

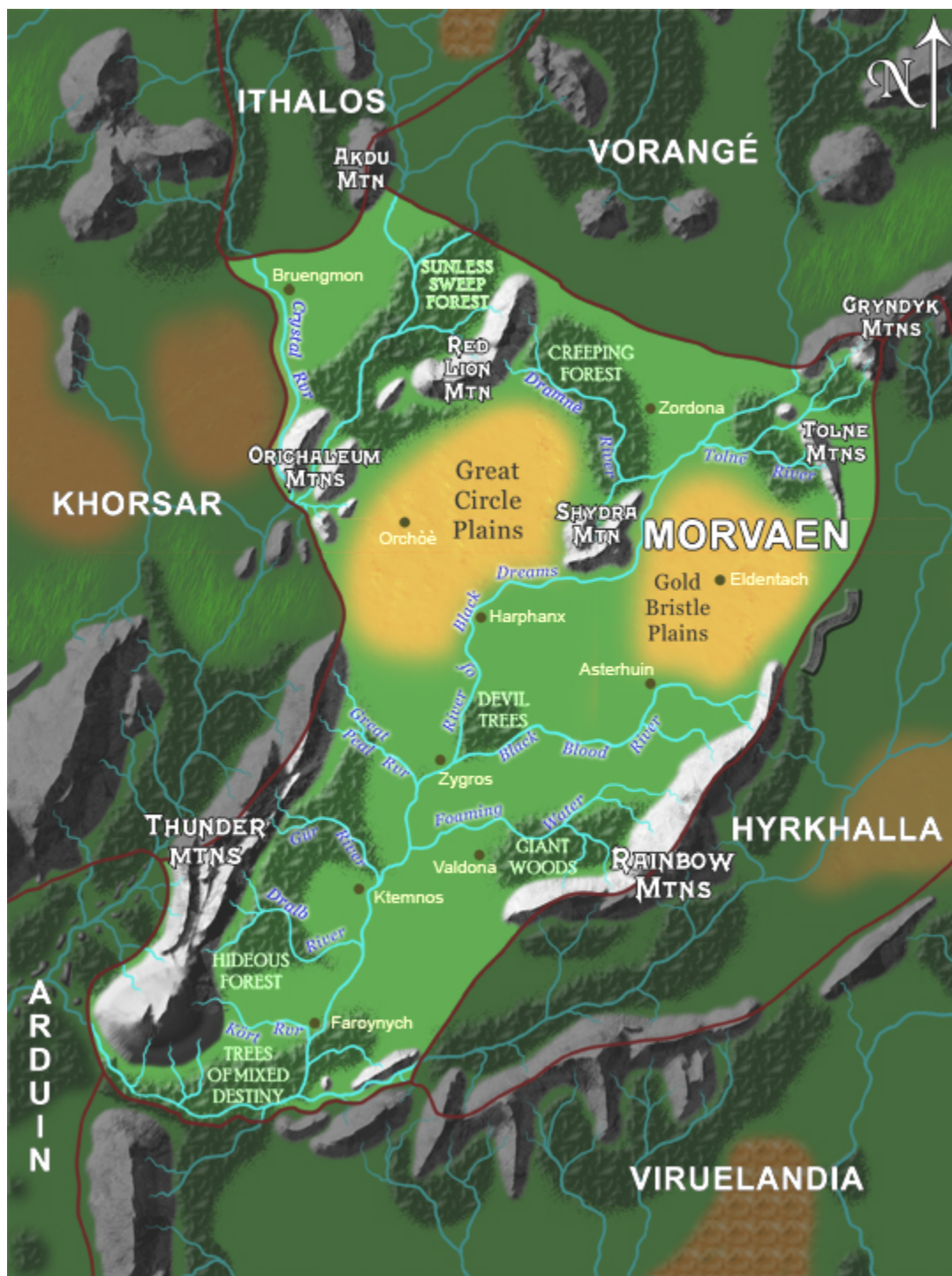
# ARBUIN ETERNAL



Morvaen

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# ARDUIN® ETERNAL

## Country of Morvaen

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# MORVAEN

**Location:** G4 – G6, H4 – H6

**Capitol:** Harphanx

**Population:** 4,250,000

**Demographics:** Human 80%, Dwarf 7%, Elf 5%, Hobbitt 3%, Other 5%

**Government:** Aristocratic Monarchy [stable]

**Tech:** High

**Magik:** Medium

**Psychic:** Low

**Spirit:** Low

**Religion:** Emerald Star Cult, Marbonas, Triune Moon Gods, HIM [defunct]

**Symbol or Heraldry:** Double headed Vord on dark green

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** Viruelandia, Hyrkhalla, Khorsar, Vorangé, Höhenaré

## QUICK DESCRIPTION

Morvaen has seen the rise and fall of many empires and the relics and ruins of the past litter the land like grains of sand on a beach. The recent and rapid descent of the Church of HIM after their god's disappearance in the night sky revived an old empire, that of the Vord Kings. Born again in blood and violence, both the people of the land and the world around it wait with bated breath to see how Xuanth's hand of fate will turn destiny.

## GEOGRAPHY

The country is a land lush with diversity. Mountains bristle along its flanks in the south and in spikes elsewhere. The heart of the land is the corridor of gold, its honeyed plains thick with growing grains and plants that feed the country and many beyond. The Sunless Sweep and Creeping Forests cluster greenly above the plains and the whole is cut and formed by its rivers that churn with bristling energy to power mills at every bend and turn.

## SOCIETY

Morvaen holds a treasured position central to all the other nations on Khaora. Central to the continent, trade crosses and crisscrosses its breadth on winding roads and pierce the mountains that languish around it. The nation is fully land locked. The map of its lands are a powerful contrast of civilized and wild. Numerous cities, towns, villages, abound, joined by great amounts of untouched wilderness. The drama of Morvaen, however, is not just in its landscape. Its people are locked in a similar dynamic, though it has turned upside down recently. Where once the powerful of the land locked horns in a four-way struggle, now only one dominates. When the strange god HIM faded from power and the night sky, its religion fell with it. It upset the power struggle between the factions and from the ruins of the battle for supremacy rose one with the blood of the Vord Kings.

Once the Vord Kings were rulers of the country before their reign gave way to a popular revolt, followed by a short lived rule by the people. Reborn during their long absence from power, the newly-crowned Vord King sundered the hold of the guilds and gods, returning

great powers to the nobility. The 7 Dukes still reign powerfully, as they rose to back the man who took the crown of the High King. With them came many of the Barons though just as many chose to fight against. With the opposing nobility were many of the commercial Guilds and the flagging religion of HIM. The sacking of them all led to utter chaos that gripped the kingdom for more than a year before the dust settled. Even warfare, blood, and chaos couldn't blunt Morvaen's geographic advantage. Trade beat a road to its door and trade was the path to regaining control. The new king, Cheysion ul Vord, kept control of the roads, using the forces of his predecessor to maintain his grip. In the aftermath, it served as means of control and for conquering the kingdom.

The king takes a tithe from use of the roads and from ducal lands that amounts to roughly 5% – enough to continue upkeep on the roads and assist in maintaining the large royal army. The Dukes, Barons, and Lords operate on a fiefdom system, though all now owe direct allegiance to the king. The hold of the priesthood is shattered; once they were a linchpin of keeping the people happy and content with the status quo. Now they hold little power, their lands and treasures confiscated, at least those of the Church of HIM. The other sects are still relatively untouched though its only by the king's say that its so. The Guilds, always a strong influence, have maintained their place, continuing to control trade by threatening boycotts, blockades, or even hiring mercenaries to ensure their assets are left alone and grievances are settled rightly.

Morvaen is rich. This wealth, though, lies solely in the hands of those in power. A majority of populace is poor, and locked into a serf or tenant status. Those in towns are typically of commoner status, and slightly better off than their tenant equivalents in the rural areas. Smaller portions of the populace are freeholders, man-at-arms, craftsmen, and merchants. Still, Morvaenians are proud, filled with great confidence of the power of their nation. Even the poorest and least well off feel it. They are expansionist and filled with a cultural mandate to exploit it.

Clothing in the kingdom varies by season, but tends toward the heavy and full covering regardless. Trousers are everyday wear, women and men alike, accompanied by fitted tunics with hoods or semi-circular cloaks pinned at the neck or shoulder. Nobles tend to wear an under tunic, an over tunic with a colored silk border, trousers gartered into leather calf high boots, semicircular cloaks, and colored round cloth caps. All Morvaenians, regardless of social status, tend to have at least one decent set of clothing, which is pulled out for festivals, religious events, and ceremonies of the nobility.

Cities and towns are cramped, close quartered, and built for defense. Most architecture depends greatly on stone and wood, both of which are in great supply in Morvaen, though the builders in the nation have not learned to construct tall buildings or elaborate structures very well. They are as likely to construct on an older foundation or building than define a new one. Viruelandian influences have crept in over the last couple of cycles and it shows in the arrival of courtyards and open faced yards that are atypical of Morvaen architecture. Most buildings and structures appear rather squat, short, and unimpressive if solid and well built.

Repressed in architecture, Morvaenians are very open in food. They enjoy all manner of courses. They have adopted foods from everywhere, and this seems more a truth to defining a style of food for their land than anything. The current vogue is a form of spiced curry served with ghost potatoes, laced heavily with vegetables. Wine is another frequently seen item in

Morvaen, and they are quite snobbish about it.

Morvaen is an oasis of technology in the middle of a desert of magic. Khorsar, their western neighbor loath them for it, seeing it as an affront to the gods. Morvaenians could care less, seeing Khorsarian's affront as weakness to be exploited. Technology is a factor of life and Morvaenians fill it full. Bits of technology shoulder basic needs, whether it be to lift water and move it or to use it in warfare.

### **WELL KNOWN CUSTOMS**

Trade forms the lifeblood of Morvaen but its not for everyone or the light of heart. Trust and ease of business hinges on who you know and time well spent, so finding the right intermediary can make the difference between success and failure. Just giving it the right time to develop matters too. Dress is a function too and wearing the wrong gear for a business call and end you up in the gutter alone.

Its not all about business. Morvaenians love circuses, festivals, and sharing food and rink. The traveling theater is especially loved and welcome in all towns as a diversion and relief from the grind of life. Its said an actor can live nine times nine years on the work to be had in Morvaen. Its draws many a showman, especially those ready to extol the myths and long history of the kingdom.

A keen and interesting festival well remarked by travelers is the First Day Festival. A throwback to their agricultural heritage, it lies on the first day of every change of season and represents a day to drive away malevolent and fearful Faerie, especially from homes. Usually the first born sons/daughters cast some form of growing vegetable, typically beans as they walk around the house or in it, if need be.

Speaking of Faerie, If there is one things Morvaenians despise and fear its Faerie. Its a deep seated cultural fear, a throwback to when a Faerie Throne claimed a broad swathe of what is now Morvaen from the Faalithi. A Morvaen will spit or cast salt, which they tend to keep in pocket, if they think Faerie are around. If this doesn't work, Morvaenians will fight or flee if they must, even abandoning their own homes if needs must. More than one house lies vacant due to Faerie habitation. Even spirits don't breed the same fear as Fae do.

Perhaps the most prevalent thing about Morvaenians, for all their cockiness and angst on life and their need to expand or die, is how they integrate song, music and the weave of history in their culture. They might equally quote a strand of poetry or words of play to make a point; burst into song to make a point or tap a dance to an unseen piper.

### **MYTHS AND QUIRKY THINGS**

A child born with white hair is said to be the mark of the Faerie, as is a child who shows any mastery over water. Both are slain on the spot, without mercy or caution, seen as harbingers of the past.

While Morvaenians follow a wide variety of gods they learn as persistent myth as children. For them, no matter the truths they learn, the myth that people of Morvaen were born in the flash and heat of the cracking of creation is a persistent one. They speak of it when vexed, as

a curse, as a blessing, and just an exclamation.

Morvaenians are particular about their digestion. It almost at the level of obsession and creeps into civilized talk in great and small ways. A lot of visitors to Morvaen scoff at it but to them the order of food is important to get the right juices flowing. In part, its history just like everything else in Morvaen. Hijinec cooking was a dominant method used by Morvaen chefs, and it emphasized and order of eating, starting with the easiest digestible followed by the heavier. Additionally, it isn't the cook that crafts the meal but the person being served, by tuning into requesting what they crave. Most find that odd, since giving into cravings as a norm is usually avoided.

The history of Morvaen and its pursuit of technology is full of bad turns and dark alleys. One such walk on the dark side led to a strange obsession. The original discovery of Morvaenian gun powder was done through cooking. It was mainly consumed by the mortal rich, who thought it a means of finding immortality. It reached a high level of obsession for awhile, until siege of the city Falondé, where, during the fighting, half the nobility and generals in the city sparked and burned from the obnoxious amounts of powder in their blood. It moved from cooking into the vats of the scientists and alchemists soon after but the idea that it could be a path to immortality continues to persist.

## **EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Morvaenian is the language of the land, and even the poorest serf learns to speak Morvaenian as well as write the basic numbers and letters. Those in the merchant and trader classes typically pick up a few other languages, due to the sheer amount of differing people that transit Morvaen for trade. More education is rare though Morvaen has some isolated flowering of academic excellent. These are primarily eclectic centers of learning focused around technology and magic and sometimes both. The recent war for supremacy over the kingdom broke a lot of the establishments when they took sides, helping one faction or another in a pursuit of control. Its been a slow but continued revival helped by the influx of trade and a new breed of pioneers born in the current generation.

## **RELIGION AND POWER**

HIM, its church and vast following faded as rapidly as it exploded into place. Having one's diety present in the night sky tends to be a blessing; intrinsic and primal like the Triune moon gods. Just as the absence of said god is equally as damning when it disappears. In less than a year after their god faded from the night sky, so did the large sprawling organization it founded, the first of several shots that started a long war of succession among the nobility. In the place of HIM grew the old gods of the land as well as mass conversion to the Triune Moon gods of Silver Lady, Shagrath and Skirin.

Spirits, and spiritual issues tend to be earthen, woodland, and elemental in nature. Their presence, while understated is strong. The dead lie easy here, an oddity considering Morvaen's turbulent past.

Technology, now there is where the true power of Morvaen lies. Prior to the recent chaos, several large campuses of learning were dedicated to science and the creation of technology. As is so often the case, ego and politics were the downfalls that kept advancements from

leapfrogging as far forward as they deserved. The recent war for sovereignty forced the campuses to seek sides and fight one another. More than one burned, its knowledge destroyed or driven into underground libraries. Its scattered the learning, though the new king has made inroads to retrieve it in the face of invasion from Hyrkhalia, Vorangé, and Viruelandia.

## **MILITARY**

The basis of all Morvaenian fighting is the pike, lance, and breech-loading flintlock. Morvaen infantry consist of pikemen with chain mail and swords, unarmored gunners with smoothbore flintlocks, and a few elite riflemen snipers and scouts. The pikemen are well trained, and form the greater bulk of the army, while gunners are poorly trained and the smaller portion. A few very special infantry units exist, and use large rifled solid and case shot cannon, cast from iron or steel. It takes several teams of horses and good roads to move these with any decent speed. All larger castles are equipped with bombard cannon, which fire massive stone projectiles or scattershot into invaders.

The premier Morvaen shock weapon and the other large portion of the standing army is the cavalry. The heavy cavalry use the lance, sword, and flintlock pistol; the scout cavalry use sword and pistol only. There is also the Morvaenian mounted infantry who are mounted gunners, but with chain mail, swords, and pistols. They are better trained than the average gunner, moving to key positions during battles, dismounting and firing volleys into the enemy's flank and rear. They typically use a double or triple barrel loaded pistol and carry several.

Morvaen tactics are advanced, at least when it comes to utilizing their pikemen, cavalry and gunpowder units. Their warfighting savvy has been all that has kept them intact in the face of several strong enemies, chiefly Viruelandia and Hyrkhalia.

## **COMMERCE**

Commercially, Morvaen is a crossroads of trade; its geographic position as well as the network of roads and rivers in the country working in its favor to support this. The position has kept open the door to new ideas and products, and created a very cosmopolitan outlook on trade. It has filled the kingdom's purse with many gold sovereigns as well. Morvaen generates a great excess of cereals, agricultural products, and livestock; something it exports in vast amounts. A plentiful abundance of minerals has left it lacking little; it does, however, import many luxury items and large amounts of weapons.

Guilds are a powerful factor in Morvaen, especially the commercial ones. Even in the aftermath of the recent fighting, the Guilds rose up in a strong position. While the well known Guilds have returned to dominate in Morvaen, one exception to their number is the House of Zandar. This Noble House and Guild is a quasi-religious, quasi-military, quasi-noble group with a complete monopoly on firearms in Morvaen. Only they have the secret to the complicated formula and rituals needed to make gunpowder and its famous blasting oil. They keep it secret through a liberal use of spies, bribes, and paid assassins (another Guild, one with which they have great influence). Anyone purchasing gunpowder must register with them, and they keep records everywhere. Few outside of the Morvaen military sources can purchase more than 6 shots worth of powder in a month.



## LANDMARKS OF NOTE

Blood Lake – This lake has a horrible pallid water whose color resembles the deep, black blood of those who are dead. The lake is fed by the rivers of Black Dreams and the Black Blood and lies near Zygro on the edge of the Devil Trees. The lake is the abode of bogeymen, spirits, and great demonic creatures, which slip forth and hunt to feast on the flesh and blood of the living. Most attribute the lake for giving the nearby forest its name. Among the Morvaenians, it is feared more than the Forbidden Mountain or the Mangled Marsh.

Forbidden Mountain – Not much of a towering pile of stone but one more feared than most. It lies within the Sunless Sweep Forest and between the Red Lion and Orichalceum Mountains. The area around its base was once cultivated as a plantation for Grim Teak trees and the remains of it still lay abandoned. Outside of this area, the desolation of the land becomes apparent. Shrubbery is sparse and dry riverbeds can be seen running between stones on the slope. A ring of stones incised with runeweaving and the tongues of Morvaen, Arduinian and dozens more, warning all away from the Faerie presence that lies on the mountain. The stones act to keep anything from exiting forth from the doorway to the realm of a Faerie Throne, though they do nothing to keep anyone from entering.

Giant Woods – Once giants roamed this stretch of trees though the Morvaenians tamed them with gunpowder and pike. Now the dark gloomy place is thick with trolls and even worse things, keen to attack anything that ventures within. Morvaen keeps a small fort just within the western edge between it and Valdona and soldiers make regular forays within for training and to keep the denizens of the forest in check.

Golden Bristle Plain – This is the stretching plain of golden grasses, home to the Great Plains Boars, and the scene of many battles between Hyrkhalla and Morvaen. Its also a great progenitor of Morvaen's grain production and farms lie on the plains Hyrkhalla closed a critical portion of the plain with the construction of the Dragon Wall, and the 2 nations have fought 3 times (the 3 Battles of Dragon Wall) over the area. Somewhere on these beautiful grassy plains lies the legendary Star Graves, where myths say 16 stars came to rest on Khaas, after cycling the Multiverse on one great journey.

Great Circle Plains – Like the Golden Bristle Plain, the Great Circle Plains are the breadbasket of Morvaen, a source of the cereals it exports and the location of the vast herds of livestock they maintain. Its a tame place compared to Golden Bristle, its predators long since hunted down. Its claim to fame is the crumbling concentric berms and low stone ridges that seemed to be omnipresent where ever one goes. A remnant of some past civilization that has puzzled more than one curious sage. Orchoe, one of Morvaen's larger cities, was inspired by the same circles and is known as the circular city for its interlocking, concentric wards.

Mangled Marsh – Where the River of Black Dreams meets the Kort River on the edge of the Trees of Mixed Destiny lies the Mangled Marsh. Fair Faroynych lies at the same crossing and has stone quays and docks that line the river and even the deeper portion of the marsh. Its a forbidding place and few dare its twining depths other than the adventurous or rash. At night it flourishes with queer and quixotic lights, which locals swear are Faerie or worse beings, that entice and lead the foolhardy or the foolish to a sucking, muddy doom.

Orichalceum Mountains – one in the line of the volcanoes that ones rose up and formed both the Orichalceum and the Thunder Mountains. It has a duo of defined cones, Aylaent and Marked Nine, both of which are long dormant. The mountains take their name from the golden-coppery hue more than any metal found within its slopes. Not that the lack of the famed metal had stopped mining in the past; the slopes are littered with mines, abandoned and active. The one most known is the Eater of Life mine. It has become a prison in the last couple cycles for some of Morvaen's most notorious criminals. One they never leave.

Rainbow Mountains – The mountains gets its name from the intense and varied colors of its terrains' stone and sands from heavy mineralization. Morvaen splits the range with Hyrkhalla and its hotly contested back and forth. Both sides use the range for mountain training, usually actively against one another to hone their troops skills. Morvaen has several heavily fortified forts in the mountains, which it mines secretly for some ingredients to its famed gunpowder and blasting oil. Its also one of the few places they have placed mine fields to protect some valleys and entryways into their country. Hyrkhalla in return has cultivated numerous monsters, especially dangerous flying ones, and released them in the range as retaliation.

Red Lion Mountains – An iconic part of Morvaen, and once an emblem of past rulers. It has its place in some song and theater but its grandness has grayed and faded. It has few minerals of value, its stone is common and the forests that cling to its base are hazardous and full of deadly creatures. Its one claim to fame is the massive etching of a winged lion on the southern side of the mountain. Nearly 300 ft in size its lined in vermillion stone, a herald of the times when the mountain was a force in the Morvaen ethos.

River of Black Dreams – The river haunts the poetry, songs and culture of Morvaen, just like it sweeps through to divide the land. Its waters are bracken, like its name, thick with a black algae that blooms in the spring and summer and then dies out in winter and fall. When the river runs dark with the bloom, any drinking of it not born doing so find themselves gripped with dreams most dark indeed. The lucky wake up days later and find out what the madness that gripped them did; those less fortunate never wake up or ever descend from the insanity that overtakes them. Even in the fall and winter months, when the algae is dead and thick like scum on the waters, the river is sullenly shadowed. Many creatures, predominately fish, snake and reptiles of all sorts are found its entire length. They are most active when the algae is dying, coming to the surface to eat. Otherwise they are found only in the deeps, and the river is very deep, especially around the Shydras and Tolne Mountains.

Sunless Sweep Forest – The forest is heavily canopied, thick with close growing trees and heavy, nigh impassable underbrush. Within the Sunless Sweep Forest are many predators – giant flying snakes, khorbs, quarl and such. One must also contend with poisonous insects, disease, toxic plants and snarling underbrush that tries to thorn and swallow travelers.

Thunder Mountains – Even newcomers to Khaas soon hear of the legendary Thunder Mountains, with their unruly inhabitants, great blasting storms, and low clouds. Electricity literally seems to vibrate in the air, and the scent of ozone crawls in the air at the heights. Dwarves and others have dug deep homes in the roots of the mountains, and the Thunder Mountain Dwarves are well known for their technological aptitude and equally irascible natures. Perhaps the most well known peaks of the mountains are the Five Commanders, Master of Rain, and Two Thunders.

## **REGIONAL HISTORY**

Morvaen is an old land, inhabited many times by varying peoples over a great span of time. Among the geography of the kingdom is a multitude of ruins and relics commemorating or reminiscent of these previous people, cultures, and kingdoms. The Morvaen of current times is but a short interlude in the land's long history. Before its present incarnation, the people of this land framed their destiny in the Wars of Life. They accepted the consequence of near total annihilation of all; they were to ensure life would still exist on Khaas. They had only recovered when the chilling Shadow of the One fell on their land. While conquered in land and body, they were never subdued in spirit, and fought its dominion from the first Day of Chains. Modern Morvaen was born in the iron pride that grew from these times, and its mettle is a sturdy and well tested one, hammered on the anvil of history many times by powerful events.

Morvaen is well known as the first nation to invade after the Falohyr findings about the nexus gates that sparked the bloody Wars of When. Morvaen was also the first to invade when the Gods Flood struck Khorsar. It has a history of land grabbing and first strikes to 'protect its interests'. Its central location to so many other nations prevents neighboring kingdoms from effectively moving against it economically, but has not prevented the cluster of wars of the last 20 cycles with Hyrkhalla, Viruelandia, Khorsar, and Ithalos.

Once firmly ruled by an all-powerful Great King, Morvaen has seen the erosion of the crown's power during the debilitating Wars of When, until the greater nobility have almost equal power with the king. The Guilds took power away from both, especially in the advent of prosperity after the end of the Wars of When. The coming of HIM and the growth of power for its priesthood stole power from all the other groups when the priests swayed the people of the land to their bosom.

That all changed when the being that was known as HIM faded from the sky overnight. In the absence of their god the people threw the land into chaos. Out of that anarchy came a return of an old bloodline, that of the Vord Kings. Cheysion ul Vord, took the crown back and with it its old power as he shook of the grip of the guilds, nobles and religions alike. It was a bloodbath, one that really only ended when Hyrkhalla invaded from the east. Roused from their internal fighting, the Morvaenians united behind the new king to fend out an outside invader. The attack was easily repelled; it was more a test of their response than anything else. It cemented the king's power, however, and in the three years afterward it has done nothing but grow stronger, especially with the flow of trade now returned.

## **ARDUIN ETERNAL INFORMATION**

Most people benefit from the culture they are raised in. Unless otherwise directed in the racial write-ups, you select one culture and choose three cultural influences from that culture. Keep the following items in mind as well:

- Some influences cost more than one. Check the write up for full details.
- Where a cultural influence indicates either wealth or items, note them down on your character sheet for when you select your equipment.
- The entries under the cultures define the range of influences common to that culture. These are subject to GM modification – check with them for specifics.
- Where a racial entry is indicated (e.g., Arduin Elf) this indicates a distinct and strong

subculture exists that influences the mainstream of that nation.

- Many cultures give access to one or more languages. Unless otherwise indicated you can use them with full fluency, to include any written form. Any checks required against a language will use REAS checks.
- If you choose 2 or more cultural influences with the bonuses to the same skill, add them together.
- You cannot take opposing cultural influences, like Individualist Nature and Community Spirit.
- You can use one language option to learn to read and write a language you can speak.
- Named skills, like Business or Wilderness, have entries with a number following a plus sign. These are skill ranks. Bonuses are stated as bonuses.
- History entries are Knowledge skill specializations. The Knowledge skill is detailed in the Skills section.
- Culture entries are Culture skill specializations. The Culture skill is detailed in the Skills section.
- Everyone starts with a base Tech Level (TL) 1 unless previously given a higher TL. Any TL noted under the cultures is added to any existing entries.

### **MORVAEN CULTURAL INFO**

- Morvaen Culture +20
- Morvaen History +10
- Read/write & speak Morvaenian and speak 1 other tongue.
- TL +3
- Agriculture [Know] +2, Crime +1, Engineer +1, Intel +1, Military +2, Social +1, Wilderness +2

### **CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Agricultural Heritage  
Battle Mandate  
Cultural Confidence  
Engineer Traditions  
Faerie (Seelie)  
Faerie (Unseelie)  
Feudal  
Mercantile Traditions  
Monarchy  
National Pride

Nobility (Landless)  
Nobility (Minor)  
Plains Dweller  
Recognized  
Religious Heritage  
Religious Pursuits  
Religious Traditions  
Renaissance  
Well Educated