



EN5ider Presents:

The ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Player's Guide Part 4

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OUR HUMBLE AND SPECIAL THANKS TO to the hundreds of gamers who backed the original release of ZEITGEIST on Kickstarter, and to the over one thousand generous patrons of EN WORLD EN5IDER whose support has made this Fifth Edition update possible.

Setting Overview

Most of the action of the ZEITGEIST adventure path occurs in Risur, a subtropical nation with ancient ties to the magic of its land, struggling to adapt to a recent revolution of technology and industry. While the nation's historic capital lies in Slate with its antique castle manors and elite gated villas, the fulcrum of its power is slowly shifting to Flint, an industrial powerhouse benefiting greatly from the nation's need these past few decades for more and more advanced weapons and warships.

It was Risur's traditional enemy Danor—bereft of magic after a cataclysm five centuries past—which began the industrial revolution. Their steam-powered ships and deadly cannon fusillades won them many battles, but the artificers of Flint are combining magic and industry in ways impossible for their enemies, and the tiefling oligarchy of Danor seems content with the land it has acquired.

Many of the other great nations, however, fear what Risur can achieve with the marriage of magic and technology, and King Aodhan of Risur worries they might try to disrupt his nation's safety and prosperity.

Elsewhere, the dwarven homeland Drakr preaches of a nihilist doomsday and sells technomantic arms and war machines to warlords and mercenaries across the land. The clergy of theocratic Crisillyir loathe Danor and its tiefling leaders, and they wield piety as a lash to inflame distrust of what they claim is a godless abomination. Just across a mountain border to Risur's south, the warlike clans of Ber have formed an alliance, which might signal a coming invasion. Even in distant Elfaivar, where the small Risuri colony named Kellandia struggles against settlers from other nations to claim the broken empire's bounty, the natives lash out at these interlopers, unable to forgive a centuries-old grievance still fresh in their long-lived hearts.

Languages and Accents.

If you're interested in giving characters from different nations distinctive accents, here are some guidelines. These suggestions are intended for Anglophones, so if English isn't your native language, other assumed dialects may work better for you.

Risur speaks Primordial, derived from the ancient speech of the original fey titans who ruled the land. Educated people of Risur often speak Common as well. Risuri speakers have English accents (or whatever local variant of English you speak: American, Australian, Canadian, etc.). All PCs gain Primordial as a bonus language.

Risur has a diverse culture, with local elves, gnomes, and halflings who all have their own traditional languages, but even they almost always also speak Primordial. The skyseers and other druidic sects are rumored to have their own secret language.

The language Common, which served a role in Lanjyr similar to Latin in Europe, is spoken in Ber, Crisillyir, and Danor, albeit with some local variations.

Ber mixes Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, and Common, with most state business conducted in Common. Berans have a Spanish accent (or Mexican, if that's easier for you).

Crisillyir speaks Common as well as Dwarvish, with strong Drakran influences. Crisillyiri sound like Eastern Europeans (or perhaps Italians, if that's easier for you).

Danor speaks Common, but its schools and academies are strict in maintaining the language's purity. Danorans sound like the French.

Drakr speaks Dwarvish. Drakrans sound Russian.

Elfaivar speaks Elvish, plus the Common of their conquerors. Elfaivarans should have a non-European accent: perhaps Iraqi, Indian, or Japanese.

The fey of the Dreaming speak Sylvan or Elvish amongst themselves, though most of them also speak Common. They tend to have a sing-song cadence and earthy pronunciation, a bit like someone reciting *Beowulf* in Old English, though smaller fey like pixies just tend to sound high-pitched.

The seldom seen races that live under the sea have a language of their own known as Deep Speech, but their affairs almost never interact with people of the surface.

The languages known as Abyssal and Celestial has only been found in fragments on truly ancient artifacts, decipherable only by magic. No one can be said to truly understand these languages.

Infernal, the language of the fallen Demonocracy, is practically extinct except for curious scholars, a handful of demented cultists, and the warriors of the Clergy who strive to stamp out the last lingering traces of that unholy empire.

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Risur

Every Risuri child knows that before King Kelland, no human nation had ever endured more than a few years in Lanjyr. The mighty nature spirits known today as the fey titans only allowed the elves to walk their domain, and they terrorized all others with beasts and storms and blight. But in 1200 B.O.V. (Before Our Victory), Kelland subdued the lord spirits of field and forest, of marsh and mountain. With their grudging blessings, he established Risur.

The people of Risur offered the spirits tithing and tribute, and eventually lulled them to sleep. What were once uncharted wilds of fierce beasts and tiny enclaves of elves became a prosperous bastion of humanity. In the seventeen centuries since, Risur's rites of rulership have ensured that Kelland's crown only passes to those mighty enough to cow the land's primal spirits should they ever seek to reclaim their domain.

Land and Culture.

Risur is a subtropical country, possessed of vast forests and fertile fields fed by hundreds of rivers and streams which flow from the southern Anthras Mountains to the northern shore of the Avery Sea. Temperatures are warm but comfortable year-round, though a rainy season strikes near the end of what the northern nations consider summer.

Even the poorest Risuri can enjoy fresh fruit all year round. Wealthy foreigners cherish Risur's pineapples, limes, bananas, and massive jackfruit, but most prized are its cocoa and sugarcane, and alcohols made of each. A typical Risuri meal consists mostly of fruit, beans, bread, and fish, with the occasional beef or pork. Factory workers in Flint seldom can afford quality meat, and instead make savory stews by soaking bones and sausages in dark beans. Holiday celebrations often include steaming milk flavored with either chocolate or honey.

Terrain.

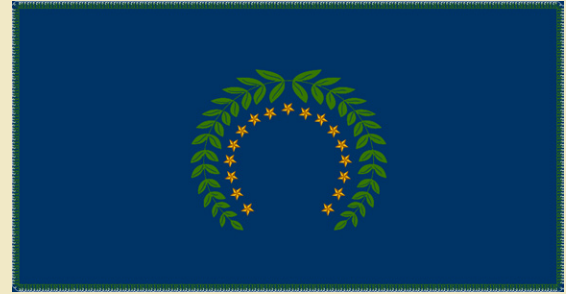
Four main landscapes make up Risur. The northern Avery Coast is dominated by a mix of wooded beaches – where mountainous granite domes rise out of the sea and anchor dry lands – and forested swamps, often referred to by the native Elven word *bayou* – where the country's many rivers sweep soil out into broad floodlands.

The Westlands of Risur are low plains covering most of the western two-thirds of the country, which draw their name from the countless rivers that weave toward the sea like yarn in a cloth. Most towns and farms lie here, though pockets of wild forests and rocky hills create uninhabitable divides between provinces.

The land rises to the south, and in the mid-altitude hills an unusual swamp wriggles across the landscape, known as the High Bayou. Though the hills are uneven, huge numbers of nesting beasts and giant insects have dammed swaths of the land, slowing the rivers that flow out of the mountains and ensuring a steady source for rivers year-round. Few Risuri live here aside from villages of elves who never integrated with the rest of the nation.

Beyond the High Bayou, the rain-carved Anthras Mountains forms a broad border with Ber. Forests cover most of these mountains, though mining in the east has stripped many peaks. Centuries of attacks from Ber have kept many towns from flourishing here,

Kingdom of Risur.



- + **Capital:** Slate
- + **Government:** Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary federal republic
- + **Head of State:** King Aodhan
- + **Official Language:** Primordial
- + **Common Races:** Human 86%, elf 6%, halfling 5%, other 3%.

but numerous old forts dot the King's Road, which runs from the richest mining lands, all the way north to the capital.

Flint, City of Industry.

The industrial powerhouse of Flint sits nestled among dozens of granite peaks along the eastern stretch of Avery Coast. With a rapidly-growing population of over half a million, slums for factory workers have begun to clump along these steep hills, while builders work to clear large sections of rainforest from within the city limits. Small satellite towns cling to the islands outside Flint's harbor, and many foreign nations and businesses have flocked to the city to gain influence in the past forty years.

The ZEITGEIST campaign assumes that the PC party is based out of the Royal Homeland Constabulary branch in Flint.

Slate, the Historic Capital.

Risur's capital of Slate lies on the banks of the Great Delve River, in verdant plains fifty miles from the Avery Sea. It is by far the largest city in the country, with a population of nearly a million people. A half-dozen major highways converge on Slate, including the King's Road. Slate is still the heart of Risur's internal trade and business, though more and more international trade goes through Flint.

For people used to living in the bustle of Flint, the city of Slate appears stately, calm, and perhaps a bit doddering. The Great Delve River, with its steep banks turning it almost into a man-made channel, generally separates the city into the noble west bank and the common east bank.

Six antique castles sit along the inside of a wide bend on the river's west bank, arranged in a pattern originally designed to defend against invasion. Each castle acts as a nexus of a community of elite gated villas, and here live the nobles descended from the many kings and queens Risur has had throughout history. Today the district resembles an overly-manicured flower garden, more pretty than practical.

Across the shore lie dozens of less affluent neighborhoods surrounding the Grand Weft, a massive square where three highways



intersect. Wealthy businesses clump along the Lowland Highway, which leads from the square to docks along the river. The king's residence, Torfield Palace, sits atop a broad grassy hill a mile south of the weft. It is symbolic of the government of Risur that the king lives with the people, and only once he steps down or dies does his family move to the west bank.

Other Cities.

Other prominent Risuri cities include the beleaguered **Shale** on the western coast near the war-wracked Yerasol Archipelago, where druids keep wary watch from sandy barrier islands and shipyards assemble the mightiest sailing vessels in the world; and lumber-rich **Bole** in the Antwalk Thicket southeast of Slate, source of some of the finest food and theater, and host to finely cultivated forest gardens.

Both cities were once capitals of their own smaller nations in ancient times, before joining with Risur, yet they were always connected by water routes. The Great Delve's tributaries start near Bole, and the river only widens and deepens as it passes Slate and eventually pours into the sea near Shale.

A dozen other cities with a hundred thousand or more people dot the coastlines, and a few more flourish along the most traversable rivers, but much of the country's interior is rural.

Transportation.

The numerous rivers across the country hold great potential for trade inland that has not yet been realized. Most trade occurs along the coast, with rivers primarily used to carry lumber downstream to shipyards. Every new king or queen expresses an interest in expanding settlements into the more rural regions, but vast swaths still remain uninhabited.

One development that might change that is the introduction of railroads. Though rail travel is far more prevalent in Danor and Drakr, a few lines have been constructed across Risur, usually traveling perpendicular to the flow of rivers. The most developed line runs from mines in the Anthras Mountains to Flint, helping to feed its hunger for raw industrial materials. Many traditionalists, however, oppose the expansion of the railroad and warn that its churning wheels will anger the native fey.

Race and Religion.

The humans of early Risur outfought or outgrew the native elves, though many elves and half-elves call the land home today. The sub-men races from what is today Ber – dragonborn, gnolls, goblins, kobolds, minotaurs, and orcs – survive in pockets, often as the descendants of slaves taken in old wars, now freed but not accepted. Dragonborn in particular are viewed with suspicion, out of paranoia that they hold a grudge for a Risuri king slaying the last dragon.

Some families of halflings mingle with humans in farming communities, and dwarves similarly in mining towns. Tieflings receive an odd mixture of fear and respect, though common folk tend to believe their influence on the nation is dangerous. Other races are too rare for most people to recognize them, and are generally lumped together with eladrin as being distrusted “fey.”

Risur's main religion is a mix of old human pantheism, elven druidic rites, and reverence for local fey titans who slumber in the earth. Centuries ago many gave worship to the eladrin gods or even archfey who claim to be emissaries of the fey titans, but after the fall of Elfaivar in the Second Victory a cultural shift has taken hold across the whole continent away from fey icons.

For most of Risur's history, their most respected religious leaders were the skyseers, druids who devoted themselves to understanding patterns in the stars. The skyseers offer guidance and occasionally proclaim prophecies to guide kings, lords, and common folks alike. But the skyseers have many sects, and in the past century their prophecies have grown more and more vague. Many still respect them, but they no longer hold the same political power they once did.

Some elements of the millennium-old Clergy faith have taken root in Risur, in particular the Great Man doctrine, which sits well with a people whose first king personally changed the course of history. However, Risuri reject the Clergy's elaborate celestial hierarchy of planar domains and stars, which states the dots in the night sky are actual worlds of their own. To the Risuri, such belief reduces the prominence of the mortal races, instead placing great import on beings from realms no human has ever visited.





Fey and Mortal Realms.

The folk of Risur know that the Dreaming exists, though they might call it the Feywild, the Green Land, the Unseen House, the World Beyond the Looking Glass, or the Happy Hunting Grounds. Most Risuri treat it like an unpredictable neighbor. While human kings rule in the material plane and there are clear cities, nations, hierarchies, and borders, the Dreaming follows rules mortals can only struggle to understand.

Once every few years the Unseen Court sends emissaries to collect the tribute that King Kelland promised the fey titans at Risur's founding, typically made in the form of magic items, prize hounds and horses, or more exotic gifts. In one notable event, a cadre of archfey arrived on the summer solstice and demanded one thousand engraved silver moons before sunrise.

The ultimate desires or motives of the Unseen Court are unknown, but so far their requests have never been onerous. When they are not appeased, however, they retaliate by sending agents to seize infants from cribs, drive wild animals into cities, or call forth impossible weather like flashdroughts and hailstorms of frozen toads.

The most famous manifestation of the Dreaming in Risur is the Great Hunt. Every seventeen days a mass of mounted fey warriors tromp across the entire length of the nation, avoiding cities and sticking to the uncertain borders of civilization and the wilds. The wind carries the stamping of their steeds' hooves, the melodies of their riding sounds, and the baying of their hounds, but they are only ever seen by the light of the full moon.

Many folk charms are said to ward off the unwanted attentions of the fickle fey. Lines of salt block their crossing, iron and the sound of iron bells drives them away, and red liquid – blood, paint, or muddy clay – distracts their attention. They are unsettled by anything with spinning parts, from wagon wheels to the gears of a clocktower, and often try to break such devices as fervently as a man might chase a mosquito. On the other hand, milk or cheese left outside a home will win a fey's favor. Of course, as a fickle lot, fey do not always follow their own rules.

Fey Titans, Archfey, and the Unseen Court.

The fey titans are five creatures of colossal scale and near god-like power, which in their heyday could reshape terrain or alter weather with their will. All the creatures in their domain, from the lowliest bug to the primitive elves who had just learned to craft stone, honored them and catered to their will. When Kelland became the first king of Risur, he challenged the five titans and bested them. Rather than slay them, he made a pact that his people would honor them, but in turn the titans would never attack his nation.

Today, the five fey titans slumber, and on the rare occasion they do awaken, lesser fey quickly seek to appease them to prevent whatever devastation their discontent could cause. For this service, these fey are able to draw upon the power of the titans.

The five titans, known to every child in Risur, are:

- ◆ **She Who Writhes**, a kraken that slumbers on the ocean floor. There are whole societies of merfey and far more alien aquatic life that tap her power to control the water ways. The archfey Beshela, for instance, ensures Risuri ships can travel safely in exchange for regular gifts of appeasement.

Sword of the Black Needles.

Five centuries ago, as Lanjyr was reeling from the fall-out from the Great Malice, the Voice of Rot rose up against Risur and cast a smoky pall across the sun. The king at the time, Dukain, was a mighty but aged wizard who wielded magic through his sword. He traveled to a mountain ridge overlooking the High Bayou, known as the Black Needles, and there he battled the fey titan, which had taken the form of a towering anaconda of smoke and peat.

The king battled the titan high into the Black Needles, and after three days neither side could force the other to surrender. Realizing he could not defeat the titan and thus was unworthy of his crown, Dukain cast aside his sword and abandoned the battle. The titan, in its fey logic, saw that it and the king were equally matched, so when Dukain ceased to fight, so did the titan. Dukain yielded his crown to his chosen successor, the titan returned to its slumber, and Risur was saved.

Scholars fear that should the lost Sword of the Black Needles ever be recovered, it would signal a resumption of battle for the fey titan, and once again threaten the existence of Risur.

- ◆ **Father of Thunder**, a many-horned gazelle-like herd beast that fell asleep and has been coated in a grassy plain. Farmers make offerings to him for good weather, which are gathered by grigs and other field fey, who then herd the various wild animals that the Great Hunt will chase every 17 days.
- ◆ **The Voice of Rot**, a white serpent who controls swamps and dead animals. He is roused from his slumber most often, since there are few mortals who live in his domain and think to leave him offerings.
- ◆ **Ash Wolf**, a white-furred hunter who rests in a forest cave with her pack. She's said to awaken during great forest fires, so woodsmen are encouraged to gather brush and burn it before they go hunting.
- ◆ **Granny Allswell**, a corpulent gremlin snoozing somewhere in the mountains. Her gremlin offspring harass miners because they don't want the noise of digging to wake her. They likewise hate loud machinery and tend to break it if they can.

Archfey, meanwhile, are simply fey of substantial power, all of them long-lived, most of them humanoid. Some are servants of the fey titans, other simply mighty warriors or mages who have a domain of their own in the Dreaming analogue of Risur.

Then there is the Unseen Court. The Court represents feykind in negotiations with Risur, but their internal politics are nearly impossible for outsiders to fathom, having as much to do with style and emotion as with any tangible effect. The actual members of the Court are, true to their name, never seen except in truly exceptional circumstances, but they have many agents. Some vekeshi mystics claim to speak for the Court, but there is practically no way to confirm or deny this.

Sometimes the archfey serve the Court, but their interests do not always align. The common metaphor Risuri use to understand the affairs of the fey is that the Court are the nobility, and the archfey are wealthy land-owners. It's much like politics in the real world, except with more giving men donkey heads and tricking people into falling in love by sniffing poison flowers.



KING AODHAN OF RISUR



DUCHESS ETHELYN OF SHALE



CATHERINE ROMANA

GOVERNOR ROLAND STANFIELD
OF FLINT

Monarchy and Government.

Risur's current monarch, **King Aodhan**, rules from Torfield Palace in Slate. Now in his seventies, Aodhan was only thirty when the previous king chose him as his successor. Aodhan had distinguished himself in the Third Yerasol War against Danor, performing feats of strength and heroism most today assume are just tall tales.

Aodhan has always been fascinated by Danor's technology, ever since he lured its first steam-powered warship into a kraken's reef lair, waited for the crew to abandon ship, then beat back the kraken and single-handedly piloted the vessel—still bearing scars of the kraken's tendrils—to the harbor of Flint. (Or at least, that's one story of how it happened.) Once he took the crown, Aodhan pushed for industrial investment to keep up with Danor, but regional governors forced him to keep foreign technologies out of Slate. Flint became the next most obvious choice.

King Aodhan's aged wife died four years ago. Though heredity and marriage has little impact on national succession, many wonder whether the king will seek a new bride so late in life. Despite his great strength in his youth, the king grows weaker each year.

Many suspect he will name his younger sister **Duchess Ethelyn of Shale** as his replacement, and indeed she has distinguished herself as a leader in the Fourth Yerasol War that ended seven years ago, even though her city nearly fell to Danor. She is rumored to have close ties to the Unseen Court, and acts as Risur's ambassador to its nearest neighboring nation. However, her coronation would be the first in Risur's history that transferred the crown between two blood relatives.

Politics.

Twenty-three governors direct the affairs of Risur's various provinces. Most of these are of noble lineage, descended from one of the nation's previous kings. Noble governance tends to follow family lines, unlike the crown. Each governor sends several representatives to the national Parliament, which handles the details of implementing the king's decrees and can with a supermajority overrule them. Various officers of the court and of Parliament direct specific sub-bureaucracies and agencies to handle affairs involving the nation's commerce, culture, defense, and so on.

Perhaps the most prominent noble these days is the headline-catching **Catherine Romana**, a descendant of a previous queen and ally of Duchess Ethelyn. She stridently opposes Danoran-inspired industries, and prefers to counter that new technology with

arcane innovations. She is rumored to be planning a major announcement later this year, and has been seen in the company of brilliant researchers from Pardwight and Mitchell University.

One famous exception to the power of the nobility is **Roland Stanfield**, the deva governor of Flint. Five hundred years ago he witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama, and in various reincarnations he has called Risur his home ever since. Forbidden by the rites of rulership from pursuing the crown because he is no longer precisely 'mortal,' Stanfield was long content to govern Flint and its relatively insignificant province of farmers, miners, and fishermen. When King Aodhan decreed Flint would become the seat of Risur's industry, however, the old deva eagerly took to the challenge, claiming he was excited to try something new after so long.

Royal Homeland Constabulary.

With the recent influx of foreign technologies and therefore foreign influence, thirty years ago King Aodhan ordered the formation of a new government agency to protect the traditional identity of the Risuri homeland. Within a decade this mission had morphed into investigating significant threats to the nation, particularly those involving technology. Today the Royal Homeland Constabulary uses a combination of investigators, spies, and warriors to root out, undermine, capture, and if necessary kill any groups who endanger Risur.

Though most activity occurs in Flint, officially the Constabulary's central chamber is based out of Slate and headed by **Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill**, who was a commander in the Fourth Yerasol War. His Lordship's greatest success as director was presiding over the apprehension of a group of Drakran necromancers attempting to animate undead dragons in the Anthras Mountains.

Regardless of where they are based, agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary have broad jurisdiction throughout the nation, and enjoy mild immunity while overseas when acting in an official, acknowledged capacity.

History and Place in the World.

Risur paved the way to nationhood, and many others followed the same path. By placating the dominant fey titans of Lanjyr they turned the continent into a land for mortals. The Risuri people have always respected the spirits and the fey they share the land with, but they believe the era of those beings has rightfully passed.

While the northern nations waged holy wars between the Clergy and the Seedism faith of Elfaivar,

Risur was preoccupied defending its borders from the sub-men of what is modern Ber. The dragons who terrorized the lands south of the Anthras Mountains feared the progress of civilization, and would often gather armies of savages to raid or assault Risur. It is believed that two centuries ago King Boyle slew the last great dragon of Ber, after which attacks from the south finally faded.

No sooner had Risur found safety to its south than did Danor arise in power to the north. Risur and Danor have warred for nearly two hundred years, mostly using the islands of the Yerasol Archipelago as a proxy battle ground, in a series of four Yerasol Wars. Occasional waves of conquest have lapped over each nation's shores, and today the two countries have more in common than either likes to acknowledge. The current king assumed the throne at the end of the Third Yerasol War, four decades ago, and he presided over the fourth, in which Risur lost much land against the threat of Danor's superior technology.

Leaders of Risur's merchant guilds, its military, and its noble families are grateful for the stability, but fear a resumption of hostilities. They have taken advantage of the new international cordiality in order to catch up with Danor's technological revolution. Whether the next threat comes from Danor or another foe, Risur is arming.

Ber

Ber's history is tied to dragons. Until just a few centuries ago, the land was in constant flux, with different dragons battling for supremacy while the mortal races served as their slaves. Tribes of dragonborn, gnolls, goblins, kobolds, minotaurs, and orcs ascended to tiny nation states under the banners of their draconic overlords, built cities and strip-mined mountains to gather wealth for these kings, and eventually collapsed into chaos when their rulers fell. Newborn nations conquered each other like a ring of serpents devouring their tails, and whenever a dragon had willpower enough to unite all of Ber, it would inevitably make the mistake of pressing into Risur or Elfaivar, and be slain in retaliation.

Despite the endless turnover of rulers, Ber did manage to establish a few long-lasting cities—Ursaliña, Reo Pedrecoso, and the capital Seobriga, among others—and develop a shared culture, often thanks to wandering minotaur bards who were seen as neutral. After the death of the last dragon king Inatch the Hex-Eater two hundred years ago, Ber splintered into racial and tribal factions. Only in the past forty years has a semblance of unity returned to the land.

Kingdom of Ber.



- + **Capital:** Seobriga
- + **Government:** Absolute monarchy
- + **Head of State:** Bruse Shantus
- + **Official Language:** Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin
- + **Common Races:** Orc 26%, gnoll 18%, goblin 16%, minotaur 10%, kobold 8%, dragonborn 5%, other 17%.

Le Roye Bruse.

Four decades ago, an orc warlord, Vairday Bruse, declared himself king of Ber after he managed to conquer the three largest cities in the land. Risur expected an imminent invasion, but instead the new king opened diplomatic channels with Danor, asked for help writing a constitution, and arranged for the construction of factories. The wealth from this new industry helped keep tribal warlords cooperative, and the work gave would-be soldiers something to do with their energy.

Dubbed “Le Roye,” a Danor diminutive for “the king,” Bruse managed to keep peace until his death five years ago, and had the foresight to arrange a peaceful transition of power. He took his cue from Risur, and passed the crown to a respected ally who was not a blood relative; indeed he was a minotaur, not even an orc. The new king kept his predecessor's name in place of the typical “king,” and so was crowned **Bruse Shantus**.

Though there are still factions in the Anthras Mountains who refuse to bow to the new monarchy, many old enemies are now clamoring for a share of this new prosperity. Against nearly everyone's predictions, it appears that Ber will endure as a unified nation.

Executores dola Liberta.

One of Vairday Bruses's more contentious programs was to aggressively end the practice of slavery except as a punishment for criminals. He enlisted bureaucrats from Crisillyir to reform the country's legal system and track convicts, and then created a law enforcement group of warriors and priests, the Enforcers of Freedom.



VISCOUNT INSPECTOR
NIGEL PRICE-HILL



BRUSE SHANTUS



The Tyrant's Eye

In 700 B.O.V., the dragon Yerev controlled a small empire, cowing his enemies with the power of his unblinking third eye. It was said this pale, scarred orb could slay any creature it could see. On a moonless night, an army of thousands rose up against the dragon tyrant and managed to slay the beast, but when he collapsed, his eye remained open, killing any who crossed its path.

Nearby townsfolk carefully surrounded Yerev with all his treasure to appease his spirit, then carted the soil from the nearby hills to bury his corpse, finally blinding his eye. Supposedly the only sign of Yerev's cairn today is a field of lush potato flowers. Only the most foolish or desperate seek the treasure, lest they inadvertently unearth the deadly eye.

Comprised primarily of women, the *executores dola liberta* are officers of the king, tasked with wandering the country and finding rich or powerful people who abuse their station by forcing others into slavery or slave-like conditions. Such wrongdoers they thrash brutally, dragging them into public locations and pummeling them with royally-empowered fists or staves while proclaiming the person's crimes.

They inflict similar punishments on those who try to quash protests, silence vocal complaints, forbid undesired religious practice, or hoard wealth from those they tax rather than providing value for their money. Membership in the Enforcers is strictly monitored, and those few who hypocritically abuse their own authority suffer excruciating public torture, then are executed.

Remnants of the Dragon Kings.

Ber cities tend toward stout, vertical buildings with prominent rooftop perches. Dragons no longer alight these roofs, but they have become part of Ber's romantic conception of its own identity. Many festivals are celebrated on these old draconic perches, and many inventors from Crisillyir come to Ber to study winged flight and test glider designs. Window cleaners can commonly be seen swinging from colorful ropes tethered to high rooftops, singing of lovers meeting to watch the sunset from the top of the city.



BRAKKEN OF HEFFANITA

In the countryside, the dragon kings left an even more obvious mark: megafauna. Beasts of great hunger and great size, dragons protected herds of elephants, massive cattle, and deer as large as houses, forbidding their enslaved mortals from hunting the creatures. Huge swaths of Ber are still relatively uninhabited because these megafauna and the giant bears and tigers that hunt them pose too great a threat for cities to endure. Even more deadly are the pets that were bred for the dragon tyrants: giant bipedal reptiles known as tyrannosaurs.

Some ranches have managed to domesticate megafauna, which can feed a whole village for days. Wealthy foreigners pay huge amounts for the privilege of serving such a beast at their banquets.

Scars and Loyalists

The nation bears the scars of many mines. Sadly, the wealth from these mines is mostly lost, hidden away in the lairs of paranoid dragon kings, and booby trapped even after the tyrants' deaths to prevent their recovery.

Along the southern coasts, unincorporated tribes composed primarily of gnolls refuse to join the nation. Bruse Shantus has cheerfully appointed one gnoll as his Minister of Rebellion, and claims this shows his graciousness to his enemies. In truth, the gnolls are simply too numerous to ignore, and they have a violent and messianic faith in the eventual return of their slain dragon tyrant Gradiax, the Steel Lord.

By contrast, the citizens of Ber's cities love to keep trophies of long-dead dragons. In the capital Seobriga, the courthouse has integrated the skeleton of the dead tyrant Widoreva into its décor.

The Panoply.

This young movement consists of a few educated Berans who have proclaimed themselves scholars. Inspired by the new - and comparably peaceful - cooperation among the many races of Ber, they have begun to found schools throughout their nation. There they educate students in matters of art and culture from around the world, pursuits normally mocked by those who follow the old tribal ways.

A few traveling professors from the Panoply schools have made a splash among the dockers in Flint, and every year more foreign artists and poets attend the parties of wealthy Beran nobles who are eager to appear cultured.

The Ursaliña Bear Games.

The mountain city of Ursaliña hosts a strange tradition, wherein those who wish to act as ambassadors of Ber hold proxy battles using trained short-haired bears, each standing a dozen feet high at the shoulder. A great coliseum, once used for entertaining blood-thirsty dragon tyrants, now hosts these vicious battles, which occur every few months; different days determine the positions of different ambassadorships.

Thousands turn out to watch the games, which are surrounded with grand pomp and much feasting. The fights between the bears are seldom to the death, because each beast is worth a small fortune. One game five years ago, however, witnessed an event so unbelievable that word of it spread throughout Lanjyr.

Minotaur merchant **Brakken of Heffanita** was competing to be named Ber's ambassador to Orithea, a tiny war-torn nation between Danor and Drakr, when his dire bear's throat was mangled in the arena. Brakken leapt into the arena and stepped between his bear and its opponent, staring into the other bear's eyes. To the shock of the crowd, the other bear hesitated in its attack, then fled, as if intimidated by a person half its size. Bruse Shantus gladly named Brakken an ambassador.

Perhaps even more unexpected, two years after Brakken began his ambassadorship in Orithea, the country's civil war ended, and it came under the protection of Danor. Today Orithea is part of the rail route along the north Avery Coast, and it is enjoying unprecedented prosperity.

This past year, Brakken competed to become ambassador to Risur, and won without any challengers.

Fear of the Clergy.

Ber has never had any close ties to Clergy religion, for it was insulated by its neighbors. Some eladrin sought refuge in Ber after the Second Victory, and brought with them great distrust of the Clergy. Ber's religions are a disjointed mish-mash of different

tribal beliefs, involving hundreds of gods and spirits without any unifying doctrine.

Recently, however, preachers from Crisillyir have begun to visit Ber, and a few have set up missions to spread their faith. Some of these have been met by violence retaliation, including one incident where an Enforcer of Freedom tossed a battered priest into a rowboat and told him to return home after the man's church abducted several children from a nearby village under the auspices of teaching them.

Ber has seen what the Clergy can do to a nation when they disagree with its faith. Especially since the Bruse became so friendly with Danor – itself deemed heretical by the church – many in Ber fear that Crisillyir might someday invade in a bid to forcibly convert them.

Other Nations

Risur and Ber are but two of the national powers at play in the world of ZEITGEIST. The remaining realms – Crisillyir, Danor, Drakr, Elfaivar, and the planes – will appear in Part 5 of the ZEITGEIST Player's Guide.

