employed as merchants, craftsmen, and soldiers. For a long time, they have been the link between city-states. They are usually the ones who spread news, discoveries, and knowledge. Many see Kartaçöl as typical of the hobgoblin spirit: cosmopolitan, open, inventive, cunning, diplomatic, complex, and refined. Many hobgoblins come to Kartaçöl, drawn by the hope of a bright future.
- **Humans.** For the most part, humans in Kartaçöl descend from settlers from the time of Ghardat's colony. The nobles did not survive the conquest. Those that did were common people, workers, craftsmen, farmers, and ranchers. The human populations also include former war slaves who were freed after swearing allegiance to the empire. Finally, there are also descendants of Kaani conquerors.
- **Merosi.** There are very few orcs in the Kartaçöl region, so the merosi present in the empire are almost exclusively the descendants of conquerors. They occupy a variety of positions and are closely integrated with the human population, with many weddings between these peoples.
- **Goblins.** Goblins are very numerous in the empire, in all positions and in all social circles. Ingenious, determined, and resilient, they have established themselves as essential elements of society.
- **Bugbears and aldaron.** Bugbears and aldaron are practically kindred spirits. It comes as a bit of a surprise to outsiders, since they are so different in appearance, but their spiritual connection is very real. They both mostly follow the druidic tradition, and few of them are willing to honor the immortal emperor. Those who become full-fledged members of the Kartaçöl population are usually left at odds with their original tribe. Ündsenoin hunters come to Easafir to sell their furs and buy the goods they lack. The style of their clothing leaves no doubt as to their status as foreigners.
- **Kobolds.** Kobolds are quite populous in the Telhika Mountains, very close to the present border of the empire. More and more tribes are seduced by the possibilities offered to them in a country as prosperous and open as Kartaçöl.
- **Orcs and ulkani.** These species are especially common in the southern half of the continent. Their presence in Kartaçöl's Empire gradually increases as its prestige grows, but they are still very much a minority.
- **Rare peoples.** Individuals of virtually all origins can be found in Easafir. They are welcome as long as they respect the institutions of the empire and show, through their behavior, a willingness to integrate themselves. Whether they are drow, dragonborn, or tieflings, each is judged solely by the actions they undertake as part of their oath of allegiance to the Immortal.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Conquerors' Descendants

While in the rest of Kaan, every individual has the right to say they are the child of a hero—whether this is true or not—this custom is closely regulated in Kartaçöl's Empire. Not everyone can bear a name ending in –nesil, as it is reserved for the descendants of the conquerors who walked with the ezen Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl. These are merosi, humans, goblins, and hobgoblins. Each founding house is duly registered in the archives of Easafir: Kalênesil, Sazannesil, Talannesil, Seliknesil, Eyüpnesil, Hincalnesil, Hünernesil, Kezbannesil, and many others. Since the ezen's force was an army, very few people can boast about knowing all the founding lineages by heart. A few impostors do try to take advantage of it, but the sentences incurred are very heavy—frightening, horrible, and disproportionate in the eyes of outsiders.

There is no nobility in Kartaçöl, in the sense that no public office is hereditary. On the other hand, some houses have commercial and political interests, each generation taking on new, high positions in the administration, the army, or religious institutions. What inheritance does not allow, friendship networks facilitate.

Mixed Marriages

There is nothing I love more about my travels than discovering the culture of my hosts during parties! Thanks to merchant friends who introduced me, and to the amicable curiosity induced by my status as a foreigner, I was invited to the wedding of Dîlman and Medya. To my great surprise, they were a merosi and a hobgoblin, respectively. In my country, official unions only take place if they can be fruitful and provide a foundation of alliance between lineages through future births.

A little puzzled, I tried, as tactfully as possible, to inquire about the customs here. Little by little, I realized that institutions are based on the example set by the Immortal. He was married—at least symbolically—to women of all peoples. Creating a bond, whether of friendship, love, or loyalty, takes precedence over the potential fruits of the outcome. Marriage celebrates the will to live together and build a common future. The priests of Afirînerê bless this impulse.

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm



Scott Timmerman (Order #39781950)

Easafir, the Capital

An ancient port, an overcrowded city, the capital of an empire, Easafir is a place of meetings, adventures, opportunities, and mysteries. It is built at the mouth of the River Bereket, near a large marsh known to be a nesting and roosting site for migratory birds from the south. At certain times of the year, the sky seems to be filled with them, so much so that a common saying is that all you have to do is shoot blindly into the air to bring one down. The city itself is towered over by a great palace surrounded by high walls, a veritable fortress within the city. The Old Town of Easafir was built according to a harmonious and methodical plan. Since the conquest, it has continued to grow rapidly. The pâdis and merchants had palaces built in proportion to their success. These luxurious houses adjoin overcrowded and hastily built dwellings. The original walls have long since been overrun. A second wall has been built, and a third is already being planned to encompass the growing suburbs. In this noisy and lively atmosphere, the city parks are oases of calm and serenity. Several gardens have been planted, adorned with fountains, arbors of jasmine, and paths bordered by elegant cypress trees. Lovers, poets, and musicians gather here to rest; families and friends come to picnic on summer evenings.



Emblem of Easafir

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



1. Easafir's Necropolis
2. Popular District of Haliç
3. Hamlet of Kocakari
4. Fort Kuzeykapisi
5. The Guild of Eltoz, the Hand of Dust
6. The Great Caravanserai of Saint Mehabad
7. The Great Temple of the Father
8. The Triumphal Arches
9. Barinaki's Port
10. Arsenal
11. The Covered Market
12. The Breeze Garden
13. Yokarysyk, the Imperial Palace

Iconic Locations of Easafir

Easafir's Necropolis

On the north bank of the Bereket, past the Merchants' Bridge, the new necropolis stretches on both sides of the Pilgrims' Road. More and more people who could not find accommodations in the city settle here, between the tombs and mausoleums. Amid unsavory people, one might also find gravediggers, impoverished freedmen, and migrants in search of a better life.

Executions take place outside the city, in the Moor of Murmurs, an arid place far to the northeast of the necropolis. This infamous site is a chaos of granite overgrown with tall grass. The condemned must make amends in front of the Great Temple of the Father Creator, then walk to the Moor. The methods of execution are highly varied, reflecting the creativity of Maker in the darkest way, the purpose generally being to translate sins into visible symbols of transgression. Death by crucifixion is quite common. According to some scholars, this custom is rooted in ancient dark magic practices. This may explain the persistent rumors about the presence of warlocks and fiends in the area.

The Mouth of the River Bereket

On the south bank of the Bereket, nearly a quarter of Easafir is built on a floodplain. The vast, popular district of Haliç is built there. Bordered by many small fishing ports, it also houses commercial ports along the river and a few marinas for the boats of the city's powerful who wish to take to the water.

Wooden bridges connect Haliç to nearby islands of silt, from where one can take a ferry to the hamlet of Kocakari, built on stilts on the north bank. According to the legend, an old witch lived there for a long time before she was chased away by Maker's chosen ones. She is said to have transformed into a heron and to be still prowling around, hoping to one day take her revenge.

Originally, the entire estuary was a swampy area of silty islets covered with papyrus reeds and willows: the Sazlikorman. Today, only the north bank still acts as a natural shelter for birds, particularly migratory ones. A true maze, it changes with the seasons and the tides. It is mostly inhabited by poor fishermen, who live exposed to varying water levels and mosquitoes. The rich and powerful come here to hunt, in which case small boats are provided to the hunters, while more luxurious crafts are for attendants and spectators, who picnic on the water.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731930)

Fort Kuzeykapisi

Located on the north bank of the River Bereket, Fort Kuzeykapisi is connected to Easafir by a fortified bridge, and oversees a second bridge for civilian use. Thanks to the layout of Gladius and Spear Avenues, the army not only monitors the entrances and exits, but can also rapidly intervene in the city.

The Guild of Eltoz, the Hand of Dust

The Hand of Dust is a small guild of moneylenders led by Nesrew, a hobgoblin. It is located in the district of Haliç, near the mouth of the River Bereket. Rumor has it that the Hand dabbles in criminal activities typical of a thieves' guild, while others believe the group to be doing the government's dirty work.

The Great Caravanserai of Saint Mehabad

Saint Mehabad was one of Maker's chosen ones and also one of the first eneler of the Immortal. This hobgoblin was a shrewd merchant who carved out a reputation by developing infrastructure, among which was the Great Caravanserai.

According to legend, Mehabad designed the building with hidden foundations and rooms holding secrets and riddles. It is sometimes said that the Salt Circle, a group of assassins operating in many countries, comes here on a regular basis (see **Free City, Criminal Underworld: The Salt Circle**).

The Great Temple of the Father

There are many temples in the city, most of them dedicated to Maker, although a few establishments honoring other deities are tolerated. The Great Temple of the Father, at the junction of Spear and Saint Avenues, is a majestic, always bustling sanctuary. People come to obtain blessings for their daily activities or future endeavors. The square and adjoining gardens are also popular meeting places.

The Triumphal Arches

At the junction of Gladius Avenue and Spear Avenue stands a high monument celebrating the triumphs of the Kartaçöl dynasty and, now, of the Immortal. With each new victory a column, statue, or secondary arch is added to an already baroque ensemble. The Crossroads of Triumphs is a place of meeting and the streets are often very congested.

Barinaki's Port

Barinaki's port is Easafir's oldest port, located on a natural bay at the foot of Old Town Hill.

An ancient lighthouse stands on a peak at the northwestern tip, which can only be accessed by a long, narrow staircase carved into the rock. Many accidents have occurred here, and the most superstitious are convinced that the lighthouse is haunted.

The northwestern half of the harbor is used by merchant ships. Here also, privateer ships from Tili's Gulf sail in to sell their plunder with the ilkral's blessing.

The southeastern half of the port is reserved for the Kartaçöl navy. The arsenal was built right into the port, surrounded by fortifications integrated into the second city wall. The barracks of the empire's sailors are also located there.

The Covered Market of the First Wall

Easafir's primary place of trade, this covered market near the palace is a prestigious place. People come here to gaze upon the works of the best craftsmen in the country, to find the rarest products, to eat the finest foods, and to engage in ruthless negotiations. From above, one might only see stalls bunched together; in fact, the market is much larger, as it also includes several levels of underground warehouses, dug into the hill and accessed from heavily guarded passages in the second wall.

The Breeze Garden

Stretching to the southwest of Old Town Hill, the Breeze Garden is a terrace shaded by cypresses and stone pines, where one can gaze upon the sea while wandering the gardens and the mosaics of carefully tended flowers.

In the past, the eneler often came here to take the air and escape the confines of the palace, but those are bygone days ever since the scandalous misconduct of the merosi eneler, Nexsin. She is said to have used the shady kiosks and nooks of the Breeze Garden to meet with her lovers. She was ignominiously executed after a short trial. Some claim that she was actually the victim of a plot to prevent her from revealing some of the Immortal's secrets.

Yokarysyk, the Imperial Palace

Surrounded by high walls, Yokarysyk Palace is a city within the city. It holds large squares, several lodges, a temple to Maker, the gurnama quarters, a number of magnificent gardens, kitchens, warehouses, and even a prison reserved for political criminals that the sovereign wants to keep close by. One can access the palace complex through a single large gate, as majestic as it is strictly controlled, while soldiers constantly guard the ramparts.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Gadagan, the Sealed Mausoleum of Ghardat's Princes

The name Gadagan (also called the Forbidden) is only spoken with superstitious restraint. It is the name given to the ancient mausoleum of the city's notables, from a time when it served as a trading post for Ghardat.

During conquest, the violence and cruelty of Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl's troops led to a major massacre whose details today—whether real or fictitious—curdle one's blood. It ended when several inhabitants, many of whom held high positions in Ghardat's society, were entombed alive in a burial complex that also included an underground temple of Death. Ancient treasures may still remain intact, safe from the plunder of the conquerors. Some people wonder why anyone would dispose of weak victims by sealing the accesses to this underground place. Were they actually protecting themselves from something else threatening to emerge?

These days, all known entrances have been buried under the foundations of off-limit buildings near the Breeze Garden. The regime's dignitaries even deny the existence of Gadagan. Many horror stories, involving ghosts or even sünsutaa, are spread about the place. Supposedly, their absolute hatred toward Kartaçöl and desire for revenge still burn strong, ready to spring up from the buried complex. Priests of Death reputedly know details about the events and the state of the condemned temple.

The most optimistic believe that the prisoners of the sealed mausoleum managed to escape through the bottomless well of the temple. Filled to the brim with water, it is so deep that anyone who dives in faces almost certain death. However, it is said that those whose prayers are heard by Death can actually reach the surface of another well, in another of the deity's temples somewhere else on Eana. There may thus be a slim hope that the condemned escaped the horror of a slow death.

The City of Cats

Mewling and yowling. It never stops. The whole town, from the old cemetery to the harbor, is full of cats. They hunt mice and rats, keeping an eye out for offal and food given by the locals. Considered protectors, they are accepted everywhere despite their invasiveness and pilfering. Some are regulars of a shop or terrace. Watching over cats is a sort of moral duty for many inhabitants, who can tell countless anecdotes about this or that feline—its history, habits, personality, and the places it frequents. All these cats are at the heart of invented tales and stories. To sympathize with someone, a good approach often consists of talking about the small, purring hunters in the neighborhood—though a minority of people sullenly endure the animals' presence.

Aside from the role they play in the lives of city dwellers, cats are also said to be the preferred familiars of Easafir's wizards. During a long evening, one of my companions surreptitiously told me that polymorphing into cats is quite common. Apparently, it allows the Immortal's spies to observe undetected. It is said that many alchemists regularly brew potions of polymorph *to meet the demands of their clientele.*

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm

Scott Timpermans (Order #35731350)

The Secret Kingdom of Anakedi Cats

The anakedi are an urban legend in Easafir. Supposedly, they are a species of cats as intelligent as humanoids, posing as ordinary felines while pursuing their goals. These creatures are said to have their own feyland, accessible through secret portals that only they can see. The most superstitious believe that they are here, there, and everywhere, carrying out strange plots and secret wars.

Uncommon Fey

When they think of fey, people imagine ethereal creatures hidden in the heart of the wilderness. For the anakedi, it's almost the opposite: these creatures wander the streets with both insolence and grace, hidden in plain sight thanks to their feline form. If necessary, they can also use their innate affinity for abjuration magic. Their entire strategy is based on observation, stealth, and elusion. They use the naivety of humanoids and follow them closely, even going so far as to sleep in houses like actual pets.

The Secret Plans of the Anakedis

Several anakedi factions operate in Easafir. Some have allied themselves with the ilkral and actively help the authorities, sometimes with ulterior motives. Conversely, others are very concerned about Kartaçöl's rapid increase in power and closely monitor the situation.

Anakedi Factions and Figures

Taçgüne

The Sun Crown faction is welcome at the Immortal's palace. These anakedi offered him the artifact that helped him to begin his endless reign. What did they receive in return? The power they hold behind the pâdis seems to be one of their motivations.

Aygözleri

The Eyes of the Moon are a group of ambivalent anakedi. They help Kartaçöl's intelligence, giving them information of vital importance, but their reservation suggests that they may not be as ardent supporters as the Taçgüne. In well-informed circles, they are suspected of seeking certain formidable artifacts, or of leading a conspiracy against the Taçgüne. Another theory makes them scholars seeking to understand the cycles of the moon Eternity more deeply; with Kartaçöl gathering so many Fate-chosen, the empire makes an ideal place of study to delve into the mysteries of destiny.



Nefesrhu

The Breath of the Soul is a faction dedicated to freedom. In particular, it does not accept that a power as great as immortality has been entrusted to Kartaçöl's ruler. These proud rebels gather in small clandestine groups to carry out independent targeted actions. Some are philosophers who hope to inspire humanoids while keeping them in the dark, others have a preference for grand blitz actions, sometimes involving ambushes or burglaries.

Balıkölüm

The Dead Fish are mainly composed of extremely cynical outcasts. They do not appreciate the authority and arrogance of the anakedi close to Kartaçöl's power, but unlike the Nefesrhu, they favor a subtle and opportunistic undermining activity. They are often close to thieves' guilds.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9779149)

The Eclipse District

The anakedi once had allies among Urban Shadows, a particular archetype of ranger who can develop a bond with Eana in the very heart of the most lively cities (see **Adventurers**, **Ranger, Ranger Archetypes: Urban Shadow**). Together, with the help of arcanists experienced in the school of illusion, they created the Eclipse District in Easafir. Contrary to what the name might suggest, it is not a single place, but rather a network of spaces inserted in the Material Plane and linked together. An alleyway in the Eclipse District can start in a dead end and lead to an avenue on the other side of Easafir through a supernatural shortcut.

A Place Between the Material and Ethereal Planes

Life in the Eclipse District is very intense and has its peculiarities. This wonderful and magical place has gradually welcomed a larger population, as the original inhabitants invited those they considered trustworthy who, in turn, did the same. Now, it is home to anakedi, arcanists, rebels, thieves, undercover spies, and well-informed adventurers.

Here is an overview of the characteristics of the Eclipse District:

- **Knowing the way.** Powerful illusions conceal all entrances to the Eclipse District, in addition to an ethereal border geomagic effect (see **Grimoire**, **Geomagic: Ethereal Border**). Only a well-informed person can use the passageways and pass through the false walls leading to the squares, streets, and inner courts.
- **Perpetual twilight.** The Eclipse District is always shrouded in darkness, shifting between twilight and dark night. For this reason, permanent lanterns are installed everywhere, casting various shades of light.
- **Places to live.** The Eclipse District is similar to the rest of Easafir in that it comprises alleys, houses, and shops. These places are secret, accessible only to those who know how to enter the district.
- **Passages to the Ethereal Plane.** Flaws in the architecture of the Eclipse District lead to the Ethereal Plane, exposing the area to recurring manifestations of wraiths, ghosts, and sünsutaa. All these incorporeal undead are a constant threat that should not be underestimated!

Shadow Bazaar

Similar to Easafir's Covered Market, the Shadow Bazaar is a maze of craft shops, cafés, and restaurants. Everything can be found here, from poisons and potions to ancient stories, forbidden maps, and cursed weapons.

Since the architecture of the Eclipse District is not limited by the strict rules of physics of the Material Plane, it allows oddities that defy logic. Labyrinths and traps await greedy thieves seeking to plunder the reserves of talented mirafactors and alchemists.



Scott Timmerman (Order #3773430)

Figures of Easafir's Shadows

Thyme-Flower Xebat

Xebat is a human who wanders the city, wearing a thyme flower in his lapel. He refers to himself as a facilitator and seems to be quite knowledgeable. He dodges questions with jokes or by playing the fool. He is familiar with the story of Nexsin, the merosi eneler who was executed after a scandal in the Breeze Garden. Indeed, she was part of his family, and he has found a lead to shed light on this conspiracy. He has to be very careful, because as soon as his enemies find out who he is, they will use radical means to silence him.

Sabriya the Tiefling, Priestess of Death

Lightly dressed so she can flaunt her tattooed skin, Sabriya likes to dance in the taverns of the Hiçal District. When she laughs out loud, her heavy pendants jingle. Who would imagine this lively young woman with short, black hair is a priestess of Death? And yet, she is indeed involved in serious and dangerous affairs. The immortality of the ilkral and the growing fanaticism of his followers have Sabriya worried. Action must be taken, but the obstacles are great.

Midya, Purveyor of Fine Wines

Midya is a melessë approaching thirty. Her face sports a birthmark, but she exudes a certain charisma and self-confidence that quickly makes you forget her flaw. She presents herself as a wine merchant born in Cyrillane, now working between several countries. In reality, she is a Ghardat agent on a mission and has contacts with members of the Raqisa. In Easafir, she has to be extremely careful.



Scott Timmerman (Order #3073150)

Nesrew, the Pawnbroker

Nesrew the hobgoblin is the leader of the Hand of Dust pawnbrokers' guild, but actually, a significant part of his income comes from his criminal activities. He acts as an intermediary for the recruitment of assassins, pirates, or pragmatic adventurers, either in Kartaçöl's Empire or abroad. Although his trade is mainly suited to unscrupulous individuals, those who know him well also know that he is quite superstitious. In particular, he believes that dreams are fragments of the Astral Plane, meaning they must be imbued with divine essence and are a higher truth that must be listened to.

Tâjdin, the Beggar

This old and blind melessë beggar is guided by Dilsah, an orphan girl as poor as he is. Together, they travel the city and recite poems to attract the attention of passers-by and call on their generosity. It is said that Tâjdin knows the city and its history by heart, and this is almost no exaggeration. He was a member of the clergy of Death at the time of Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl's conquest, and lost his sight during the assault. He lived through dark hours and never really recovered from what happened. He is the only person still alive to have seen Gadagan, the walled mausoleum.



Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Easafir's Figures of Power

Eneler Açelya of Cesmarassa

A hobgoblin from a merchant family of the holy city of Cesmarassa, Açelya is an eneler. Like her predecessors, she has thus far succeeded in defending her native territory. She is an ardent defender of local peculiarities and customs, and is opposed to cultural standardization.

Eneler Exter of Shüd'delkhii

A refined eneler from the mysterious city of Shüd'delkhii, Exter proudly displays her wealth and doesn't deny herself any sort of luxury. Of course, she enjoys telling anyone who will listen that she owes her rise in status to her tenacity and talent, having escaped from a modest lifestyle. Exter's supporters praise her authenticity and pragmatism, the eneler always standing ready to use her great means to solve problems. Conversely, her opponents describe her as a narcissistic and opportunistic liar, totally devoid of conscience, always gossiping or scheming.

Naskê, the Eneler Druid

The aldaron druid Naskê unintentionally became the eneler of Ündsenoin. She intended to negotiate with the Immortal's agents, to make them understand the sacredness of the primeval forest, the importance of the maelossas and of Yksittaïnen, the oldest tree. Alas, she was lured into a trap, captured, and then held as a hostage. Ever since, she has kept blaming herself for her past idealism and naivete. She is now locked up in Yokarysyk Palace, living in a life of luxury under constant watch. She is being used both to put pressure on her relatives and to learn more about the forces that the tribal warriors could mobilize. As for Naskê, she is desperate to escape.

Officer Rêwan

This charismatic merosi, famed for his riding skills, gradually rose to prominence in the army. He is one of the most promising officers of his generation, someone who knows how to stay calm and focused when under pressure, but also how to creatively find unexpected solutions. As a reward for his exploits, he has been granted access to the palace and can hope to marry one of the eneler before becoming a powerful pâdi.
But he does have a weakness: gambling. He likes to make bets, to take risks, and to try his luck when all seems lost. Thieves' guilds know how to recognize this kind of individual and gradually bind them to their addiction and debts.

Saglama, the First Nesil

The highest religious office in the empire is held by a hobgoblin called Saglama the Sagacious, First nesil. He leads all nesiller honoring Afirînerê. An advisor to the emperor, Saglama lets himself be guided more and more by hermetic prophecies and signs that he interprets as encouragement toward establishing the worship of a single god, whose son and messenger is the Ölümsiz. When he is not in Easafir, Saglama inaugurates great new temples in the provinces, or visits the ruins of temples that his agents have uncovered.
He is very wary of the city-state of Shüd'delkhii, convinced that its leaders are biding time in order to accomplish some evil spell.

Officer Sakar

The chief of the Immortal's personal guard, Sakar is one of the few ulkani in Easafir. He is a brooding warrior, disinclined to joke. Vigilant to the point of inflexibility, he leaves no room for mistakes. His attention to detail and his quest for perfection are combined with a will to train the younger generation. From time to time, he goes to Synagçöl to supervise the final tests that will help select the future members of the elite troops. The rest of his time is devoted to the scrupulous protection of the palace and the capital.

Ziret, the Ilkral's Hand

A rigorist mystic, yet ever smiling and gentle, Ziret is a frightening paradox for those who have to deal with the ilkral's right-hand man. He is responsible for implementing the emperor's decisions, as well as for coordinating the entire complex bureaucratic machinery of the empire. He collects reports from spies and diviners. His love for his sovereign is boundless and he is ready to make any sacrifice to bring his vision to fruition.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9778195)

Traveling in Kartaçöl's Empire

Mother,
I traveled through Kartaçöl. With my axe beak Somurktan, I roamed the roads of this country. Wherever I stopped, I watched and listened so that the Sansli tribe can make a decision. What is the offer to join the empire worth? What place can we kobolds hope for? This letter should reach you through a hobgoblin guide I trust. His story should also interest you. As for me, I want to push a little further north, toward Ündsenoin, the primeval forest. The goblins there have received the same proposals that we have, but they seem dissatisfied. I'd like to know more. In the meantime, I hope that finding out about these special places in Kartaçöl will allow you to travel a little with me, in spirit.
Your son, always,

Cengo



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Döwuldioküz

My journey through the empire began riding down from the mountains to Döwuldioküz Moor. Only herders live here, in the valleys in winter and at high altitudes in summer. In the wild pastures, you can see ruins dominated by monumental bull statues. Some of them can be approached, but it is said that illusions conceal access to the most important ancient sites. Seeing the poverty of the people here, I can hardly imagine how their ancestors were such great builders. A local story says that a curse weakened their blood, causing many to fall ill around the age of 40, aging prematurely.

Pâdi Hawraz has recently arrived. He's been given the mission to integrate this desolate land into the empire. I'm sure the poor man thought that being in charge of a region would be more prestigious.

Monastery of Döretmek

Originally, Döretmek was a monastery dedicated to Maker, built on the road that pilgrims traveled on their way to the distant Pillars of Creation. When Kartaçöl adopted its particular approach to the worship of the god, the holy place was prompted to follow the orthodox dogma established in the capital of Easafir. The change was not without difficulties, and some people suspected monks of concealing heretical sacred texts, or supporting enemies of the empire.

The authorities of the cult of the Father Creator helped build a bridge across the Heavenly River, the Asmandariya. They also set up a center for the training of followers here, attracting many zealous young people who outnumber the last monks of the olden days. No doubt Easafir hopes to sweep the problem under the rug without causing a scandal, by claiming this respected holy place.

Are we ready to embrace the worship of the Father Creator?

The Carçuwa Fields

The Carçuwa Fields, southeast of Easafir, are the most fertile region of the empire. The territory is tightly controlled by several pâdis. Everything is very orderly, with well-defined plots of land, lined with cypress trees to shield them from the wind, as well as quickset hedges where berry bushes grow. There are many goblins here. Some of them are rich farm owners, but most of them are day laborers going from place to place to find work.

The villages along the main roads always have roadhouses for horsemen. They are used primarily by messengers of the empire who can gallop almost all the way. There are also small strongholds, and everything is arranged so that the army can get very quickly to the borders of the country, at the foot of the Telhika Mountains.

The Yyrtmak Mines

People who leave the capital via the Mountain Road, and then branch off to the southeast after the Carçuwa Fields, will arrive in the grim mining region of Yyrtmak. This large dustbowl was dug by following a deep silver vein, but other metals are also extracted. Rebellious slaves are sent here till the end of their lives, either dying of exhaustion, or at the hands of horrors from the Netherworld.

Cesmarassa, the Holy City

An ancient town built on holy springs, Cesmarassa watches over the source of the Heavenly River, the Asmandariya, in the northern part of the Telhika Mountains. Water springs up from everywhere, and many sources are hot. There are as many pilgrims as there are ill people, both having come to commune with the spirits in the hope that they will listen to their prayers. I felt a strange atmosphere as I walked through the pine woods with white stones, and in the baths dug into the rock. I couldn't explain it. It was as if something was calling me to go further east...

Here, people know many legends and stories about the Bail Empire. It is said that there are temples and places where they studied the course of fate. It doesn't really feel like you're in the empire here. I think it is because of the eneler of this area pushing to retain their local customs over those of the empire. If our tribe decides to join Kartaçöl, the choice of our eneler will be decisive for our future.

Synagçöl's Officer Academy

The Desert of Trials is a rugged region, a rocky maze with richly colored stones and harsh vegetation. A prestigious school for officers of the Immortal's army is found there, whose students undergo perilous training of which little is known, other than that they learn how to ride griffons.

The Jadymna Academy

An official academy of magic, Jadymna is built on the westernmost point of Kartaçöl. This tower is located on a rocky island surrounded by reefs and, with the exception of magic, can only be reached by a suspension bridge. Any who experience the Awakening in the empire must study there, under the tutelage of the clergy of the Father Creator. I don't know how they control the students. I've heard that they are just imitating the customs of Old Kaan, but some whisper that the methods used here go beyond discipline. Those who adhere to the rules suffer no abuse, but rebellious spirits are said to disappear.

Awakened foreigners must declare themselves and ask permission to practice their art in Easafir. When a tribe joins the empire, the status of their Awakened depends on the negotiations. This aspect must not be neglected!

Söhröldi Mausoleum

The mausoleum of the conqueror and founder of the Kartaçöl lineage, Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl, is located northeast of Easafir, beyond the necropolis and the terrifying Moor of Murmurs. It used to be a splendid place, a true palace, with several buildings decorated with double rows of colonnades, paved esplanades, fountains, and ponds. For a long time, those who claimed to be related to Kartaçöl came here for private reflection. All of the conquerors' descendants and their close relatives were buried here.

Eighty years ago, just before the ilkral revealed his immortality, he made a final journey here. Since then, access has been strictly forbidden. A small contingent of the emperor's followers protect the place from looters. The closure of the Kartaçöl mausoleum was a statement that death would no longer have a hold on the Ölümsiz, but some still wonder whether there is more behind this decision than meets the eye.

Scott Timmermans (Order #3973435)

The Immortal's Ambitions

The title of Immortal (or Ölümsiz in Kartaçian) is not a metaphor: the sovereign Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl does not age and seems invulnerable.

The New Father Creator

The Ölümsiz is described by imperial propaganda as the agent of Afirînerê's divine will, and the world's new Father Creator.

The clergy of Afirînerê-Maker in Kartaçöl's Empire is organized according to a strict hierarchy that must mirror the myths of creation. Ranks are organized according to a pyramidal structure called nesil, or generation. The high priest is Saglama the Sagacious, the First nesil who leads all nesiller. A close advisor to the Ölümsiz, Saglama has enforced an increasingly harsh policy toward other religions. Participating in the rites honoring the Father Creator is now practically mandatory, with members of other religions being asked to exercise restraint, discretion, and even conversion.

The extreme glorification of the figure of the Father of Plenty is also achieved through the commissioning of works of art, the construction of monuments, and the passing of laws giving extensive privileges to fathers of families. They are considered the image of the ruler within their community, their duty being to convey the values of the empire. Although women enjoy many of the same freedoms as men, their role in Kartaçöl is more limited. Above all, they are destined to be mothers of a growing and prosperous population. Their role is purely advisory and they are not to make decisions, like the institution of the enelergurnama. In order to fulfill their function, women must remain as safe and distant from fighting and threats as they're able, living in comfort made possible by the father's wisdom and kindness.



The Enelergurnama

I believed harems to be an absurd idea straight out of a fantasy, and that such a practice could never be perpetuated like this. But I can think of no better word to convey what Kartaçöl's assembly of mothers, the enelergurnama, is all about.

The emperor calls women of all backgrounds, from all regions, to come to his palace. This gathering of female representatives is unique. Some eneler were appointed by their communities to promote the interests of their region in the capital. Some are war slaves. From what I've heard, the ilkral tried capturing the karalieva—the ruler of Arolavia!—to make her an eneler slave! I can well imagine the Arolavian anger at such an insult.

However, the gurnama is fortunately not always so scandalous. Most of the eneler live in Yokarysyk Palace and hold administrative positions. Those with artistic, artisanal, or intellectual talents are free to pursue their passions here. They receive emissaries from their region in order to facilitate relations between the capital and these remote territories. Even a war slave eneler has an important rank. A captive eneler's life is limited to the palatial grounds, however, whereas a free eneler has liberty to leave the palace, whether to walk the city or to visit her family for important events.

All eneler are symbolically married to the emperor during their service, but most only see him from a distance. After spending twelve years at the palace, and provided they do not have children to the ilkral, they can either marry a pâdi, receive an office of their own (such as becoming an ambassador, for example), or return to their country.

For eneler who become mothers—a pleonasm, if one is fussy about such things—the situation is different. They are required to remain in the palace until their child either comes of age or dies. Living with an immortal father must be strange. The Ölümsiz is more than a hundred years old, but is said to look no more than forty. He has already buried many children. I don't quite understand what the emperor's policy is. He surrounds himself with women, has so many children that the inhabitants of the empire have stopped counting, but these princes and princesses are treated with distrust. It is said that some have spent their lives in the palace prisons because their father thought them too rebellious. Others have the opportunity to see the world, becoming soldiers or artists. In spite of their parentage, nothing is done to prepare them to inherit the power of a father destined to reign long after their death.

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Prisoners of War and Integration

There are many prisoners of war in a conquering empire. Their fate depends on the outcome of the conflict. They can be held for ransom or tribute, or they can be enslaved. This status, however, is always temporary in the empire.

Regularly, the Ölümsiz arranges great emancipation ceremonies during which thousands of slaves regain their freedom on the condition that they swear loyalty to the emperor. They are given financial aids and offered jobs. Everything is done so that the newcomers won't regret their new allegiance and have every reason to support the expansion of the empire.

Behind this glamorous front, the fate of rebellious or resistant slaves, on the other hand, is often tragic. The trip to the Yyrtmak Mines is often one-way only. The most troublesome are executed like rebels or bandits, crucified at crossroads or along the roads.

Present Power Relationships

Tension is high around Kartaçöl and the Ustalva Sea. While the powers directly concerned, such as Arolavia, Ghardat, and the Old Kaan, have made a clear decision (even if it is sometimes partly secret), many other territories hesitate. The Free City and the powerful dwarven houses of the Drakenbergen, for example, remain remarkably silent, as does the Steinbank. Why would they involve themselves with these distant problems? To ally with one party would be to infuriate its enemies. A cautious form of neutrality is very common. This involves sending agents to observe what is happening to the various players, in order to be ready to act if and when the time comes. Merchant princes from Ajagar and the Sand Kingdoms, meanwhile, seem to opt for calculated neutrality. They openly pretend not to interfere, but behind the scenes they negotiate with the different factions, feigning support for them in secret, to gain something regardless of the conflict's outcome. Finally, there are those who choose a mercenary lifestyle. They forego any long-term strategy and are content to seize opportunities as they arise. Among those are cynical nobles, ambitious merchants, and venturous pirate captains.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Greedy Eyes Set on Ündsenoin, the Primeval Forest

The Septentrion was long seen as a barbaric land whose only resources were wood and fur, but the settling and expansion of Boreia offered a new perspective on the region. Strengthened by their supreme creator god, the most zealous supporters of Kartaçöl's power consider the druids of the primeval forest to be weak and backward idealists. Now is the time for change, for conquest, and for glory. Ündsenoin's lands and woods are resources to be used, no matter what the aldaron or bugbear tribes in the area think.
Not all of Kartaçöl's inhabitants share such an arrogant world view, but even moderates tend to hope that, through persuasion and diplomacy, they can change the region by supplanting the chaotic wilderness with the civilized creations of humanoids.

A Fragile Alliance with Shüd'delkhii's Hobgoblins

For now, Kartaçöl remains on good terms with the sinister and secretive city of Shüd'delkhii, in Tili's Gulf. Kartaçöl hires its well-trained troops, but it hasn't taken an oath of loyalty, despite the best efforts of the ilkral's emissaries. The hobgoblins have their own agenda and try to keep the balance of power in a state beneficial to them.
The eneler Exter is a high-ranking hobgoblin sent to Easafir. She is both a gurnama ambassador and a spy. This experienced warlock is aware that her position is both dangerous and useful. She has a lot of leeway and seeks to promote her own interests as well as those of her terrifying city-state.

Ghardat's Deep-Rooted Resentment



If the merchant princes of Ghardat hold such a deep hatred for Kartaçöl, it is largely due to the extreme violence of the conquering of Easafir. Many prominent personalities of the time were massacred, and most notables were buried alive in the city's mausoleum. Since then, relations between the two countries have been tainted by escalating pursuits for revenge, with assassins and personal quarrels compounding national conflicts of interest and mutual sabotage.
Today, this cloak-and-dagger struggle continues, although the stakes seem modest in view of the open conflict with Arolavia and, soon enough, with the Old Kaan. The ilkral still harasses Ghardat's kingdom through privateers and spies, though only with rather moderate forces, as he knows that the merchant princes of the Sand Kingdoms have no desire to lead a full armed conflict. Meanwhile, others are ready for open war, making those fronts more pressing.

Scott Timmerman (Orde - 39731950)

On the Arolavian Matter

It is an understatement to say that relations between Kartaçöl and Arolavia are abysmal. The karalieva is still as incensed now as she was several years ago, when she was asked to send her younger sister—and current heiress—as a delegate to the gurnama. After a few failed negotiation attempts, the Ilkral changed his strategy and decided to capture the karalieva herself. Kartaçöl extends over part of Kaan and the southern Ustalva Sea, which it seeks to control completely. The undertaking seemed to be going well with the capture of Moramiek in Arolavia, but the karalieva managed to turn the situation around, leading to Kartaçöl's worst military defeat.

Kartaçöl's plans for Arolavia can be summarized as follows:

- **Flank it with Cyrillane and Boreia.** By settling in Cyrillane, Kartaçöl would have a land base. If this plan were successful, Arolavia would find itself caught between Cyrillane to the south and Kaan across the sea to the east. This gambit would be even stronger if Boreia were to switch support to Kartaçöl's side. Arolavia would then lose control of the Ustalva Sea, the main point of access to the rest of the world for this landlocked country. From Arolavia's perspective, it would be better if Cyrillane were destroyed rather than become a vassal of Kartaçöl. The karalieva might consider allying herself with the worst warlords to prevent her enemy's plan from succeeding.
- **Control the sea.** With the help of privateers, Kartaçöl aims to control the entire Ustalva Sea and wipe out the Arolavian fleet.
- **Enslave the karalieva.** The ilkral's seemingly obsessive desire to capture the karalieva and lock her up in the gunarma lodge seems the mark of a lecherous man. In reality, the Immortal knows certain details about the ritual that links the karalieva to her country's lands, to the fey, and to Eana. In his eyes, she is a living artifact that he could use for his ambitions.

A Growing Influence in Cyrillane

The ilkral is portrayed as a stabilizing element, capable of protecting the population from warmongers and their misdeeds. A strong bridgehead must be established in Delfini before the ilkral can begin methodically claiming the rich lands and cities of a severed country. Kartaçöl's plan for Cyrillane has several elements:

- **Establish a trading post.** Presently, few people are in a position to criticize Kartaçöl's assistance to the victims of the civil war from the town of Delfini. The empire imposes itself and establishes a trading post which could only be removed through military intervention.
- **Control Boreia.** By helping the legions of Boreia return to their native Cyrillane and support the loyalist factions engaged in the civil war, Kartaçöl would gain relative control over an interesting portion of the Septentrion. At the same time, this would place Cyrillan loyalists in a position of dependence.
- **Restore a controlled loyalist faction.** Although direct conquest of Cyrillane is still a viable option, the ilkral knows that fewer resources would be consumed by setting up an indebted vassal government. For this, his current bet is on loyalists, although there is no guarantee that he will not change sides if a better opportunity presents itself.

The Opposition Between the Old Kaan and Kartaçöl

Although Tamerakh's Horde is seen as a remnant of a bygone era when compared to the efficiency of the Egilmez (Kartaçöl's army), the bravery of nomads is still respected. The ilkral promises everyone rewards fitting their merit. His agents travel to Tili's Gulf, to the Telhika Mountains, and even to the Old Kaan to seek warriors to enlist. Only the most naive of fools can't see that these armies will storm the Clay Cities sooner or later. How many will remain faithful to Tamerakh and the Old Kaan when Kartaçöl and the cult of the Father Creator promise so many opportunities? The crystallization of tensions between the two great Kaani powers could well take on a religious dimension in addition to the political.

Now, the opposition between the two Kaani empires has come to a head. For a long time, the conflict was between Ghardat and Kartaçöl; now, however, the Old Kaan, under the influence of advisor Bekasi, is struggling more and more fiercely to save its very existence.

Here are some elements summarizing the contrast between these cultures:

	Old Kaan	Kartaçöl
Main Deity	Tamerakh, the Destroyer and Liberator.	Afirînerê the Father Creator.
Religious Situation	Highly tolerant.	Official clergy growing more and more stringent and intolerant.
Type of Ruler	A humanoid transcending themselves through their feats.	A divine, chosen immortal.
Administration	Autonomous city-states and steppes; difficulties in effectively controlling the territory.	The assembly of mothers and the pâdis, closely controlled by the ilkral; constant and efficient surveillance.
Army	Apart from a few permanent troops, mobilization is based on needs.	Professional and permanent.
Individual Rewards	War loot, conquest.	Rewarded by the ilkral.

The plans for the Old Kaan include several options that the Immortal will pursue as opportunities arise:

- **Economic stranglehold.** Kartaçöl hires pirates from Tili's Gulf who become privateers in the empire's service, and then uses them to strain the naval routes of its opponents (the Old Kaan, but also Arolavia and Ghardat). Another approach is to negotiate exclusivity with the masters of mines—often kobolds from the Telhika Mountains—so that they stop supplying Old Kaan. In addition, subversive agents try to incite certain nomadic clans of the steppe to engage in highway robbery and caravan looting. The more complicated the economic situation becomes, the more the power of the Old Kaan will be weakened.

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- **Incitement to sedition.** Like any empire, the Old Kaan was built on claiming territories that were once independent kingdoms. Many of these small territories are still nostalgic for the old days. Sometimes, it is enough to simply stir up dissent to ignite a fight for independence. Kartaçöl, of course, has no real desire to promote the freedom of peoples, but the empire will take anything that can weaken an opponent and thin out their forces.
- **Encourage power struggles in Khaalgany.** Most of the real power is currently in the hands of the lich advisor Bekasi—a different sort of immortal than the ilkral—which ruffles feathers in the Old Kaan. Many traditionalists refuse to have an undead as their prime minister. Others consider themselves just as legitimate as the Kaani emperor and would like to overthrow him. A new ezen inspired by Tamerakh could also appear one day. In short, for Kartaçöl, all means that could help remove Bekasi, considered too formidable to be fought head-on, are readily considered.
- **Plunder Xonim's treasures from the ruins of the Desolations.** While Kartaçöl claims more and more staunchly to follow a particular vision of Maker as an omnipotent and all-knowing Father Creator, the arcanists of Easafir nevertheless dream of the treasures of magical knowledge left behind by Xonim. Secret expeditions are conducted to find magic items and rituals that will give the ilkral a decisive advantage.
- **Take control of the tarrasque.** Persistent legends tell of the existence of a monstrous creature-weapon of limitless power, dormant somewhere in the Old Kaan. These legends also say there may be a way to guide and control it. With the mysterious tarrasque in his service, nothing could hinder the ilkral's conquest of the world! However, the monster's resting place remains to be found in the immensity of the Old Kaan.

The Fall of Corrupt Dragons

Some sixty years ago, an event took place, so extraordinary that I thought it would become constantly celebrated, yet is treated with a form of restraint that contrasts with the usual pomp of the Immortal's propaganda. While Canker is reputedly rare in Kaan—praised be their druids and shamans!—the ruler of Kartaçöl is said to have gone with his best warriors to the Telhika Mountains to face several corrupted adult dragons. Stories speak of evil, corrosive breaths, but not of black scales. I wonder if those monsters might have been copper dragons?

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm

Playing in Kartaçöl

Gradually distinguishing itself from the traditional nomadic culture, Kartaçöl is a nascent civilization whose particularities are becoming more and more concrete. Depending on the campaign, it will either be a backdrop location for supplies or a central element.

Kartaçöl's Empire is a power in constant expansion. But for the adventurers, it is neither an inevitable enemy nor an obvious backer. This country is full of contradictions. This empire includes eminently respectable and even agreeable people, but so do its enemies.

A Campaign for the Empire

All peoples are called upon to unite in the universal goal of a welcoming, dazzling civilization, which rewards each and every one on the basis of their own merits. Although the country is a conquering one, it prioritizes diplomacy as much as possible, and offers real gains for the new subjects of the empire. For adventurers, serving the empire is easy. All of Eternity's chosen are eminently respected and receive missions that are both useful to the ilkral and full of opportunities for wealth and glory for those who carry them out.

In such a campaign, the adventurers could play a key part in winning over the Telhika Mountains and the Old Kaan. Confronted with the traditional rulers of these lands who refuse the Immortal's rule, they must negotiate, manipulate, and fight in a targeted manner to make these conquests possible.

As a reward, the heroes will become powerful pâdis at the head of territories as vast as kingdoms. Perhaps the adventurers will want to steal the power of the ilkral for their own benefit? But only one of them could become the new Immortal...

A Campaign Against the Empire

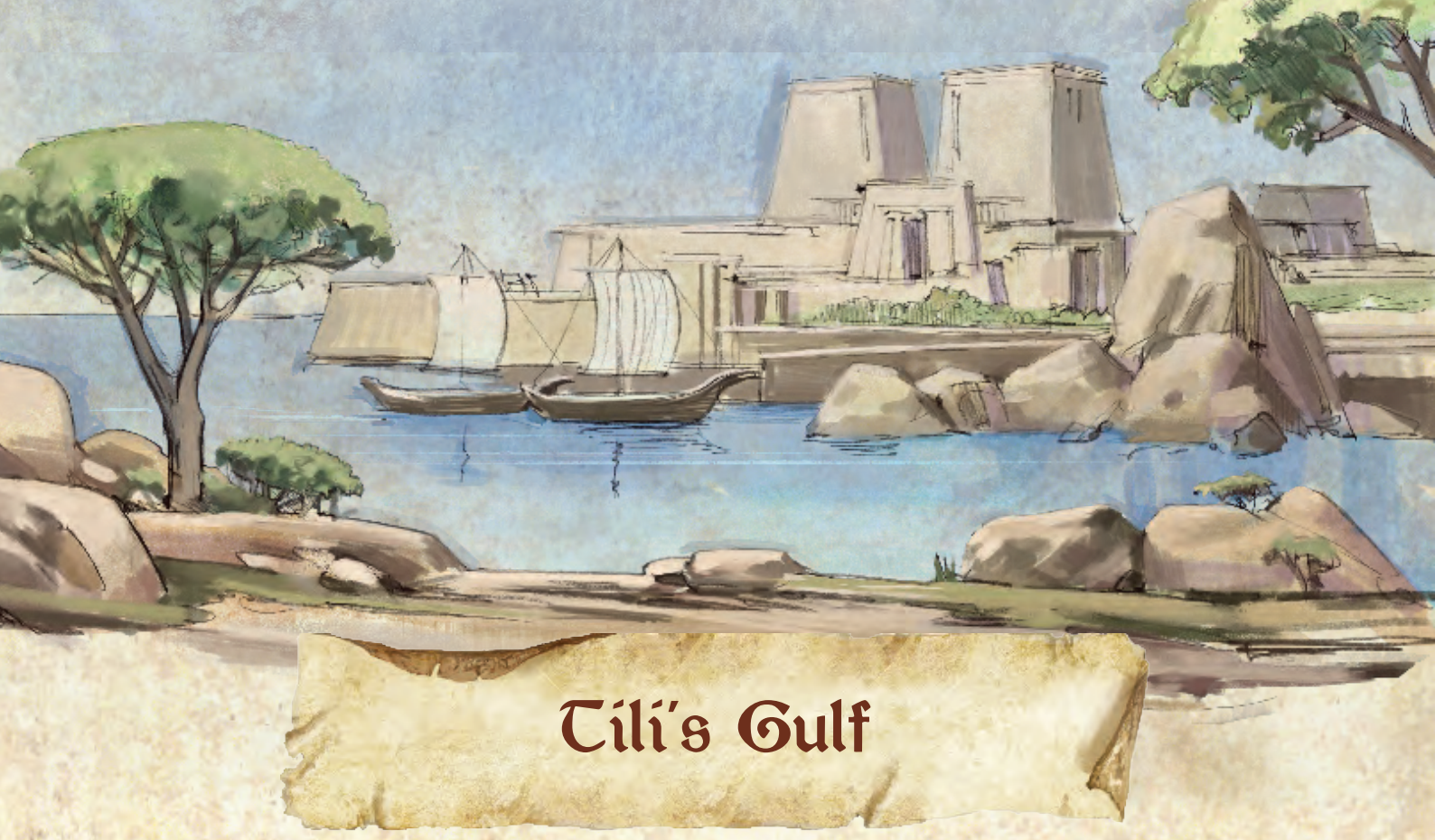
The country is ruled by an authoritarian and immortal ruler. Although he portrays himself as a magnanimous being, he is above all an ambitious person lusting for power, who will stop only once he has conquered the entire world. How many soldiers will be sent to their deaths to quench this infinite thirst?

In a campaign against the empire, adventurers are confronted with the power of an army and fearsome spies, but also with common people who sincerely support the Immortal. Opposing his thirst for conquest could cost many innocent lives and involve the use of morally questionable methods. How to defend one's freedom without disavowing one's convictions? Fighting to prevent a future deemed tragic and loathsome... is that good judgment, or merely a refusal to accept the inevitable?

Switching Sides

Whether the adventurers start for or against the empire, the events they experience could make them doubt their choice and change sides. This turnaround could be brought about by moral questions (glory or freedom? union or diversity?) or personal relationships. All these choices will have consequences that will be all the more critical as the adventurers grow in power and fame, causing admirers to follow after them, while their enemies might be tempted to join forces in the opposite side.

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Tili's Gulf

Stretching over 1,500 miles from Dalain's Cape to the north of the Old Kaan, Tili's Gulf is bordered to the south by Patytap's Cliffs, and dotted by the islands of the Marjan Archipelago. Here, goblins are the most populous people, though hobgoblins are also very well established. In the port cities, there are also large merosi and human communities, though they are still considered minorities in this region.

The climate is often described as pleasant, with mild winters, a turquoise sea, and long sunny days. Summers are hot, punctuated by impressive thunderstorms. Travelers discover villages with inner courtyards shaded by climbing vines. There, the sweetness of life blends with the mystery of memories of ancient legends. Behind groves of cork oaks or black pines, one can find ruins of the Bail civilization, and of the ephemeral dynasties of the Age of the Fated Kings.



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Iconic Locations of Tili's Gulf

Dalain's Cape

At the extreme northwestern end of the Old Kaan, Dalain's Cape—sometimes called the Cape, or simply Dalain—is a medium-sized port city, typically frequented by fishermen and, in early spring, by Afirînerê pilgrims on their way to the Septentrion, to visit the faraway Pillars of Creation.

Nardashin's Island

Until recently, the people of Nardashin followed a radical, pacifist religious movement. They had named their port and capital Barigalust, or "welcome" in Tilian, the dialect spoken in Tili's Gulf. Rigorously nonviolent, they were opposed to the learning of writing, preferring to devote themselves to the wisdom of the present, devoid of any ambition. To protect their natural resources, they limited their births and sought moderation in all things. When an empire became too aggressive, they paid a tribute in kind, thus hoping to escape the long-term horrors of war and oppression.

Unfortunately, a few years ago, the island was attacked by unscrupulous slave traders who captured almost the entire population. They are now dying in forced labor on Shüd'delkhii lands. The few remaining Nardashians are hidden inland, fearing the return of the malicious foreigners, with no clue as to where their compatriots are.

Recently, foreign sailors accidentally rediscovered the deserted and haunted port of Barigalust. Now the port is still used for supplying water, but one avoids lingering there.

Tatarine

Hidden from most travelers, Tatarine is a free city. It is a meeting place for pirates, who can conduct their business on an island whose location is carefully kept secret.

Tëbê's Island

Tëbê's Island is known for its endless conflict. The goblin dynasts are all cousins, sometimes brothers, but the laws of vengeance and alliances are so complex and peremptory that one battle follows another. War itself obeys strict and complex laws, and honor demands they be respected... although it doesn't prohibit ambushes or certain forms of assassination. Of course, it is forbidden to destroy harvests or food reserves, to attack children or peasants at work, etc. These laws are necessary for the survival of a belligerent society in the long term. Following the Tëbêian politics is a popular activity for some. Sometimes, people even draw inspiration from it for epics such as *The Year of the Four Emperors*, a tale that describes the glory and death of the kings who had succeeded in uniting the island, even if only for a short time.

Hyusin Harbor, in the north, and Harave Harbor, in the south, are ruled by priests of Afirînerê who have managed to keep them neutral zones. The influence of Kartaçöl's theology is growing, and people weary of the warlike culture sometimes dream of life in an empire truly at peace.

Patytap's Cliffs

Patytap's Cliffs are known for the strange light phenomena that occur there, typically on nights of a full moon. Haloes and optical illusions create a fascinating, but extremely dangerous, spectacle. Compasses go wild, and travelers become distracted by illusory reefs before smashing on very real rocks.

Hrabukha's Island

Dominated by the Hrabukh volcano, a dangerous sleeping giant, Hrabukha appears welcoming at first glance, and may remain so for a long time, but it has been devastated on several occasions, with pyroclastic flows engulfing towns and villages. The most extraordinary explosions are said to have even caused titanic tsunamis in the distant past, completely ravaging several islands and coastlines, causing countless casualties.

Kitiskel's Moving Maelstrom

Kitiskel's moving maelstrom is a phenomenon for which neither naturalists nor arcanists have yet found a sure explanation. It moves around in Tili's Gulf, generally near Marrakhug, the Misty Island, and Anmegh, the Isle of Madness. As soon as a boat enters its currents, all hope is lost: the craft is soon swallowed up and taken apart, and its passengers drown. To avoid it, sailors are ready to do anything, even braving the reefs or other potentially deadly perils!

Marrakhug, the Misty Island

Marrakhug is an arid, volcanic, and majestic territory where a strange, endemic flora grows. The island has no freshwater springs or rivers. Instead, the place is covered every night by a thick fog that clears in the morning. One of the few ways to get water here is to find a fountain tree, covered with thorns that trap moisture and turn it into trickling droplets.

The population of Marrakhug is very sparse, made up only of a few hermits in search of peace and quiet, and former castaways who have adapted to the harsh environment. Monasteries are dug out of the rock, which use cool, carefully maintained cisterns to make the most of scarce but violent rains.

Anmegh, the Isle of Madness

Few go willingly to Anmegh. There reigns madness. Any humanoid who goes there risks being caught in a delusion that will alienate and imprison them on the island forever. Some unfortunate residents are quite peaceful, even pleasant. There is little to fear of a man who believes his horse is a superior being that must be served at the table. However, other forms of madness are much more frightening. Even more amazing is that the island harbors a community of stone giants who have been struck by the same madness as the humanoids.

Those who manage to escape the island describe a strange architecture. There are said to be stairs everywhere, many of which lead nowhere or appear to be designed for creatures who can walk on walls or ceilings. Some scholars believe that beneath the surface of the island are the remains of a mysterious civilization whose influence is still felt, the likely source of madness.

Batsapimej

Located on the pilgrimage route to the Pillars of Creation, this ancient city-state is ruled by aristocrats organized as a senate and is known for the excellence of its pottery. It gradually came under the influence of Kartaçöl. Officially a simple protectorate, it is a base from which the agents of the empire launch their missions.

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Tatarine's Free Port

Tatarine was built on an island in Tili's Gulf, rich in fresh water and wood, but difficult to access. The island is bordered by reefs, while the relief of many surrounding islets provide convenient cover. Skillful sailors who know the secrets of these passages can reach a natural harbor that is well protected from the winds. These qualities encouraged pirates to set up a refuge here. Once totally secret, the reputation of Tatarine has grown little by little, though the sailors able to reach it remain few and jealously guard their knowledge.
Barbary pirates come here to negotiate with their Kaani counterparts. Hobgoblins dominate the sea in Tili's Gulf, but there are very few crews made up only of a single people. For a long time, sailors were fairly neutral and merely violently opportunistic. But shifts in the balance of power are causing many of them to take sides. As a result, Tatarine, despite its renown as a cheerfully cynical pirate lair, is agitated by disturbing upheavals. Here are the major parties involved:

- **Slave traders from Shüd'delkhii.** These pirates, nicknamed the Kaçaks (an abbreviation of a word for trafficker), work for the city of Shüd'delkhii (see **The Diabolist City of Shüd'delkhii**). Without any moral qualms, they bring in unfortunate prisoners who will die of exhaustion in forced labor in the service of the warlock lords' excesses. They also cultivate other opportunities, so as not to sail with empty holds for too long. It is said that their only consistent quality is a rigorous respect for their contracts. In this regard, they can be much more reliable than other sailors and pirates who may abandon a commitment if something more profitable arises. However, it is essential when dealing with Kaçaks to be very careful about the terms of the agreement, or risk very unpleasant surprises.



Emblem of Tatarine

- **Kartaçöl's privateers.** Drawn by money, glory, or the conviction of serving a noble cause, Kartaçöl's privateers form an important part of the empire's navy. They are free to attack their master's adversaries, currently Arolavia and Ghardat. Conversely, they are not to engage the countries at peace with Kartaçöl. Recently, they have even been called upon to take part in humanitarian missions to provide aid to Cyrillan populations. For the former pirates, this is quite the departure from their usual activities, but most are quite happy with being the object of gratitude and cheers for a change. The privateers stop in Tatarine to resupply, while immersing themselves in the intoxicating and disturbing atmosphere of a proudly illegal lifestyle. It is also an opportunity for them to convince other captains and adventurers to join them. Kartaçöl is certainly a conqueror, but it also offers civilization and, to those with nothing, a chance to earn their place in the sun.
- **Fishing pirates.** They are the upholders of the original tradition of Tatarine. They all have families, safely home in their coastal villages of origin, somewhere in the gulf. They lead a simple existence in which piracy is a way to improve their lifestyle by "freely importing" what they lack. Goblins are widely represented in this group. Fishing pirates are divided when it comes to the most desirable future. As a whole, they tend to sympathize with Ozodlik, the libertarian movement that transcends borders (see **The Diabolist City of Shüd'delkhii: Ozodlik's Rebels**).
- **Foreigners.** In addition to locally based pirates, crews from the Barbary Islands, the Sand Kingdoms, Rachamangekr, and even Shi-huang can be found. To do business in hidden Tatarine, however, these strangers must first secure the help of a navigator familiar with the area.

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Iconic Locations of Tatarine

Gor-Vortik's Den

A fortified manor that partly stretches underground and overlooks the small town from one of the northern cliffs, Gor-Vortik's Den is a confusing, baroque place where unbridled celebrations take place every day in the richly appointed suites. At the back are sinister rooms, including the private apartments of the master of the house. These areas include jail cells, chambers dedicated to the practice of the dark arts, and even a torture chamber.

People come here to negotiate securely on complex matters, to spend an evening wallowing in decadence, or to establish contacts with pirates and arcanists. It's a good place to learn about obscure rituals and dark secrets. Practitioners of profane magic are welcome here as long as they follow the rules, foremost among which is respecting Gor-Vortik and his undisputed authority.

The Good Luck Well

The Good Luck Well is a sea cave to the southeast of the town, surrounding a natural well that descends into the sea water. A local superstition has developed that says when a ship returns from a successful hunt, it must sacrifice some of its booty by throwing it into the Good Luck Well lest the pirates incur a curse. The origin of this evil, however, is unclear. Some say it comes from the spirits of the victims; others from sea monsters; others still believe it is the work of demons.

It is forbidden to plunder the loot at the bottom of the well, and on a pirate island, laws have few punishments other than death. It is an extremely dangerous endeavor regardless. According to legend, no thief has ever survived a trip down the well.

Fort Transitory

The nickname "Fort Transitory" refers to the infamous prison in which slaves are locked up and await transfer to other destinations. The stone building is square, sturdy, and designed to prevent escapes. Its inner courtyard is where "goods" are traded and showcased, under the supervision of the Kaçaks. The rest of the time, these unfortunate souls are crammed into underground jails. Some are given individual cells and are chained up. Some rooms are secured with Death's Bans and Xonim's Glyphs.

The Rock of the Drowned

This rock with chains attached to it is used to execute those rare criminals who are sentenced to death. They are doomed to die by drowning at high tide.

The Auction House

The establishment so pompously called the Auction House is a tawdry tavern with a stage set up for shows and candle auctions. Mostly, looted items are showcased but, on occasion, slaves or creatures are also put up for sale.

In a candle auction, when an item is presented, a piece of candlewick is lit, the length of which determines the duration of the auction: when the wick goes out, the item is sold to the last bidder.

The Great House

The largest tavern in the city, a veritable manor, the Great House is several floors high and stretches over the near entirety of a block. Here, one can eat and sleep, or find company, gambling, employers, missions... The staff are armed and can restore order if necessary. Aggrieved pirates are expected to settle their scores outside.

Second-Hand Bazaar

A shop that specializes in fencing rare and unexpected items, the Second-Hand Bazaar is managed by the hobgoblin Milena and frequented by pirates in search of clues or equipment for an adventure. Provided one is not afraid of rifling through an overfilled flea market, one can find scrolls, potions, and even magic items that, for some unknown reason, were once sold to Milena at a good price.

Lifelines

Lifelines is run by the hobgoblin Maritza, a mystic and diviner who is frequently consulted before leaving on a journey. She sells advice and rumors and, for the right price, can even perform divination or necromancy rituals.

Nersès's Manor

When human Captain Nersès spotted the first gray hairs in his beard, he decided to start preparing his retirement. After much hesitation, he opted for Tatarine and set to building a comfortable house on the heights, a little to the north, with its own rainwater collection tanks and a few refined servants—freed slaves with whom he got along well. Now, he's looking to settle little by little into the life of a notable. He is thinking of taking a wife and having children, adopting them if necessary. Ambitious people come to him to enter his service or to solicit him as an investor on expeditions, for which he receives a share of the booty if successful.

River Tarmats

An essential life source, the River Tarmats feeds on the small streams that spring down from the hills of the island and flows into the sea on the northern coast of Tatarine. In the past, water had to be drawn from here, but a few slave-trading captains tired of the inconvenience and used their merchandise to build some gutter-like aqueducts. Less than three feet deep, they bring water up to a hundred yards from the river, depending on the season.

The prosperity of Tatarine has brought a growing population, and the water from the river alone cannot sustain the town, especially in summer. Pirates are used to taking what they need without worrying about such things as "the common good". There is no coordination on their part. In fact, the island's good condition is only owed to the mute goblin druid, Tishouhie.

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Important Figures of Tatarine

Gor-Vortik, the Monster

Unlike most of Tatarine's personalities, Gor-Vortik, also known as "the Monster," is a permanent resident of the city. It has been years since he left his mansion, where he lives confined, though this doesn't prevent him from handling his business. There are many rumors about him. He is said to be an intelligent, non-humanoid creature, enormous and repulsive; or he could be a merosi that became immortal and abhorrent by sinking into Canker's corruption. His plans and objectives are equally nebulous, but most agree he can only be up to no good.

Tishouhie, the Mute Druid

Tishouhie, an old goblin, is the latest in a long line of protectors of Tatarine's bountiful nature. She lives in the woods and meadows, communicating only with gestures. Many believe her to be mute, but she may have simply taken a vow of silence. Only shepherds and fishermen see her regularly. Most pirates are unaware of her existence, even though she makes life on the island possible. Without her, there would never have been enough water for everyone, and the city's pollution and its consumption of firewood would cause such great damage that the small, turquoise-watered paradise would soon disappear.

Païtsare, Captain of the Coast Shark

A hobgoblin from Shüd'delkhii, Païtsare is an intimidating, cynical, and rational woman. She is the undisputed leader of the Kaçaks and nothing transpires at Fort Transitory without her say-so. When absent from Tatarine, she relies on devoted agents permanently stationed there.

Captain Nersès

This eccentric human had traveled the world for a long time before discovering Tili's Gulf. He took a liking to the culture of the fishing pirate goblins and fell in love with the turquoise waters of the Marjan Archipelago. Although hotheaded and brutal in his youth, he has mellowed with age, developing a relatively good nature. However, one should not believe that he has become weak: when he identifies a serious problem, he seeks to eliminate it without hesitation! With the wealth he accrued and his rather honorable reputation—for his line of work, at least—he is something of a role model for ambitious young people who wish to sail off without being influenced by Kartaçöl or Shüd'delkhii.

Hovakim the Mage

A former pirate, this goblin became fascinated with the arcane and discovered that he had a gift for it. He focused all his efforts into studying and soon became known as Hovakim the Mage. Now, he is a respected personality on Tatarine, the one people first come to for protection or advice about a dark curse. He has begun taking apprentices—all eager to learn the arcane without having to enroll in a strict, official school of magic. For now, classes are held at his home or in the nearby wilderness, but this may need to change if his teachings grow more popular.

Maritza

The sister of Milena, Maritza the hobgoblin is the owner of Lifelines. She is often described as beautiful and capable of seducing a humanoid of any species or gender. She plays on the prejudices surrounding fortune-tellers, but is also a shrewd businesswoman. She wants her business to be profitable, and does what it takes to make it so. Currently, she is worried about the power struggles in Tatarine. She and Milena keep a wary eye on Shüd'delkhii and Kartaçöl. Together, they may be tempted to influence events in a direction that suits them better.

Milena

Sister of Maritza and owner of the Second-Hand Bazaar, this portly and joyful hobgoblin is both perceptive and cunning. She is always on the lookout for good items. Sometimes, she goes to look for them herself, in wrecked ships. An excellent swimmer, she can stay underwater for a long time and isn't intimidated by sharks. Pernicious rumors have sometimes accused her of plundering the Good Luck Well, but as most believe that nobody can survive attempts at plundering the Well, these whispers are typically dismissed as slander.

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The Diabolist City of Shüd'delkhii

Shüd'delkhii was founded and is run by diabolist hobgoblins honoring the hospodar Karathaan. As such, the city is a rarity, and this exceptional characteristic is compounded by the goal of its rulers: to conjure their master into the Material Plane.

A Secret City Turned Ally of Kartaçöl



Emblem of Shüd'delkhii

In the early days of its foundation, the very site of the city was kept secret, with slaves discreetly brought in to undertake extensive construction work. However, it became apparent that it was impossible to carry out such a task out of sight, since a city requires significant resources to develop its power. By becoming an ally of Kartaçöl, Shüd'delkhii, under the leadership of Siragan, the current Great Strategist, chose to reveal itself and shine brightly while maintaining close control of its territory and projects.

Karathaan's Great Work

Karathaan worshippers around the world have received visions from the diabolic hospodar urging them to help the leaders of Shüd'delkhii by any means possible. Some have joined the city, seen as a promised land for those who follow the hospodar's dreams of power.

In order to free Karathaan from Furnace and promote his conquest of the world, Shüd'delkhii's warlocks train an elite army and build the capital of their master. His coming will kill 11,997 people in a single day—as many as the number of this terrible lord's diabolical troops. Year after year, the diabolists' slaves dig the pit. Eventually, thanks to fell invocations, its walls will become the fangs of a gigantic mouth into which unfortunate souls will be thrown. When the beast is finally sated, the hospodar will spring forth in all his glory.

Blood Tears

Shüd'delkhii's assassins are named after their hobgoblin leader, Blood Tear. They share with her a profound nihilism, caught between disgust for the world and self-contempt, which is released through the exercise of strict and sacrificial discipline. All these assassins train daily and lead an almost monastic existence. They live only to deliver death, and are equally prepared to accept it. In this, they distinguish themselves from other professionals by accepting suicide missions.

However, as individuals, they have their own motivations. Some have become Blood Tears to secure the release of their enslaved family, others to care for a loved one suffering from a serious illness that required significant resources to cure. There are, therefore, regular volunteers who choose this path of shadows. Anyone can apply, even slaves. Selection is made via two series of tests. The first aims to eliminate fanciful applications and comprises nonlethal athletic and combat trials. Things become more serious with the second test, which takes place in the wilderness, in a vast area full of traps and hiding places from which examiners can release a wild animal, or personally intervene.

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Ozodlik's Rebels

Ozodlik, or Freedom, is an underground movement whose members operate in Kartaçöl's Empire, as well as in Tili's Gulf and the Telhika Mountains. Its hobgoblin founders are dissidents of Shüd'delkhii, although the network now unites members of all peoples. They fight to free slaves and sabotage the diabolists' plans.

Though their initial mission was to fight cultists, their research has made them concerned about some of Kartaçöl's initiatives, particularly those aimed at acquiring powerful and fearsome artifacts that could cause destruction on an unimaginable scale.

Iconic Locations of Shüd'delkhii

The Closed and Open Harbors

Shüd'delkhii has two harbors. The closed harbor is the oldest and dates back to the time when the city was still entirely secret. It welcomes ships flying the flag of the city and the privateers who hunt for it.

Since the city-state has been in contact with Kartaçöl, it has had to concede some very limited openings to the outside world. The open harbor is one example. Recently developed, and with little infrastructure to offer, it only allows foreign ships to resupply.

The Outer City

There are two Shüd'delkhii: the Outer City and the Forbidden City. The first is open to foreigners, rare as they may be, though some caravans stop there. People eat in taverns, go to the theater, and do business. One can walk through the wide streets—all straight roads and neat, right angle intersections—almost without a care... if one can ignore the patrols and the likely presence of informers watching for irregularities on behalf of the authorities. In fact, the most surprising thing for a naive traveler is the absence of temples in the city. Believers pray at home, in private chapels. All religious expression is forbidden in public, and priests, even foreign ones, are invited to mask, hide, or put away the symbols of their faith.

The Outer Palace

When authorities of Shüd'delkhii have to deal with strangers, they usually invite them in the outer palace. This elegant construction is integrated into the Curtain and allows passage from the Outer City to the streets of the Forbidden City.

The Curtain

The structure called the Curtain is a wall that separates the Outer City and the Forbidden City. It is open near the outer palace and the harbor master's office. Shüd'delkhii's rulers do not want anyone to notice how many slaves disappear in the Forbidden City. The Curtain seemed to them a simple solution to this problem.

The Harbor Master's Office

The harbor master's office allows the passage of goods and people authorized to access the closed harbor.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)



Shüd'delkhii's Forbidden City

1. The Entrance to the Forbidden City
2. The Forbidden City Wall
3. The Pyramid
4. The Courtyard
5. The Hippogriff Stables
6. The Blood Tears Convent
7. The Pit
8. The Slave District

Scott Timmermans (Order #39751930)

Iconic Locations of Shüd'delkhii's Forbidden City

The Entrance to the Forbidden City

The entrance to the Forbidden City leads to the back of the pyramid. It is a strictly controlled passage. Only slaves and the faithful of the regime are allowed inside.

The Forbidden City Wall

The style of Shüd'delkhii's fortifications is unique. The star shape of its towers was designed to frustrate any attempt at a ground assault, anticipating the work of sappers who dig trenches or tunnels to reach the ramparts and sabotage them. To defend itself against possible aerial assaults, the city is half-buried and vast spaces are consolidated—thanks to the ingenuity of engineers and arcanists—to such an extent that they can be hit by catapult projectiles without suffering any serious damage.

The Pyramid

At best, foreigners can only admire the pyramid from the windows of the outer palace. For those who can see it, it is a grand sight.

The tip is red gold, sometimes shining brightly with an almost blood-like glow. Just below it is the prestigious, high floor of the throne, marked on the outside by a layer of shiny obsidian and three doors, each on a different side. The lower part is layered with immaculate white stones. It contains an entire palace, which is only lit by sunlight through discreet openings hidden on the slopes of the pyramid. These prestigious floors can also be accessed from the vast network of underground rooms in the Forbidden City.

Three staircases are built on three sides of the pyramid. Black and white steps lead to the throne room floor; the staircase facing the Pit can accommodate Large creatures, while those on the sides are designed for Medium creatures.

The Courtyard

While most of the Forbidden City is buried and fortified, a large, white courtyard surrounds the pyramid and overlooks the alley of the Pit. The walls overlooking the courtyard are painted in red, contrasting with the whiteness of the courtyard and the dark stones of the ramparts.

This place is deeply imbued with solemnity and gravity, the only animation coming from the training of hippogriff riders.

The Hippogriff Stables

Hippogriff riders are among the elite troops of the city-state. Handsomely paid, with all the perks of high status, they are constantly subjected to intense competition. The ranking of hippogriff riders is established every 6 months, determining pay and privileges.

The stable is located inside the Forbidden City. The animals train in the courtyard, at the foot of the pyramid, and flights can be dispatched at a moment's notice to defend the heart of power and the most sacred places.

The Blood Tears Convent

The Blood Tears Convent is a small, star-shaped fort inside the fortress city of Shüd'delkhii. Spread across several floors, the assassins enjoy simple but comfortable quarters, refectories, libraries, and study rooms, providing specialized training facilities for each of the areas they need to master. Here, they are cut off from the world, protected and imprisoned at the same time.

The Pit

The hole constantly dug by slaves is now hidden from the world by the high walls of the Forbidden City. From outside, any activity can only be guessed at as mounds of earth are carried out and thrown over the nearby ramparts, before being transported further away.

The diabolists live for Karathaan's triumphant arrival from the depths. From there, he will gloriously walk toward his pyramid and begin his reign.

The Slave District

For convenience's sake, slaves are crammed in the lower floors of the Forbidden City, near the Pit, which also supplies air to their tunnels. Every day, the logistics and the precise supervision of the unfortunate souls grows more complex as the work reaches Netherworld-deep levels. The administration is meticulous, but it is hard to keep track of all the slaves. Some fall down into the Pit and disappear, accidentally or otherwise. Others hide in the underground network. The digging supervisors would rather see the slaves returned to the surface barracks, but the leaders of Shüd'delkhii, concerned with diplomatic relations, prefer to keep the darker side of their country hidden.

Scott Timmerman (Orde - 3973950)

Important Figures of Shüd'delkhii

Siragan, the Great Strategist

Shüd'delkhii's master builder is also its Great Strategist, in charge of meticulously planning every detail of his country's running. Despite his power, he is an unassuming and reserved hobgoblin. Although he wears quality clothes and equipment, he is not the ostentatious sort, except when playing his role as a leader.

His path to the pact with Karathaan, the diabolical hospodar, is marked by deep disillusionment. Hobgoblins, without an official land of their own, are treated as fodder, or even considered as monsters—especially in Cyfandir. Leaders use their power cynically, publicly promising to follow noble principles then acting shamelessly. Convinced that the world is profoundly evil by nature, the Great Strategist came to the conclusion that it was better to embrace this perceived universal truth, and to unleash the power of a supreme master. Karathaan will be the guarantor of a new world order, rigorous and implacable, but devoid of hypocrisy.

Tatévik, the Scarred Barbarian

This insane human is one of the very few non-hobgoblins to hold a leading position in the city. Her near-absence of clothing makes her an unmistakable sight: not reserved in the slightest, she appears to wear a loincloth only out of some inexplicable personal sense of fashion. At most, she wraps herself in a loose, luxurious coat with a dark hood, either in the evening, in winter, or when she wants to move in the shadows.

A tall woman with alabaster skin and a body as lean as it is strong and toned, her skull is half shaved, the rest woven into a braid dyed blood red. She fights unarmored, covered in refined pieces of jewelry, many of which are formidable magic items. Her armor is her anger, her speed, and her endurance.

She barely speaks and has supposedly devoted her life to fury since her adolescence. No one knows exactly what happened to turn her into this bloodthirsty fighter and zealot of Karathaan. Based on all the burns, scars, and ritual scarring on her skin, one can only imagine the worst.

Tatévik has followers among the hobgoblins and slaves of other peoples. She is a harsh but efficient tutor to female fighters who sometimes become pirates or looters, proudly bringing their booty back to their mistress, who holds great sway over them.

Voskan-Sos, the Great Sacrificer

This obese hobgoblin warlock—who claims to be a cleric—is as cruel as he is passionate about his mission. Every day, he grows more and more impatient for the coming reign of his master. He constantly proclaims clichés and mottos, such as "We devour those who oppress us," and "We trample the corpses of those who stand before the fulfillment of our ambitions."

To celebrate his patron hospodar, he devised a sinister ritual called the Feast of the Vanquished. When Shüd'delkhii's troops are victorious, they are invited to bring back their prisoners. Some will become slaves—the Pit is always hungry for more—while others will be sacrificed in lavish celebrations and served as food.

Blood Tear

This hobgoblin's heart is filled with hatred, yet guilt gnaws at her: Blood Tear is a leader of secret forces and, in concrete terms, of assassins. Her nickname is shared by her order. She leads her troops with a firm, deft hand, almost gentle at times. Once an individual has been selected and sworn in, she sees them as her child. She knows that all blood tears will be shed, accepting it with the serenity of lucid despair. She leads her adopted family to death.

Blood Tear has another contradiction in her heart: she is not a Karathaan fanatic. She celebrates him without exultation and begs Death to grant her the nothingness of the dissolution of the soul.

Jiraïr-Makar, the Diplomat

Recently elevated to the highest rung of the state, Jiraïr-Makar is an ambitious and pragmatic hobgoblin. He sees celebrating the devil as a way toward a better life, nothing more. Shüd'delkhii has the opportunity to become powerful alongside Kartaçöl. In his eyes, summoning a diabolical hospodar is the whimsy of fanatics like the demented Voskan-Sos. He believes it is high time to get rid of madmen and simply behave like realistic politicians using the tools available, without becoming their slaves.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39781950)



The Telhika Mountains

A mountain range with many deep valleys, this region has areas that are wild and untamed, and others inhabited by small, virtually self-sufficient communities. Here, a traveler will stumble upon calm, grassy plateaus, contrasted by steep cliffs overlooking ravines where dangerous torrents froth in the waiting depths below. The wealth of minerals increasingly attracts greedy prospectors, while the reckless and adventurous may be enticed to enter ancient places of power near the destroyed city of Mangulik, where ungodly research worthy of the Desolations was conducted.

Riches of the Mountains

Although I went to Telhika in the summer, I was struck by the prevalent cold in some shady valleys and in the mountain heights. This region bears no resemblance to the stories I have read about the Drakenbergen. It is craggy, with rocks everywhere, and the vegetation is concentrated only in small areas.

To take shelter from the harsh climate, many communities have dug dwellings into the mountains. They remind me of anthills with a bizarre, awkward appearance. Inside, however, the rooms have lime-covered walls and shimmering drapes, keeping the temperature pleasantly constant. The floor is covered in thick, warm woolen rugs, which help make the atmosphere truly welcoming. The main source of commerce is animal husbandry, supplemented by a few irrigated crops that are protected by walls. Mining is also quite common, providing the opportunity to trade with Kartaçöl and the Old Kaan. As for myself, I came from the Sand Kingdoms to learn more about the lapis lazuli we are importing, currently through intermediaries that are too numerous and too expensive. It is time for this to change.

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm

Invaluable Mines

The orcs hold the secret of gandaichin smithing (see **Wonders of the Great Kaan**). It is a complex technique, including the use of mithral and adamantine, that allows for the creation of exceptional weapons and armor. The Drakenbergen dwarves can only dream of these mountains, so rich in precious metals. In addition, there are many other rare minerals and enticing gemstones to be found here, such as lapis lazuli, large veins of turquoise, sapphires, silver, and more.

The Telhika is riddled with mines. Many are controlled and exploited by kobold communities who export their product to the Clay Cities and Kartaçöl. The latter, unsatisfied with middlemen, invests a lot of energy to extend its influence, valley after valley.

Kartaçöl's Expansion

Some communities are happy to join the empire. They gain the beneficial infrastructure of roads and bridges, access to better prices for the goods they produce, and possible advancement within the high society of Easafir. Additionally, when a client kingdom of the empire is in trouble, Kartaçöl can take direct action by launching a righteous war to defend its ally.

Indeed, Kartaçöl has much to offer. However, the mountain people can be fiercely independent, strongly rejecting even moderate interference in their affairs. In response, the empire does its utmost to gain influence through diplomacy and intrigue. It sends ambassadors and merchant spies, seeking to identify more pliable candidates for leadership, with which to supplant the opposition.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Kömirqala, the Mining City

South of Telhika, Kömirqala is a mining town run by Sidamkay the Patient, a traditional kobold leader, who is both a wealthy and rather savvy businesswoman. The flat-roofed mud houses are pressed together, forming a huge anthill of sorts dedicated to coal mining. Everywhere, fine black dust falls on the once light-colored buildings. This fuel is easily transportable and makes it possible to maintain fires much brighter than those made of wood. Large caravans from Kömirqala bring the precious material to all the Clay Cities. It is also thanks to coal that orcs can use the gandaichin technique. Kartaçöl entertains the idea of redirecting coal exports to its own territory. This would be useful for the development of its armies and the weakening of the Old Kaan's troops. Sidamkay is aware of the situation and is seriously considering her options. Which side should she take? What is the wisest choice for a kobold controlling profitable mines in these mountains? After all, the Drakenbergen dwarves are their own masters. Furthermore, how long until she is forced to make a decision?



Lapis-lazuli



Emblem of Kömirqala



Turquoise

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Kömirqala, the Mining City

1. The Coal Mines
2. Family Council and Common House
3. Egg House
4. Merchants' House
5. The Covered Market
6. The Temple of Zanar
7. The Terraces
8. Cliff-Side Tombs

Scott Timmerman's Order #39731930

Iconic Locations of Kömirqala

The Coal Mines

The coal mines provide some wealth to the inhabitants, but they are dangerous. As is often the case, the mines are community-based, with everyone seeing a fair share of the profits.

The exploitation of the minerals reshapes the landscape with hills of waste. Foreigners wanting to visit the mines soon realize that they are dug and shored up to accommodate the kobolds' small stature. The long mining tradition of the kobolds prevents many accidents, though there is no guarantee against misfortune or lung diseases, which greatly reduce the life expectancy of even the most vigorous workers.

There are many anecdotes, distorted accounts, legends, and superstitions surrounding the underground and the Netherworld. The kobold mines are rumored to be one of the possible entrances to this sunless world.

Family Council and Common House

The wise Sidamkay may run the town and make decisions on her own routine concerns, but she consults the Family Council regarding affairs of major import with far-reaching implications. This is a common practice in kobold communities. It allows everyone the opportunity to express themselves, debate the issues, and find solutions that best meet each individual's needs.

Foreigners who have proven their sense of honor may be allowed to speak before the Council.

The Family Council meetings are held in the Common House, a large building in which the head of the community lives, and where many celebrations and feasts are hosted. In winter, this is the busiest place in town.

Egg House

The mining life is dangerous, but other careers can also shorten the life of valiant kobolds. The Egg House takes in orphans from the city and the surrounding area—even those of other humanoid species. It is an important and charitable institution. Its small residents often have a front row seat at celebrations.

Merchants' House

The Merchants' House was built for the purpose of housing merchants who are too big for kobold architecture. Along with the Common House, it is one of the tallest buildings in the city and was designed to accommodate the mounts and staff of entire caravans. Here, people sit on cushioned benches along the red-painted walls while meal trays are laid out on coffee tables. Ubiquitous drapes and carpets contribute to the warm and welcoming atmosphere, although at this altitude, and especially during the coldest months, people happily wrap themselves snugly in blankets, even during the day.

For a long time, the Merchants' House was peaceful. However, the growing tensions between Kartaçöl and the Old Kaan can be felt even here. The mere presence of representatives from both countries simultaneously can poison the atmosphere.

The Covered Market

The houses crammed together in Kömirqala often have doors to one's neighbors. One can pass through several houses, exiting far from the point of entry without ever stepping outside.

This architectural peculiarity inspired the creation of a covered market, mainly for barter, with the use of gems as a referential value when necessary. Here, gems are not so rare. By the grace of Zanar, they are found simply by digging the earth.

On market days, doors are open, stalls are set up on braided mats, and people form a circular path, allowing buyers to literally walk around several houses. Since everyone knows each other, people take this opportunity to drink tea and exchange gossip.

Foreigners rarely come to these markets; they normally just buy what they need from the Merchants' House.

The Temple of Zanar

The temple of Zanar the Dreamer, mother and protector of kobolds, is a warm and rather cozy place, covered with frescoes evoking visions of happy dreams. Those faced with difficult decisions sometimes ask to stay overnight here until they find a solution, which will come to them in their dreams.

The adjoining library is available on request. It is customary for literate kobolds to write down their dreams throughout the course of their lives. Upon their death, their collection joins the works preserved in the Temple of Zanar. The deceased are believed to join Zanar's dream. People hope to remain linked to their ancestors through past dreams, while preparing to join them in the future.

The Terraces

The mine alone is not enough to live on. Many families keep a terraced garden and a carefully tended orchard, protected from cold winds by walls. In summer, people enjoy picnics while they are lulled by the muffled tumult of the torrent below. Toasts are made to the dearly departed buried opposite, in the cliff-side tombs.

Cliff-Side Tombs

Customarily, the Kömirqala community places the deceased in vaults dug into the cliff, directly above the raging Kömir River, opposite the terraces. As this is a dangerous activity, young people skilled in stonework dig their own tomb in advance. Some make it into a work of art, easily identifiable from afar. Digging one's tomb gives a kobold the right to choose a new family name and pass it on to their descendants. Kobolds not so skilled in masonry must make do with joining the vault of a stonemason ancestor whose name they bear and whose memory they honor.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Important Figures of Kömirqala

Sidamkay, City Leader

Sidamkay is a middle-aged kobold who was elected by her community at the Family Council. She has been running the town successfully for several years now, displaying both prudence and pragmatism. She never had children, but involves herself in the care of the Egg House. In doing so, she has become something of an adoptive mother to many younglings, kobolds and non-kobolds alike.

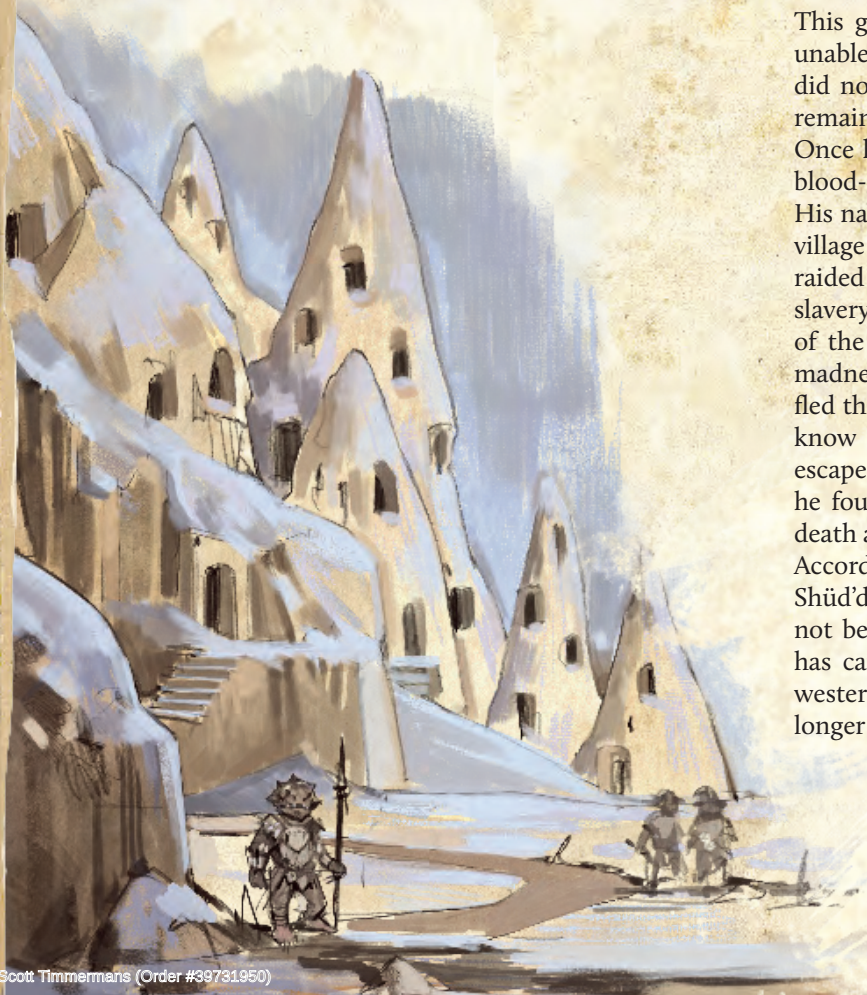
Her benevolence toward her own people does not exclude a certain ambition. Sidamkay is proud of her culture, but sees greedy empires coveting her precious coal, while many kobold tribes are joining Kartaçöl in the hope of a better life. How can she unite the kobold people?

Yegsathete and Tavit, Priests of Zanar

The old priestess Yegsathete had begun to train the young Tavit and guide him in dreams. Every day was a new adventure in the Astral Plane, discovering imagined buildings, and meeting old friends and grandparents who had become young again...

But one day, Yegsathete forced Tavit to wake up earlier than planned, while she remained within her dream. She had seen someone who should not have been there: Mekhitar. No one speaks his name anymore, so abominable were his deeds. Since then, Yegsathete has remained unconscious, and none of Tavit's rituals have been able to bring her back. What had happened? How did Mekhitar get there? And so, he tries to understand, studying dreams and searching for clues about the life of the one person people want to forget.

His first discoveries are disturbing. Mekhitar has bound himself to Canker, and has even developed abilities related to Nightmare. Certain details in other kobolds' dreams also seem to indicate the presence of evil creatures. How should they deal with this threat?



Isahak the Blacksmith

Isahak is an orc from the Old Kaan, the only one among the permanent residents. He initially came to learn more about the origin of the coal he used in his forge, so that he might better understand its specific qualities and thus hone his art. He used to stay at the Merchant's House, but when he decided to settle down for good, he built a house appropriate to his size and suited to his trade. He settled almost outside the city—Kömirqala's houses, all bunched together as they are, left him little choice. Isahak's clientele is mainly composed of foreigners.

His relationship with the Seroks, a family of local blacksmiths and fire-workers, is far from perfect. Isahak is a master of the secret art of gandaichin smithing, a source of envy for the Serok family. But Sidamkay is thinking about the future. If they ever need to defend themselves, better weaponry would be required. How can she coax the Seroks and Isahak to unite their knowledge and talent for the benefit of Kömirqala?

Bavakane, the Mountain Tamer

Bavakane, also known as the Mountain Tamer, is a kobold famous in the Telhika Mountains for guiding travelers through dangerous lands. Whenever she comes into town, children rush to her for stories and often small gifts. The explorer is indeed gifted with a great talent for woodcarving. She always carries what she needs to sculpt cute figures that fit in one's palm, often animals. Her style is very recognizable, and each piece is unique. In the region, it is said that Bavakane has travel in her blood and that her sculptures bring good fortune. Those who receive such a present tie them around their neck or belt as a good-luck charm.

Kamo, the Escapee of Shüd'delkhii

This goblin arrived one day, lean and haggard, scared and unable to speak. The customary hospitality of Kömirqala did not fail him. For several weeks, the unfortunate goblin remained in a disturbing state, inside a room of the Egg House. Once he regained the strength to speak again, his story was blood-curdling.

His name is Kamo and he used to live peacefully in a fishing village in Tili's Gulf. Unfortunately, Shüd'delkhii's pillagers raided them without warning. The assault was brutal, but the slavery that followed was far worse. He saw the endless digging of the Pit, as if into an unreachable void. He survived the madness that came upon masters and slaves alike. Finally, he fled through a passage leading to the Netherworld. He didn't know how to find his way, while trying to simultaneously escape Shüd'delkhii and return to the surface. This was how he found himself in the Telhika Mountains, having evaded death at least a hundred times.

According to Kamo, it is only a matter of time before Shüd'delkhii's pillagers attack mountain communities that do not belong to Kartaçöl's Empire. In Kömirqala, his warning has caused great concern. Messages have been sent to the westernmost villages, only to find that some of them no longer exist. The threat is getting closer...

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Ruins of Ephemeral Kingdoms

While the ancient cities of the Steppes, built in raw earth, have fallen to dust, the rock hewn ruins of the mountains remain, witnesses to the pride of the Fated Kings and their desire to be remembered millennia after their death. Monumental staircases to astronomical observatories and ziggurats are carved into the mountain, while the streets are lined with titanic sculptures of griffins or arslanikhs—powerful Kaani lions. Defying the void below, bridges—sometimes boldly devoid of railings—cross chasms from which rise the echo of the bubbling rivers. Even mausoleums take the form of labyrinths of steps, floors, and galleries, their walls covered with bas-reliefs describing both a sovereign's limitless power and disturbing creatures that are either celestial or fiendish in nature.

The Mystery Surrounding the Origins of Santak

On our way to the south of Telhika in order to join the caravans of the Steppe, my attention was drawn to an ancient stone covered with words in Santak cuneiform. This alphabet is aesthetic and very complex, and is used to write both in Kaani and in Diabolic.

Seeing these writings, I was struck by the strangeness of their similarity. Did people write in Kaani using the devils' characters because they had taught their letters to the mortals who worshipped them? Or was Diabolic written in Santak because Kaani warlocks had been the first to make a pact with these fiends? And if so, did devils write in Diabolic using Santak, or another writing system entirely?



Lost to my pondering, I knew not what to think. A dizziness of sorts came over me. I had the impression that there was something important here, but I also wondered if I weren't imagining things, like a child who dreams up monsters in their room at night. My guide's questions brought me back to the present. I tried to explain my confusion to her, all for something as silly as writing. She invited me to keep walking with her while she told me a legend from the Telhika Mountains. Here is the essence of what I remembered:

When the devils came to feed on Eana's souls, most of the hospodars settled in the Furnace. One of them managed to go directly to Telhika. Versions differ as to why or how, but storytellers agree that he entered the rock of a mountain. His soul is said to be concentrated in a precious ore, like a living diamond in the heart of the untouched caverns of his domain, where it remains to this day. He is called Dengêkevir—the "voice of stone," in the mountain tongue. Supposedly, he expresses himself from within the stones, eroding their surface to carve words, or by creating cracks from which, if one listens closely, the muffled murmur of his voice rises. He would have been the first devil to teach his knowledge to warlocks, and even arcanists. Arcane writing would have spread under the influence of this disturbing model. Even stranger perhaps, reports claim that Dengêkevir is no longer a devil and that his nature has changed.

Much later, I mentioned this legend of the mountains to scholars of the Clay Cities. They smiled at me and were too polite to tell me that I was simply gullible. They explained to me that there was no doubt in their eyes that Santak had been invented by the humanoid peoples of Kaan. The cuneiform writing was originally designed to be written on clay tablets, using a stylus. Initially, it was mainly used for keeping accounts. It has become a mere habit to write in Diabolical using this writing system. As for what devils do in Furnace, one would have to go there to find out.

On reflection, I do not see any obvious incompatibility between these two stories.

Travelogue of Tamira of Qûm

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Memory of Copper Dragons

There was a time when copper dragons were almost common in Kaan. They distinguished themselves—always discreetly—by striking alliances with the stone giants to fight against Canker. They also took it upon themselves to guard places laden with powerful, dangerous magic. The younger ones did not hesitate to become involved in fights against bloodthirsty rulers. These brave creatures never bowed down to tyranny and evil from the depths of the Netherworld. Exposing themselves to such peril, many copper dragons perished, though their sacrifice helped protect the continent from the worst of threats.

The Advisor of Kobolds

Edabatuku the Bereaved is an ancient mother dragon who, to this day, remembers the deeds of each and every kobold, from her lair in Telhika. In the past, she was seriously wounded in battle, and now is unable to fly, so she keeps to her beloved mountains. She views the world with both tenderness and bitterness. The wisest kobolds come to her for advice, which she always willingly delivers... even if the little scaly ones see her primarily as a messenger of their mythical mother, Zanar.

The Immortal's Crimes

One of the most painful memories held by Edabatuku is that of the Birrînemir massacre, some sixty years ago. The copper dragons had learned Kartaçöl's ruler had acquired a fearsome artifact, granting him immortality and invulnerability. However, seeing the positive aspects of his reign, they tried to negotiate with him and convince him to renounce it. The ilkral fooled them and prepared a formidable trap. Accompanied by his best fighters, he defeated the dragons and slandered them, claiming they had been corrupted by Canker.

Since then, copper dragons have held a strong opinion about Kartaçöl. Aware of the longevity of these creatures and the possibility they will seek revenge, the Immortal ilkral maintains a discreet elite troop, equipped with the best weapons and armor. They are tasked with the mission to find, and slay, all copper dragons, regardless of age.

The copper dragons went into hiding, examining all options and approaching organizations such as Ozodlik's rebels. They are reluctant to forge ties with the lich Bekasi, who directs the current policies of the Old Kaan, as they believe it is impossible to trust anyone who uses dark magic to stay alive forever.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Old Kaan

Stretching mostly from the northern tropic to the equator, the Old Kaan is often hot but several regions, especially those at high altitude, can still suffer from the harsh cold, with chilly mountain winds blowing down into the steppes. It is said that Tamerakh blows storms from east to west to relive his conquest. The rains are seasonal and only certain regions enjoy a wet climate, such as the shores of the Nulim Sea.

The name "Old Kaan" is practical and common abroad, referring to the homelands of Tamerakh's Horde as well as to the empire that follows its legacy. The natives refer to their country as Jinkhene, "the land of the authentic", implying that they are remarkably honorable in their virtues.

The population is mainly composed of orcs—both from the steppes and the Iruul Mountains—and merosi. The turbulent history of the country led to a great intermingling of populations. The coastal regions and the main trade hubs (Khaalgany, Nubilbabassür, and Lihyân) have the most diverse and varied population in the world. Representatives of all surface dwellers, and even Netherworld peoples, can be found there.

The emperor—who holds the title of nandin—rules from Khaalgany with the help of his immortal advisor, the lich Bekasi. They must restore the unity of an immense territory with strong local particularities if they want to resist the Kartaçöl Empire's appetite for conquest.

In the following pages, you will discover the Old Kaan, its history and institutions, and its lands from north to south, then from west to east.



Iconic Locations of the Old Kaan

Khaalgany
The capital of the Kaani Empire, this port city is located at the mouth of the River Nubil. It comprises a large, fortified harbor, a cosmopolitan sacred district with temples of all known cults in Kaan, and an imperial city. The delta is a vast papyrus maze.

Baruunkheeriin
The western steppe, or simply the Steppe (Kheeriin) is the symbol of the country. A vast expanse of plains and light grassy valleys, crossed by huge, wild herds. Prey and predators are equally dangerous here. Humanoids live in yurts and gather around the kurgans of their tribe.

Líhyân
A merchant city known for its vineyards and its large caravansary, it is built on the border between Telhika and the Steppe. It is a place of strategic importance for both Kartaçöl and Khaalgany.

Ayangaba'üül
In the north of the country, set against the Telhika Mountains, this city is known for its necropolis and the presence of a temple once dedicated to a lost deity, Ayanga. It is currently run by the disturbing Cult of the Cloistered.

Nubil
A rare, permanent river, the Nubil brings water across the Steppe, from the Manbalarer Mountains to the capital.

Nubilbabassür
Sometimes simply called Babassür, this city is located near the middle of the Nubil and is famous for its crops and gardens. The population is also known for its many mystery cults and secret societies.

Khoosrol
What sets the Desolations apart from the rest of the Steppe is their dismal atmosphere. Every night, ghosts and wraiths prowl around, wailing in despair, and attacking any humanoid they find. This is the location of what may have once been the most splendid city in the world, Mangulik, the destroyed capital.

Tuzdisöl
Stretching from the south to the southwest of the Steppe, this salt desert is an extremely arid place of rare beauty. There, druids know a sacred site of great importance, a maelossa.

Iruuls
A little-known region in the far east of Kaan, the Iruul Mountains contain ruins from the Era of the Giants and the elaborate works of the native orcs of these lands, descendants of rebels who refused to participate in the conquest of Tamerakh.

Nulim Seashores
This hot and humid region—stifling, some say—contrasts with the steppes. It holds several cities that were once the capitals of countries conquered by Tamerakh. The local culture is known for its sophisticated decadence.

Kuhr
A city close to Manbalarer, in the south of Kaan, located at medium altitude. It is the seat of the largest temple of Death on the continent. Pilgrimages there are intense experiences. There is also a school of magic and several schools of combat. Gambling and bets are an important part of the local culture.

Manbalarer
On the southern border, the Land of Springs is a mountainous region bordering Ajagar. Ulkanijer, home of the ulkani, is found in this region. Manbalarer's mystics and prophets are very famous.

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The Empire

The empire is ruled alternately by ezens (the lords) and nandins (the sacred ones). The former are warlords blessed by Tamerakh; the latter are the heirs of these heroes, nobles educated in the faith and whose sacred role is to ensure unity, prosperity, and harmony.

Tamerakh's Heirs

Tamerakh brought down the Clay Cities before setting out to conquer the rest of the world. Ancient kingdoms from the Age of the Fated Kings fell into oblivion, eclipsed by his immortal glory. Tamerakh, however, did not create a dynasty, as all his relatives perished in the fall of Mangulik, the sacrificed capital.

The conqueror's apotheosis—his divine ascension, shortly followed by that of his mother Xonim—led to a chaotic and mystical period in Kaan, ruled by priests who were sometimes said to be insane. The country was torn apart by the rivalries of second-rate officers, as all of them tried to carve out their own kingdom within the headless empire.

The merosi ezen Tsunsny was as good a fighter as he was a rigorous administrator. He gathered a new army and reconquered the Clay Cities that had tried to leave the empire. He went down in history as a leading philosopher, and one of the great builders of Khaalgany's port. He also created the nandinate institution.

Every ezen conqueror appoints as their successor a nandin, a "sacred one". The nandin's function is to maintain the empire, to consolidate it, and to ensure its harmony. In turn, each nandin must appoint another as their successor. A day will come when a new ezen comes from the Steppe and overthrows the nandin to start a new cycle of creation and destruction, as inspired by the epic of Tamerakh.

The Old Kaan became the empire of eternal cycles.

First Stage: Creation

A heroic and inspired ezen gathers an eager army. Together, they go from conquest to conquest, laying the foundation for a new empire and a new cycle. The ezen liberates, purifies, and regenerates the world.

Second Stage: Consolidation

The conqueror entrusts their empire to a nandin, charged with founding a dynasty whose rulers have the sacred duty of maintaining and strengthening the empire. In turn, each nandin appoints a successor, who is not necessarily related by blood. The purpose of this succession is that nandins of all species and all tribes can rule. Within the same dynasty, a goblin nandin can be succeeded by a kobold, then a human, an orc, a merosi, etc. It is lawful to name one's own children as heirs, but this practice is viewed with suspicion, as it can be a possible starting point for a period of nepotistic decadence. A nandin can change their designated heir during their reign, and they can also keep the heir's identity a secret, such as with a sealed will. However, as soon as the nandin is crowned, they must appoint a successor, or even several, in case of a serious crisis.

Third Stage: Decadence

Decadence is a concept that has greatly interested Kaani philosophers.

Lady Khutga, a merosi who belonged to the Suvdeen nandin dynasty (303–704), had a very negative view of this phase of the cycle. As a princess at the end of a cycle, she lived in opulence before she was forced to flee her country in appalling circumstances. For this philosopher, decadence is the will to perpetuate indulgent habits that provide little benefit for much of society. It is therefore symptomatic of nostalgic blindness, coupled with a form of hubris. Decadents indulge in egocentric refinement that only serves to fill an existential void, as they live in denial of their inability to face the reality of a changing world. In particular, they cling to privileges that they have done nothing to deserve and which contribute to the worsening of the global situation.

The poetess Yulduz, meanwhile, completely opposes Khutga's views. Naturally provocative, she claims that decadence is actually a phase of affirmation for the individual, freed from the moral tutelage of the collective. During this phase, freedom is real. In her eyes, Xonim, the Lady of the Night, who abandoned the priesthood to guide her son toward divinity—a great yet ultimately selfish goal—is an embodiment of the profound truth of decadence.

Fourth Stage: Destruction

When a society can no longer evolve harmoniously with the world around it, when it clings to memories of past greatness... Then, the time has come for it to be destroyed by Tamerakh, with the army of an inspired ezen as his instrument.

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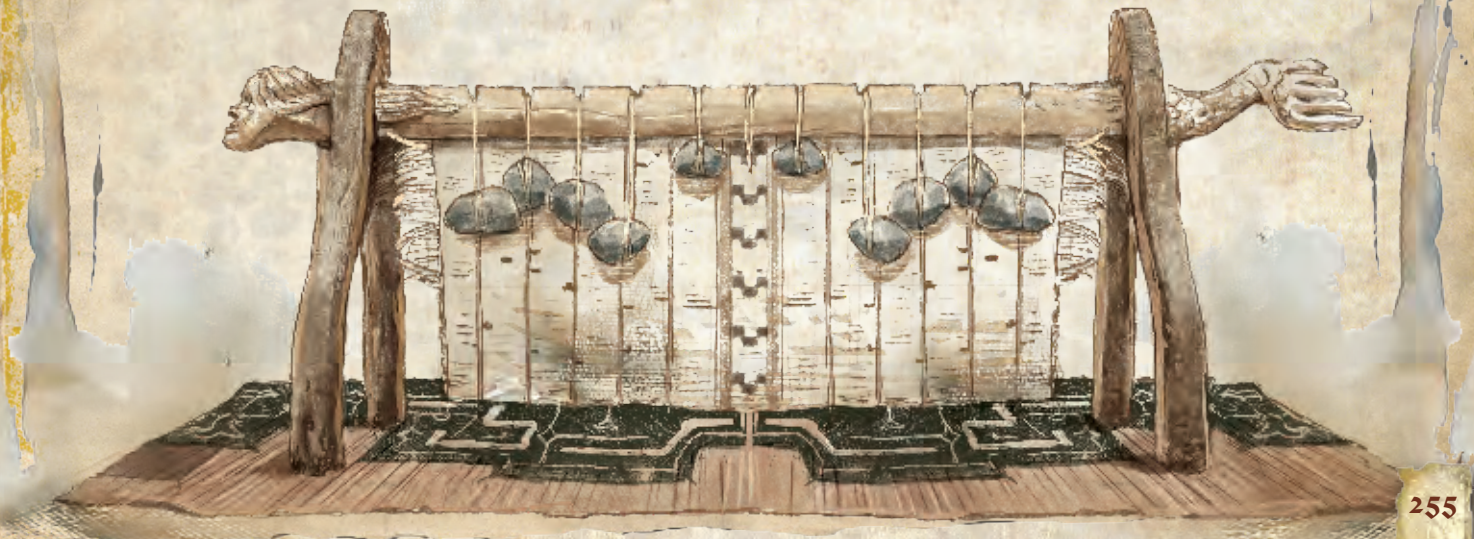
Some Founding Events Within the Empire

The following events are dated in accordance with the Kaani calendar. The table below gives an equivalence with the Free City calendar:

- **Year -42.** Birth of Xonim. She becomes a high-ranking priestess of Death, but then turns to arcana and abandons religion.
- **Year -18.** Xonim becomes the third wife of the orc ruler Khüch'adal.
- **Year -17.** Birth of Tamerakh, fifth son of Khüch'adal and only child of Xonim.
- **Year 0.** Oath of the Steppe, starting point of the great conquests of Tamerakh. He conquers the Clay Cities, then travels north, crosses the Septentrion, and uses the winter ice floe to reach Cyfandir on foot. The Drakenbergen are conquered, and the Stopstep Empire collapses.
- **Year 14.** Death of Xonim on her return journey to Mangulik. She never saw the capital again. Rumors say that the powerful woman was assassinated; the official version simply says that she was exhausted after living a full life. According to legend, she was considered an apostate and the priests of Death refused to perform the funeral ceremony. The death of his mother was a severe blow to Tamerakh and there are indications that this was a period of uncertainty.
- **Year 17.** All important figures of the empire are summoned to the capital. Tamerakh leaves to seek the Fateforge. At the same time, or shortly thereafter, the capital Mangulik is destroyed.
- **Year 50.** Approximate date of the first revelations of the *Midnight Verses*. The merosi high priestess Yaria-shöniin receives visions from Xonim, which are collected into a holy book.
- **Year 77.** Conquest of the merosi ezen Tsunsny.
- **Year 83.** Ezen Tsunsny appoints his adopted daughter, the hobgoblin Gyalalzan, as nandin; she founds the Gyaleen dynasty.
- **Year 303.** Beginning of the Suvdeen nandin dynasty.
- **Year 704.** Beginning of the Itgelteen nandin dynasty.
- **Year 746.** Beginning of the Shuurgeen nandin dynasty.
- **Year 780.** Beginning of the Nairtaeen nandin dynasty.
- **Year 909.** Beginning of the Mönkheen nandin dynasty.
- **Year 1155.** Beginning of the Naranzeen nandin dynasty, currently on the throne.

Date Equivalents Between the Free City and Kaani Calendars

Event	Free City Calendar Dates	Kaani Calendar Dates
Birth of Xonim	– 1033	Year –42
Xonim marries Khüch'adal	– 1009	Year –18
Birth of Tamerakh	– 1008	Year –17
Oath of the Steppe	– 991	Year 0
Fall of the Stopstep Empire	– 980	Year 11
Death of Xonim	– 977	Year 14
Fall of Mangulik	– 974	Year 17
The writing of the Midnight Verses begins	– 941	Year 50 (approx.)
Beginning of the Gyaleen dynasty	– 908	Year 83
Beginning of the Suydeen dynasty	– 688	Year 303
Beginning of the Itgelteen dynasty	– 287	Year 704
Beginning of the Shuurgeen dynasty	– 245	Year 746
Beginning of the Nairtaeen dynasty	– 211	Year 780
Beginning of the Mönkheen dynasty	– 82	Year 909
Birth of the Free City Republic	Year 0	Year 991
Beginning of the Naranzeen dynasty	Year 164	Year 1155
Fall of the Cyrillan Kadmeid dynasty	Year 330	Year 1321
Present	Year 331	Year 1322



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The Army

As the cycle of creation and destruction foresees the inevitable defeat of the nandins at the hands of the ezens, for a long time, armies were designed as ceremonial instruments, tasked with maintaining order—as much as possible—in the capital and participating in shiny parades. Nobles served without any real combat experience or martial skill. In times of need, real warriors came from the troops of the Steppe, called to help by many messengers… who also needed to be excellent negotiators.

This changed both with Bekasi's rise to power and the rise of the Immortal Emperor of Kartaçöl (see **Kartaçöl**).

The reform was not easy to carry out, as there was much attachment to the Celestial Guard. For this reason, Bekasi instead subtly reduced the number of its members, its financing, and its field of action, in favor of creating the Gandaichin Guard, which became the real army of the Old Kaan. She also extensively reorganized two corps that were essentially composed of common folk and thus traditionally considered less prestigious: the navy became Qizginoyna, the Blazing Mirror Guard; messengers became Xabarchi, the Messengers' Order. Finally, each city maintained an army for its defense and law enforcement: the vasiylari.

The Celestial Guard

Led by the orc yerönkhii Zunkhalga of Lihyân, the Celestial Guard has been the army of nandins since the creation of the nandinate. Its officers always hail from the greatest families of the Clay Cities and wear greatly refined armor, dominated by gold and lapis lazuli. Each one carries slightly different equipment, as the members of the Celestial Guard must buy their gear with their own pay and, sometimes, their personal resources.

There is some competition between soldiers from different cities to demonstrate the superiority of their home. Rivalry can be fierce, and cloak-and-dagger business can be rife, involving slander, blackmail, poison, and even murder. Since the Celestial Guard officers have access to the palace of Khaalgany, they are considered by their city of origin as precious agents, with which to influence the politics of the empire or weaken opponents.

Not all officers are spies or schemers: some among them are true, knightly fighters, with noble values. They accomplish great deeds, destroy the monsters that threaten the people, and shine in tournaments. It is due to them that the country remains attached to this institution. Nevertheless, the Celestial Guard is receding in the face of the Gandaichin Guard and even the Messengers' Order—something which it finds hard to swallow.

The Gandaichin Guard

Among the Gandaichin Guard, there are no privileges of birth. Only value and merit are considered when establishing hierarchy. Everyone starts at the bottom of the ladder and undergoes physical and intellectual training. Efficacy, courage, loyalty, and intelligence—in studies and in dealing with peers—are all constantly assessed, determining promotions every year. The merosi yerönkhii Aniqoq, a fearsome archer, leads these troops.

Advisor Bekasi counts on the Gandaichin Guard to defeat Kartaçöl's troops, but also to push back the ezens' hordes—a necessity for her to maintain her position and continue her work of reforming the country. If she ever actually succeeds in preventing the conquests of new ezens, it would be a sign that the Old Kaan is entering a new era and that the nandinate is destined to change its nature.

These questions about the future remain distant. For now, she must fight the schemes of the Clay Cities' disgruntled aristocrats and face the threat posed by Kartaçöl.

Xabarchi, the Messengers' Oder

All messengers are accomplished riders, often capable of riding a large variety of mounts, or even of navigating vessels. They also have training in geography and diplomacy. Messengers are often recruited among orcs and merosi of the Steppe tribes, but the Order is open to all deserving candidates.

These light fighters must be able to move fast and far, reach out to tribal chiefs in the Steppe, and lead them, whether through persuasion or negotiation, to answer the call of the nandin when fighting a monster or foreign invader. Messengers are also involved in tax collection, escort missions, and advising those in command, thanks to their great knowledge of the terrain.

Qizginoyna, the Blazing Mirror Guard

While historically the navy has been the poor cousin of the Old Kaan's military, it has received sustained attention from Advisor Bekasi. This corps comes from very diverse backgrounds. Goblins from Tili's Gulf, humans, and merosi make up the bulk of the sailors. For now, they are mainly tasked with strengthening defenses, securing the coasts, and protecting the trade routes that supply Khaalgany. There is a lot to be done, however, and the imbalance in the number of vessels, the might of the ships, and the skill of the sailors is still clearly in Kartaçöl's favor.

The Vasiylari, the City Guards

A remnant of the time when the Clay Cities were independent, the vasiylari are sometimes merely peacekeepers, but in some cities, they are a force to be reckoned with. The most ambitious and proudest cities staunchly maintain vasiylari troops worthy of a legion.

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A Passion for Taming

For Kaanis, training animals is as rewarding, if not more so, as hunting them. A good part of the success of the Kaani peoples comes from their ability to master many different mounts, adapted to every terrain:

- **Axe beak.** The kobold and goblin cultures in the southern Telhika Mountains are known to excel at breeding and riding these great, bipedal birds. Exceptionally fast, they can outrun any other land animal on the continent.
- **Capricorn.** These great mountain goats are particularly appreciated by mountain cultures in Telhika, Iruuls, and Manbalarer.
- **Camel.** Covered in very warm wool and capable of going several days without food or water, the camel is essential for crossing the most arid regions of the Steppe, especially the terrible salt desert of Tuzdisöl. This mount is favored by the Iruul orcs.
- **Horse.** The quintessential mount of conquerors, the horse was first domesticated in Kaan before spreading around the world. It is the favorite mount of orcs and merosi.
- **Griffon.** A mountain beast, the griffon is greatly admired in the Clay Cities. Taming and controlling these winged predators is dangerous, making airborne riders elite troops as feared as they are revered. The Lihyân region is famous for its griffon riders, but some are also found among the Iruul orc tribes. Some people are willing to pay a great deal to have a griffon tamer in their court.
- **Hippogriff.** A rival species to the griffon living in the same environments, the hippogriff has received the same attention. Training techniques and equipment are different from those of griffons. The kobolds of the Telhika Mountains are famous for their ease with these mounts, but some Iruul orc tribes have also developed a greater affinity for these creatures than for griffons.
- **Worg.** Considered to be messengers of Tamerakh, worgs are particularly honored in the goblin culture, among which adapted riding techniques have been developed.



Magic

The Old Kaan's leaders have always had a close relationship with the supernatural, but this knowledge has also led them to be wary of rebellious warlocks and wizards. Legislation governing magic use has varied greatly throughout the empire's history. Each stage has left its mark and each still has its supporters.

- **The privilege of nobles.** The practice was once reserved for nobles; offenders were executed.
- **Controlled by the clergy of Death.** In the past, a school was established in Kuhr, the seat of the main temple of Death. This decision seems to have been made in order to find common ground between the cults of Xonim and Death, due to the many disagreements that arose even back when the Lady of the Night was mortal. During the periods when the power of nandins was at its peak, priests controlled the practice of profane arts rather strictly. Today, the approval of the clergy of Death is still required for arcanists called to public office. Advisor Bekasi was once an approved arcanist, but now, the clergy of Death could never support a lich. In spite of this opposition, the imperial administration continues to respect conventions, asking Kuhr to approve any arcanist who might serve the empire.
- **Secret societies.** The city of Babassür is famous for its secret societies. For a long time, they have provided ways for people at odds with imperial power to learn magic. Many of these groups are known to the nandin's spies, who keep an eye on them. Tolerance for the learning of magic has certainly grown since Advisor Bekasi has taken up a key position.

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The Satraps

In the past, each Clay City was independent; today, they are led by a satrap appointed by the emperor. They are the heads of all administration, from justice to the army. These eminent figures keep the capital informed through regular reports, but the further their province is from Khaalgany, the more autonomy they have. A satrap's reputation is seldom good. Sent to a region they do not know, they must find their place in local and well-established networks of alliances. Residents distrust these governors, who are frequently accused of corruption, bribery, and abuse of power. It is not easy to find the balance between building a strong rapport with the elites of a territory and representing the authority of a distant power.

The Mark of Time

The past seems strangely close in the Old Kaan. The memory of ancient texts is kept alive and more clay cities keep getting built out of pride and ambition, before quickly falling into dusty ruins. The past still feels alive in the Old Kaan, representing an issue that is both ideological and arcane, as powerful spellcasters used to be many. These mighty magicians left their mark in many ways, some of which can still be felt.

The Memory of Clay

The Clay Cities owe their name not only to the material from which they are made, but also to the archiving medium for important documents. Clay tablets are fireproof, unlike paper or papyrus libraries. Thanks to them, the archives of the country can be traced across the millennia. One can go to the site of a city that was looted and burned down 3,000 years ago, dig up the ground where the archives were located, and find them intact. To my knowledge, there is no equivalent anywhere else in the world... With the exception of the Drakenbergen dwarves who have, I believe, a similar practice.

The Splendor of the Clay Cities

The places of power in the Old Kaan Empire make a strong impression on foreigners. The palaces are often built in brick, but enamel, varnishes, and frescoes form a flamboyant and multicolored decoration. Furniture is richly painted, inlaid with brightly colored glass, or ivory enhanced with golden veneers. Drapes and carpets are everywhere. Ceramic crockery often copies the gilded enamel techniques of the Sand Kingdoms. As in all leading capitals, trade in luxury goods is very active: glassware comes in from the Sand Kingdoms and ivory from Mibu, while carpets, hangings, and cashmere fabrics are exported to all corners.

In this sumptuous setting, nobles and courtiers, their eyes underlined with kohl, dress in bright, vivid colors, with a preference for blood red and lapis blue. City and court attires are very different from those of the Steppe, especially via the overwhelming presence of embroidery and fringes.

Travelogue of Selim of Ghardat

Letters from Ruins

In the Steppe, oral tradition prevails. Among cities, the establishment of dynasties of conquerors boosted the spread of writing, especially on clay materials. Santak, a cuneiform writing, is a common writing system (see **Adventurers: Languages**). It was chosen to write the chronicles of the Kaani Empire in High Kaani, the language of scholars, merchants, and the court. The first written records predate Tamerakh's Horde, the ravages of which were such that large portions of knowledge pertaining to earlier cultures and civilizations has been lost. If ancient writings were rediscovered, it is very likely that no scholar alive could decipher them.

Kaani bards are heirs to a long and rich tradition of epics, songs, laws, treaties, and philosophical writings. Traditionally, these texts are recited with music, accompanied by the harp, the flute, or the drum. Here are two typical literary genres that are not generally encountered outside Kaan:

- **City laments.** This genre emerged in the court of Tamerakh the Conqueror and Destroyer. He had a great epic created, narrating his war against each city he took, detailing the vain hopes, the destruction, his power, his heroic battles... A legend claims that Tamerakh forced survivors of captured cities to describe the triumph of the victor and their many humiliations. Since then, the tradition in the Horde is to have a lament composed every time a city is conquered. Historians know that these stories are permeated with propaganda and that the victors write their versions of the truth, but, by reading between the lines, it is sometimes possible to find decisive information and suss out the truth.
- **Disputes.** This genre is at the crossroads of philosophy, science, and comedy. It pits two bards against one another, each embodying a character that complements the other (night

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and day, summer and winter...). Both try to demonstrate to the assembly that they are the best, the most useful, and the most essential. This genre leads to highly appreciated verbal jousts, the winners of which can receive substantial rewards. Dispute tournaments are held between bards who seek to make a reputation for themselves this way. Disputes are also used to educate young princes and princesses in entertaining ways, by vividly exposing them to the things they need to know about their country and the world.

Archives Written on Clay Tablets

The practice of keeping administrative records and tracking the sovereign's policies is an old one. Their access is strictly regulated. Advisor Bekasi places great importance on knowledge and seeks to find the tablets of other cities, starting with those that are nothing more than ruins. She sends agents to find these places—some of which are haunted—and bring back the documents.

As for the archives of other, still inhabited cities, she at least tries to obtain papyrus copies, though the archivists are not always cooperative. It is not uncommon for them to conceal the most valuable documents.



The Fragility of the Clay Cities

My guide, Orozo, is resourceful and well-connected, and although my questions were far removed from his usual area of expertise, he proved remarkably cooperative, using his extensive network of connections to help me. Without him, I would never have learned so much during this single trip to the Old Kaan.

Astride two ill-tempered camels, with two additional pack animals to carry luggage and food, we traveled to a place that seemed, at first, perfectly ordinary. There was apparently nothing to distinguish it from the rest of the Steppe, but Orozo urged me to look more closely at the dust near some of the mounds. Confused, I perplexedly scratched the surface, and found that behind was the remains of a wall. A dwelling?

A smiling Orozo explained that there used to be a town here. Built with mudbricks, it was very vulnerable to erosion. As soon as the inhabitants stopped applying the protective coatings, the walls crumbled to dust. On the surface, there was almost nothing left, only vague shapes.

Only very prestigious buildings were made with stone, brought from the mountain quarries. The cost of construction in the region is vastly different depending on whether one uses dirt-cheap mudbricks or incredibly expensive stones.

I stayed there for a while to meditate on time and its passing. Splendid palaces and temples had been the pride of a now-forgotten city, until they literally fell into dust. I was struck by the contrast between the pride of the powerful and the futility of their existence. I also wondered if there were still tunnels or subterranean passages. I had heard that the magic of powerful artifacts or creatures protected ruins from the passage of time.

Travelogue of Selim of Ghardat

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Emblem of Khaalgany

Khaalgany, the Capital

As the capital of the Old Kaan, Khaalgany is a multifaceted city. Associated with a city where many merchants and craftsmen work, its active port is thriving. The factories and warehouses provide work for a large population. Restaurants and covered markets are always bustling. Nearby is the Temples District, which brings in pilgrims and travelers, all of whom admire the splendor of the buildings and celebrations. The emperor's palace grounds are located further on, on an artificial hill, from where the rulers overlook the plain and the river delta.



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Important Figures of Khaalgany

Narabaatar, the Present Nandin

The current nandin is the merosi Narabaatar, of the Naranzeen dynasty. Aged 24, he is the son of the previous ruler. He did not make any substantial changes when he ascended the throne, leaving the government in the hands of Advisor Bekasi, and focusing instead on religious and cultural matters. Most notably, people owe to him the splendor of the sacred theaters in Khaalgany's Temples District, as well as the grandiose restoration of the palace and the largest temples. To this end, he turned to the best glass craftsmen, wood inlayers, and sculptors of the Free City, whom he hired at great expense. He maintains a cosmopolitan court of artists and sycophants, all with their personal ambitions. His taste for luxury and comfort have made him a prodigal, spendthrift, hedonistic, open-minded monarch, far removed from the affairs of state.

Narabaatar is particularly frowned upon by traditionalists, who call him a mad, degraded emperor. For them, he is a symbol of decadence, and may be the sign that the time for a new ezen has come.

Some would have preferred one of his rivals to succeed him, such as the noble orc Jehat-Karza, but he fled Khaalgany years ago, apparently to save his life (see **Ayangaba'üül**).

Bekasi, the Power Behind the Throne

The most important political figure in Khaalgany is the lich Bekasi, a former merosi who is almost a hundred years old. Although she wields formidable powers, she has never sought to conquer the throne and seems quite satisfied with her position as first advisor, which essentially makes her prime minister in charge of most political dealings. Methodical and realistic, she approaches power relations between countries with pragmatism. Although she avoids making a show of it, it seems that she does not believe in the necessity of the cycle of creation, consolidation, decadence, and destruction. She works to ensure that the power of the Naranzeen nandin dynasty lives on, letting the living ruler deal with sacred matters and the image of the country while she handles more down-to-earth issues.

Her undead nature leads to fear and criticism within the country. Despite these recurring problems, Bekasi's more urgent concerns are Kartaçöl's ambitions.

Some wonder whether there is a link between Bekasi and the eight legendary liches (see **Khoosrol: The Desolations**). Bekasi is obviously much younger, but perhaps she acquired the knowledge that allowed her transformation from one of them?

Tahirih

A former member of the Gandaichin Guard, this human was noticed by Bekasi for her ability to be discerning and candid, without pride or rebellion.

Originally from the Sand Kingdoms, Tahirih wears her black hair cut short. Just shy of forty, she works closely with the advisor and takes on many tasks, all while single-handedly raising her son. Among her duties, Tahirih ensures the security of the palace and monitors the progress of the missions of the Agents of the Mask—Bekasi's servants.

She is a strict and loyal person, with a high sense of ethics. She is loath to murder, and outright forbids the commission of dishonorable crimes, such as torture. She also refuses to deliberately send her agents on suicide missions.

Her enemies sense that her most obvious weakness is her son, Vaada. The identity of the father is unknown and the child, now a teenager, is showing signs that he wants to leave the palace, where he received a thorough and guarded education, worthy of a nandin. Described as open, generous, and likely naive, he is motivated by an ardent religious fervor.

Hastee, the Fiancée from Nubilbabassür

Hastee of Nubilbabassür recently arrived at the court, sailing in from her native city in a splendid vessel, preceded by musicians and dancers, accompanied by a luxurious entourage, and surrounded by refined servants and domesticated beasts. Everything had been organized so that the beautiful lady of the City of Gardens would make a strong impression... and she certainly succeeded, as nandin Narabaatar quickly arranged his engagement with his hundred-petal rose. Advisor Bekasi, on the other hand, is said to be less approving of the newcomer.

At just 17 years of age, the human girl seems blessed with all virtues. Refined, gentle, modest, gifted in the arts, patient, kind... Moreover, she seems an expert in all the areas that Narabaatar loves. Coming from the Bulakaltin family, she has obviously been long prepared to take power in the capital, raised in order to meet the tastes of the ruler and enthrall him.

So far, despite their efforts, Bekasi's agents have not clearly identified the secret society (or societies) to which Hastee belongs, even though all important people in Babassür are initiated into at least one.

Hastee's relationship to magic is also a perplexing subject. She seems to be hiding something, perhaps the fact that she is Awakened, or the owner of magic items.

Ajablanarli, Priest of Tamerakh

Ajablanarli the Thunderous, chosen of Tamerakh the Storm, belongs to the ulkani minority present in Khaalgany. The members of his species are gifted with great size and impressive horns. No one wants to suffer the wrath of an ulkan!

While his people are known for their self-control, Ajablanarli has been in a constant foul mood since he succeeded his predecessor. The cult of Tamerakh is split into multiple chapels. There is little in common between the delirious extremism of Cyrillane's Nihilians and the traditions of the Steppe, which differ again from the ezen-inspired rites performed in the capital. What, then, is the true tenet? What is the real substance of the religion for which Ajablanarli performs ceremonies? For insight into this existential crisis, the high priest has embarked on intense archaeological and historical research. He wants to know. Will his faith withstand his discoveries? And can the country's institutions be supported by a doubting priest?

Scott Thunemann (Orlo...

Khaalgany, Capital of Old Kaan

1. The Conqueror's Bridge
2. The Blue Fort of Kuchlikok
3. The Ports
4. The Fortified Port
5. The Temples District
6. The White Fort of Tsagaan
7. Davamgailal Palace
8. Noble District
9. The Conqueror's Road
10. Ezen Gate
11. Nandin Gate



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Iconic Locations of Khaalgany

The Conqueror's Bridge

A monumental bridge spans the River Nubil. Its two ends are each decorated with a massive arch: the ezen gate on the right bank (north side), and the nandin gate on the left bank (south side). The warrior lord comes from the Steppe, while the steward in charge of preserving the empire stands on the city's side.

Traditionally, an ezen wanting to claim the throne comes from the Steppes Road and ritually confronts the Celestial Guard troops stationed in the Blue Fort; after which, they cross the bridge and the city via the Conqueror's Road and reach the palace at its end. The nandin is supposed to come and welcome the conqueror who has defeated their armies.

The Blue Fort of Kuchlikok

The Blue Fort owes its name to the turquoise blue enamel that dominates this architectural ensemble. In spite of its military function as the seat of the Celestial Guard, Kuchlikok is also a palace of great refinement, with its artistically designed and pleasantly cool rooms. The officers of the order come from powerful families of the empire and lead a privileged life here, when they are not spending time in the nandin's palace.

The Delta of the Nubil

Khaalgany was built on a shore shielded from the strong winds, with a harbor well sheltered by offshore islets. The River Nubil is wide and its undeveloped banks are swampy mangroves in which papyrus grows over six feet high. At high tide, the waters can be navigated in small, round, flat-bottomed boats, waterproofed with pitch. There are hundreds of islets, both natural and artificial, often flood-prone. Here, water birds are extremely numerous.

The humanoid population is made up of fishermen, both on foot and by boat, and criminals—especially smugglers—who find refuge here.

The Ports

Khaalgany has several river and sea ports on both its banks. Some are modest and peaceful, used only for fishing by the locals. Others are very active and harbor ships from abroad, such as the docks that serve the Merchants' District. Finally, the fortified port is the most recent development, intended for the growing navy of the empire.

The Fortified Port

The Old Kaan only makes occasional use of the ships of seafaring peoples, such as Ghardat or, more rarely, Shi-huang. The country lacks far too much wood to easily explore the seas. Until recently, no one feared an attack from the sea, but Kartaçöl's Empire in the north has grown into a sea power. Major works have started on Khaalgany's port to allow the city to defend itself in the event of attack by an enemy fleet. Many alchemists and engineers have been hired by Advisor Bekasi to work on weapon designs. Rumors suggest the installation of war mirrors, capable of burning ships from a distance. There is also talk of improving alchemist's fire and preparing large stockpiles of this substance. Some people worry: dangerous weapons can destroy an enemy, yes, but if said enemy manages to infiltrate the city and take control, won't they turn them against Khaalgany?

The Temples District

The Temples District is symbolically cut off from the rest of the secular city by elaborate walls and gates. Khaalgany has the largest religious complex in the Old Kaan, the gathering of temples forming an immense sanctuary. All deities honored in the empire must have a clergy, a place of worship, and be celebrated in the capital.

The stronger a spiritual organization, the richer its temple, regularly receiving embellishments. Conversely, marginal beliefs may be housed in places with poor maintenance, accessible at the end of dark alleys. Some people in the city like to seek out and discover these obscure cults, which may enlighten them to a more authentic faith. For example, periodically, new believers from Ayangaba go on pilgrimage to Ayangaba'üül (see **Ayangaba'üül**).

The tallest and richest building in the area is Storm's Tower, made almost entirely of stairs. Maker, revered as Afirînerê, also enjoys a vast sanctuary. For pilgrims on their way to the Pillars of Creation in the Septentrion, it is often the first major step of the journey, during which one asks priests of the Father of Peoples for their blessing.

The Temples District is home to the priests of all these cults and their families, and also to a host of other trades such as professional mourners called on for funerals, musicians who play during ceremonies, gravediggers, or craftsmen who specialize in the making of sacred objects. There is no shortage of inns and taverns either, and the nightlife in the Temples District is as lively as that of any harbor.

The White Fort of Tsagaan

Located right next to the palace, the White Fort is a plain, sturdy building. It houses the Gandaichin Guard, tasked with defending Davamgailal Palace. The Guard comprises elite soldiers, mostly orcs and merosi, capable of mounting griffons.

If a new ezen were to appear, they would have to fight not only the troops of the Blue Fort, but also those of the White Fort—and these are much more seasoned.

Davamgailal Palace

Davamgailal Palace was built on an artificial hill outside the city, and is connected to it by a wide, dusty avenue lined with colossal stone sculptures. This makes it a city of its own where access is controlled, though the comings and goings of authorized privileged people are numerous.

Scott Thompson's Order #3973139



Baruunkheeriin, the Western Steppe

The Steppe is known as the home of the warrior clans that once made up the great horde of Tamerakh, the greatest conqueror of all time, and the merosi who became the god Storm more than a thousand years ago.

The Old Kaan is divided between nomads—"amurru"—and sedentary peoples—"suurin". Although great conquests were made when the amurru subdued the suurin, the horde chiefs often gradually embraced city customs, providing a cultural victory to the conquered. Some individuals may move from one to the other, and some tribes adopt a seasonal in-between.

In the course of their lives, nomads travel long distances and have the opportunity to live at the foot of mountains, in deserts, on the shores of ephemeral lakes, or near haunted steppes. They travel between permanent water sources and the caravan routes crossing their territory.

The Breath of the Ezen

Gather round, travelers, nomads, and steppe walkers. I believe you've had an exhausting day, battered by the local wind. Rest assured, tomorrow will be worse, and future days worse still as you ride eastward. The wind of the Kaan sands you down, scraping and scrubbing. It never stops, be it summer or winter! Some who defeat entire hordes in a matter of days can go mad because of the wind. It is the invisible enemy, that which deflects your arrows, carries gravel, twists your ankles and the legs of your horses. It tears the leather of your saddles and prematurely ruins hides! But make no mistake, the wind also sows; its gusts plant seeds and makes them grow with the rains that it brings. Clouds are the spirit of Storm, the breath of our ezen, Tamerakh! See how his power has not wavered! He wants to remind us that this land is his, from where the sun sets to farther away than your eyes can see. This breath is his own, it can fertilize the sea of wild grasses and topple citadels. Do not rail too much at the wind, for it builds character. It shapes your muscles and your spirit for war. It is the restless spirit of the one who conquered the earth and became the cloud!

Daïni-mori, traveling merosi storyteller

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



A Wild and Omnipresent Nature

The Old Kaan is known for its immense steppes and wildlife as fierce as it is majestic. The creatures here provide inspiration for the fighters and druids of the continent. For instance, a barbarian's ability to fight without armor, relying on their wits and constitution, would be the result of a long observation of the wildlife, with direwolves, arslanikh lions, and aurochs being some of the best models. Traveling in the steppe means discovering a world teeming with life, in which both predators and prey are formidable fighters. Here, the struggle for survival is clear.

Prey

Herds numbering tens of thousands of animals graze in the meadows. Gregarious animals come in all sizes. Small and skittish antelopes, no bigger than goats, flee in a few leaps at the slightest suspicious movement. Deer herds alternate between meadows and forests in the south or in the uplands. Horses, camels, aurochs, bison, and long-horned bison migrate from one region to another, following the rain and fresh grass. The quick axe beaks—large flightless birds—run at astonishing speeds.

Predators

All these creatures are stalked by predators, many of which are massive, such as direwolves or arslanikh lions. Young copper dragons—and sometimes, especially in winter, white dragons that have come straight from the Septentrion—fly over the Steppe in search of prey.

At the other end of the scale in terms of size, the seasonal swarms of süirel locusts consist of very small creatures and still represent a great danger. In addition to vegetation, they devour beasts and humanoids without distinction and with frightening speed.

Basilisks and their petrifying gaze—along with taurine gorgons, whose breath has the same effect—are responsible for the frighteningly realistic statues that are sometimes found in the Steppe, and which bear witness to ancient hunts.

One of the greatest local hunters, however, is seldom seen. The bulette is an underground creature. It digs tunnels, leaving large dirt hills here and there as a sign of its activities, before springing on its prey without warning. Since it cannot store fat in its body, it must constantly hunt for food, or stock up an emergency pantry.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

The Kurgans

Kurgans are artificial hills concealing an individual or collective mausoleum. Over the millennia, there have often been changes in the size and detail of the layouts of these circular structures, easily recognizable by the imposing walls and deep ditches that encircle them. The largest have a perimeter of more than one hundred yards, towering over thirty feet high.

Landmarks and Sites of Remembrance

In an ocean of windswept grass, kurgans serve as anchors and landmarks, islands and meeting places. Tribe members are buried there with great fanfare: the opening of the door is always a powerful, symbolic moment. The glorious ancestor returns to the earth and helps welcome the generations of their descendants. The dead gather and protect the living. The most powerful leaders are honored with monumental tombs that can be seen from afar, and important shrines are associated with them.
Each kurgan is linked to a particular tribe, whose emblems and ancestral figures are clearly represented. They bear witness to how long a tribe has been established in a region.

Gathering Places

Sedentary tribes generally build their kurgans near the places where they live. The permanent population is small but may include farmers, fighters, and clerics attached to the place of worship. In any other part of the world, it would seem a modest village, at most. In summer, when the tribe gathers for celebrations, the population multiplies at least tenfold, sometimes even more, and a city of yurts springs up in the middle of the Steppe.

The purely nomadic tribes abandon their kurgans to the wind and rain most of the year, and travel there during celebrations, or to bury a deceased clan member. Even when left unattended, these monuments are protected by a great tradition of respect for the dead, and more literally so by curses, traps, and sometimes sünsutaas—incorporeal undead typical of the Steppe.

The Independence of Hordes

During the ascension of a new horde, the dominant tribe invites its vassals and allies to its capital for war councils, weddings sealing alliances, lavish funerals, or great religious celebrations. This union is strengthened by mingling, trading, and sharing. The leaders of Khaalgany keep a close watch on rumors of growth in the Kurgan capitals, as they may foreshadow the rise of a new ezen, a warlord planning to attack the coasts and overthrow the current dynasty.



Scott Timmermans (Order #9773)

Powerplay in Baruunkheeriin's Steppes

The Horde is made up of many tribes, each of which are made up of several clans. An ezen wanting to unite and lead them into battle must be both strong and subtle, capable of wielding weapons as well as diplomacy. No matter how savage the leaders of the tribes of the Steppes may seem, none of them would have reached and maintained their rank without great political talent. As the clan system is almost exclusively meritocratic, the balance of power can change very quickly, evolving with the passing of generations and alliances. Here is an overview of the different units and hierarchies among the peoples of the Baruunkheeriin steppes, in increasing order of importance:

The Clan

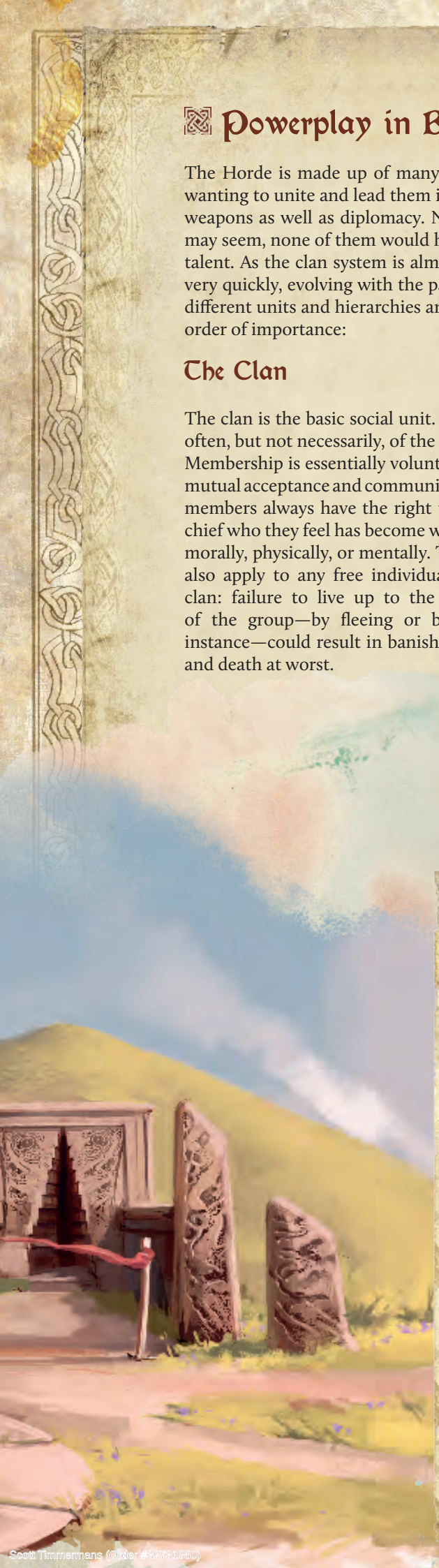
The clan is the basic social unit. Members are often, but not necessarily, of the same species. Membership is essentially voluntary, based on mutual acceptance and community spirit. Clan members always have the right to abandon a chief who they feel has become weak, whether morally, physically, or mentally. These criteria also apply to any free individual within the clan: failure to live up to the expectations of the group—by fleeing or betraying, for instance—could result in banishment at best, and death at worst.

The Tribe

A tribe brings together all clans sharing the same laws, rites, and culture. Tribal leadership varies greatly. The governing entity may be a council of elders, a circle of widows of clan chieftains, a leader elected by their warriors, or even a king drawn by lot. Each tribe has its own customs.

The Ezen

Whoever aspires to become the warlord of an entire region must demonstrate their worth to the tribal chieftains, while ensuring that they are respected by the clan chiefs. There are no strict conditions for becoming ezen. An ezen can gain support through persuasion and negotiation, win it by demonstrating cunning and intelligence, or snatch it by conquest and coercion. It can also be a mix of all three. Each ezen is unique.



Züzzan and Sharakhyn, the Steeds of Tamerakh

We know for certain that our lord Tamerakh deeply loved horses and that he gave rise to the now renowned traditions of the breeders of our tribes. It is sometimes said that his own horses were called Züzzan, "the cloud", and Sharakhyn, "the scorch". These divine steeds traveled the world beside our Storm, terrifying his enemies, who bowed at the feet of the conqueror. For they were no ordinary horses, but clouds and flames made stallions, with whom Tamerakh had made a pact. From the nostrils of Züzzan gushed gusts of wind that uprooted trees and tore down walls; the hooves of Sharakhyn gave birth to tongues of fire that tore through flesh and melted metal. With their help, our lord became master of the winds and flames, which he used to conquer the world.

Although the twin steeds disappeared along with Storm himself, we are reminded of their presence every day, in the wind that stings our faces and in the embers that warm our homes. I have heard that only the whip of Tamerakh could recall to our land the wild and free horses of yore, and that whoever wields it would then become the equal of the god who commands them. What presumption!

Daïni-mori, traveling merosi storyteller.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731930)

Tengeer'chuluu, the Sanctuary of the Skystone

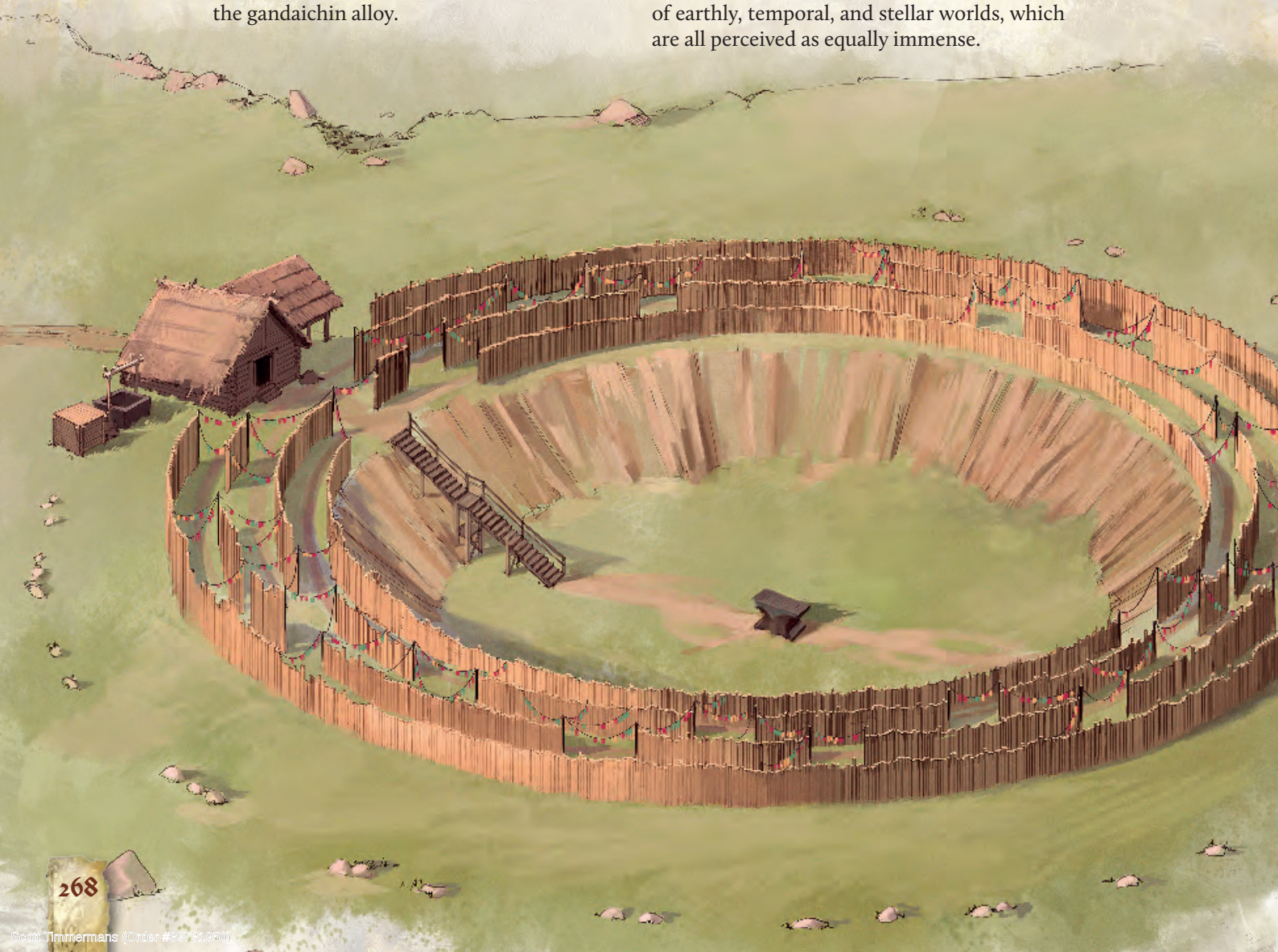
Tengeer'chuluu is a sacred building isolated in the middle of the Steppe, built in honor of the Skystone, and, through it, heaven and earth. A sanctuary honoring Tengeer, the Sky, was built all around the impact crater. Wooden columns were carved and at the top of them, banners fly in the wind. Priests and druids of the surrounding tribes regularly come to maintain the site and pray there. The worship is syncretic, celebrating the divine and nature together. The followers ensure that there are sufficient water supplies for the pilgrims who sometimes come here. The wooden enclosure of the sanctuary includes a small annex where travelers can take shelter from bad weather and regain strength.

The Legendary Origin of Gandaichin Smithing

The Skystone fell from the sky long ago. This meteorite of pure metal was discovered by orcs and, according to legend, served as the starting point for their art of forging. Orc warriors were particularly proud of their blades made of sky metal. They crisscrossed the Steppe to collect the small nodules and forge them in earthen ovens dug into the ground. Little by little, they perfected their art and developed the gandaichin alloy.

Pilgrimage Site

Before the rise of Tamerakh, orc warriors would come here before every expedition or war to celebrate the union of heaven and earth and give thanks to the infinite. The fear of death was dreadful, but one still had to prepare for it. A battle was first won in spirit. Only those who accepted their finiteness could live intensely, free from the poison of terror.
Now, the worship is mainly undertaken by blacksmiths and druids. They come here to find inspiration by meditating on the intersection of earthly, temporal, and stellar worlds, which are all perceived as equally immense.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731930)

Lihyân, the Merchant Lock

Lihyân is the main gateway to the Old Kaan from the longest roads that cross the Telhika Mountains. Its surroundings are marked by terraces on which vines are grown to produce a renowned wine.

The Gateway to the Old Kaan

The city is fortified with walls that blend in with the mountain cliffs. In the past, it had to defend itself against plunderers from the Steppe; now the danger seems to come mainly from Kartaçöl. If a war between the two empires were to take place, Lihyân would be a strategic target. Conquering it would allow the Immortal to send his troops by land, not just by sea. Not only would it be simpler, it would also offer the possibility of attacking on two fronts and unleash a pincer attack upon the Kaani army.

A Place of Meetings and Intrigues

A meeting place for merchants from the north and south of the Telhika Mountains, Lihyân is a good place to do business and make deals. The most powerful merchants have the wealth and networks to involve themselves in the political affairs of both the Old Kaan and Kartaçöl.

For spies coming from the ilkral's lands, Lihyân is an important base for launching operations and extracting agents who must flee the Old Kaan quickly. They gather in the underground network of aqueducts and warehouses.

The city is a veritable anthill; the visible part on the surface is only a small piece. There are also entrances to the Netherworld and a shadow market where drow, duergar, and svirfneblin come to buy and sell. Sometimes there are also inconspicuous stone giants, who use *pearls of size-change* to become the same size as the humanoids surrounding them.



Emblem of Lihyân

Scott Timmerman (Order #3973930)

Yurts and Caravans

As a whole, the lives of the Kaani people are structured around horses and herds. The animals set the pace and are given priority. Without horses, Kaani nomads wouldn't exist.

The amurru travel constantly, in caravans of varying sizes that sometimes spread out over long distances, protected by the tribe's warriors against attacks by wolves or the wild hordes that infest certain regions. At night, the desert is speckled with mushroom-shaped tents that they call "yurts". Made of warm furs, they are arranged in a circular pattern, furnished with magnificent embroidered carpets and light, carved furniture that can be easily dismantled. They are quite cozy: in winter, the heat rises to perfectly suitable temperatures thanks to the small, indoor fires that the Kaanis protect from the wind. They brew a delicious spiced tea infused with mare milk.

A Study of Peoples, *Volume II, by Bombil Knotsofarr.*

The Creeping Influence of Dengêkevir

Dengêkevir cannot be a god. That would be ridiculous. That is not the way things work. A powerful creature, yes, whose unique nature needs clarifying, but certainly not a god.

Gods have only existed since the creation of the Fateforge, and only through it. The only analogous entity is Eana, in her own, unique way. Her chosen ones are granted access to a form of divine magic, but it is different from the magic of priests.

Dengêkevir's faithful—in increasing numbers—use the gifts of warlocks. Some of them may even have cleric abilities. Are we to believe that this being has found a loophole, a way to tap into the resources of the Astral Plane? That it has become a conduit?

Supposing such a loophole even exists, it is not enough to make it a deity. For ease of understanding, gods can be considered as harmonic or entropic, depending on whether they seem to promote life or not, but the lines are blurry and the behavior of deities is difficult to interpret. However, I am quite certain that futile ambitions to conquer the world are incompatible with either state. That would be the desire of fiends, who are imbued with destructive and evil ambitions. Gods are not necessarily good, but at least they are above such hubris as "becoming masters of the world" or "destroying the world". What next? What do tyrants dream of once they reach their ultimate goal?

When they believe they can forever remain at the peak of their fleeting glory, the laws of the moon Eternity cut them down to size, revoking their abilities.

Dengêkevir is unique, powerful, manipulative, and yet it may be transforming. It was dominated by the appetites of its former nature. It has retained some of its old habits, but they cannot remain. Erosion does its work, even on the highest mountains.

Alas, in our short lives we must concern ourselves with those who worship it and believe that they are gaining power through it. What a strange faith it is to love a sword or a spell for its destructive power!

Excerpt from the diary of Erem





Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Important Figures of Lihyân

Sinur, the Master Vintner

Sinur, the Master Vintner, is the merosi heiress to one of the largest vineyards around Lihyân. She recently became a member of the city council, elected by craftsmen and merchants who believe her to be reliable, capable of fighting both corruption and the shady maneuvers of other factions. Sinur herself is very proud of this role and is determined to fight relentlessly against her enemies. Although her battles are just, she remains a divisive figure because of her sanctimonious character. She does not forgive mistakes: for her, showing understanding is the first step toward complacency.

While Sinur otherwise enjoys a great deal of support, for her opponents she is a problem that needs be solved intelligently, lest neutralizing her cause more trouble than her activities.

Evzer, the Wool Mogul

Evzer the goblin is a textile merchant. She buys wool, dyes it, and then weaves it, before exporting it far away to Kartaçöl, Khaalgany, the Nulim Seashores, or the Manbalarer. A backbiter with very flexible morals and a willingness to cheat to get her way, Evzer is very protective toward the members of her tribe. By extension, she is also favorable to the goblin cause. She abhors the way her people are despised and enslaved. On the other hand, she shows few such qualms in the rest of her affairs. When it comes to Lihyân's future, Evzer will support the Old Kaan or Kartaçöl depending on which one is to her advantage, without any further ethical considerations.

Semzin, High Priest of Afirînerê

Semzin is a young tiefling, already in the highest ranks of the cult of Afirînerê in Lihyân. Brilliant and hard-working, he has distinguished himself and has managed to turn his fiendish origins into an asset. People see him as a spiritual guide capable of taming and even defeating evil. Many followers and adepts have an unquestioning faith in him. They know nothing of the torments that trouble Semzin's broken soul. While he encourages daily prayer to the Father Creator of Kaani peoples, he himself cannot help but worry about his own evil father, who he is and what his plans are. This quest has become an obsession bordering on folly. Convinced of his mission, Semzin may well overlook other serious issues. His concerns focus on the great fiends of the continent: Karathaan the Warlord, Gegaôr the furious beast, Askinos the Pain Drinker. If that weren't enough, he also has concerns about Dengêkevir.

Xezêm the Judge

In the merchant city of Lihyân, many cases are settled by complex contracts with a myriad of clauses and subclauses. It seems that everything can be resolved this way: purchases, sales, partnerships, marriages, wills, etc. For this reason, merchants and families alike require impartial judges who can study the meanings of agreements and decide their proper execution in the event of a dispute.

The goblin Xezêm is one of the most respected judges in the city. People come to see her in the event of a problem, but also sometimes beforehand, to examine an agreement prior to signing it. However calm and wise she may seem, this middle-aged lady appreciates her role because of her passion for gossip. She is curious about everything and loves news from faraway places. This helps her better understand the ins and outs of seemingly harmless business. Kartaçöl's agents in particular are wary of her, though they are not the only ones. A person of integrity who knows a lot about everyone could jeopardize certain plans. Therefore, Xezêm's enemies are interested in her family, the judge's only apparent weakness.

Peljin the Moneylender

Peljin is an old ulkan working as a moneylender. She is one of the richest people in Lihyân. When someone needs large sums of money rapidly, they need only ask her. She knows how to solve problems and overcome obstacles. She is a worrying figure to many because she knows how to get her money back—with interest, of course—but those who are fortunate enough to consider her a close acquaintance also know that she sometimes gets involved in noble causes... And if there's a way to recoup her costs after these generous displays, even better.

Narî the Miner

Aldaron living so far from the forests of the Septentrion are rare. Some left the tribes, lured by prospects in Kartaçöl's Empire; others were taken prisoner by the same empire before they managed to flee. Narî doesn't know which category her parents were in. As a young girl, she was taken in at Kömirqala's Egg House, before becoming a miner in the kobold community. Curious to see the world, she traveled with Omri, a good kobold friend and adventurer at heart. Unfortunately, when they stopped near a strange ruin, Omri began to develop strange symptoms, gradually losing his mind. With great difficulty, Narî managed to reach Lihyân. Having few resources, she settled in Heights Hospital. There she discovered that others were suffering from the same sickness as Omri. What was going on?

Scott Timmerman (Orde - 3973950)

Iconic Locations of Lihyân

The Green Tower of the Merchant Council

Lihyân is governed by a merchant council elected by the assembly of the city's craftsmen and shopkeepers. The building in which it stands is made of green and black marble, with walkways leading from nearby guild headquarters. The debates held here are meant to ensure the smooth running of business in the city and the quality of agreements that bind Lihyân to its trading partners. It is also here that political decisions on defense, weaponry, and support for the capital are made.

The Red Tower

There used to be a council in the Red Tower. Footbridges connected it to the main barracks and to large, fortified gates. Now, the building is half empty, used to store what is mostly judicial and contractual archives. According to an urban legend, the place is haunted and full of secret passages.

The institution of the Red Tower Council was dismantled after the Water Bearers' Revolution thirty years ago, which aimed to overthrow the tyrannical General Jawero-Din. Since then, in the name of protecting civil freedoms, the power of the army has been tightly limited and the merchants—civilians—run all politics. Lihyân's soldiers lost the right to vote. This has resulted in a dissatisfaction for those in military careers. Those with ambition and a taste for combat now enter the Celestial Guard or the Gandaichin Guard in Khaalgany.

The Great Caravanserai

The Great Caravanserai is the size of a multistory village, with warehouses and eating places. The establishment can accommodate travelers' mounts of any size! Axe beaks, capricorns, camels, horses, worgs, and even hippogriffs and griffons can be groomed and fed there by qualified personnel.

Despite the quality service and good reputation, the wealth stored here attracts thieves from Lihyân and sometimes also from the Netherworld. Countless strange events have taken place here: romances, mysterious assassinations, discreet negotiations on matters of prime importance, meetings of spies, exchanges of prisoners, the birth of beautiful friendships, the starting point for perilous expeditions into the wilderness, and so many others!

The Bazaar

The line between the bazaar and the caravanserai is unclear. On the surface, one must cross a street; but in the underground floors, warehouses and shops intermingle in the colorful darkness of perpetual lanterns and their colored glass. The town planning here is totally chaotic. Every time a space becomes available, people improvise, dig, develop, or consolidate. The most powerful merchants have shops on the surface, near the guild headquarters, but well-informed people know that very interesting things can be found for a good price when you go through the trouble of searching and haggling.

Great Beast Market

For those wishing to find a rare mount, such as a racing axe beak, a purebred capricorn, or a docile hippogriff, the Great Beast Market of Lihyân is one of the best places to go in the Old Kaan. Breeders and trainers come from far and wide to showcase their herds. It is here that one buys the griffons that will be sent to Khaalgany for the members of the Gandaichin Guard. Visitors walk through a maze of pens, admiring the most remarkable mounts, while tasting takeaway food bought from street vendors. The most important sales take place at the end of spring, during a large fair marked by races and other sporting events that showcase the prowess of the riders.

Heights Hospital

Although Lihyân is a merchant city with little forgiveness for weaknesses and which leaves everyone in charge of their own negotiations, there is an important charitable institution, largely financed by donations. Heights Hospital is built near the northern gate of the city, the one that leads to the Telhika Mountains. Injured and distressed travelers are brought back here where they can stay in dormitories, eat soup, and receive free medical treatment.

There is an increasingly mystical atmosphere here as pilgrimages honoring Afirînerê and bound for Kartaçöl, or even the Pillars of Creation, grow in popularity. However, one also meets strange madmen, struck by disturbing visions of the mysterious Dengêkevir.

Guild of Bonds

The Guild of Bonds brings together translators, guides, and intermediaries. They are considered merchants of words, advice, and facilities. With all the foreigners who come through town, this institution is necessary. Here one can find specialists of all kinds of languages and rare tongues, including those normally related to a mystical practice—such as Druidic.

Even though the members of the guild swear to keep everything they see and hear secret (and their discretion is recognized), some have been murdered in the past to ensure their complete silence.

Guild members may use illusions to change their identities if necessary. They also have a network of caches in the city and in the mountains. These are most often used as warehouses for smuggling, the other important activity of this group.

Scott Timmermans (Order #99731450)

Soul Sap

Soul Sap is a clandestine establishment in the depths of the city. It is very difficult to discover it by chance. One has to take several hidden sets of stairs from back shops and warehouses of the Great Caravanserai or the bazaar.

A notorious place among people living on the margins of legality in Lihyân, it serves several functions. First and foremost, it is an opium den and gambling establishment. It is also a marketplace of the Netherworld, where drow or duergar come to do business. Slave traders from the distant Shüd'delkhii also have a business presence. Rumors say that the chambers of Soul Sap are not only for sleeping and experiencing poppy-induced dreams. Here, the most deviant tastes can be expressed without fear of judgment.



Lihyân, the Merchant Lock

1. The Green Tower of the Merchant Council
2. The Red Tower
3. The Great Caravanserai
4. The Bazaar
5. Great Beast Market
6. Heights Hospital
7. Guild of Bonds
8. Temple of Afirênerê

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Ayangaba'üül, the Necropolis City

Nestled at the foot of the Telhika Mountains, in the far northeast of the Old Kaan, the city of Ayangaba'üül stands, carved into the ocher and red cliffs of the mountain. It is a sight to behold, where dwellings, tombs, temples, and tents are linked to each other via a series of rope bridges and ladders, rock-carved stairs, and steep wooden ladders. The necropolis-city honors the ascended Tamerakh, deceased ancestors, and Ayanga, an ancient, widely forgotten deity.

The site is divided into three areas. The first one serves the everyday lives of laymen, with housing, a market, and craftsmen stalls. The second is the sacred area which is open to pilgrims, with the great temple of Tamerakh and chapels dedicated to local spirits and other creatures. The final area is restricted to initiates of the Cult of the Cloistered.

The secrecy surrounding the ancient necropolis breeds frightening rumors. Some say that the monks practice necromantic rites in order to fuel an abnormal longevity. Others say that the Cloistered are planning something disturbing, linked to the ancient deity who was once honored there.



Emblem of Ayangaba'üül

Ruins from the Age of Tamerakh

Ayangaba'üül is located in the orcs' ancestral territory. Its golden age came before the reign of Tamerakh, as a high place of worship for a rival deity of Death who gave its name to the city: Ayanga.

The tombs of the necropolis keep the memory of the great rulers of yesteryear, including the Destroyer's father, Khüch'adal. The funerary treasures and mausoleums are said to lie untouched, trapped and haunted by the incorporeal undead charged with protecting them.

The fall of Mangulik and the appearance of the cursed lands of the Khoosrol nearby greatly isolated the site. Pilgrims became less numerous, and the temple became impoverished. It was then that the clergy of old gradually formed the Cult of the Cloistered.

Now, the population of the area is made up of semi-nomadic goblin and orc livestock farmers, who live on a seasonal cycle. Life here is marked by death and the memory of ancient curses. The troubling Cloistered also protect the city from the horrors of the Khoosrol—sometimes also acting as intercessors...

The Nature and Work of Ayanga

The deity Ayanga is difficult to understand even for its most zealous followers. This is partly due to the fact that its nature has changed over time.

- **Divinity of the Age of the Fated Kings.** Tamerakh was not the only mortal to attain divine apotheosis, but he is the only identifiable, historical figure (along with Xonim) who managed to remain a prominent god. Ayanga, on the other hand, became a god (or goddess, its gender is uncertain), but something put an end to its reign.
- **The domain of Ayanga.** Ayanga was a deity linked to death, mystery, and knowledge. Its peculiarity is that it linked its Beyond to the stone of its sanctuary. All the souls of its followers are gathered just below the rocky surface, and yet are infinitely far away, between the Material and Astral Planes.
- **A Nightmare-linked stasis.** Ayanga was absorbed by Nightmare at an unknown point in time, but something unexpected happened due to the peculiar ties of this deity's Beyond. Its essence was linked to this realm of the dead, and thus partly inaccessible to Nightmare. One part of Ayanga remained inside, the other outside. As a result, the dread of nothingness has contaminated the realm of the dead, a fresh terror in an atmosphere that has never been particularly joyful. The Cult of the Cloistered, in seeking mastery over their feelings of horror, allows Ayanga to remain in a sort of precarious equilibrium, as if suspended above a precipice. Reversing this will be very difficult, likely involving an epic confrontation with Nightmare.
- **Freeing the sorrowful souls from the rock.** Ayanga's Beyond is rather unappealing today, resembling a sad purgatory. It is possible to free the souls caught in the rock, similar to a great exorcism that would involve the complete dismantling of the necropolis city. But the shrine is Ayanga's link to the world, and to the part of them that exists outside the Nightmare. If such an exorcism were to happen, only the part of Ayanga that was absorbed by Nightmare would remain, and the deity would likely disappear rapidly.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731630)

Ayanga's Cult of the Cloistered

The Cult of the Cloistered is a semi-religious, semi-arcanist order mainly comprised of orcs. It carries out burials, prays for the dead, and protects the mausoleums' treasures from looters. It is funded partly by the donations of pilgrims and the families of the deceased buried there, and partly by the offerings of a few orc and goblin communities in the area.

Coming to Ayanga

The Cloistered maintain a crude chapel dedicated to Ayanga in the Temples District of Khaalgany. In their belief, those who are called by the deity will find their way to it despite the chapel's austere and worn appearance. All the trials and tragedies of life find meaning when they enable one to discover the path leading to the necropolis city.

Since Brother Avolition has been leading the Order, proselytism has been much more active. Brothers and Sisters preach in the underprivileged neighborhoods of the Clay Cities. Converts in search of meaning come from Lihyân, Babassür, and even from the Nulim Seashores.

The cult is placed under the seal of mystery, each revelation conditioned by initiation. The spiritual journey of the Brothers and Sisters is punctuated by illusory certainties, studies of paradoxes, and complex mysteries.

Scholars and Augurs

The study of mathematics in particular—at a very high level of complexity—and anatomy are part of the daily activities in the sanctuary. The unfathomable mysteries of life, death, and infinity can be revealed to those who know how to look beyond appearances, just as one should not stop at skin-level in their study of bodily functions.



The Cloistered are also renowned oracles, and people come from far and wide to consult them. They help pilgrims find the answers they seek, and sometimes even discreetly solve their problems. Brutal poisons and scrolls can be sold. There are even jars containing incorporeal undead that are released when broken.

The Appearance of the Cloistered

The daily clothes of the Cloistered consist of loose black pleated pants tied at the waist, resembling a skirt when seen from afar. Both men and women are usually shirtless, their skin covered with a chalky substance that gives them a very pale look. At night or when traveling, they wrap themselves in a plain, short, loose coat with wide sleeves.

Each member of the order takes the title "Brother" or "Sister" followed by the name of a handicap, disability, or degenerative disease. They wear a mask in public, which is decorated with a stylized motif after the weakness of the body for which they are named. It is said that the individual is thus immune to this misfortune, and that they have the opposite advantage. Thus, "Brother Atrophy" wouldn't have weak muscles, but would be particularly muscular.

Experts on the Khoosrol Region

Members of the Cult of the Cloistered sometimes leave their sanctuary to go to the Khoosrol. In spite of the danger, they have been making these trips for centuries and keep records of their excursions on the shelves of their archives. They are undoubtedly experts of these places and of the dangers that await adventurers.

Facing Nightmare and Horror

Horror is central to the Cloistered philosophy. They seek to have mastery over it, and to gradually tame it, to avoid being overwhelmed by this visceral emotion. Their training aims to desensitize themselves to the macabre and to make its destructive powers their own by understanding the aesthetics of darkness. They write poems, paint, and sculpt while exploring the disturbing beauty that exists even in the depths of the most unfathomable abyss of affliction. For the Cloistered, becoming serene masters of all that would make mere mortals scream in fear is a path to the sublime.

This is not simply a stylistic exercise or an abstract question. Their goal is to defeat Nightmare by internalizing it in a perfectly mastered manner, and, in a way, to swallow and digest it psychically. In this, they draw inspiration from the murmurs of Ayanga, a lost divinity supposedly absorbed by Nightmare—and therefore by Canker. However, Ayanga's chosen ones remain rare among the Cloistered.

Scott Timperman's Order #35731450

The Threat of Horror

The Defile of Despair is accessible only by initiates of the order. They alone are prepared to discover this impressive, horrifying, and mind-wracking place. Anyone else who enters must make a DC 17 saving throw against horror (see **Grimoire**: **Madness**). On a failure, the following effects can occur:

- **Short-term madness (roll 1d6):** (1) nervous breakdown; (2) panic (fleeing this place at all costs); (3) aphasia; (4) hallucinations (voices and presences in the walls); (5) shock; (6) fainting.
- **Long-term madness (roll 1d6):** (1) compulsion (the character repeats incessantly—even if they don't know it—a macabre litany in Diabolic, a poem sung by the Cloistered); (2) hallucinations (voices and presence in the walls); (3) paranoia (the sensation of an imminent, very dangerous threat); (4) disgust (fleeing this evil place); (5) blindness (refusal to see gives the feeling of having lost sight, as if one's eyes have been burned by the things that prowl around); (6) coma.
- **Permanent madness:** "Spirits of the ultimate nothingness whisper from the cracks in the cliffs. What they say is important". The voices can be imaginary or mingle with real messages from incorporeal creatures, or even powers (see the **Lexicon**).

The Role of the Cloistered

Depending on the style of the campaign, the Cloistered may have a variety of roles, potentially combining several of the following approaches.

An Ambitious Sect

Guided by Jehât-Karza, also known as Brother Avolition, the Cloistered convert more and more inhabitants of the Old Kaan: disillusioned city dwellers, disgusted by corruption, jaded by materialism, in search of a form of transcendence. The Cult grows more and more important and influences the rulers of the Clay Cities; members of powerful families become fanatical servants ready to commit assassinations at the risk of their own life. Ayanga becomes the only deity honored in some cities and all opponents are ruthlessly hunted down. In the end, everything is done to overthrow both the current nandin and Advisor Bekasi.

The Guardians of Rich Mausoleums

Adventurers are motivated by the excessive riches kept here, or they seek some artifact or essential information in one of the mausoleums guarded by the Cloistered. In defending the sacred places, the Cult will do everything in its power to stop these invaders, including hunting them down should they manage to escape.

The Knowledge of the Past

The archives of the Cloistered, their mastery of divination, and their experience of the Khoosrol make them good advisors for anyone wishing to visit Mangulik. They also have access to knowledge about Nightmare and dimensions of reality that few people understand, such as the nothingness in which the mysterious lamentrope lives, and where Xonim would have remained in the period between her death and her divine ascension.

A Door to the Nightmare

The Cult's devotion to absolute horror closely links them to Nightmare. The shrine of Ayanga could be one of the only places in Eana where one can open a portal to the Nightmare, in the Astral Plane. Of course, some people also fear that the Cloistered could become an unwilling gateway into the Material Plane for nameless horrors.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Scott Timmerman (Orde - 39731950)

Jehât-Karza, alias Brother Avolition

This orc noble lived at the Khaalgany court. He was known as a charismatic and remarkable individual; many thought he would succeed the previous nandin, but the latter eventually appointed his son to the position. Jehât-Karza believed that the fault for this unjust decision lay with Advisor Bekasi, for whom he harbored deep resentment. Abandoned on all sides, Jehât-Karza felt compelled to flee for his life.

In the capital of Old Kaan, most people think that Jehât-Karza has been dead for twenty years. In fact, he secretly travelled to the ancestral lands of the orcs and found refuge in Ayangaba'üül. He took the holy vows and changed his identity to become Brother Avolition. After a few years, he managed to establish himself as the bearer of a vision for the order.

Ambitious and an authority on life in the faraway Clay Cities, he prepares his revenge, eager to both destroy his rival—who became nandin—and reveal to the world the renewed power of Ayanga.

Iconic Locations of Ayangaba'üül

The Dry Stone Village

The outer part of the necropolis city, open to the world, is a typical village in the foothills of the Telhika Mountains. A few rounded walls of dry stones of about 10 feet high follow the cliff, broken at times by large rocks. The flat-roofed houses are built on the slope, with very narrow streets. In the past there were larger, beautifully designed buildings made of mud brick like the Clay Cities, but they did not survive the impoverishment of the area. The city was also larger in the past. Now it has shrunk to a fraction of its former size, inhabited only by shepherds, a few craftsmen, and a handful of merchants.

The Layover Inn

Run by a family of goblins, the Layover Inn is the only establishment in Ayangaba'üül whose design follows modern building practices found in major cities. The stones of the walls are even sealed with mortar. Inside, travelers would be relieved to find a counter, a common room, a small shop, individual or group rooms, and even a large dormitory under the roof, for the few occasions when pilgrims are a little too numerous. However, one should not expect too much from local resources. There is neither beer nor wine—alcohol is limited to fermented milk—and almost everything on the menu is based on milk, butter, whey, or cheese.

The Main Sanctuary

The main sanctuary is accessed through a monumental staircase. Several wide and low doors are open to welcome the faithful into the windowless hall, decorated with braziers. Any Cloistered present each sit at a different bowl and light the flame. As long as it burns, they remain at the disposal of the pilgrims. They listen to their questions and answer their requests in whispers.

The Monastery

Although the dwellings of the Cloistered resemble the first tombs, their internal layout is quite similar to that of a monastery. The members of the order each have a small cell, which they leave to take part in common activities: meals, meditation, physical training in the courtyard, studies in the archives, and practice of the arts, such as painting and sculpture.

The monastery may also occasionally welcome laymen, either in hope that they will join the order, or because of an important matter.

The Archives

The archives are the library of the order. These rooms and shelves take up a considerable amount of space. Texts have been collected since the early days of the Cult, and the Cloistered are proud that there has never been a fire. There are documents on clay tablets, others on parchment, tissue paper, and papyrus: they comprise treatises on medicine, astronomy, divination, necromancy, and arcana, as well as accounts of expeditions to the Khoosrol region, and of all the oracles reported.

The Defile of Despair

These winding gorges are wadis—stream beds untouched by the rains most of the year—meaning they are often dry. However, during violent bad weather, waterfalls form and feed a torrent that flows into an underground lake, inside the Temple of Recollection and Oblivion.

In this interlacing maze, one walks among many monuments. The entrances to the mausoleums are systematically placed over thirteen feet from the canyon floor, thus protecting them from the waves, meaning that one usually needs a ladder to enter them. Skeletal telamons are carved into the wall: gigantic, emaciated humanoids that seem to carry the weight of the sky, glaring down on the living who venture here. Fountains of blood slowly pour out, and the ominous bas-reliefs, reminiscent of heaps of intermingled corpses, seem to briefly come to life.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39781990)



The Wall of Remembrance

Located in the Defile of Despair, the Wall of Remembrance is a huge, macabre bas-relief. Each time a person is buried in the necropolis, a sculpture representing their appearance in the Ethereal Plane is made. Thanks to this, each deceased remains eternally linked to the stone of the sanctuary, which becomes their Beyond. As long as their portrait remains here, they will never dissolve into Eana or suffer another fate. By visiting the representation of a dead person, one can communicate with them.

Souls linger in a strange and arid universe, with an impossible architecture made of aberrant staircases and walkways, which is mirrored by the sanctuary of the necropolis city, albeit in an extremely simplified version. The existence of the dead is dull and contemplative, extremely slow-moving, with a distorted perception of the passage of time.

The Temple of Recollection and Oblivion

At the lowest point of the Defile of Despair, the Temple of Recollection and Oblivion is carved into the cliff and has a titanic entrance, so large that giants could go through it. This may have been the case in the past, during the Era of the Travelers. There is no door. The water from the occasional torrents rushes inside without anything to slow it down. In a thunderous roar, it rushes down the eroded slopes of ancient staircases until it reaches an immense underground lake, which the Cloistered call the Lake of the Forgotten.

Its waters are perfectly transparent, glowing with ephemeral luminescence, as if traces of energy and life were escaping from the bas-reliefs both on the surface and in the depths, rising up through the waters. Everywhere, including from the lake, a great many square-cut columns rise vertically, and horizontally. They are of irregular height, and many of them do not seem to help support the architectural structure. One can walk on them to move above the surface, jump, or climb, at the risk of falling into the water. Here, no path seems obvious or to have a logical meaning.

Hidden places containing mystical knowledge have been waiting for centuries, even millennia, for initiates and heroes capable of reaching them through this aerial and aquatic maze.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Nubilbabassür, the Garden City



Emblem of Nubilbabassür

Nubilbabassür, a city on the banks of the River Nubil that is sometimes only called Babassür, clearly stands out from the Steppe, even from afar. There are well-kept forests where notables can hunt and lumberjacks can find building materials. Then come the fields and orchards, bordered by high walls to protect them from cold winds and irrigated by a network of canals. Wheat, pomegranates, oranges, lemons, vines, peaches, apricots, almonds, and much more are cultivated.

After crossing this vast pastoral area, one can finally reach the elegant, castellated walls of the city. Water is grandly displayed everywhere, with fountains and lavish bathing establishments. Fabulous gardens adorn all the mansions and the courtyards of wealthy residences. The color blue is richly expressed in shades of lapis and turquoise on the glazed bricks of the monumental gates, palaces, and temples.

The surrounding region was originally populated by orcs but, in such a lively market town, species mix. Now, there are almost more merosi and humans than orcs, with merchants from all other peoples, including, of course, a significant minority of hobgoblins.

Babassür is still ruled by its crowned hassu, but his scepter is in Khaalgany, among the symbols of power held by the nandin. Protocol, however, is as complicated and overburdened as if the hassu were emperor, and perhaps even more so, as if to compensate for a vassalage that was never fully accepted.

The Importance of Secret Societies

The inhabitants may be welcoming, but they nevertheless keep to a degree of secrecy. The spirit of the city is expressed through its favorite deities: Xonim, the Lady of the Night, and Flora, honored as Khüsdeg, the Desirable One. Babassür is rich in secret societies. It has a public face and a hidden face. Magic, religion, and craftsmanship are always taught in initiations that are full of symbols and riddles.

The same is true of theft, espionage, and murder. In the city, masters can be found who can pass on these illicit and dangerous skills, which are presented as arts. This practice is only partially secret, because one of Babassür's great buildings is the Cenotaph of the Nameless. There, spies, agents, and assassins can be honored in front of an empty, anonymous tomb with a coded epitaph. The authorities in Khaalgany are in contact with several secret societies in Babassür that provide well-trained agents. While most of the initiates of these secret groups are Kaani, sometimes foreigners, fascinated by the mystery, will come here and may be accepted as apprentices.



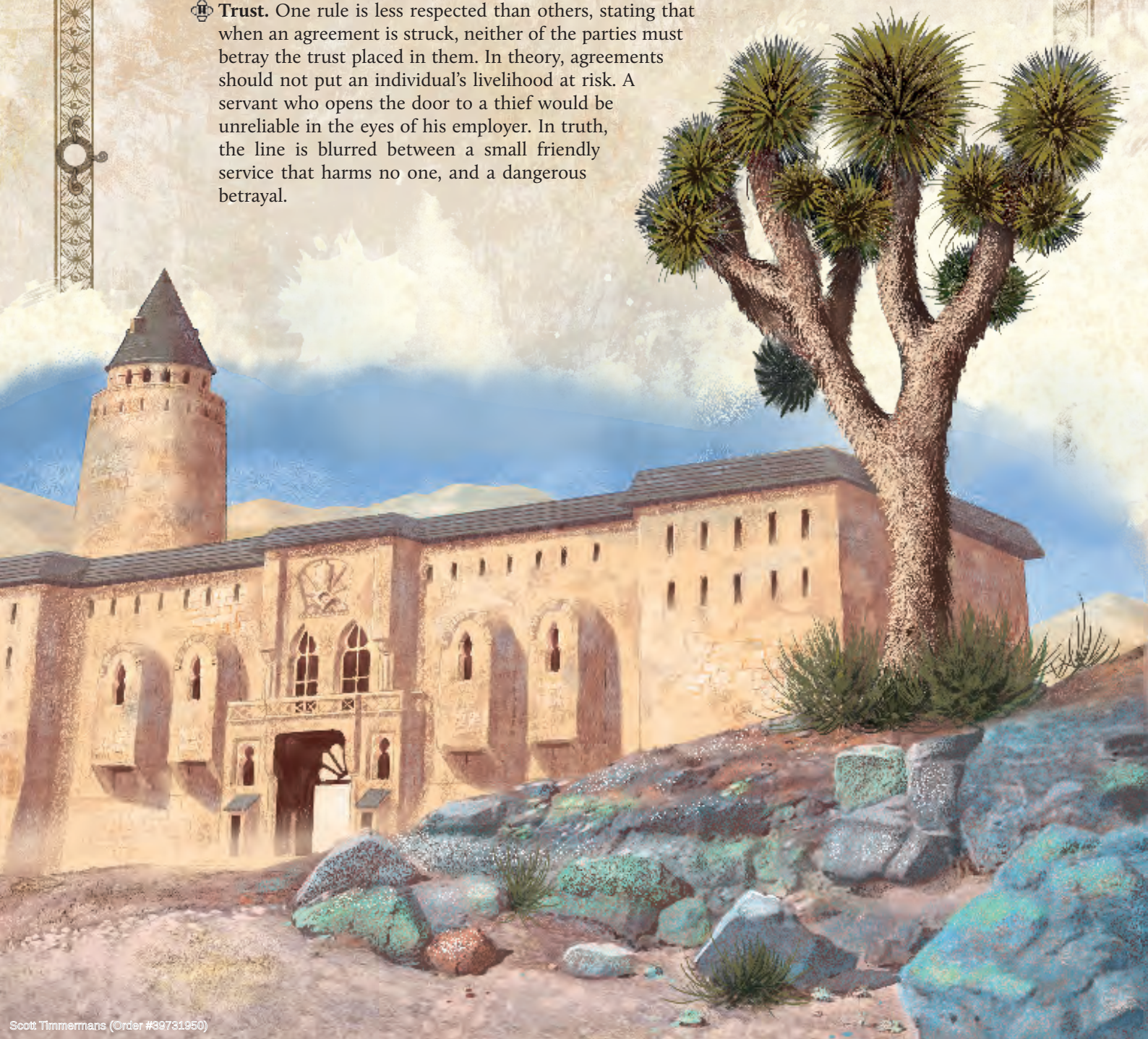
Scott Timmermans (Order #9773450)

Everything Has a Price

Negotiation is part of the city culture, as evidenced by expressions such as: “Everything has a price, you just have to know it”, “No is but the starting point of a negotiation”, “Only the lazy accept a price displayed”, “Only the cowardly accept the rules proclaimed”, “There is no harm in making agreements”, and “Never get between two negotiators”.

Bribery is a widespread evil in Babassür, subtly hidden behind the term “agreement”. There is no fixed price for bribes, as the expected values depend on variable factors and even customs:

- **Mood.** It is considered rude to suggest an agreement to someone who is angry or despondent.
- **Integrity.** For many people, integrity is similar to nobility, with the idea that an important person would not stoop to accept an agreement for a sum so small that it becomes insulting. Thus, one can buy a visit to the city walls by offering 2 sp to a trio of low-ranking guards, but it will easily cost tenfold if one tries to make an agreement with an officer passing by. Conversely, if a member of the public refuses an agreement of apparently acceptable value, it may surprise their counterpart and lead them to believe that they are too prideful.
- **Elegance.** Financial agreements may be practical, but they lack elegance. To make an agreement with a notable, it is better to choose a gift of adequate value.
- **Intimacy.** It is frowned upon to ask for an agreement in front of witnesses who can overhear the topic of discussion. Any person present should be a stakeholder or a beneficiary.
- **Trust.** One rule is less respected than others, stating that when an agreement is struck, neither of the parties must betray the trust placed in them. In theory, agreements should not put an individual’s livelihood at risk. A servant who opens the door to a thief would be unreliable in the eyes of his employer. In truth, the line is blurred between a small friendly service that harms no one, and a dangerous betrayal.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Materialism or Spiritual Elevation

Khüsdeg, the Desirable, Desired, and Desiring, is the greatest goddess of Babassür. She is the local equivalent of Flora, with a more seductive appearance than in Cyfandir. She gives people their thirst for life. Her followers are divided between those who follow a literal interpretation of the notion of desire, and those with an abstract acceptance of it. The feud between these interpretations is ancient and led to the construction of two temples, held by two distinct clergies.

- **Khüsdeg-ilaliya.** Ilaliyans honor Khüsdeg as a mistress of pleasures, an epicurean deity who encourages mortals to revel in their senses. The statues and works of art in the temple are baroque, sometimes erotic. The celebrations are sometimes totally unbridled, even orgiastic. Prayers are accompanied by offerings of perfume and incense, and hymns are readily sung. The temple is visible from afar and includes a school in which to study the arts, and ambitious people are taught to become refined courtesans.
- **Khüsdeg-istanza.** Istanzians believe in a deep spirituality, which goes beyond the physical and values fortitude of the soul. This cult is in deep conflict with the corruption and superficial materialism that is spreading throughout Babassür. Its members are concerned about the fragility of the city. Powerful black magic is used to gain power, while inequalities are growing and mistrust is becoming the norm. How can one live with dignity and integrity in such conditions?



Nubilbabassür, the Garden City

1. Ramparts
2. Sallipêdan, the Great Palace
3. The Hanging Garden of Paradise
4. Temple of Khüsdeg-ilaliya
5. Temple of Khüsdeg-istanza
6. Cenotaph of the Nameless

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Iconic Locations of Babassür

Ramparts

The ramparts of Babassür once served a real military function; now, they mainly serve as an elegant monument. They follow a strict, square perimeter around the old town and are adorned with beautiful gates, the motifs of which are reminiscent of myths. Officially, civilians are not allowed to walk on the walls. At night, the inner city gates are closed, opening only to those with special passes.

However, these rules are regularly broken, as bribery is so widespread. For approximately 2 sp, the guards let visitors access the splendid panorama that can be seen from the ramparts. Getting a city gate opened at night is more expensive, about 2 gp per guard present.

Sallipêdan, the Great Palace

Located precisely at the center of the old town, the Great Palace is an exceptional edifice, admired all over the world—or so the people of Babassür think. Fully integrated in the middle of the Hanging Garden of Paradise, it is a splendid place that keeps the memory of a time when a real king ruled.

The Hanging Garden of Paradise

Splendor, enchantment, wonder: there is no word too strong to describe the Hanging Garden of Paradise. Four artificial terraces are permanently watered by underground canals and pumps that supply irrigation systems, which in turn distribute the water between the plots. Gravity does the rest, a small slope draining the water from the upper floors. Waterfalls, either simple or combined with water-activated musical instruments, create a soothing and unreal environment.

Paradise is the first place of intrigue in the palace. Hushed discussions are surrounded by fragrant flowers, but the words spoken can be quite harsh. The apparent sweetness of life only briefly masks the greed and ambitions of the great noble and merchant houses. Everyone expects the worst from their interlocutors and the handful of naive ones are seen as tools. As for the staff, sweepers and gardeners, they observe and report what they have seen to a master who is not always the one who hired them.

Underground Canals

On arriving in Babassür, a traveler may admire the countless canals, but would be unaware that there is another, equally important network of underground canals. Unlike sordid sewers, the underground canals are kept as clean as possible. If someone were to throw a corpse down a well, for example, it would be found fairly quickly by patrols, so as to prevent the water from becoming polluted. These vaulted tunnels are engineering wonders that allow many people to have a well in their courtyard, and sometimes fountains, baths, or similar refinements.

The constant coolness of the canals also attracts visitors during the hottest periods. Diffused sunlight shines down from the well openings, about thirty feet above. The lighting is supplemented by small blue perpetual lanterns affixed to the walls.

Some notables have stairs that lead down to the canals located beneath their homes. These underground designs range from simple benches to actual living rooms, and even subterranean dwellings.

Secret societies and lovers meet clandestinely below the surface at nightfall, when the canal surveillance patrols cease.

Temple of Khüsdeg-ilaliya

The lavish temple of Khüsdeg-ilaliya, the Sensual One, is a place where people come to study the arts. Prostitution is common in its immediate surroundings.

Temple of Khüsdeg-istanza

The circular temple of the Istanzians is built outside the ramparts and is half buried, immersed in a contemplative and meditative atmosphere that is strongly imbued with the culture of the Iruuls. The goddess is represented in the form of beautiful, illuminated minerals while prayer is a slow and silent circular procession. The abstract forms and pure beauty help the faithful to rise, strengthen their will, and discover the meaning they want to give to their lives. Many philosophical and political debates take place in the temple. All the faithful are treated as equals and sit on the benches along the walls to reflect on and confront their ideas. There are many dissatisfied people here who do not recognize themselves in the slow decline of Babassür.

Cenotaph of the Nameless

The spies, agents, and assassins trained in Babassür's secret societies know that they risk their lives by leaving their homeland. A custom was born to honor them in front of an empty, anonymous grave with a coded epitaph. Only those who know the keys understand who is "buried" there, what was important to them, and what fate befell them. Some see the reading of the epitaphs on the cenotaph as a form of contemplation. There are alchemical symbols, abstract codes, hermetic poems, and adages written in dead languages.

The atmosphere here is very different from the usual opulence of the city, a starkness that one would almost qualify as Istanzian even though the main deity here is Death. The corridors are less than two meters wide, all curved like a meandering river, and bordered by cenotaph compartments that rise ten feet high. Memories of the deceased or special offerings are placed inside. It is also a great place for schemers to hide precious objects.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731359)

Important Figures of Babassür

Hassu Karuli Kistuwant

The hassus of Babassür are rulers elected by the families of the high houses. The choice of a ruler is the result of secret agreements, intrigues, power plays, and luck. Having popular support, even if the people do not vote, is also useful.

Hassu Karuli of the human house Kistuwant rose to the head of the city almost twenty years ago. At the time, he was an ambitious and ruthless young wolf, as much feared for his anger as he was known for his rambunctious parties. However, becoming a father and a leader were experiences that gradually changed his view of the world.

His son Lazziya received extensive training that was to make him his heir and facilitate his succession. For some unknown reason, the young man was fascinated by the Steppe and spent all his time with merosi and orc friends. They went near the Khoosrol and did not return. In spite of the search, it was impossible to find the hassu's child. Today, only the father, now an increasingly isolated leader, believes his son to have survived, somewhere. Hassu Karuli's refusal to accept his son's death weakens him and many say that it is time to organize a new, exceptional election to replace him.

Iwaruwa, Priest of Death

Those who go to the Cenotaph of the Nameless are likely to come across Iwaruwa, the priest of Death. This young hobgoblin dresses in simple, gray clothes, and seems to meditate even when walking. People go to him to receive his care and blessings. He offers the benefits of his divine magic for a single payment: whoever receives his blessing must then agree to help the first person to require their own help, no matter what they ask or how important the favor is.

Beggars and thieves often prowl around the cenotaph to take advantage of those who have gone to Iwaruwa. According to legend, even when the help required by the priest is given to a person of ill repute, it results in a higher good.

Piyanaï the Benefactor

Piyanaï's past is the subject of rumors, each one more extravagant than the last. He is said to have found an ancient treasure, or to have married a wealthy elderly widow, or to have seduced the daughter of a prince of the Sand Kingdoms, or that he is the hidden son of the ilkral of Kartaçöl... One thing is certain: this merosi is rich.

Living in a luxurious residence near the hassu's palace, where he is a regular, Piyanaï leads a life that is the envy of many people. He is a remarkable artist and musician, but also a generous patron of the arts. Despite all this, Piyanaï can never have enough. He wants all the glory for himself and the recognition of the old, noble families.

In his dark moments, he is overcome by destructive anger, doubting everything and fearing above all that his secret will be discovered. He once committed a crime and fled; his departure brought him luck and allowed him to become the man he is today. He hopes that no one will ever recognize him.

Mehur

Mehur is a young orc whose face and body are largely covered in tattoos with symbolic motifs referring to a long poem in honor of Xonim. An orphan of modest origin raised by the hassu Karuli, she is fanatically devoted to him. She doesn't care that some people say that she was trained to be Karuli's hound. She is at the head of the Talliya, the hassu's intelligence service, and charged with maintaining peaceful relations with Khaalgany. Meticulous, not to say obsessive, Mehur has a passion for intelligence. She had mixed feelings for Lazziya, and has resigned to his death.

Dasuwah

Dasuwah is a mature and ever-elegant orc. Prior to his disappearance, she was the tutor of Lazziya, the son of hassu Karuli, and is still welcome to the palace. A respected scholar, she is known for her strong personality. Impulsive, passionate, and difficult to convince, she also nurtures a keen interest for antique pieces. She collects rare objects, and a popular rumor has it that many of these items are magical and dangerous.

However, few people know that she is a member of a secret society; more importantly, she and her society agreed that she should persuade Lazziya and his friends to approach dangerous ruins in the Khoosrol in the hope that he would not come back alive. It's nothing personal, merely a way to undermine power by using the candor of a boy unfit for court life.

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Khoosrol, the Desolations



Emblem of Khoosrol

The steppes at the foot of the Iruuls were once fertile meadows where agriculture was possible, not far from the rich mines in the mountains. This is all a thing of the past. Cursed lands, haunted every night by swarms of specters, wraiths, and sünsutaas, the Desolations are the painful memory of the darkest hours of the Kaan. By day, they look similar to the Kheeriins, except that ruins are hidden in the grass. In Tamerakh's time, steps were taken to ensure that many official buildings or the homes of notables were built from stone. The mud dwellings of the common people, on the other hand, have almost completely disappeared, leaving the impression of a civilization that existed only through its most prestigious buildings. Finally, magic, which permeates certain areas, contributes to the conservation of the ruins despite the passage of time or exposure to the elements.

The Khamgaalagchid

The Khamgaalagchid (literally the Protectors), also nicknamed "khamgas" by foreigners, are an order of sacred guardians who honor the Lady of the Night, Xonim, by protecting the secrets she left in the ruins of the Steppe. They are composed of all kinds of fighters, spies— even assassins—and priests of the goddess. Most of them lead a double life in one of the clans of the region, but some of them are entirely devoted to the cause of the order.
Their main task is the killing of grave robbers, but they are regularly confronted by well-organized groups of treasure hunters in the service of governments seeking power. Kartaçöl's Empire (like many others before it) is eager to collect the gifts of Xonim, sending undercover agents to bring back magic items and artifacts. There are not enough Protectors for all the ruins in the region, but any looter they spot better beware. Before unleashing a direct attack, the khamgas try to scare off the offenders by using the morbid folklore of the Desolations.
The members of the order are nomads who live near the Desolations, mostly merosi and orcs. As these peoples have a low life expectancy, and the khamgas lead a dangerous existence, the group has many members who may seem surprisingly young in view of the gravity of the order and the strength of their convictions.
The order is nomadic and regularly finds itself in the ruins of the Steppe, responding to the call of their mistress, Assiyatar, who uses a *horn of the steppes* to send messages. This summons often follows the arrival of a group of potential plunderers in the region.

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Important Figures in the Khamgas

Assiyatar, the Voice of Xonim

The pious Assiyatar prays to Xonim under the infinite, starry sky of the Steppe, asking her for guidance and help in being more vigilant in the future than she was in the past.

At a young age, this skillful rider was already a guide, traveling between Babassür, Lihyân, and Ayangaba'üül. She made the mistake of helping a silver-tongued human who claimed to be a simple scholar in search of a better understanding of past tragedies. She led him to the Khoosrol despite the danger, only to discover that his sole motivation was a sinister madness. He lacked the judgment to wield powerful artifacts without falling prey to them.

Although Assiyatar escaped, it was only thanks to the blessing of Xonim and the pity of the stone giants. The former gave her powerful spells, while the latter healed the serious wounds she had suffered. To this day, she still reflects on these events. She must protect the Khoosrol and the world from greed and excess. This mission goes beyond her and gives meaning to her life. Her wisdom, however, is sometimes countered by the call to battle. Assiyatar fights with rage, throwing herself body and soul into the fray. When she charges, she becomes more of a living image of Storm than of Night!

Halliyari the Ominous Musician

When Assiyatar prays, Halliyari plays a bewitching, celestial and somber music. When the leader of khamgas gathers her troops in anticipation of the confrontation, the ominous bard meets the enemy in the guise of her choice.

This young orc's mission is to subtly discourage plunderers from pressing on. To do so, she uses her expertise in both Deception and Persuasion, seeking to exploit cracks within a group. When her ability to lie and manipulate is not enough, Halliyari uses enchantment spells without fear of corruption thanks to her *Xonim's mercy of enchantment* amulet.

While Halliyari may appear to be a confident, shameless, and mocking liar, she is actually very fragile and has a sickly dependence on her faith, compounded by a superficiality that causes her to neglect tedious but sometimes important details. Without her faith, without Xonim, without the khamgas, she is nothing. She is hypersensitive, causing all of her accumulated pain and doubts to suddenly reappear at times. A former apprentice bard at Babassür, she prompted the cruel downfall of another student, consequently plunging their family into misery. The shock led her to return to the Steppe to recover. There, her father, a khamga, suggested she join the order, which she did with desperate passion.

Dark Mask Hatukissai

Hatukissai comes from a family close to Halliyari's, but he has spent his entire life in the Steppe. This young merosi is an accomplished warrior, much appreciated by his people for his loyalty, dedication, calm, and organizational skills. He is the kind of friend you can count on in times of need and a warrior who is always ready to protect his companions. He joined the khamgas out of family tradition, and the order had high hopes for him. However, Hatukissai lacks ambition, and his current motivation is to look after Halliyari the musician. When she goes on an undercover mission, he always follows at a safe distance. He is the disturbing silhouette of a horseman that treasure seekers sometimes discern in the distance. He never goes into battle unnecessarily, but is always on the lookout in case of trouble, ready to shoot a few well-placed arrows to allow his childhood friend to escape.

Hatukissai presents a smiling, open face every day, showing himself to be gentle and kind. But when he has to fight, he wears a mask representing a furious demon. It seems then that the young warrior loses all sensibility, revealing his violence.



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The Stone Giants

Masters in the art of enchanting pearls that allow each member of their people to use certain powers (see **Wonders of the Great Kaan**), the stone giants are secretive beings who observe the world and act only when they deem it necessary. They live in the Netherworld, where they gather to meditate and deliberate in the underground city of Parastin, located beneath the Desolations.

Caution Born from a Tragic History

Stone giants are few in number and are still slowly recovering from the carnage of the Dawn War, when they were the front line against Canker and came close to extinction. Although they live exceptionally long lives, their birth rate is quite low and they cannot quickly replenish their ranks.

Later, as they slowly began to rebuild their civilization, they were ordered by Tamerakh to join the Horde or be considered its enemies. The stone giants refused to submit and were forced to wage another deadly war. Now, they regard both the surface and the Netherworld with distrust and defiance. To fade into history and be forgotten by all has become their preferred goal.

The Daily Life of Stone Giants

When people speak of stone giants, they imagine creatures over 20 feet tall, crawling through the crevices that lead to the Netherworld, and are surprised that such a people can exist in secrecy. This is why some believe that stone giants are a myth. Thanks to their numerous *pearls of size change*, the guardians of Parastin continue their existence by sometimes taking on the form of Medium humanoids with gray skin, somewhat mineral in appearance. This people's whole way of life is organized around moderation and prudence, to the point that stone giants spend most of their existence in a form smaller than their true size.

Although Parastin is giant-sized, many other installations created by this people could lead one to believe that they were designed for humans, merosi, or orcs living underground. A visitor will discover a few rooms no higher than 8 feet, equipped with tools from the surface; then, after taking a turn, they'll enter an alley four times larger. The half-miniature, half-gigantic architecture offers a striking and unique contrast, as if doll houses had been mixed with normal-sized buildings. The builders imparted the ceremonial and sacred locations with the highest degree of grandeur, imbuing the areas constructed by stone giants with a feeling of great intellectuality and spirituality.

Meditating in Parastin

Some traces of the past suggest that the stone giants used to be ambitious and endowed with a culture of warfare that could be compared to that of the frost giants. The hardships suffered by this people pushed them to a deep reassessment and the transformation of their society toward greater restraint.

This reorganization resulted in the city of Parastin becoming essentially a monastery dedicated to the Eana of the depths, the roots of life that plunge deep underground while maintaining a tight bond with the stars and the universe. In this religious vision, the ateaks of the world act like branches that link Eana to other worlds, creating a continuum between terrestrial and stellar spiritual forms.



Healers of the Desolations

The territory of the giants is not plagued by evil spirits like the surface of the region, but still the giants remain vigilant. The most powerful sünsutaas are indeed capable of possessing them. Carefully, the guardians of the Netherworld inspect the Khoosrol. They keep an eye on adventurers and looters, sometimes coming to their aid for reasons that are not always obvious. Some act on principle, others seem to have plans that they keep to themselves.

Against Canker

To this day, stone giants continue to monitor activity in the Netherworld. They know, however, that there are not enough of them to fight off a major assault. They would need allies, but it is difficult to forego decades, even centuries, of isolation and distrust.

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Important Figures of Parastin

Ohkumih, the Druidess of the Roots

Old Ohkumih spends long hours meditating among Eana's roots. These Netherworld structures brought forth underground maelossas, allowing for the survival of refugees during the Fall of the Travelers. The druid listens to the murmurs of nature to anticipate the manifestations of Canker as soon as possible. It is obvious the giants won't be able to fight alone, so she has formed cautious ties with kobold druids, a people who share the knowledge of the Netherworld.

Despite being courageous, patient, and dedicated, Ohkumih has a weakness that complicates her mission. She is shy to the extreme. Even now, despite centuries of life experience, she loses her composure completely when a discussion heats up or takes a turn for the worse. In these moments, no matter the urgency, she stops talking and becomes lost in her inner world, her expression vacant.

Nupahô the Austere Guardian

Nupahô has statuesque features: slender, ageless, and graceful. He always carries himself with somber dignity, wrapped in a large and heavy fold of fabric. Each of his gestures seems measured and full of gravity, while his gaze seems aimed somewhere beyond prosaic realities. A perfectionist and traditionalist, he studies the past of his people with obstinate passion, reflecting on its past greatness to envision a future that will see it restored in all its splendor. His exemplary piety and charisma make him a personality both admired and heeded.

His relationship to the surface is one of duty. He believes that stone giants must make their nobility known to surface dwellers. Therefore, it is necessary to keep an eye on things, to save those who must be saved, without becoming attached to these ephemeral beings. In the end, fighting evil is just a way of maintaining these precious vestiges. Still, the detachment of the austere Nupahô could weaken in a time of crisis for his people, or if concrete opportunities toward restoring their glory were to present themselves.

Pukutak the Ambiguous Protector

Pukutak is a giant who has traveled widely on the surface. He likes to wear a loose, black coat and hood, and he sometimes also wears a mask with colorful geometric patterns. He knows several surface languages and has visited cities, masquerading as a mysterious human mystic.

His people see him as an authority on the current world. If an important decision involving the community needs to be made, Pukutak would certainly be consulted and his opinion would carry a lot of weight. The traveling giant is aware of this and feels a great responsibility toward his people.

However, his passion for mystery and the understanding of the dark powers at work in the Khoosrol is growing, leading him to take ever-increasing risks. One day he may fall victim to a sünsutaa, or become involved with one of the terrible liches trapped in its ancient lair—as his desire to acquire dangerous knowledge leads him to act unwisely.

The Secrets of Ruins

Although Mangulik is the most famous site of the Desolations, adventurers and grave robbers are spoiled for their choice of destination. The region includes not only extremely ancient kurgans, but also palace-mausoleums, cities that were once caravan stops on now-abandoned roads, and much more.

These places are guarded by many minotaurs, some of whom are believed to be servants of Tamerakh, if they are not emissaries of an older god from the Bail Empire.

Ruin golems are also particularly famous for their formidable efficiency. Whether made of clay, stone, or steel, these monsters have decimated generations of plunderers!

Imprisoned in the places of their mysterious arcane studies, and sometimes of their undead transformation, liches await the moment to free themselves from underground. Former chosen ones of Eternity have supposedly succeeded in protecting the world from the danger they represent, by carrying out certain rituals to lock them in their lairs.

The Rumor of the Eight Scheming Liches

The looters gathered by the campfire. The sharing of the spoils had gone well and the palpable relief led to light-hearted discussion and jokes. One elder, an old goblin who had apparently seen and heard it all, began telling a few stories well-known in their trade to a young merosi thief who was on her first adventure.

"We're lucky that it wasn't the domain of one of the eight liches! Let me tell you, this beautiful world is constantly threatened by their evil conspiracy!

"These creatures were sorcerers of the Clay Cities, before the rule of Tamerakh. All of them sought immortality by turning into nasty, animated corpses. They should have done it like Kartaçöl's emperor if you ask me, but...

"It all dates back to the age of the Fated Kings, when Eternity shone brightly in the sky and gave powers even to thieves and barbarians, and, of course, to wizards. While they prepared their transformation, heroes—it is said that they were part of a secret order, linked to the clergy of Death, the Funeral Guards—what was I saying? Oh yes, these heroes locked them up. Poof! The liches were imprisoned in their lairs. Trapped there, despite all their powers.

"They should have just waited until the end of time, dying of boredom, hoping that looters would eventually free them—ha ha!—but they've managed to get in touch with one another and scheme. Eight liches are a lot: if they weren't locked away, they could wreak havoc on the world if they really wanted to. Some say they could free themselves if they worked together to perform a specific ritual. Let's hope that never happens and it's all just rumors!"

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The Eight Liches of the Desolations

Nuntara the Impatient

Nuntara the Impatient was once a human who specialized in enchantment. His mastery over this dangerous magic enabled him to design legendary magic items. Treasure hunters tell many stories about these insane wonders. They are said to offer control over the minds of others for a great length of time, like a perpetual *dominate person* spell. According to legend, Nuntara wanted to use his creations to abolish all fear and suffering, and unite the "beneficiaries" of his blasphemous magic items into a single, combined revolution against the tyrants of this world.

Nuntara sees himself as a rebel, but is in reality a nervous and delusional spirit who talks to his dead sister-wife, a figment of his derangement who doesn't even exist as a ghost. If this lich were freed, he would rush to bring down empires with the help of his glorious "liberated" troops.

Huwappa the Tormentor

Huwappa the Tormentor was an ambitious aldaron, scarred by a very difficult life during which he was enslaved by a particularly sadistic necromancer lover-master. Although he managed to free himself and destroyed his tormentor, reducing him to a miserable and weeping ghost, Huwappa had plunged into the deepest abysses of cruelty and madness. Obsessive and rigid, he conceived his lair as a complex with austere, overwhelming, and sterile architecture, punctuated by study rooms that reveal all of the arcanist's excessiveness and nefarious madness. Even after becoming a lich, Huwappa maintained ritualistic cleanliness and a determination to keep his domain absurdly sanitized. Everything must be perfect and carried out according to precise procedures.

His passion for the study of suffering has not disappeared, but Huwappa the Tormentor has developed a new obsession: elven genealogy. He wants to know everything. Why this people are almost immortal, what distinguishes them from others, what differentiates aldaron and elenion, etc. If Huwappa were freed, his former community would be at the heart of his concerns, but it is unclear whether he would dissect elves and melessë, or attempt to annihilate all other species. Perhaps both...

Miumar the Gentle

Miumar the Gentle is a rather paradoxical lich of dragonborn origin. She was once a musician priestess of Flora, a popular artist and an arcanist who had mastered illusions. She was also an ambassador for her people, a long time ago. Her life could have been peaceful had she not met a strange character named Echo-o'-Storm. Chroniclers believe that he, despite claiming to be a wise man, was actually a tempting devil. He managed to instill doubt in Miumar and exploit her weaknesses, among which was her will to do well, coupled with reckless impulsiveness in a crisis.

In the end, Miumar the Gentle became a lich to do good for the world, but she lost her mind and remains in a lair of unreal beauty. The walls are painted with rich frescoes reminiscent of humid tropical regions, though the undead nature of the lich prevents any real flowers from growing normally.

It is difficult to anticipate what Miumar would do if released. Perhaps she would seek to turn cities into gardens and extinguish all dissonance in favor of splendid, musical harmony? Unless she tries to solve one of the world's great problems with very dangerous methods...

Kalmisara the Lightning Bearer

A combative aldaron, Kalmisara the Lightning Bearer went by another name when he lived with his tribe, but he left it, dissatisfied with the limits imposed by traditions. He became a powerful war mage specializing in evocation, as charismatic, respected, and acclaimed as an ezen. He was, however, rather reckless and underestimated the plot his enemies were concocting against him. He was buried alive in what now serves as his lair. Realizing that he would soon run out of air, he considered his options: to die, or to start a vile ritual to become one of the living dead and have the opportunity to one day take revenge.

If Kalmisara were released, he would seek to shed light on the conspiracy that condemned him. He is not sure whether he could exact revenge on the guilty parties directly, but he would be satisfied enough if he can capture their souls or their descendants. As for the future, he would have to explore this new world and its opportunities.

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Lazziya the Ordained

Lazziya the Ordained was a hobgoblin who inherited a long, matrilineal family tradition that mixed knowledge of birth and death, mystically considered as two forms of childbirth. Learning necromancy was a natural extension of her activities, widening her understanding of the world. She knew the power she could acquire by becoming a lich. A period of severe crisis put the survival of her people in jeopardy. It was then that she made the fatal decision to sacrifice herself to a monster to spare others. Victory was achieved at great cost. Lazziya had asked her people to bury her in the wilderness of the Steppe, and to come to her only if she were needed again.

For a long time, Lazziya remained in a stasis, lying in a rich sarcophagus that gave her the appearance of death while her spirit wandered in the Astral Plane. Recently, she woke up without knowing why. She believes it to be a sign of fate and that it is time for her to return to the surface, but she is still imprisoned. She hopes that her existence has meaning, and if it does not, she will find herself a mission to carry out, whatever it takes.

Assanu of the Far Away Worlds

Assanu of the Far Away Worlds was a merosi conjuration specialist with a devouring passion for the study of planes and worlds distant from Eana. The short lifespan of her people saddened her, so she set out to change her nature in order to continue her work. The early days of her transformation into a lich were quite satisfying. She set up her lair under a great astronomical observatory in the Steppe, with a large library of clay tablets compiling the movements of the stars and celestial phenomena—passing comets, eclipses, etc. However, the moment came when heroes locked all of the Desolations liches in their lairs, to eliminate the threat posed by their power and frequent madness. At first, confinement was not too problematic, as Assanu still had much to do without worrying about the rest of the world. But as time passed, the lich began to develop obsessions in her brooding loneliness. She became convinced that Canker was a direct result of the Fall of the Travelers, caused by creatures from another world now hidden in the Netherworld. All of her works are in her library.

If released, Assanu would not travel to the surface, but to the Netherworld to meet these otherworldly creatures capable of devastating entire planets. She is excited to discover a superior species and is considering helping them. After all, she owes nothing to the humanoid peoples who buried her.

Ekt-hurnen the Huntress

Ekt-hurnen the Huntress was a fearsome goblin, a mistress of divination specializing in the destruction of evil creatures. An unparalleled tracker and talented arcanist, she was a living legend. She was said to be incorruptible, but also extremely violent, equipped with terrible weapons of war.

Chronicles disagree on how she became a lich. Some versions claim that she was cursed by a powerful enemy, while others claim that she made this decision in order to face a greater peril. Another theory says that she lost her mind and decided to become what she had always fought against, like a morbid apotheosis. Some even think that she became a lich by accident, when her soul became trapped inside the phylactery of another.

In any case, it seems certain that Ekt-hurnen is an angry, paranoid creature, as dangerous as she is unpredictable.

Siunniyah the Leper Princess

Siunniyah the Leper Princess was a melessë of royal blood who had achieved great mastery over abjuration. Chroniclers describe her calm personality and great compassion for the poor and all those who suffered. Legend has it that the leprosy that gnawed at her was not of natural origin, but rather the result of a ritual through which she had freed an entire community from a cruel epidemic by welcoming the sickness inside her. After this generous and radical decision, her life became hell, but she refused to let herself be beaten down. She tried increasingly destructive remedies, all the while seeking to create an artificial form into which she could transfer her soul to free herself from her suffering body. In the end, she became a lich, a last resort that allowed her to control her dead flesh. To pass the time, Siunniyah perfected her crafting of artificial creatures. Her lair is filled with them.

If Siunniyah were freed, she would use her artificial army to reclaim her place at the head of society.

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Iconic Locations of the Khoosrol

Xonim's Tomb

Supposedly, Xonim spent her life preparing for the ascension of her son and trusting him to help her reach her own divine status. Her quest mixed divine and arcane knowledge, and placed blind faith in her only child. The Lady of the Night knew that she would die before her son, and legend speaks of a palace-sized mausoleum that had been built largely during her lifetime. It was a lavish, refined place, with splendid gardens and libraries of clay tablets.

The conflict between the clergies of Death and Tamerakh cast a cloud over Xonim's funeral. The mother of the conqueror had indeed abandoned her priestly duties to embark on a political career and arcane research, some of which was profane. The priests refused to officiate at the burial of the deceased. Of course, Tamerakh did not accept this rebellion without response, but the chronicles are incomplete about these events.

Only one thing is certain: there is a mausoleum of the goddess, somewhere in the Desolations. It is rumored to be a splendid place, overgrown with lush vegetation. It arouses both the lust of plunderers and the curiosity of the goddess's followers, who plan to make it a sanctuary and a place of pilgrimage.

Seasonal Rivers

Two great seasonal rivers flow from the Iruuls and irrigate the Desolations: the capricious Koshinshog, and the gentle Chikherleg, both named after their usual behavior. In the past, they allowed farmers to grow the barley and cotton that supplied the great city of Mangulik.

Togshikh Forest

Togshikh Forest is mostly made up of tall, black pines, centuries old. Located at the foot of the Iruuls, it marks the eastern border of the Desolations. It was used as a source of lumber during the conquest of Tamerakh, and has since been flourishing without the presence of loggers. Its proximity to the haunted expanses of the Steppe influences the flora and fauna, which is fierce, powerful, and easily provoked. Druids try to bring peace to these places, erecting standing stones that the undead cannot pass, creating peaceful sanctuaries.

According to a recent rumor, the forest is inhabited by a golem of the Desolations who has developed consciousness, and is now trying to live a simple life while learning about this vast world of which it knows nothing.

Amidral Sea

The Amidral Sea is fed by Koshinshog and Chikherleg, seasonal rivers flowing from the Iruuls, and was once full of life. The remains of abandoned fishing villages can still be found on its shores. The waters are not dead, but they serve as shelter during the day for the incorporeal undead who fear sunlight.



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Mangulik

In the heart of the haunted steppes of the Khoosrol lies the ruined city of Mangulik, the former capital of Tamerakh. Today it is an inaccessible ruin after it was destroyed by its creator. The entire population is said to have been sacrificed in one night. The surroundings of Mangulik are a haunted territory, plagued by specters. It is said that the cursed winds carry the agonized screams of its victims and inhabitants.

The site is immense, a size fit for an empire that desired global expansion. It comprises but is not limited to: large alleys; the residential quarters of a population both free and subservient; barracks and vast military training grounds; gardens, fields and orchards; canals for irrigation and conveying drinking water; an immense palatial complex; temples dedicated to Maker, Death, Frostelle, Flora, and Eana; large squares for gatherings and celebrations; and more besides.

Coming to Mangulik makes sense to seekers of the truth who cannot bear to remain ignorant about such a tragic event. Others see it as a place of pilgrimage in honor of Tamerakh in his darkest aspect. Beyond these selfless intellectual motivations, looters are interested in treasures, and the ambitious dream of finding the terrifying *wailing ark*, an artifact that would easily defeat all their enemies!

The City Today

Like all places marked by intense magic, Mangulik has suffered little from the ravages of time. The state of the city reveals the events that led to its destruction. The leader can choose the version best suited to their campaign (see **The Great Kaan, Chronicles of the Ice Floe in the Land of Springs: Age of the Fated Kings**). For example, the intervention of the tarrasque would have important consequences on the state of Mangulik.

On a Quest for Tamerakh's Blessing

According to a legend widespread among the faithful of Tamerakh, all those who make the pilgrimage to Mangulik will be rewarded for their courage and fervor. It is even said that some pilgrims received the benefits of a *wish* spell! This pilgrimage is still extremely dangerous, at least for the time being. It nevertheless follows certain codes.

- Pilgrims enter Mangulik on the Conqueror's Road.
- They must bow down in the great square in front of the monumental staircase leading to the palace and pray aloud.
- Then, they must go to the throne room and kneel respectfully, as if their lord were still present, to pray and meditate there. It is said that sometimes the god or his angels manifest themselves through signs, and sometimes by voices coming from the statues.
- The pilgrims make an offering of incense (or opium) and their own blood, praying while gazing at the smoke of the brazier. It is said that the wisps form messages to be interpreted.

Afterwards, even though it is not strictly part of the pilgrimage, it is customary to restore or maintain some of the ruins. This is why travelers sometimes make the surprising discovery of empty, comfortable dwellings in the middle of the abandoned city.

The Last Master of Mangulik

The glorious Mangulik was built in a region that had known other powerful rulers in the past. Such fertile lands are always coveted and constantly change masters. Only the curse of the Khoosrol region prevented other rulers from succeeding Tamerakh. When he destroyed his city, Tamerakh both cursed it and sanctified it, removing it from the profane world.

The Ruins of an Empire Fascinated by Destiny

A traveler may be awestruck by the widespread glorious signs of Tamerakh's reign, but there are traces of an even older past. The Bail Empire once worshiped a now-forgotten god represented by a powerful bull, simply called Great Bull-who-bears-Eternity-between-its-horns, or the Bull of Destiny.

The Bull of Destiny survives here and there in representations throughout Kaan and beyond, although artists don't always know what they are referring to precisely. The Bail Empire built underground labyrinths as places of sacred initiation, an echo of the one leading to the Fateforge. Before the reign of Tamerakh, this empire was famous, but the ravages of the horde and the conqueror's deeds made it sink into oblivion.

If Xonim and Tamerakh were able to develop an ambitious plan that allowed them both to attain

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divinity, they certainly owe it to the Bail scholars, who had extensive knowledge about the Fateforge, Eternity, divine nature, and the Astral Plane.

What Happened to the Bull of Destiny?

Some deities were swallowed up by Nightmare. This event preceded the Dawn War, when an elven god disappeared in this manner, and the elves were assaulted each night by such horrors that they started to go mad. The death or annihilation of a god always comes with consequences for the mortals or souls linked to it.

The Bull of Destiny itself did not fall prey to the dreadful Nightmare, but its obsolescence nevertheless had repercussions. Minotaurs were the creation of the bull god, and these creatures are still very sensitive to the cycles of Eternity. These bloodthirsty prophets do not understand the meaning of the bloody mazes that they draw. They are taken by impulses that they cannot explain, drawn by a call that only they can hear.

The mystery remains around the disappearance of the Bull of Destiny. Some arcanists have been studying the seemingly incomprehensible actions of minotaurs for centuries. Here are some of their theories:

- **Became one with destiny.** The god may have melded into the Labyrinth leading to the Fateforge and its essence would now be mingled with Eternity's. This would explain the change in the mystical cycles of the moon. During the age of the Fated Kings, there were many Fate-chosen, to the point of creating great political instability and many epic crises. After Tamerakh's apotheosis, however, the situation calmed down. It is often believed that it was the conqueror-turned-god who changed the influence of the moon, but it may be that it was actually the Bull of Destiny acting on a divine scale—ever so slowly—wanting to prevent divine profusion after the ascension of Tamerakh and Xonim.
- **Dove into the cosmos.** The god lost interest in the mundane realities of the world of Eana and spent the last few centuries exploring the vastness of the cosmos. To supporters of this theory, the recent appearance of a mysterious and transcendent deity in the Sand Kingdoms (called Bêdawîtî the Infiniteness by his followers) symbolizes the return of the ancient god, transfigured by his access to a higher knowledge.
- **Subdued by Tamerakh.** Like many ephemeral gods, the Bull of Destiny was defeated and destroyed, or absorbed, or imprisoned. Either way, Tamerakh did the deed. The god's followers support this idea and have added the storm bull to the emblems of their cult.

Battle Song

We, children of fury, mud and blood,
The wind carries us,
The storm and rage of Tamerakh!
The weak give up,
They submit and they die,
Bound in pain and fear of death!
We pick ourselves up!
Mock fate! Despise it! Own it!
Sing in battle,
Gold and glory are yours!

Translated excerpt of a battle song praising Tamerakh

The Wailing Ark

Legends about the *wailing ark* are numerous and contradictory:

- **The support of conquests.** Tamerakh couldn't have gone from victory to victory without this artifact designed by his mother Xonim. He owes his achievements to the ark rather than to his talents as a general. This version is widespread among arcanists and people hostile to the cult of the Destroyer.
- **The essence of conquest.** The *wailing ark* is said to contain part of Tamerakh's mortal essence, as a result of his ambitions and adventures. He himself never used the artifact, which he created after his divine ascension and placed in the Temple of Destiny. Despite this obvious sign of the power of the new god, many people doubted, so only the most loyal subjects became his first prophets and apostles. They sang the first sacred praises as they walked around Mangulik, condemning the city to destruction for its impiety. This story is very popular among the most radical followers.
- **An uncertain gift.** According to this third variant, the artifact was a dangerous gift offered to one of the very first pilgrims to come to Mangulik. He would have wished to receive a weapon reflecting the destructive omnipotence of the god. He then discovered the artifact in the Temple of Destiny. He stood in the middle of a city that was once beautiful, now lost and haunted. Should he, in turn, change the world with the ark? Realizing that laying waste to the world was not his path and that it would not be a desirable outcome, the pilgrim did not take up the artifact and instead spent the rest of his life designing a place in Mangulik where it would be protected from the dangerously power hungry. This version is widespread in the moderate currents of the cult.

Scott Timmerman (Order #35731930)



Mangulik

1. The Conqueror's Road
2. The Main Square
3. The Sphinx
4. The Temple of Destiny
5. Tamerakh's High Palace
6. Water Networks

Iconic Locations of Mangulik

The Conqueror's Road

The Conqueror's Road is a paved avenue several miles long, stretching from west to east. It is crossed by triumphal arches high enough for a stone giant to walk under without having to bow their head. The path is bordered on either side by colonnades and statues: it starts in the Steppe, and is progressively flanked by more and more ruined buildings. A traveler will then reach a crossroads of triumphal arches, and can then continue the straight walk to the palace.
For travelers, the problem lies in the many ruined dwellings. The shadows and rubble are hiding places for brutal creatures ready to pounce, or for more subtle enemies to lie in wait.

The Main Square

A huge square is laid out at the end of the Conqueror's Road. Travelers must cross it before reaching Tamerakh's high palace. The square occupies a central location, and from there one can quickly reach the city's other prestigious monuments. The tiles have loosened and, between them, flowers sway in the wind, creating a meadow with hues that change depending on the season—white, yellow, or red. Beds of lichens and succulents spread out here and there. Some wonder if Flora or Eana might be gradually taking over the cursed city. Maybe in 3,000 or 5,000 years, all traces of evil spells will have disappeared?

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Sphinx

In myths, the Sphinx is a creature associated with the knowledge of destiny and the moon Eternity. A monumental sculpture of the creature was carved out of an immense block of sandstone, and although it now lies half buried in dust, it can still be seen from afar, arousing intense emotion in onlookers. Some scholars suspect that the Sphinx marks an attempt by Tamerakh to take over an ancient sacred site dating back at least to the Bail Empire, traces of which are said to remain in the foundations and underground chambers. Could secrets be discovered there, of the sort that allowed both Tamerakh and Xonim to gain access to divinity?

The Temple of Destiny

In Mangulik, there are temples dedicated to each of the great gods (Blacksmith, Maker, Death, Frostelle, and Flora), but the most important of all for Tamerakh was that of Destiny. It was built to the right of the palace, next to the sphinx. Like other important buildings, it was built on a platform to raise it above the rest of the city, and is accessed by a long staircase.

Some scholars believe this sanctuary was once dedicated to the Bull of Destiny, who would have been the conqueror's favorite deity until he decided to honor destiny in a different way, as part of his secret journey toward divine ascension.

Tamerakh's High Palace

The high palace stands at the end of the Conqueror's Road, towering over the main square. On its right are the sphinx and the Temple of Destiny; on its left are the palaces, barracks and noble residences. The ruler is thus located on the border between the sacred world in the northern part of the city, and the profane world in the southern part.

According to the clergy of Tamerakh, there are no undead haunting these sacred places, although that doesn't mean they are safe. Nonbelievers better beware if they think they can plunder the conqueror's treasures with impunity, or steal his legendary vorpal sword without merit!

Water Networks

Open canals were dug and carefully maintained. They were used to irrigate nearby fields, bring in fresh food, and transport goods by boat. These canals, still fed by rainwater, are now clogged with silt and sand. They can be recognized by the greener vegetation growing directly inside or nearby, forming straight oases.

In the past, aqueducts brought water directly to the city, supplying public fountains as well as those in noble residences. The whole system was linked to a sewage network, which was directed via a buried canal to an artificial lake outside the city.

This "stinking lake" was once at the heart of the slave district, who were crammed there in squalid barracks when they were being exploited on the large building sites of a city in perpetual expansion.

The Unfinished Work Site

To the southeast of Mangulik is a strange, unfinished construction site. The sandstone ground has been dug up over a depth of 150 feet and a length of almost 1,200 feet, as if to create an artificial gorge. The work was obviously important and difficult. Some people believe it was a quarry exploited to build the capital. Blocks of stone were certainly extracted and used, but the shape of the cut and the effort it took seems to indicate that they were also trying to achieve something, or to shape a structure. Most theories suspect an engineering project of insane magnitude, such as crossing the Iruul Mountains with a canal that would have given Mangulik direct access to the sea. Others, more inclined toward a mystical interpretation, see it as the beginning of a huge summoning circle.

Today, some areas of this gorge are clogged with debris, while others are well protected and humid, forming oases. Communities of outcasts took refuge there at certain times, digging shelters in the rock, deepening natural shelters, and perhaps creating accesses to the Netherworld.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Tuzdisöl, the Salt Desert

Located south of the Khoosrol, the Tuzdisöl is an impressive salt desert, a one-of-a-kind Kaani biome. Nothing grows in this sterile place, the vacuous immensity of this white land only broken by rocks smoothed by the salty wind. This desert is one of the most dangerous of Kaan, but by crossing it, one can reach the Iruuls without having to venture into the cursed Desolations.

In the heart of these white and ochre regions are shallow lakes. They contain a sort of red-pinkish warm brine, as absolutely undrinkable as saltwater. These pools are a vision both sublime and unearthly, the serene scarlet basins mirroring the heavens and the nearby grotesquely-shaped rocks. It is hard to believe that such places can exist on Eana. Surprisingly, pink flamingos are capable of finding food and even of nesting there. Their ballets offer a surrealistic show, the sight of these great colored birds frolicking in the middle of the inhospitable immaculate plains appearing like something straight out of a fever dream.

For druids, these strange lakes are a mark of Eana's blessing. They show the presence of a maelossa, a sacred place where the vital energy of the world is particularly intense. The maelossas of the Tuzdisöl are halfway between the surface and the Netherworld, and notably known by the highly secretive stone giants.

Iruuls

The mountains to the far east are called the Iruuls, or "Dawn Mountains", in the local language. The Kaanis know little of them, as since the fall of Mangulik, reaching them generally requires carefully crossing the Salt Flats of Tuzdisöl. This is the domain of the orcs of the Iruuls, descendants of rebels who refused the authority of Tamerakh. To avoid extermination, they took refuge in these deep valleys, which they still defend fiercely today.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

The Culture of Mountain Orcs

Over time, the orcs of the Iruuls settled into their new home, far away from any large city or humanoid community. They discovered ruins from the Era of the Giants and developed their own mystical culture, in which contemplation and meditation play an important role.

These skillful builders sculpt the mountains by creating buildings that overhang the chasms and sink into the rock. Balconies, cliff-side staircases, and unexpected dwellings behind a waterfall are all typical. The orcs' ancient need to protect themselves from Tamerakh, by concealing their presence, has become an integral element of their architectural aesthetics.

Horses are rare and poorly adapted to this environment; except for travels in the plains and for buzkashi games, they were replaced by griffons, hippogriffs, and capricorns. These species are common in the Iruuls, with specialized stables for each in all permanent settlements.



Emblem of Zogsokh

The City of Zogsokh

There are few densely populated sites in the Iruuls, and Zogsokh is the main point of contact with the outside world. The village is located at the end of the track that crosses the Salt Flats of Tuzdisöl on the way to the Dawn Mountains. By the standards of the Clay Cities, it is but a poor village; by the standards of the surrounding area, however, it is a bustling cosmopolitan trading center.



Scott Tunnicliffe's Order #3753530

Important Figures of Zogsokh

Tethima the Chieftain

Tethima is an aging orc of the Iruuls. Back in the day, he traveled throughout Kaan, spending quite some time on the Nulim Seashores. He returned with a great deal of treasure and distributed his wealth widely for the good of the Zogsokh community. His selfless generosity and kindness earned him the title of chieftain. He is happy with his role and supports whatever helps develop the economy, although he himself does not take much initiative. Day-to-day, he is rather disorderly and distracted, and anything even resembling paperwork is inevitably piled up in a corner and forgotten. He likes simple pleasures, such as cooking, walking, listening to people, and partying with them.

Recently a traveling merchant stopped in Zogsokh and was shocked to recognize Tethima. According to him, the quiet village chieftain is actually one of the most infamous bandits in the southwest: a real monster of unfathomable cruelty. Is this a case of mistaken identity or is there truth to the merchant's tale? In a huge country like the Old Kaan, false rumors have spread many times in the past, often with disastrous consequences.

Nermîn the Cochieftain

Nermîn is a merosi, much younger than Tethima, although that did not prevent her from courting and marrying him. She is now co-chieftain. Much more ambitious, proud, and active, she is considered by many to be the real leader of the city. She is warm-hearted and enjoys physical activities, especially dangerous ones.

Nermîn organizes buzkashi tournaments. Buzkashi is a game in which dozens of riders on horseback fight with whips in a melee, with the goal of picking up a severed goat's head, carrying it to a distant point, and then bringing it back to the center. According to legends, during the conquests of Tamerakh, people played with the severed heads of their most powerful enemies.

Xerdel the Hero

No one knows the exact age of Xerdel, whom everyone calls "The Hero". This merosi has been an old man for a long time now, and yet he continues to meditate and to train in martial arts every day. He is a Bladebonded: a warrior wielding a Steelmate. Although he has nothing left to prove, he continues to strive for excellence. To him, it is a spiritual journey that gives meaning to his life. The lessons he provides to students from the city, or from further afield, earn him enough money to indulge his vice: gambling. Despite his wisdom, when it comes to bets and chances, Xerdel encourages, shouts, and cheers, hoping to win—and often loses. His small fighting school is the victim of his flaw, and the meals are often much sparser after a buzkashi tournament...

Helale the Necromancer

Helale the necromancer and healer is a mature hobgoblin who is close friends with Chieftain Nermîn, who she supports unconditionally. Rationality has no place in friendship, and Helale is blind to the faults of those she likes. On the other hand, she has a passion for gossip. The news of Tethima's past—whether a true, false, or otherwise distorted story—is of great interest to her. She would like to learn so much more...

When she's not greedily hunting for pieces of news (regardless of its trustworthiness), Helale works for Nermîn as a cleric and security officer. She also enjoys decorating her home in a very personal style. To her dismay, it is difficult to find a companion who understands her tastes or desires, though at least the dead are always there for her.

Tastiyah the Researcher

Her name means "whispers", and it seems fitting for this mature goblin who is passionate about mysteries, nurturing a particular obsession for the Giants of yesteryear. She is always ready to sponsor adventurers to map a location or verify a legend. Due to her age, she only accompanies her "research assistants" if the trail looks particularly promising.

While everyone knows Tastiyah is eccentric—like many others in Zogsokh—most people have no idea how serious the madness eating away at her is. She may well drag the small community into tragedy without realizing the horror of her actions.

Iconic Locations of Zogsokh

Dry Stone Ramparts

The city of Zogsokh fears no attack and has no enemies. Who would come here from the salt flats? There are, however, ancient, half-collapsed ramparts dating back to a distant time when a warrior mistress from the Nulim Seashores seemed determined to conquer the Iruuls, either on principle or for slaves. Today, the inhabitants are divided on whether it is really necessary to maintain these ramparts. The nonchalant attitude of Chieftain Tethima comforts those who believe the community is safe from the misfortunes of the world.

The Chieftain's House

The residence of the community leaders is a typical round house, built on the heights of the village, with a small vegetable patch nearby that is carefully tended to by Chieftain Tethima himself. He welcomes his guests in a large room, having them sit on benches with cushions around a large carpet. Simplicity is the key.

Tablet House

Located near the chieftain's home, Tablet House serves as both an archive and an office for local leaders. The place contains interesting works, both old and well preserved, but it has been several decades since Zogsokh's rulers have bothered to put it in order. Everything is preserved and seems to be in good condition—provided that mice haven't gnawed through books to make their nest—but has been piled up according to spontaneous inspiration. Notes regarding taxes to be paid in kind (in salt) to Khaalgany are stuck between family trees or travelogues found on adventurers who died in the desert, and which have been kept for no apparent reason.

Tablet House once only contained tablet documents, though over time it also came to store others too, without it changing its name.

Scott Immermann (Order #3933830)



Zogsokh

1. Dry Stone Ramparts
2. The Chieftain's House
3. Tablet House
4. Xerdel's Martial Arts School
5. Three-Way Market
6. Helale's Dispensary
7. Three-Horned Goat Farm
8. The Temple of Pangod
9. Buzkashi Field

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731930)

Xerdel's Martial Arts School

The famous hero Xerdel founded a martial arts school that is renowned for having trained many skilled adventurers. He mainly teaches fresh fighters and rangers, but he has also trained scholars skilled in fighting techniques. Students come from far and wide to learn from him, some of them barely teenagers. The complex includes an inner courtyard, with rounded towers and buildings that seem to have grown around it like mushrooms. The common rooms are dark and rather narrow, especially as there can be as many as thirty pupils of different ages staying here. Money is often lacking, and the meals are seldom varied. The atmosphere is at once austere and familial, harsh and joyful. Xerdel is a benevolent and attentive teacher, both in the technical mastery of weapons and in the development of the ethical sense of his protégés.

Three-Way Market

Three-Way Market is also the main square of Zogsokh. Bargaining alternates between sales for money or barter. People sell desert salt, buy wool and stones from the mountains, and exchange vegetables and cereals grown nearby. Options are sparse, but artisans are willing to take orders and work for a good price. For travelers coming from the plains, it is the place to buy capricorns that will allow them to continue their journey in the high mountains.

Helale's Dispensary

Like many people here, Helale the necromancer has many activities. In addition to helping Chieftain Nermîn, she runs a small herbalist shop that also serves as a dispensary for travelers in need. The rather macabre decoration usually makes foreigners uncomfortable, but if they want to buy healing potions (or poisons), they will have to trust her.

Three-Horned Goat Farm

Contrary to what its name suggests, Three-horned Goat Farm, commonly just called "the Farm," is an inn that also serves as a boarding house that offers furnished rooms on a long-term basis. Tastiyah the researcher, for example, has been living here for some time because she has no inclination to take care of the everyday chores that come with a house of her own. Unexpected people can sometimes be met in the common room. At one table, dine the druids who come and go from the salt flats; at the next, adventuring peddlers are ready to go to the Iruuls to find precious stones for a low price. Further on, a small and sinister group of banished warriors (or bandits) are looking for a new life somewhere no one knows them; a stranger accompanied by an interpreter is here looking for secrets about the Giants of yesteryear; and in the corner sits a bounty hunter who has traveled from Babassür to find a fugitive.

The Temple of Pangod

There is only one temple in Zogsokh and it is dedicated to "Pangod," a local way of honoring all forms of divinity in one place. This circular place of worship has several niches with altars dug into the walls. People come here to deposit offerings and pray. Important ceremonies are performed by the druids of the salt flats. They rarely stay in the village for long, so it is sometimes necessary to go looking for them in Tuzdisöl or the Iruuls.

Buzkashi Field

The most popular local sport is buzkashi, and Chieftain Nermîn is so passionate about the game that she has had a large field built on the outskirts of town, including slightly rustic bleachers. Zogsokh is a quiet town most of the year, but when the buzkashi season comes in late spring, competitors travel from the steppes and mountains to compete in large, chaotic tournaments. On these occasions, the market really comes alive and yurt hamlets enlarge the town. For foreigners, buzkashi is just another leisure activity, but here the young riders train all year round to shine at the festivities. The good organization of the event also contributes to the influence of Zogsokh. Clan leaders travel and meet there, where friendships and alliances are forged around a common passion.

The Secrets of the Giants

When they settled in the Iruuls, the renegade orcs discovered many ruins. They did not understand everything they found and were well aware of the danger that some of the remains represented. However, after centuries of careful study, the sages of the Iruul orcs are among the greatest experts on the arts, sciences, and magic of the Giants before the fall of the Travelers.

Deciphering Lost Languages

The sages of the Iruuls have carried out research of great quality in the field of language studies. Among their tablets are elaborate lexicons and grammars to help decipher exotic languages such as Demonic, Diabolic, Draconic, Celestial, and Sylvan. The most exceptional feature of the Iruuls' scholars is that they have begun to decipher Tumiit and Viatic. These two languages were spoken before the fall of the Travelers, and their understanding, however partial, gives a better chance to discover and understand the extraordinary remains of this age's mastery of several forms of high magic!

Understanding the World Before the Fall

The highlights of the Iruuls, for researchers fascinated by the world before the fall of the Travelers, lies in certain particularities:

- **Bilingual texts.** The Giants who lived here recorded studies of their contemporaries. Were they spying or cooperating? Perhaps both, at one time or the other. The ruins contain texts written in Tumiit and Viatic, the same texts that helped create the first lexicons.
- **Geographical studies.** Maps and models of the world before the fall are found in some of the ruins. It takes time to understand the logical system used by the Giants, but these discoveries will certainly help identify the location of many ancient sites, built either by the Giants or the Travelers, such as long-lost Ateaks!

Scott Timmermans (Conde-Sky.com)

Iconic Locations of the Iruuls

Khorikhuntakh Lake

This large, remarkably deep lake is found at altitude. Its level has been steadily rising since an earthquake, some 3,000 years or so, caused a large landslide that created a natural dam in the river that once drained the overflow. From the banks, ancient ruins can be seen under the cold waters, suggesting the presence of a huge complex now submerged. Local legends mention a mythical creature, the tarrasque, a destructive titan, that supposedly slumbers there. The ruins could be a temple honoring it, or some arcane installation designed to control this living weapon.

The legend has reached the ilkral, ruler of Kartaçöl, who always keeps an eye out for means with which to increase his power.

The Yocanum Study Hall

Yocanum is a mythical site mentioned in the ancient texts engraved on the walls of many ruins of the Iruuls. From what scholars have gathered, it is an important research center, likely to contain precise information on the location of the Ateaks and the places of power of the Travelers. It may also house a prototype planar gateway designed by the Giants who sought to better understand the invention of their rivals.

The Mausoleum of Sculpted Faces

The discovery of the mausoleum came as a surprise to scholars. A hidden door carved into the mountain, followed by a long corridor, led to a large room with a domed ceiling. Even more confusing: the ceiling was covered with ceramic masks the size of a giant's head. Upon closer inspection, they turned out to be actual skulls with a clay coating meant to reshape the face. Was it a common funeral rite from those distant times, or does the mausoleum hold a more mysterious function? Some people suspect a necromantic oracle and wonder how to activate it—if that is even still possible today.

Esharnumaï Convent

The Esharnumaï Convent was founded by an orc from the Nulim Seashores, who was a mystic warrior and arcanist. She wanted to create a place of excellent training for the elite. The Iruul Mountains are shrouded with an aura of mystery that fascinates even in decadent cities. Nobles in search of meaning and glory were tempted by the experience.

The convent was built according to principles inspired by the minimalist ideals of the sage Ezzan. The place exudes an oppressive magnificence. The rules of living and training were strict, enforced by rigorous punishments meant to drive each initiate to reveal their full potential. In particular, one could study the Way of Pain (see **Adventurers**: **Monk**), and several styles of combat and secular magic.

The very high tensions that prevailed in this microcosm and the frequent abuse of power created a toxic atmosphere that led to many tragedies, including suicides covered up as accidents.

Recently something even more serious has happened. It seems that there is no longer a living soul in Esharnumaï. The few locals who have ventured forth tell tales of carnage, blood-stained walls, and an inhuman wail coming from the heart of the buildings, as if a monster were trapped there and sought its freedom.

Taksulatar Refuge

The Taksulatar Refuge is located in the southeast of the Iruuls, in a sparsely populated area overlooking the sea. The small community serves as a stopover point between the Iruuls and the Manbalarer. Its small, well-protected port provides shelter for the occasional ships. Further east lies the continent-ocean of Torea, with its countless islands. The outstanding sailors of Shi-huang sometimes sail up the coast of Kaan during fishing season.

In this austere, rocky desert with steep cliffs, stairs are carved into the rock walls, and bridges are sometimes nothing more than ladders set over a void. There are few water sources: the succulents and cacti that manage to grow here get water from morning mists and dew. Their flowers are like pink and red jewels in a landscape dominated by earthy hues.

The refuge is a hermitage, a dispensary, and a place of mediation and study. People live here in crooked buildings with few resources. Lilarmalk, the orc who founded the place, is an eccentric pacifist. He is very attached to the contemplative traditions of the Iruuls, so much so that he has a hard time accepting the new or the unexpected. He finds it very difficult to heed recent warnings, be it from Shi-huang sailors about missing ships and attacks by aquatic peoples, or the worrying rumors about Esharnumaï Convent.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Nulim Seashores

Sometimes it seems that all the rain of the Old Kaan falls on the Nulim Seashores. This vast equatorial region starts a little south of Khaalgany and covers an area almost as large as Tili's Gulf. The population there is very diverse, with slightly more humans than other species. There are also a few dragonborn communities descending from Rachamangekr merchants.

Many small cities were built there, some of them disappearing with time, the victims of decay, wars, monsters, or natural disasters. But whenever communities die out, others appear and flourish, sometimes on ancient ruins.

Natural Perils

The climate is so hot and humid that it becomes stifling. For many travelers, it takes one to three days of rest to get used to the humidity. The landscape is unique, with jungles of tropical pines and tree ferns, bordered by mangroves along the seashore. Swampy terrain is very common and unsuitable for most mounts. In some areas, people ride placid rice buffaloes, resistant to mosquitoes and disease. Travel is difficult and transport is usually by raised wooden roads, built and maintained at great expense, or by small boats.

In addition, the Nulim Sea is fraught with dangers: its currents are treacherous; shallows are widespread, particularly in the south, with its many reefs; and cyclones and tropical storms are quite common.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731459)



A Few Words from the Nulim Seashores

- **Esha:** a title given to a person who is respected, used before their first or last name.
- **Ezzan:** Ezzan, the orc sage, had developed a philosophy based on rejecting materialism, accumulation, ostentation, and embarking on a quest for the essential. His nickname means "salt," in reference to the apparently trivial condiment, yet essential to life. His work has had an enormous influence on the city of Arawanni.
- **Hassu:** the king of a city.

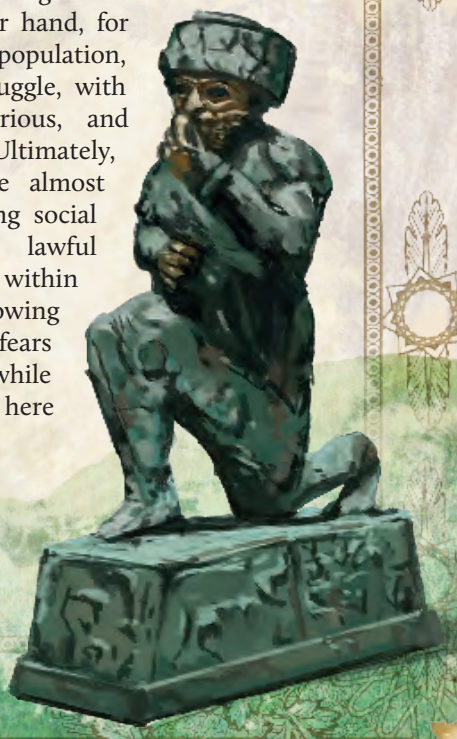
Toxic Riches

The lush vegetation provides an abundance of materials for remedies and poisons that have built the excellent reputation of herbalists and poisoners, respectively. The boundary between these two specialties are blurry. Added to this is their expertise in the field of drugs. Since ancient times, plants and mushrooms with psychoactive properties have been used to facilitate the journey of souls to the Astral Plane. Opium prepared from Manbalarer poppies is a widespread analgesic, ready to smoke, or to drink in its liquid form of laudanum. Many half-poisonous, half-healing substances can be bought on the Nulim Seashores, almost without difficulty and at prices three to ten times lower than those found in the Free City.

Precious stones, such as sapphires or emeralds, are extracted from the tropical undergrowth. Over the last thirty years or so, deposits of eternite gems and elemental condensate have been discovered, resources that were usually only found in the Drakenbergen. They allow people who get their hands on the riches of this trade to make easy money. The economy is mainly organized around exporting precious resources and importing everything else.

Serious Inequalities

In a large part of the Nulim Seashores, the greatest sources of income were taken over by a materialistic aristocracy that created and consolidated a deeply unequal system which benefits noble families, some clergies, warlords, and merchant princes. Immense wealth is held by a minority who live in unprecedented luxury, while a wealthy, educated, and urban middle class also manages to live well. On the other hand, for almost half of the population, every day is a struggle, with low-skilled, precarious, and poorly-paid jobs. Ultimately, these people have almost no hope for raising social status through lawful means. Tensions within this society are growing and giving rise to fears of a bleak future, while clashes break out here and there.



Scott Timmerman (Orlo... 39731950)

Locations of the Nulim Seashores

Arawanni the Pure

White and dignified, two words that undoubtedly describe Arawanni. A traveler wandering the streets of the small town will feel like they are entering a vast, palatial complex. Everything seems to have been designed in a spirit of pure aesthetics defined by smooth geometrical lines. The city is strongly inspired by the philosophy of Ezzan the Humble.

Minimalism is the mainstream among the elite. The city prides itself on possessing only quality goods, showcased in a studied scenography. The same is true of clothing and personal belongings. Everything is carefully tidied: disorder is banished in favor of a detached contemplation of the ephemeral. "My body is a temple" is the credo that rules daily life. Food and body care are extremely refined, while sometimes giving strangers an impression of poverty. What are they to think of a dinner where the plates are artistically staged but practically empty?

A few pre-reformation baroque buildings remain on the outskirts of the city. Today these old palaces, which were the pride of merchants and nobles, are overcrowded, cluttered, poorly maintained, and dangerous. The poorest are crammed into them, in the middle of an extravagant flea market, mixing utilitarian items and old works of art (some of them of high quality) that no one knows what to do with. Former noble districts are now skid rows where thieves, beggars, and other marginalized people are welcome.

Tuhhuizashi Swamp

Located near the town of Arawanni, the dark swamp of Tuhhuizashi is an area of weak magic (see **Grimoire**: **Geomagic**) seemingly abandoned. Yet, if one knows where to go, one can find a refuge there. A small community —simply nicknamed "The Homestead"— takes in those who have to leave the "Pure" city. Among them are individuals who have either fallen into drug use, or are ruined, dishonored, or at odds with their loved ones. An individual's first contact is pleasant, providing the sensation of finally being heard and giving the actual freedom to be oneself instead of a perfect and ethereal image.

When one stays there and is vigilant, anomalies appear. The founders of The Homestead have true convictions, but do not live by everything they say. For example, they seem to be involved in the opium trade. Additionally, several members of the community have recently disappeared. They are said to have gone to another region to rebuild their lives, but in some cases this seems unlikely.

Waktu's Ruins

Visiting Waktu is a rather surreal experience. The city near the sea was devastated by a major earthquake during which the waterlogged, sandy, and silty soil collapsed under the weight of the buildings and engulfed them. Statues and columns can be seen today, sometimes buried halfway up. The balconies of the old palaces are almost at ground level; ground floors, when they still exist, look like cellars. A few elegant, slender tropical pines rise and sway in the sea winds. Tree ferns grow in the middle of inner courtyards, moss spreads in thick, wet carpets in ancient living rooms, watered through the destroyed roofs and floors. Orchids with vine-like roots penetrate every crevice and crack.

The site seemed unsuitable for rebuilding and had been abandoned until recently. Everything changed when a traveler, something of a treasure hunter, stopped here and discovered a jewelry box—quite by chance, according to her. When she later showed the jewelry in town, she learned that it was of great value. Word quickly spread that there were treasures buried in Waktu. People remembered the legends about the wealth of the ancient hassu of the lost city. Everything must still be there: the treasures of his palace and temples, and the tombs of his dynasty.

Both poor people in search of a better life and dangerous individuals arrived in Waktu, and continue to flock in regularly. Now, in the middle of the ruins, a junk village has risen: overcrowded, cluttered, and totally chaotic. The atmosphere is rather welcoming, and the inhabitants colorful.

Tensions are nevertheless palpable. Not all treasure hunters are honest, and some are willing to steal and kill to take the loot of a more fortunate soul. In addition, strange accidents have occurred, and some say they have noticed disturbing silhouettes at night. Magic seems to become denser—and perhaps darker—as some of the more ambitious dig sites progress.

Scott Timmermans (Order #99791450)

The Luxurious Entertainments of Sesmakkes

Sesmakkes, the City of Pleasures, has become a center of attraction for the region because of the many leisure and entertainment activities it offers to the wealthy and jaded privileged. Only superlative excellence can move these dull souls. Sesmakkes offers gaming and pleasure houses where one can win and lose dizzying fortunes.

To entertain, they invent, perfect, and refine. Each show is more dangerous and more extravagant than the last, with acrobats, beasts, arcanists, fighters, monsters, and more. There are exhibition areas, menageries, and arenas. Exceptional and highly specialized craftsmen work all year round to embroider spider silk dresses, or design custom-made boots that may only be worn once a year.

In this society, predicated on appearances, crooks, talented thieves, and charismatic artists take great risks to redirect some of the immense wealth for their own benefit.

Sullatar Bridge

The splendid Sullatar Bridge is not far from Sesmakkes. The works undertaken here facilitate journeys to the City of Pleasures, and more are planned. These have completely reshaped the appearance of the River Lingant and the surrounding area.

Inarrawant, the nomadic tribe of orcs, merosi, and humans had a sacred site there: a great place of pilgrimage devoted to healing. When its members found out with horror what had happened to their ancestral sanctuary, they gathered together to plan their future. The most moderate wish to make one last plea to the powerful of Sesmakkes and ask for reparation, but others are polishing their weapons.



Scott Timmerman's Order #3973193


Emblem of Kuhr

Kuhr, the City of Death

Kuhr is located in the southern part of the Old Kaan, in a region of medium mountains. It is run by the council of the Masters of Orders, and it is often referred to as the City of Death because it holds the largest temple of the goddess on the continent, making it a famous place of pilgrimage. But those who expect to find a great mausoleum are in for a surprise.
The region is heterogeneously populated with merosi and orcs from the Steppe, ulkani from the Manbalarer, humans descended from the Nulim Seashores, and hobgoblin merchants. Other peoples are somewhat rarer.

The Sanctuary District

The Sanctuary District is built on an artificial hill several hundred yards wide. Overlooking the rest of the town, it is comprised of several stone ziggurats. They surround an immense central esplanade, which can accommodate thousands of pilgrims and priests. The district includes the Temple of Reunion, which is always bustling, as well as a large observatory, renowned archives, and a school of magic of major importance. The society of the faithful, which has its quarters in this district, is divided into several orders.

Zilatyai, the Seers

The zilatyai are seers who worship Death. Their role is to reassure visitors frightened by the unfathomable unknown of death. They can confirm the presence of a deceased soul in a divine realm other than Death's or obtain other similar information. They are sometimes called upon to help investigate crimes committed in Kuhr; some are so experienced that they qualify to conduct any type of investigation.

Halliyari, the Sacred Bards

The halliyari are poets who sing the wonders of the Beyond and praise the benevolence of the celestials serving the goddess. Intimacy with death helps tame the fear of it and reassure the terminally ill, as well as those whose end from old age approaches. The same comfort is offered to anyone who has reason to think their death is near.
Some families in the Old Kaan take death very seriously. When it seems inevitable, people make the trip to Kuhr where, if necessary, they will stay for several weeks to support their loved ones as best as possible. These stays have a very special atmosphere.
A large apartment is rented, where the visitors live together, sharing exceptional moments in wait of their beloved's final end. This is a bittersweet time of sharing, certainly not devoid of genuine joyous events such as parties, feasts, or touristic visits of the city.
During this time, a halliyar visits every day. The order's philosophy is that just like future mothers receive guidance for delivery and newlyweds are given advice for marriage, the soon-to-be deceased need support to be ready for their upcoming change.

Taptarai, the Mourners

While the halliyari take care of the dying, the mourners look after families and loved ones, often after death. This order is predominantly female, as these priestesses are likened to mystical mothers who give birth to the dead. Men, with feminine attributes in their vestments and garb, also officiate. The company of the taptarai is sometimes subdued, consisting of quiet listening; other times, it is noisier, with piercing wailing or thundering music. Death is as varied as life, and funerals need not always be the same.

Ishiulhai, the Guardian Templars of Magic

The ishiulhai are followers of Death who have undergone arcane training. They look after the school of magic. Arcanists were once obligated to study there to obtain the right to practice. This is no longer the case, but those who aspire to work for the administration of the Old Kaan should always receive the approval of the clergy of Death.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773450)

Polytheism in Kuhr

Funeral rites are not just a plea to Death, as other deities and their priests are also present, albeit behind the scenes.

- **Frostelle** offers acceptance, and a time of rest for the bereaved souls of the living.
- **Flora** is always implicitly present in hope, and the joy of renewal.
- **Blacksmith** unties evil bonds through fire and radiance.
- **Tamerakh** as Storm scatters what was and leaves room for change.

A Passion for Gambling

People who stray from the sacred district of Kuhr discover the profane areas of the city. Of course, the majority of the population is made up of craftsmen, scholars, and merchants, but it differs from other cities with its strong entertainment culture. Gambling and betting are commonplace. People play with death, money, their future, or simply for fun. All year round, celebrations and street artists brighten the lives of the inhabitants and travelers, who seek distraction from grave or spiritual questionings. Although some followers obviously condemn these practices, many priests mingle with the crowd to watch acrobats or gamble at the racecourses.

Iconic Locations of Kuhr

The Temple of Reunion

The Temple of Reunion is one of the most visited places in the city and the main destination for pilgrims who are overwhelmed by grief. By sleeping in the temple, one can go to the divine realm of Death in their dreams and find their loved ones there.

Widows and widowers, distraught parents, and orphans come from afar to try to cure their loneliness. Some never leave Kuhr again. They settle in the city or the suburbs, regularly coming to pray and reunite with those they miss.

Members of the clergy of Death are split concerning this development. The Temple of Reunion should only help one mourn, but for some it is becoming a reason to stop living and to wait out death. The situation has worsened with the increased consumption of illegally imported opium in the city. The traffickers are linked to those who profit from the decadent Nulim Seashores. A common fear is that desperate people will commit suicide in the Temple of Reunion by falling into an eternal slumber. While some followers of Death believe that they must respect that choice, many others consider it a heresy: Death exists to teach us to accept that things end, and so that life can continue on even brighter.

The Observatory

Many myths and visions related to Death involve the stars and speak of the circumstances that led to her divine ascension. In order to get closer to the goddess, an astronomical complex was built. It is more a place of science than spirituality. Followers watch for the signs of Destiny's activity and seek to understand the unfathomable night. Some priests of Xonim are also present, united in their passion for mystery.

Tales from the distant Septentrion speak of a similar watchfulness of the heavens among the followers of Frostelle. The black goddess and the white goddess share a common concern and are united by their role as sentinels of the sky.

In an apparent paradox, followers working at the observatory also pay great attention to the goings-on of the Netherworld. They are, of course, concerned about Canker, but they are especially interested in determining the activities of the most powerful aberrations.

The Archives

The town is ancient and has suffered little significant damage in centuries. There have been many battles and earthquakes, but none have had a lasting impact. The archives keep track of pilgrimages, hymns, visions, and, less interestingly, of the smooth, logistical running of the shrine.

The School of Magic

The ishiulhai templars are in charge of the school of magic. It is a quality establishment, although it is rather austere and greatly values the study of ethics. Those who pass their exams here gain the respectable status of notable and have easier access to the palaces of the Old Kaan.

The school library is divided into two areas: open and forbidden books. The latter includes grimoires with many spells of necromancy, enchantment, and transmutation. Magic items and scrolls are also locked up here, which the ishiulhai use as reference texts and objects to study certain evils.

The expertise of the ishiulhai is recognized, and these faithful are sometimes called upon to investigate supernatural affairs or cursed ruins, hundreds or even thousands of miles from the Kuhr sanctuary.

The Crematorium

Here, Death is called indifferently using all synonyms related to passing away: the Passing, the Final Breath, the Last Journey, and many other epithets. In the dogma practiced in Kuhr today, death is necessary for life to exist. Leaving the past behind while respecting its legacy means one should not cling to graves and constantly mourn a deceased person, losing oneself to a perpetual melancholy.

While many people die in Kuhr, there is no cemetery. The remains are burned by day in a crematorium fueled by an eternal fire of supernatural origin. The ashes are then scattered in the winds of the Steppe.

The Arena

With the culture of death and gambling, the arena of Kuhr is an institution that provides combat training, entertainment, and the enforcement of court orders. Depending on the time and day, the spectators can bet on the students in training or the fighters who compete against each other in impressive confrontations:

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731990)



Kuhr, the City of Death

1. The Temple of Reunion
2. The Observatory
3. The Archives
4. The School of Magic
5. The Crematorium
6. The Arena

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731450)

- **School.** In the morning and in the evening, the arena is used to train those—both young and old—who wish to learn martial arts. All styles are taught, each with specific schedules and teachers. The audience is usually made up of family and friends, so the bets are fairly harmless, with a friendly atmosphere.
- **Atonement.** Instead of facing the death penalty, convicts can ask for atonement. The training and the fights of those condemned to atonement take place in the Arena between late morning and mid-afternoon. Depending on the seriousness of their crimes, they may have to undergo training fights, or actual combat with sharpened weapons. Atonement continues over several months or years, with the ultimate goal being to join the Death Guard, an elite troop that serves the nandin in Khaalgany. This recruitment process is not the only way to join the guard, but it is undoubtedly the most spectacular, and one that is also likely to give rise to real legends.
- **Spectacle.** From mid-afternoon onward, professional fights of all kinds take place. Some are friendly, without life-threatening risks; others deliberately involve the use of dangerous weapons and are watched by an audience that has come precisely for the thrill of potential death. However, people rarely die.



Important Figures of Kuhr

Mahshid, Leader of the Zilatyai

Mahshid is an ulkan woman in her forties. She has led the zilatyai order for fifteen years.

Under her leadership the seers act with extreme meticulousness. Every action of the followers is checked and cross-checked, their requests validated after a long and detailed examination. For Mahshid, this strictness is essential. Divination is an art too easily influenced by what one wishes to discover. Therefore, it is necessary to doubt everything, to point out gray areas, and to question certainties.

The ulkan influenced the zilatyai by instilling them with a doctrine of absolute pacifism, deep detachment, and radical neutrality. For the mistress of the order, non-violence is a moral duty and a necessity. Those who uncover secrets must not interfere with the affairs of this world.

Mahshid's principles are respected, but in practice, they can be quite difficult to follow when members of the order are confronted with the harsh reality of the outside world.

Farshid, Leader of the Halliyari

Farshid is an ulkan man in his fifties. This bard is cordial, smiling, and calm, and has been leading the halliyari for fourteen years. His charisma and confidence inspire trust and respect among those he meets.

However, Farshid has recently been facing some unexpected difficulties. Malicious people are spreading slanderous rumors about him. These rumors seem absurd to those who deal with him on a daily basis, but the ulkan was surprised to hear certain details from his past that should have remained secret. His enemies know of a tragedy that once drove Farshid to turn to Death. Who are they? Who would gain by removing him from his post?

Shabnam, Leader of the Taptarai, the Mourners

Shabnam is a 38-year-old hobgoblin who became head of the Taptarai order six years ago. She is very dynamic and eager to improve the good operation of the sacred institution, as well as the city of Kuhr. The situation has recently become more complicated, as powerful people from the Nulim Seashores seek to undermine order through various means, including providing drugs. These substances offer only artificial but easy comfort; they are also offered during celebrations associated with the local culture of gambling and parties.

In opposing these traffickers, Shabnam has drawn attention to herself. Her enemies have been watching her and they seek to exploit her weaknesses. The mistress of the taptarai is a spendthrift, pouring money down the drain, with a pronounced taste for strange or extravagant works of art. She is also known for lavishly helping vulnerable people.

Hesam, Leader of the Ishiulhai, the Guardian Templars of Magic

Hesam is a merosi, middle-aged by the standards of his people, but still lively. As the head of the ishiulhai order, he has the heavy responsibility of watching over arcanists without oppressing them. His peers respect him for his sense of responsibility and common good, as well as for his communicative energy and great knowledge, with an attention to detail that sometimes borders on obsession.

One of the projects that drive him the most is the restoration of the magic academy. Studying there is only optional, but in Hesam's eyes, the Old Kaan Empire needs to rely on experts with faultless morals, just as in the past—even if this past is somewhat idealized.

Another issue has begun to worry the ishiulhai: the appearance of Ayanga preachers in some cities. This almost forgotten cult, associated with a temple built in the distant Ayangaba'üül, worships a god of death whose mysterious teachings appeal to people in Babassür, Khaalgany, and the Nulim Seashores. He doesn't know how to react, and they surely need to know more in order to decide upon a course of action.

Kambiz, Master of the Arena

Kambiz the goblin is honored and celebrated as the master of the arena in the city of Kuhr. This charismatic and elite fighter is the subject of popular fervor. The stands are packed when he fights, or when he simply gives lessons to young students. His greatness, fortitude, infectious smile, and generosity are praised. The parties organized in his lavish home are very popular.

At the height of his glory, Kambiz could simply and peacefully retire from his career as a gladiator, moving into another field thanks to his accumulated wealth. Yet he could never forget the tragic passing of his mother, Astira. She disappeared mysteriously and was later found dead. There were strange tracks near her corpse. Recently, Kambiz saw the same tracks in town. Is it an evil spell? A dark creature? The goblin is determined to find out the truth.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731450)

Manbalarer, the Land of Springs

Manbalarer is located at the very south of Kaan. It is a very damp region of mountains, where the heavy rains give birth to many springs and roaring torrents. Each forest valley houses endemic species, while the windy summits consist of heaths characterized by fields of granite. Ulkanijer is the region closest to the Steppe, and by travelling further on the rocky reliefs, one arrives at the city-state of Pahalakadam, founded by natives of Ajagar.

The population in the cities is diverse, with a slight predominance of ulkani and humans, but with communities of many peoples, including a dragonborn minority. Distant trading companies have small trading posts here, run by a few of their members.

Ulkanijer

Located in a region of medium-sized mountains, in a territory covered with conifers, Ulkanijer is the land of the ulkani, a powerful Kaani people whose members are the largest of the humanoids. Their physical strength is equal to their wisdom. Although they appreciate the art of combat—like any other art—they have often declined the calls to war from the ezens of Kaan. Only a few of them answer the call of adventure, curious to discover the world and put their strength and valor to the test.

The ulkani are a sedentary people fond of stone. They build temples and high fortifications with large, carefully constructed brickwork that requires no mortar. Their skills were instrumental in the building of the sanctuary of Death in Kuhr. There are many small cities, each towering over a relief, but the subtle elegance of ulkan construction is the same everywhere.

In the mountains and in their contemplation of the heavens, the ulkani seek answers. There are so many mysteries to solve, so many wonders to discover. Listening to the revelations of the spirits and the gods, living or dead, the wise ulkan men and women are like sentinels of the world.



Emblem of Pahalakadam

City-State of Pahalakadam

From the region of Pahalakadam (usually called simply Pahala by foreigners), the mountain becomes a world of violent contrasts. Anyone who wishes to reach the lavish kingdoms of Ajagar from the lands of Kaan must pass through this city-state. Strictly speaking, it is not part of the empire. It was conquered by hordes in the past, but fought back and broke free. It strengthened its fortifications and withstood the subsequent assaults.

Pahalakadam is a city built on several terraces. Walls and defenses surround each district, the gates of which are closed and closely guarded at night. The city is rather dense, with a mixture of richly carved dark woods, baroque statues, and stone walls.

The many tunnels under the city and the region provide access to the Netherworld, but it has been so long since Canker has last been a danger that the threat is wholly underestimated.

Scott Timmermans (Dodecahedron.com)

Deep Inequalities

Pahala is governed by a guild caste system. People are born into a family practicing a craft, which they learn and make their living from. Only a few recently arrived foreign merchants disregard these social standards, literally buying their privileged status.

In addition to the near-nonexistent social mobility, the city's democracy is complicated by the institutional system. The more skilled a craft is, the more weight the vote of its members has. A guild ragpicker's vote is worth 1, but that of a master goldsmith is worth 10, which means that power remains in the hands of a minority.

The Council of Elders

In theory, the city is ruled by a merchant prince elected by guild members, but in reality the Council of Elders holds the most clout. It oversees everything that does not relate to the day-to-day running of the city.

The Council of Elders brings together all former leaders of the city. Its role is to ensure that values and traditions are respected: to do so, it is both a supreme court and an all-powerful senate. In particular, it has the right to overturn any law or regulation that violates the sacred founding principles. In theory, this should not prevent reform, but the Elders are extremely conservative. Many are extremely old and have accumulated both wealth and privilege for decades, meaning they won't consider even the slightest of changes.

Important Figures of Pahala

Chatur, the Merchant Princess

Chatur the hobgoblin is a businesswoman in her fifties and the leader of the cashmere guild: she has been at the head of the city for five years. Educated in the faith of Tamerakh the Destroyer who regenerates the world, she feels entitled to be alternately authoritarian and manipulative depending on which seems more appropriate. Although she is a sincere believer, she is not actively religious, as all her ambitions are focused toward ensuring the prosperity and glory of her city. In that sense, she is truly concerned about the common good, even if her personality is divisive.

There is much to be done to defend Pahala. The rigid social system is a relic causing great tension. Schemers in the service of the rakshasas of Ajagar are creeping into the city. Mountain poppy traffickers use the city as a springboard for opium production and distribution to the Nulim Seashores, bringing wealth and corruption at the same time. Here, as with anywhere else in the Old Kaan, agents from the distant Kartaçöl seek ways to weaken the country and unsettle the power of the nandin.

Ehteram the Ambitious

Ehteram is the Messenger of the Council of Elders. That means she receives instructions and must carry them out. In practice, she has a lot of leeway and her influence is such that she holds almost as much power as Chatur, the Merchant Princess.

This 46-year-old human is motivated by ambition: in service to the Council of Elders, she has found a way to reach the top. She is the tool of doddering old men, but she is preparing for the moment when the situation will change to her exclusive advantage. Totally devoid of empathy or ethics, this shameless liar manipulates others with ease. She takes the time to discover weaknesses and then exploits them, accumulating her own influence and wealth over the years.

Tamana the Passionate

Tamana is a hobgoblin born into a low caste guild. Due to her birth, her existence should be one of menial working, collecting rubbish and feces with no hope of change in her life. Inspired by the ethics of freedom of Tamerakh the Destroyer of Illusions, she believes that the current social system is decadent, absurd, unjust, and objectively bad in the medium and long term. She has developed a non-violent but determined mission to change the city from within. To do so, she denounces inequalities, excesses, corruption, and the impunity of certain powerful people. As a result, she is making many enemies. Many are fed up with this nothing woman giving them lessons. The people who support her anonymously report the cases of abuse that they witness. Some secrets are dangerous. Some powerful people will not tolerate their ways being challenged in this fashion for long, and are thinking of making an example of her. Still, they wonder whether this could make her a martyr, which would be even more catastrophic for them.

Jahangar the Guide

Jahangar is a young ulkan, a sage who dresses modestly in monastic robes and lives on charity. He meditates in the city, following a spiritual quest whose message mixes several tenets of the Old Kaan: the meditation of the Iruuls, the strengthening of the will of Babassür's Istanzians, and considerations on Death following the teachings of Kuhr.

The man is greatly respected, and is gaining more and more followers. His community thrives among the poorest. Solidarity and mutual aid prove to be necessary to balance the harshness of their living conditions and the dramatic ups and downs.

Although Jahangar preaches compassion and assistance to the most destitute, he also receives important donations from the notables of Pahala. People ease their conscience by inviting him into their homes, meditating under his guidance, and giving money in public. Fundamentally, Jahangar's requests are similar to Tamana's, though they are formulated within a more complex and ambiguous ideological framework. The concept of acceptance is understood by the elite as a legitimization of the city's unequal system. Will Jahangar's gentle and exemplary persuasion bear fruit?

Scott Thompson (Order #39781939)

Iconic Locations of Pahala

Mehran Palace

Mehran Palace is the seat of government of Merchant Princess Chatur. The place is rife with intrigue and scheming. All this takes place against a backdrop of paperwork and administration; the latter being is as meticulous as it is slow, as a copy of each important act is sent to the Council of Elders. The decoration of the noble floors is ostentatious. Each of them is in the latest fashion, with an overload of garish patterns.

Major renovation work to change the organization of an entire wing is underway. This is despite its good condition; it simply wasn't to the taste of Chatur's predecessor. The work is going slowly, and the clerks have become accustomed to the scaffolding. Those who work here know a lot about what goes on behind the scenes of power. Many are aware of the mountains of debts that lie dormant in the accounting books.

The Exclusive Rukokhusi Salon

The exclusive Rukokhusi Salon is a place of relaxation for the members of the Council of Elders and their friends. People have dinner and idle pleasantly amidst thick carpets and silken pillows. Many decisions are made here, and reputations are made and broken. It is also the place to be, and access is not easy. There is a proper dress code, and guests are expected to act with refinement. Protocol and decorum are extremely strict, distinguishing the true elite from mere upstarts. Everything has meaning, from the way one holds their glass to how one approaches certain conversation topics.

The Akhara of the Elders

The Akhara is one of the few large squares in town. It was a gift from the Council of Elders to the city. The people can admire this work of art, in which every detail from the entrances to the stands, has been thoroughly thought out. It is a popular, trendy location, with many artistic and sport events throughout the year: parades, street artists, animal trainers, concerts, athletic contests, and more.

Important people have their own entrance, separate from the public one, in a different street. There are rumors of secret passages that would allow notables to escape in case of a fire or a riot. These alleged tunnels are reported to lead to places of high political importance.

The House of the Fallen

Kiana was a bard, a courtesan, and a merosi spy. Famous in the city, she managed to build a luxurious mansion. However, her wealth was not enough to cover her expenses and she accrued significant debts. In itself, this is quite commonplace in Pahala: many powerful people live in houses of cards. Betrayed, she was led to the Red House, and likely executed.

A series of auctions were held to pay off the creditors. However, there were many unusual incidents, and people started to believe the place to be cursed. Superstition only had partial effect: some trinkets remained, but others were simply sold as far away as possible.

The new owner of the House of the Fallen prefers to remain anonymous, but they also let people freely visit the place.

The building is a beautiful ruin, quaint in its flashy, dusty, and strangely welcoming appearance. It has become a nightly meeting place for all newcomers and those wishing to climb the social ladder. People gather in refined outfits and everyone brings a drink. It is a pleasant night. It is like a club for jealous mutual benefit and friendly betrayals, the perfect place to find out rumors and make friends.

Red House

Red House is the nickname given to a small monastery built at the very bottom of the city, near the main gate. The building is almost cubic, with thick, black stone walls, and windows like arrow slits, all built around a cloister. The garden is bare and austere, much like the rooms and corridors. The atmosphere is oppressive.

It is a place of worship for a complex, esoteric cast of deities and powers. Outsiders see the cult as quite strange, thinking their members worship monsters, or even fiends to better protect the city.

However, the place is best known for being both the town's main prison and the place where executions are carried out, some of which used to reach refined heights in cruelty. The many underground levels are lit only by a skylight located at the center of the cloister. Access is tightly controlled and very little is known about what goes on there, although rumors abound. Among other things, it is said that the place is haunted, but that ghosts and wraiths are locked up in certain rooms. It is also said that victims of Canker wishing to rid themselves of their corruption can ask to stay in the Red House to be purified.

A recent earthquake caused some damage underground, although the extent is unknown. Repair work will surely take place soon.

The Junk Store of Asessar

The junk store of Asessar is a shop run by Hamif the poet, a merosi foreign to the city and a good expert on Babassür. The man is particularly secretive. He seems to have the manners of someone who has known luxury and all sorts of delights, but he hides his skin and face as much as possible. Is he ashamed of a disease, or a form of corruption? Despite this oddity, Hamif is very welcoming and courteous toward his clients.

In this large—by Pahala's standards, at least—and perpetually cold building, people walk among overcrowded shelves. There are works of art, archeological finds, and other curiosities. According to a tenacious urban legend, Hamif is involved in trafficking and smuggling; he is also said to know a lot about the eight liches of the Desolations. Rumor has it that many of his wares are magic, and that among them are blasphemies, full of tragic stories, and sometimes still stained with blood.

Everyone in the district knows that the shop is new, but no one seems to remember exactly when or how it appeared, or what used to be there.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



City-State of Pahalakadam

1. Mehran Palace
2. The Exclusive Rukokhusi Salon
3. The Akhara of the Elders
4. The House of the Fallen
5. Red House
6. The Junk Store of Asessar
7. Main Gate

Mountain Travels

The environment beyond Pahala becomes very typical of mountain regions:

- **High altitude forest.** Here a traveler will find rhododendrons so widespread that they form groves, and banyan trees so ancient that, over the centuries, the inhabitants have been able to tie their aerial roots together to make spectacular living bridges, which can withstand the most violent wet seasons. Even at 10,000 feet, vegetation is still abundant, clinging fiercely to every small space of stone or earth on near-vertical slopes.
- **Steep paths and high passes.** The intrepid traveler can embark on narrow paths that wind their way more than 16,000 feet above sea level. On the way, they will come across small caravans with placid yaks as their pack animals. They can stop in monasteries with red walls, their facades lined with prayer wheels.
- **Snow-capped peaks.** At the very top are immense glaciers, eternal snow, and white dragon lairs; but aside from the winter-like cold of the Septentrion, the most severe ordeal for Steppe people is the lack of air. Some even succumb to it, suffocating, and the only cure is to descend to lower altitudes

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Wonders of the Great Kaan

The treasures in this section are from Kaan and the Septentrion. Imbued with the wild and untamed power of the far north or the harsh steppes, they lend themselves as much to travel as to combat and will delight any adventurer. Some were made by Kaani mirafactors using tribal, magical methods, others are the secrets of mystical worshippers of Frostelle, and others still were designed by the terrible frost giants.

In this section, you will also find magical pearls fashioned by the stone giants, capable of triggering spell-like powers, sometimes with additional effects. A great addition to the arsenal of any party!

Typical Kaani Equipment

The peculiarities of a civilization's environment, history, and culture often result in the creation of special equipment. This chapter gives an overview of such gear, complementing the information presented in **Adventurers** (see **Daily Life**).

Trade in Kaan

On a vast continent with only a few big cities, many people live on their own, exchanging goods and services through a complex network of relations, with debts sometimes paid in kind years later. Under these conditions, items are not always as readily available as in Cyfandir, and prices fluctuate according to supply and demand: a precious item in the Free City may be worth very little in Kaan, and vice versa.

- In Kaan as in the Septentrion, cattle and salt blocks (500 gp) are frequently used as reference goods for trade. This can make even desolate regions (like the great salt desert of Tuzdisöl in the Old Kaan) particularly attractive due to the resources they hold.
- Kartaçöl's currency, the gül (1 gül = 1 cp), is gaining influence among merchants every year. In fact, the empire prohibits any other currency on its territory. Conversion rates depend on the origin of the currency to be converted into gül, based on the political relations with the country. In addition to the 1 gül coin, there are 10 gül, 50 gül, and 100 gül coins (i.e. 1 sp, 5 sp, and 1 gp). For larger purchases, small ingots worth 500 and 1,000 gül (i.e. 5 gp and 10 gp) are used. In the case of greater sums, transactions are made in precious stones, bills of exchange, in kind, or through an agreement ratified by a relevant authority.
- In the Old Kaan empire, on the other hand, foreign currencies are easily accepted as long as their gold or silver titration can be evaluated. Anything of value and easily transportable is accepted by merchants… though usually not without negotiations! Needless to say, this can lead to ruthless haggling, which may be to the detriment of unwary travelers!
- In southern Kaan, Manbalarer, and Telhika, precious stones are especially valued. For locals who exploit small mines, it is an easy way to gain purchasing power. On the mainland, turquoise and lapis lazuli are typically highly sought after. Stones are often set in jewelry or religiously inspired works of art, or even in expensive, easily transportable furniture. In turn, these items can be stored and redistributed.

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Weapons of the Horde

Weapons are part of everyday life in Kaan. Equipment suited to long hours of travel by horseback is particularly favored. One must be able to fight astride a mount and on the ground with the same ease. The warriors of the Steppe are famous for their mounted combat techniques.
By using the optional rules and equipment in this section, adventurers will be given additional possibilities, and the idiosyncrasies of Kaan will be emphasized.

Warrior's Strength

For the people of the Steppe, both Strength and Dexterity are of great importance. The optional Warrior's Strength rule reflects this demand and the need for rigorous martial training from childhood, resulting in fighters who are both quick and strong. It makes Strength more necessary and discourages stat distribution with overwhelmingly high Dexterity and low Strength.
Even if a weapon has the finesse or light property, a minimum Strength is required to wield it. If a creature uses it without the minimum Strength, its attacks have disadvantage. This applies to both melee and ranged weapons.

Minimum Strength to Efficiently Use a Weapon

Weapon Damage	Minimum Strength to Use the Weapon
1d4	8
1d6	10
1d8	11
1d10	13
1d12 or 2d6	15

Weapon Properties

If you use the optional **Warrior's Strength** rule or **Typical Kaani Weapons**, the new weapon properties below apply. The *heavy* property is also modified.

Dual

This weapon can inflict two different types of damage. The attacker chooses the damage type when it makes its attack roll.

Sabers are dual weapons.
This property also applies to the weapons listed in the following table, included in **Adventurers**:

Weapon	Price	Damage	Properties
Halberd	20 gp	1d10 piercing or slashing	Heavy, reach, two-handed
Morningstar	15 gp	1d8 bludgeoning or piercing	—

Heavy

A heavy weapon cannot be used while mounted.

Powerful

A weapon with the powerful property lets the wielder use its Strength modifier instead of Dexterity for its damage rolls.

Technical

A technical weapon is technologically advanced, making it more balanced and easier to wield. A technical weapon reduces the required Strength to wield it by 2 (see the **Warrior's Strength** optional rule).
Light and heavy crossbows are technical weapons.

In the Old Kaan, crossbows are regarded with a measure of disdain. A crossbowman having access to the same power as an archer but with much easier and quicker training is seen as a form of cheating.
Highly talented weapon inventors can design advanced, or even cutting-edge, technical weapons. Kartaçöl's Empire seeks to hire these geniuses to mass-produce their creations and equip its armies with formidable weapons, perhaps worthy of giants! Improved crossbows, with the statistics of heavy crossbows, but 1d12 or even 2d6 piercing damage, would be terrifying on a battlefield. The leader can introduce such instruments of warfare to their campaign, whether as plot elements or as possible treasure, thus replacing magic loot.

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Typical Kaani Weapons

The ingenuity of weaponsmiths and armorsmiths knows few limits. Here is an overview of typical Kaani weapons little known in Cyfandir. The leader can imagine many variations of these weapons, using their statistics or modifying them to match the leader's design.

Composite Bow

The Steppe composite bow is a formidable weapon, designed to be wielded on horseback and on foot with equal efficiency. It is also compact, as opposed to the longbow. The only real downside to this weapon is its weakness to humidity: the composite bow must remain dry. If it becomes wet, it acquires the *fragile* property. The military superiority it allows is one of the reasons for the success of Hordes. This weapon is typical of traditional Kaani training (see the **Warrior's Strength** optional rule).

Saber (khutga)

In Kaan, sabers are called khutga, but their statistics are the same as in the neighboring regions of Rachamangekr, Ajagar, or Shi-huang. They can be short (with a blade of about 20 inches), long (the size of a long sword, with a blade of about 30 inches), or great (similar to a two-handed sword, with a blade of about 50 inches). Unlike swords, sabers only have one edge.
These weapons are very appreciated by horsemen, and typically associated with highly elegant fighters.

Price and Statistics of Kaani Weapons

Weapon	Category	Price	Damage	Weight	Proprieties
Composite Bow	Martial	75 pg	1d8 piercing	1 ½ lb.	Ammunition (range 160/500), powerful, two-handed
Short saber	Martial	30 pg	1d6 piercing or slashing	1 ½ lb.	Dual, finesse, light
Long saber	Martial	50 pg	1d8 piercing or slashing	2 lb.	Dual
Great saber	Martial	75 pg	1d12 piercing or slashing	3 lb.	Dual, heavy, two-handed

Traveling in the North



Septentrion and Kaani Mounts

Animal Handling is a prized skill on the Kaani continent, where many different animals are used as mounts. The mounts below are more exotic than those of **Adventurers**, and each one has its own morphology and behavior, meaning that learning how to ride them properly requires time (see **Adventurers**, **Daily Life, Lifestyle: Long-Term Activities Influencing Lifestyle**). A rider that hasn't undergone such training has disadvantage on rolls for riding or interacting with the beast. The training times in the table below apply to riders proficient in the Animal Handling skill; for all others, the duration is multiplied by 3.

The prices of the mounts listed below are an average of those in Kaan and the Septentrion; there may be higher prices for a remarkable beast, and, conversely, lower prices for an old or restive animal.

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Septentrion and Kaani Mounts

Animal	Price	Speed	Maximum Load (carried or hauled)	Special
Camel	50 gp	50 ft.	480 lb.	The camel is the best mount for long journeys through arid lands and is often used by caravanners. Training: 30 days.
Capricorn	350 gp	40 ft.	300 lb.	The only mount suited to rough terrain, with an exceptional sense of balance. Training: 60 days.
Giant Elk	N/A	60 ft.	800 lb.	Giant elks are sacred creatures in the druidic culture of the North. Training: 30 days.
Griffon	1,000 gp	30 ft. / fly 80 ft.	300 lb.	One could hardly find a more prestigious mount than a griffon. Riding one is usually the privilege of warlords, heroes, and elite troops. Training: 250 days.
Hippogriff	800 gp	40 ft./ fly 60 ft.	300 lb.	At ease both on land and in the air, the hippogriff is the dream mount of any seasoned scout or explorer. Training: 200 days.
Kaani Steed	300 gp	60 ft.	440 lb.	Kaani steeds are smaller than in Cyfandir. Training: creatures proficient in Animal Handling know how to ride a horse.
Reindeer	100 gp	50 ft.	360 lb.	In cold climates, reindeer are bred as pack, riding, and draught animals. Training: 30 days.
Riding Axe Beak	300 gp	80 ft.	230 lb.	Well-trained axe beaks are the fastest beasts on the steppe. Training: 90 days.
Worg	N/A	50 ft.	230 lb.	It is taboo to sell a worg in any land honoring Tamerakh. Training: 120 days.

Septentrion Land Vehicles

The training times in the table below apply to a creature proficient in Vehicles (Land); for all others, the duration is multiplied by 3. The prices apply to Kaan in general.

Special Septentrion Vehicles

Item	Price	Speed	Weight	Load Capacity	Special
Pair of Snowshoes	1 gp	Speed /2	4 lb.	N/A	Many people make their own snowshoes. Training: 2 days.
Team of Sled Dogs	10 gp per dog + 20 gp for a sled	50 ft.	50 lb. per dog + 300 lb for the sled	60 lb per dog up to a maximum of 600 lb	One must be proficient in Animal Handling to lead a group of sled dogs. If well-fed and well-trained, these animals can run for a long time and cover over 60 miles per day. Training: 20 days.

Travel Speed in a Sled

A team of sled dogs has enough stamina to exceed the usual traveling speed numbers (see **Adventurers, Adventuring: Travel Pace***). Count up to 10 miles per hour at a fast pace, for 6 consecutive hours.*

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Special Materials

Certain materials from extraordinary creatures or natural formations can be used to make weapons and armor. In the latter case, creatures with strong natural armor might appear to be good choices. However, a creature's natural armor may be hard to harvest, result from anatomical features other than a strong hide (such as a highly resistant skeleton or organs), or lose much of its resilience after the creature's death. Thus, a creature with high natural armor may not necessarily yield an exceptional material.

Basilisk Hide

It is said that the skin of a basilisk is as hard as the stone into which it turns its prey... and just as heavy! If not for prestige, armor made of such material is generally discarded in favor of more conventional protection, although some druids appreciate it, as it provides them with great defense while respecting their taboos.

Basilisk hide armor weighs 60 lb. It is medium armor with AC 16, but the Dexterity bonus to AC is limited to +1, and it gives disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. If the leader uses rules, the disadvantage extends to Athletics (for swimming) and Acrobatics checks, and a Strength of 11 is required to properly wear the armor.

Gandaichin Smithing

The gandaichin technique, which can be roughly translated as "warrior steel", was invented by orc master blacksmiths who successfully combined adamantine and other metals, either directly during the smithing process or through forging techniques resulting in pattern-welded metal. Gandaichin weapons and armor are highly sought-after and expensive. They provide several advantages:

- **Armor sturdiness.** Critical hits to the wearer of gandaichin armor become normal hits. Only metal armor can be enhanced in such a fashion.
- **Sharpness.** The critical range of a gandaichin weapon increases by +1. Thus, a weapon will inflict a critical hit on a result of 19 or 20 on the d20. This is in addition to other benefits that extend the critical range, such as a champion's Improved Critical feature. Only weapons that inflict piercing or slashing damage can benefit from this property.
- **Durability.** This equipment cannot be destroyed by acid, a rust monster's touch, or the fluids of Cankerous creatures.

Manufacturing requirements are commensurate with the quality of such equipment. In many families, gandaichin weapons are passed down from one generation to the next. They are also gifts bestowed by leaders to comrades in arms, or tributes brought by vassals to their lord. It is rare for these exceptional pieces of equipment to be bought; they are usually considered above monetary notions, the physical expression of a moral commitment.

Gorgon Hide

A gorgon's hide is so heavy, so thick, and so strong that it is more akin to an iron shell than hide! Properly skinning a gorgon requires smith's tools rather than leatherworker's tools. Moreover, fashioning a gorgon's hide into armor requires advanced knowledge in metalworking, armorsmithing, and alchemy. Such mastery is so rare that those on Eana who are capable of such craftsmanship can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Still, some believe the result to be worth the effort.

Gorgon hide armor weighs a staggering 90 lb. It is heavy armor with AC 19 that gives advantage on saving throws against becoming petrified. However, the wearer has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. If the leader uses rules, the disadvantage extends to Athletics (for swimming) and Acrobatics checks, and an amazing Strength of 17 is required to properly wear this massive protection.

Remorhaz Hide

Remorhaz are such powerful creatures that cutting one down and skinning it is a feat all on its own. If properly harvested, a remorhaz hide provides light but strong armor that is remarkably resistant to heat and cold.

Remorhaz hide armor weighs 11 lb. It is light armor with AC 12 and resistance to fire and cold.

Yksittäinen Wood

This sacred wood is used by Septentrion druids, harvested and sanctified according to specific rites. Receiving an item (typically a staff or spear) made of Yksittäinen wood is an honor for a druid and practically unheard-of for a non-druid. Such an item is made expressly for a particular individual, and if this gift were to end up in the hands of another, they would certainly incur the wrath of the druids.

An item made of Yksittäinen wood is associated with a druid spell. When this spell is cast by the creature for which the item was fashioned, the spell either receives a +1 bonus to all associated attack rolls, or the DC of associated saving throws is increased by +1 (item creator's choice).

Scott Timmermans (Order #39781950)

Treasures from Cold Lands

Amulet of the Winter Crone

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This amulet is engraved with a symbol reminiscent of Frostelle, the Winter Crone and mistress of the Septentrion. While you wear it, minions of the goddess in the **Far North** cannot come within 5 feet of you nor take offensive action against you.

Creatures affected by the amulet are **wails of the wastes** (**shiverwails** and **frostwails**) and winter wolves. At the leader's discretion, its effects can apply to other creatures.

If you perform a hostile action against a creature, the amulet's effects cease for this creature. Furthermore, Frostelle, or a celestial in her service, can break the amulet at a distance of 120 ft. (no action required) if the wearer is considered unworthy of its protection.

A priest of Frostelle can use this amulet as a holy symbol.



Armor of Resistance

Armor (light, medium, or heavy), rare (requires attunement)

You have resistance to one type of damage while you wear this armor. The leader chooses the type or determines it randomly from the options below.

d10	Damage Type
1	Acid
2	Cold
3	Fire
4	Force
5	Lightning
6	Necrotic
7	Poison
8	Psychic
9	Radiant
10	Thunder

Berserker Axe

Weapon (any axe), rare (requires attunement), blasphemy

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, while you are attuned to this weapon, your hit point maximum increases by 1 for each level you have attained.

Curse. This axe is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the axe, keeping it within reach at all times. You also have disadvantage on attack rolls with weapons other than this one, unless no foe is within 60 feet of you that you can see or hear.

Whenever a hostile creature damages you while the axe is in your possession, you must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or go berserk. While berserk, you must use your action each round to attack the creature nearest to you with the axe. If you can make extra attacks as part of the Attack action, you use those extra attacks, moving to attack the next nearest creature after you fell your current target. If you have multiple possible targets, you attack one at random. You are berserk until you start your turn with no creatures within 60 feet of you that you can see or hear.

The most infamous berserkers hail from the Septentrion, to the far north of Cyfandir and Kaan. It is said that the most savagely brutal of them had, at times, caught the fascination of the demon prince Gegaôr the Furious Beast, who offered them either the gift of lycanthropy or a berserker axe. These kings of warriors, driven by their axes, stained in blood and glory, met heroic—if early—deaths. Entombed in great barrows, their contemporaries knew it was unwise to separate the deceased from their favorite weapons... a consideration not shared by grave robbers.

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731950)

Boots of the Winterlands

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

These furred boots are snug and feel quite warm. While you wear them, you gain the following benefits:

- You have resistance to cold damage.
- You ignore difficult terrain created by ice or snow.
- You can tolerate temperatures as low as –50 degrees Fahrenheit without any additional protection. If you wear heavy clothes, you can tolerate temperatures as low as –100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The mightiest spiritual guides of the Septentrion fashion this wonder for the heroes of their clan, whether they hail from their people or are strangers of outstanding dedication. Thanks to these boots, daring explorers can travel across the dreaded Far North without fear of most of the dangers of this harsh region.

Dawn Amulet



Wondrous item, rare

The *dawn amulet* looks like a colorless quartz which emits bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. As long as a creature or object is within the bright light zone, it is treated as if it were exposed to sunlight. The amulet needs only be covered to obscure the light.

This magic item is highly prized by paladins and other hunters of the undead, but it also makes them obvious targets for the unnatural entities they pursue. As soon as an intelligent undead learns of the existence of such an item, it knows who to attack, and can devote its efforts and those of its agents to destroying both the *dawn amulet* and its bearer.

Down Coat

Wondrous item, uncommon

While you wear this immaculate white coat, the gift of a sednae, you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy terrain. In addition, you have advantage on Charisma checks against servants of Frostelle. Finally, if you are in Gemoniae, you have immunity to cold damage.

Frost Weapon

Weapon (any), very rare (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 cold damage. In addition, while you hold the weapon, you have resistance to fire damage.

In freezing temperatures, it sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

When you draw this weapon, you can extinguish all nonmagical flames within 30 feet of you. This property can be used no more than once per hour.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Gem of Alecrith

Gem, uncommon

Alecrith resembles quartz and has the peculiar property of illuminating when touched by an Awakened, or an individual with such potential. The intensity and hue of the light are dependent on the abilities of the creature.

Sometimes, an alecrith is passed on for generations without ever lighting up, believed to be nothing more than a beautiful but ordinary crystal. The Boreal civilization, which once flourished in northern Cyfandir, was known for using alecriths, as they played a major role in their arcane arts. Ancient Boreal mechanisms, for example, cannot function without slotting such gems inside, or can only be used by Awakened.

There are no known alecrith deposits in Cyfandir. Some scholars believe that alecrith is in fact pure, crystallized magic, and therefore that it can only be obtained through arcane experiments. Research is ongoing, and organizations specialized in arcana regularly send expeditions to the Septentrion, hoping to discover and explore Boreal ruins and bring back relics.

The gem's effect varies depending on whether it is set in a weapon or armor (see **Treasures of the Drakenbergen: Using Enchanted Gems**):

- **Armor.** The armor grants resistance against force damage.
- **Weapon.** The weapon deals +1d6 force damage.

Gemoniae Bracelet

Wondrous item, rare

This bracelet is made of a leather string slipped through beads of bone and ivory. As long as you wear it, you have immunity to cold damage.

These bracelets are crafted in Gemoniae by prisoners freed from the ice, and it is said that only they can make them. The maker must carefully prepare the materials themselves while focusing on memories of their dreadful experience. Remembrances of a year's imprisonment fade from their traumatized memory, becoming energy that powers the bracelet. Only thanks to these precious protections can rebels escape their jailers.

Ring of Warmth

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, you have resistance to cold damage. In addition, you and everything you wear and carry are unharmed by temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit..

Scott Timmerman's (Order #39731950)

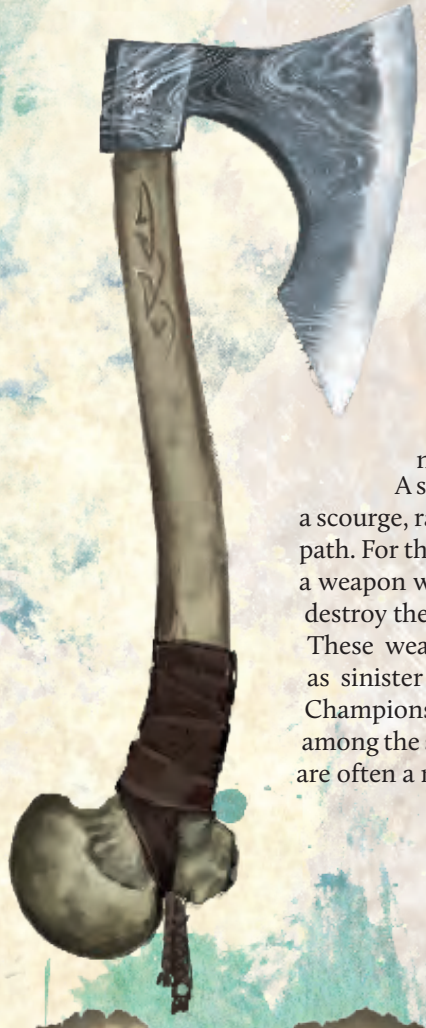
Staff of Frost

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

You have resistance to cold damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 10 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *cone of cold* (5 charges), *fog cloud* (1 charge), *ice storm* (4 charges), or *wall of ice* (4 charges).

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff turns to water and is destroyed.



Weapon of Arctic Death

Weapon (any), rare (requires attunement), blasphemy

When a creature is killed by this weapon, it must make a Charisma saving throw (DC 8 + the proficiency bonus of the creature wielding the weapon). On a failure, the body of the slain creature rises 1d20 rounds later as a **gaunt**. Gaunts never attack the wielder of a *weapon of arctic death*.

A single creature equipped with a *weapon of arctic death* can become a scourge, raising in its wake legions of gaunts that will kill everyone in their path. For this reason, when a gaunt is spotted, it is often suspected that such a weapon was used. All efforts are made to find the wielder, kill them, and destroy the blasphemous weapon.

These weapons are especially popular with frost giants, who see them as sinister and miraculous wonders: the works of revered blacksmiths. Champions are given one and sent on rampages, sowing death and horror among the smaller peoples. When frost giants plot invasions, these weapons are often a major component of their plans.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Gifts from the Druids

Bag of Tricks

Wondrous item, uncommon

This ordinary bag, made from gray, rust, or tan cloth, appears empty. Reaching inside the bag, however, reveals the presence of a small, fuzzy object. The bag weighs 1/2 lb.

You can use an action to pull the fuzzy object from the bag and throw it up to 20 feet. When the object lands, it transforms into a creature you determine by rolling a d8 and consulting the table that corresponds to the bag's color. The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 hit points.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions, and it acts on your turn. You can use a bonus action to command how the creature moves and what action it takes on its next turn, or to give it general orders, such as to attack your enemies. In the absence of such orders, the creature acts in a fashion appropriate to its nature.

Once three fuzzy objects have been pulled from the bag, the bag can't be used again until the next dawn.

Grey Bag of Tricks

d8	Creature
1	Weasel
2	Giant rat
3	Badger
4	Boar
5	Panther
6	Giant badger
7	Dire wolf
8	Giant elk

Rust Bag of Tricks

d8	Creature
1	Rat
2	Owl
3	Mastiff
4	Goat
5	Giant goat
6	Giant boar
7	Lion
8	Brown bear

Tan Bag of Tricks

d8	Creature
1	Jackal
2	Gorilla
3	Baboon
4	Axe beak
5	Black bear
6	Giant weasel
7	Giant hyena
8	Tiger

Gem of Sapian

Gem, rare

Sapian is a substance extracted from roots in the Netherworld. Druids believe it is a manifestation of Eana. It is often used in its resinous or liquid forms, as an alchemical component or as incense, but its crystallized form is prized above all else. In this form, sapian amber is a golden gem with sometimes brown or green hues, and whose simple contact provides an exhilarating, galvanizing sensation.

The gem's effect varies depending on whether it is set in a weapon or armor (see **Treasures of the Drakenbergen: Using Enchanted Gems**):

- **Armor.** The armor grants resistance to thunder damage.
- **Weapon.** The weapon deals +1d6 thunder damage.
- **Special.** Sapian can replace any druid or ranger material spell component worth 1,500 gp or less.

Gloves of Swimming and Climbing

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing these gloves, climbing and swimming don't cost you extra movement, and you gain a +5 bonus to Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb or swim.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731450)

Lucky Charm

Wondrous item (requires attunement), common

As long as you carry this item, you gain a +1 bonus to saving throws. In addition, at any time, but only once, you can choose to reroll any roll you've just made. You must keep the new result. One week after it is made, a *lucky charm* loses its magical properties.

Lucky charms come in various esoteric forms: bone, wood, horn, rock, shell, bark, etc., often painted, engraved, or decorated in some way. Druids, shamans, and other spiritual guides fashion them before a battle, an expedition, a journey, or any other important and dangerous enterprise, to preserve the bearer from the worst harm.

Pillar of Protection

Wondrous item, common

A *pillar of protection* usually comes in the form of a post 5 inches in diameter and up to 10 feet high. Therefore, most are not easily transportable, but there exist more portable versions the size of a large quarterstaff (and which can be wielded as such). A *pillar of protection* is richly painted with mythological motifs. For it to take effect, it must be planted in the ground as an action, typically in the middle of a camp.

As long as the *pillar of protection* is in place, the beasts depicted on it won't come within 30 feet of it. If it has no choice, the beast may reluctantly enter the zone of a *pillar of protection*, but it will have disadvantage on all rolls as long as it remains in the zone. A single *pillar of protection* can only repel one type of beast.

Many families own such a magic item, fashioned by a druid or a shaman. On wedding occasions, they are offered as a collective gift to the newlyweds to keep them safe from **bulettes** or **arslanikhs**, depending on the region.

Rage Water

Potion, uncommon

This alchemical preparation puts its drinker into a warlike trance. For 1 minute, you gain 20 temporary hit points and can reroll the damage of all your melee weapon attacks once, keeping the result of your choice. For this duration, you cannot cast spells or concentrate on a spell, and at the beginning of each of your turns, you must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or immediately use your action to attack the nearest creature.

These controversial potions are used among the most belligerent tribes of the Septentrion as instruments of war. Some see them as a convenient way to turn a simple individual into a fearsome fighter, others as dreadful, unnatural psychotropic drugs. Among berserkers, some make extensive (and even immoderate) use of them, while others—particularly those hostile to magic—view them as stimulants unworthy of a true warrior.



Staff of Swarming Insects

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a bard, cleric, druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This staff has 10 charges and regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a swarm of insects consumes and destroys the staff, then disperses.

Spells

While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *giant insect* (4 charges) or *insect plague* (5 charges).

Insect Cloud

While holding the staff, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to cause a swarm of harmless flying insects to spread out in a 30-foot radius from you. The insects remain for 10 minutes, making the area heavily obscured for creatures other than you. The swarm moves with you, remaining centered on you. A wind of at least 10 miles per hour disperses the swarm and ends the effect.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773145)

Staff of the Woodlands

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a druid)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you have a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls.

The staff has 10 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff loses its properties and becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.
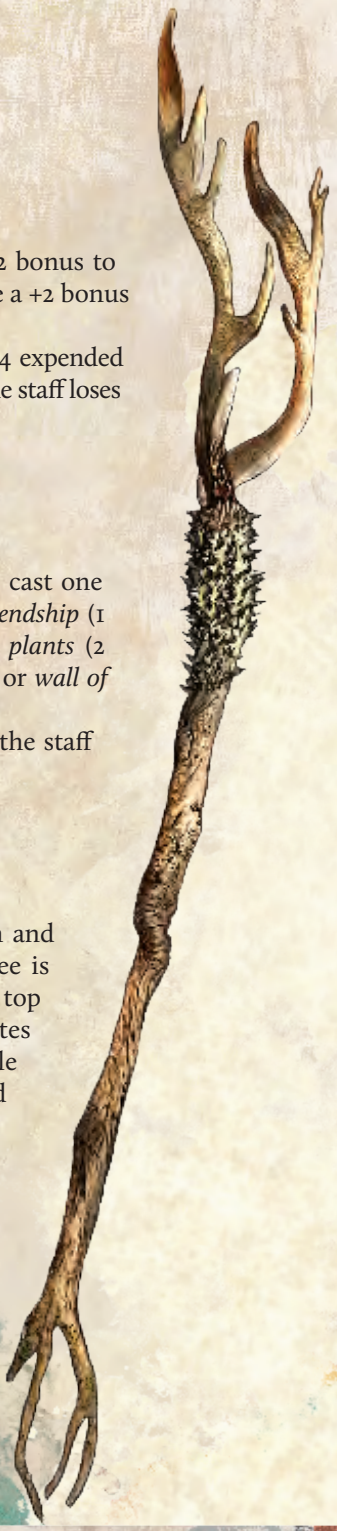
Spells

You can use an action to expend 1 or more of the staff's charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *animal friendship* (1 charge), *awaken* (5 charges), *barkskin* (2 charges), *locate animals or plants* (2 charges), *speak with animals* (1 charge), *speak with plants* (3 charges), or *wall of thorns* (6 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *pass without trace* spell from the staff without using any charges.

Tree Form

You can use an action to plant one end of the staff in fertile earth and expend 1 charge to transform the staff into a healthy tree. The tree is 60 feet tall and has a 5-foot-diameter trunk, and its branches at the top spread out in a 20-foot radius. The tree appears ordinary but radiates a faint aura of transmutation magic if targeted by *detect magic*. While touching the tree and using another action to speak its command word, you return the staff to its normal form. Any creature in the tree falls when it reverts to a staff.



War Paints

If you use this optional rule, the druids of the Septentrion and Kaan know the art of *war paints*. The effects of this magical substance are as follows:

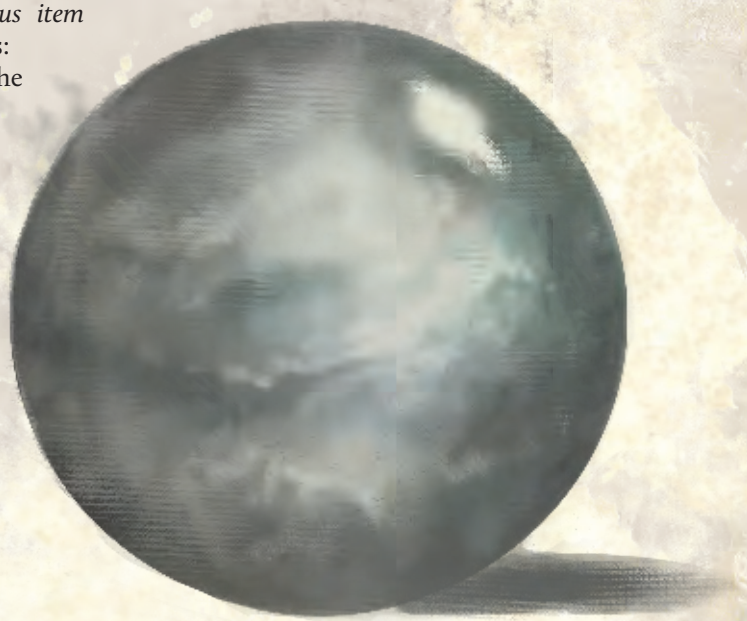
- **Spell with a duration:** A *war paint* has the effects of a spell. To imbue power into a *war paint*, the druid casts a spell normally, infusing it into the war paint. Any spell that can target a creature and has a duration other than Instantaneous can be infused into a *war paint*. Most spells mixed in *war paints* are beneficial, but there may be variations aimed at harming the wearer.
- **Expiration:** If it is not applied, an imbued *war paint* loses its properties at the next dawn.
- **Applying the paint:** It takes 1 minute to paint the body of a humanoid with a *war paint*. An individual can only wear one *war paint* at a time.
- **Activating the war paint:** The *war paint* takes effect with an action from the bearer, regardless of the spell's normal casting time. The activation's precise requirements vary depending on the druid who applied the *war paint*: battle cry, prayer, ritual gesture, mimicking an animal scream, etc.

Scott Timmerman (Order #3773430)

How to Use Pearls

Unless stated otherwise, pearls (marked as *Wondrous item (pearl)*) in this section all have the following properties:

- They are perfectly round and smooth magic stones, the size of a plum.
- They are made by stone giants. The secret of their creation is a well-guarded one, and as far as is known, it has never been shared.
- They are activated with a command word spoken in Primordial.
- A pearl's activation mimics the effects of a spell specified in the pearl's description. The spell in question is described in **Grimoire**.



Pearl of Feather Fall

Wondrous item (pearl), rare

This white pearl is so soft and light, it seems as if it was made of feathers. Its effects are those of the *feather fall* spell, but activating it doesn't require using a reaction. Instead, the pearl's effects can be activated with a simple thought from its bearer. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Pearl of Mist

Wondrous item (pearl), uncommon

This pearl looks like a crystal ball filled with shifting smoke, which spills from the pearl when activated. Its effects are those of the *fog cloud* spell, except the fog cannot be dispersed by strong winds. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Pearl of the Ghost

Wondrous item (pearl), uncommon

This pearl is utterly transparent, and therefore invisible, save for the reflections it produces under the light. Its effects are those of the *invisibility* spell. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Pearl of Grand Illusion

Wondrous item (pearl), rare

On closer inspection, this color-shifting pearl conceals a miniature landscape in constant flux. Its effects are those of the *hallucinatory terrain* spell. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Pearl of Size Change

Wondrous item (pearl), rare

This tangerine-sized pearl, red interspersed with veins of blue, can be easily compressed to the size of a pea, after which it slowly returns to its original size. Its effects are those of the *enlarge/reduce* spell and last for 1 hour. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Pearl of the Hidden Path

Wondrous item (pearl), uncommon

Much like a chameleon, this pearl takes on the color of its surroundings, and so goes easily unnoticed. Its effects are those of the *pass without trace* spell and last for 4 hours. Once used, the pearl can't be used again until the next dawn.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Treasures of the Clay Cities

Amulet of Wet Clay

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement)

As long as you wear this amulet, you are immune to being petrified.

This item is most common among **basilisk** trainers, as these creatures are often used as guardians in the rich mansions of the Clay Cities. In such places, it is not unusual to see a basilisk following its trainer like a watchdog, ready to use its Petrifying Gaze on command.

Clay Tablet of Permanence

Wondrous item, uncommon (1st or 2nd level), rare (3rd level), very rare (4th level), legendary (5th level) (requires attunement)

Tablets of permanence are small, compact items of dried clay, with cuneiform formulas written on them.

- Each tablet is linked to a spell whose name and components are described on the tablet. It can only be a spell with a duration other than Instantaneous. The spell can only be of a maximum level defined by the rarity of the *clay tablet of permanence.*
- If the owner of the tablet is the target of the spell written on it, the spell remains active on them as long as they keep their attunement to the tablet.
- The effect of the *clay tablet of permanence* ceases if it is broken or damaged in any way (notably by humidity, since it is made of uncooked clay).
- As long as a spell affected by a *clay tablet of permanence* is in effect, the spent spell slot cannot be recovered.

Ulkani are known to use *clay tablets of permanence* to durably change their size using the *enlarge/reduce* spell. Powerful spellcasters or their masters are less moderate in their usage, sometimes greedily seeking tablets inscribed with a spell they dream of making permanent in order to satisfy their ambitions.

Lightning Weapon

Weapon (any), very rare (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic weapon, the target takes an extra 2d6 lightning damage.

This weapon has 5 charges. If you expend 1 charge when you hit with an attack using this magic weapon, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become **stunned** until the end of its next turn.

The weapon regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the weapon becomes nonmagical.

Staff of Fire

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

You have resistance to fire damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 10 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *burning hands* (1 charge), *fireball* (3 charges), or *wall of fire* (4 charges).

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff blackens, crumbles into cinders, and is destroyed.

Staff of Striking

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

The staff has 10 charges. When you hit with a melee attack using it, you can expend up to 3 of its charges. For each charge you expend, the target takes an extra 1d6 force damage. The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.



Scott Timmerman (Order #35731450)

Staff of Thunder and Lightning

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. It also has the following additional properties. When one of these properties is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Lightning

When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can cause the target to take an extra 2d6 lightning damage.

Thunder

When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can cause the staff to emit a crack of thunder, audible out to 300 feet. The target you hit must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or become **stunned** until the end of your next turn.

Lightning Strike

You can use an action to cause a bolt of lightning to leap from the staff's tip in a line that is 5 feet wide and 120 feet long. Each creature in that line must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 9d6 lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Thunderclap

You can use an action to cause the staff to issue a deafening thunderclap, audible out to 600 feet. Each creature within 60 feet of you (not including you) must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 2d6 thunder damage and becomes **deafened** for 1 minute. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and isn't deafened.

Thunder and Lightning

You can use an action to use the Lightning Strike and Thunderclap properties at the same time. Doing so doesn't expend the daily use of those properties, only the use of this one.

Thunder Weapon

Weapon (any), uncommon (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 thunder damage and must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become **deafened** until the end of its next turn.

Weapon of Smiting

Weapon (any bludgeoning weapon), rare

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. The bonus increases to +3 when you use the weapon to attack a construct.

When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon, the target takes an extra 2d6 bludgeoning damage, or 4d6 bludgeoning damage if it's a construct. If a construct has 25 hit points or fewer after taking this damage, it is destroyed.

Weapons of smiting *are among the most emblematic weapons of the Destroyer's followers. Those who possess one relish turning it against golems, guardians, and other animated entities that spellcasters pride themselves on. They see it as a lesson in humility for the haughty that hide behind constructs, as well as a demonstration of Tamerakh's power.*

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773145)

Treasures from the Steppes

Amulet of Health

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Your Constitution score is 19 while you wear this amulet. It has no effect on you if your Constitution is already 19 or higher.

Belt of Giant Strength

Wondrous item, rarity varies (requires attunement)

While wearing this belt, your Strength score changes to a score granted by the belt. If your Strength is already equal to or greater than the belt's score, the item has no effect on you.

Six varieties of this belt exist, corresponding with and having rarity according to the six kinds of true giants. The *belt of stone giant strength* and the *belt of frost giant strength* look different, but they have the same effect.



Type	Strength	Rarity
Hill giant	21	Rare
Stone/Frost giant	23	Very Rare
Fire giant	25	Very Rare
Cloud giant	27	Legendary
Storm giant	29	Legendary

Boots of Striding

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

While you wear these boots, your walking speed becomes 30 feet, unless your walking speed is higher, and your speed isn't reduced if you are encumbered or wearing heavy armor. In addition, you can jump three times the normal distance, though you can't jump farther than your remaining movement would allow.

Bow of Elusive Stride

Weapon (any bow), uncommon

As long as you hold this bow, you gain the following benefits:

- Opportunity attacks that target you have disadvantage.
- If you moved at least 20 feet during your turn, your attacks with the *bow of elusive stride* ignore the AC bonus of shields, as well as of half and three-quarters covers.

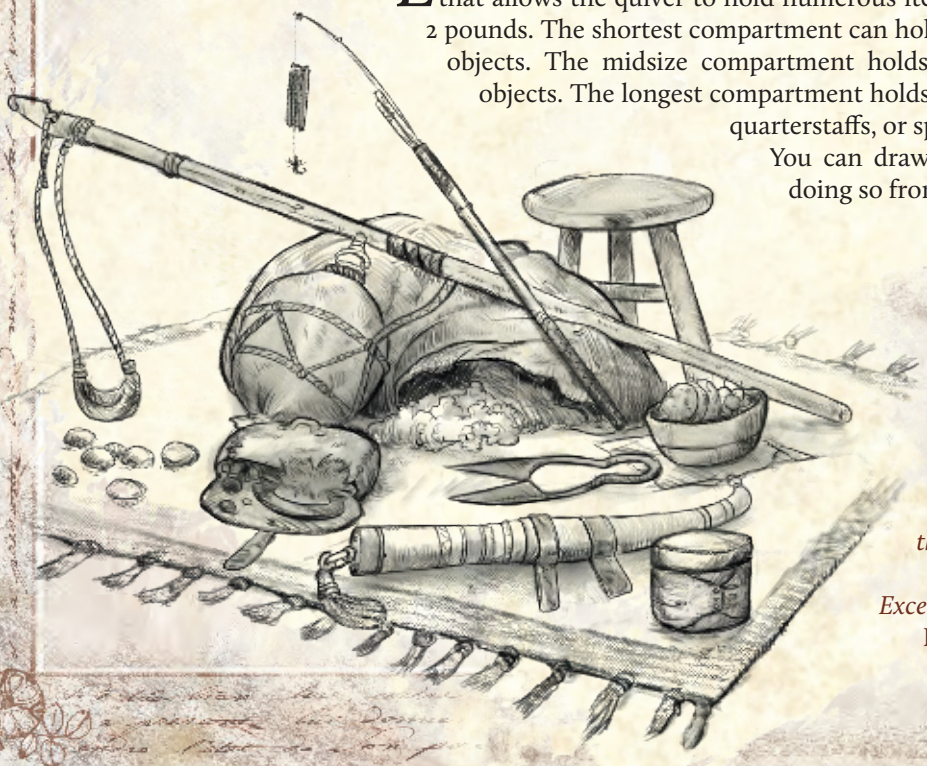
Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Efficient Quiver

Wondrous item, uncommon

Each of the quiver's three compartments connects to an extradimensional space that allows the quiver to hold numerous items while never weighing more than 2 pounds. The shortest compartment can hold up to sixty arrows, bolts, or similar objects. The midsize compartment holds up to eighteen javelins or similar objects. The longest compartment holds up to six long objects, such as bows, quarterstaffs, or spears.

You can draw any item the quiver contains as if doing so from a regular quiver or scabbard.



Using their light cavalry techniques, the Kaani hordes swarmed across the world and built (often short-lived) empires. The merosi mounted archers were the first to use efficient quivers, which gave them an added edge on their enemies.

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Gauntlets of Ogre Power

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

Your Strength score is 19 while you wear these gauntlets. They have no effect on you if your Strength is already 19 or higher.

Horn of the Steppes

Wondrous item, uncommon

This finely crafted horn can carry a message of up to 20 words to a recipient. The user must hold the *horn of the steppes*, visualize the recipient, and blow the words. This property cannot be used again until the next dawn. Since the message is carried by a breeze, it can only reach a recipient in the same plane in a place where the wind can reach it. For example, the message cannot reach a creature in the depths of the ocean or in an airtight building.

The tribes of the Steppe use these horns to call warriors scattered in the wilderness, or to communicate between clans. To be appointed as the bearer of a *horn of the steppes* is a prestigious responsibility.

Horseshoes of Speed

Wondrous item, rare

These iron horseshoes come in a set of four. While all four shoes are affixed to the hooves of a horse or similar creature, they increase the creature's walking speed by 30 feet.

Enchanted horseshoes are quite popular in Kaan, where horses—and other mounts of a more-or-less exotic nature—are highly esteemed. Among the more traditionally minded, some see such devices as a dishonest alternative to a fine beast and actual riding skills, but most people wonder at the increased abilities that these magic items confer... provided the rider can endure such a wild ride!

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Javelin of Lightning

Weapon (javelin), uncommon

This javelin is a magic weapon. When you hurl it and speak its command word, it transforms into a bolt of lightning, forming a line 5 feet wide that extends out from you to a target within 120 feet. Each creature in the line excluding you and the target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 lightning damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. The lightning bolt turns back into a javelin when it reaches the target. Make a ranged weapon attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes damage from the javelin plus 4d6 lightning damage.

The javelin's property can't be used again until the next dawn. In the meantime, the javelin can still be used as a magic weapon.

Nurturing rains, storms, thunder... all are tied to one another in the myths of those civilizations that rely on rare seasonal showers. In these cultures, Blacksmith is a warrior atop the arid hills, wielding a javelin of lightning. In addition to its destructive powers, it is said that when launched into a cloudy sky, this weapon brings rain, instantly making seeds sprout and young shoots grow.

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Accords*, by Magister Aria Malachai*

Ring of Free Action

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

While you wear this ring, difficult terrain doesn't cost you extra movement. In addition, magic can neither reduce your speed nor cause you to be paralyzed or restrained.

Saddle of Horsemanship

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

When this saddle is used to ride a mount, the creature attuned to it and its mount gain the following benefits:

- Mounting or dismounting requires only 5 feet of movement.
- Both the rider and the mount have advantage on Dexterity saving throws and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.
- When the mount is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.
- When the mount is the target of an attack, the rider can choose to take the attack instead.



Unfailing Ammunition

Weapon (any ammunition), rare or legendary

When you make an attack with this magic ammunition, the attack roll is automatically a success. Afterward, the *unfailing ammunition* becomes nonmagical.

There is also a *legendary* variety of *unfailing ammunition*, which automatically resolves the attack roll as if you had rolled a 20 on the d20.

The madman, taking advantage of the general confusion, had grabbed my protégée and was using her as a human shield. He pressed the blade of his dagger to my friend's throat and threatened to kill her if we made any "funny moves", all while backing out of sight. He was going to get away with it!

Fortunately, I had an invaluable asset: a gift from an Arolavian hunter whose life I had saved. With the chaotic brawl between us, I used the confusion and distance to my advantage. I grabbed my shortbow and the magic arrow I kept in a special quiver. Out of the villain's sight, I silenced my doubts and put my trust in the enchanted gift I'd kept tucked away.

My fears vanished when the arrow loosed and, as if guided by the unfailing Death herself, brushed past my friend and sank deep into her captor's eye.

Excerpt from the Memoirs of Nara

Scott Timpermans (Order #39731450)

Amulet of Golem Command

Wondrous item, rare (clay or stone golem), very rare (iron golem) (requires attunement)

This amulet is attuned to an individual golem and is used to command it. As long as the creature attuned to the amulet keeps it on its person, the golem will obey it blindly. If the golem is out of control (for example due to an absurd command), the owner of the amulet can activate it by means of a command word to restore the golem's docility within a range of 60 ft. The golem must then succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or return to its ordinary state of submission. Once used, the amulet cannot be used again until the next dawn.

These amulets are highly sought after, since they provide command over an unquestioning and extremely powerful servant. Countless times have *amulets of golem command* been stolen, usurped, snatched, looted, forged, or subjected to other morally questionable manners of appropriation.

Ayanga Amulet

Wondrous item, uncommon

The wearer of an *Ayanga amulet* is **invisible** to the undead as long as the wearer does not touch them or take a hostile action against them. At the leader's discretion, the invisibility can also be dispelled if the wearer disturbs something valuable to the undead, supports a creature currently fighting the undead, or otherwise directly harms its interests.

This item is often sold with an *Ayanga jar* to protect customers of the sanctuary from accidents when handling these dangerous objects.

Ayanga Jar

Wondrous item, common to very rare, blasphemy

An *Ayanga jar* is a sealed ceramic jar inside which an incorporeal undead of the Desolations has been trapped. It can be released by breaking the jar as an action. The undead will immediately attack the nearest creature it can see. It will fight to the death, but once its anger has been quenched, what happens next will depend on its personality. Sünsutaa are sometimes willing to deal with mortals temporarily, if it is in their best interest to do so.

Ayanga jars are made by members of the Cult of the Cloistered, a sect from Ayangaba'üül. They sell them to pilgrims seeking radical solutions to certain problems. The prices listed below apply only in this sanctuary. Thanks to their trade of these blasphemous creations, the Cult attracts large "donations", which facilitates its expansion (see **The Old Kaan: Ayangaba'üül**).

Merely transporting these blasphemies causes uneasiness. Moreover, the evil essence of the incorporeal undead can be felt with a *detect evil and good* spell or through a paladin's Divine Sense, among other means.

Rarity of an Ayanga Jar

Captured Creature	CR	Rarity	Price
Specter	1	Common	50 gp
Wraith	5	Uncommon	500 gp
Sünsutaajijig	7	Rare	1,000 gp
Sünsutaa	9	Rare	2,000 gp
Sünsutaaikh	13	Very rare	5,000 gp

Horn of Blasting

Wondrous item, rare

You can use an action to speak the horn's command word and then blow the horn, which emits a thunderous blast in a 30-foot cone that is audible 600 feet away. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 5d6 thunder damage and is **deafened** for 1 minute. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't deafened. Creatures and objects made of glass or crystal have disadvantage on the saving throw and take 10d6 thunder damage instead of 5d6.

Each use of the horn's magic has a 20 percent chance of causing the horn to explode. The explosion deals 10d6 fire damage to the blower and destroys the horn.

Scott Timmermans (Order #9773450)

Manual of Golems

Wondrous item, very rare, blasphemy

This tome contains information and incantations necessary to make a particular type of golem. The leader chooses the type or determines it randomly. To decipher and use the manual, you must be a spellcaster with at least two 5th-level spell slots. A creature that can't use a *manual of golems* and attempts to read it takes 6d6 psychic damage.

d20	Golem	Time	Cost
1–5	Clay	30 days	65,000 gp
6–17	Flesh	60 days	50,000 gp
18	Iron	120 days	100,000 gp
19–20	Stone	90 days	80,000 gp

To create a golem, you must spend the time shown on the table, working without interruption with the manual at hand and resting no more than 8 hours per day. You must also pay the specified cost to purchase supplies.

Once you finish creating the golem, the book is consumed in eldritch flames. The golem becomes animate when the ashes of the manual are sprinkled on it. It is under your control, and it understands and obeys your spoken commands.

The Diabolical Origin of the Manual of Golems

A *manual of golems* burns to ashes as soon as it has been used successfully. This phenomenon is similar to what happens to the Book of Shadows of a deceased warlock (see **Adventurers, Classes, Warlock, Pact Boon: Pact of the Tome**). Some posit that a power wishing to remain anonymous must be the cause behind the spread of *manuals of golems* in the world. A golem's loyalty is unwavering, but it is perverted by its obliviousness, which is reminiscent of the uncompromising and vicious discipline of devils. According to legends associated with golem creations, a gnome named Aplëx was an obsessive designer of these constructs and made several of each kind. He is said to have been one of the few arcanists to have owned all four volumes of the *manuals of golems*. Certain scholars suggest that Aplëx was actually none other than the diabolical author of the books, maliciously spreading his blasphemous texts under this guise. Perhaps gathering a copy of each volume would make it possible to track down this devil and put a definitive end to his nefarious works?



Nine Lives Stealer

Weapon (any), very rare (requires attunement), blasphemy

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The weapon has 1d8 + 1 charges. If you score a critical hit against a creature that has fewer than 100 hit points, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be slain instantly as the weapon tears its life force from its body (a construct or an undead is immune). The weapon loses 1 charge if the creature is slain. When the weapon has no charges remaining, it loses this property.

Nine lives stealers are gifts that fiends bestow on their most promising servants. Hobgoblin princes often bear such weapons, engraved in honor of hospodar Karathaan. Meanwhile, the demon princess Akhlitôl the Vengeful offers them to those who set off on a bloody quest for revenge. According to legend, such a weapon allows a worshipper to kill the exact number of enemies they swore to slay, after which they are carried off to Melancholia, to become a marilith akin to their mistress.

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Nuntara's Chain

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement), cursed blasphemy

The bearer of a *Nuntara's chain* is immune to being charmed and frightened, as well as to the effects of all exhaustion levels except the 6th. If the wearer reaches the 6th level of exhaustion, they immediately die. The bearer of the chain is permanently under the effects of a *dominate monster* spell to the benefit of the bearer of *Nuntara's key*, overriding the immunity to the charmed condition conferred by the chain.

Nuntara the Impatient is one of the eight legendary liches whose lair is said to be buried in the Desolations. According to chroniclers, he crafted a great number of these items and equipped some of his troops with them. Each soldier was thus a relentless, tireless war dog that he could control at will.



Nuntara's Key

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement), blasphemy

Any creature wearing a *Nuntara's chain* is permanently under the effects of a *dominate monster* spell to the benefit of the bearer of *Nuntara's key*. When the key bearer uses the telepathic link associated with the *dominate monster* spell, they can choose to communicate with one, several, or all the chain bearers.

Nuntara the Impatient is one of the eight legendary liches whose lair is said to be buried in the Desolations. His key was part of a complex plan meant to bring down tyranny, without realizing the irony of using dominating magic to such an end. Today, Nuntara is locked in his lair in the Desolations, and his plans have come to a standstill. This fearsome magic item should be in the lich's lair, and he might be willing to gift it should he feel that it would serve his interests or his delusional obsessions.

Ring of Rightful Ire

Ring, uncommon

As long as you wear this ring, you gain the following benefits:

- If you inflict damage to a possessed creature, you can deal damage to the possessing creature rather than the possessed one.
- If you are targeted by a hostile action from a creature that you can't see, you intuitively know the creature's location until the end of your next turn and can attack it without disadvantage from a lack of visibility.

Vorpal Sword

Weapon (any sword that deals slashing damage), legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, the weapon ignores resistance to slashing damage.

When you attack a creature that has at least one head with this weapon and roll a 20 on the attack roll, you cut off one of the creature's heads. The creature dies if it can't survive without the lost head. A creature is immune to this effect if it is immune to slashing damage, doesn't have or need a head, has legendary actions, or the leader decides that the creature is too big for its head to be cut off with this weapon. Such a creature instead takes an extra 6d8 slashing damage from the hit.

All shudder in fear at the mention of Tamerakh the Destroyer's vorpal sword, the very weapon he wielded when he was still mortal. Today, his blade supposedly rests in the sacrificed capital of Mangulik, at the heart of the haunted steppes of the Khoosrol. It is said Tamerakh will offer it to anyone powerful and fearless enough to claim it.

Excerpt from the Treaty of Enchanted Harmonies, *by Magister Aria Malachai*

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Wailing Ark

Wondrous item, artifact, blasphemy

Today, the city of Mangulik is an impenetrable ruin, located at the heart of the Khoosrol, a haunted steppe. It was once the capital of an empire, the seat of power for Tamerakh, the Horde's conqueror who would later become a god. The city was destroyed by its creator and the entire population was sacrificed. Now, it contains many cursed treasures. Among them is said to be the *wailing ark*, an artifact of grave power. Supposedly, it has the shape and form of an ivory ark inlaid with gold the size of a large wardrobe, its lid adorned with a huge pitch-black obsidian, its side decorated with chillingly stark scenes of slaughter. According to legends, the Destroyer used it to bring down entire cities through disasters: fires, earthquakes, epidemics... Such destructive powers would be within reach of any who manage to claim the *wailing ark*, but so too would the user be possessed by ambition and a self-destructive madness.

Effects



In order to activate it, the *wailing ark* must be carried in a procession that circles the targeted area. All along this route, the creature or creatures carrying the ark must intone praises to Tamerakh, heralding the havoc to come. If one of the creatures stops talking or the procession stops for one round, it must be started over.

Once the procession is over, the heralded disasters strike the targeted area. The disasters are subject to the following limitations:

- They must be at least remotely plausible (for instance, a city in the heart of the Sand Kingdoms cannot be hit by a tsunami).
- They must last for a few hours or a few days at most.
- They are irreversible except by means of a *wish*.
- They will leave a chance of survival to a minority of the population, however small.

The affected area will be devastated and uninhabitable for at least several months.

Once the ark has been used, any creature that carried it must make a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or become affected by the following permanent madness: "I want to cause as much destruction as possible."

- **Destroying the ark.** Only an ezen can destroy the *wailing ark*, but if they do so without using a *vorpal sword*, the ark's destruction will trigger cataclysms ravaging the land over several miles, and assuredly annihilating whoever is within this radius.

Xonim's Amulet of Mercy

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This amulet, imbued with Xonim's blessing, is associated with a school of magic. For example, it can be a *Xonim's amulet of mercy of abjuration*, though the name is often abbreviated to *Xonim's mercy of abjuration*, or simply *mercy of abjuration*.

When the wearer of this sacred amulet uses corrupted spells from the associated school, the casting is not considered corrupted.

Only a faithful of Xonim can wear an *amulet of mercy*. For any other creature, the risk posed by corrupted spells of the related school is instead increased: the wearer has disadvantage on their spellcasting ability saving throw to resist the corruption (see **Grimoire**, **Corruption: Casting a Corrupt Spell**).

The amulet creates a powerful bond between the wearer and the goddess in a way comparable to the mystical channel that grants a cleric their domain spells. This is whence the energy that purifies corrupted spells comes.

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Appendix

Magic Items in the World of Eana

Magic items are gleaned from the hoards of conquered monsters or discovered in long-lost vaults. Such items grant capabilities a character could rarely have otherwise, or they complement their owner's capabilities in wondrous ways.

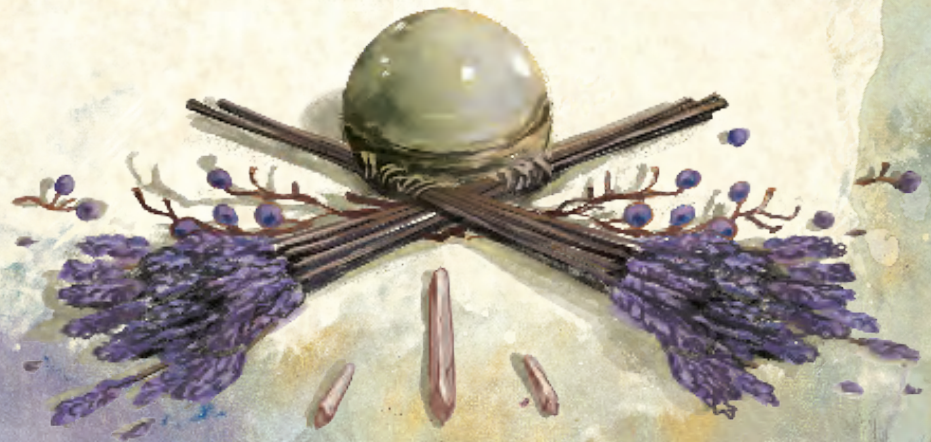
Using Magic Items

To use magic items, one must understand their essential characteristics. More often than not, this includes identifying an item's supernatural properties. The benefits such items confer may be permanent for as long as they are equipped, or may require activating.

Magic Item Characteristics

Each magic item's description comes with details pertaining to its characteristics:

- **Nature:** The category the magic item belongs to (potion, scroll, weapon, wondrous item, etc.).
- **Rarity:** Magic items are ranked according to rarity tiers. Said tiers are, from most to least common: **common**, **uncommon**, **rare**, **extremely rare**, and **legendary**. A magic item's rarity is directly associated with its power. Common items are the weakest, while legendary items are the most powerful.
- **Blasphemy:** A blasphemy has been cursed, corrupted, or linked to dark powers that act through it. Blasphemies are often at the core of dark fantasy-inspired adventures.
- **Module:** The modular system icons indicate which type of atmosphere the item is best suited for.



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Rarity, Properties, and Bearers

Rarity	Power Range*	Standard Level of the Bearer in the Playstyle	Standard Level of the Bearer in the Playstyle
Common	Limited-use effect similar to a cantrip or 1st-level spell Property similar to a technologically advanced or quality non-magic object	1	1
Uncommon	Weapon or shield +1 +1d6 damage Limited-use effect similar to a 1st or 2nd-level spell Confers a climbing or swimming speed +1 bonus to two types of rolls (saves, ability checks, attack rolls, AC, etc.) Increases an ability to 19	5	3
Rare	Weapon or shield +2 Armor +1 Limited-use effect similar to a 3rd or 4th-level spell +2d6 damage Resistance to a type of physical damage (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) or two types of non-physical damage	9	7
Very Rare	Weapon or shield +3 Armor +2 Limited-use effect similar to a 5th or 6th-level spell +3d6 damage Permanent +2 bonus to an ability	13	11
Legendary	Sentient weapon +3 with other properties Armor +3 Limited-use effect similar to a 7th or 8th-level spell Effect with non-renewable uses similar to a 9th-level spell Immunity to a type of physical damage (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) or two types of non-physical damage	17	15

(*) Restrictive use or activation conditions (only on a critical hit, underwater, for a limited period of time, non-renewable, etc.) may justify reducing the rarity of the object by one degree.

Spotting the Peculiarities of Magic Items

The presentation of magic items uses the same set of icons as the spells in **Grimoire**, for more convenience in making a selection suited to the atmosphere you're aiming for:

Game Style	Icon and Associated Meaning
Heroic, High Fantasy	This magic item is suited for epic campaigns and grandiose adventures, facilitating unexpected twists and turns.
Exploring Mysteries	This magic item is associated with the discovery of important information; only particular individuals may use it; it may reveal its powers only gradually, over the course of the campaign.
Intrigue, Investigation, Atmospheric, Psychology, Suspense	This magic item can be excluded from campaigns focused on intrigue and investigation. This item is associated with strong dramatic stakes and can easily be the focus of a series of scenarios or a campaign.
Gritty, Low Fantasy	This magic item works even in weak magic areas and is suited for a low fantasy campaign. These items are plain-looking, with subtle magic. This magic item does not work in weak magic areas and may even only work in strong magic ones; it can be excluded from campaigns with a low fantasy tone. This magic item helps with treatment and recovery; it can be excluded from campaigns in which danger and difficult healing are primary elements.
Dark fantasy	This magic item may only be usable by corrupted creatures, or its usage inflicts corruption. This magic item is cursed or tied to tragedies.

In addition, take note of the following icon:
This magic item is specific to Eana.

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Artifacts

Artifacts are unique and exceptional magic items of such power that they can turn the tide of history. They spawn many contradictory legends and are often said to be the work of gods, colleges of archmages, or ancient dragons. Artifacts are characterized by:

- **A Legend.** Many bards and scholars know of it, even if theirs is but a fragmented version.
- **Positive Powers.** An artifact is an invaluable asset to its owner, granting them both minor and major effects.
- **Drawbacks.** Using an artifact always comes at a price, with conditions or consequences that can be severe. One might risk losing their mind, being possessed or destroyed, etc.

If an artifact is involved in your campaign, it will most certainly be at the heart of the story, to the point that a large part of the plot may revolve around the efforts made by the adventurers to obtain it, defend it, or use it without letting it destroy them.

Wearing Magic Items

While some magic items grant the wearer an immediate benefit, others require forming a bond with them.

Attunement

Some magic items require a creature to form a bond with them before their magical properties can be used. This bond is called attunement, and certain items have a prerequisite for it. If the prerequisite is a class, a creature must be a member of that class to attune to the item. (If the class is a spellcasting class, a monster qualifies if it has spell slots and uses that class's spell list.) If the prerequisite is to be a spellcaster, a creature qualifies if it can cast at least one spell using its traits or features, not using a magic item or the like.

Without becoming attuned to an item that requires attunement, a creature gains only its nonmagical benefits, unless its description states otherwise. For example, a magic shield that requires attunement provides the benefits of a normal shield to a creature not attuned to it, but none of its magical properties.

Attuning to an item requires a creature to spend a short rest focused on only that item while being in physical contact with it (this can't be the same short rest used to learn the item's properties). This focus can take the form of weapon practice (for a weapon), meditation (for a wondrous item), or some other appropriate activity. If the short rest is interrupted, the attunement attempt fails. Otherwise, at the end of the short rest, the creature gains an intuitive understanding of how to activate any magical properties of the item, including any necessary command words.

An item can be attuned to only one creature at a time, and a creature can be attuned to no more than three magic items at a time. Any attempt to attune to a fourth item fails; the creature must end its attunement to an item first. Additionally, a creature can't attune to more than one copy of an item. For example, a creature can't attune to more than one *ring of protection* at a time.

A creature's attunement to an item ends if the creature no longer satisfies the prerequisites for attunement, if the item has been more than 100 feet away for at least 24 hours, if the creature dies, or if another creature attunes to the item. A creature can also voluntarily end attunement by spending another short rest focused on the item, unless the item is cursed.

The Progressive Mirafaction of Personal Items

If you use this optional rule, one or more of each adventurer's personal items will gradually acquire magical properties during their adventures. This is a direct consequence of being Fate-chosen. The leader decides which powers manifest themselves and when they appear. A personal magic item is attuned only to the person in whose hands it became magic. When the Fate-chosen dies, their personal belongings are just as likely to lose all power as they are to become true magic items that are accessible to any other creature, at the leader's discretion. With this approach, the leader needs to be sparing with handing out magical items during the adventure, with the exception of consumables such as potions and spell scrolls. In fact, this optional rule can purposefully replace some or all of the discovery of magic items. The aim is to make each magic item truly unique and, in so doing, all the more wonderful and personal.

Step 1: Choosing the Item

Only an item with great symbolic value for the adventurer can become magical. It could be a trinket related to their history, a weapon they won after a harrowing fight, or a coat offered to them by a loved one. As the Fate-chosen gains more levels, the item in question grows stronger, and in turn, other parts of their equipment may also become magical.

Step 2: New Powers Advancement

Once you have selected an item, take some time to think about the personality of the adventurer who owns it. What deeds have they done? What are they like? What is important to them? Personal magic items are a reflection of a person's very nature.

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You can use the magic items described in **Treasures from the Drakenbergen** as they are and make them into personal magic items, or you can use them as inspiration to create new ones. The choice of an item's power and its features (cannot be used in areas of weak magic, limited uses per day, blasphemy, etc.) can reinforce the general tone of the campaign.
Refer to **Balancing Power and Atmosphere** for assistance regarding the nature and number of magic items in your campaign.

Number of Effects of Personal Magic Items

Max. number of effects of personal magic items	Average Level of the Bearer in the Playstyle	Average Level of the Bearer in the Playstyle
2	1	1
3	5	3
4	9	7
5	13	11
6	17	15

Step 3: Blasphemy

An item carried by a corrupt being becomes a blasphemy sooner or later. Blasphemies potentially have greater power than other magic items of the same rarity level, but always come with negative, evil, or even corrupting drawbacks.
A blasphemy, by virtue of its abilities, can bring great benefits to its bearer, but so too does it attract misfortune. A hero can accomplish exceptional feats with a cursed sword, but the item carries troubles with it, which may eventually lead the hero to an untimely end.

Step 4: When Powers Appear

One needs more than to simply gain a level for a personal item to become magic. Personal magic items awaken during the campaign, during climactic moments of the Fate-chosen's story. In that regard, they are the physical counterpart of the rules relating to Awakening. The leader determines when the magic reveals itself, in accordance with the tone and modules chosen for the campaign.

Wearing and Wielding Items

Using a magic item's properties might mean wearing or wielding it. A magic item meant to be worn must be donned in the intended fashion: boots go on the feet, gloves on the hands, hats and helmets on the head, and rings on the finger. Magic armor must be donned, a shield strapped to the arm, a cloak fastened about the shoulders. A weapon must be held.
Depending on your playstyle, a magic item that's meant to be worn may fit a creature regardless of size or build. As such, many magic garments will be easily adjustable, or will magically adjust themselves to the wearer. But rare exceptions may exist. If the story suggests a good reason for an item to fit only creatures of a certain size or shape, you can rule that it doesn't adjust. For example, drow-made armor might fit elves only. Dwarves might make items usable only by dwarf-sized and dwarf-shaped folk.
When a nonhumanoid tries to wear an item, use your discretion as to whether the item functions as intended. A ring placed on a tentacle might work, but a monster with a snakelike tail instead of legs can't wear boots.



Multiple Items of the Same Kind

Use common sense to determine whether more than one of a given kind of magic item can be worn. A character can't normally wear more than one pair of footwear, one pair of gloves or gauntlets, one pair of bracers, one suit of armor, one item of headwear, and one cloak. You can make exceptions; a character might be able to wear a circlet under a helmet, for example, or to layer two cloaks.

Paired Items

Items that come in pairs—such as boots, bracers, gauntlets, and gloves—impart their benefits only if both items of the pair are worn. For example, a character wearing a boot of striding and springing on one foot and a boot of elvenkind on the other foot gains no benefit from either.

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Activating an Item

Activating some magic items requires a user to do something special, such as holding the item and uttering a command word. The description of each item category or individual item details how an item is activated. Certain items use the following rules for their activation. If an item requires an action to activate, that action isn't a function of the Use an Item action, so a feature such as the rogue's Fast Hands (see **Adventurers**, **Rogue: Thief**) can't be used to activate the item.

Command Word

A command word is a word or phrase that must be spoken for an item to work. A magic item that requires a command word can't be activated in an area where sound is prevented, as in the area of the *silence* spell.

Consumables

Some items are used up when they are activated. A potion or an elixir must be swallowed, or an oil applied to the body. The writing vanishes from a scroll when it is read. Once used, a consumable item loses its magic.

Spells

Some magic items allow the user to cast a spell from the item. The spell is cast at the lowest possible spell level, doesn't expend any of the user's spell slots, and requires no components, unless the item's description says otherwise. The spell uses its normal casting time, range, and duration, and the user of the item must concentrate if the spell requires concentration. Many items, such as potions, bypass the casting of a spell and confer the spell's effects, with their usual duration. Certain items make exceptions to these rules, changing the casting time, duration, or other parts of a spell.

A magic item, such as certain staffs, may require you to use your own spellcasting ability when you cast a spell from the item. If you have more than one spellcasting ability, you choose which one to use with the item. If you don't have a spellcasting ability--perhaps you're a rogue with the Use Magic Device feature--your spellcasting ability modifier is +0 for the item, and your proficiency bonus does apply.

Charges

Some magic items have charges that must be expended to activate their properties. The number of charges an item has remaining is revealed when the item is identified. Additionally, when an identified item regains charges, the creature attuned to it learns how many charges it regained.



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Balancing Power and Atmosphere

To arouse wonder or mystery, the leader can define the degree of intensity to which magic is present in Eana by combining different variants, such as Awakening mechanics, the Elusive Magic rule, the frequency of magic services, the size of strong or weak magic zones, etc. Magic items are also part of this. This sub-chapter addresses the choices at the leader's disposal in this area, and their influence on the campaign.
The power of a magic item is tied both to its intrinsic rarity (a legendary item is much more powerful than an uncommon one) and its availability in your campaign.

Subdued Atmosphere

In low fantasy, a magic item is precious and rare, and subtle in appearance. A mere handful of individuals might possess one, and only one. To infuse a low fantasy atmosphere, here are some tips:

- Magic items are almost exclusively common and uncommon, with a few exceptional rare ones.
- The most common magic items are potions, and only great alchemists can brew them for rich customers.
- The only available magic items are those that can be used in areas of strong magic.
- Magic items are either mythical treasures or the product of mirafactions (or malefactions) that evolve as the bearer grows. The very idea of a magic item market is outrageous.
- Magic items (even powerful ones) look rather plain and have relatively simple effects. Thus, a *longsword* +2 dealing +1d6 ice damage, though extremely rare, may exist, but it will simply appear to be remarkably sharp, well balanced, and cold to the touch. Its supernatural nature may not be apparent at first glance.

Grand Scale Adventure

In an epic and spectacular campaign, wild and light-hearted, full of twists and turns, magic items are important, and can even be a central feature. If one is not careful, however, they can become banal. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- All magic items exist at the rarity indicated by their name: common, uncommon, rare, very rare, legendary.
- All Awakened craftsmen can fashion magic items; all alchemists can concoct potions, and they are common enough to be bought in inns.
- There is a market for magic items.
- Adventurers find items that can be used in both strong and neutral magic areas.

Extraordinary Items

One way to put the plot front and center can be to start with a low fantasy atmosphere and give the party a legendary item or artifact very early on. The item's excessive power will contrast with the characters' everyday life in the world they inhabit, giving rise to unexpected situations and even to a major theme of the campaign.
What would happen if a 1st-level adventurer found/inherited/won a legendary magic item? How would those around them react, since they are not yet a hero? Would the character be worshipped, admired, feared, envied, rejected, despised, or exploited?
If the actions of novice adventurers resulted in the discovery of an extremely powerful artifact, what would they do? Would they stick to aimless wanderings and the occasional mission? Would they use the item to acquire power and wealth? Would they become drunk with power and turn into evil antagonists?

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Fame and Greed

By using this option as the main focus of your campaign, magic items will be full-fledged actors of the world. Famed and desired, they will spur rumors and acts that might be excessive, violent, or even disastrous. The tale of the Farmer and the Wand is a cautionary one, reminding all adventurers of the duality of powerful magic items. The more powerful an item, the more risks it poses to its owner. This tale all too accurately describes how powerful magic items usually end up in the vaults of kings, archmages, hierarchs, and guild masters.

The Tale of the Farmer and the Wand



A farmer was busy clearing the woods for a new field. His brow was sweaty and his back was sore, but he had to work to feed his family. At the foot of a tree, he chanced upon a strange stick engraved with symbols. Driven by curiosity, he brought the trinket home and let his children play with it. In toying with the stick, they discovered how to activate it, creating a roaring explosion in the sky. A wand of fireballs! The item was so powerful that it quickly became known to the region as a formidable weapon. Rumor spread of its existence, and soon enough, the local lord laid claim to the item. The farmer refused to surrender it, for he could already see himself sitting on the throne, wearing an ornate crown. "I will slay my lord, bring the others to their knees, and then I will live in comfort and ease!"

Unfortunately for him, the farmer would not have a chance to set his big plans in motion, as an unscrupulous thug murdered him with a well-shot arrow. And thus, the wand gained a new owner. The murderer, more experienced than the farmer, quickly discovered that the magic item attracted the attention of dangerous individuals. Soon, his life of banditry turned to one of running. His dreams of glory and wealth suddenly seemed so fragile! For a long time, he couldn't decide whether to keep the wand or give it up, until one day he realized that he favored his life as an unknown outlaw over one of endless struggle. And so, he sold the wand to a crime lord in a big city.

This third owner was powerful enough to dissuade his competitors from stealing his property, and skilled enough to use it to serve his interests. He was quick to dispose of all his enemies, and with the wand in hand, he eventually succeeded in plotting a successful coup, and became king.

The table below gives you a ranking of the types of magic items compared to the usual levels of users and the item's geographical reach. This geographical reach describes the fame of the magic item once its existence is known.

- If the magic item is a consumable (scroll, potion, etc.), its manufacturer is relatively famous in the corresponding geographical area. An alchemist who brews common potions will be known in their village or neighborhood, but if they can brew rare potions, their reputation will stretch to the scale of a big city or a small kingdom.
- If the magic item has a permanent enchantment (weapon, focus, etc.), the reputation applies as much to the creator as to the item itself and, by extension, to its owner(s). Bards frequently tell the tales of famous magic items through treasure rhapsodies, shifting the tone of their narrative between epic and humorous. The best treasure rhapsodies live on for centuries, sometimes prompting adventurers to seek a long-lost magic item.

Fame of Magic Items

Type of Treasure or Magic Item	Geographical Reach	Average Associated Levels	Game Style
Common	Village, neighborhood	1 to 2	Beginner Adventurers
Uncommon	Small town, region	3 to 4	Beginner Adventurers
Rare	Big town, small kingdom	5 to 10	Senior Adventurers
Very Rare	Large kingdom, empire, continent	11 to 16	Exceptional Adventurers
Legendary	World, multiverse	17 to 20	Legendary Adventurers

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Retail Price of a Second-Hand Magic Item

Using this option, the adventurers can sell the treasures they discover and, conversely, acquire other such items through trade. A party could even make a career out of it. Magic items have a very high market value, and can even be priceless. Adventurers sometimes gather into a party specifically for the purpose of acquiring and reselling them, with the party members opposed by nemeses who are more like competitors than enemies.

The main difficulty of selling magic items is finding a buyer willing to pay the seller a reasonable price. Conversely, a buyer may struggle to obtain the item of their dreams even if they have the means to afford it, for they still need to find someone who owns it! Where to go? Who to contact? If the adventurers spend too long searching and negotiating, they may both waste their time and attract the attention of unscrupulous thieves, such as in the old tale of the Farmer and the Wand.

In general, magic items don't wear out too much. Consumables (potions, scrolls, etc.) and clothes (dresses, belts, boots, etc.) are the first to suffer from the passage of time.

The price you can get for a magic item depends on how rich the buyer is and how they plan to use it. There is no "real" or standard price for a magic item. Only an agreement between seller and buyer determines the price. To get an idea of how much someone might be willing to pay, note the potential buyer's standard of living over a year (see **Adventurers**, **Daily Life: Lifestyle**) and refer to the table below:

Importance of the Item for the buyer	Yearly Standard of Living
Little souvenir. An amusing item, but the buyer doesn't really have a use for it in mind. They may take it "just in case" or as a travel souvenir to show to friends.	Divided by 50
Impulse buy. A very amusing or beautiful item, this tugs at the heartstrings or is otherwise a potential impulse buy. The buyer can also be a merchant thinking (correctly or not) that they can resell the item at a profit.	Divided by 10
Decoration. This item would be very fancy at home; it is a prestigious commodity recognized in the culture of the buyer.	Divided by 2
Useful. This item is really useful in the daily life of the buyer, or for an important project.	No modification
Essential. This item would be extremely useful, even vital for a project, or it would be of great assistance in fighting off a dangerous enemy.	Multiplied by 5 (the buyer is willing to get into debt *)
Vital. This item is the buyer's lifelong dream. They have been looking for it for a very long time.	Multiplied by 20 (the buyer is willing to get into heavy debt *)

(*) If the buyer has to get into debt, they cannot pay the sum immediately. Buyer and seller must therefore agree on the terms of payment: official promissory note, mortgage, buyer's possessions or relatives as collateral, etc. People with a modest (or lower) standard of living may have to get into debt even for an impulse buy, as their resources are often just sufficient to meet their needs. It is also possible that a buyer who can't afford a magic item that is important to them may consider acquiring it through illegal means, such as theft or murder.

The Dangers of Magic

Blasphemies are a way to create a dark and oppressive atmosphere. With this approach, all rare, extremely rare, and legendary magic items are blasphemies. The more powerful the item becomes, the greater the dangers it incurs. A blasphemy always comes with a drawback that the bearer will have to suffer at some point. The use of blasphemies is generally motivated by the lure of power, or because the user believes they have chosen the lesser of two evils.

Scott Timmerman (Order #39731450)

Appendix
Reminders

The Names of the Gods

	Eana	Blacksmith	Maker	Death	Frostelle	Flora	Tamerakh	Xonim
Cult of the Ages	–	Peak	Growth	Cessation	Decline	Beginning	–	–
The Star	–	Ulgurd, the Maturity	Gùnd, the Child	The Mask	Haldrìn, the Crone	Aster, the Girl	Varanid, the Destroyer, perceived as a demon, an evil being	Niflhel, the Corrupter, perceived as a demon, an evil being
Free City	Eana	Blacksmith	Maker	Death	Frostelle, Twilight Sister	Flora, Dawn Sister	Storm	Night
Drakenbergen (dvaergen)	–	Verndari, the Defender. Shaaris the schatz, also known as Moonscale, and the silver dragon Vevir, are considered his daughters	Leirkerasmi, the Potter	Narfor	–	Edwur	–	–
Drakenbergen (humans)	–	–	Beamir	Narfor	–	Edwen (in Gleannceò, she is regarded as Narfor's cursed daughter)	Destroyer	Night
Septentrion	–	Warrior	–	–	Winter Crone	–	–	–
Kaan (Kartaçöl and the Old Kaan)	–	–	Afirînerê, the Father Creator, the Father of Plenty	Blade	Bite	Khüsdeg, the Desirable, Desired, and Desiring	Tamerakh, the Destroyer, the Liberator	Xonim, the Lady of Mysteries
Kaan: Iruuls and Manbalarer	Agas, the Tree	–	Aavni, the Father	–	Tevcheer, the Enduring Patience	Naidvar, the Combative Hope	–	–

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Religions of Peoples of the Great Kaan

People native to the Great Kaan claim to be of remote divine ancestry. Their primordial father is Afirînerê the Creator, and below are the primordial mothers:

- Çan the Dust, mother of orcs
- Dîlketina the Humus, mother of bugbears
- Eseptöçü the Quartz, mother of ulkani
- Ilay the Red Ochre, mother of hobgoblins
- Shavarlag the Green Clay, mother of goblins
- Zanar the Schist, dreaming dragon and mother of kobolds

Cult of the Ages

Originally from Cyfandir, the Cult of the Ages was the dominant religion under the ancient Stopstep Empire. Time was worshipped as a succession of eras: Beginning, Growth, Peak, Decline, and finally Cessation. These concepts represented the deities now commonly known as, respectively, Flora, Maker, Blacksmith, Frostelle, and Death. The Cult was very well organized around stone temples, with strict hierarchies.

Triad of Renewal

Mainly practiced in the Drakenbergen before the Dawn War, this religion associates Death, Frostelle, and Flora as defenders of Eana.

Forgotten Gods

- **Ayanga.** A rival deity of Death honored in Ayangaba'üül. Associated with death, mystery, and knowledge, she was consumed by Nightmare and now only exists as a fragile remnant of existence.
- **Sun Falcon.** The main elven deity before the Dawn War, known to have been a victim of Nightmare. Today, its name has been forgotten.
- **The Red.** A mysterious entity, especially well-known in the Drakenbergen, and considered to be very dangerous. Some see a connection between it and Canker. The Red is said to have been a hero accompanying Death, Frostelle, and Flora to the Fateforge. Stories about it are very vague. Some sects describe it as Death's sworn enemy.
- **Bull of Destiny.** The main deity of the Bail Empire, associated with minotaurs and the Fateforge.

The Star Pantheon

The polytheistic worship of the Star is one of the most common in Cyfandir. It is even the official religion in Lothrienne. In its orthodox version, it includes five divinities: Flora as a child or young girl named Aster, Maker as a child or teenager named Gùnd, Blacksmith as a mature man named Ulgurd, Frostelle as an aging woman named Haldrìn, and Death as an angelic mask simply named "the Mask."

Night and Storm are not recognized as gods, but rather as evil spirits associated with fallen angels: the former is a corrupter named Niflhel while the latter is a destroyer named Varanid, and both represent mortal dangers for society.

The worship of Eana, though tolerated, is considered a dated, pagan religion.

A break-away group venerate the seven-pointed Star, including Niflhel and Varanid as true divinities to the initial pantheon. These believers claim that their message is more enlightened and have attracted the wrath of the orthodox Star church, who consider these teachings highly heretical. According to the seven-pointed Star believers, the world of Eana is influenced by seven divinities, and rejecting two of them because they are ambivalent or dangerous is childish. Divine reality must be accepted as it is.

Scott Timmerman (Orde - 39731950)

Criminal and Secret Organizations

There are many criminal and secret organizations. The ones listed here are noticeably (in)famous and far-reaching, but they are not the only ones. The Old Kaan city of Nubilbabassür, in particular, is known to shelter a very large number of such groups, with both spies and arcanists among their ranks.
In addition, perfectly legal and reputable groups of the Free City cultivate great secrecy, such as the builders' guild, or the alchemists' guild in the Crystal District. Other recognized organizations remain shrouded in mystery, such as the Ayangaba'üül Cult of the Cloistered, in the Old Kaan.

- **Aïpio.** A hierarchic thieves' guild controlled by elenion from the Star District, in the Free City, and with connections in Ellerìna. It is specialized in bureaucratic crimes (blackmail, swindling, fraud, etc.).
- **Blood Tears.** A group of state assassins based in Shüd'delkhii.
- **Dorchadas.** The secret police operating in and outside of Gleannceò as a network of spies to support the ambitions of the vampire lord Kentigern. They stand out in that their ranks are made of living beings and undead working together in close collaboration.
- **Guild of Eltoz, known as the Hand of Dust.** The Hand of Dust is a small pawnbrokers' guild in Easafir. This is its legal facade, but it also conducts activities typical of a thieves' guild, and works for the Kartaçöl government as a network of spies and enforcers.
- **Kaçak.** Pirates and slave traders based in Tili's Gulf, more specifically in Tatarine, who regularly work for the city-state of Shüd'delkhii.
- **Kleidi-Kleidaria.** The Kleidi-Kleidaria, often referred to simply as "Klei" or "Key," is a hierarchic Cyrillan thieves' guild, operating as a decentralized network. It is very involved in the diaspora of its country and is well established in Cyrillane's cities, with members acting as smugglers for those who can afford their services.
- **Mask.** A nickname given to the network of spies working for Bekasi, first advisor to the nandin of the Old Kaan.
- **Moles of Thorst.** Refers to several loosely structured bands of the Thorst District, in the Free City, whose common point is a great knowledge of the nearby catacombs. The Rat Moles, a particularly feared and sordid fringe, is remarkable for its very high population of wererats.
- **Ozodlik, or Freedom.** An underground movement whose members operate in Kartaçöl's Empire, as well as in Tili's Gulf and the Telhika Mountains. Its hobgoblin founders were dissidents of Shüd'delkhii, but the network has since gathered members of many peoples. They fight against slavery and all forms of oppression.
- **Rag Kingdom.** An unofficial ragpickers' guild specialized in the gathering and sale of information in the Free City.
- **Raqisa.** Ghardat's hierarchic thieves' guild. It has aggressive methods and connections with the political power of the Sand Kingdoms, including activities of espionage and targeted assassination. It is in conflict with the Tridentine in the Free City. It acts more covertly in Easafir, the capital of Kartaçöl, where it fights the Guild of Eltoz.
- **Robins.** Traditional thieves' guild from Blömiane, in the Drakenbergen.
- **Salt Circle.** A group of vigilante assassins operating in the Free City.
- **Moochers' Guild.** A recent, loosely structured group of the Free City, specializing in party crashing and social parasitism.
- **Tridentine.** Traditional thieves' guild of the Free City, with activities involving all varieties of crime. They are in open (and disadvantageous) conflict with the Raqisa.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)



Types of Secret Organizations

Below are the different structures that secret organizations may take, and what characterizes them.

Traditional Thieves' Guild

- Progressive training of members similar to crafts, with apprentices, journeymen, masters, and professional secrets that are only passed on to those who have proven themselves.
- Use of lingo known as thieves' cant.
- Trades and specialties such as burglar, pickpocket, beggar, etc. Each trade has a leader, carrying a more or less pompous title, who is usually elected by the members of the represented specialty.
- Delinquents and criminals operating in its area of influence are required to give a share of their income to the guild, up to 10%. This treasure is used to protect members by bribing guards, paying lawyers, or organizing jailbreaks.
- Relative autonomy of the guild members, who are considered entrepreneurs.

Hierarchic Thieves' Guild

These organizations have similarities with traditional thieves' guilds, but their hierarchy is much stricter. In particular, trying to leave the group is very dangerous, leading to severe punishment (usually death) for high-ranking members. The guild's head appoints the people in charge of a territory, activity, or mission. The degree of freedom varies depending on the guild. Lower-ranking members may be allowed to conduct personal affairs against payment of a percentage to the guild.

Secret Brotherhood

Such an illegal organization exists solely for the pursuit of a specific purpose, known only to its members. They are sworn in, and their criminal activities serve the interests of the brotherhood's ideals. A code of honor is enforced, with ethical rules of varying strictness depending on the organization.

Spy Network

Some groups work for political powers such as states, princes, or guilds. Their activities may consist of monitoring people (secret police), acting abroad to gather information (espionage), or carrying out operations (subtle or violent) in support of their master's plans.

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Dictionary of Eana's Cultures and Mysteries

Aljagar. (Pronounced ah-djah-GAWR). Group of kingdoms sharing a common culture as a Draconic Kingdom (a land where dragons and those associated with them are revered and respected), located south of Kaan.

Aldaron. (Pronounced AL-dah-run). Subspecies of elves who did not migrate to Ellerìna. Also known as sap elves, they prefer to live in forests, which they fiercely defend.
In Cyfandir, aldaron live in Taurëlma. Their relations with the other core peoples range from strained to hostile.
Unlike the aldaron of Cyfandir, the Kaani aldaron are fairly open-minded. They live in harmony with bugbears in Ündsenoin, united by their respect for the primeval forest.

Alexis III Drae. The last ruler of Westree, a vassal kingdom of the Cyrillan Empire. He died during a diplomatic expedition, under unclear circumstances. His death led to the proclamation of the Free City Republic.

Anakedi. (Pronounced ah-nah-KEH-dee). Fey who look like ordinary felines. These creatures dwell in Easafir and are among its movers and shakers. Most act as advisors and a secret police for Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, but others belong to more or less opposing factions.

Arataurë. (Pronounced ah-rah-TOH-ray). To the southeast of the Drakenbergen, in Cyrillane, this forest was once one of the two great sacred forests of the aldaron, along with Taurëlma. Located near the Askamor Volcano, it is now white, ashen, and cursed.

Arawanni. (Pronounced ah-rah-WAH-nee). Clay City located on the Nulim Seashores, famous for its simple architecture and its refined way of life that mixes sobriety and elitism.

Arcanist. A designation indicating a spellcaster who uses profane magic, which is also called arcane magic.

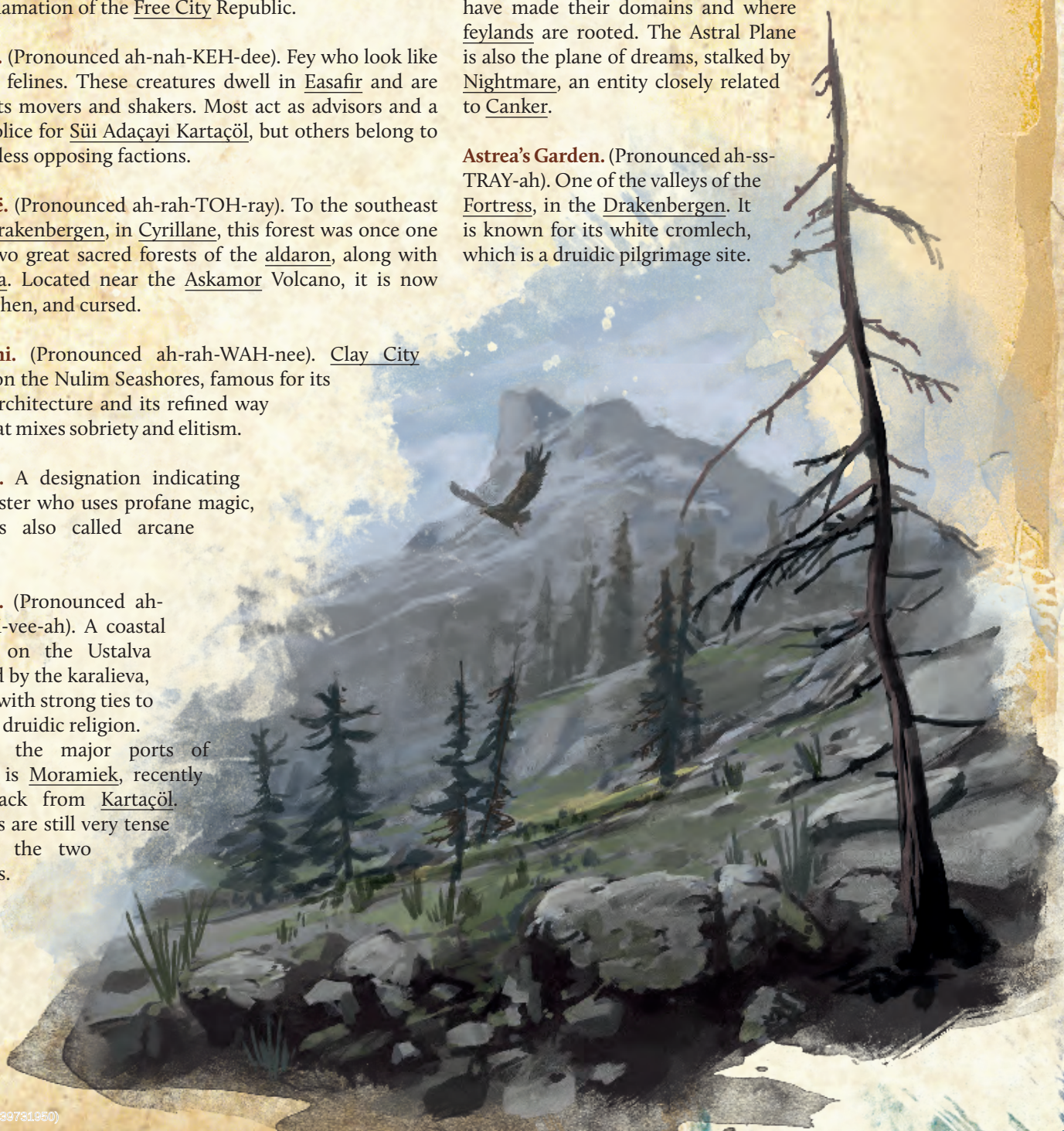
Arolavia. (Pronounced ah-roh-LAH-vee-ah). A coastal country on the Ustalva Sea ruled by the karalieva, a queen with strong ties to the local druidic religion.
One of the major ports of Arolavia is Moramiek, recently taken back from Kartaçöl. Relations are still very tense between the two countries.

Askamor. (Pronounced ASK-a-more). The only active volcano in Cyfandir, located in the Drakenbergen. The geomagic activity is very strong there, and surprising species adapted to the environment can be found, some of which are even intelligent, like azers or salamanders.

Askinos. (Pronounced AH-skee-noh-ss). The diabolic hospodar ruling over the Gemoniae, called the Pain Drinker. It is bound to the goddess Frostelle by a pact. Askinos is a power.

Astral Plane. The Astral Plane is an immaterial reality in which notions of space and time lose almost all meaning. Compared to the norms of the Material Plane, the flow of time is aberrant, while space can stretch, shrink, and grow, sometimes following the rules of Euclidean geometry, sometimes ignoring them. This dimension is where the main divinities of Eana have made their domains and where feylands are rooted. The Astral Plane is also the plane of dreams, stalked by Nightmare, an entity closely related to Canker.

Astrea's Garden. (Pronounced ah-ss-TRAY-ah). One of the valleys of the Fortress, in the Drakenbergen. It is known for its white cromlech, which is a druidic pilgrimage site.



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Ateak. (Pronounced ah-TEEK). A demonstration of the Travelers's strong magic, this type of magic portal makes it possible to reach distant lands, planes, and worlds. Extra-Eanean creatures were brought back from these territories. Today, few functional ateaks remain, and their locations and workings are jealously guarded.

Athenaise. (Pronounced AT-uh-nay-z). The former capital of the Stopstep Empire, destroyed by Tamerakh.
Its ruins are close to the sources of the River Dispende.

Awakened. The term Awakened applies to any creature who has acquired the ability to wield supernatural energies. Most are spellcasters, but one can be Awakened and not learn magic, or wield it in other ways than via spells.

Ayangaba'üül. (Pronounced ah-YANG-aba-oo-ool). Ayangaba'üül is a sanctuary located in the northeast of the Old Kaan, known for its ancient, sacred necropolis. It is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Tamerakh and to Ayanga, a lost deity.

Azer. (Pronounced ah-z-AIR). Azers are fire elementals in the service of Blacksmith who live in Askamor. Talented craftsmen and extraordinarily disciplined soldiers, they support order and the fight against Canker, and are renowned for their blessed magic items.

Babassür. (Pronounced bah-bah-SOOR) Another name for Nubilbabassür.

Bail Empire. (Pronounced bah-EEL). The Bail Empire was a great civilization whose area of influence extended over the Lanabahr Seashores and Kaan. Mangulik was one of its major places of worship before it was conquered and then destroyed by Tamerakh.

Barruna Province. (Pronounced bah-ROO-nah). Name of the territory covering the southwestern part of Cyfandir. It was formerly a province of Tamerakh's Empire, then a short-lived kingdom from 970 to 950 before the Free City Republic. Its capital was Malachaï.

Baruunkheeriin. (Pronounced bah-ROON-keh-reen). The Baruunkheeriin is the main steppe region of the Old Kaan. This area is populated mainly by orcs and merosi.

Batsapimej. (Pronounced Bah-t'sah-PEE-meh-j). Located on the pilgrimage route to the Pillars of Creation, this ancient city-state, known for the excellence of its pottery and for being ruled by a senate of aristocrats, has gradually fallen under the influence of Kartaçöl. Officially a simple protectorate, it constitutes a base from which the agents of the empire launch missions.

Bekasi. (Pronounced beh-KAH-see). Bekasi the lich is the prime advisor to the nandin ruling Khaalgany. This makes her one of the most powerful and influential personalities of the Old Kaan.

Blacksmith. A major divinity whose domains are protection, order, stability, duration, harmony.

Blasphemy. An evil magic item, sometimes cursed. They may be created by a malefactor, although their existence can also be accidental.

Bleeder. A monster of humanoid, bestial appearance, haunting the forests and shadowed valleys of the Drakenbergen.

Blömiane. (Pronounced BLUH-mee-ah-n). A city of the Drakenbergen located along the course of the River Dispende. It is a popular starting point for adventurers in this region, where they can hire a guide and purchase supplies.

Boreal Civilization. The Boreal Civilization once flourished in the Septentrion, uniting humans and frost giants. The texts of this period are famously written in Tumiit.
The downfall of this culture may have been caused by the desecration of Hiemal, a powerful chosen of Frostelle, for which he is said to have been imprisoned in Gemoniae.
Today, many adventurers seek the Boreal magic academy, which is said to contain the secrets of this ancient civilization's strong magic.

Boreal Magic Academy. A mythical place built by the Boreal Civilization for the practice of strong magic. Many adventurers seek to find it in the Septentrion.

Boreia. (Pronounced bo-RAY-ah). A colony founded by Cyrillane in the Septentrion, in the Evnoïka Peninsula. Its capital is Katafygia. It is led by General Atreus, commander of the 8th legion.

Bugbear. A people native of the Old Kaan. They are of medium size, with thick fur, and live mainly in the Septentrion.

Canker. A corrupting entity of godlike puissance, Canker has striven to expand its deleterious influence for as long as the people of Eana can remember. Some creatures, like gnolls or ettercaps, are bound to Canker by their very nature and are collectively called ravagers. Canker is capable of granting power to mortals, defiling their deep essence in the process and ultimately transforming them into ravagers. Canker is both a plane and a power; its very nature defies classifications. It thrives in the depths of the Netherworld.

Celestial. Celestials are usually the servants of deities, employed as messengers or agents in the mortal realm and throughout the planes. Celestials are good by nature. They speak and write Celestial, a language also called "the godly words."

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Clay City. A name designating large cities of the Old Kaan, such as Khaalgany, Nubilbabassür, or Kuhr.
This metonymy refers to the building material favored for millennia: raw clay bricks. In reality, stone is also used as a building material in some of the Clay Cities. A common point of Clay Cities is that they were once city-states and were conquered by Tamerakh. They have retained strong local characteristics.

Core Peoples. Encompasses the peoples that were the most involved in the Dawn War, namely dragonborn, dvaergen, elves, gnomes, halflings, humans, melessë, merosi, and tieflings. Since most of Kaan remained out of this major conflict against Canker, most of its inhabitants are not recognized as core peoples.

Corruption. A phenomenon related to the influence of Canker and Nightmare, through which an individual is physically and mentally transformed. Causes of corruption include madness and the casting of corrupt spells (see **Grimoire**, **Corruption**).

Cyfandir. (Pronounced SEE-fun-deer). The continent on which exist the civilizations of the Free City, the Drakenbergen, Cyrillane, Lothrienne, and Arolavia.
The name comes from an empire which ruled these lands approximately from 4,000 to 2,000 before the Republic. The dominant religion was druidism.

Cyrillane. (Pronounced SEE-ree-lah-n). Until recently, this empire was ruled by the Kadmeid dynasty, from their palace in Kratéïra. The Cyrillan Empire stretched to the east of the Free City and to the southeast of the Drakenbergen.
A civil war has been raging in Cyrillane since the year 330 of the Free City calendar.

Cys. (Pronounced SEE-ss). The Great Plain of Cys lies at the foot of the Drakenbergen. Crossed by the River Dispende, this region is filled with wetlands and dotted with lakes, rivers, and canals.

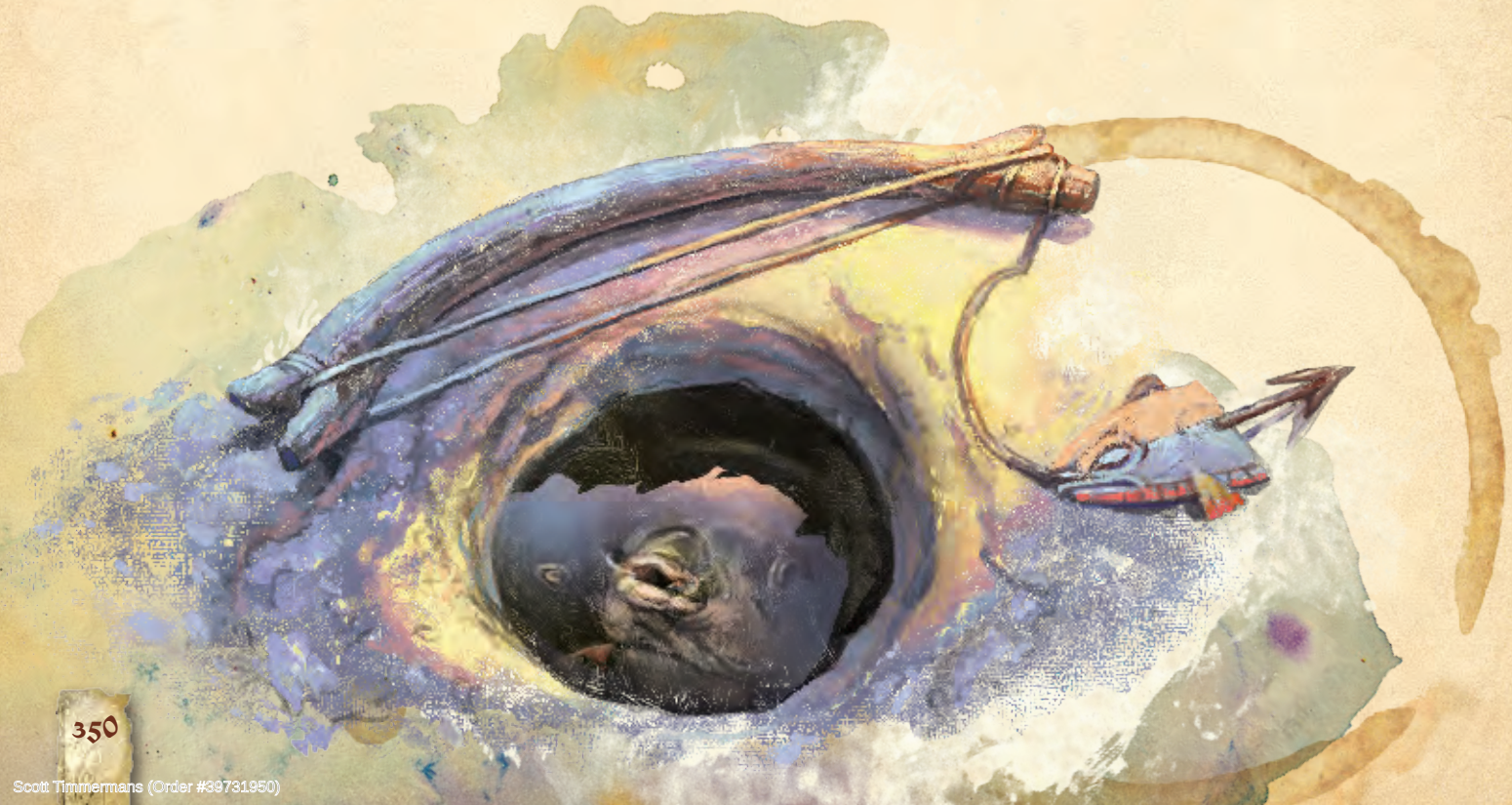
Dalain's Cape. (Pronounced dah-lah-EEN). Located at the extreme northwestern end of the Old Kaan, Dalain's Cape (sometimes simply called "the Cape" or "Dalain") is a medium-sized harbor town. It is mainly frequented by fishermen and, in early spring, by Afirînerê pilgrims on their way to the distant Pillars of Creation, in the Septentrion.

Dawn War. The first great manifestation of Canker, which destroyed the elven civilization, and ravaged Cyfandir and beyond. Canker was not defeated, only repelled. Since then, guardian dvaergen watch the Netherworld to prevent its return.
The Dawn War did little damage to Kaan, thanks in part to the early intervention of the ancient Dalain'khümüs (the people of the sea) in Cyfandir. Thanks to the involvement of these brave navigators, merosi were included among the core peoples. Additionally, the vigilance of the Ündsenoin druids in the Septentrion was instrumental to this region's protection. Finally, the sacrifice of the Netherworld stone giants, under the Kaan, did much to keep the threat at bay.

Death. A major divinity whose domains are acceptance, appeasement, purification, and the termination in preparation for renewal. Death is also the guardian of secrets, ensuring that potential dangers are not revealed. This aspect sets her apart from Xonim.

Demon. Demons are fiends born in Melancholia from furious, resentful, or regretful souls. They usually speak Demonic. They claim to strive for freedom above all else, and lead fundamentally brutal lives. The most exceptional of them are the demon princes: powers who offer extraordinary abilities to warlocks sharing their vision of existence.

Demon Prince. An extremely powerful demon ruling over its peers. All demon princes are powers.



Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Dengêkevir. (Pronounced DENG-geh-keh-veer). A mysterious and powerful entity from the Telhika Mountains that whispers through cracks in the stone and whose revelations can bring madness.
Dengêkevir is a power.

Denisova. (Pronounced deh-nee-SO-vah). Denisovas are humans who are particularly adapted to extreme cold. They live in the Far North and are the northernmost humanoid people.
Their language is derived from Tumiit.

Desolations. Common name for the Khoosrol.

Devil. Devils are created in Furnace from souls that had the misfortune of falling into the hands of preexisting devils. They commonly speak Diabolic. Unlike demons, devils follow a strict, downright totalitarian hierarchy. Lemures form the bottom of this social structure. Above them are the rabble, the weak, unreliable rank and file. Next in power and prestige are the rightly feared officers known as the knijaz. All these are commanded by the hospodar, the most terrifying of known devils. Each hospodar is a unique power, capable of granting spells to warlocks who form a pact with them. It is said that the hospodar are dominated by a single archdevil, but it is unknown whether such a being even exists.

Dispende. (Pronounced diss-PEN-deh). large river that originates in the Drakenbergen and flows toward the Lanabahr Sea.
Along its course are the ruins of Athénaïse, the thermal town of Varmbad, the town of Blömiane, the Wooded Valley, and the Free City.

Doppelganger. A humanoid creature with an unstable psyche that can take any other humanoid form at will. Many doppelgangers exist secretly, in the Free City in particular.

Dörtharo's Lock. (Pronounced dur-TAH-ro). A dvaerg city ruled by the Dörtasbald (or Holdstone) clan. It was built in the vicinity of the Askamor Volcano, in Krataer's Garden, and allows quick access to deep regions of the Netherworld.

Dragon. Large reptilian beings of ancient origin and tremendous power. True dragons, including the good metallic dragons and the evil chromatic dragons, are highly intelligent and possess innate magic. Also in this category are creatures distantly related to true dragons, but less powerful, less intelligent, and less magical, such as wyverns and pseudodragons. Dragons speak Draconic, which they can also read and write. Many mystical and arcane works are written in this language.

Dragonborn. Humanoid species with a dragon-like appearance, who are especially widespread in the region known as the Draconic Kingdoms: Rachamangekr and Ajagar. Dragonborn have important trade relations with the Nulim Seashores in the Old Kaan.

Drakenbergen. (Pronounced DRAH-ken-bear-gun). A very large mountain chain populated by dvaergen, which stands at the heart of Cyfandir. Several very diverse regions can be found there: the Fortress, the Fjordkungden, the Sendaïrë, the Maze of Mirages, Gleannceò, and the Dispende valleys.

Drow. A reviled, mysterious subspecies of elves, who appeared in the Netherworld after the Dawn War.

Dvaerg. (Pronounced d'v-AIR-g; singular: dvaerg/dvaerj; plural: dvaergen)
The name of dwarves in their own language. To be said in front of them only if one knows the correct pronunciation! Guardian dwarves monitor Canker's activity in the Netherworld, while builder dwarves are major players in the economy of Cyfandir, especially via the Steinbank.

Dvaergejord. (Pronounced d'v-AIR-geh-yor-d). Literally "the domain of the dvaergen". The dwarf name of the Drakenbergen.

Ecana. (Pronounced ey-AH-nah). The name commonly given to the world. Among druidic cultures, this term also designates the spirit of the world, who is regarded as the living entity at the origin of all life, plagued by Canker.

Easafir. (Pronounced ey-AH-sah-feer). Capital of Kartaçöl's Empire. Poised to rival the Free City in terms of population, wealth, and influence.

Eben-Chekwa. (Pronounced ebon-CHECK-vah). Ancient civilization of Mibu, to which is owed the formalization of the schools of magic as they are still used today.

Egilmez. (Pronounced ey-GEEL-meh-z). Literally "the unyielding"; the name of Kartaçöl's army.

Elemental. A type of creature. The essence of these beings is closely tied to that of the elemental powers at the origin of the world. Some creatures of this type are little more than animate masses of their respective elements, including the creatures simply called elementals. Others, like azers and salamanders, have definitive forms infused with elemental energy. Most elementals only speak Primordial, but some may understand other languages, depending on the creatures they interact with.

Elenion. (Pronounced el-EN-yun). An elven subspecies. Elenion live in Ellerìna, where they have raised a civilization of great refinement.
They are also well established in the Free City, where some of them lead the thieves' guild of Aïpio.

Ellerìna. (Pronounced el-eh-REE-nah). The land to where the elenion migrated after abandoning Cyfandir at the end of the Dawn War.

Eneler. (Pronounced EN-uh-ler). An eneler represents a community of Kartaçöl's Empire before the ruler Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl. All eneler sit on the enelergurnama, in the capital of Easafir. This institution, meaning "assembly of mothers", is also simply called "gurnama" (the assembly). Foreigners translate it as "harem of the Immortal", or "great harem."

Scott Thunemann (Order #39731930)

Eolian Isles. A flying archipelago made of floating islands located west and southwest of Cyfandir. This land is populated by many gnomes known for their creativity.

Eternity. The moon Eternity is one of Eana's two satellites. It is more distant than Melancholia and shines with a bronze glow. It is reputed to influence the fate of people and the development of heroic aptitudes. The mythical Fateforge is said to be situated on Eternity, at the heart of a Maze that takes up most of the planetoid's surface.

Eternity-Chosen. The Chosen Ones of Eternity, also called the Fate-chosen, have abilities far mightier and more developed than any ordinary mortal. There are many theories related to the Fateforge to explain their place in the world:

- **Instruments of a plan of the Travelers.** Fate-chosen are said to receive their abilities at a specific moment in time to accomplish part of a vast plan.
- **Pure chance.** Eternity radiates and randomly touches a few lucky ones; there is no fairness in this blessing, nor any meaning to be sought in it.
- **Merit.** Only willpower matters. Eternity-chosen are superior beings, a cut above the common rabble, and their abilities are tangible proof of this.
- **Epiphany.** The determination and willpower of adventurers draw Eternity's blessings to them, but it is not all there is to it. Their state of mind must be in tune with a particular situation, typically characterized by extraordinary events. Somehow, something in their actions resonates with the nature of the moon, causing them to surpass themselves.

Ezen. (Pronounced EY-zen). An ezen is a warlord at the head of a Horde. There have been several ezen in history, but three stand out:

- The first ezen in history is Tamerakh the Conqueror, also known as the Prince of the Horde, the Destroyer, the Storm, the Liberator.
- The ezen Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl conquered the city-state of Easafir (which, at the time, was a colony of Ghardat) and laid the foundation of Kartaçöl's Empire.
- The ezen Tsunsny went down in history as one of the great builders of Khaalgany's port, as well as a highly influential philosopher. He is behind the organization of the Old Kaan Empire, formalizing the handover between the ezens (lords) and the nandins (the sacred ones).



Fall of the Travelers. A cataclysmic event in the history of Eana, whose origins, effects, and consequences are still poorly understood. It caused the extinction of the Giants and the Travelers, who were the ruling civilizations at the time. Those who survived owe their lives to refuges such as the Netherworld or the Pillars of Creation.

Far North. Common name for Kokciqusqacu.

Fateforge. The genius and strong magic of the Travelers made manifest, this construction is located on the moon Eternity. To reach it, one must cross a vast Maze filled with deadly perils. A creature that reaches the Fateforge can ask for a single Granting of such power that it can alter the reality and profound nature of both things and beings. The Fateforge is particularly famous for allowing Tamerakh to ascend to the status of deity.

Arcanists have many theories to explain the role of the Fateforge:

Some say the Travelers knew that their end was near and designed the Fateforge to prepare for the future. The shapes of the Maze, visions, and strange coincidences all provide insight into this millennial plan. Others believe that there is a link between Canker and the Fateforge, which would explain why the latter is powerless to destroy either Nightmare or Canker.

In the Great Kaan, the Fateforge is also named Ukhaantai.

Feyland. The name given to a territory where fey are born and live. Such lands are almost always home to a maelossa.

Scott Timmermans (Order #39731950)

Fiend. Fiends are fundamentally evil beings from Melancholia, Furnace, and Gemoniae. The demons of Melancholia and the devils of Furnace are the most active fiends.

Fjordkungden. (Pronounced fee-YOUR-d-koong-den). Western region of the Drakenbergen, characterized by the presence of numerous fjords that flow deep into the land. Many small kingdoms have settled here, between the high mountains and the sea.
The Two Sisters, Flora and Frostelle, are particularly worshipped here.

Flora. A major deity whose domains are life, rebirth, hope, and combativeness.

Fortress. Located in the eastern part of the Drakenbergen, the Fortress is a vast and compact rock formation, with the notable absence of any passable valley. However, it features several circular depressions that resemble cirques, craters, or calderas of gigantic volcanoes. The valleys of the Fortress are called Gardens.

Free City. A city-state in the southwest of Cyfandir. The Free City prides itself on being the largest and richest city in the world. This republic is governed by several institutions:

- The Council of Strategists is composed of nine magistrates skilled in diplomacy and warfare. They can decree martial law, mobilize troops, order conscription, and send ambassadors to foreign countries.
- At the Assembly, citizens can gather and discuss the future of the Free City
- The Council of the Guilds is open to all trading and manufacturing organizations, meaning that non-citizens can have a seat there.
- The Council of the Dragons gathers the representatives of the city's legally accepted religious groups. It organizes the major religious festivals and has jurisdiction to judge offenses or crimes committed within the holy confines of temples.

The lands under the rule of the city are: Histe's Woods, the Great Plain of Cys, Meanderise, the Old Pass, Myetea, and Issure.

Frostelle. A major divinity whose domains are endurance, willpower, perseverance, and purification.

Furies (Gate of the). Located on a plateau in the Drakenbergen, in the Maze of Mirages, the Gate of the Furies is said to grant passage to Melancholia.

Furnace. Furnace is an entirely underground, suffocatingly hot plane. Generally dark and fiercely burning in places, it used to be the domain of salamanders, but is now dominated by devils and efreet.



andaichin Smithing. (Pronounced gan-die-SHEEN). The gandaichin smithing technique was invented by orcs. Its masters can forge formidable weapons and armor.

Gaunt. A corporeal undead created by dark, cold magic. They are a dreadful peril during winter in the Septentrion.

Gegaôr. (Pronounced GUY-gah-or). A demon prince called "the Furious Beast", Gegaôr is famous for having created lycanthropes. His influence is great in the Septentrion. He is a power.

Gemoniae. (Pronounced gem-OWN-ee-ay). An evil and penitentiary plane, this frozen land is ruled over by the diabolic hospodar Askinos.
It can be accessed from Eana via a permanent portal in the Yotumkupatunsh region, in the Septentrion.

Geomagical. This adjective qualifies a localized supernatural phenomenon called geomagic, which can be short or long in duration. Strong magic increases the power of its manifestations, while weak magic reduces it (see **Grimoire**: **Geomagic**).

Ghardat. (Pronounced GUARD-at). One of the Sand Kingdoms and a great rival of Kartaçöl, Ghardat is a thalassocracy, meaning a country with great influence due to its hold on maritime trade.
The Raqisa thieves' guild originates from Ghardat and supports its interests.

Giant. The Giants (with a capital G) were a people from the era before the Fall of the Travelers. They wrote in Tumiit and wielded a form of strong magic. Among many things, they are remembered for erecting the Pillars of Creation. Many ruins in the Iruul Mountains are related to their civilization. Maker is reputed to have once been one of them.
There are currently several giant peoples, such as the frost giants of the Septentrion, or the stone giants who live between the Netherworld and the Khoosrol, in the Old Kaan.

- The frost giants once formed the Boreal Civilization with humans, but this alliance has given way to pronounced hostility. Today, more and more of them worship the demon prince Gegaôr the Furious Beast.
- On the front lines of the Dawn War, in the Netherworld beneath Kaan, the stone giants were driven to near-extinction. Now absent from Cyfandir, they live in seclusion, very attached to a secretive and mystical way of life steeped in druidism.

Gleannceò. (Pronounced glay-ANN-kay-oh). A large valley in the northeastern Drakenbergen, infamous for being ruled by the vampire lord Kentigern. Its capital is Greimnead. The valley is crossed by the Falann, the bloody river.

Goblin. A people native to the Old Kaan, small in stature and very prolific. They live mainly near Tili's Gulf and the Telhika Mountains.

Greimnead. (Pronounced GRIME-nay-ad). Capital of Gleannceò.

Gül. Kartaçöl's Empire's currency. One gül is approximately worth a copper piece.

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Harro. (Pronounced HAH-roh). Beast of the Drakenbergen, cousin of the ibex, with a similar strong frame and two great horns.
It is used as a prestigious mount by elite Windwalkers.

Hevitur Mountains. (Pronounced eh-vee-TOO-r). Mountain range north of Arolavia, forming its border with the Septentrion.

Histe's Woods. (Pronounced HISS-tay). Histe's Woods is a medium-sized massif covered with dark woods, which are exploited for the shipyards of the Free City. It is the metropolis's natural border with Cyrillane. Since the beginning of the civil war, it is frequently traveled by refugees, smugglers, marauders, and exiles.

Hobgoblin. A people native to the Old Kaan, of medium size with reddish skin. Hobgoblins live in diaspora, and are particularly present in Kartaçöl's Empire and the merchant cities. A faction of hobgoblins has founded the diabolist city of Shüd'delkhii.

Horde. Typical Kaani term for a huge, armed force gathered under the leadership of an ezen. The Hordes of Kaan are legendary and contribute to this land's reputation of ferocity among the rest of the world.

Hospodar. (Pronounced HAW-spuh-dar). An honorific title for a powerful devil ruling over the many fiends of its creation. All hospodar are powers.
Askinos the Pain Drinker is a hospodar.

Ilkral. (Pronounced EEL-krah-l). Literally means "king of first rank", or "first king among kings". It is the title of the ruler of Kartaçöl and implicitly emphasizes that he is destined to rule the world. Abroad, the title is translated as "emperor". In everyday life, ilkral is sometimes simply used to refer to the ruler.

Immortal. One of Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl's titles, reflecting his seemingly unfailing longevity and invincibility.

Iruuls. (Pronounced ee-roo-OOL). A little-known region in the far east of Kaan, the Iruuls contain ruins of the Era of the Giants, as well as the elaborate works of the native orcs of these lands, descendants of rebels who refused to join Tamerakh's conquest.

Issure. (Pronounced ee-SOOR). A city under the influence of the Free City, located at the mouth of the Vaquensirë, Issure is a town split in two, full of life on Myetea's side (to the south) and empty on Taurëlma's side (to the north).
Boats moor at its stone docks. There is a distance of about a hundred feet between the river and the walls that circle the town, and this space is generally filled with dockworkers and peddlers. The town's merchant fairs also take place on the docks, with a profusion of booths made of wooden planks.
On the other side, the forbidden ruins appear as Issure's grim mirror, a perpetual threat, a reminder that prosperity can at any time cease brutally and give way to death. Since the war against the aldaron, everything has remained as it was— with the exception of the many poplars, willows, and alders that grew. Some buildings still bear the mark of fires and destruction from war machines, while others seem strangely undamaged from afar, looking like revenants.

Kaan. (Pronounced KAH-ah-n). Kaani terminology is as complex and composite as the continent and empire it grew in. Here is some insight into these variants:
Proper Names
- **Great Kaan.** Refers to the territory perceived as the natural extension of the Kaani Empire. It covers all lands from Manbalarer to the Septentrion.
- **Old Kaan.** Old Kaan refers to the territory stretching north of the Manbalarer, west of the Iruuls, and south of the Telhika Mountains. It is a term commonly used by foreigners, referring to the homelands of Tamerakh's Horde. Natives of the Old Kaan refer to their land as Jinkhene, meaning the land of the authentic ones (implying that its inhabitants are remarkably honorable).
- **Kaan.** When used alone, the term refers to the continent, in the same way as Cyfandir. It thus encompasses the lands of the civilizations of Ajagar, Kaan, and the Septentrion.

Adjectives
- **Kaani.** Refers to a creature living in Kaan.
- **Kaanite.** Refers to an inanimate thing associated with Kaan.

The Kaani Language
Kaani is the dominant, vernacular language in the Old Kaan. In the northern half of the continent, it is also widely spoken, but is gradually being supplanted by Kartaçian, Kartaçöl's official language.

Kadmeid. (Pronounced KAH-d-may-eed). Cyrillan dynasty that ruled until 330 of the Free City calendar. They were resonsible for the founding of the colony of Boreia.

Kartaçian. (Pronounced KAHR-tah-see-uhn). Official language of Kartaçöl's Empire, which is gradually replacing Kaani in the territories under the rule of the empire.

Kartaçöl. (Pronounced KAHR-tah-suhl). Kingdom founded by the human ezen Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl. It is now a conquering empire ruled by her grandson, Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl.
The official language is Kartaçian.
The currency is the gül.

Katafygia. (Pronounced kah-tah-FEEG-ya). The capital of Boreia. This port city is located at the mouth of the River Uposkesio and secured by Fort Anoigma, led by General Atreus.

Kentigern. (Pronounced KEN-tig-urn). A vampire lord ruling over Gleannceò, in the Drakenbergen. The dorchadas serves him.

Khaalgany. (Pronounced KAH-ahl-gah-nee). Capital of the Old Kaan, located at the mouth of the River Nubil.

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Khoosrol. (Pronounced KOOS-roll). Cursed steppe of the Old Kaan, which used to be the heart of Tamerakh's Empire. The ruined capital of Mangulik is located there. Travelers risk being attacked by incorporeal undead, including sünsutaa, specters, and wraiths.

Khorikhuntakh Lake. (Pronounced kor-ee-KOON-tah-k). Large lake located in the Iruul Mountains. Some say that the tarrasque slumbers there.

Khüch'adal. (Pronounced KOO-t'chah-dah-l). Ancient orc lord, the husband of Xonim and father of Tamerakh.

Kobold. A people native to the Old Kaan, kobolds are small, with features reminiscent of dragons, and live mainly in the Telhika Mountains.

Kokciqusqacu, the Far North. (Pronounced kox-ee-KOO-ska-koo). Region of icy tundra in the Septentrion where the ice giants dwell. It contains the ruins of the Boreal Civilization and the Pillars of Creation.

Kömirqala. (Pronounced kuh-MEER-kah-lah). A small kobold town in the Telhika Mountains specialized in coal mining.

Kratær's Garden. (Pronounced kra-t-AIR). Volcanic valley near Askamor.
Dörtharo's Lock is one of the main places of interest.

Kuhr. (Pronounced koor). A city of the Old Kaan, in which stands the continent's largest temple of Death. It is a bustling place of pilgrimage. The city itself is known for its magic academy and its arena.

Kupatwacuw Mountains. (Pronounced koo-pah-t-wa-KOO-weh). Mountain range in the extreme northeast of the Septentrion, in the lands of the frost giants. Some say the Boreal magic academy is located there.

Lamentrope. (Pronounced LAH-mun-troh-p). An immortal and eternal creature connected to the fundamental laws of nature. In particular, it is tasked with fighting anything that threatens the integrity of time and space.

Lich. A corporeal undead resulting from a ritual performed by a powerful arcanist (usually a wizard), which involves locking one's soul in a vessel called a phylactery. For some, it is a means of gaining access to immortality. According to legend, the rites unlocking this condition were discovered in the Clay Cities long ago. The Khoosrol saw the emergence of many liches, which were later imprisoned there, in underground lairs.

Lihyân. (Pronounced lee-YAH-n). A merchant town of the Old Kaan. It is located on the border between the steppe and the Telhika Mountains. It is famous for its large caravanserai and is a hotbed of intrigue.

Lothrienne. (Pronounced loh-three-YEN). A feudal kingdom located northeast of Cyfandir, known for its strict religious doctrine, particularly hostile to druidism.

Lycanthrope. A shapeshifting creature, half-humanoid, half-beast, born from the influence of the demon prince Gegaôr.
Among lycanthropes are the wererats of the Free City and the werewolves of the Septentrion.

Maacillero. (Pronounced mah-see-YEH-ro). Name of the Free City before the Dawn War. The city was then limited to an elenion palatial complex where the Assembly now stands; it was the starting point of the great elenion expeditions.

Maelossa. (Pronounced may-LOH-sah). Maelossas are lands of vibrant life that express the deep essence of Eana. They can appear in all natural places: within oceans, forests, the Netherworld, deserts, etc. These nexuses of pure life grow at a tremendous rate, engendering abundant life. The vitality and regenerative abilities of a maelossa are extraordinary: even if all that remains of one is a single seed, it can bring life anew. This life will be different, but as intense as before. There is a strong connection between maelossas and feylands.

Maker. A major deity whose domains are creation, invention, and discovery.
Maker is reputed to have once been a Giant. He is known throughout Kaan as the Father Creator of all species native to the continent: bugbears, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, orcs, and ulkani.
The god's most devout followers make pilgrimages to the Pillars of Creation, in the Septentrion.

Malachaï. (Pronounced mah-lah-KAH-ee). Short-lived capital of the Barruna Province, born as a result of the administrative division of Tamerakh's Empire in the 980s before the Free City Republic. The ruins of Malachaï are located in the coniferous forests of the Histe hills, bordering present-day Cyrillane.

Malefactor. A person skilled in designing and crafting magic items, but who has no qualms in imbuing them with harmful effects or turning them into blasphemies. A malefactor is the opposite of a mirafactor.

Manbalarer. (Pronounced MAH-n-bah-lah-rare). Also known as the "Land of Springs," it is a high mountainous region forming the southern border of the Old Kaan.
It is also the homeland of the ulkani: Ulkanijer.

Mangulik. (Pronounced MAH-n-goo-leek). Former and glorious capital of Tamerakh, and destroyed by him. It is now at the heart of the Khoosrol.

Material Plane. Refers to the world of everyday life. As such, the Material Plane matches the reality of Eana.

Maze of Mirages. A region in the northwest of the Drakenbergen characterized by the presence of numerous and permanent illusions that render travel difficult.
The Gate of the Furies is one of the famous sites of this territory.

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Meanderise. Meanderise is a country located northeast of Myetea, east of Taurëlma, and southeast of the Fjordkungden. It shares a large border with the Drakenbergen. The region is mostly characterized by wet woodland, crossed by several rivers that flow into the Vaquensirë. Floods are frequent and the locals have adapted to them.
The region has experienced violent crises: Cankerous nests, the Taurëlman War, an epidemic, and the appearance of numerous undead. There are now ruins of small fortified towns in the middle of the woods, as well as half-destroyed citadels, partially restored by gnomes from the Eolian Isles. They have undertaken modern renovations (streetlights, machines…), resulting in a strange environment where ruins clash with state-of-the-art installments. A district's street may be as animated, orderly, and clean as those of the high-class portions of the Free City, while the next alley will lead into a gloomy dumping ground.

Medusa. A humanoid cursed as a result of a complex ritual that serves as a mode of reproduction for medusae. Characterized by snake-like hair and a petrifying stare, medusae are fearsome, but humanoid and intelligent, however cursed they may be. Male medusae are referred to as "medusi" ("medusos" in the singular).

Melancholia. Melancholia is the moon closest to Eana, populated by demons. It shines with a blue glow, and one of its most striking characteristics is that its size and distance from Eana vary. Sometimes, it looks like it is about to drop on the earth, and at other times, it seems to be watching from far away, like a sentry of the skies.

Melessë. (Pronounced meh-LESS-eh). Refers to people born from the union of a human and an elf (aldaron, elenion, or drow). Another, less respectful term is half-elf.

Merosi. (Pronounced meh-ROH-zee). Refers to people born from the union of a human and an orc. Another, less respectful term is half-orc.
Merosi are native to Kaan. The most famous of merosi was Tamerakh.

Mibu. (Pronounced MEE-boo). A continent renowned to be the birthplace of the Eben-Chekwa culture, said to shelter the legendary cloud giants.

Minotaur. Massive humanoids with the head of a bull, minotaurs were created by an ancient deity called the Bull of Destiny, whose intentions remain mysterious.

Mirafactor. A mirafactor is an arcanist with the know-how to design and craft magic items. It is a highly respected title, the opposite of a malefactor.

Moramiek. (Pronounced MOH-rah-mee-eck). Port of Arolavia, conquered by Kartaçöl for time, then retaken.

Myetea. (Pronounced mee-YET-eya). The Myetean Marches, also called Myetea, are a border region between the northwestern lands of the Free City and the Woods of Taurëlma. Halflings are the region's main inhabitants and live independently, as a reward for negotiating a peace treaty. The region is a Free City territory, but the locals have their own law and cannot be drafted in times of war.

Nandin. (Pronounced nun-DEEN). The nandinate institution was created by ezen Tsunsny in the year 83 of the Kaani calendar (-908 of the Free City calendar). Each ezen conqueror appoints a nandin ("sacred one") as their successor. The role of a nandin is to maintain the empire, to consolidate it, and to ensure its harmony. Each nandin in turn appoints a nandin as their own successor. This goes on until a new ezen comes from the steppe and overthrows the nandin to start a new cycle of creation and destruction.

Netherworld. A world of underground galleries, caverns, and tunnels of natural and artificial origin, the Netherworld stretches far beneath the surface of the earth. There, mysterious civilizations—such as the drow—thrive and Canker grows.

Nightmare. Nightmare inhabits the Astral Plane. It is closely related to Canker. As its name indicates, Nightmare brings tormented dreams, some of which are said to induce revelations that may lead to madness.
Nightmare is known to have absorbed ancient and now forgotten gods, in particular Sun Falcon, an elven divinity, just before the Dawn War began.

Nihilian. A radical sect honoring Tamerakh as the Liberator through destruction. It is known to have precipitated the civil war in Cyrillane and contributed to bringing about the fall of the Kadmeid dynasty.

Norrastjär. (Pronounced nor-ah-st-YEH-r). Dvaerg city of the Drakenbergen, led by the Stalfelt clan, also known as Ironfield.

Nubilbabassür. (Pronounced noo-BEEL-bah-bah-soor). Refined merchant city in the heart of the Old Kaan, famous for its gardens watered by the fertile waters of the River Nubile.

Old Pass. A memento of a time when elves and dwarves were close allies, the Old Pass is a road that goes through the Drakenbergen and connects eastern Taurëlma (now Meanderise) with Arataurë (now Cyrillane's cursed White Forest). The path is large and passable for vehicles, but few travel it because several segments are rumored to be haunted.

Ölümsiz. (Pronounced uhl-OOM-see-z). Literally meaning "immortal", it specifically refers to Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl, the current ruler of Kartaçöl. It is used as a mark of respect. Foreigners prefer the translation and refer to him as the Immortal.

Ômki. (Pronounced OHM-kee). The sacred city of Ômki dates back to the Boreal Civilization. It was located in the Kupatwacuw Mountains, and Frostelle was worshipped there.

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Orc. A people native to the Old Kaan, orcs are of medium size and known for their sturdiness. They dwell mainly in the steppe of the Old Kaan and in the Iruuls.

Pâdi. (Pronounced PAH-dee). A high-ranking officer and lord in the service of Kartaçöl's Empire. The plural "pâdis" is sometimes used indeterminately to refer to the highly centralized and bureaucratic administration of the country. Pâdis can have civil (ambassador), military (general), or mixed (governor) functions. The title comes with privileges, including judicial protections.

Pahalakadam. (Pronounced pah-HAH-lah-kah-dum). A prosperous but congested trade city located at the southern end of the Old Kaan, in the Manbalarer. It is influenced by the culture of Ajagar.

Parastin. (Pronounced pah-rah-STEEN). A secret Netherworld city, close to the surface, located under the Khoosrol and built by stone giants.

Pillars of Creation. A site of inhuman proportions built by the Giants of old, which ensured the survival of many humanoids. A major place of pilgrimage for the followers of Maker.

Plane. The term "plane of existence" applies to any universe, set of worlds, or dimension of reality. Several types of planes exist, starting with the Material Plane, the one on which the world of Eana is located. The notion of plane is convenient, but remains abstract, particularly considering certain "things" like Canker seem to be at the same time planes and forms of life.

Power. This term refers to entities capable of granting powers to at least one warlock. Powers include demon princes, diabolic hospodar, fey crowns, lords of abjection, couatls, and nagas. The mightier a power is, the more warlocks it can support. Powers cannot grant divine spells, and therefore cannot have clerics. However, certain powers have made it their purpose to attain godhood.

Ravager. Ravagers are born (directly or indirectly, via corruption) from Cankerous nests. Brought forth by these organic structures, they share a communion of destructive emotions that drive them to gather in groups and destroy everything that stands in their path. Their shapes are as diverse as the strategies they employ. Every one of these monsters exists to serve the designs of Canker. As such, even though they may sometimes appear to possess free will, any semblance of independence disappears when they feel the call of the nest.

Resgrande Riporte. (Pronounced reh-GRAN-deh ree-POR-teh). Name of the Free City under the Stopstep Empire, before the ravages of the Horde of Tamerakh in 980 before the Republic.

Ridge. A great massif of the Drakenbergen extending along an approximately north-south axis, cutting the Fjordkungden from the rest of the region.
Also called the Hidrun by the dvaergen.

Sadik. (Pronounced sah-DEEK). Civil servant in the service of Kartaçöl's Empire. Sadiks enjoy less exceptional protections and privileges than pâdis, but those perks are still enticing enough to make it a very attractive career. A sadik can hope to attain the rank of pâdi by showing their skill and ambition.

Salamander. Salamanders are fire elementals residing in Askamor. They used to live in Furnace, until they were driven out by the devils. Now, they live on Eana, where they are trying to make a place for themselves.

Sand Kingdoms. A group of small kingdoms and city-states on the Lanabahr Seashores that share cultural traits, especially in relation to climate and natural resources.

Santak. (Pronounced sah-n-TAH-k). Cuneiform writing used to write Kaani and Diabolical.

Schatz. (Pronounced SHAH-t-ss). A serpentine, elemental creature of the Drakenbergen that can grow to a gigantic size and whose body contains a wealth of precious minerals. The schatz is considered sacred by the dvaergen, and is commonly believed to be a creation of Blacksmith.

Sednae. (Pronounced SED-nay). Sednai (singular sednae) are celestials in the service of Frostelle who travel between planes and return to the Septentrion during the aurora borealis. They are revered as protective ancestors.

Sendaïrë. (Pronounced sen-dah-EE-reh). Huge lake of the Drakenbergen, which the locals consider a veritable freshwater sea. Close to the ruins of Falquaturia and the valley of Gleannceò.

Septentrion. Vast northern territory without political unity. The regions of the Septentrion are:
- Boreia, the Cyrillan colony
- Ündsenoin, the primeval forest
- Kokciqusqacu, the Far North
- Yotumkupatunsh (or simply Yotum), the hungry ice
- Gemoniae, an evil frozen plane.

Sercëpoica. (Pronounced sir-seh-POY-ka). Sercëpoicas are thoroughbred horses raised by elenion in Ellerìna. These prized mounts have a white, silver, or black coat, and a silver mane. In addition to their beauty, they are known for their intelligence, courage, and endurance. They graze on the meadows near the Sentinels' Port, in wait of a rich buyer.

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Sesmakkes. (Pronounced SESS-mah-kess). Clay City on the Nulim Seashores in the Old Kaan, famous for its pleasures and entertainment.

Shüd'delkhii. (Pronounced shoo-deh-DELL-kee-ee). The city of Shüd'delkhii was founded and is run by hobgoblins. It remained secret for a long time, but is now cautiously opening up to the world.
Its army is well organized and includes an elite order of hippogriff riders.
The city is an enemy of the Ozodlik, an underground organization, and an ally of Kartaçöl's Empire. It has privateers in Tili's Gulf and in Tatarine, which have been reported to attack goblin fishing villages and kobold communities in the Telhika Mountains.

Steinbank. (Pronounced sh-TINE-bank). Main banking establishment of the Free City. Founded by builder dvaergen, this powerful institution is a major political player and has many branches all over the world.

Stopstep Empire. The Stopstep Empire succeeded the Cyfandir Empire and ruled over the continent approximately from 2000 to 980 before the Free City Republic. Its capital was Athenaise, in the Drakenbergen, near the present-day city of Varmbad. The dominant religion was the Cult of the Ages.

Strong Magic
The Art of Magic
One of the definitions of strong magic is a special spellcasting method that can produce extraordinary results. It must be practiced in a specifically designed place and cannot be performed by a single caster. There are several known types of strong magic:

- **Strong magic of the Giants.** The Giants had developed a form of strong magic allowing them to manipulate the up and the down, the big and the small. They were also versed in the creation and transformation of living things. To this day, many spells are owed to them, such as *enlarge/reduce*, *levitate*, or *reverse gravity*. However, these are but diminished versions of the wonders they were capable of.
- **Strong magic of the Travelers.** The Travelers mastered a form of strong magic allowing them to bend space through the use of ateaks. On the moon Eternity, they designed the Fateforge, which makes it possible to change the course of events and create gods.
- **Strong magic of the Boreal Civilization.** The Boreal Civilization is reputed to have developed a form of strong magic with the combined efforts of descendants of the Giants and of chosen of Frostelle. It is said to combine knowledge of the cosmos, the nature of life, time, infinity, and raw magic. All of it could be rediscovered if the Boreal magic academy were to be found again.

Geomagic
An area of strong magic is characterized by a strong geomagic intensity, making magic more powerful, and usually more difficult to control.

Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl. (Pronounced SOO-ee ah-dah-SAH-ee KAHR-tah-suhl). Sublime sapient, chosen and prophet of Afirînerê, descendant of ezen Aï Etkileyici Kartaçöl, immortal ruler of Kartaçöl's Empire, Süi Adaçayi Kartaçöl has reigned for now almost a century with unflinching strength and determination.

Süirel. (Pronounced SOO-ee-rell). Name given to infamously devastating swarms of locusts in the steppe of the Old Kaan.

Sünsutaa. (Pronounced SOON-soo-tah-ah). A dreaded, incorporeal undead of the Khoosrol, in the Old Kaan. They are especially known for their ability to possess their victims.



Tamerakh. (Pronounced tah-muh-RAH-k). A major divinity whose domains are liberation, the destruction of illusions, courage, ambition, determination, life force, and renewal.
Tamerakh was the son of Xonim and the orc ruler Khüch'adal. This merosi was the greatest conqueror of all times and he built a glorious capital in Mangulik, before ultimately attaining divine apotheosis by reaching the Fateforge.

Tarrasque. Immense and legendary creature buried in the depths of the Khorikhuntakh Lake. It is said to be devastatingly powerful and its origins are shrouded in mystery.

Tatarine. (Pronounced tah-tah-REEN). Pirate port in Tili's Gulf.

Taurëlma. (Pronounced tah-oh-RELL-ma). An ancient forest of Cyfandir. It has remained virtually untouched since the Era of Renewal and has been guarded by the aldaron ever since. It was coveted by the Free City, but the war turned in favor of the elves. Since then, the River Vaquensirë stands as its natural border.

Telhika Mountains. (Pronounced tell-EE-kah). Mountain range separating the lands under the influence of Kartaçöl and those of the Old Kaan. The cities of Kömirqala and Lihyân are located in the region.

Tiefling. A humanoid born out of the union of a fiend and a human.

Tili's Gulf. (Pronounced TEE-lee). Land located between Kartaçöl's Empire and the Old Kaan, and shared by these two areas of influence. Tatarine and Shüd'delkhii have ships in these waters.

Torea. (Pronounced toh-REH-ah). Vast oceanic archipelago stretching east of Kaan.

Travelers. The term "Travelers" with a capital "T" refers to the most ancient known civilization of Eana, which became extinct about 10,000 years ago following a major cataclysm known as the Fall of the Travelers. The Travelers are known for having created the ateaks and for having brought extraordinary creatures to Eana. The works and knowledge

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of this people remain a source of fascination for many scholars and arcanists.
The Travelers also designed the Fateforge and were contemporaries of the Giants.

Tumiit. (Pronounced TOO-mee-eet). Language spoken at the time of the Boreal Civilization. It is reputedly indecipherable, and protected by Death's Ban (see **Grimoire**, **Geomagic: Death's Ban**).
Only a few Giant scholars still understand it, but the Denisovas of the Far North speak a dialect similar to it.

Tuzdisöl. (Pronounced TOO-z-dee-suhl). Salt desert located south of the Desolations of the Khoosrol, west of the Iruul Mountains and north of the Manbalarer Mountains.
There is at least one maelossa in this region.



lkan. (Pronounced OO-l-kun). A people native of the Old Kaan, more particularly of the Manbalarer. Ulkani are large humanoids with massive horns. They live in a territory called Ulkanijer.

Ündsenoin. (Pronounced OON-duh-seh-no-een). Ündsenoin is a primeval forest, meaning a land that has remained untouched by man and in which all manner of trees grow freely. It is located in the Septentrion and is a vast territory, sacred to druids. The nomadic goblin and aldaron tribes make up the bulk of the native population. One of the most extraordinary and respected forms of life in this region is Yksittäinen.



ampire. Cursed undead creature of great power, transformed as a result of dark rituals, extraordinarily vile acts, or by another vampire. Kentigern is a vampire.
Legend has it that vampirism is a gift of Xonim.

Vaquensirë. (Pronounced vah-ken-SEE-reh). A river in Cyfandir, the natural border between the lands of the Free City and those of the aldaron of Taurëlma.

Varmbad. (Pronounced VAH-r-m-bah-d). A small thermal town in the Drakenbergen, near the ruins of Athenaise and the sources of the River Dispende.



eak Magic. A category of geomagic, which makes spells more difficult to cast.

Windwalkers. A brotherhood of rangers and experienced guides in the Drakenbergen.

Wooded Valley. A group of communities in the southern Drakenbergen, living along the banks of the River Dispende. Their notable burgs: Sawburg, Ashbeech, and Smithtown, led by Isilde Florimande.



onim. (Pronounced zoh-NEEM). A major divinity whose domains are mystery, initiation, revelation, magic, research, and ambition.
The goddess Xonim shared revelations with her followers in the *Midnight Verses*. This book is the main source of knowledge on her and Tamerakh's past life.
Xonim was once a priestess of Death, but subsequently became a wizard and married the orc ruler Khüch'adal. She supported her son in his conquests and died in unclear circumstances before she could return to the capital of Mangulik. Tamerakh allowed her to ascend to divine status after he himself had attained divinity.



ksittäinen. (Pronounced eek-see-TIE-nen). Yksittäinen is a forest-tree born before the Fall of the Travelers. It is considered by druids as an essential and sacred witness to the history of Eana, especially concerning the emergence of Canker. This entity is the author (so to speak) of *Breath of the Aspen, Prophecy of Roots,* and *Lessons Translated and Betrayed from Yksittäinen*.

Yotumkupatunsh. (Pronounced Yo-TOOM-koo-pah-TOON-sh). Yotumkupatunsh (or simply Yotum), meaning "the hungry ice," is the most hostile region of the Septentrion. From here, a portal leads to Gemoniae.



ogsokh. (Pronounced ZOG-sock). Small city located at the foot of the Iruul Mountains, just at the end of the Salt Flats of Tuzdisöl.

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