

# Glorantha

## THE SECOND AGE



# The Abiding Book



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# INTRODUCTION

*All gods are unto me. None are false yet none are true. I have many aspects and these you see in manifestations that others have named but none correctly. The only truth is that perceived through Solace and Joy which is attained through the singular path. The rejection of the many reveals The One. Embracing the many divides the soul and divides the path to Solace and Joy.*

*Bring unto me the Many. Make this the object of your light and reason.*

— *The Abiding Book, Chapter One, Canto Eight.*

If anything defines the God Learners of the Middle Sea Empire it is this extract from their holiest manuscript: The Abiding Book. Here the Invisible God, speaking through the words of his prophet, Malkion or Makan, tells that all gods, whatever their pagan names, are all aspects of the One God, the True God, the singular god and the creator.

The Middle Sea Empire's religious goal is to unite the myriad myths and gods into a single philosophy: the monomyth. In a world where the actions of the many gods are highly visible, and their myths palpable manifestations, this is no easy task because it requires the dissembling of many faiths, reconciling each with the truth that there are not many gods but one, single, supreme being.

Yet if this was the *only* purpose of the God Learners they would have remained an obscure sect on an obscure island. In fact the pursuit and formulation of the monomyth is a recent addition to the God Learners' history. The Jrusteli were in possession of a mighty empire even before realising that the pursuit of the monomyth was core to their true purpose. Like any empire the Middle Sea Empire combined ambition with expansion, trade with battle and diplomacy with brute force before The Abiding Book revealed their wider purpose. Jrusteli scholars postulate that The Abiding Book came into being only because the foundations of empire had been laid. Had the Jrusteli remained a timid, introverted nation The Abiding Book, the Word of the Invisible God, might have been revealed elsewhere or even not at all.

The appearance of The Abiding Book therefore completed the Middle Sea Empire's grand plan and clarified its immense and cataclysmic direction.

This book delves deep into what the Middle Sea Empire is, its structures, its plans, its culture and how The Abiding Book ties all these disparate strands together. It is an examination of empire.

It is also, of course, a resource for Gloranthan adventures using the *RuneQuest* Core Rules. Within these pages you will find a detailed explanation of God Learner culture and learn just what it is to play a God Learner Adventurer. It is best compared with *Races of Glorantha* but with a sharply defined focus. The structure is as follows:

## The Essence of God Learners

The nature and philosophy of the Middle Sea Empire: confirming certain truths and dispelling certain lies. This chapter attempts to explain a people who are often, gravely, misinterpreted and misunderstood.

## Myths of the Middle Sea Empire

How the Middle Sea Empire, through Malkionism and other faiths, explains the world; its fundamental myths, their history and how these relate to wider Gloranthan mythologies.

## The Middle Sea Empire Worldview

The Empire Explained: its structure, its extent, its functions and its goals. This chapter also seeks to dispel certain falsehoods about how the God Learners see the world and how other cultures of the world see them.

## God Learner Adventurers

A more detailed treatment of God Learner Adventurer creation with expanded options, background events and community rules.

## Orders, Cults and Factions

An examination of the many, many sorcery orders, sub-cults, beliefs and political factions at work in the Empire. This chapter builds on the Malkioni sorcery orders described in *Cults of Glorantha*.

## The Mechanics of Empire

Detail concerning the structure of the imperial government and the God Learner military apparatus, plus an overview of key God Learner events, charting the empire's rise and development.

## WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

Three volumes will be useful:

*Glorantha: The Second Age* – For detail on the incredible world of Glorantha.

*Cults of Glorantha* – For detail on the sorcery orders fundamental to the Empire.

*RuneQuest Core Rulebook* – For creating God Learner Adventurers.

### A Note on Terminology

Not all Malkionists are God Learners. Not all Jrusteli are God Learners. Not all Malkionists or Invisible God worshippers are members of the Middle Sea Empire...

However, for the sake of simplicity, assume that the terms Jrusteli, Malkionist and God Learner refer to citizens of the Middle Sea Empire – but remember that the distinction is far more complex than the terminology may suggest.

# THE ESSENCE OF GOD LEARNERS

*Unto yourselfs, say this: There is only one, true God and Malkion is his prophet. Repeat this in your heart at the going down of the sun and in the dawn, and you will embark upon the path to Solace and Glory.*

— *The Abiding Book, Chapter One, First Canto.*

The Middle Sea Empire extends from Pamaltela in the south, through the imperial seat of Jrustela, up through Seshnela, across to Esrolia and Kethaela, north through Ralios and eastwards, along the Genertelan coast, across to Kralorela and the eastern isles. It held sway in Fronela for a time but the Hrestolists of Loskalm rebelled and Fronela is no longer considered part of the great and mighty God Learner Empire.

## WHAT THE GOD LEARNERS ARE

As with all empires the Middle Sea Empire includes many faiths, many beliefs and many conflicting views. A Malkionist of Jrustela views the Invisible God and Malkion differently to a Malkionist of the Esvulari and a Hrestolist of Loskalm.

The empire was initially created out of trade rather than any over-riding desire to impose Malkionist doctrine. And, in the beginning, there was no such thing as a 'God Learner'. But, as is the wont with empires, beliefs and attitudes became exported commodities along with trade goods: it was inevitable that Malkionism would spread and become the over-riding principle for continued expansion.

Whilst many nations of Glorantha were undoubtedly conquered with arms some were not and joined the Middle Sea Empire peacefully,

for trade reasons, and gradually came to accept and integrate the principles of Malkionism into their existing faiths, either merging them together (as with the Esvulari who Malkionised the old gods of the Storm Tribe) or allowing Malkionism to replace their legacy faith. The rise of the Middle Sea Empire was by no means one long religious crusade; and the average Middle Sea Empire citizen is not a raving proselytiser who denies the pantheons of other cultures; rather he belongs to a powerful, sea-faring nation culture that has brought wealth and rich cultural diversity to his doorstep and reveres Malkion privately, just as the first canto of the first chapter of the Abiding Book instructs him to do so.

Yet the Middle Sea Empire is characterised by certain traits that help define its nature. These are broadly as follows:



## Curiosity

The people of the empire's heartlands – Seshnela and Jrustela – are a naturally curious race. Their curiosity extends into all spheres: commerce, culture, magic, religion, warfare, philosophy and, particularly, myth. Myth is perhaps the most important. All cultures in Glorantha know and understand the daily importance of myth but tend to ignore or reject the myths of foreign cultures. The people of the Middle Sea Empire, on the other hand, seek to understand all myths, of all cultures, because there is a commonly held belief that all myths, no matter how diverse or contradictory, have a single point of origin and have evolved culturally and magically. As the empire strengthened this curiosity to understand, and then manipulate, myth led to the rise of the term God Learner – but it was there from the very start. However the empire demonstrates insatiable curiosity in all things and has always, culturally, asked a variety of questions – none of which are found in the Abiding Book but are found in many philosophical works of the great Jrusteli scholars:

- Who am I?
- Who are you?
- Who will I/you/we become?
- Why do we do this?
- Why did you do that?
- What do you believe?
- Why is that different?
- What is over there?
- What is there that we cannot see?
- How can I change things to make them more like the things I recognise and accept?

All of these are open questions that seek to gain an informed response and thus knowledge: few God Learners ask closed questions, especially of themselves and the tendency for citizens of the Middle Sea Empire to ask a barrage of questions of anyone new they meet, or any new place they visit, is a culturally defining quality.

## Discovery

Coupled with curiosity discovery is a hallmark of Jrusteli civilisation. Only the Waertagi travelled more by sea; only a handful of isolated HeroQuesters have travelled more into myth. The Middle Sea Empire has made more discoveries: geographical, logical, magical, mystical and mythical, than any other civilisation since the God Time. These discoveries, and the innovations leading from them, will far outlast them. In ages to come people will gleefully pursue and hoard God Learner artefacts and knowledge despite the eventual fate of the Middle Sea Empire or the horrors wrought on Glorantha.

## Recklessness

There is little doubting the recklessness of the Jrusteli: immersion in sorcery without the immortal wisdom of the Brithini; entering and tampering with myths that are not their own; travelling to Glorantha's four corners without understanding what lies there; challenging not one but every contemporary empire in the whole of the Glorantha for supremacy. Even the mighty Empire of Wyrms' Friends or the haughty Dara Happans have not ventured far into places such as Pamaltela and Vormain; neither have they sought to enter and manipulate myth. None have engaged on such far-reaching crusades against their enemies or their own people; and neither have they won and lost such large dominions as the Jrusteli.

The recklessness of the God Learners is born from all their desires and cultural traits. It will be their undoing, too.


## Zeal

God Learners are a diligent people. The Middle Sea Empire is founded on a meticulous bureaucracy, high levels of literacy, codification of practice, custom, tradition and law, and standardised systems relating to measurement in all things. Although the level of zeal varies from one person to another, it is a culturally defining trait for an imperial citizen to consider what the rules/codes/laws are pertaining to a particular situation and attempt, wherever possible, to abide by them. Individual and local interpretations are tolerated but not usually encouraged. Standardisation and continuity are the hallmarks of empire. The empire's zeal has allowed for its rapid expansion and brought sense to those dominions where a unit of measurement might have been determined by the local king or chief and vary from one ruler to the next.

The logical extension of this, though, is the kind of zealotry that causes the empire to be disliked, distrusted and hated. The imperial way is always the right way. The actions of the empire, no matter how extreme or hurtful, are done for the right reasons and a just cause. Things that differ are inherently flawed or inherently wrong. Look to the name of the empire's feared army: The Rightness Army. The first crusade was the Rightness Crusade. God Learners – Jrusteli in particular – believe they are right in all things and the existence of the Abiding Book, written by the Invisible God's own hand, simply entrenches this zealotry.

## Silos

God Learners adore silos: that is, everything in its right place, correctly defined, with no cross contamination. Of course, where religion is concerned the belief is that there should be a



single silo with the Invisible God central to it; but in matters such as politics, bureaucracy and the military, most agencies work as independent units, self-governing and regulating, with regular communication but necessarily decision-making, between these disparate silos. The end result is incredibly large, sprawling, confusing, monolithic organisations that operate under a general veneer of standardisation but, in reality, operate to their own rules, often unwritten, and own conventions, often contradictory. Witness, for instance, the many sorcery orders and schools of the empire. The Abiding Book is very clear on how sorcery orders should work and what they can and cannot magically access from its pages. However in practice each sorcery order is subtly different and there is no single authority to regulate and police them. Even the mighty True Malkioni Church, the main cult of the empire, has no central control over any of the many sorcery orders; indeed, its own nature is composed of many different agencies and silos, often working independently and at odds.

The empire, even before the appearance of the Abiding Book, always worked in this way but became even more silo-like in the 640s to 650s when the Abiding Book was copied 13 times and distributed. The owners of each copy could not help but make individual corrections and alterations. Thus, no copy of the Abiding Book resembles another 100 percent: there are always variations. And, because the copies of the Abiding Book acted as the basis for the existing sorcery orders, diversion was assured. A further compounding factor is that each sorcery order then works from its own Grimoire, which is an extract of a copy of the Abiding Book – and each extract has been subject to further local and personal changes, clarifications, deletions and additions.

## WHAT THE GOD LEARNERS DO

The Middle Sea Empire perpetuates by fulfilling multiple agendas. These usually complement one another, cementing alliances between disparate power groups, but sometimes – often – come into conflict. There are several reasons why the empire is successful in this regard when, ordinarily, the pursuit of plurality should doom it to failure:

### The Agenda of Conquest and Will

The primary agenda for the empire is known as the Agenda of Conquest and Will. It works to certain precepts that have guaranteed its success.

**Absolute conviction in its actions:** The Middle Sea Empire is never less than confident and frequently arrogant but it also knows its limitations. The basis of the empire is scholarly rather than social and since its earliest times great stock has been

placed in study, logic, calculation and risk assessment. When the emperor declares a crusade he has the coin to pay for it, the soldiers to prosecute it, the supply lines to support it and a clear goal at the end of it. God Learners rarely do anything without an absolute conviction in their capabilities and absolutely the right resources to meet with success. One might term it a ‘can do’ attitude: but the real clue lies in the Western languages originated by the Brithini but adopted and promoted by the Middle Sea Empire. Nowhere in any of the Western languages is there a word meaning ‘impossible’. There are words for 17 different levels of possibility and over 40 to describe measures of probability but none that mean ‘this cannot be done’. Neither the Brithini nor the God Learners believe that they can be constrained and this belief fuels their conviction.

**Infrastructure:** Wherever the Middle Sea Empire lays-down roots, it works to a specific pattern that is designed to rapidly establish an infrastructure that supports further expansion. That infrastructure works to the following broad principles:

- *Pretext:* The Middle Sea Empire has to have a reason for being somewhere. It does not simply invade because it can. It will certainly engineer pretext if this is required but largely it bides its time and mobilises when its arrival, victory and continued presence can be spun positively – both to the imperial heartlands and the people just conquered.
- *Hearts and Minds:* The Middle Sea Empire might wage bloody war to secure its position and it has indulged in its fair share of massacres but once the initial conflict has ended, with the majority of resistance quelled, it is quick to offer those now within its domain as many of the benefits of empire as it can and as swiftly as it can. It will share secrets; it will teach sorcery to those who had previously never encountered it; it will tolerate local gods (until it has had a chance to introduce Malkionism and tamper with prevailing myths to ensure its acceptance). In short, once the military battle is through, the public relations battle begins – and it is prosecuted with all the stamina, vigour and ingenuity of any military campaign.
- *Rule of Law:* The Middle Sea Empire never allows any of its territories to endure a power vacuum or fall into a state of lawlessness: down that path lies chaos and Chaos. It acts swiftly to impose a working rule of law and a judicial machinery geared towards supporting the battle for hearts and minds and showing the benefits of Jrusteli civilisation.
- *Rebuilding:* The empire rebuilds what it destroys and rebuilds with speed and quality. That it also rebuilds in a hybrid of Jrusteli and local styles simply reinforces the idea that the God Learners are here to stay.

## The Monomyth Agenda

The most famous agenda of the empire is *magical*: its sorcerers wish to expand their knowledge and power through exploration into, and exploitation of, the so-called pagan religions of Glorantha. The central aim of this agenda is the creation of a Monomyth; a single, unified explanation of all existing religions within a metaphysical framework that explains and rationalises competing and contradictory doctrine. Many wrongly assume that the purpose of the Monomyth is to convert all pagans to Malkionism: this is certainly a goal but not necessarily a driving goal. Enlightened Jrusteli scholars know that all religions can be traced back to certain mythical events and root causes. The Monomyth is an attempt to show how the gods of similar cultures are actually one and the same god (simply described in different ways and given different names) and that all gods ultimately relate to the One True Invisible God. Thus, all storm gods are Orlanth; all sun gods are Yelm. Storm and Sun gods exist because the Invisible God has allowed them to exist even though one could worship the Invisible God and gain all powers and magic these individual gods offer through discretionary worship.

Within the Agenda of the Monomyth are certain doctrines, which are as follows:

- *Conversion*: Some religious orders seek the wholesale conversion of pagan worshippers to the Malkioni way. They subscribe to the Doctrine of Conversion and are called **Missionaries**. This agenda conflicts with the interests of God Learner sorcerers who are at the heart of the Monomyth agenda. If the pagans were to be converted en masse, the God Realm might go away and, with it, the source of the magic they have been perfecting for centuries.
- *Judicious Use*: Some sorcerers concede that the pagans ought to be converted – but only after their secrets have been thoroughly plumbed. The false gods are part of the Invisible God's creation and he must surely intend for his followers to make use of their gifts before eradicating their worship. This is the Doctrine of Judicious Use; its proponents are nicknamed **Postponers**.
- *Realism*: Other sorcerers argue that, while wholesale conversion is ideal in principle, the pagans are so truculent and mired in their false beliefs that the goal is unrealistic in practice. One should instead work to bring light to the few good and receptive souls among the pagan horde and allow the rest the perdition they so fervently seek. Those who espouse this school of thought are called the **Realists** and they are the driving core behind the overarching work of the Monomyth.
- *Inherent Selection*: Yet another doctrine has it that pagans are cursed by the Invisible God and do not deserve his light. To attempt to convert them is to disobey his will. One should instead give thanks that one was lucky enough to be born a Malkioni and thus be eligible for God's Solace. This is the doctrine of Inherent Selection; its exponents are called **Inherents**.
- Finally there is a school of fence-sitters who lament that this controversy was not current in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, so that it might have been addressed by the Abiding Book, which conclusively settled all doctrinal disputes active at that time. To avoid error, they say, one must do nothing on the matter, except pray for revelation in the form of a new chapter of the Abiding Book. This is the Doctrine of Inerrant Delay; its exponents are the **Delayers**.

Despite their notoriety, sorcerers make up only a fraction of the Empire. For most ordinary people, its central goal is *religious*. Its duty is to continue the work of the Rightness Army, to promote the orthodox practice of Malkionism and to stamp out heresy.

## The Agenda of Magic

Of the Empire's four driving agendas, the one providing the greatest opportunity for Adventurers is the accumulation of magical knowledge. The God Learners' hunger for information about pagan gods, mystical traditions and shamanic practices. As far as they are concerned, knowledge is treasure. This pertains especially to the myths of pagan cultures. To the God Learners, stories are power.

## Otherworlds

The God Learners are responsible for formulating the current understanding of the relationships between the known planes of existence: essentially there are five sets of worlds; the mundane world, also known as the Inner World, the God's Plane, the Spirit World, the Sorcery Plane and the Hero Plane. These latter three comprise the Otherworlds.

The Otherworlds intersect in many different ways and have different representations according to how they are approached. As approaches are magically and mythically based, different cultures perceive and interact with the Otherworlds differently. The God Learner magical agenda is founded on the understanding of the Otherworlds and how they can be manipulated from either afar or within. No other race, including the Brithini, have so actively attempted to influence and shape the magical forces of Glorantha.





## The God Plane

The Inner World and God Plane are separated by two distinct barriers: these barriers are known as the Great Compromise, which forever separated the two worlds and Time, which is a constraint on the Inner World but a barrier to the God Plane nonetheless (where Time has no existence or meaning). The God Plane is a reflection of the Inner World insofar as it is a representation of Glorantha; however its geography is fundamentally different because the world exists as it was during the God Time, before the Great Compromise and before the Great Darkness. Thus, certain features exist, such as Kero Fin, but many familiar landmarks do not.

What one experiences on the God Plane is wholly dependent on one's magical affinity. Theists always experience the realms, homes and deeds of their gods. Solar worshippers, for example, enter the realm of the Celestial Court and encounter the gods of the Solar pantheon from the perspective of those myths. Malkioni experience the Saints' Plane where the many saints of the Invisible God have established their homes in the afterlife: they also experience Danmalastan, the Perfect World created by Malkion before the Runes rebelled and Vadelic corruption led to its destruction.

Thus the God Plane consists of many different realms that are both a personal and cultural reflection of faith. They are, however, all part of the God Plane and are interlinked. Monsters and enemy gods dwell at the edges of each pantheon's realm

and here the borders are blurred. It is possible to pass from one realm to another (from the Celestial Court into the Storm Tribe's lands, for example) and one is always aware of transition. Passing from one realm to another is, however, very risky unless one has a definite connection with additional realms. Many mortal visitors to the God Plane have disappeared trying to pass from a realm they belong to into one that they do not; what becomes of these souls is unknown – possibly they die but it is more likely that they become subsumed into the fabric of the God Plane, their energy being put to use by whatever gods are capable of harnessing the life force.

## The Spirit World

The Spirit World is where all spirits dwell. They do not normally have any existence on the Inner World unless summoned or channelled through a spirit practice or a fetish. The Spirit Plane always reflects the geography of the Inner World although time does not follow the same rules. Nature Spirits live in the Spirit World but have a physical manifestation in the Inner World, which is a reflection of the spirit nature. One can therefore contact a spirit on the Spirit Plane through interacting with its physical reflection on the Inner World but full interaction is very limited unless one Spirit Walks to the Spirit World.

There is no gravity on the Spirit World and spirits encountered there often float above the ground. There is, however, a definite manifestation of mass and weight which is based on

the elemental runes: heaviest is Darkness and Darkness Spirits cling to the ground as shadows and patches of night. Next heaviest is Water and Water Spirits flow along the ground like streams or rivers, just as in their earthly manifestation. Earth is considered lighter than Water and Earth Spirits rise up from the ground and descend beneath it, as whim takes them. Air Spirits are always above the ground and rarely touch it. Fire Spirits are lighter still and can fly as high as the sun itself in the Inner World.



Spirits of the other runes exhibit different behaviours in keeping with their origin. Plant and Animal Spirits cling to the ground whilst Disease Spirits may be miasmas or ugly, deformed representations of humans, animals or monsters, depending on what they prefer to infect.

Ancestor Spirits occupy the Ancestral Court, a realm that is part of the Spirit World but distinct from it in the same way the God Plane has pantheistic distinctions. Ancestors do not dwell in communities together and do not interact – even where ancestors who were once enemies are concerned. Each ancestor builds a hut, house or hall, which is a perfect version of the dwelling they occupied when alive. Visitors to the Ancestral Court are able to enter the dwelling of an allied Ancestor and interact with them. They will also be able to see (or, more accurately, be aware of) the dwellings of the many different ancestors from different cultures but will not be able to approach these dwellings (which always remain at a distance, no matter how hard one tries to make an approach) unless the ancestor concerned has offered an invitation to visit.

### The Sorcery Plane

The Sorcery Plane is accessible only through specific grimoire spells. It occupies seven levels, some of which intersect with the Inner World. These intersection points are where Inner World visitors arrive. The seven levels are, in descending order:

1. **Invisible God:** This level is outside of all planes. It is all-encompassing, all-inclusive and is the state of existence before the First Action took place. It is the inner sanctum and soul of the Invisible God.
2. **Immeasurable Plane:** Also known as Joy or The One Plane. Reaching it requires transcendent religious practices, purity of the soul and strength of purpose. Mortals can reach it but its most frequent visitors are the saints and they are able to reach it at will. The Immeasurable Plane is difficult to comprehend with a mortal mind but within it one experiences sheer joy and perfect enlightenment, which is necessary to be able to perceive, and be close to, the Invisible God.
3. **Law Plane:** Known also as Solace, Heaven or the Dualities. This is a plane of pure energy, which manifests as movement and vibrations, which manifest as patterns. Again, only those who have attained a degree of purity can access Solace and this tends to be the saints but those who visit here know complete peace – which is the first step towards attaining Joy.
4. **Saint Plane:** This intersects with the God Plane and the Inner World and is also called the Idealised Plane. It is from here that the Primal Runes originate and where the first beings began. Danmalastan exists here in its original, unsullied form and one can reach the Citadel of Thought where Ord Elvis makes his home and the Laws of Malkion are at their truest and most potent. This is also where Zzabur's sanctuary can be found. All saints


make their homes here, which manifest in many ways and forms reflecting the deeds of that saint. Saint Hrestol, for instance, occupies a hermit's cave; Saint Xemela a grand Hall of Healing; Saint Atrox a forbidding castle of obsidian and basalt.

5. **Adept Plane:** Called, also, the Spell Plane or Symbolic Plane. This plane intersects with the Inner World and is the usual point of entry to the Sorcery Plane. All spells – even those that have yet to be created and encoded in grimoires – have a manifestation here, usually as patterns, formulae or perfect, geometric formations. Whenever a sorcerer learns a new spell or new grimoire, his mind is transported to the Adept Plane so that the topology of the spell can be absorbed.
6. **The Mundane Plane:** This is the Inner World. It is the home of the sorcerer's mortal body and is polluted by interference from the God and Spirit Planes.
7. **Hell:** The sorcerous portion of the Underworld is inhabited by evil beings, Chaos creatures and demons. It is here that the various races of the Vadeli were formed and where they return to when they die. It has no energy mortal sorcerers can access unless that sorcerer has turned to Vadeli or Chaos practices. It contains many dreadful grimoires that have been ripped from the Adept Plane and imprisoned here. Reading these grimoires usually drives the sorcerer mad and always corrupts their soul.

### The Hero Plane

This is where myths co-exist. The Hero Plane has many forms depending on personal belief, culture and myths known. Within it exist all of the eras of Glorantha before Time began: the Dawn Age, Storm Age, Golden Age and so on. Cultural variations exist in the precise name of the era and, in this respect, the Hero Plane is a mirror of the God Plane but is also distinct from it.

The Hero Plane is almost an intermediary stage between the Inner World and God Plane. It is where the actions of gods manifest and where mortals experience them. These actions are called myths and whilst myths have a fixed progression they can still be influenced by mortals who, with the right magic, perform HeroQuests. This is the key to God Learner power and is fundamental to their magical agenda. It was always known that individuals belonging to a certain pantheon could re-enact the deeds of their gods by participating in their myths but it was the God Learners who discovered that myths can be changed, merged, deleted and created. All this must be done on the Hero Plane of course and sorcery is needed to alter any myth; however, what the God Learners did not discover until they returned to the Inner World, was that the changes wrought on the Hero Plane have a resonating effect on the Inner World according to the change made. It is not the case that tampering with a myth causes an effect on the God Plane, although it is entirely possible. What is known but



not fully understood is that changes made to a myth cannot be undone by the gods who are central to the myth concerned. This may be a consequence of the Great Compromise or it may be due to barriers between the God Plane and the Hero Plane, creating a one-way flow of mythic resonance.

The discovery that the Hero Plane is malleable has subsequently shaped and driven the God Learner activity of the Middle Sea Empire. If the Otherworlds are the ultimate source of power, myths are their treasure maps. In the theist tradition HeroQuesters venture into a well-known myth of their culture. The quester always encounters surprises, which may give new insight into the gods but the essential outline of the experience is pre-established. HeroQuesters become part of the story, with the quester in the role of the god worshipped. God Learners, however, enter the Other Side to win magical powers for themselves but often do it by moving from one myth to another. They are not the first to engage in this sort of experimental HeroQuesting; Arkat did it before them. Their innovation lies in creating new hybrid stories where none existed before. Once a new story is established, God Learner Myth Tamperers – such as the Order of Otherworld Exploration, or Hwarosian Mystics – are sent in to repeat it over and over. Thus they cement their new tale as part of the God Realm. In the material world, the people who worship the altered god accept the alterations, eventually coming to believe in the newly established myth.

## CULTURE AND BELIEFS

To outsiders, even Seshnegi, the common conception of the Jrusteli is that of a nation of cold-minded and cunning sorcerers who will brook no limit to their ambition, who also believe that they are possessed of a unique divine mandate and God-given unity. While the Jrusteli are a united people thanks to the revelation of the Abiding Book, there are still cultural divides among them. The majority of the Jrusteli are of Seshnegi blood but there are numerous social groupings that are not immediately apparent to outsiders. There are five main Seshnegi-derived cultures on Jrustela.

Old Frowalkelites are the descendants of the very first Seshnegi settlers from the old colony at Frowalkel. They are rare outside their home city and are noted for being conservative and reserved, even standoffish. They are said to make excellent scribes and librarians and good wizards but rarely produce any dashing generals or explorers.

Nralarites are the descendants of the first wave of Virtuous colonists, the founders of Hredimorinos and the great explorers and conquerors of the island. Nralarites make up most of the population of the northern towns and are in positions of power and wealth throughout the island. They pride themselves on

their financial cunning and influence and on their progressive, free-thinking attitudes. They consider the Old Frowalkelites to be cowards and backwards cousins and are fierce rivals of the Volunteers. The Nralarites have abandoned much of the caste system they brought with them from Seshnela.

Kalites are the third group, made up of the descendants of the second wave of colonists. They are most common in the east and south and are probably the largest of the older cultural groups. Kalites are especially devout for the most part and are strong backers of the church and the Rightness Crusade. Some hold the Olodo in disdain; others are strong advocates of integration and hold Jrustela to be a model for a new society where all old divisions are annihilated by the pure light of Makan's reason. The Kalites give lip service to the caste system but are willing to tolerate social shifts and changes in caste that would be unthinkable elsewhere.

In Norvalela, one finds the Jalanites, the followers of the family of Jalan. They are arch-conservatives and supporters of the old ways. They rigorously obey the caste system and keep to all the Seshnelan traditions there are, even ones that have died out on the mainland. The Jalanites would be politically isolated if it were not for their mining wealth and their control of shipping.

The final major Seshnegi group are the Haladinities, newcomers who arrived in the wake of the unification with Seshnela (older immigrants tend to be considered Kalites or just ordinary Jrusteli). Haladinities are of a lower social class than the first settlers and have little political power but it is from the ranks of the Haladinities that the majority of craftsmen, petty wizards and soldiers come.

Half-breeds – originally, half-Seshnegi, half-Olodo but latterly anyone who is partially Seshnegi – are generally called Hadites after the first Seshnegi/Olodo child born on the island. Hadites face prejudice from more conservative Jalanites, Frowalkelites and some Kalites.

The original Olodo culture has largely been washed away but many in the south of the island still have Olodo blood in their veins. They tend to be slightly larger and heavier than the Seshnegi and some isolated rural families still speak the Olodo language at home. The Olodo tend to follow the lead of the Kalites or Haladinities in most matters. One subgroup, the Old Way People, still cling to the Olodo culture and beliefs. They were once prevalent in Shenilstos but fled that city when it was converted to the Rightness Crusade. Old Wayers are found mostly in Arshu Phola but many have gone overseas to Umathela. The third major Olodo grouping are the Saved, fundamentalist converts to Malkionism who are the most devout of all Jrusteli.

## God Learner Qualities

Certain qualities are shared by virtually all Jrusteli. Learning and scholarship is universally prized on the island, especially mastery of magic. In the cities, all children are taught at least to read and write and the children of even moderately wealthy parents can go on to further education. Especially gifted children have their education paid for by the Church or by a university and cities like Irenstos and Evrowal have even instituted universal education policies. The Jrusteli are a practical people, too – ‘God helps those who help themselves’ was once a common phrase but it has been replaced by the unofficial motto of the Middle Sea Empire: ‘Competence is holy’.

Religion occupies an odd place in Jrusteli society. On the one hand, Jrusteli are a very devout people, which is unsurprising given that the Invisible God Himself appeared to sort out all questions of politics and belief. This intercession gave rise to the Return to Rightness movement and the fierce piety of its priests but it also had the opposite effect on many Jrusteli. All too many Jrusteli believe that religion is basically a solved problem. God said they were right and everyone else was wrong and they have the documentation to prove it. Religion for many Jrusteli is a topic of idle debate or political convenience, not a true belief. A good Jrusteli will profess his utter devotion to the Invisible God but will retain what many call an ‘agile and open mind’.

## Caste

The colonists brought the four-fold caste system of Malkionism with them from the north. Originally, the colonists were divided into farmers (Donari), Soldiers (Hroli), Wizards (Zzabur) and Lords (Talar). In the rough and dangerous early days of colonisation, the caste system had to be ignored. A man’s merit counted for more than his birth caste. If a Donari knew how to build a dam to save the village, then he was listened to instead of a Talar. There was so much work to do that even wizards had to get their hands dirty and the population was so small that inter-caste marriages had to be allowed. In any event, the spirit of reformation was in the air and old caste boundaries were becoming blurred.

In Jrustela, a person’s caste is still a major factor in his social standing. Lower-caste people must defer to higher-caste people and there are all sorts of subtle changes in address and bearing that go with inter-caste communications. However, all men have equal legal standing in Jrustela and a lord has no more power under the law than a peasant (of course, the courts are more likely to side with a lord than with some grubby Olodan Donar but the principle remains true). The free elections practiced by many cities allow all castes to vote equally and candidates have even been elected from among the farmers to rule over whole cities.

With the growth of Jrustela’s wealth and especially with the opening of the seas after the Waertagi were dealt with, the merchant ‘caste’ blossomed. While this is not an official caste, the wealthier merchants are treated as Soldiers (Hroli) instead of peasants and it is common to buy a minor title for promotion to the Talar. Under Jrusteli law, it is also possible to rise in caste through marriage, so the wife of a noble is a noblewoman and so forth, allowing people to ‘marry up’. The traditionally narrow definition of the wizard caste has also been expanded to cover all the academics and scholars of the many great universities.

## Attitudes

All Jrusteli, and most citizens of the Middle Sea Empire, embody certain core attitudes that are a product of Malkionism, cultural entrenchment and teachings derived from the Abiding Book. They are listed here but it should be noted that these attitudes manifest to lesser and greater degrees between individuals (they are, however, always present; simply to different extents).



**Chosen:** The people of the west and Jrustela are the chosen of Malkion and the Invisible God. Only the chosen can become saints and attain Solace and Joy. When the world comes to its end the Invisible God will save only the chosen and the rest will perish. This is an absolute attitude and it is central to Middle Sea imperials in the same way that Orlanth's nature is central to the Orlanthi barbarians, or Yelm's arrogance is innate to the people of Dara Happa.

**Logic:** The universe operates to certain rules, laid-down by the Invisible God during the Five Actions. These rules constitute logic. All Jrusteli believe that anything is possible through the application of logic whether in a mundane fashion (considering cause and effect) or magically, through sorcery. No problem is insurmountable if approached in a logical way. This is not to say that logic replaces emotion: Jrusteli are a passionate people. They can, however, become *readily* dispassionate, placing logic before emotion, head before heart, response before reaction whenever the need arises.

**Contempt:** Because the Jrusteli are chosen by god it follows that all other gods and faiths are not chosen because they are wrong in the Invisible God's sight. Furthermore, these other gods rebelled and led to the Time of Disintegration, which shattered the idyll that was Danmalastan. And, if that was not bad enough, the worshippers of these gods have since celebrated their gods' recklessness through their myths and rituals. The natural attitude to such selfishness is contempt. The Orlanthi can worship their Storm God if they want but the God Learners see no reason to respect that wish or recognise the legitimacy of the other gods. Had the Erasanchula remembered their logical place then Danmalastan would still exist and Malkion's law would be universal. The pagan gods broke the universe; the Vadeli helped them. Those who worship anyone but the saints, Malkion and the Invisible God are worthy only of contempt.

**Curiosity:** The Viymori, the distant ancestors of the Jrusteli, were insatiably curious and this trait persists. The Middle Sea Empire is curious about everything. It wants to know how, why and, most importantly, what if. Curiosity built the empire; curiosity discovered the true nature of the Otherworlds and how to shape myths; curiosity discovered sorcery. The curious seek answers and find them. Those without curiosity are mere passengers, devoid of creativity and character. Such people inevitably turn to the worship of pagan gods and thus are worthy only of contempt.

The Jrusteli are concerned far more with personal honour and loyalty than with notions of social justice and equality. Great respect is placed upon those who observe, and conform with, the tenets of Malkionism. Graceful and dutiful conduct mean more than absolute honesty and integrity is a matter of serving and serving well. The Abiding Book defines six notions of personal honour:

1. Honour of the Invisible God, Truth and Creator.
2. Honour of the Prophets, who communicate the Word and Truth.
3. Honour to the Family, which embodies the Word and Truth.
4. Honour of the Self, for in the Self is truth embodied.
5. Honour of Wisdom, because through wisdom comes the path to Solace and Joy.
6. Honour of the Perfect World, because, through all other forms of honour, it will be made.

## Family Dynamics

Where clans and family interactions are concerned, the relationship is based on strength and power, be that political, religious, sorcerous or military. Every family seeks to consolidate its position and extend its reach and alliances are broken as easily as they are made if a better offer or prospect presents itself. In such a highly stratified society, power and integrity (or at least a semblance of integrity) are the keys to success. Weakness is not tolerated and success, along with the power it brings, is central to the politics of the God Learners.

The family is therefore the fundamental unit of Jrusteli society. Families are patriarchal with the nominative head of any family always being the oldest male. A typical Jrusteli family is a sprawling affair with many branches each tracing their way back to the family's head and taking their lead from whoever that head might be. As is to be expected extended families result in clan-like structures that rely on intermarriage and familial honour to consolidate and maintain personal power. Any dishonour stains a whole family and therefore conformity is very much in evidence with Jrusteli families seeking to promote themselves as wholly honourable, practicing Malkionists whilst going about the more grubby business of establishing and advancing personal and familial ambitions.

Those who dishonour the family can expect ostracism and exile. Expunging a dishonourable element can restore family honour and pride and also sets a ready example to others who might also share wayward urges.

## The Traditions

A further way of reinforcing family honour is through the Traditions. This is a codified set of behaviours drawn from the Abiding Book that acts as the family's code of conduct. At their heart the Traditions codify:

- Lines of succession.
- Roles and responsibilities within the family.
- Cults and sorcery orders deemed acceptable (and those that are not).
- Birthdays, anniversaries and other days of note and celebration.

- Guidance on how to act at family gatherings and celebrations, formal and informal.
- Details of enemies and those who have slighted the family.

Every family of note and status employs a scribe who maintains the Traditions. This position is usually a family member or long-standing, trusted retainer from outside the family who may later be adopted or absorbed into it. The Keeper of the Traditions maintains the vast tomes that constitute the family's Traditions, knows by heart all the key dates, ceremonies, requirements and obligations, as well as ensuring that family members are always aware of how the Traditions affect them and what their individual requirements are according to particular circumstances. The Keeper of the Traditions is therefore an important role that answers to the family's patriarch and acts as both a secretary and a counsellor. He is sometimes called the Riath (Seshnelan for 'Right Hand Man') and a trustworthy Riath is essential for any Jrusteli patriarch if he is to maintain standing within wider God Learner society.

The Traditions stem back to the days of Danmalastan when each family of the Viymori accepted the guidance of Ord Elvis and wrote down the way they were expected to behave. As Viymori society fragmented it was the presence of the Traditions that separated the civilised Malkioni from the corrupt and godless Vadeli who destroyed the Traditions of their forbears as a signal of their rejection of the Invisible God. Therefore the Traditions continue to occupy a very important place in Jrusteli family life, mirroring the Abiding Book and acting as a guarantor that the family loves and reveres the Invisible God, accepts the word of the prophets and will act honourably (because the Vadeli never did). The Traditions also reinforce the division between Jrusteli and other cultures, which do not have such detailed codes of behaviour. Jrusteli see their Traditions as the sign of true civilisation – even though most societies of Glorantha have clearly defined customs that govern acceptable and taboo behaviour.

## Marriage

Marriage in the Middle Sea Empire is rarely about love and frequently about securing position, status and power. Marriages are used to seal alliances and demonstrate respect. Romantic notions are normally divorced from the institution of marriage. If a husband and wife love each other then it is a bonus.

All marriages are arranged by patriarchs. Permission to marry is dependent on the will of either and how beneficial, in the long run, the union will be. Once granted, the ceremony is highly reverential and conducted at a temple with the bride shedding her white outer garments to reveal a red undergarment beneath, representing her rebirth into a new family. All brides bear a dowry, which must be returned to

her family if the marriage fails or the husband is found to be negligent in caring for the wife (such as failing to provide her with a standard of living suitable to her station).

And, just as marriages are arranged by others, so can divorce be commanded. A Lord can order a couple to divorce if circumstances dictate it is the most honourable or efficacious course to take. Likewise, the parents of the husband can arrange a divorce in their son's name if the wife is proving to be undutiful or unsuitable.

## From Youth to Retirement

Childhood is considered to last from birth until the age of 16, when the child attains adulthood. He is allowed to marry, to serve and to fight, although such things may happen earlier if circumstances dictate. Between 20 and 40 a man is considered to be in middle age and by 51 is ready to retire if he has not attained an office that requires his continuation.

## Address

In Jrustela modes of address and conversation are highly important and extremely complex. Between equals, colloquialisms are fine but in other situations the way someone speaks and the words used are of utmost importance since they reinforce the social hierarchy and confirm both respect and deference. It is usual for those of inferior status only to speak when given permission to do so and the expectation is a clear, concise answer with no obfuscation.

Jrusteli culture distinguishes between formal and informal modes of address. Failure to use the right one, at the right time, is a cause of grave offence. If circumstances require it, have Adventurers make a Culture (Own) roll to ensure that they have abided by the appropriate rules of address and conversational etiquette. Failure results in being ignored, insulted back, ostracised for a time or even expelled from a community altogether, if the offence is grave enough.

## THE REST OF THE WORLD

Here is how, generally, the Jrusteli view the rest of the world.

### Non-Malkioni Religions

Any faith that worships many gods, or even a single god that is not the Invisible God, is a pagan and a heathen. God has forsaken them and, misguided, they have turned to false idols for succour and solace. Pagan beliefs are based on superstition reinforced by complex myths that have become real on the different planes of the Otherworld. Ultimately they are wrong: there is only One God and Malkion is his prophet. They can save themselves by embracing Malkion but otherwise are doomed to non-existence in the afterlife.

## Mystics (draconic and Kralori)

Clearly they are heathens but neither are they pagans. They do not worship in the conventional sense and neither do they seem perturbed by superstition and potent myth. Mystics appear to gaze inward all the time, attempting to become something alien to all nature yet never able to explain what it is that they are searching to become. This is because they do not know. And they know they do not know. Arkat did not know. Obduran did not know. Dragonewts do not know. Only the Invisible God knows and he will reveal all to his faithful.

But what makes the mystics dangerous is that they draw their strength from below, from others, and not from their god (for they have none). They are parasites who want to inflict change on everything because they believe that they – and they alone – are right. Only God can make change; and he will not change the world into a monster...

## Uz

Once, the uz were allies of the Malkioni but since the First Age they have proved they are, truly, darkness creatures and cannot be trusted.

- The uz are enemies of the dwarfs and destroy their secrets; secrets that the God Learners can develop and put to the benefit of all. uz are destroyers.
- Arkat became a troll to defeat Gbaji. Later, the trolls turned to Arkat worship and he gave them stolen sorcery with which to defeat others. uz are deceivers.
- Ezkkenkekko, the Only Old One of Shadow Plateau welcomed saints and prophets once but now sides with the Wyrmfriends and pagans who court miserable Esrolia and besiege the Clanking City. uz are disloyal.

Thus, trolls are greeted with much suspicion and, sometimes, outright enmity. It is not natural for a race to dwell

underground so close to insects and formless demi-gods. For all their intentions, uz cannot be trusted.

## Mostali

The mostali are mechanistic simpletons entrusted with great power by a being not unlike the Invisible God. Somehow they have managed to work marvellous magic with their command of sorcery but, being greedy and simplistic, will not share it. Teachings by the Brithini suggest that the mostali stole much of their knowledge and so it is right to steal it back. They seem to care little; all they want to do is fix, mend and repair. But if something is not broken, why fix it?

And, as with all simpletons, the mostali are jealous. They are jealous of the immensity and grandeur of the Clanking City and seek only to tear it down. They cannot abide anyone but themselves having a command of the powers of the universe and seek to destroy like petulant children. Like children, it is sometimes best to let them have their own way from time-to-time and this is what the God Learners do. But when they step out of line, then they should be punished. And punished hard.

## Aldryami

Plants do not think or truly feel. Aldryami might be mobile and sapient but they have no real feelings for the world and little empathy with it. The whole world would be a single tree, if they had their way and their fungus and root gods had any real power; the whole world would fester and become overgrown, like an unkempt garden. What is needed is pruning and weeding; mulching and cropping. The elves do not see this. All they see is the slowness of the organic process and the speed at which a forest moves. The world does not work this way. The world moves fast. It is brutal. One has to force the world to make sense – or perish. This is why aldryami are there to be studied, exploited and discarded – in precisely the same way one treats a curious plant in the herbaceous borders.

# MYTHS OF THE MIDDLE SEA EMPIRE

The history of the Malkioni, and the origins of the God Learners, have always been subject to rigorous debate and much conjecture within the empire. It was not until the Abiding Book appeared that the truth of it was known and much that had puzzled was understood. This chapter summarises those sprawling cantos of the Abiding Book.

What follows is what all God Learners – Jrusteli – believe but not necessarily what all Malkionists believe. The Abiding Book has caused as many divisions as it has healed but the following information is common knowledge for all Malkionists even if it does not hold true for all of them.

## BEFORE TIME

In the beginning was the Truth, which was central and whole. It watched and listened and contemplated. From these musings came the Plan, which would have five actions. Truth made each action happen consecutively and each was an act of creation. This is therefore known as the Creation Period.

### The First Action

Mystery came first so that all other things might follow. Mystery is the counterpoint to Truth but does not compromise it. Mystery comprised of three elements:

- The Universal Perspective – That which is true and infinite but understandable from any point in space and time. It is encompassed by Truth and encompasses it.
- The Prima Materia – All that is physical in the universe and all that can be physical. Outside the Prime Materia is the Truth and thus the Invisible God; within it are all realms and all possibilities.
- The Intellect – Which the Abiding Book terms ferbrith. Conceived within the Prime Materia ferbrith separated lifeless matter from formless energy because, entwined, neither could grow.

With the creation of ferbrith the Invisible God developed his own intellect and made it perceivable to all contained within the Prime Materia. Ferbrith is also called Malkion the Creator.

### The Second Action

Ferbrith separated matter and energy into the World and the Sun through his perception. He then analysed their natures and set them in train. This is known as Kiona and is the First Law.

Through Kiona he separated further energies into perfect components that defined both matter and energy: these were the Erasanchula, otherwise called the Primal Runes. Each of the Erasanchula received the benefit of ferbrith and so found their own true shapes, true intellects and true principles.

From the Second Action we know now that Malkion the Law created the Runes.

### The Third Action

Kiona, acting alone, scrutinised the Runes and in doing so became Ordrelvis, that which combined the Runes in many combinations to create the Prime Objects. Ordrelvis manifested as the Citadel of Thought and it is understood by all that through the Invisible God one can enter Ordrelvis and enact its will, so ordering the universe.

Through the Third Action Kiona the First Law became Malkion the Seer and Ordrelvis is his Realm.

### The Fourth Action

Ordrelvis duplicated the Prime Objects and made from these duplicates ‘The Perfect World’ which is called Danmalastan. He also made the first people and these people formed the Six Tribes. From the Six Tribes, all else follows, although this was before Time and before the Darkness and the Flood.

Thus Ordrelvis became Malkion the Founder, father of all.

### The Fifth Action

After the creation of Danmalastan, Malkion the Founder became Malkion the Old, or Elmalkion. The Six Tribes prospered under his leadership but the Runes became jealous and greedy of these new powers. Acting in concert the Erasanchula brought about the Time of Disintegration when they rebelled and tried to undo all that Ordrelvis and Malkion



the Founder had conceived. They were primal in nature and could not control their impulses; but the people of the Six Tribes could and this is why they were different.

The Runes seized the powers of life and twisted them, corrupting all. Malkion sheltered the Six Tribes until the Erasanchula of Sorcery (known as Zzabur) threatened the universe with total annihilation. Elmalkion stood before Zzabur and absorbed the destruction that was hurled across Danmalastan, sacrificing himself for the Six Tribes. His immortality dispersed and the Six Tribes took benefit of that dispersal: this act was called Awakening (and all sorcerers undergo this). Each of the Six Tribes, so Awakened, took the spirit and soul of Elmalkion and resolved to rebuild the world from it, redeeming it and making it ready for Elmalkion's return.

So, in the Fifth Action Elmalkion became Malkion the Sacrifice and He created Salvation.

## Hrestol and The Scattering

With Malkion's salvation the Six Tribes were scattered far and wide, their idyllic civilisation destroyed and their old magic rendered useless. During the Fifth Action, and perhaps before, Hrestol was born to Xemela and it was he who taught the scattered to communicate once more with the Invisible God going from tribe-to-tribe and bringing the Invisible God's word in the form of Irensaval, the light within. This was the realisation of Solace and Joy and the truth that the only path to salvation is through the worship of the Invisible God.

One of the leaders of the Six Tribes, Hrestol practiced and perfected the roles of each of the Zzaburi-created castes, which dominated the people at that time. Through this perfection he became the Four Class Man and led his people out of the Time of Disintegration. By taking unto himself the spirit of Elmalkion Hrestol became the First Prophet of the Invisible God but renounced his leadership in order to become a hermit and move closer to the Truth. He visited Brithos where he went unrecognised as an enemy of Zzabur because he had renounced his leadership and there claimed the Four Tools, which made him the One Man who united the fragmented peoples of Fronela.

On many travels he brought the Invisible God's word to the scattered and sundered people, keeping them alive during the Ice Age, when all was frozen solid. It was Hrestol who created the ceremonies that still endure amongst all Malkioni even though the Ice Age was ended by Zzabur. Later, he renounced all worldly trappings again and undertook a pilgrimage that stretched the length and breadth of Glorantha. Eventually the Brithini, who always considered him an enemy of Malkion, the True Prophet, captured him and killed him – a crucifixion

on a Death Rune in the confines of Sog, the Brithini city of Loskalm's edge.

## Danmalastan

Danmalastan was a perfect land established in the shadow of the Citadel of Thought and so was close to Malkion the Founder. Danmalastan consisted of six provinces, one for each tribe and these were:

**Brithos:** The land made by the Erasanchula of Sorcery, called Zzabur, which was furthest away from the Citadel of Thought and so exiled from Elmalkion's light and reason.

**Hestandarol:** The land of friends. Like Mornastan, Flesh people lived here in the seven clans and were allies of the Mornastan Flesh people although they kept to themselves save when war came upon them.

**Mornastan:** Land of the Five Peoples and close to Brithos. In the centre dwelled the Viymori, ruled by the Brithini Talars. In the north were the Flesh people, also ruled by the Talars but curious and adventurous. In the east were the Wood people, ruled by Aldrya, and they dwelled in their exquisite and extensive forests. In the south lived the Fleshless people: they were jealous and schemed, under the leadership of the creature Bamat. And, in the west, there were the Stone people. They made great cities underground and were carved from the stuff of the earth: Mostal was their fuel.

**Sornalastan:** The land under the land. Here, watched by Dame Darkness, the children of the Darkness Erasanchula grew and were hungry.

**Tadenitela:** The land forbidden but still part of the Six Tribes. From here the warlike Tadeniti came to conquer, in the wake of the Time of Disintegration.

**Thakarn:** The dwarf Stronghold; a mighty refuge made by the men of stone who travelled from Mornastan and in response to the theft of secrets by Vimorn (most adventurous of the Flesh people of Mornastan).

Danmalastan was the place of perfection where all things grew and all things were possible. The Brithini sought control of it and, in time, it would be corrupted by the rebellious Erasanchula and the perversions introduced by Vadel. It was kept safe and secure by Ordelvis from the Citadel of Thought and from that place logic flowed in a stream of six rivers that touched each land of Danmalastan and then flowed to the sea. The Brithini drank of their river and so their sorcery grew strong. The stone people used the streams of logic to lubricate their engines and they, too, grew strong. One, Vimorn, sailed the rivers to visit the other lands and grew in wisdom but

sought the magic of the others who had drunk of the streams or made use of it in some other way. Ordrelvis approved of this, because it proved ingenuity but even he did not see how Vimorn's wanderings would bring pollution to the world.

## Vadel

Vimorn wandered and, in time, begat 10 children with his wife, Kalonia. They made their home in Hestandarol and created the race (long passed from Glorantha) called the Erasko who, in turn, made the Pelans. The sons and daughters of Vimorn were known as the Seekers and one of their number, Vadel, was even more adventurous than Vimorn or his brothers and sisters. Vadel travelled far beyond the edge of Danmalstan and, in so doing, passed beyond Ordrelvis's guidance. This deprived him of logic and reason and he fell prey to the harsh demons of the World Beyond. Vadel was corrupted 10 times in 10 different ways and brought this corruption with him when he returned to Danmalastan. His return coincided with the rebellion of the Erasanchula and together the Great Darkness and Cold was introduced to the world. Vadel did not create the Great Darkness and Cold but he ensured it prevailed. These are the ten corruptions he brought:

1. Disobedience of the Laws of Malkion.
2. Deceit amongst the Malkioni.
3. Greed for things one does not need or already has.
4. Gluttony.
5. Theft: before hand, there had never been such a thing.
6. Arrogance: Vadel believed himself better than all men and all Erasanchula.
7. Hate: for all that was different and often things that were the same.
8. Incest: which speaks for itself but no one dares whisper the word.
9. Death: which broke all logic and ushered-in foul things of the underworld.
10. The Devil: which was Vadel's lord and master and plagued the world until Arkat fought it.

Vadel's corruption spread to his children. From his children it spread through the other Seekers of Hestandarol. They spread it far and wide and deep and, as the Erasanchula rebelled, causing rifts in logic and reason, the 10 corruptions infected everything and plunged the world into war. Vadel broke Danmalastan but he also fought the demon Balmat and although he did not defeat it, he proved that salvation could be present even where corruption prevailed.

The Vadeli – those who contain the original corruptions of Vadel – persist to this day, although they are shunned and hunted. Before Time, the Vadeli made themselves the enemies

of the Brithini because they challenged logic and denied the Law of Malkion. With the Darkness and Ice the Vadeli formed themselves into three castes, each of a different colour and took themselves to the isles that became known as the Vadeli Isles. The three castes became three races: Brown, Red and Blue and they made war on the Brithini and the Malkioni with uproarious abandon, often in the company of vile things summoned from stolen grimoires. The Brithini eventually sank the Vadeli Isles during the Ice Age, unleashing terrible magics to quell the growing corruption; but some, mostly Brown Vadeli, survived through cunning and guile and carried Vadel's corruption through the ages once Time began.


## The Darkness and the Ice

The Erasanchula grew restless and fractious. Energy and Matter came to blows and even different energies turned against each other. Their fury was directed at the Citadel of Thought and Ordrelvis came under siege. At this time Vadel brought the 10 Corruptions to Danmalastan and so there was no way to protect the Citadel of Thought or the acts of the Second and Third Actions.

This is what happened:

- The sky was sundered from the earth.
- The sun was destroyed.
- The Devil made the world his playground.
- Bamat and other demons walked the earth and the Vadeli walked with them, even though Vadel fought against Bamat's invasion.
- Danmalastan was abandoned.
- Brithos was besieged.
- The Ice Erasanchula descended from the north and caused all things to freeze – even the oceans and especially the Six Rivers of Logic.
- The Citadel of Thought fell.
- The Tadeniti were slaughtered by the Vadeli – the first time any Malkioni had fought another Malkioni. The Erasanchula called Death was the Vadeli's weapon.

All things happened at once because the Rivers of Logic were frozen and polluted. Only the Brithini, who remained uncorrupted, stood against the chaos surrounding them. Zzabur, who had challenged Ordrelvis and caused him to sacrifice himself for the world, saw what needed to be done and killed the Ice Erasanchula. Next he created a Grimoire with which to remake the sun although he kept this a secret from all who wondered what Zzabur would do next. Finally, he built the Stone Weapon and hurled it at the Devil, imprisoning part of it and leaving some of it to be fought by others.



The sun was remade and the Devil, imprisoned, could rampage no more. Malkion returned to the world in human form and healed the people, bringing the Word of the One, True God to those who would listen: these were the people of the west and only they learned the truths. Elsewhere, the people fell into the bad habits of worshipping the errant Erasanchula as gods, even though they were not – they were manifestations of urges and some had been corrupted by the things Vadel brought back with him.

Another Grimoire was forged but Zzabur claimed no responsibility for it. This forced the Erasanchula to go to a place made for them, which became known as the Other Side, which was separate from the world of Matter; they went sullenly but had no choice. This Grimoire created Time and changed all things, guaranteeing the world for mortals. Some of the first people did not go: the mostali, the Wood People

and the children of Dame Darkness; they retreated to the lands they had already made for themselves and left the world to men.

The Brithini sank the Vadeli Isles and most of the Vadeli. Zzabur had created wards to protect Brithos against the influx of Time and, within their lands, they became immortal although, once outside their island, were as prone to the ravages of Time as were all other creatures.

Only one race was unaffected by all of this. The dragons and the dragonewts watched curiously and the Brithini watched them. Time had no effect on the draconic creatures and even Zzabur could not understand why. They ignored the dragonewts and the dragons and, for a long time, the draconic races ignored the Brithini and the Malkioni. But this would not last.

# MIDDLE SEA EMPIRE WORLDVIEW

This chapter concerns the extent of the Middle Sea Empire and walks, place-by-place, through its territories. It begins, though, with a political history of the Jrusteli and examines the origins of the empire from its earliest days when the great might of the Gloranthan seas was the Waertagi.

This is therefore a detailed and extensive chapter deliberately divorced from the mythic events preceding the empire's formation and the rise of Malkionism.

## A POLITICAL HISTORY OF JRUSTELA

The Olodo – literally, *old people* – were the first human settlers of Jrustela in history and were brought to the island by the Waertagi. Jrustela is obviously the key to travel across the seas, as it is the first major landmass encountered by a ship sailing south from Genertelta or Brithos. The other routes south, like island-hopping down the Venperthan Sea or braving the storms around Teleos, were too long for the Waertagi to contemplate and they needed a base of operations. As the Waertagi had no desire to live ashore, they looked for a people willing to settle a new land. The first settlers were transported south from their original homes in Slontos. Accounts of the original motivation for the Olodo's departure from Slontos vary – some tales say that the Olodo were exiled from their homeland and rescued by the Waertagi; others insist that the Waertagi took the Olodo as slaves. By blood and culture, the Olodo were most akin to the folk of Kaxtorplose. However they came to Jrustela, they landed on the north coast, very close to the first Seshnegi settlements that would come centuries later. The relatively sheltered bays around what would become Hredimorimos or Evrowal would have been ideal ports but for some reason the Olodo abandoned their early settlements within a generation. When the Waertagi trade boats returned, they found nothing but cold hearths and empty buildings. The first settlers had left the coast and gone beyond the ken of the sea-farers. The Waertagi no doubt shrugged their shoulders and muttered about how the one time they actually wanted land-dwellers to stay still; they heard the call of the horizon wandered off.

The initial settlement of Slontan refugees called themselves the Kachenblod (the name Olodo was obviously applied by the

later Seshnegi). Within a few years of arriving, they angered the local earth spirits, the dreo, and were forced to flee. They abandoned the town of First Landing and travelled south into the inner reaches of Jrustela. There, they ran afoul of the timinit hives and fearsome dreo-controlled beasts of the inner jungle basin and a great many Kachenblod were killed or else separated from the main colony. They were scattered and by the time they found the Famosel River and followed it south to the coast they had lost everything they brought with them from Genertala, including most of their magic, as they worshipped northern storm gods who had little power in the jungle. The Kachenblod divided into a dozen or so tribes and built small fortified villages along the southern shoreline. They survived by fishing and gathering while they fought a constant war with the timinit tribes and jungle horrors.

The largest of these villages was Arshu Phola, which became the new holy city of the Kachenblod as they struggled to re-establish a relationship with their gods. Their other settlements (and their modern names) were Chabu, Persek (Peresk), Piskato (Piskosol), Managar (Irenstos), Lostrum (Shenilstos) and Barvendaru (Bathijras). As the attacks on the settlers continued, many in the smaller villages began to look jealously upon Arshu Phola. With its defensible position along the coast, its rich fishing grounds and increasingly powerful priests, the city became richer and richer while the other settlers starved. Persek, Chabu, Barvendaru and Managar united and sent an army against Arshu Phola. The lord of the city, Sergalis Manlanth, entered the nearby Cave of Nemath, a den of dreo spirits and somehow won their aid for the city's defence. The alliance of other towns collapsed in the face of this unexpectedly strong resistance and the raiders of Persek soon turned on their erstwhile allies and stole from them instead of pressing the attack on Arshu Phola.

## The War of Thorns and The Peace of Ekose

Around the year 400, the central Kachenblod tribes were united by marriage under a single chieftain, Ekose, who led his people in the War of Thorns against the Timinits of the jungle. The numbers of the Kachenblod had grown considerably in the previous two generations and they now had enough strength to force the insect-men back. The alchemists of the town of Managar had managed to create a magical smoke that

poisoned the timinits who were exposed to it and considerable copper and tin deposits had been discovered in the foothills of the Curustus range.

The War of Thorns lasted a generation and ended with the destruction of a huge timinit-hive in the heart of the central basin. Ekose died setting fire to the hive and he is remembered as Ekose the Burner by both insects and men. After this defeat, the timinits retreated deeper into the jungle and the rivers quickly became accepted as the borders between human and insect territory. The northern town of Lostrum was built initially as a bulwark against further timinit hostility but quickly developed into a trade town.

With the threat of the insects and the jungle dealt with, the Kachenblod civilisation thrived for a time. Their capital remained at Arshu Phola but the central towns of Managar and Lostrum became almost as important. The isolated northern town of Piskato was almost totally abandoned during this period, with only a few die-hards remaining in the mud-baked brick houses to care for the temples and to fish the stormy waters of the east coast. There were a few attempts to unite the Kachenblod under a single leader but these failed due to the ongoing rivalry between the priest-kings of Arshu Phola and the warrior dynasty descended from Ekose. Slowly, though, they began to decline due to a lack of trade with other civilisations and cultures. They turned inwards in a time called the Slow Years. A series of harvests failed due to intense rainstorms, forcing the Kachenblod to cultivate more land and abandon their towns just to survive. Even at its height at the start of the Slow Years, Arshu Phola's total population never exceeded a few thousand and barely 10,000 souls lived within its walls when it was discovered by the Seshnegi.

## THE SESHNEGI ARRIVE

Nralar was the 32<sup>nd</sup> King of Seshnela, the son of valiant Gerlant Flamesword, also called the Firelord. His father had battled the betrayer Arkat and his Stygian Empire but Arkat vanished the year before Nralar inherited the throne. The foul Stygian Empire survived the loss of its founder, though and so Nralar made war against the Stygians and the trolls to ensure humanity's survival in the west. He also took the iron mines from the dwarf-folk, winning that precious metal for the Seshnelan crown and fortifying his armies for their struggles against their enemies.

During the reign of Nralar, a small number of adventurers departed Seshnela and sailed south. They went seeking adventure, knowledge and power. By the time they crossed the sea and landed on the north coast of Jrustela, they had lost both their taste for danger and about half their number. Still, they founded a small community called Frowalkel or New Frowal. They explored little of the island after their first

three expeditions failed to return. The hilly terrain due south and east of Frowalkel is dangerous to this day, an untamed tangle of jungle, swamp and jagged wasteland. This initial settlement was founded around 520 and maintained irregular communication with the mainland. Removed from the normal intercourse of study, the adventurers developed some curious new sorcerous traditions that would one day give rise to the God Learner's Secret but this lay centuries ahead. For the most part, the initial settlement of Frowalkel is but a footnote compared to the 'true' founding of Jrustela.

King Nralar lived a very long time and had a great many sons. One of these, Nepur, was chosen by the priests to inherit the throne. Now this was before the great revelation of the Abiding Book united all the followers of Malkion and there were many different sects and orders in Seshnela. Nepur was the only son to follow the now-defunct Invisible Hand Sect, an order of cynics who mouthed prayers to Malkion while lining their own pockets, which gave him many supporters in court and in ecclesiastical circles. Some of his elder brothers and their followers agreed to leave Seshnela to avert the spectre of a civil war. As part of this compromise, the brothers agreed to abandon not only their claims to the throne but also their status as part of the royal family. In effect, they became commoners but were still respected and loved by the virtuous. Other brothers, though, were disbarred from the throne by the priests for very good reasons, as they were foolish or greedy or otherwise unfit to rule. These unworthy ones remained in Seshnela and would bring civil war down in future years.

The Community of the Virtuous, as this assembly of would-be exiles called themselves, was a motley crew (they are often referred to as Nralarites, although this is likely a confusion of historians, as both the Community and their antagonists, the Nepurists, were equally descended from Nralar). There were priests and philosophers from a dozen sects, many of which had been oppressed when Seshnela was a vassal state of the Stygians and who hoped they could find a new place to worship the Invisible God in peace. There were wise men who saw that the great days of Gerlant had come to an end and Seshnela would soon be torn apart by kinstrife. There were adventurers looking for a challenge, there were peasants who sought a new and better life and there were exiled nobles and their followers and knights who were leaving to avoid a conflict with Nepurists. Initially, the exiles were determined to go north into Arolanit and either settle in that pleasant land or pass onwards into the north-east but then they received an unexpected offer – one that would give birth to the Middle Sea Empire.

The declining reach of the dark Stygian Empire and the opening up of trade routes encouraged the Waertagi sea-farers to again attempt to set up a port on the southern island of Jrustela and they offered to transport the Seshnegi exiles south.

Seeing this as a sign from the Invisible God, the Community agreed en masse to accept the Waertagi offer. There were too many exiles for even the vast dragonships to carry, so it was agreed that there would be several waves over five years. The Waertagi ships would winter in their home ports at Brithos then pick up the settlers from the Virtuous' temporary base at Pasos before carrying on to trade in the east.

The initial crossing from Genertala to Jrustela was blessed with fair winds and calm seas and the Seshnegi landed at the same bay where the Olodo had arrived centuries before. The Seshnegi named it Hredimorimos, which means 'Great Venture.' Nothing remained of the original Olodo settlement save a few broken walls and wind-worn carvings, so the Seshnegi quickly built a wood-walled stockade to protect their little village. None of the old nobles of Seshnela had come south in the first wave, so they chose their leaders democratically. A parliament of nine elected from among the settlers would make all decisions for the colony and a leader would be elected from among the nine councillors. The first leader was the far-sighted Faramos of Hredimorimos, who ordered that they immediately begin exploring their new home.

## Early Exploration

The early explorers set off inland and soon discovered a strange wet jungle quite unlike the forests of Seshnela. They found no animals in this jungle but there were all manner of lizards, serpents, birds, plants and insects – especially the latter. Some of the insects were as large as men and were discovered to be intelligent. The timinits (insect-people, in the Seshnegi tongue) initially assumed that the settlers were just another group of Olodo who were trespassing into the central basin in contravention of the peace of Ekose and attacked the explorers from Hredimorimos. The explorers retreated back to the coast but Faramos refused to give into fear of the unknown and ordered a large area south of the new settlement to be cleared for farming. The settlers soon discovered that the soil of Jrustela was incredibly fertile and its growing season long. Further armed expeditions were sent into the jungle to battle the insects; these expeditions discovered some of the Olodo ruins and also the upper waters of the Faramosel River.

Meanwhile, the famed explorer Borostonar built wooden longships and sailed east. Over the next few years, Borostonar would circle almost the whole island and to this day the east coast is called Borastenorela, Borostonar's Land.

After Borostonar returned to Hredimorimos, he and Faramos debated future exploration plans. It was believed that the Pila River, discovered by Borostonar, might be the same as the Faramosel River found by the southern overland explorers. No major river deltas had been encountered by Borostonar along the eastern coast, so it seemed that the Faramosel must


turn south, implying that the whole inner basin was drained by a single vast river. Recognising the importance of this supposition, the two leaders travelled south the following year and Faramos sailed all the way down the river, emerging at the same point on the south coast as the Pila River... For a time, the river was called the Faramosel and its main tributary was called the Pila. Decades later, the settlers made contact with the secretive river-folk and the native names of those rivers were adopted, with the settler names changed to apply to the surrounding lands – thus, there is the Pilasel district around the Jrezar River and Faramosel on the Curand River.

## Early Settlements and Early Wars

Meanwhile, the bulk of the Nralarites were still waiting in Pasos for the next Waertagi dragonship to bring them to Jrustela. Their numbers swelled unexpectedly when King Nepur discovered that his coffers were nearly empty and saved money by offering thousands of jailed prisoners pardons if they would take ship with the Waertagi. With one stroke, Nepur removed thousands of mouths to feed, gained a reputation as a peacemaker and law-bringer and weakened his enemies by transferring the burden of the thieves and brigands onto them. Fortunately for the community, a charismatic preacher named Theditos Chainbreaker moved among the criminals, pacifying them and convincing them to build new lives for themselves.

New settlements were founded, first at Evrowal and then at Orphalsketal when Borostonar's Second Journal was found. Many of the criminals found life in the religious colonies too oppressive or dull, so they struck out on their own and eventually founded the city of Hathinelthor on the east coast. One Nralarite prince, a grandson of Nralar, led his personal household down the Norvalelan coast in the west and founded a settlement at Jalaneswal. Every dragonship that arrived swelled the populations of the existing settlements and created a half-dozen new ones. Hredmorinos and Frowalkel were the best established colonies but they were just used as gateways by the new settlers, who usually pushed on to other towns.

As the settlers moved south, they finally encountered the Olodo, who initially mistook the Seshnegi for Waertagi. The first encounter was at Piskato, which had dwindled to a pathetic fishing village when the Seshnegi arrived. The Piskatoans told the explorers from Hredimorimos about the southern reaches of the island, about the pirates of Persek and the priest-kings of Arshu Phola. Alarmed by the thought of a powerful rival civilisation, Faramos of Hredimorimos led another expedition south. After many adventures and battles in the jungles, he sailed down the river that still bore his name and discovered the city of Managar, which he nicknamed *Arastos (City of Birds)*, as thousands of jungle parrots nested in its crumbling walls and flew up as his boat approached. Managar was larger than Arshu Phola but because of the



information Famos had received from the folk of Piskato, he did not pay proper tribute to the chieftain of Managar and instead asked for directions to the king of Arshu Phola. This was a terrible insult to the descendants of Ekose the Burner and one that would have lasting repercussions.

Arastos became Irenstos (*City of the Source*) because of a mistake by Borostenar's cartographer, who marked the city as the source of the rivers instead of their mouth.

Famos met with the king of Arshu Phola, Sergalis Manlath. Now, while the king bore the same name as the famed ancestor who had entered the Cave of Nemath over two centuries before, he was not the same person (despite a cult tradition among the Olodo that Manlath received immortality from the dreo). The two leaders exchanged gifts and agreed that there would be peace between the Olodo and the Nralarites but there was little friendship between the two. Famos mistrusted the Pagan king and Sergalis foresaw the annihilation of the Olodo at the hands of the numerically and magically superior newcomers. Still, peace might have been achieved if it were not for the warriors of Managar. They ambushed Famos' party as they travelled through the jungle, believing that the newcomers were going to ally with Arshu Phola against the river towns of Managar and Lostrum. Famos survived the ambush but was severely wounded and died on the journey home.

## The Treaty of Peresk

Infuriated by the murder of their leader, the Hredmorinos Parliament met to discuss a response. They were joined by representatives from Frowalkel, Evrowal, Orphalsketkal and Hathinelthor. While the Jrusteli Confederation would not be formally established for another four decades, the Passing of Famos is generally held to be the event that led to its formation. The accounts from the survivors of the expedition to Arshu Phola were confused and it was believed that they had been attacked by Arshu Phola warriors, not men from Managar. Therefore, the Parliament voted to declare war on Arshu Phola.

The first year of hostilities between the Nralarites and the Olodo was limited to border raids. The northernmost Olodo towns like Piskato were destroyed or occupied; in response, the Olodo attacked several new settlements like Hathinelthor.

To get the ships and soldiers they would need, the Parliament sent diplomats and missionaries to the Olodo town of Persek. The Persek pirates were rivals of both the river towns and Arshu Phola and responded immediately to the Seshnegi overtures. They converted to Makanism immediately and the Parliament and the chieftain of Persek signed the historic

treaty of Persek (or Peresk, as it became known). This treaty is the legal foundation of the Jrusteli Confederation. It acknowledged the right of the Makanised Olodo to dwell on the island and gave them equal rights to the Seshnegi settlers. It also permitted them to send a representative to the Parliament at Hredmorinos.

An army of warriors from Peresk, together with cut-throats and adventurers from Hathinelthor and sorcerers from Hredmorinos attacked Arshu Phola. Just as his ancestor had done, Sergalis Manlath attempted to invoke the dreo earth-spirits but he reckoned without the power of Sorcery. The earth-spirits were bound or destroyed and the outer district of Arshu Phola was set alight. Reinforcements from outlying villages did manage to drive the invaders back but this was a temporary relief. Hadilon of Persek, a Seshnegi who had married one of the Olodo converts, took command of the attacking army. A year later, Seshnegi troops were back at the walls of Arshu Phola and a year after that Arshu Phola was taken. Many of the inhabitants of the Olodo city fled before the end, sailing south on a hazardous journey to Umathela in the far south.

Once Arshu Phola was conquered, Hadilon sailed onto Managar and conquered that town too. Seeing that the newcomers could not be defeated, the town of Lostrum surrendered and became known as Shenilstos (*City of Bargaining*). A few isolated Olodo settlements managed to hold out but the vast majority of the old folk were either conquered by or surrendered to the Seshnegi. The terms of the treaty of Persek were extended to all Olodo – if they converted to Makanism, they would have the same rights as any of the Seshnegi settlers. With the assimilation of the Olodo, the Seshnegi learned a great deal about their new home. A combination of Seshnegi sorcery and Olodo knowledge allowed the colony to expand into the mountains and deeper into the jungle. The Olodo coastal boats began to travel between all the ports along the east coast.

A second and third wave of immigrants from the north arrived in 620-623 and 631-634. The first group were mostly Nralarites, or new enemies of the king who had joined with the Nralarites in taking exile instead of risking death or civil war. The rest were drawn by the opportunity of a new life in Jrustela. Tales of the island's incredible fertility and the new land to be claimed had spread back to the north, a complete contrast to the 'Jrustela – land of monsters' stories that had been current when Frowalkel was founded. These new immigrants flocked to the southern side of the island, often occupying Olodo settlements. New cities established in this time included Svalwal (a mining town) and Eradinthanos (originally a supply base for Hadilon's wars).

## The Migration To Umathela

Umathela was founded by migrants who were opposed to the war with the Olodo. They argued that the parliaments were engaged in empire-building and would fall victim to the same feudal foolishness that threatened to tear Seshnela apart. When the warring city refused to listen, they left and sailed south. Ironically, their numbers were reinforced by Olodo who fled from doomed Arshu Phola.

## The Taming of the Timinitis

As the Olodo had done before them, the Nralarites warred with the insect-folk. The Olodo had come to an uneasy peace with the insects after the deeds of Ekose the Burner but they had agreed not to cross into the heartland of the jungle. The expanding Nralarite colonies, though, did not honour this agreement and the timinitis responded with force. The war was initially led by the Parliament of Hredmorinos, who seized upon the timinitis as a way to re-establish their town's pre-eminence. The first Virtuous settlement was being eclipsed by new towns like Svalwal and Orphalsketal.

Hundreds of acres of jungle were cleared using slash-and-burn techniques, while hunting parties searched out timinit hives and attacked them. The timinitis began digging tunnels and creeping into human territory by night. The insect-folk did not have the same concept of honour or morality as the Seshnegi and saw nothing wrong with attacking women and children. Tales of timinit atrocities drew volunteers from other cities and through both force and sorcery the insects were soon forced to retreat into their jungle heartland. One timinit ambush slew the leader of the Parliament, Abrishtos, who had been visiting troops in the region.


Attempts to attack the heartland were beaten back. The Olodo offered the use of their magic smoke and a batch of it was brewed up in the alchemical vats at Hredmorinos. However, before the smoke could be used, it was destroyed by a saboteur who was later discovered to be the mind-controlled host of a new and hitherto unknown species of insect – the cerebresites. The belief that anyone in the colony could be an insect thrall nearly tore the nascent Confederation apart. Evrowal closed its gates, while Orphalsketal and Janeswal declared that any ship passing into Norvalela would be attacked if the navy believed it carried cerebresites. It was later found that only rare cerebresites could take non-timinit hosts.

The crisis was averted when a researcher in Piskosol discovered a reference to a 100 year old letter from the old colony at Frowalkel. One of the sorcerers there, Varnwey, had managed to learn the timinit language but his research had been ignored by the universities and scholars of Seshnela. Now, a century after his death, Varnwey's work proved vital. Using his work and combining it with the folk traditions and observations of the Olodo, the men of Piskosol were able to open up negotiations with the insects. The timinitis responded eagerly to the offers of peace, as they were utterly terrified by the prospect of losing more hives. The quick-minded insects learned the human tongue and began aping human culture. Less than a year after Varnwey's work was rediscovered, the war was effectively over and the timinitis were applying for citizenship under the terms of the treaty of Peresk.

Just as the discovery of the cerebresites had forced the various cities in Jrustela to close their gates against traffic from outside, the timinit question also divided them. The Parliament in Hredmorinos was unanimously opposed to stopping the war,







let alone letting the timinits into Jrustelan society. The towns of the east coast, who had done most of the actual fighting, were willing to countenance the idea while the southern district sought an end to the fighting in order to re-establish river traffic through the jungle basin. The increasingly independent western cities remained neutral on the topic. As the debate moved from the immediate question of ending the war to more rarefied topics, such as the possibility for timinits to achieve Solace or their standing as ensouled beings, Hredmorinos became isolated and acquired a reputation as being hidebound and reactionary, a curious state for a city that had been founded only a few years earlier as the 'Great Venture' of radical progressives.

## Birth of the Confederation

The Jrusteli Confederation was born partly from the debate over the timinits and partly over the near-revolt of the western colonies of Norvalela. The western land was virtually a separate entity to mainland Jrustela, as the only way to reach it by land was via the dangerous northern pass of Abri Khalan. The shipyards of Orphalsketkal had become vital to the Jrusteli civilisation but they were dominated by the nobles of Jalaneswal, who treated Norvalela as their own personal fiefdom. As relations with the Waertagi soured, the cities looked to Orphalsketkal for aid and ships but the nobles refused, preferring to invest magic and money in their growing domain and claiming that the rest of Jrustela was none of their concern. Secretly, the nobles were allied with forces from the mainland.

This coincided with a spate of troll attacks on outlying settlements near Jalaneswal. Out of paranoia, these attacks were blamed by the Norvalelans as being caused by the easterners, or by the timinits, or the Olodo or all three. The Norvalelans threatened to close their borders once more but a coalition of democrats, philosophers and shipwrights rose up in Orphalsketkal and called for aid from the eastern cities. A rag-tag fleet of mercenaries and Sons of Damolstan sailed to Norvalela in support of the coalition, forcing the nobles to climb down and abandon their territorial claim on Orphalsketkal. They further infuriated the nobles by sweeping down the coast and dealing with the troll trouble.

The authority of the nobles was effectively broken from that moment on and Jrustela was now almost wholly in the hands of the various democratic leagues and theocracies. Of the 13 cities, only Jalaneswal was ruled by nobles from old Seshnela. Hredmorinos and Evrowal, though, were controlled by the 'new nobility', the descendants of the first founders who had dominated the parliaments in both cities. Frowalkel clung to the same curious legal structure it had used since its founding. Orphalsketkal and Svalwal were ruled mainly by coalitions of guilds and elected councils, while Hathinelthor

was ruled by criminal gangs posing as guilds. Eredithanos was a theocracy; the Olodo towns of Piskosol, Peresk, Arshu Phola and Irenstos were all ruled by councils comprised of Nralarite administrators with Olodo advisors, while Shenilstos still refused to wholly yield to the Malkionist settlers.

The alliance with the timinits opened much more of Jrustela to colonisation and the island attracted more settlers from the north as Seshnela slipped into civil war. The various cities declared that their oaths to the throne in Seshnela were void between 620 and 627. Each city-state was independent between then and 652 but the practise of the Insight Contests brought their laws into alignment. If two cities disagreed, they would each nominate the best of their scholars, philosophers and oracles, who would question each other on Malkian lore and other scholarly topics. The city of the winning scholar was deemed to be in the right. This practise united the cities of Jrustela and paved the way to the war for unification in 652.

While the Insight Contests did iron out the differences between the laws of the various cities, they had two unexpected side effects. Firstly, Jrustela moved further and further away from the caste system prevalent in Seshnela – this social upheaval was already present due to the large numbers of settlers from the lower castes who were taking on roles as leaders, scholars, warriors and sorcerers normally reserved for their betters. Secondly, and more insidiously, every city was lavishing money and power on its universities in order to win the insight contests. This meant the scholars were probing the boundaries of traditional belief; as a result, all manner of unusual cults and sects were springing up. Jrustela was always welcoming to those of minority sects but by the 630s it seemed like every neighbourhood had its own unique beliefs and ways of honouring Malkion and the Invisible God. By the early 640s, the proliferation of different cults had even begun to disrupt the Insight Contests, as judges began arbitrating based on their own home sects instead of 'outdated' or traditional beliefs.

## The Jrusteli Confederation

The appearance of the Abiding Book six years earlier was the force that pushed Jrustela over the edge into unification. Not only had the holy book unified Jrusteli religion, it also resolved the on-going concerns with the Insight Contests. The appearance of the Book was so conveniently miraculous that some whispered it was in truth a forgery, designed to quell any dissent and enforce a single authority on the whole island. The Confederation first met in Eridithanos, where the Abiding Book had appeared. The terms of the confederation were that each of the 13 cities would nominate a member of the council. Each city could decide who its member was as they wished – Jalaneswal, for example, always chose its

## The Years of Jrustela's Glory

**Approx 400:** War of Thorns.

**401:** Burning of Ekose.

**426:** Sergalis Manlanth enters the Cave.

**501:** Establishment of Frowalkel.

**511:** *Impossible Landscapes* smuggled out of Seshnela to Frowalkel.

**540:** Nralarite succession crisis; formation of Community of the Virtuous.

**555:** Establishment of Hredimorinos; first voyage of Borostanar.

**556:** Second voyage of Borostanar.

**557:** Establishment of Evrowal and Orphalsketkal.

**574:** Second wave of colonisation; Establishment of Hathinelthor.

**575:** Treaty of Peresk.

**577:** Foundation of Eridithanos.

**578:** Fall of Arshu Phola.

**580:** Establishment of Svalwal; Establishment of Umathelan colony.

**593:** Taming of the timinits.

**602:** The Burning of Hredimorinos; closure of ports.

**603:** Peace with the timinits.

**643:** First Eridithanos conference.

**646:** Second Eridithanos conference; Appearance of the Abiding Book.

**647:** Foundation of the New Order.

**652:** Foundation of the Jrusteli Confederation.

**655:** Establishment of Malkioni True Church.

**660:** Fourth Ecclesiastical Council; Civil War in Seshnela.

**665:** Drowning of Svalwal.

**680:** Army of Rightness lands in Seshnela.

**718:** Battle of Taniens' Victory; Destruction of the Waertagi fleet.

**740:** End of first Return to Rightness Crusade; beginnings of transfer of the power of the Middle Sea Alliance to Seshnela.

**745:** The New Order discover *Impossible Landscapes* in the library at Frowalkel.

**776:** New Order enfranchised as monastic order.

**798:** Opening of the School of the New Order .

**806:** Establishment of the Order of Otherworld Explorations.

**823:** Invasion of Brithos.

**845:** Formation of the God Learners' Collective.

**876:** Declaration of the Era of Continued Revelation.

**908:** The Present Day.


representative from the line of Jalan, grandson of Nralar, while the head of the Hredimorinos Parliament also became its council member. From their own ranks, the 13 council members would elect a leader, a First Among Equals, who would shape policy and lead the Jrustelan nation. No city's member could be the First twice in a row, ensuring the locus of power moved between the cities. The First would serve for a term of 10 years. Initially, the power of the council was limited but its rise was utterly intertwined with the rise of the new religion of the Abiding Book as preached by the Saintly Bookbearers. Political unification was driven by the tide of religious unification, as exemplified by the choice of First Volunteer Hyrafos of Piskosol as the first leader of the council.

Hyrafos' first acts were to secure the safety and independence of Jrustela. Recognising the island did not have an especially strong civil martial tradition, he instituted the policy of sponsoring and supplying religious troops from the Return to Rightness movement and soon the crusade *was* the Confederation's military arm. He ordered all the magical colleges that had grown up to fight Insight Contests to turn their attention to more practical sorcery, beginning a crash-course in military magic development. He also began to support the splinter colony in Umatela, building the first ocean-going ships held by any western humans outside the Waertagi. Trade sprang up between the island and the southern continent and soon these ships were also sailing north to Genertela, bringing missionaries and Saintly Bookbearers as well as trade goods and products of Jrustelan sorcery.

Angered, the Waertagi used their magic against their erstwhile allies in 665, summoning up a host of water elementals who rushed inland in the form of a huge tidal wave. The city of Svalwal was drowned and thousands of lives were lost. Many of these lives were later returned in mass resurrection miracles by the Malkioni, becoming the order of Just Shipbuilders. In defiance of the Waertagi ban on sea travel, the Just Shipbuilders continued to assemble ocean-going ships, sailed by the Just Men of the Sea. To placate the Waertagi, the Confederation agreed to cease all voyages north to Genertela but the Free Men of the Sea continued to sail to Umatela and other points along the southern coast. While the Waertagi and the Free Men of the Sea utterly despised each other, relations between the Confederation and the Waertagi were quickly repaired after the destruction of Svalwal, as the Confederation needed the Waertagi to spread the word of the Abiding Book.

## The Collapse of Seshnela and The Return to Rightness Crusade

While Jrustela strode ever onwards, the mother country was collapsing into ruin. Barbarians encroached on its borders and dozens of lords and petty nobles plotted to seize Gerlant's



throne. Not even the advent of the Abiding Book could stave off collapse. The last true king, Bretnos, perhaps recognised that only the true teachings of the Invisible God could save his kingdom, for he gave land and support to the Sainly Bookbearers who arrived on his shores from 650 onwards. In 660, he even called the Fourth Ecclesiastical Council, hoping to unify religions in Seshnela the same way they had been unified in Jrustela and so bring his land into rightness. The blind clerics of Seshnela rejected the primacy of the Abiding Book – some argued that while it was a revelation from God, it did not necessarily supersede previous insights and teachings, while others dismissed it as a forgery or even a trick of the devil. In a last, desperate attempt to salvage something, King Bretnos himself addressed the conference but he was assassinated by sorcery even as he spoke.

The civil war continued for nearly 20 years until the Army of Rightness arrived in the shores of Seshnela. This army was sent by Jrustela, ostensibly to protect the few Jrusteli citizens still caught in the chaos of the civil war. The Army of Rightness was led by Trymir, the head of the Confederation and a descendant of the Seshnegi kings of old. The Army crossed the seas on Waertagi ships. It was relatively small compared to the warring Seshnegi forces or to the barbarians or beast-men hordes but the magic of the Order of the New Iron Staff was of a magnitude undreamt-of since the days of Zzabur. Armed with this sorcery, the Army of Rightness liberated much of old Seshnela and brought it under the control of the Jrusteli Confederation.

Trymir returned home in triumph and his place on the mainland was taken by Hadalin, a native of Jalanswal and a descendant of the great explorer Borostonar. Hadalin acted as a peacemaker, bringing other Seshnelan provinces into the Jrusteli protectorate and resolving disputes between conquered groups. He also helped spread the word of Makan to the benighted people and missionaries flooded out to the countries around Seshnela. Hadalin was well loved by his people, who called him the Great, and a grateful Confederation gave him the honorary title of High Duke.

## The Alliance

Hadalin was so respected by the Seshnegi that they accepted his son, Ullmal, as his heir. This was anathema to the democratic Jrusteli, who only approved of inherited power when it was cloaked in a veneer of democracy or merit. However, Ullmal was established as the Duke of Seshnela and the bulk of the 'Jrustelan' army was on the continent and loyal to him after several years of crusading. While he was nominally a representative of the Confederation, in truth they had no power over him. Ullmal was able to appoint his own War Bishops to run the Rightness Crusade, battling vestiges of the Stygian armies.

Meanwhile, the Confederation was being threatened by the Waertagi. The sea-folk had violently disapproved of the Jrusteli ship-building efforts in the past and had even destroyed the city of Svalwal to maintain their monopoly on ocean travel. The growing magical power of the Confederation had stopped the Waertagi from taking direct action again but with the Jrusteli power overextended and divided between the island and Seshnela, the sea-folk had grown increasingly belligerent. Matters came to a head in 715 when a Waertagi diplomat threatened to invoke a sea-god to drown the whole island. The Confederation could not permit this threat to continue but needed aid. They appealed to Ullmal, who traded recognition from the Confederation as High Duke for the support of his armies and war-wizards. In 718, the Jrustelan Free Men of the Sea sailed out to meet the Waertagi dragon-ships in battle. The Waertagi had 50 city-sized dragon-ships, each one holding as many men as the entire Free Navy. Their sailors were vastly more experienced and better armed than the Free Men. The Waertagi had weather-shapers and elementalists who could conjure tidal waves, mentalists who could command kraken, whales and undines. The Free Men's position seemed hopeless but they had a secret weapon.

New Order sorcerers from Seshnela had prepared a new and great invocation, one of the greatest spells since the conjuring of Nysalor. They called on a strange god, the son of Tanien, and bound the god as if it were the merest spirit. Then, they forced the son to call his father down from the sky realm – and the sea became fire. Tanien was the god of water in the fiery sky realm and his presence transformed the earthly water into flame. Huge firebergs cascaded across the ocean, smashing and burning the Waertagi ships. The transmutation spread to the skies above and the storms rained fire.

Over a third of the Free Man fleet was destroyed by the Waertagi or by the fires but over nine-tenths of the dragon-ships were now nothing more than ash or ever-burning fire. The power of the Waertagi was broken forever. The Battle of Tanien's Victory was costly for the Jrusteli (or, more properly, for the Middle Sea Alliance of Jrustela and Seshnela) but it confirmed the incredible power of their new sorcery and gave them dominance of the oceans. The path to the Middle Sea Empire was open.

Ullmal died without an heir and his throne was claimed by Pilif the Magus of the New Order. The church opposed the crowning of a sorcerer, pointing out that the Abiding Book insisted that no person dedicated to sorcery could be king. Instead, the nobles of Seshnela chose one of the Jrusteli Princes, Saval, to be king and he quickly obtained the support of the church. There followed a brief but bloody

clash for control of the Seshnegi throne. Pilif's allies, the powerful New Order sorcerers flush with their success in the Battle of Taniel's Victory, immediately tried to kill Saval when he came ashore but he fled to Sanderal where his allies waited. Pilaf and his cabal met with Saval's Loyal Twelve in sorcerous battle but the New Order met with disaster when Pilaf attempted to summon the Power of Seshnegi Kingship. The entity turned on the false claimant, devouring him and instructing Saval on the true rites and rules of kingship. Although Saval was crowned in the ancient manner of Froalar and took the title of Sacred Overlord, he never claimed the kingship.

The repercussions of Pilif's claim were also felt in Jrustela, the home of the New Order. The sorcerous group was forced to curtail its researches and activities and was placed under the control of the church.

## The Shift To Seshnela

Over the next three generations, more power returned to the northern homeland. Annmak, son of Saval, was crowned king and while his heirs would alternately be warriors or builders, they all expanded the territory paying tribute to the Seshnegi crown. A spirit of adventurism seized the lands, leading to such grand deeds as the alliance with Kralorela. The last remnants of Arkat's empire were smashed and other northern lands were incorporated into Seshnela. In the south, the opening of the seas following the defeat of the Waertagi meant the colony at Umatela could blossom into the Six-Legged Empire.

Through all this, though, the Jrusteli Confederation failed to take a leading role. It was no longer the brave new frontier but had matured into the stable centre of the empire. Jrustelan sorcery was the source of the Middle Sea Alliance's strength, Jrustelan trade ships kept it together and Jrustelan money paid for it all – but the Confederation seemed unwilling to push the kings it had created. By the time the Alliance was reconstituted as an Empire, the Confederation had waned to be little more than a meaningless middle house in the Middle Sea bureaucracy and the 13 cities were again behaving as independent city-states.

As part of the coronation ceremony of Svagad, the Emperor of Land and Sea, the original Abiding Book was transferred from the Cathedral of the Book at Eredithanos to the Holy Mountain at Damolsket in Seshnela. With the passing of God's book from the island, the days of Jrustela's primacy in the Middle Sea Empire came to a close.


## The Era of Continued Revelation

Although the political control of the Middle Sea Empire has passed back to Seshnela, Jrustela is still the wealthiest of the provinces and the centre of the Empire's burgeoning

## The Roll of Kings From Nralar the Old to the Present Emperor

The Kings of Seshnela and Jrustela are recorded in the Third Book of Salovan:

32. Nralar the Old, King of Seshnela Reigned 501-603
33. Nepur, King of Seshnela Reigned 603-632
34. Bretnos, King of Seshnela Reigned 632-660
35. Relam, King of Seshnela Reigned 660-666
36. Pamalar, Duke of Frowal Reigned 666-673
37. Hymat, Duke of Frowal Reigned 673-676
38. Thyerm, King of Tanisor and Seshnela Reigned 676-679
39. Grodlam the Wolf, Duke of Malkonwal 679-681
40. Trymir, Commander of the Army of Rightness, Prince of Jrusteli 681-689
41. Hadalin, Manager of Greater Seshnela, the High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Prince of Jrusteli 689-708
42. Ullmal, High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Prince of Jrusteli 708-725
43. Saval, Count of Orphalsket; Champion of Malkion, Prince of Jrusteli; later also Sacred Overlord 725-734
44. Annmak the Peacemaker, King of Seshnela 734-751
45. Meipal, King of Seshnela 751-754
46. Orvansfal, King of Seshnela 754-768
47. Svalak, King of Seshnela 768-789
48. Svagad, Emperor of the Land and Sea 789-805
49. Modos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 805-816
50. Miglos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 816-823
51. Suilmant (aka Sulmat), Emperor of the Land and Sea 823-838
52. Brailach (aka Bralax), Emperor of the Land and Sea 838-859
53. Darangram (aka Dagram), Emperor of the Land and Sea 859-870
54. Triosos (aka Trosos), Emperor of the Land and Sea 870-887
55. Keralamalos (aka Kralas), Emperor of the Land and Sea 887-901
56. Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 901-today [908]



overseas trade. More importantly, it is also the source of the Middle Sea Empire's staggering magical power. While Frowal and Estan on the mainland have their own respected universities and the Pameltanan colonies are home to radical experiments and highly advanced research, the intellectual heartland and questing mind of the Empire was fostered and established on Jrustela, the island of sorcerers. While the rise of the universities and Jrustelan sorcery has been described previously, the precise path that led to the God Learners requires special consideration.

It started with a group known as the New Order. They began as a Makanist scholarly circle, a group of merchants, philosophers and sorcerers who met to discuss and debate the revelations of the Abiding Book. Soon, they discovered that some of the teachings in the book could be construed as sorcerous formulae, making the holy book a grimoire. Their use of the Abiding Book as a grimoire was quite different to the application of the book by the Rightness Crusade and their *Sharp Abiding Book* – the *Sharp Abiding Book* is an edited version of the original, with the teachings and commentaries about conversion removed and battle-spells added. The Crusader magic did not attempt to address the high planes – it was direct, simple sorcery. In contrast, the New Order's work with the Abiding Book involved taking the writing of Makan in the same way they would examine a sorcerous textbook, taking the word of God as a coded incantation. By the time of the Waertagi crisis, the New Order was among the most powerful military orders in Jrustela, focussing on the military applications of the revelations. It was powerful, flexible, insightful but also bordered on the heretical.

The conjuration and binding of Tanien's son to destroy the Waertagi dragon-ships could not have been accomplished without the New Order but they made a disastrous political blunder by supporting Pilaf the Magus' bid for the Seshnegi Throne. The New Order was caught in the turmoil that followed Saval's victory and was officially disbanded. The Jrusteli military could not afford to lose the magical advantage offered by the New Order, though, so the organisation was eventually put under church control and reformed as a monastic order. The best of the New Order sorcerers were ordered to join the sect and its researches were now overseen by church censors.

Four centuries before the present day, a book called *Impossible Landscapes* was stolen from the Stygian Empire by dissidents who smuggled it to the colony at Frowalkel. There, it lingered in obscurity for decades, miscatalogued as *A Compendium of Medicinal Fungi*. The book was a series of animated pictures depicting scenes from various Otherworlds. The provenance of *Impossible Landscapes* was uncertain – though it certainly came from the heart of Arkat's empire, it was damaged by fire and several parts could not be discerned. If that was all there

was to the book, then it would simply have been recatalogued and forgotten once again. However, page 43 contained a minor spirit, an imp called Samin. The imp crawled out of the book and sang and danced to entertain its observers. It thrived on the attention and grew. When asked about the other pictures in the book, Samin taught the scholars some other silly songs.

These songs were effectively microscopic HeroQuests. When a song was sung while looking on its corresponding picture, the observer would move closer towards the Hero Plane. This shift was but the tiniest fraction of the spiritual movement made possible by an actual Gate but it was a definite magical shift and could be built on and exploited. It was an opening into the higher realms that required much less power than the epic invocations of Tanien.

It was rediscovered in 745 by a member of the New Order of sorcerers. To be precise, it was discovered by one of their librarians, who took the book on tour as soon as the imp was found. *Impossible Landscapes* entertained crowds all over Jrustela and the Silly Man's Song was imitated by minstrels and bards. The Order initially saw the book as a source of quick cash, which they desperately needed to survive but when the magical implications of the plane shift were discovered, the tour was cancelled and *Impossible Landscapes* was brought back to the Order's library under guard.

*Impossible Landscapes* contained clues that led to the acquisition of the *Five New Ways*, a tome that contained the secrets of Arkat's revolutionary HeroQuesting as reinterpreted and refined through the lens of devout Makanism by a great cleric named Mandarel. It took an understanding of Arkat's techniques to produce the *Five New Ways*, as previous analysis of the records left by the great trickster failed due to a lack of understanding of HeroQuesting. With that in hand, the New Order was able to develop a powerful new form of magic but it was as controversial as the application of the *Abiding Grimoire* to sorcery. Mandarel feared that his discovery would be lost if the suppression of the New Order continued, so he travelled around Jrustela preaching the virtues of the *Five New Ways*, arguing it was a way of honouring and praising Makan while also fighting against unbelievers and Pagans. When they were reformed as a monastic order, Mandarel was named the first abbot.

The early Heroquesting attempts met with disaster. They attempted to replicate Arkat's accomplishments and tried to penetrate into the prehistoric myths of Ralios. Firstly, the voyagers had to gain access to the holy sites, which often involved clashing with local foes and priesthoods. Then, they would transit to the Otherworld but without a working knowledge of the myth cycle they were often destroyed by the first guardians or ejected at an early station. Few survived these abortive voyages. Mandarel's project seemed doomed,

although the Sixth Voyage did manage to approach Orlanth's Hall by the simple expedient of blowing through as much opposition as possible. They were faced with a horde of angered demigods but they managed to escape by deliberately failing a station and being forcibly ejected from the mythic realm. Parallel research offered a new opportunity, though – those who had experienced the minor shift through Impossible Landscapes had not gone through an existing gate or holy site. The pilot bands did not need to use major gates; they could seek out other portals, lesser backdoors into the Gods' War.

The researchers also made discoveries into what exactly the Gods' War denizens were and how they related to the pagan Gods. The revelation that the God's War aspects of the gods were constantly repeating their own past deeds and myths gave the scholars the key to successful HeroQuesting – know the myth and you can manipulate the god. The second phase of HeroQuests were able to replicate the results of many Pagan rituals, garnering rewards from the gods without any requirements for belief or sanctity. The God Learners would slip into a pagan myth and complete as much of the quest as possible using information from the myth, then use brute force and sorcery to get past any remaining barriers.

Mandarel's successor, First Pilot Maragaran, revealed the results of the early work with *Five New Ways*, a book called the *753 Compilations*. This was part grimoire and part commentary on the Abiding Book and effectively offered a new way to worship Makan through HeroQuesting. It argued that prayer energy could be utilised and shaped using belief and that adherents should experience and utilise Pagan beliefs and myths as a way of praising Makan. This grew into the religious movement known as Malkionerism, which remained controversial throughout its history and was deemed heretical by some in the mainstream faith of Makanism. For all its perceived moral flaws, the success and power of its God Learner adherents ensured the survival of Malkionerism.

The *753 Compilation* was built on with works like the Abiding Grimoire (derived from the magic of the Abiding Book but stripped of all encumbrances and elements not related to the practice of sorcery) and its successor, the *Unencumbered Lights of Reason* manual of sorcery. The original New Order school gave rise to dozens of sub-cults and other orders, such as the Supernatural Pilots (officially the Order of Otherworld Exploration), which allied together in the God Learner's Collective of 845. The *Compilation* also detailed the results and accomplishments of the earlier Heroquests. The *753 Compilation* inspired a young wizard named Hwaros, who made a mystical voyage similar to that undertaken by Mandarel and produced the technique now known as Runequest Sight. This effort drove Hwaros to the brink of madness but the intercession of St. Xemela saved his

sanity and Hwaros was able to teach his technique to others before retiring to a closed monastery. By now, the God Learners were able to tap divine power from dozens of myths, to charge up magical items as reflections of the possessions of the gods and to invoke divine powers via quests. They had developed the God Learner's Secret, which let them step beyond *recorded* myths and perceive relationships between powers and deities.

On the centennial anniversary of the reformation of the New Order, First Pilot Arados declared to the Jrusteli Confederation council that the Collective was entering what he deemed the Era of Continuous Revelation, when the power and utility of HeroQuesting through Malkionerist sorcery would continue to grow and grow indefinitely. He said that with this power at its command, the Middle Sea Empire would be utterly invincible.

## IMPERIAL SEAT: JRUSTELA

Jrustela is a sub-tropical continent, warmer and wetter than the northern lands. It is a land of volcanoes and earthquakes, where the ground is uncertain and violent. As if in recompense, though, the land is fertile and produces very great harvests. The weather is generally mild, although there are tremendous storms in the later months of the year. Admittedly, the land seemed much less welcome to its first settlers, as the central basin of Jrustela was a dense and virtually impassable jungle haunted by insect-men, monsters and earth-spirits. It was only after the Nralarite colonisation that the bounty of Jrustela became manifest.

The land is shaped like a great crater or basin – the lowest point of the central jungle basin is only a few feet above sea level, hence the great slow meandering course of the Famos River. The mountains of the Curustus thrust up thousands of metres above the mainland and slope steeply down to the ocean on the western side. The northern and eastern coastlines are a maze of cliffs, reefs and sheltered coves, often of spectacular natural beauty. The south-east of the island is known for steam vents and earth tremors, although it is nowhere near as volcanic as parts of the western Curustus.

To the south, there is the great mouth of the rivers. The central basin is drained by a single vast river system that stretches for thousands of kilometres. These rivers empty out into a wide bay that provides the best harbourage and fishing on the continent.

When the Olodo first arrived here, in the Dawn Age, all of Jrustela's central basin was covered by jungle. The Olodo cleared much of the south-eastern jungles when they built their cities but it was not until the Nralarite expansion that the majority of the island's forests were removed, initially by



slashing and burning, then by magical means involving the binding of the native dreo or the temporary animation of whole swathes of vegetation. Today, only the centre of the island and the eastern side of the mountains are still covered by jungle. Much of the land once claimed by the wilderness is now farmed, although extensive reaches have been cordoned off as military testing grounds, timinit reserves, parkland, hunting grounds or simply as green areas dividing city-states. Jrustela, it is said, could feed the world with its bounty. The fields' natural productivity is very great but when augmented by the stolen blessings of numerous fertility deities, they

produce three harvests every year and never suffer from blights or bad weather (the failure of the Goddess Switch, if known to the farmers of Jrustela, would cause mass panic and carries the threat of famine). Despite this natural bounty, the population of the island is highly urbanised. As many people live in the 13 great cities of the Confederation as dwell in the countryside and many of the rural population are imported labourers from Umathela or the north.

Jrustela's cities are almost all located along the coast. There are few inland towns and it is a rare Jrusteli who does not at

least see the sea every few days. The island has an admirable infrastructure, with well-paved roads running from city-to-city, watched over by guards at regularly spaced posts. Of late, Zistorate mechanical coaches have become the favoured mode of transport on the roads but the bulk of the population still rely on horses (especially since the God Learners replicated the Pentan horse-blessings of Kargzant). Swift coastal boats, either sailed or propelled by bound sylphs or undines, hug the coastline while mighty Free Man galleons are always crossing the horizons. The great river is also a major artery of trade and travel, especially since the construction of the Thirteen Thunders canal linking Evrowal to the river. Finally, for those with the gold to spare, there are more exotic ways to get from Arshu Phola to Zzabburistos, like flying beasts, balloons, skyships or even the still-experimental teleport grid.

In contrast to the dangers and restrictions on travel in Genertela, where there are innumerable little kingdoms and feudal domains that might block a wanderer's path, most of Jrustela is open. Peasants (donari) can travel with a letter obtained from a noble or bureaucrat, while those of higher castes can go anywhere on the island they wish. Each of the 13 founding cities is legally permitted to bar non-citizens from entering but this law has not been invoked in centuries.

The Jrusteli Confederation is made up of 13 (12, since the drowning of Svalwal) great cities, called the Original Thirteen or the Founding Cities. Officially, these are the only cities on the island as it is the dukes of these great metropolises that sit on the Council. Every Jrusteli man, woman and child is a citizen of one of the 13. Each city administrates the land around it, even when this land incorporates other cities. For example, the large town of Isstur is located around the coast from the city of Frowalkel. In any other land, Isstur would be considered a city but as Jrusteli law defines a city as one of the Original Thirteen, it remains a town. Isstur is in the zone administrated by Frowalkel. A man dwelling in Isstur might introduce himself as 'Albred of Isstur, Citizen of Frowalkel,' or just 'Albred of Frowalkel' if his home town is not at issue.

There are constant demands to promote one or more of the great towns of Jrustela to city status, opening up another seat on the council and giving another town a chance at the Arch-Dukedom – or at very least choose a town to fill the empty seat left by Svalwal. Thus far, the 12 cities have resisted adding another to their number, leading the town councils of such places as Isstur and Bathijras to petition the Emperor of Land and Sea directly.

Jrustela is divided into several geographical provinces, which are described here.

## Kerela

Kerela is the oldest 'civilised' part of the island. It was here that the Nralarites landed and their influence is obvious. If it were not for the tropical trees and the cries of strange birds, this could be Seshnela. The coastline of Kerela is dotted with innumerable small villages and ports and the inland reaches are a patchwork of small farms and vast manorial estates. The citizens of Kerela take great pride in their ancestry and heritage and everywhere are monuments to some great explorer, sage or philosopher of the past. They are also noted patrons of the arts and often it seems impossible to take two steps without running into some poetry recital or uplifting dramaturgical performance. It is a settled land, a safe land.

## Western Kerela and The Frowalkel Peninsula


Kerela's boundary to the west is marked by the tangled Regrettable Hills, just south of the Frowalkel peninsula. The hills, a maze of thorny forests, bogs and things with teeth, once blocked overland travel from Frowalkel. The citizens of the city on the cape complained for years about the dangers of the hills, leading to the construction of the Corrective Highway in 801. This wide road of spell-reinforced stone cuts straight through the hills and wards along the sides of the Highway fend off wandering monsters. The opening of the Highway linked the Frowalkel peninsula with the rest of Jrustela (and within a day, the Frowalkites were complaining about the influx of visitors and meddlers in their affairs). The Highway is a century old but still consumes a huge amount of money on maintenance and security.

The Frowalkel peninsula (also known as the Spur of Hith) is the home of the first Seshnegi colony on the island. It is blisteringly hot, a land of parched hills and stony outcrops. There is little arable land here and few green things grow. Goats are farmed here and there are a few copper and gold mines of doubtful profitability. The heat grows marginally less intense in winter but summer is absolutely unbearable. Apprentice wizards are often employed by rich families in Hith to place spells of cold on their homes and there is talk of another great sorcerous project to rework the climate in the whole peninsula by either binding an ice god or moving the spiritual aura of the Valind Glacier. The small towns of Hithland are all located along the eastern coast, except for the mining towns of Esten and Galhind. From north to south, the coast towns are Northcape, Gerlant's Harbour, Frowalkel, Genersketkel and Port Haven.

## Northcape

The most northerly town in all Jrustela is also, perhaps, the most unhappy. The town swelters all year long in punishing, searing heat. The buildings are of Seshnegi design, made to cope with cold winters and winds but the hidebound citizens refuse to adopt more open styles of housing. Their servants,





though, have no such compunctions and dwell in airy huts and small homes. Northcape might have been abandoned if it were not for the Northcape Lighthouse just outside of the town. Dangerous reefs lie just beyond the cape and many ships coming from the north have run aground on them in the past. Originally, the lighthouse was a simple bonfire atop a tall stone tower but it has since been replaced with a magical beacon containing a bound fire elemental. It is the only denizen of the district who complains about the cold.

The tip of Jrustela is marked by a rocky knoll called Gerlant's Head, so named because it resembles the great king in certain lights. Some have heard the head make prophesies in times of great upheaval.

### Gerlant's Harbour

Gerlant's Harbour is one of the more pleasant Frowalkel towns, located in a sheltered bay thronged with dolphins. It is a fishing town but is also home to a small magical research group attached to the University of Frowalkel who are investigating the principles of Debaldan water-magic. As of yet, their greatest accomplishment was when they flooded over half the town but accidents will happen.

An odd local legend claims that the copy of the Abiding Book held in the town church was drawn up by a fishing net from the depths of the ocean and that it is of special age and holiness.

### Frowalkel

The oldest Seshnegi city on the island, Frowalkel actually seems older than even Arshu Phola in the far south. It is a dusty place, with a musty air of decay and indolence. All the great civic buildings were built generations ago, in stark contrast to the thrusting, competitive architecture of the other cities. Irenstos is always trying to outdo Shenilstos, Evrowal and Hredimorinos in competition to build the most beautiful temples or towers but Frowalkel just sits and festers.

The city is built on the Jensursus River, which flows down from the northernmost hills of the Curustus through the Regrettable Hills. By the time it reaches the town, the river is slow-moving and a muddy brown colour and the delta on which Frowalkel is built is thick with mosquitoes and crocodiles. The Jrusteli have dug deep channels through the mud to keep Frowalkel's harbour clear.

In the centre of Frowalkel, on Seldon Hill, is the Old Town, the first colony. Frowalkel was founded as a base for explorations, for an era of empire that never came. Old Town bores into the hill, with miles upon miles of cellars and storage vaults for supplies that were never used or gathered. Much of this storage space has been taken over by the university of Frowalkel, which has absorbed many of the abandoned buildings in the city.

Beyond Old Town, the newer sections of Frowalkel show little of the grandeur and ambition of God Learner architecture displayed elsewhere in Jrustela. There are few soaring towers reaching for heaven and no grand cathedrals or monuments to the Empire's glory, just endless terraces of dour-faced houses and brown-grassed parks named for long-dead Seshnegi kings. The vitality of the Middle Sea Empire ensures that Frowalkel is growing constantly but cannot stave off the air of malaise that hangs over the city.

One curious rumour about Frowalkel insists that the city is home to numerous heretical cults. Certainly, Frowalkel is far from any of the centres of the Rightness Crusade, like Shenilstos, and its distance from the mainland when it was first founded centuries ago would have made it desirable to those practising heretical variants of Malkionism – or worse, those worshipping demons or pagan gods. The presence of *Impossible Landscapes*, a book salvaged from somewhere in Arkat's Empire, lends credence to this rumour but it is of course unthinkable that any such cult would have survived to the present day and it is even more unlikely that any such cults use the maze of cellars and vaults beneath the Old Town to hold their blasphemous rites.

The Civic Union, the governing body of Frowalkel, ignore such rumours as they ignore so much else. The Union is made up of a few elected officials but is dominated by the ancient families of the first settlers and by representatives from the church and the university. As Frowalkel's status declines, the Union's efforts to deny the obvious grow. The Union either trumpets the city's mediocre advancements or issues scathing condemnations of anything the other cities do. New trade routes will just sap the economy; new spells are morally suspect, while new support for the church is decried as crushing civic liberties and freedoms. In truth, the Civic Union does more harm than good to Frowalkel's reputation but it has managed to keep the city safe and secure – the crime rate in Frowalkel is lower than anywhere else in Jrustela and there have been no disastrous magical accidents here in decades.

### Genersketkel

This town has grown into a suburb of Frowalkel, linked by the Ocean Road. Genersketkel has tried to stave off its inevitable absorption into the larger city but to little avail. Genersketkel is known for its smithies and foundries and the skills of its metal-workers.

### Port Haven

The largest port in the region save for Frowalkel itself, Port Haven stands in opposition to its parent city. Whatever Frowalkel says, Port Haven opposes. The city has embraced the Return to Rightness Crusade and was a significant launching platform for the moral and military relief of Seshnela. The

Cathedral of the Bright Word is dedicated to all the Sainly Bookbearers who were martyred in the north before Trymir led the Rightness Crusade across the ocean. The centrepiece of this cathedral is an enchanted copy of the Abiding Book. The book is said to be magically linked to all sentient beings in the world and the pages turn as more are converted to the worship of the Invisible God. When the last page is reached, all beings shall give praise to His name. Most God Learners dismiss the book as a mere symbol or even a hoax but they still look warily at this clock that counts down to the effective destruction of the pagan worlds.

Recently, Port Haven was struck by a sneak attack from the air, believed to have been perpetrated by the Empire of Wyrn Friends. Fire lanced from the clouds, setting nine Bookbearer vessels alight as they sat in the harbour. Divination spells failed to track down the assailants, who were likely winged dragons but some fishermen reported seeing a strange flying machine of paper and glass in the sky shortly after the attack.

There is also a significant shrine to St. Waertag in Port Haven, which is something of an embarrassment to the Missionaries who dominate the town. St. Waertag's status in the modern church is rather uncertain due to the Jrustelis' war with the Waertagi boat people. Nonetheless, the saint remains popular with the fishermen and sailors of the city and attempts to replace the shrine with one dedicated to a more acceptable saint (like St. Volanc or St. Hedimenta) have so far failed. The Sainly Bookbearers compromised by building a trio of religious buildings (a seminary, a library and an administration tower) around the Waertag shrine, overshadowing it and concealing it from the view of passers-by. Still, whenever the weather is bad or a ship is lost at sea, the common folk of Port Haven swarm in to pray to the Boat-building Saint for intercession.

## Esten

The mining town of Esten has been taken over in the last decade by Zistorites, who replaced the old, inefficient mines with vast open-face pits dug by golems and titanic machines. The town has become a showpiece for the new techniques (which can be summarised as 'throw magic at the problem until it works') and the foundries of Esten now run night and day. The human inhabitants of the town are now utterly overshadowed by the great machines. Esten is linked by a tributary of the Jensurus to Genersketkel and the two towns are closely linked. Some of the old underground mines have been taken over by the Zistorites and are now used as storage vaults for experiments. Ships from the distant Clanking City have been arriving at Genersketkel of late and barges that bring ore downriver now return to Esten with cryptic cargoes concealed by spells and canvas coverings.


## Galhind

Galhind lies beyond the Regrettable Hills in the foothills of the Curustus. It is a mining town like Esten but is much more traditional and quiet, with none of the clanking machinery or bizarre religious practices of its northerly neighbour. Galhind's main claim to fame is its infrequent contact with the mostali dwarfs of the mountains. There are also bizarre tales of Galhindians who have odd connections or even relations with the dreo spirits of the land.

## Central Kerela

The central portion of Kerela runs along the coast from the Regrettable Hills to the Evrodry Forests. It is the home of the Reformist movement and holds itself to be the heart of Jrusteli civilisation. Central Kerela is a land of low hills, green fields, orchards and vineyards. It was once covered by forests but these were cleared centuries ago. It is not quite as fertile as the east and south but the wine and fruit grown here make agriculture vital to the region.





In the south of Kerela, the orchards give way to wilder lands, then to jungle as Kerela shades into Faramosel. The nobles of Kerela like to keep this region unspoiled, partly to provide hunting grounds but also as a training ground for armies and a buffer against Faramosel. There is a growing militaristic undercurrent in Kerela and more and more towns and cities are quietly building up their guards and private armies. This is perhaps a reaction to the sudden spate of setbacks afflicting the Middle Sea Empire, as Kerela has always been a weathervane with regards to political and economic trends. The election of Beels as Duke of Evrowal may also be a mark of this renewed militancy.

The court at Frowal looks warily at Kerela, seeing it as the obvious rival to its power. The other regions of Jrustela are all caught up with their own internal projects or problems but peaceful Kerela has traditionally dominated affairs on the island and seems willing to take a leading role again. It is only the comparative weakness of Evrowal on the council and the ongoing struggles between the Jrusteli church and the God Learners that have held Kerela back from assuming a position of supremacy on the island.

The Evrodry Forest is a tangle of thick woodland and fast-flowing rivers that has never been fully mapped, let alone cleared. There are a few tracks through the outer reaches of the wood but most travellers take the longer roads that wind their way inland, or the magnificent sea road along the cliffs, where basalt bridges supported by titanic carven pillars span gaps in the coastline. One curious feature of the forest is the irregular sightings of strange granite monoliths or even white statues amid the trees. These stones are never seen in the same place twice but have never been observed to move. Alarmingly, the bodies of travellers have been found lying by these cryptic stones, dead but unmarked.

### Copertin

Copertin is best known for its markets. Originally, these were just farmers' markets selling fresh produce from the surrounding farms but as the reach and power of the Middle Sea Empire grew, curios and treasures from foreign lands began to be sold alongside cabbages and pigs. Today, Copertin's bazaars are thronged with goods from as far away as Vithela or the elf coasts of Errinoru and the most wonderful things can be bought there: little glass figurines that move and roar, dreams of sleeping mountains, steaming potions of dragon's blood or even heretical texts from the Empire of Wyrms Friends...

Many of the items sold in Copertin are immoral, illegal or dangerous but the market is tolerated, partly because it has the support of the organised crime gangs in far-off Hathinethor but also because Evrowal's lords and wizards refuse to countenance the Church trying to impose laws and restrictions in Kerela.

### Reyenswal

Reyenswal is an odd island of traditionalism in the midst of progressive Kerela. It was settled by immigrants from Brithos who arrived in the 650s. They may have fled an even more oppressive regime in their homeland but their new life seems incredibly hidebound to their neighbours. In Reyenswal, the old caste laws are rigorously upheld. A form of Makanism is practised in the town but it is perilously close to the atheistic ways of Brithos. Reyenswal is known to be under observation by church officials.

The port of Reyenswal is sometimes visited by Waertagi sailors, who also pay their respects at the shrine in Port Haven to the west. There is Waertagi blood in the Reyenswal people and some even have a bluish tinge to their skin. For the most part, they are snubbed by their neighbours as being wilfully backwards, although some outsiders tolerate the Reyenswal people and find their customs quaint.

Eighty years ago, before the Middle Sea Empire assaulted Brithos, the Order of the Iron Staff and other military groups came to Reyenswal to consult with the leaders of the town about potential hazards and defences that would be encountered on the sorcerer's isle. These preparations turned out to be of no use and some suspect that the Reyenswalians lied about their old homeland. Oddly, there are very few children and fewer old people in Reyenswal and there are many windowless buildings that no outsider is permitted to enter.

### Amedsford

The city of Amedsford is located in the Kerelan heartland. It is famed for its vineyards and orchards and boats sail downriver from Amedsford to Copertin bearing the fruits of the region's labour. Amedsford's wealth is founded on this trade and the safety of the harvest is of paramount concern. The local landowners employ many timinits as field labourers, believing the insect-men to be more productive and hard-working than humans. The Amedsford Wine League is one of the financial power-houses of Jrustela, wielding a staggering amount of influence in the Middle Sea Empire.

Amedsford is also the centre for research into the magic of earth and plant. Blessings from a dozen fertility gods of different cultures are invoked daily and this magic gives the land no less than four harvests each year. The lords of the Amedsford Wine League are ambitious, though, and have given the God Learner's Collective a staggering amount of money to improve this fertility sorcery. If the League learned of the disastrous effects of the recent Goddess Switch, it would cripple public confidence in the Empire's magicians and lead to a disastrous financial crash. Wine is as blood to this Kerelan town.

### The Dantrils of Amedsford

Richest of the families of the Wine League, the Dantril Dynasty is infamous for its political infighting, torrid affairs and incredible wealth. Gossip about the loves and intrigues of the Dantrils is a common entertainment in the area. Currently, the old lord of the Dantrils, Jremos, is on his death bed but he has been there for almost two decades, sustained by sorcery and his own stubbornness. His eldest son, Hrethas, has become a priest but mainly in order to convince his father of the virtue of letting go of life and letting the inheritance pass to Hrethas' son by a previous marriage, young Rohric. Jremos' three other children, his daughters Lucila, Amri and Katala, are all married to local nobles who want their share of the Dantril fortune except for Katala, who has married a God Learner sorcerer and become an accomplished magic-user herself. She is pregnant but the child is not her husband's – she recreated one of the myths of Flamal and somehow conceived a child with the god in the God World. Meanwhile, Jremos' brother Gerema and his wife Kara have been trying to win control of the family estates for decades and are still searching for the will left by old Eranty Dantril, which was hidden somewhere in the family chapel...

### Southwall

This town was constructed during the war against the timinits and has retained its martial character even today. It is protected by heavy fortifications, both mundane and arcane, and has a number of military bases and training grounds. It is located on the edge of the border with Famosel and rangers and border scouts from Southwall patrol for many leagues through the central wilderness. The town has a reputation for producing skilled warriors and is a good place to go looking for mercenaries or sellswords. The town also has an unsavoury reputation as a den of vice and depravity, although this is likely deliberately exaggerated on the part of the town's leaders; rich young nobles from the north and east go to Southwall seeking debauchery.

### Arshu Emris

This is the second town to bear this name. The original town of this name was built by the Olodo soon after they first arrived.

The inhabitants of Arshu Emris did not join the migration south and lost contact with the other Olodo settlers.

When the Nralarites arrived, they discovered a ruined town. Whatever fate befell the first settlers, it left no traces, no scars on the land. The town was situated in a fine spot, so the Nralarites moved in, reclaiming what Olodo buildings they could and demolishing the other ruins. Today, little save the name testifies to the existence of the old city. Of late, though, many citizens of Arshu Emris report strange dreams. Some of these dreams are of the old city, of the daily lives of the Olodo. Others are sea-dreams, of something swimming in the blue waters of the bay. These dreams are most intense at the height of summer when the shores are covered with a seasonal migration of jellyfish.


Attempts to unravel these mysterious dreams have failed and as yet nothing untoward has happened save for a few sleepless nights. Still, something took the people of Arshu Emris once and it came for them like a thief in the night.

### Evrowal

The sunset city of the north coast slopes steeply down from the hills to the sea. It is a city of wide plazas and golden-red stone, of canals and little harbours, of museums and cafes. Evrowal was founded as a city of intellectuals and sorcerers, where logic and reason and justice would count for more than strength of arms or might of magic. It has held true to these lofty goals and is known all over Jrustela for being a city of artists and scholars. Some in the church question the morality of the citizens of Evrowal, decrying them for not being sufficiently strong in their faith and commitment to the Malkioni way. Others see Evrowal as a decadent, weak place, a city of shrill parasites who contribute little to the Middle Sea Empire.

The heart of Evrowal is the Grand Bright Square and the surrounding bright quarter, which holds the majority of the city's civic buildings and great towers. Evrowal's major streets are wide boulevards lit by magical lamps but there are many narrow alleys and wynds in the areas between these boulevards and the harbour district to the east. The four main streets start in the Grand Bright Square and run off in the four cardinal directions. The east street is the Street of the Ocean of Form; to the west is the Street of Clarity of Thought; to the north is the Street of Pleasant Shapes and the Street of Golden Reason runs south. Most refer to them as just Ocean, Clear, Pleasant and Gold streets.

Evrowal's harbour is small – the city is located on a promontory overlooking the bay and the way down to the harbour is via



a cascade of staircases. A Zistor-powered pulley apparatus is being constructed above the harbour to ease the carrying of cargo up from the ships. The neighbourhood between the bright district and the harbour district is called the Steps and is seen as the most bohemian section of the city. To the north of the main city is the Spire, the seat of the duke and the city's main fortification. The defences of the spire have fallen into disuse and many worry about its ability to function in the unlikely event of an attack by the Empire of Wyrms or another foe, like Brithos.

The newer sections of the city – the Clockmaker's Parade, Pandrel's Folly, the Dunes and Clifftop are all located to the south.

By tradition, the Duke of Evrowal is chosen by lot from among the nobles of the city. The nobility are a mix of the founding citizens and high-caste immigrants from Seshnela and as anyone with even a drop of noble blood is eligible for election, over a fifth of the citizens can hope to be elected Duke. The Duke serves for five years and is given a generous stipend by the city and the run of the ducal palace. The actual business of governing Evrowal is done by an elected council, who are voted on by the populace from among leading landowners and citizens. The council also serves for five years but elections for the council happen in between the lottery for duke; the duke therefore acts as a check on the council. Attempts by the distant emperor to bring Evrowal into line with more conventional cities failed – the citizens objected to having a permanent duke, as they believed it would lead to corruption and social restrictions. When Ilotos was informed that the citizens of Evrowal were willing to fight for their eccentric freedoms, he relented.

Evrowal has always been a place where new thoughts and ideas are fostered and allowed to thrive. Ideas that would be deemed heretical or blasphemous or just plain wrong in other cities are bandied about as casual conversation over dinner. If a citizen of Evrowal declares that Jrustela should break its ties to the Seshnegi throne and return to being a confederacy or say that he believes the Abiding Book is a pack of lies and nonsense, his opinions are tolerated and discussed without penalty. Conspiracies and cults can operate almost openly here and the city has been a refuge for oppressed peoples and religions in the past. Obscure branches of Makanism and Reconstructionalism are practiced in the temples here and some even whisper doctrines that could be considered heretical Transgressionist teachings in a certain light.

Still, Evrowal is a beautiful city in the sun, which so often shines on the golden terraces with their coffee-houses and the curious cobbled laneways where citizens speak earnestly of reforming not just the government but the world and all that dwells within it.

## Volancaster

This town is nestled in the Kerelan uplands, just on the north side of the central basin. It was founded in a spate of religious fervour after the canonisation of St. Volcanc, the holy crusader patron of the Sainly Bookbearers. The town's commitment to Rightness has cooled over the past centuries, despite the best efforts of the church to establish Volancaster as a counterbalance to the secular influence of Evrowal. The town is noted for its ornate temples and its elaborate pageants. The diocese of Volancaster is a prestigious one within the church.

The Feast of St. Volanc is the great festival of the town, during which the death of the great saint at the hands of unbelievers is re-enacted. Visitors come from all Kerela to witness the mummers play. Three times in the past, the actor portraying the saint in the play has been rapturously affected or inspired and has spoken words of prophecy as if possessed by the spirit of St. Volanc.

## Talanis

The city of Talanis has grown from a small village to one of the great metropolises of the Middle Sea Empire in the space of little more than a generation. Its prosperity is founded on the grand tripod of the Empire – trade, conquest and magic. Talanisport welcomes trade vessels from all over the world and hosts one of the largest naval bases in the north. As for magic, why, the air in the city is thick with the crackle of spirit-binding runeplates and the chanting of protective spells. Talanis is a strong supporter of the Empire and as such is wholeheartedly opposed to Evrowal's reformism. It was the lord of Talanis, Duke Castor, who secretly lobbied the Emperor of Land and Sea to appoint a permanent duke in the capital. That scheme may have failed but Talanis remains wary of its neighbour, whose commitment to the glorious eternal empire is wavering.

Duke Castor sees himself as a champion of the Empire, a patriot who is willing to do whatever is necessary to preserve the Middle Sea Empire and the devout of the Invisible God. It rankles with him that the Emperor has not seen Castor's humility and heroism but no doubt evil advisors in the Seshnegi court are plotting against him, or so he tells himself. He sees enemies everywhere and many times has jumped to stab at shadows. No one in town dares mention the unfortunate incident where the duke personally funded a military strike against the worm-things in the southern ocean, having mistaken worms for wyrms and sent 100 good men to a watery death.

## Aelswal

Quiet and civilised, Aelswal's fortune is built on maritime trade. The shipyards of Aelswal are not as impressive as those in Orphalsketkal but they put the vessels of any other nation to shame. The white-and-red ships with prows of bronze

and sails of ensorcelled fire cut through the waves of Aelswal harbour like bloodied blades.

Aelswal is ruled by a baroness, Lady Jaca of Aelswal, but she is rarely at home. She holds a high position in the Free Men of the Sea (a testament to her tactical sense and skill at battle-magic) so her town is administered in her absence by a regent, Tyrfis. Tyrfis is known to be obsessed with Kralorelan culture and has filled the ducal manner with exotic artefacts and even a few imported servants and entertainers.

## Eastern Kerela

The eastern portion of the province begins when the thick woods of the Evrodry are left behind and the traveller enters what is called the Land of the Great Venture. This is the oldest settled portion of the island by far and it bears all the signs of long habitation. Most of the settlements in this province are scattered around the shores of First Landing Bay, where old Hredimorinos is located. South are increasingly steep hills where the hoary villages founded hundreds of years ago have not changed in the slightest and the people still practice old faiths. To the east is the Head of Nralar, a forested peninsula that marks the beginning of Borostenorela.

Eastern Kerela is a little more socially traditionalist than Central Kerela but politically is the birthplace of reformism. Hredimorinos pioneered democracy; the district is wealthy and powerful enough to chafe under the rule of distant Frowal. The easterners are a proud folk with a deep respect for traditions but also a committed belief in freedom, self-governance and working for the common good. The beliefs and morals of Malkion are highly honoured in Kerela but the first settlers wanted a division of church and state and so it remains.

The insect-folk are a major social divide in Eastern Kerela. The region incorporates both 'Timinit city,' as Piskosol is called, because of its large number of insect-folk living there and the segregated towns of Landing Bay where the insects are legally separated from humans. This divide stems from the war between the settlers and the insects that occurred centuries ago; Hredimorinos was the aggressor in the war and many of the villages here suffered timinit attacks. The insect-folk still remember the burning hives, too, and that trauma made them frantically adopt human cultures as a defence mechanism.

## Hredimorinos

The City of the Great Venture is still one of the largest cities on the continent and its wealth is second only to Hathinethor. The original buildings of Hredimorinos are long since gone but there are many small houses and ancient churches that date back centuries. These relics, though, are overshadowed by the new structures. Gothic towers and cathedrals jostle for space with the titanic parliament building and the nine-circle

Library of All. The original scheme for Hredimorinos was for a carefully planned city with a grid system of streets dividing the city into quarters for each of the castes. This reasoned design was abandoned during the initial settlement rush, when new Nralarite colonists crowded into the town.


The walls of Hredimorinos are a curiosity on Jrustela, a land which has known few land wars or sieges. The Nralarite cities have never faced a major war, so they never constructed the mighty fortifications seen in the north – all save Hredimorinos, which built walls to defend against the insects. Today, the walls divide the city in two, into Inner and Outer Hredimorinos. The Inner City is the wealthiest city in the modern world. Its towers and grand palaces soar above the crumbling stone walls that once seemed so tall and imposing.

The University of Hredimorinos is located on an artificial island in the harbour, called the Rock of Books. It is connected to the mainland by a shimmering bridge but many students actually swim or row back and forth from town to academy. The University is not one of the leading lights of Jrustela and is outshone by Eredithanos or Irenstos or even Piskosol, to the great shame of the burghers of Hredimorinos. The great attraction of the Rock of Books is the museum attached to the university, which contains relics, artefacts and prizes from hundreds of Jrusteli conquests. Items dating back to the wars against the island's Olodo and timinit jostle for warded shelf space with chaos-twisted horrors from Arkat's kingdom and bizarre draconic icons from the Wyrms Friend's Empire. While the curators of the Museum of History and Pagan Gods try to ensure that nothing *actively* dangerous is put on display, every God Learner or military ship that arrives at Hredimorinos brings another crate or two of strange wonders to be categorised.

If Evrowal is a city of conspiracies and fringe groups, then Hredimorinos is the mature version, a city of factions and parties. There are numerous political groups vying for control of the Hredimorinos Parliament. The leading parties in 908 are the Thirteen Friends (Reformist), the League of Blue Flags (Loyalist), the Venture Trust (conservatives), Read Between The Lines (religious) and All Forward Together (God Learners). The current duke, the scholar-warrior Tyndryza, was a compromise candidate elected by a Thirteen Friends/All Forward Together coalition. He is also secretly backed by the Venture Trust group, which funded many of his scientific expeditions and holds great influence over him. When Hredimorinos holds the Arch-Dukedom, things get done and in times of crisis, the whole island looks here for leadership. The glory days of the Parliament have not been forgotten here.

## Danmalas Point

Named after the Eden-like realm of Malkioni pre-history, Danmalas Point is one of the most pleasant and beautiful



regions of all Jrustela. The town is home to numerous wealthy merchants and nobles but in the last three decades it has become best known for a healing spa on the outskirts of town run by Xelemite nuns. The Hospice of Danmalas is especially good at treating afflictions of the mind and spirit and God Learners blasted by hostile divinities during HeroQuests are often sent here. The hospice has built a high wall to keep the madmen away from the wealthy neighbours.

### Abrokel

A day's ride south of Hredimorinos, Abrokel is used by the timinits as their gateway into that city. The insects refuse to enter Hredimorinos, so Abrokel is full of middle-men, messengers and agents for the timinit trading guilds. There are also several accountancy firms and banks here – the insects have a talent for detail and mathematical problems and so have a near-monopoly over financial administration. Carts loaded with documents, ledgers and even chests of gold crowd the road south from the Great Venture.

Most of the insects in Abrokel are either aranea clerks or lucan guards but there is also a large colony of cerebresites. They employ many human preachers and poets to write religious tracts in praise of the cerebresite propagation methods. These tracts are distributed by missionaries in the timinit lands of the southern continent, in the hopes that more insect men will come forward and volunteer to be cerebresite hosts to win eternal Solace.

### Fortress Wingbreak

The tower of Wingbreak was constructed at the height of the war against the jungle and is still garrisoned even though the timinits are now part of the Middle Sea Empire. A trade town grew up around the military camp and that town has now become a small city. Fortress Wingbreak is still a key part of the Jrusteli military machine, a training camp for knights and war-wizards. A forge – now dominated by Zistorites – turns out experimental siege engines while bubbling alchemical vats are used to brew up potions and poisons. The Middle Sea Empire's weapons' technology is already far ahead of any rival empire but with places like Wingbreak, it shall soon be invincible.

It is an open secret that Wingbreak has been tasked with preparing for a major clash with the Empire of Wyrms Friends. The armies trained there practice ways to fight dinosaurs and flying foes and learn how to survive magical blasts of incredible power. When the war comes, they will be ready to slay dragons.

### Borosten Harbour

Borosten Harbour is sometimes called the Gateway to New Horizons. Located in a narrow bay between two towering

cliffs, the harbour is home to the best explorers of the Middle Sea Empire. The ships built here have sailed to the very edge of the world and skirted the edges of Magasta's Pool. The quay at the harbour is studded with stones taken from all the islands and lands of the world; each time a ship returns, it brings a new stone for the harbour.

The sheltered location lends itself to small-scale weather magic and the gardens around the town are the world in microcosm, growing plants taken from as far afield as Vithela and Kralorela. There is a library of maps, which is one of the great state secrets of the Middle Sea Empire, and a museum dedicated to past explorers. Borosten was obviously founded by the descendants of the Great Explorer and takes pride in its association with him. It is considered lucky to begin ventures here in the Harbour and many companies and adventuring parties are formally formed here.

### Piskosol

Piskosol is the city of surprises. When first discovered by the explorer Borostanar, it was a decaying Olodo village that was home to only a few dozen sullen fishermen. With the signing of the treaty of Peresk and the peace between the Olodo and the Nralarites, Piskosol was recolonised by newcomers from Seshnela. The town was decaying but its location was ideal and the fishing good. Within a generation, Piskosol had grown to one of the pre-eminent cities of the north.

When the timinits joined Jrusteli society, they too were welcomed into Piskosol. The town had profited from its merging of two cultures and so they were willing to accept the insects. For their part, the insect-men were suddenly obsessed with human culture and were eager to adapt human ways. The timinits proved to be extremely adept at mathematics and analysis and while their ability to innovate was limited, they made excellent aides and partners to human academics and librarians.

Today, Piskosol continues to reflect this partnership between man and insect. The city is divided into 13 semi-independent wards, each of which chooses an elector to select the duke of the city. The wards were added to the city at various times, so there is a large difference between their sizes and importance. The Outer Ward, for example, covers nearly three times as much ground as the next largest ward.

Piskosol is also called the 'City of Volunteers' and it is true that the city contributes disproportionately to the success of the Middle Sea Empire. Patriotism runs strong here and many would argue that the 'melting pot' approach and potent sorcery of Piskosol exemplifies the best methods of the Empire.

**Old Ward:** If one looks very closely at the cobbled streets and old buildings of the Old Ward, one can discern the shape of

the ancient Olodo village that once stood here. There are a few of the curious hexagonal temples dedicated to their gods and some alleyways that still conceal shrines to placate earth-spirits. The brown-skinned folk of this ward still invoke the old gods sometimes but on most days they are as honest and fervent in their faith in Malkion as any man in the empire.

**New Ward:** New Ward was built by the Nralarites and is the seat of government here in Piskosol. The whole ward has become little more than a few streets around the monolithic Ducal Palace and Civic Hall, which incorporates all the administration and bureaucracy of the city. Hundreds of arachans work here, swarming up the outer walls in a black tide each morning. The Ducal Palace also houses auditoriums, theatres, storehouses, defence towers, hidden wells, prisons and dungeons – every year, more of the city is consumed by the sprawling mass of the building. In certain lights, the palace is like a crouched beast, a dragon coiled around the city's heart, with tongues and horns of stone stretching languidly towards Wallward.

**Waertagsward:** The port section of the city is always crowded. Piskosol is one of the major trade hubs for the whole Middle Sea Empire and ships from all over the world dock here. Swarms of lucans carry the cargo from the ships into the underground warehouses while crews from a dozen races and 100 nations flood the taverns and markets. Timinit-rafts jostle for space with Just Men galleons and elemental vessels.

Waertagsward is notoriously dangerous, especially for newcomers. Timinitis who have come north from Pamaltela, full of enthusiasm and wonder for this new world, are often lured into slavery or press-gangs as soon as they scuttle off the boat. Criminal gangs based in Hathinelthor control much of the business on the docks, despite the best efforts of the Piskosol authorities.

**Ironward:** This is the industrial section of the city and is dominated by timinit work-guilds. In the early days of the city, the insects were virtually enslaved by the Nralarites and were exploited as cheap labour. It was only when a famed ephemera, Lan Longtalker, united the workers and fought back against the Nralarite lords with a combination of industrial action and philosophical debate that the balance shifted to favour the insect-men. Today, the timinitis control all of Ironward and the foundries work night and day.

There is a growing schism between the timinit guilds and the Zistorites. Piskosol, with its strong military presence, devotion to logic and mighty ocean-going fleet should be a natural ally for the distant Clanking City but the influential Ironwarders block any attempts to support the Zistorites – the machine-priests are in direct competition with the industrial guilds

and the longer the Clanking City suffers, the less the threat to Ironward.

**Wallward:** The Wallward district was constructed during the wars against the Olodo. It crowds against the Waertagsward's edge, a stone bulwark of battlements and barnacle-encrusted walls. Its original purpose as a military fortress has been partially lost, although the Just Men of the Sea remember that it was from here that the great war against the Waertagi was launched. Now, the Wallward is mostly warehouses and shipping guild-houses but the walls are still garrisoned and the fires of Tanien's victory are but banked, not cold.

**Insect Ward:** No timinit with an ounce of self-respect would live in the insect ward, the slum district of Piskosol. The shadowy neighbourhood is full of termite-tower tenements and stone hives, inhabited by a motley mix of species. Timinitis – mostly lucans and myrmidons – are the marginal majority here but humans now occupy many of the buildings built by the insect-folk who first arrived here centuries ago. The Insect Ward is the poorest section of Piskosol and is often nicknamed Bugtown. Strange Malkionist cults find fertile ground here, including heretical ones.

**Spider Ward:** The Spider Ward is located above the insect ward. Seven tall towers rise high above the slums and an insanely complex webwork of strands runs between them. The Spider Ward is a marvel of engineering and sorcery. Some of the webbing is natural but most is made from braided metal or spun with sorcery. The web is strong enough to support not only the thousands of insects (mostly arachans and mymidons) but also numerous laboratories, libraries, temples, towers and even a monastery dedicated to the Saint Who Is To Come (a hypothesised/prophesied arachan saint). A handful of other creatures make their home here, mostly sorcerers working closely with arachan experts.

A new tower is under construction, an upside-down tower protruding from the base of the Spider Ward. This glass-roofed tower will be staffed by agents of the Ducal Guard and will be the new home of the Piskosol city watch. From this eyrie, they will be able to watch over the entire city for signs of trouble.

**Temple Ward:** Piskosol is a devout city due to its timinit population, who are fervent devotees of the Invisible God. The temples here are among the richest in all of Jrustela and that is no small accomplishment. It is whispered among the acolytes that this had made the priests of the temples here corrupt and decadent. The senior priests are all human but the majority of their congregation, as well as their acolytes and aides are timinit. There is a rising tide of support for renewed Rightness in Piskosol, a tide that may sweep away the established order



in this ward. The arch-bishop of Piskosol, Jalbon the Great, has the support of the duke and the old families of the city, as they see him as a brake on timinit ambitions.

**Eighth Ward:** The Eighth Ward was built in the years of excitement and religious enthusiasm following the appearance of the Abiding Book. While much of the Eighth Ward has been taken over by criminals and whores from the neighbouring Waertagsward, a keen eye can still see the marks of that old fervour – all the street names are those of saints and every building is richly decorated with Malkionite symbology and the deeds of past heroes like Hrestol and Serozos.

There is a killer loose in this ward – four criminals have been found dead in as many weeks. Each one had his throat cut and words from the Abiding Book branded into his face. As long as this madman preys on other criminals, his deeds will attract little attention but if the murders cross into the Templeward or the Highward, measures will have to be taken.

**Highward:** The Highward marks the expansion of the city onto the headlands north of the bay. It is a wealthy area, home to merchants and traders. For much of the region's history, timinit were little welcomed here, until the establishment of an artist's village. Most timinit artists are ephemerae, swift to master a particular style and desperate to leave something to posterity. It has become fashionable among the nobles here to be patrons of the arts and competition to foster a particular talented insect is fierce.

When Highward was first discovered by Borostonar centuries ago, there was a great carving depicting some Pagan deity on the chalk cliffs beneath the city. This was removed when the foundations of the Highward were dug, replaced by an image of Saint Serozos. Since then, the cliffs have been carved by successive generations of timinit masons and today the White Cliffs are one of the wonders of the world, comprising over two miles of incredibly detailed stonework. The cliffs are constantly being remade, both by the sea and by new artists. It has become a custom among the ephemerae that when they grow old and tired after 10 months or so of life, they climb down the cliffs and work on the chalk just above the waterline until their limbs wither and they fall and drown.

**Hyrafos' Ward:** Hyrafos' Ward is located north and inland of the Highward and mimics its neighbour however it can. It is a lower middle-class area with pretensions above its station. There are many fine craftsmen in this ward but little money and less influence. A tradition of military service has sprung up in the last century and almost every family here has at least one soldier fighting overseas. Myrmidon insect-men are a common sight here. The myrmidons are fiercely loyal to their comrades-in-arms and if a human dies, his myrmidon

companion will always visit the family of the deceased soldier, serving and protecting them in place of the fallen.

**Tower Ward:** The Tower Ward is the university district of Piskosol. The university is dominated by the insects who make up more than half its members. The university is highly regarded in many fields, including magical theory, mathematics, theology and Seshnelan history (ironically, it has little knowledge of old timinit history but this deficiency is being addressed by questioning immigrants from Pamaltela). The rivalry with the university of Irenstos is well known and stems from a dispute over the interpretation of the sorcery that led to the Battle of Tanien's victory. Scholars from both universities worked on the spell but the wizards of Piskosol argued that binding the god would have unintended side effects. Those of Irenstos insisted that the spell was as safe as it was going to get and presented their findings to the First Duke. Those of Piskosol still believe that if they had been listened to, the disastrous collateral damage of the seas of fire could have been avoided.

**Outer Ward:** The Outer Ward comprises of all the smaller towns and farms surrounding Piskosol. The primary crop in this area is sugar-cane, which is much prized by the insects.

## Norvalela

It is a strange truth that a scholar from Eridithanos or Evrowal would feel more at home in some distant place like Umathela or even parts of Kralorela than he would in this part of his own land. Norvalela is so different to the rest of Jrustela that it is virtually a separate country. The tropical climate enjoyed by the rest of the island is unknown west of the towering Curustus range. Instead, howling cold winds from the northwest lash the coast with driving snow and sleet. In the far north, beyond Orphalsketkal, the landscape is bare and broken, changing from jagged rocks and rushing streams to jagged rocks and bleached desert in a matter of miles. The south is grey and cold, resembling Fronela in climate. The arable sections of Norvalela are found in a narrow strip between the sea and the mountains, in high green vales and steep meadows.

Technically, the region is divided into Northern Norvalela, Orphalwal, Southern Norvalela, the Mountains of Serakal and the island of Brosta. There are hardly any settlements of note in Northern Norvalela, save for mining towns and prospectors looking for gold washed down from the mountains. Dreo earth-spirits are a constant threat in that area.

Norvalela was first settled by the Janalites, the followers of Janal. Janal was a descendant of King Nralar, who travelled south with his household and retainers to create a new kingdom for himself. While his dreams of an independent kingdom came to naught, the people of Southern Norvalela



(the most populous section) consider themselves still Seshnegi, not Jrusteli. Their customs and mode of dress and speech are virtually unchanged from the time of Nralar and they were slow even to accept the teachings of the Abiding Book. Caste laws are still enforced here.

### Orphalwal

The folk of Orphalwal are hardy and practical. The land is not especially fertile, so they must rely on the sea for survival. The storm-tossed Kerenath Sea, though, is dangerous and the Jrusteli here have been forced to become superlative sailors. They live in small villages and are semi-nomadic – during the spring and fall, they work in the high fields and go sailing and fishing the rest of the year. They have little interest in the philosophical debates or grand ambitions of their fellow countrymen but are the very backbone of the Free Men of the Sea. Culturally, they are Haladinites but consider themselves Jrusteli first and foremost. An austere form of Malkionism is favoured here, with priests preaching from wooden churches when the storm-winds howl.

### Waenis

A large but otherwise typical example of the Norvalelan towns, Waenis is best known for its troubles with the trolls that live in the nearby mountains and the town has been attacked many times by them. Each time, the monsters have been driven back into the mountains but the power of the

troll tribes has never been broken. The Confederation's grand military schemes have no place for minor engagements with the trolls in their own backyard, so the townsfolk of Waenis must resort to hiring adventurers and mercenaries to defend them.

Visitors to Waenis are struck by the lack of magic. Other towns in the Empire, especially elsewhere in Jrustela, tend to have obvious examples of powerful sorcery. A town might be illuminated at night by sorcerous fire or impossibly tall towers might reach into the very clouds, supported by spell-wrought stone. Waenis has none of this grandiose magic – the only spells commonly cast in town are Rune Magic charms to guard against drowning and foul weather.

### Orphalsketkal

The greatest city in Norvalela, Orphalsketkal's fortunes are intimately bound up with the sea. Orphalsketkal is the home port of the Free Men of the Sea and the mighty drydocks here are

the primary construction yards for the Empire's navy. Virtually everyone in Orphalsketkal works directly or indirectly for the navy.

The city was almost completely rebuilt in the years after the destruction of Swalval. Many were convinced that Orphalsketkal was the next target for the vengeful Waertagi elementalists, so a new, more defensible city was constructed. The low-lying town that had sprung up in the initial settlement was swept away by a frenzy of rebuilding that was as destructive as any tidal wave. The city was rebuilt as a series of artificial boat-shaped islands of magically shaped stone, with all the buildings stacked atop these supports. If an elemental tide wave rushed in to Orphalsketkal harbour, the city (it is claimed) could ride out the storm with minimal damage. The vital shipyards are sheltered in the heart of these islands, on the lee side. Effectively, Orphalsketkal is a city of skyscrapers with shipyards at their hearts. The difference between Orphalsketkal and the surrounding towns is staggering – a new navy recruit might leave his little village of stone houses with thatched roofs and find himself sleeping that night in a barracks lit by glowing sigils a dozen stories off the ground.

The town's magical defences are even more impressive than its mundane ones. An eternal cloud of fog surrounds the harbour but a spell known only to the navy pilots allows a sailor to see through it. Warding runes guard against offensive magics, while bound elementals, spirits and other entities provide added force to the elite guards that protect the city. An eternal

storm allows the harbour-masters to hurl thunderbolts at enemies or to command the winds that hang over the city, calming them or whipping them into a frenzy.

Orphalsketkal's three dozen artificial islands are designated by number, not name, although they have acquired nicknames over the years. The most important are Governor's Isle, Big Fish, Waves' Folly, Bloodmarket, Three Blessings Short, Last Sail, Lash City, Jalan's Writ, High Squall and the South Isle. All the islands are very crowded, with buildings exceeding a dozen stories being quite common. Some of the fortress-towers are so tall their spires rise into the clouds above. Arachans and other insect-folk have taken to building webs in sheltered spaces between buttresses and the city authorities are considering the construction of floating platforms to create another level to the city. On the shore around the harbour is a more mundane city, officially Greater Orphalsketkal but more commonly known as the Flotsam.

The university of Orphalsketkal is attached to the naval school there and focuses on practical, military magic. Only the very basics of God Learning are taught here, in favour of blasting things and commanding things.

The city is ruled by a hereditary family, the Tarasts. Centuries ago, the Jalan family tried to claim control of the city but their brief reign was ended by a coalition of Nralarites from Kerela who objected to the Jalanites having such influence over the city. Many in Orphalsketkal hoped for self-rule but instead a new duke was chosen from among the military officers. With a permanent dynasty holding the city as their hereditary fiefdom, the Jalan family would never be able to take over the government as they had done by subverting the elected officials. The Tarasts consider themselves to be servants of the Empire first and foremost and run the entire city as a military base. They tacitly support the Reformist cause, believing that the balance of power should tilt back to Jrustela. The common folk of the city are even more strongly aligned to Reformism and there are still many in the city who abhor Orphalsketkal's single-minded focus on the navy. These people dream of remaking the city as a metropolis of learning and logic like Evrowal or Eridithanos.

### Port Storm

Port Storm is an uneven compromise of a town. It was founded by Haladinities as a fishing port but when Orphalsketkal was rebuilt, much of that city's trade was diverted to Port Storm. The town has tried to cling to its old Haladinite ways but the rush of gold and the growth of the port as the 'dark side' of Orphalsketkal has given Port Storm an unsavoury reputation as a den of thieves and whores. The Jalanites have numerous choice comments to make about this town and blame the lords of the port for every criminal and smuggler west of the Curustus.

In an attempt to redeem Port Storm, a new church has been built in the heart of the very worst section of the slums. This church is literally a moral beacon, as it is infused with mind-controlling spells that the sorcerers of the Order of Ascendant Light believe will transform Port Storm into a city of perfect order and grace. The true nature of this church has been kept a secret from the native Haladinities, who mistrust such potent magic.

### Jalan's Landing

As the name suggests, this is where Prince Jalan first arrived on Jrustela. The town, though, is solidly Haladinite and takes little pride in its heritage. The few Jalanites who live here are mistrusted and seen as interlopers and useless parasites by the majority of the townfolk.

One night two centuries ago, all the children in Jalan's Landing vanished. When their parents searched for them, they found no sign of their lost offspring save for a great crack in the hillside behind the town, a crevasse that had opened in the night and which slowly closed over the next few weeks. Today, the crack is discernable only as a grey stain on the green hills. The townfolk blamed the dreo earth-spirits for this crime, although others insist mostali were seen skulking around the town in the days before the kidnapping. Sorcerers from Orphalsketkal were called but even the most potent scrying spells could not find the children. Many of the townfolk joined the Sons of Damolstan in an attempt to atone to the Invisible God, believing they had been judged for their wickedness and to this day the Sons recruit many warriors from Jalan's Landing.

The town survived this tragedy and there are few signs of that ancient loss today save for a memorial shrine in the town chapel. Still, the people here clutch their children close whenever the earth groans.

### Southern Norvalela

Icy and damp, Southern Norvalela was claimed by Prince Jalan largely because no one else wanted it and his dynasty are still the absolute rulers of the 'kingdom within a duchy' as many call it. Southern Norvalela is, despite the towering mountains and shining glaciers that provide a backdrop, almost identical to Seshnela of four centuries ago. Everything from dress to customs to politics hark back to the days of Gerlant's reign. The democratic, egalitarian beliefs of mainland Jrustela are almost unknown here.

Some traditions that prosper here are of great use to the Middle Sea Empire. Jalaneswal produces the best swordsmen and horse-riders in Jrustela and its armoured knights are the flower of Jrustelan chivalry. It is also a wealthy land, partially from exporting metal and gold to the rest of the

island but also because many second sons of Seshnela come here seeking their fortune. They are welcomed by the lords of Jalaneswal and it has become customary for noble students at Jrustela's universities to be sponsored by one of the noble families here. Of all the provinces of Jrustela, Southern Norvalela has prospered the most from a closer connection to the north and has the most to lose from Reform.

### Genertsketkal

Named for the wealthiest port in Seshnela, this town has failed to thrive and prosper like its namesake. It is a blight on the face of Norvelela, a place of crushing poverty and despair. The town's decline began when the fish deserted the coastline nearby and continued as, one-by-one, the copper mines were exhausted. There are still noble families ruling over the town, too proud to work or ask for aid. The area around Genertsketkal is dotted with crumbling towers and mansions, with noble houses sliding into madness and decay. Occasionally one of these noble families produces a scion of such drive or intelligence that his madness is channelled into the service of the Empire – the current head of the Mercantilist's League and Lord Treasurer of the Middle Sea Empire, Sylark, hails from this region but he long since paid for his family to move to the more politically suitable city of Jalaneswal.

### Hostinwal

Every summer, the tournament at Hostinwal attracts knights and warriors from all over the Middle Sea Empire. The tournament is sponsored by the baron of Hostinwal, (currently Erikas Jalan, sixth of that name) and offers a pouch of gold as the prize. The festivities associated with the tournament last for two weeks, with fairs and dancing and feasting of all sorts. There are numerous other events in the lead-up to the tournament, such as archery, spell-flinging, wrestling, philosophical and insight contests and jousting. Last year, there was even a mock sea-battle commemorating the defeat of the Waertagi. The final event is a free-for-all tournament between mounted warriors, with the last knight left standing winning the prize.

Embarrassingly, the barons of Hostinwal are notoriously fervent in their support of the Inherent philosophy and use the tournament as a platform from which to preach a new crusade against the pagans. More and more of the events at Hostinwal are targeting enemies of the state and the last few years have featured dragon-slaying in various forms as the main theme.

For the rest of the year, Hostinwal is a quieter place, good for buying horses and weapons.

### Mirvaal

Mirvaal is the sorcerer's town in Southern Norvalela. It is the site of the Ducal Academy of the Arcane Arts, as well as a library of some importance. It is always ruled by the heir to the ducal seat at Jalaneswal, an acknowledgement that the Middle Sea Empire's fortunes are founded on sorcery. The town is protected by an enchanted hedge-maze that shifts and changes each day. Only those of the bloodline of Jalan or those bearing magic talismans containing a drop of this blood can find their way through the maze successfully.

Mirvaal's privacy has become more important in the last 80 years. In the aftermath of the disastrous attack on Brithos, Jrusteli agents did manage to retrieve several occult tomes from the sorcerer's isle. Since then, scholars in Mirvaal have been trying to decode the magical secrets held in the books. The existence of the Brithosi tomes is a secret, as the lords of Jalaneswal wish to keep whatever magic they retrieve to themselves as a counterbalance to the growing power of the God Learners.

Stories of insanity, misfortune and small hungry goblin-things lurking in the corners of darkened rooms are not associated with the books in the slightest and the fact that the last two scholars to study the book jumped off the topmost tower is a mere coincidence.

### Jalaneswal

To enter Jalaneswal is to step back in time. The sound of the streets is an archaic mix of old Seshnegi phrases and accents and the caste marks and customs are still seen, with peasants deferring to fighters, fighters to wizards and wizards to lords.

The city was designed by Jalan himself and has hewn closely to his original map. It is divided into five sections, centred on Castle Hill in the centre where the mighty keep of the Jalan family stands. The Jalan family has become a vast dynasty, controlling virtually all wealth and industry in the town. The remainder of the political power is held by guild masters and priests, most of whom are either married to a Jalan or were Jalan before taking holy orders. Wide boulevards, paved market-places and high walls (more ornamental than functional fortifications) divide the five sections.

Castle Hill is obviously the wealthiest neighbourhood, all gilt and marble and statues celebrating the glory days of Seshnela. Numerous Seshnegi nobles maintain palaces or townhouses here, as do all the major guilds. Castle Hill is surrounded by a wall pierced by five gates, all of which are guarded night and day. Crime is unknown on the hill.

By contrast, Jalansport is relatively poor and dangerous but with the increased traffic from Seshnela coming in to visit the Arch-Duke's court, the city guard has stepped up its patrols, forcing the criminals and thugs out of the port district. Between Castle Hill and the port is the Street of Flowing Silver, the major trade section of the town. It is named for a canal that runs through it, crossed by over two dozen little arched bridges. The Thousand Towers Quarter is somewhat misnamed, as it has only around 50 towers which include the Court Wizard's Tower and the Cathedral of the Malkioni True Church.



The fifth section, Nine Loyal Swords, was named for the nine knights who accompanied Jalan south. It was destroyed in a fire three years ago and is still being rebuilt. The fire was started by arsonists who objected to the close relationship between Arch-Duke Norlantos and the Seshnegi Throne.

Technically, Jalaneswal holds authority over all the land west of the Curustus Mountains as well as the mountains themselves. Therefore, there is a small embassy from the mostali in the city. Even so, the dwarfs prefer to deal with the simple miners of Galhind, far to the north, instead of their Jalanite neighbours. The mostali distrust the ambitious Jalanites and fear they will be tricked or enslaved if they are not constantly on their guard. The embassy is one of the wonders of Jalaneswal, a mechanical double-dome of beaten copper that rotates to reveal its single entrance.

### Curus Point

Curus Point is the major town of the southernmost region of Norvalela, the Serakel mountains. It is a fortress town, built on a high knoll surrounded by miles of grassland. If Curus Point was in old Seshnela on the border with the Stygian Empire, it would have been the site of battles and sieges worthy of epic songs. Instead, it is in a land where war is virtually unknown, save for the occasional clash with trolls. Therefore, the warriors of Curus Point are knights-errant and the banner of the red horse on green fields has been raised in every crusade and expedition undertaken by the Middle Sea Empire. Sons of Curus have fought and won and died on every battlefield from Seshnela to Kralorela and trouble the serpent dreams of the Wyrms Friends.

The town is ruled by a minor branch of the Jalan family, the Cuirjalan, who have been rivals of their cousins for centuries. The Cuirjalans plot constantly against the rulers of Jalaneswal and it was a near-crippling blow to them when Norlantos became Arch-Duke. In desperation, they have suddenly become strong supporters of Reformism in an attempt to undercut their cousin's hold on the reins of Jrusteli power.

### The Serakel Range

The Serakels are perhaps the most dangerous part of the mountains of Jrustela. While they do not reach the same impossible vertiginous heights of mountains of the central Curustus range, they are full of hidden crevasses and steep cliffs, of spiky rocks and sudden falls. The inner reaches of the Serakels are unmapped even to this day. As if all that were not enough to dissuade any sane man from entering the mountains, then consider the fierce trolls who dwell there, sometimes descending from the peaks to raid villages and carry off the residents to eat.

Fortunately for the Jalans and unfortunately for their servants, the Serakels do contain highly profitable mines. Copper, tin, emeralds and alchemical substances are all found here in prodigious quantities and are carried overland to Jalaneswal or Curus Point. Working these mines is hazardous and guards are needed to fend off trolls and wild beasts. The miners have their own curious argot, a tongue with numerous mostali loan-words and slang and in this argot they speak of old things slumbering in the heart of the mountains, of worms that gnaw the earth and a thorn forest of stone trees.

## Brosta

The island of Brosta lies just offshore. It was named White Island by Borostanar when he first sighted it on the horizon at the very end of his first voyage but that was because he saw the plume of smoke rising from the peak. Brosta has a still-smouldering volcano at its heart. Like Arshu Phola to the far east, the ground on the island is often warm to the touch and steam sometimes gushes from holes or spring-mouths. Small earth tremors are common here.

Brosta was colonised during the second migration south and there was an early sentiment that it could become a 'new Brithos'. Many sorcerers and fundamentalist believers moved to Brosta, especially those who rejected Hrestol's reforms. The island's mineral wealth also drew settlers who were hunting diamonds and sulphur and who clashed with the new Brithos puritans. The Jananites built the town of Brostawal on the island's northern coast. The town was promptly ignored by the puritans (who clustered on the western side of Brosta) and the Haladinite miners (who smuggled boat-loads of diamonds east). Still, the island thrived for a while, enough to be made into a fiefdom and given to one of the loyal Jananite families, the Hristdos, who grew wealthy from the mines. The Hristdos built a castle on the coast, the Yellow Tower.

In 681, the island's central peak erupted, showering all of Brosta in hot ash and choking fumes. Hundreds died and the rest were evacuated, leaving Brostawal almost empty for almost 10 years. The only people to stay on the island were the Hristdos family and their immediate retainers, who clung to their holdings even as the air grew poisonous and the castle was half-buried beneath acrid white ash. Many went mad. When men returned to Brosta in later years, they came in fewer numbers and stayed only a few months at a time.

With the growth of Jrustela's magical power, Brosta has become valuable once again. Not only are the volcanic stones and other chemicals useful elements in alchemy and sorcery, the presence of the volcano may have implications for God Learner science as a whole. Recently, religious scholars conclusively reduced multiple volcano deity aspects into two entities, the 'Volcano Twins' Caldera and Aurelion. Since that success, God Learners have flocked to the Brostan volcano peak, which has been ceremonially renamed Caldera's Chalice. Experiments are underway to use the volcano as a gateway for new Quests related to these twin deities, with the ultimate aim of taming all the fiery mountains of the world.

## Brostawal

Technically, of course, it should be Brostawalkal, New Brostawal, as this is the second town to bear the name. Old Brostawal is located three miles away and is mostly buried under ash. The new town is located in the bay near Yellow

Castle. Brostawal is inhabited by miners and God Learner sorcerers. The two groups have little to say to each other.

Since the eruption, the island has been plagued by elementals of various kinds, as well as by the ghosts of those who died in the fires. These ghosts manifest as whirling vortices of ash and bone and have grown more aggressive since Brostawal was rebuilt.

## Borastenorela

The 'glorious coast' is the face the God Learner Empire presents to the world. From Piskosol all the way down to the southernmost cape, Borastenorela is a land of high wizardry. The cities compete to build the tallest of towers or the greatest of monuments and the air crackles with barely contained arcane energy. There are more sorcerers in these cities than anywhere else on the face of Glorantha and they take pride in their awesome power. This is the cutting edge of the all-conquering sword, the driving engine of Empire.

Physically, the eastern coastline is hundreds of miles of steep cliffs and jagged escarpments rising from the comparatively calm ocean. A line of low hills runs parallel to the coast for much of this distance, marking the boundary between Borastenorela and the inland reaches. The three great cities that dominate this region all exemplify different aspects of the Middle Sea Empire. Hathinelthor is the richest of all cities, the hub of commerce and trade for the entire world. Eradinthanos was where the Abiding Book first manifested and is a city of priests and sorcerers and of their uneasy alliance in the God Learners. Peresk, finally, is a city of war and conquest, a military machine that sends navies and legions out to conquer distant lands.

Borastenorela has no time for tradition, no respect for the old ways or established norms. It is in constant creative turmoil. Beliefs, fashions, politics and magic change here seemingly daily, striving ever for perfection – or power.

## The Spirelands

South of Piskosol, the land suddenly bucks and rises up into a plateau. The road from Piskosol to Hathinelthor, for instance, must ascend the zig-zag course of the Hathinelthor Celestial Edifice, a staircase carved into the cliffside. Magical elevators drawn by golems haul cargo up the slope. Three spires of blood-red stone rise from the plateau, giving the region its name.

The southerly section of the Spirelands slopes gently down, blending into the hills on its western edge and into a tangle of forests and broken ground atop the eastern sea-cliffs. Farms occupy the wedge between the hills, although today most of the Spireland's food comes from the vast estates in Faramosel.

## Asvinethor

The city of spires, Asvinethor sits atop one of the highest points of the plateau. It is so high that the air grows thin and rarefied and visitors to the city often breathe in the reinvigorating fumes of a burning herb particular to the plateau or bind minor air-elementals to themselves to cope. Asvinethor is also a city of kites and other flying machines and aerial displays are prized here. It has become a fashion here to collect exotic birds from the jungles of the southern continent and even to dress in feathers and capes.

Asvinethor tries to stay clear of the political knife-fight that is Hathinelthor and the city is often seen as a place to retreat from the battles in the district capital. To retire to Hathinelthor is to acknowledge defeat, to relinquish your position in the battles for power and prestige in favour of idly looking at the gaudy kites.

**Reasons to come here:** Adventurers are often hired to hunt down rare birds for nobles.

## Damroskel

Damroskel has the unfortunate but accurate reputation as a violent town. The mining town lacks the sophistication and subtlety of the larger cities on the coast, which means that the cut-throat politics of the east here take the form of literal throat-cutting instead of schemes and deceptions. A man can lose his fortune in Hathinelthor twice as quick as he can lose it in Damroskel but in the latter he will probably lose his life as well. The nearby bloodstone mines contain a multitude of nameless corpses, dumped by the criminal families who control the town; To go 'hunting bloodstones' is to be murdered and have one's corpse unceremoniously dumped down a mine shaft. Of late, rumours insist murdered corpses are spontaneously animating, claw their way out of the red dirt and go hunting for their killers.

Damroskel's jewellers are the best in all Jrustela, so the town has both the best lock-smiths to keep the thieves out and the best thieves to steal the jewels. It is an unending cycle between the three, broken only by the occasional betrayal or inside job.

**Reasons to come here:** The bloodstones are beautiful, expensive and magically potent, especially when ground up and mixed with the blood of pagan deities collected on otherworldly battlefields.

## Hathinelthor

The pagan gods are not the first thing one notices when stepping off a ship and entering the great metropolis.

No, first one notices the crush of people, Jrusteli and Seshnegi for the most part, but humans from many other lands, the timinit porters and servants, the clashing colours and strange garb and the babble of 100 tongues and trade-languages. Then, as one pushes through the crowd, he cannot help but notice the wealth of the city. Everyone around him is laden down with gold and jewels; exotic scents assail his nostrils and his hands brush against silk and brocade and leather. Quite staggering sums of money are exchanged for treasures from distant lands and there are cabals of traders and investors wagering their fortunes in every coffee-house.

Next, one's eye is drawn up to the towers of Hathinelthor. This is a city of mighty buildings, of towers and cathedrals and spires. The sound of the mason's hammer and the creaking of ropes and pulleys is never absent from Hathinelthor and joins in chorus with the stone-sorcerer's chant. There is the Mercantilist's League Chamber, there the House of Glorious Song, there the Trade Hall, there the All World's Bazaar. Hathinelthor is ruled by a dozen noble (by blood if not by demeanour) families who compete for the prestige of owning the most expensive and impressive buildings. There are cathedrals to the Invisible Gods and to the Rightness Crusade and all is proper and good and respectful as Jrusteli should be.

Ascend the steps of these towers, and one will notice the wind. The city is built on a promontory and the wind blows constantly from the sea, howling over the slate roofs and whistling around the spires. Every rooftop in Hathinelthor is decorated with a wind-vane or even a lightning rod in the case of taller towers. New visitors to the city often cannot sleep because of the keening; residents, by contrast, find silence oppressive and disturbing. Every gap in conversation must be filled with chatter; even the temples cannot be allowed to fall silent and so choirs and organs and musicians praise God every hour of the day and night.

As one's senses adjust to the rush and bustle and sheer *newness* of this city and Hathinelthor ceases to be an ongoing shock, one notices the curious pagan gods. They are everywhere, little icons of Issaries and Lokarnos and other trade deities. There are no temples to foreign gods here, just minor votaries and offerings. Often, they are woven into the décor of civic buildings; there, Issaries peeks from behind the skirts of a statue symbolising New Opportunity or some pagan sea-god hides in the jade seaweed of a wall mosaic. If one knows where to look, there are even golden dragons that are believed to bless commerce by the Wyrms Friends traders. The merchants and nobles of Hathinelthor are Malkioni on Godsdays but they will take any advantage they can get in trade wars. It is applied Judicious Use of pagan magic but few in Hathinelthor have the patience for the philosophical debates of other cities. By

the time the theologians have finished arguing about whether a thing is right and proper, it has already been bought and sold a dozen times in Hathinelthor.

Attempting to describe the layout of the city is often futile, as Hathinelthor is changing and growing faster than any other city on Jrustela. It sprawls along the coast, engulfing smaller towns and villages. Broadly, the city can be divided into nine central districts, each one ruled by one of the great noble families. Beyond this centre is a confusing maze of slums, warehouses, temple districts, embassies, manors and whorehouses. The nine districts are Holshadder, Mirasthelthor, the Golden, Twobottle Street, High Walk, Lost Tower Shadow, Lord's Reach, Storwark and the Circle Twining.

Other than gold, the favoured currency of Hathinelthor is gossip. By law, the duke cannot be related to the previous duke. In theory, this ensures that the dukedom will rotate among the nine ruling families of the city. In actuality, there are three dynasties competing for the dukedom, generations of bastard children and unacknowledged but cherished offspring. The duke might sire a child on some married noblewoman, then secretly pay for the child's education and care, manoeuvring the child into a position of power so he can be elected duke when the time comes. This state of affairs is an open secret on the streets of Hathinelthor, although exactly who sired which child is a matter of frenzied debate and speculation. As the three dynasties have different political views (respectively, strongly loyalist, moderate reformist and whatever is expedient that year), knowing which 'family' the new duke descends from is vitally important and the nocturnal activities of noblewomen in the city are closely watched.

The current duke, Miskos, is not in any way the son of the last duke, Arathos, who was absolutely not the son of the previous duke Faral. Miskos is loyal to the Loyalist cause and closely allied to Archduke Norlantos in Norvalela. Miskos believes that as long as the court is far away in Seshnela, Hathinelthor's utter dominance of finance in Jrustela and the Middle Sea Empire can continue. He is also engaged in building the tallest tower in all Glorantha, an edifice called the Sky Cutting Spire. Wags in the city streets who know about Miskos' continuing failure to sire a son call it by a different name and mutter about compensation.

## Remais

Remais is, unofficially, the Seshnegi city of Borastenorela. With three of the Middle Sea Empire's most important assets (Hathinelthor's wealth, Peresk's might and the holy city of Eradinthanos) on the coast, direct representation from the Emperor of Land and Sea was considered vital. Valaindel, the lord of Remais, is known as the Emperor's Eye and actively tries to foster the Loyalist cause among the nobles of Jrustela. Secretly, he is also engaged in plots to discredit or damage

those nobles who favour Reform – the alleyways of Evrowal and Hredimorinos are crowded with agents of the Eye.

## The Lands of the Visitation

God was here.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the *Abiding Book* manifested in the city of Eridinthanos. The Will and the Word of the Invisible God were revealed here, in the plains of central Jrustela, and that honour has never been forgotten. These are the Lands of the Visitation.

The Lands run far inland, through Faramosel to Shenilstos, a band of fervent Malkionism. There are few large towns here but many small, insular villages centred around a church. The caste rules are strongly observed here, even though few of the old noble families from Seshnela ever came this far south. The nobles here are the descendants of the first settlers. Despite not having any universities, the people of the Lands of the Visitation are known for their scholarship and deep knowledge of the Malkioni faith. Many go to the larger cities to study but must be careful to protect their moral rightness in the face of the corruption and sin of the metropolis.

## Bathijras

Along with Shenilstos, the ancient Olodo town of Bathijras was one of the few major settlements to resist conversion by the Nralarite missionaries. Skirmishes between the pagans and Malkioni settlers continued until the manifestation of the *Abiding Book*. With this revelation, Bathijras' townsfolk changed religion *en masse* with the fierce devotion of the newly converted. Within a year, all traces of the Olodo faith was washed away and the men of Bathijras were bringing other Olodo holdouts into the church of the Invisible God by force. The hinterlands north-east of Shenilstos had been a bastion of theism and resistance to the Nralarites but the conversion of Bathijras was the beginning of the end for the Olodo theists.

Bathijras has never lost its crusading spirit. As soon as the Olodo were all converted, Bathijras started sending missionaries and warriors to the timinits, then to the new colonies in Pamaltela, then north to old Seshnela. The Rightness Crusade may be centred in Shenilstos but it began here when the townsfolk heard of the martyrdoms of the Saintly Bookbearers. Today, Bathijras is a town devoted more to the dead than the living; everywhere are monuments, shrines and cenotaphs to the martyred dead and the crusading armies. For those dedicated to Rightness, to visit Bathijras is to be inspired and humbled. For those who lack the crusader's zeal, it is by turns a dull and frightening place.

While Bathijras is closely associated with Shenilstos, it pays tribute to the military city of Peresk – partly because it is in



Borostenorela and not Faramosel, partly because of ancient tradition dating back to Olodo days but also because the Rightness movement hopes to inspire the secular armies of the Middle Sea Empire by sending them heroes from Bathijras.

**Reasons to come here:** Crusaders fighting in the name of the Invisible God seek blessings from the temples here at Bathijras.

## The Middle Coast

The middle coast is one of the most dangerous sections of the Jrustelan coastline and is lined with sandbars and submerged reefs. There are safe harbours but reaching them requires a skilled hand at the tiller. Cut off from the main artery of commerce in the Middle Sea Empire – the sea – the cities of the middle coast have focussed on other fields to make their fortunes.

## Anniwal

This town is closely associated with Peresk. Under Jrustelan law, ownership of the land is held by males only and land rights pass down the male line. This law is in force everywhere except the lands administered from Anniwal. This is called the Widow's Town. When soldiers from Peresk go off to fight, they leave their lands in the care of their wives. Previously, when a soldier died in battle, his widow and his brothers and cousins would contest the ownership of the land. All too often, a court would look to the Abiding Book for guidance and rule in favour of the male relatives, leaving the grieving widow with nothing save a pittance of a pension. Reformist politicians argued that this was grossly unfair and so a new law was passed in Anniwal saying that any of its residents, male or female, had the right to own property.

Since the passing of this law, the *Declaration of Landholder's Rights*, Anniwal has become the second largest town in the Middle Coast, second only to Peresk. It has a disproportionate number of rich land-owners living within its walls and it is customary for a noble of Borastenorela to live on a manor but maintain a townhouse in Anniwal as his legal residence, thus putting him under the jurisdiction of the Anniwal Court. By doing this, the noble ensures that his wife will have full claim to his lands should he die without a male heir.

There are many rich widows in Anniwal whose noble husbands died on some distant battlefield or HeroQuest and who now command the incomes of vast tracts of land. Politically, Reformism is dominant here and many of the widows of Anniwal have become patrons of various parties and conspiracies in Evrowal, Hredimorinos and Eridinthanos.

## Pismaldo

Pismaldo vies with Northcape for the title of 'most unhappy town in Jrustela'. Founded around the same time as Peresk,

it was soon conquered by the warriors of that city. When the Nralarites came, they allied themselves with the folk of Peresk and so tolerated the oppression of the Pismaldoans. When the Jrusteli confederation was formed, Peresk's voice was honoured and listened to, while everyone ignored the complaints of the Pismaldoan delegate. In every month of every year of its long history, Pismaldo has been oppressed by Peresk.

Pismaldo's chief industries are in metalworking and tanning. The air in the town is foul to both eye and nose, laden as it is with soot and the stench of lime and boiled flesh. Pismaldo is a vital but utterly unacknowledged part of the Peresk war machine. In many ways, this oppression is just as important as the leather armour and blades made here – young men of Pismaldo know that their only chance to escape a lifetime of backbreaking, lung-searing labour in the factories is to join the army and fight for the Empire, so Pismaldo provides a fresh crop of new recruits every year.

In the last few years, a religious group called the Iron Sword Friends has taken hold in Pismaldo. The Iron Swords are strongly Inherent, believing that pagans are unworthy of salvation. In fact, they secretly believe that the very *existence* of non-believers is offensive to the Invisible God and all non-Malkioni should be wiped out by any means necessary. The Iron Sword Friends are growing increasingly influential within the secular military, as Iron Sword officers favour their fellow believers for promotion.

## Peresk

According to legends, when the Nralarites first came to Peresk they found a river of blood flowing through the heart of the town. This river is now located somewhere in the warren of sewers and catacombs beneath the pavements and marble squares of the modern town but it still rushes redly into the ocean, symbolising the unquenchable courage and blood-lust of the men of Peresk. Like its naval counterpart of Orphalsketkal, Peresk is more a city-sized military base than an actual city. Everyone in the city is a soldier or is employed in some trade or activity related to the army. The ruler of Peresk is always an officer in the Middle Sea legions and the city produces as many warriors as any three other cities in Jrustela combined.

There is a veneer of civilisation and discipline in Peresk that can only be described as desperate. The law is harsh here, with public whippings common punishment. Even civilians have a military bearing; orders are barked, then obeyed. Beneath this discipline, though, is a barely contained anarchy. In years past, the pirates of Peresk were fearsome sea-reavers and raiders who drowned the whole middle coast in blood and it is plain to see that this warlike spirit still burns. As one visitor from Evrowal wrote, '*this city is one meal and one disobedient act away from war on the streets.*'

A custom of duels has sprung up in Peresk and most civil disputes are handled by the contest of duellists. It is permissible but impolite to kill a foe in a legal duel.

The city's skyline is dominated by the Citadel, a sprawling fortress that incorporates the ducal palace, the university of Peresk and the military headquarters for all Jrustela save Norvalela (which is administered from Orphalsketkal). Surrounding the citadel are four great plazas: the Grand Parade, the Market, the Muster and Cathedral Square. The city is divided into four quarters, unimaginatively called North, South, East and West, although most refer to them as the Big Camp, the Port Quarter, Southwell and the Westerwall.

Religion is a highly divisive topic in Peresk. The Pereski character combines passion and pragmatism in a curious way – he can be fiercely committed to a belief until it fails him, then change and accept a new way and commit to that just as strongly. For example, the Peresk raiders were fervent followers of the Olodo gods until the Nralarites proved stronger, whereupon they accepted the Invisible God and were the first Olodo to convert, cementing their place in the new order. Today, most Pereski are only barely reformed Hrestolites, only grudgingly accepting the reforms of the Abiding Book. This lack of commitment to the Abiding Book rankles with the Rightness Crusade and the two armies rarely work well together. To avoid friction, most Pereski have adopted a 'do not ask, do not tell' policy and religion is rarely discussed. In other cities, those of differing beliefs might use Insight Contests or polite debate to resolve their arguments but the Pereski rarely have a middle ground between 'silent disagreement and grinding of teeth' and 'hitting you in the face until you agree.'

The one religious topic that unites most Pereski is the Clanking City and the Zistorites – everyone in the city agrees that the Middle Sea Empire should immediately launch a massive military operation to break the siege. The Zistorites' battle machines and engines are too valuable to be lost and the Emperor is a coward for not sending troops to their aid.

## Faramosel

The inner reaches of Jrustela have only a fraction of the population of the coasts. Of the four districts in the central basin, Faramosel is the most populous and settled but it is still a rural hinterland. The eastern section of Faramosel is all farmlands and manorial estates owned by Jrustelan nobles. The only towns are small markets or those centred on castles, fords and other notable features. West of the river is virgin jungle, home to the timinit tribes that have not moved to Piskosol or another human city.

It is a quiet, even dull region. Life on these little farms is little different to the life of a freeman peasant in Carmania or Dara Happa, save for the wonderful harvests and controlled weather brought about by God Learner sorcery and for the eternal peace. Jrustela has not known war on its mainland in hundreds of years, unlike the rest of the world. No farmer living in Faramosel has ever had to witness his thatched cottage being torched, his crops trampled, his herds butchered or his family taken into slavery. Jrustela is a land of peace and security for the common folk and this is especially true in Faramosel.

## The Dam of Three Wonders

When complete, the Dam of Three Wonders will revitalise the fortunes of the district. The creation of the dam is a staggeringly ambitious plan to create an artificial lake in the heart of Jrustela by damming the Curand river midway along its course. The planned lake will drown the entire Holas Valley, making a freshwater lake more than 20 miles across. This will have three major benefits.

Firstly, the periodic flooding of the Curand, which causes problems in Shenilstos and the Irenstos delta, will be a thing of the past as floodwaters from the mountains will be contained in the lake. A second dam will be built along the wilder Pilasel River.

Secondly, the waters will compensate for the strain on the land caused by the multiple harvests. Having four different harvest deity blessings is one thing but not even Flamal or Enica can coax crops from dust.

Thirdly, the artificial lake will be used by the God Learners as an experimental platform in deity construction. Like all great rivers, the Curand has its own gods and spirits. The new lake, however, will be spiritually empty at first but the Collective intends to build a lake god that they can command directly.

As minor side benefits, the Dam of Three Wonders keeps Jrustelan money in Jrustela instead of going to Seshnela and also gives the Jrusteli another wonder of the world to crow about.

## Tyroas

This central town is the effective capital of Faramosel, although the region is actually administered from Shenilstos. It is situated on the mighty Curand River at Famos' Ford. The ford has long since gone, replaced with the famous Horizon Arc Bridge. This structure is the pride of the town. It is decorated with statues of all the Malkioni saints and it is said these statues weep tears when the Jrusteli sin.

The folk of Tyroas, though, have their own secret sin. The river was once named the Faramosel but its name was changed when the Nralarites made contact with the river-elementals. The people of Tyroas have become close friends and allies of the elementals and there are even some children in the town who have bluish skin and eyes like still ponds. The Curand is angered by the plan to build the Dam of Three Wonders and her children grow restless.

**Reasons to come here:** Tyroas is the only large trade town in Faramosel, so Adventurers seeking work and those seeking aid will both come to its inns and taverns.

## Lukora

Around half the Jrusteli timinits live in the inner jungle, in Shenilstos district and Pilasel. Lukora, located just across the river from Pilasel district, is a human trade town which specialises in dealing with the insect-men. Unlike the 'gentrified' timinits of Piskosol, the timinits who visit Lukora often cling to the old ways, are still inexperienced in human culture or both. The jungle timinits do retain mastery of some crafts, like pulp-spitting and silk-weaving, that the city timinits have forgotten or suppressed and it is from trading in these crafts that Lukora makes its profit.

## Pilasel

The river Jrezar rushes in a wild torrent down from the mountains through the jungle. Although explorers have sailed up the river, the surrounding jungle has never been fully explored. Four attempts have been made to establish settlements in the foothills of the Curustus, all of which failed. The Olodo built the first town in the mountains but lost contact with it almost immediately and no sign of it has been found since. Three other settlements have been attempted since the birth of the Confederation. The first was washed away in a flood, the second abandoned when the miners went insane and the third buried by a rockfall. Hunters, explorers and adventurers have also vanished in the jungles. Something around the headwaters of the Jrezar wishes to keep its secrets.

Except for a few mines and isolated sorcerer's towers, there is no permanent human settlement in the Pilasel district. There are some hunting lodges north-west of Shenilstos.

## Timiswal

Few humans have ever looked upon the strange town of Timiswal, the single largest settlement in Pilasel. This is a timinit city built upon a huge insect burrow. The majority of the inhabitants of the town are lucans, who are notoriously witless. They built their town in imitation of the human cities they had seen or heard rumour of, so Timiswal is a bizarre sight. Everything in the town is made of wood or woodpulp spat up and shaped by the insects but made to resemble stone or metal. There are castles twisted from trees, paving stones of bark, paper horses tethered outside taverns which serve honeydew and rainwater. Inside, the timinits try to mimic human lives as much as possible but their understanding of human culture is limited. Lucan hatchlings are coddled by 'married' pairs of insects, for instance, but each day a couple just takes a random larva from the hatchery.

More intelligent timinits, like arachans or experienced cerebresites, are amused or embarrassed by Timiswal but they tolerate its existence. It is a private sanctum for the timinit race and as such is a useful refuge in troubled times. Some timinits come here to relax and reconnect with their insect roots.

**Reasons to come here:** Timiswal is a hidden city. Unless one is an insect, one should not be here.

## Shenilstos

The green centre of Jrustela is the 'land between the rivers' and is named after the city of the same name in the south of the district. Shenilstos is mostly jungle in the north, where only timinits and wild beasts live. The south is marshland and farmland surrounding the city.

## Northern Shenilstos

The jungle here has a few timinits but they have mostly migrated across the Curand to northern Pilasel and Faramosel. It was here that Ekose the Burner destroyed the great timinit hives and it was here that the Nralarites made war. The timinits now consider northern Shenilstos a graveyard and shy away from it.

With the timinits gone, the jungle has become more dangerous. Black cats prey on sheep herds in southern Kerela and fearsome serpents of prodigious size slither through the trees. The abandoned timinit hives and other ruins have been reclaimed by exiles from mainstream Jrustelan society – there is a cult of Transgressors who believe that the Devil and not Malkion was the true servant of God, operating out of a timinit pyramid-temple in Northern Shenilstos. This tribe is possibly working with a heretical God Learner group called the Unblinking Gaze Brothers.

## Southern Shenilstos

Southern Shenilstos is the westward end of the Jrustelan 'Abiding Belt,' also known as the Lands of the Visitation. The people are fervent believers in the cause of Righteousness and in many places the church and the Rightness Crusade hold more power and land than the local nobles.

Physically the region is a great swamp where the rivers meet. Houses are built on stilts or artificial islands to keep them above the waters and many people live on rafts or boats. In the west, the ground rises somewhat and becomes drier, so many settlements are built there even though their isolation from the rest of Jrustela restricts their growth.

## Shenilstos City

It is perhaps ironic that a place named the 'City of Bargaining' is the most uncompromising of the cities of Jrustela. Today, little remains of the Olodo trade town that once stood here, although the merchants of Shenilstos still quarrel bitterly with those of Irenstos. Shenilstos has been transformed by the purifying fires of devotion and is the headquarters of the Rightness Crusade.

Shenilstos is built at the confluence of the rivers and hundreds of small streams and canals flow through it. Going from one side of the city to another means crossing at least a dozen bridges and students at the Shenilstos Academy play fiendish logic games involving crossing each bridge in the city a set number of times. The nobles of Shenilstos usually travel by gondola rather than horse or carriage as it is faster and easier to get around town by boat. Great millwheels in the industrial quarter are turned by the flowing water, grinding or powering factory machinery or prayer-wheels.

The Rightness Beacon, the central building in the city, is so large that the main courses of the rivers Curand and Jrezar must flow through twin arches beneath the fortress. The Beacon dominates the city sky-line completely, overshadowing even the five Cathedrals of Good Action, each of which exemplifies a different virtue of Rightness. Clockwise from north, these are the Cathedrals of Indomitable Will, the Cathedral of Unsullied Vision, the Cathedral of Unyielding Loyalty, the Cathedral of Manifest Reason and the Cathedral of the Holy Martyrs. Every street in the city bears the name of some martyr or commemorates a battle. It rains constantly in Shenilstos, where water cascades through the mouths of gargoyles and leaves the lead roofs gleaming. The preachers say this is because Makan weeps for the world that does not wholly accept his divine plan.

At the edge of the city is a black tower, windowless and perfectly smooth, made of solid shadow. It is the home of the New Iron Staff order, the militant wizards of the Rightness

Crusade. The tower has no true name but is nicknamed the Blackstaff. Only those consecrated to the Order can find the single door into the tower.

Unlike its secular counterpart of Peresk, the law is not especially harsh in Shenilstos. It does not need to be. The citizens are blessed with a moral fortitude that verges on the inhuman and crime is unknown here.

It is generally believed in the political circles of Hredimorinos and Jalanswal that Rightness is a spent force, that the proactive, crusading spirit exhausted itself when Seshnela was freed and the last vestiges of Arkat's Empire were crushed, that all Shenilstos can do now is churn out missionaries and loud-voiced fanatic errant knights who run off to convert or slaughter pagans. In truth, the Rightness Crusade is almost as strong as it ever was but its focus now is on control of the Malkioni churches and its wars are fought on battlefields of doctrine and church appointments. The Rightness Crusade is covertly allied with the Back to Glory movement but this is an alliance of convenience. The leaders of the Rightness movement, especially Duke Salberos, want power to remain concentrated in Seshnela away from the dangerous and immoral lords of Jrustela but they also want to control the next pontiff and for that they need secular allies.

## Olodosel


The land of the Olodo encompasses some of the most pleasant landscapes in all of Jrustela. It is a green land sweeping around Gerlant's Bay, a land of sunshine and light rain and bright blue skies. Summers are hot but not oppressively so; winters are mild. The Olodo chose their home well when they migrated south.

Olodosel is divided into two regions: Gerlant's Bay and Briasas's Head.

## Briasas's Head

The rocky peninsula of Briasas's Head is a spiritually potent place. It is a volcanic region scattered with obsidian deposits and steaming vents and sulphurous pools. The dreo earth-spirits are still common here, manifesting as dancing piles of stones or moving cracks in cliff-faces. The majority of the population lives along the coast or in the hilly lands just north of Arshu Phola.

Briasas's Head is a land of surprises and strangeness. A traveller wandering one of the many narrow, winding paths through the hills might turn a corner and come upon a shrine to the old storm gods, or a village where everyone goes masked, or a circle of God Learner students from Irenstos practising their spells or a rampaging monster like an allosaur. Briasas's Head touches on the otherworlds. Travellers are warned not



to step outside during one of the tumultuous and awesome thunderstorms that frequently strike the headland or when mists rise from the sea. Such times are dangerous, both spiritually and physically.

### Briasa's Fold

The main road up from Irenstos passes through Briasa's Fold, a town on the west side of the headland. Sheep-farming is the main industry and is so important to the town that there is a secret temple to the Olodo farm-goddess hidden in a nearby cave. Distorted rumours of the disastrous effects of the Goddess Switch reached the ears of the farmers here and they are terrified God Learner sorcery will blight their flocks too. A conspiracy against the sorcerers is growing here among the peasants, although as of yet their actions have been limited to rumour-mongering and curses. Still, if they spread the news of the failure of the Goddess Switch, they will suddenly become a danger to the collective.

### Arshu Phola

The former capital of Jrustela in Olodo times, Arshu Phola was built in the caldera of an extinct volcano. The city is therefore bowl-shaped, arranged around a central lake. It is a city of low buildings and alleyways with none of the cyclopean fortresses, sky-scraping towers, bizarre arcane devices or wide impressive boulevards that characterise the other God Learner cities. It is an old city, a crumbling city.

It is known for its hot water springs and curative spas. Many of the palaces in Arshu Phola have running hot water and the public bath-houses are popular places to meet and socialise. It is said that more business is done in the steam rooms than in the council chambers and that exemplifies how society in the city operates – informally, casually and in secret. Unlike the majority of his subjects Duke Garolan is a Nralarite and his court is poorly attended. The city runs almost in spite of his efforts.

Politics are taboo in polite conversation here. Unlike the rest of Jrustela, where an avid interest in politics and world events is considered a virtue, Arshu Phola prides itself on apathy and resignation. What will happen will happen, they say, and there is little that can be done about it. Why not sit and relax a while instead of rushing off to the four corners of the earth trying to conquer fate? If pressed, most people in the city would admit to favouring Reform but old grudges are still strong in Arshu Phola. They may believe that too much power and wealth has gone to Seshnela but neither do they want the Nralarites of the north to get all that power and wealth back. Few here have any interest in being part of an Empire and many sympathise with the Umathelan rebels.

There is a university of sorts in Arshu Phola, although it is very small compared to those in other cities. The best sorcerers go to Irenstos instead.

The Leaida Aqueduct is a major landmark in Arshu Phola, visible from all over the city as it carries fresh water down from the north (there are natural springs in Arshu Phola but they taste bitter, especially the central lake). The Aqueduct runs first into what is called the New Quarter, the Nralarite part of the city where the duke's palace and the Malkioni Cathedral of Thirty Mercies are found. The area around the lake is referred to as the Holgreen and is the main market area of the city. On the upper slopes is Manlanth's Hand, named after the great folk-hero of the city. Many of the temples to the old storm gods are found here. These temples are still intact, although they have been converted into warehouses or shops or homes to disguise their true nature.

### Crunveld

This port town is infamous for its ties to Umathela. Many of those who fled the Nralarite conquest left from here and the connections have been maintained through the centuries. Now, with the southern colony seceding from the Middle Sea Empire, little Crunveld has suddenly become vitally important to Umathela. Letters, scrolls and new books of sorcery are copied and smuggled out through Crunveld to ensure that the universities of Umathela do not fall behind their Jrustelan counterparts.

**Reasons to come here:** The trade in secrets is illegal and highly profitable.

### Gerlant's Bay

This region has prospered for centuries. While Arshu Phola lagged behind and Shenilstos clung to theism and isolationism until the Abiding Book was found, Irenstos seized the opportunity to become integrated into the Jrusteli confederation and quickly became the richest town in the southlands. It ruled the farmlands, while the new twin city of Swalwal ruled over shipping and sea travel. With the destruction of Swalwal, Irenstos rose to the occasion and offered its harbour to the now homeless ships.

For the entire existence of the Middle Sea Empire, the south has prospered.

The calm crystal waters of Gerlant's Bay belie the region's current plight. Until recently, the towns along this coast thrived thanks to trade with Pamaltela, just as the east and north coastal towns traded with the northern continent. Now, with Umathela seceding and the Six Legged Empire in chaos,

the bay is crowded with empty freighters. For the first time in a generation, the perfect peace and considerable wealth of southern Jrustela is under threat.

### Borsyar

Borsyar was founded by the New Order school, the original pioneers of God Learner techniques, as a research base. The New Order were based in distant Frowalkel and they chose this town on the far side of the continent partly because it was so far from their home, thus hiding their discoveries from rival sorcery schools but also because there was an Olodo temple near Borsyar, which could be used as a gateway to the otherworld. None of their work was wholly successful and they never managed to access the Olodo God Plane. When Mandarel's reforms brought the God Learner technique into the public eye, the virtue of Borsyar as a secret research facility faded. A town had grown up around the New Order School and that town continued after most of the wizards left.

While the New Order may never have touched the power of the gods while at Borsyar, they did accomplish *something*. Ever since those initial experiments, the woodlands around Borsyar have been haunted. It is as though the border between this world and the Otherworlds was made weak and things leaked through. Divine beasts and avatars walk aboard on Olodo holy days. Occasionally, Olodo priests or ambitious God Learners try to solve the mystery of Borsyar but no one has managed to replicate or repair the changes caused by those early experiments.

The strange case of Borsyar was one of the examples used by Valastos of Seven Pens in his influential critique of God Learning; it was cited as proof that the New Order magic could cause permanent changes, that the God World did not 'reset' on completion of a quest.

### Irenstos

The sprawling city of Irenstos is chaotic and colourful. Its population is a mix of Olodo, Nralarite, Pamaltelan and other immigrants. Unlike other cities, where the various groups and races keep to their own enclaves, here timinits live side-by-side with humans. Noble-caste Nralarite colonists who can trace their bloodline back to Famos marry former slaves from Pamaltela. Traders from Vithos swap fake blood runes for enchanted sugar-cane and strong wine from Kerela. One can listen to the babble of tongues, see the clash of brightly coloured costumes and feel the endless frenetic life of the city wash over him. There is an eternal carnival atmosphere in Irenstos and the city seems to have a never-ending succession of holidays and festivals. Even the holy days of martyred saints are marked with feasting and dancing. Most of the old Olodo holy-days are also observed, albeit in the guise of secular celebrations.

Much of this attitude can be traced back to the wizard Darangor, who lived in the city in the years before the Taming of the Timinits. Darangor was an Olodo orphan who was taught the basics of sorcery by a kindly Malkioni priest. The young boy proved to be a prodigy at the arcane arts, working incredible wonders and uncovering new forms of sorcery. Darangor intuited the structure of the runes, predicting the existence of the Stasis, Disorder and Infinity runes before they were ever discovered by the sorcerers. Darangor founded the university of Irenstos, which to this day teaches an intuitive, emotive form of sorcery, treating it as an art instead of a science. Darangor's techniques are at odds with the ancient traditions of Malkioni-approved sorcery, which is based on Logic and Reason and the original principles laid down by Zzabur. Even so, Irenstos has produced more than a few truly great sorcerers. The rivalry between Irenstos and Piskosol universities is exemplified by their differing approaches – the wizards of Irenstos rely on intuition, feelings and even luck when working magic, while Piskosol is founded on rigorous and insect-influenced formality and mathematics.

The government of Irenstos is quite at odds with the character of the city – it is a hereditary Nralarite family, who after 400 years of rule still treat Irenstos as a conquered enemy fortress and are quite prejudiced and mistrustful towards the Olodo. The current duke, Yuthelmag the Hobbled, is an especially bad example of this family's scions, as he is a strongly Loyalist duke who favours a punitive war with Umathela's rebels, while the vast majority of people in the city are friendly to Umathela and would oppose an attack on the south.


Trade is the lifeblood of Irenstos and even if legal trade with the southlands is diminished in the current climate, smuggling and commerce with the north and overseas continue. Irenstos is almost as important a port as Hathinethor but the consortiums and companies of the northern city own much of the shipping that goes through Irenstos.

### Port Adventure

The name says it all. This sea-port was founded to support the Jrusteli expansion into the southlands. The ships that made the Six-Legged Empire launched from here, the largest naval base in Gerlant's Bay. The Free Men of the Sea consider it one of their most important assets now that Swalwal is gone. Port Adventure has no shipyards – its vessels are constructed in distant Orphalsketkal, then sailed south – but it has a binding tower to capture sylphs of the air and nets for undines of the sea. It is a place of swashbuckling adventurer and explorers and has a fierce rivalry with the sailors of Borasten Harbour in the north.

### Svalwalel

The western peninsula was settled soon after the signing of the treaty of Peresk and its fertile fields and rich wildlife



made it an ideal colony site. For a time, Svalwalel eclipsed Borastenorela as the fastest-growing and wealthiest region in Jrustela. The capital city, Svalwal, was a magnificent place, all silver and gold. Here, the sorcerers learned to bind elementals and spirits to their will and to set their bound energies to work in cunning machines of clockwork and jewels. Here, the principles of machine science that would come to full fruition with the Zistorites were first discovered.

Here, men learned to conquer the oceans.

Then came the wave and the drowning of Svalwalel. The province was almost totally abandoned after that – although the tidal wave conjured by the Waertagi only struck the southern coast, many more fled east and north fearing an invasion or further magical attacks. Even today, Svalwalel is largely empty, a land of ruined towns and isolated farms.

The magical machines and elemental-driven devices built in Svalwal survived the wave. The Free Men's League, a land-based counterpart to the Free Men of the Sea, was able to destroy or control most of the machines but there are still a few dangerous elemental devices roaming wild in the Svalwalel uplands. The Zistorites have applied to build a second monastery-city here, a new Clanking City, but their efforts have stalled due to the siege of Zistorwal.

There is adventure aplenty in Svalwal. The region was never reclaimed after the wave, as Jrusteli expansion went to the southern continent and then into the fervour of the Rightness Crusade and the Middle Sea Empire. An ambitious warlord could quite easily get the blessing of the Emperor of Land and Sea (if Loyalist) or the Confederation (if Reformist) to create his own domain in the unclaimed territories but he would have to prove his ability to claim and protect this new fiefdom.

### Siracaport

The only one of the Svalwal port towns to survive the wave, Siracaport has become the spiritual home of the Free Men of the Sea, the Jrusteli navy. The great ports of Orphalsketkal and Irenstos and Hathinelthor are of course far more important to the navy in modern times but it is to Siracaport that the honoured dead are brought, Siracaport where great admirals retire and Siracaport where bloody oaths of vengeance are still sworn against the Waertagi and all who would harbour them.

### Nezeth

The inland town of Nezeth is the largest settlement in Svalwal. A vassal town of Irenstos, it is administered by a nephew of Yuthelmag. It oversees the mines in the southern Curustus

Mountains as well as the farms and herds of the uplands and also keeps the wilderness and its dangerous inhabitants from encroaching into settled lands. Nezeth is also the starting point for expeditions into drowned Svalwal City.

### Svalwal City

The wave tore away the foundations of the southern half of the city and now everything from the ruins of the ducal palace to the seaport is underwater. The northern section of the city, which comprised the university and magical foundries, and the noble quarter is half-drowned; the streets are flooded but many of the sturdier buildings are intact.

Before the wave, Svalwal was one of the richest cities in the world. The sorcerers there had mastered the binding of elementals and their ships could cross the ocean. They had plundered the rich gold and gem mines of Umathela and Svalwal treasure ships brought a horde of incalculable value back to Jrustela. Much of this treasure, it is said, now lies scattered on the ocean floor or in vaults deep beneath the towers of Svalwal. Of equal potential importance are the magical secrets of Svalwal – some magic used by the mage-smiths of the city is still lost and is coveted by the ship-wrights of the Free Men and by the Zistorites. Most magical research in Jrustela focuses on the ramifications of God Learning, so basics like elementalism have been neglected.

The treasures of Svalwal are guarded not only by the dangerous conditions, like collapsing buildings or tidal bores rushing through narrow streets but also by malevolent water-spirits, dangerous undead and uncontrolled magical-machines and elementals.

### Curustus Mountains

Even to this day, the Curustus Mountains have not been fully explored by the Jrusteli. The peaks rise with shocking suddenness from the shore in the west, with sheer cliffs erupting from the ocean as if the world ended in a great granite wall. In some sheltered valleys on the west side, huge white glaciers grind towards the cliffs, occasionally carving off icebergs that tumble to the water far below. The approach from the east is almost as hazardous, as a traveller must cross a thousand-mile labyrinth of canyons, fast-flowing rivers and mosquito-ridden swamps before even reaching the lower slopes.

The mountains are rich in metals including gold in the north, copper and tin and jewels in the south and even a few rare iron mines in isolated places known only to the mostali. The Jrusteli mine where they can but have only scratched the surface of the stern mountain range.

## The Ducal Wars

Lasting between 898 and 902 the Ducal Wars marked that period when the Seshnegi Dukes, including those of Arolanit, escalated a variety of private feuds to new levels and incurred the wrath of both Emperor Iltos and the Rightness Army.

Feuds had beset Arolanit and Seshnela for centuries, stretching back as far as the early days of the Brithini presence in Seshnela, but they had also been relatively small-scale affairs and confined to their localities. During the late 8th and early 9th centuries though, the dukes of the mainland began to bring imperial resources into their private battles and became so consumed with fighting each other that the integrity of the Imperial Council was seriously threatened. When Iltos called for a cessation of violence, he was ignored. Tribute and taxes dried-up; the food production in Arolanit was threatened. Key Jrusteli bureaucrats were assassinated and many hostages taken. Seshnela was sinking into chaos and even the sanctity of the True Malkioni Church was threatened by an unsettling rise in Irensavalism.

With heavy military commitments in other parts of the empire Iltos was forced to rely on Rightness Army reserves to impose a rule of law in Seshnela. This was only partially successful because many of the commanders were embroiled in the Ducal Wars themselves and failed to separate loyalty to the empire from loyalty to the local cause.

The Ducal Wars were not about territory or political power; they were simply squabbles that escalated into personal hatred. Many precribed this to Arkat's legacy and there may be truth in this. None of the warring dukes who fought each other or the emperor were seeking to take the Imperial Seat for themselves; they had, instead, fallen prey to petty ambitions and a desire to see rivals dead. This meant that the Ducal Wars were bloody and protracted but without reason or common cause.

They came to an end when Iltos sanctioned the Order of Saint Atrox to 'impose behaviour and ensure it for ever more.' The brothers of Saint Atrox, experts in imposing compliance, were extreme in their methods and unrepentant for them. They employed a mixture of HeroQuesting, secret, Brithini-obtained grimoires, and inventive cruelty to decapitate the warring dukes leaving Iltos to deal with what was left. Those dukes who were spared the Atroxic retribution were those who had demonstrated continued loyalty and a degree of reason throughout the wars. In the subsequent redistribution of territory Iltos secured the ongoing support of the Arolanit and Seshnelan dukes and wiped-out several centuries of appalling in-fighting.

The Curustus have three sentient races who call them home. The Jrusteli trade with the mostali, whose main city is located under a peak called Darasus by the Jrusteli and Omphalos Prime by the dwarfs. The scale of the city is undreamt-of by the Middle Sea Empire, who believe the mostali of the mountains to number no more than a few hundred. In fact, Omphalos has thousands of inhabitants, most of whom are engaged in a long-term plan to the central node of Omphalos, which they claim to be a major shard of the Spike that was used to unify and modulate the various planes of existence. The God Learners' experiments cause terrible static and have set Omphalos' efforts back centuries but the insular dwarfs have no idea that their Jrusteli neighbours are running around the Otherworlds. It is only the rock, lead and iron dwarfs who deal with the Jrusteli, while the coppers, tins and silvers work on the Central Node.


The mountain trolls sometimes raid Jrusteli settlements in Norvalela and sometimes the Jrusteli attack troll villages. The trolls here are superlative mountaineers and prosper since they are not perceived to be any more than a minor nuisance.

Finally, Iqari are found in the upper peaks. Iqari have the heads, wings and lower quarters of huge raptors – usually eagles – and the abdomen and arms of a human. The Iqari of Jrustela are the Arhi tribe and have no interest in trade.

## AROLANIT

Lying between Seshnela and Fronela is the coastal region of Arolanit, a place of rich harvests which makes it the breadbasket for the empire and a place hotly contested by the local dukes. In times past there were many small duchies, most corrupt, all ambitious, and all hateful of their





neighbours. All this changed with the Ducal Wars when the fractious dukes refused to support Emperor Ilotos and rapidly found their lands seized, boundaries changed and their fortunes lost. Now, only a handful survive and these are the duchies of the emperor's most loyal servants. Those who sought the arrogant path of resistance against Ilotos, believing that the bounty of their lands granted them immunity, were purged in a dreadful night of assassination, orchestrated by the Atroxich Church, known as the Generous Evening. In one night sixteen rebel dukes were slaughtered in all manner of ingenious ways, for example:

- Duke Neseven exploded at his dinner table; his family were compelled to feast on his remains.
- Duke Koskovos reached into his own throat and pulled out his intestines, trailing them around his palace.
- Duchess Ratouga hurled herself from the roof of the Xemelite temple but never reached the ground.
- Duke Eweren simply shrivelled in his sleep, only a husk the size of a walnut shell remaining. Ilotos had this made into a hat-pin.
- Duke Anke-Tsous, leader of the arrogant rebels, tore off his own head and attempted to replace it with a pumpkin, obviously keen to become a jack-o-bear. The head was lost but is occasionally seen scuttling through the woods of northern Arolanit feeding on rodents.

Now there are only three duchies and the three dukes of Arolanit are the most devout of the mainland servants. They have been rewarded with the territories of those purged in the Generous Evening and rule wisely and carefully, ever mindful of the fate that befell those who sought to deny the emperor what he wanted.

## A Land of Plenty

The vast bulk of Arolanit is agricultural land: sprawling, fertile fields tended by diligent peasants growing vegetables, cereals and fruit of all descriptions. The harvests never fail, the result of deals struck with local grain goddesses and nature spirits by sorcerers of the First Age. This bounty is known, locally, as the Ernaldan Compact. The story how it came into being is as follows. Are we sitting comfortably?

Prince Arol was a sensitive and dutiful servant of the Invisible God but also a romantic soul. At that time the fields of the land were good but Arol knew they could yield more. He prayed for better harvests and tried many spells borrowed from the Brithini but the yields of the farms never seemed to improve. So, in a final bid to do right by his people Arol walked onto the God Plane and sought Ernalda. He found her alone and forlorn. He was courteous and made her gifts of fine cloths brought from his own looms. She accepted these and agreed to talk to him.

'I rule these lands, as you must know,' Ernalda said, 'but the people recognise only the saints and refuse to accept my magic. Without that then the lands grow only what they can. The spirits will not listen to me. You will have to find a way to offer reverence to me and my kin.'

'I cannot deny the Invisible God or Malkion,' Arol replied. 'My magic is not your magic but I know we can live in peace and co-operation. How might I live with you and see my people prosper?'

'I do not know this invisible god,' Ernalda said, 'but all your people need to do is acknowledge that I and my many sisters have always had a presence here and always will. Your god, I suspect, encourages you to make your own way, and this is good, because you are a mortal and that is what mortals must do as their part of the Great Compromise. But, if your people perform a simple ritual during the planting time, recognising only that we exist here, I can let my magic flow through the land and your practices will not be in jeopardy or doubt.'

'This is great wisdom,' Arol said. 'I shall make sure it is done.'

And so Arol returned and commanded the people to do the following:

- At each planting, intone the name of Saint Ernal when casting the seed.
- At each harvest set aside an offering of food to show willingness to share.
- During Sacred Time build a small shrine to the earth and offer a simple prayer to the Invisible God and the Good Ladies.

In this way the harvests of Arolanit were guaranteed. Ernaldada and her many sisters were recognised but never elevated above the Invisible God and through the creation of Saint Ernal the wisdom of the earth was made a part of honest worship. This is the Ernaldan Compact and all the people of Arolanit follow it and so ensure the province's bounty.

## The Brithini Influence

In the early 400s Arolanit was conquered by the Brithini who established their own colonies throughout the region but remained free of any desire to extend their territories into Seshnela. Why the Brithini chose Arolanit as a place for establishing a colony away from Brithos is a mystery: leaving Brithos dooms Brithini to mortality and there is always a good reason for taking such action.

Whatever the reason, the Brithini came to Arolanit and established the ducal regimes that eventually crumbled at the end of the Ducal Wars. Talars ordered the region into the



dukedom and Prince Arol, he of the Ernalda Compromise, was a descendant of good Talar stock. There is speculation that the Arolanit Brithini were renegades who had no choice but to flee Zzabur's wrath for some crime or indiscretion; further speculation posits that the Arolanit Brithini was simply an exercise in replicating social structures that were arising everywhere (Fronela, mostly) so that they might be controlled. None can say for sure but what is certain is that the Arolanit Brithini became 'human' rapidly and over the course of some 500 years adopted mortal ways although they were always loyal to the Invisible God.

They also maintained a high degree of independence from the Middle Sea Empire. Tribute was paid but Arolanit was always 'apart' from the other provinces and dominions. It lacked a governor and yet more speculation has it that the Brithini of Brithos ordered the emperors of the Middle Sea Empire not to interfere – or suffer the consequences. Until the Ducal Wars and the Generous Evening, the Middle Sea Empire did not meddle in Arolanit affairs.

Afterwards the Brithini influence faded into distant history and Arolanit was subsumed into the Middle Sea Empire until its fall. In times to come the Brithini will exert their influence once again, perplexing future scholars still further and reinforcing (perhaps) the notion that Arolanit was, and continues to be, a large-scale Brithini experiment in civilised mortality.

## Arolanit Culture

The people of Arolanit speak a different dialect than their Seshnegi neighbours. They revere Prince Hrestol and his mother, merciful Xemela, above all other saints. Their worship ceremonies are noted for their ebullience, joyous music and ordinary congregants' spontaneous outbursts of giddy sermonising.

The Arolaniti peasants, who consider scowling and pessimism as dreadful sins, are known as the Happy People. This is all part of the Ernalda Compromise and has nothing to do with Solace and Joy. The dukes, fearful of Saint Atrox behavioural conditioning, explain this innate happiness as a gift from Saint Hrestol but the Ernalda Compromise is an inconvenient truth few wish to openly acknowledge. The peasants care little: they perform the ceremonies they have always performed, smile and regard the world with a goblet-half-full philosophy and continually reap the rewards of a bountiful earth. The dukes send tribute to the Imperial Seat by caravan and ship and venerate the saints as fervently as any pure-bred Jrustelan. Arolanit is ordered and beloved of Emperor Ilotos and its cities are now blessed with all the benefits of a grateful ruler.


## Duchies of Arolanit

Out of all the duchies that existed before the Ducal Wars only three remain. Known as the Grand Duchies, due to their size, they are accretions of the smaller, rebellious duchies that have been granted to the loyal dukes.

### Grand Duchy of Varth

Centred on the coastal city of Varthulwal, this duchy encompasses all territory north of a line drawn between Varthulwal and Kelsitin. The land is rolling plain, pocked with many small settlements and produces excellent cereal crops. The Ernalda Compavt is very much in evidence throughout Varth with the local grain goddesses being offered subtle tribute although the main veneration is always for the saints.

The people of Varth are attuned the cycles of nature and the weather and are amongst the most jovial of all Arolaniti's people. They give thanks they were spared in the Ducal Wars and honour Duke and Duchess Gnostesees, their much loved rulers, in the harvest celebrations.



Varthulwal is the ducal seat of the Gnostesees clan, an old family that traces its ancestry back to the first Brithini settlers. Despite this relationship the Gnostesees, coveters of political influence and power, have always been loyal to the emperor and have made it a family tradition that all daughters of the clan are married into Jrustelan ducal lines thereby extending Gnostesees influence across the ocean.

The city itself is small and walled with crowded streets leading down to the narrow harbour, which is fashioned in the shape of a horseshoe. Varthuwal is one of the two ports serving trade with Seshnela and Jrustela and is therefore a busy, rambunctious place. Many taverns and warehouses front the harbour district each offering a particular theme such as gambling, courtesans or contests of alcoholic stamina. The city is famed for swish, a grain spirit akin to rum favoured with local herbs and potent in the extreme. Swish causes hangovers of monumental stature and those who claim to be immune to its effects have either used sorcery to counter the unpleasantness or are liars, extremely good at hiding their suffering.

The Gnostesees clan rules from its hilltop villa overlooking the harbour, a sprawling place of many low buildings, open quadrangles and secluded, walled gardens. The complex is dedicated to Saint Gno, the forefather of the clan who was of Talar Brithini extraction and was martyred for his devotion to Saint Hrestol, a tendency since cured amongst the Gnostesees clan who now view Hrestol as a deviation from true Malkioni practice.

### Grand Duchy of Kels

Occupying the band of land and coast between Varth and Lau, Kels is another vast region dedicated to good crops and superb livestock. This is the duchy of the Cattle Barons and the grand grazing lands are home to massive herds of the tall, fat, short-horned kel cattle that are prized for their beef and leather. Ruled by the neglectful Duke Aulenios the duchy is under the effective control of the Cattle Barons – those families who bring-in the bulk of the duchy's wealth through trading bovine flesh and byproducts.

The Cattle Barons are all related to the Aulenios line in some shape or form and so the barons do not see themselves as anything but the guardians of Kels' heritage; nevertheless there is resentment against Duke Aulenios. He became infatuated with the (very young) daughter of one of the rebel dukes and, when the Ducal Wars ended, he claimed Sulyina as his prize. He now rarely strays from his walled home where he spends his days wooing his 13 year old bride with poorly composed love songs and excruciating sonnets. He is oblivious to his duties and has eyes only for Sulyina who, despite her youth, is gradually realising the power she has over her ageing, love-lorn husband. Her childish whims are impossible for him to resist and she is furnished with every luxury she could ever dream

of. Duke Aulenios is, of course, denied what he really wants and his heart and loins ache for Sulyina's caresses. The secret, he believes, lies in more and more gifts and favours until she relents and takes him to her bed. His time is therefore occupied with devising ways of capturing her heart whilst the Cattle Barons are permitted greater and greater control over the whole of the region. Aulenios believes that his loyalty to the emperor is enough to ensure no outside interference but the growing strength of the Cattle Barons has not gone unnoticed by Emperor Ilotos. He is planning to have Aulenios replaced by a full Provincial Governor of the Rightness Army who will take control of the Cattle Barons and exile Aulenios and Sulyina to somewhere distant where their love cannot influence imperial interests.

The Cattle Barons do not suspect this plan and believe themselves in a position to slowly, peacefully, wrest control of Kels from Aulenios without appearing rebellious or disloyal. Head of the Cattle Barons, Baron Karusus, is behind this steady scheming and is busy manipulating the other barons into positions of administrative competence so that a political infrastructure is in place when Aulenios is quietly deposed. Ilotos knows of all this. He has spies in the Cattle Baron's ranks and has decided to let them make the power-play and then move-in the Rightness Army to assume control once Aulenios and Sulyina are out of the picture.

It is, in many ways, a sad state of affairs because, when not infatuated with his adolescent muse, Aulenios is a very capable military commander and a loyal subject. If he could be restored to his former sanity Ilotos would be overjoyed, but Aulenios is a lost cause. Better to move him out of harm's way than to risk injuring a good, if misguided, man.

### Grand Duchy of Lau

Occupying the southern third of Arolanit, including the Iron Mountains, Lau is under the direct control of the Provincial Governor, Lusius Mercindus, once a Rightness Army general and now in charge of managing the situation with the mostali of the Iron Mountains to the empire's advantage.

Before the Ducal Wars the entire region had enjoyed open relations with the Iron Mountain mostali but had never seen fit to control it to the empire's liking. A succession of greedy dukes had failed to exploit relations with the dwarfs to Jrustela's advantage and had rebelled when instructed to become tougher on this matter. At the end of the Ducal Wars Lusius Mercindus had subdued all the southern dukes and merged their territories into the province of Lau. Lusius Mercindus was given control of the duchy as his prize.

Like the other Arolanit duchies Lau supports abundant agriculture and is as prosperous. The real prize here, though is iron, and the key to it is Ferostos Gadeth. Since consolidating

Lau's power Lusius Mercindus has made the port city of Laurmal into the centre for iron ore export, vastly expanding the city's capacity and fortifying its deep-water harbour. The Rightness Army has an entire Rightness Division based here to ensure the duchy's security and each Di-Serecas is stationed in a different part of the duchy to protect the region from invasion by land or sea. The whole reason for this security is iron, pure and simple.

The Iron Mountains is the single largest repository of iron in the whole of Glorantha, with around half of the available metal originating from the great mostali forges found beneath the mountains. Ferostos Gadeth is the mostali name for their city but the surface dwellers call it Iron Stead or Iron Trade and there has been trade with the mostali, who have been enthusiastic proponents of Openhandism, for centuries. The iron seams of the mountains extend throughout the mountains and deep, deep below: thick, accessible bands of ore that are now traced by mining tunnels criss-crossing the seams. The city itself is a series of large caverns, both natural and dwarf-made, connected by tunnels and passageways that form almost a labyrinth. Iron brought out of the seams is transported by Jolanti-pushed wagons into the processing halls where the metal is separated from the ore, refined and then shunted along to the crafting halls where the mostali turn the metal into weapons, armour and other essentials. A good amount is cast into trading ingots, marked with a stamp to show the place of origin and then stockpiled for use in the iron markets. The iron available in the Iron Mountains is not an inexhaustible supply but is plentiful and the engineers of Ferostos have calculated that there is enough for at least 1,000 more years, if current production rates remain constant.

Or, at least, that is what would happen in normal conditions. The Openhandism of the Ferostos mostali means that they are quite prepared to trade but the God Learners have made this incredibly difficult with the outbreak of the Iron Wars, centred on the Clanking City. The Ferostos mostali know full well that the bulk of the iron they mine will be sent to Zistorwal's forges and, ultimately, used in activities that challenge the Master Plan and the purpose of the World Machine. Openhandism in this climate, despite protestations of innocence by the various God Learner emissaries who have visited Ferostos, is utterly inappropriate and so all trade with the Middle Sea Empire is embargoed – much to the annoyance and inconvenience of the God Learners. And so, just as the mostali blockade the Clanking City, so have the God Learners blockaded the Iron Mountains. All trade with the Iron Mountains dwarfs is suspended: if the God Learners cannot have the mostali iron, then no one can.

All approaches to the Iron Mountains are therefore heavily patrolled by the Rightness Army. All passes through the mountain range are subject to checkpoints and controlled

crossing areas. Around the foothills, and especially in the vicinity of the various entrances to the city of Ferostos, Rightness Army encampments have been formed to stop the mostali from emerging from their sanctuary. Shafts have been sunk that run parallel with the dwarf tunnels to prevent the mostali from using underground conduits to bypass the God Learner blockades. Of course, the mostali can tunnel far deeper and far faster than even the sorcery-aided God Learners but as the entire enclave is surrounded and because the Middle Sea Empire monitors all tunnel activity through a series of Zistorwal developed scrying devices, they have, so far, refrained from building any form of bypass. The mostali know that if they did attempt to break the embargo, the God Learners would invade their city to take what they want by force. And, even though the mostali are quite capable of establishing devastating defences against invasion, they suffered much during the civil wars and have little appetite for a return to war. The current state of play, then, is Ferostos under siege, with the God Learners patiently ensuring that all the mostali's efforts beneath the ground are stalemated.

The God Learners have developed a new weapon to use against the Ferostos mostali. A constant stream of misinformation is communicated to the mostali city, reporting how the siege of the Clanking City is being steadily broken and the mostali forces dispersed. Every season brings news of yet another God Learner victory over the alliance of EWF, Orlanthe and mostali, and the propaganda grows ever more fanciful and scathing. The God Learners have claimed the following victories and broadcast the news wide and deep to the mostali:

- Eight mostali stone ships have been sunk by God Learner steam dreadnoughts.
- EWF allies have turned on the dwarfs and summoned dragons to devour them.
- Key Mostal myths have been broken: it is proven that Malkion is Mostal's true organic nature.
- Seams of high quality iron, more plentiful, have been discovered under Zistorwal.
- dwarf Mine in Dragon Pass has reached a secret alliance with the God Learners.

Whether or not the mostali believe this news is immaterial; its purpose is to sow the seeds of doubt and to trouble the mostali into exposing weaknesses the Rightness Army can exploit. The engineer of the propaganda strategy is Lusius Mercindus, the corpulent, wily duke of Lau who treats the siege of the Iron Mountains as an elaborate chess game. He views the prize as nothing less than Ferostos itself, making him 'Duke of Above and Below' and turning the mostali into a client state of near slaves who serve the Middle Sea Empire with the kind of unswerving devotion a conquered people are obligated to do.

## SESHNELA

Jrustela might be the imperial seat and the epicentre for its politics but the true heart of the Middle Sea Empire is the land of Seshnela, which is the place of origin of the Jrusteli and still remains its greatest, most prosperous province.

Seshnela stood as a beacon of civilisation even during the Darkness. It flowered early in the First Age, only to be subjugated by Arkat's Stygian Empire in the era's fading years. Refugees from Seshnela founded the fabulous cities of Jrustela, liberating their homeland from the Stygians many generations later. Since then Seshnela rapidly entered a golden age, leading an Empire dedicated to trade, conquest and sorcerous inquiry.

The region of Seshnela occupies the west of Genertela, sandwiched between Ralios to the east, Fronela to the north and the ocean to the west. It comprises of several political provinces, known as duchies, each of which centred on a city and each under the control of a duke. The dukes are advisers to the emperor and most of the Seshnelan dukes are hereditary titles that have existed since the First Age when the Seshnegi carved an identity for themselves. The dukes are responsible for all local laws, raising of taxes and contributing to the Rightness Army. Although responsibility rests with an individual each duke is supported by a bureaucracy that manages the day-to-day affairs of the duchy allowing the duke and his own body of advisers to concentrate on higher matters of imperial importance.

Seshnela is arranged into a series of separate areas known as the Heartlands. These heartlands are Joriland, Kaniland, Pasos, Nolos, Seshnela (from which the entire region derives its official name), Pithdaros and Tanisor. In the First Age these were independent kingdoms that feuded mercilessly with each other until the Brithini came down from Arolanit and imposed a semblance of order that contributed to the political climate found today. Had they not done so, Seshnela would never have gone on to colonise Jrustela and the Middle Sea Empire might never have been born.

The richest of the heartlands is Tanisor, a bowl of fertile land surrounding the lower Tanier River. Its people descend from the Pendali, an ancient race of lion men but long ago (before even the arrival of the Brithini) abandoned their hsunchen ways. Their comparatively dark complexions distinguish them from the pale-skinned Seshnegi. Rumours of an ancient vampire cult that haunts Tanisor by night are greatly exaggerated. Arkat fought a vampire legion in Tanisor hundreds of years ago but now the activities of its nocturnal blood-drinkers are almost entirely curtailed. Just ask the Arch Duke of Tanisor, Langila, whose unearthly pallor is in no way connected to vampirism. His recent expeditions to the

remnants of Tanewal, a shattered city also called the Red Ruin, are doubtless motivated by the purest of academic motives.

Each duchy is named for its city and is further divided into parcels of land known as baronies, a further economic unit under the control of a favoured individual who has been granted the title of Baron by the duke. The barons act under the instruction of the duchy's bureaucracy but are responsible, in principle, only to the duke. Some barons have challenged the function of the bureaucracy, attempting to accrue more power but have quickly found themselves ostracised as a result: loyalty to the duke means loyalty to the bureaucracy also and to do as they are told. Those who rebel – and there have been some – have met with disaster and death.

Seshnela falls also under scrutiny of a Provincial Governor, as do all other provinces of the empire. The dukes, despite their position as imperial advisers, are responsible directly only for their own duchies. In charge of Seshnela as a province is the Provincial Governor who, in 908, is Arch Duke Cordurain Herenstaal the Bright who is the commander in chief of the 10 Rightness Divisions stationed throughout Seshnela and a highly decorated veteran of many campaigns and crusades. He is (rightly) known as Most Bright and Most Dangerous Soldier in the Whole of the World because his abilities as a politician and warrior are second to none. He could, if he wished, become emperor but that ambition seems to be redundant in Herenstaal's vocabulary. He controls the high politics of Seshnela and is respected and feared by the many dukes. He likes things this way. He allows the dukes enough power to satisfy their personal demands and whims and treats all with due respect; however he has his favourites and, whatever Herenstaal says goes. Only he has the true ear of Emperor Ilotos and thus the dukes stay on the right side of him, working to Herenstaal's agenda and competing with it only at their own cost.

### Seshnelan Culture

As the originators of Jrusteli stock Seshnelans consider themselves the archetype for good, Solace-seeking Malkioni. Jrustela may have become the imperial seat but pure-bred Seshnelans are still the yardstick by which the Middle Sea Empire's culture should be measured.

Seshnelans are an old and experienced people. They were the people amongst whom Malkion and Hrestol walked in the Dawn Age and the ones who resisted Arkat's Stygian Empire. Their mainland position places them in the midst of the complex politics and cultural crucible of Genertela and they believe they possess an innate understanding of how Things Work. They are the ones who set styles and trends; they are the ones who govern the rate of social change and their numerical superiority defines them as the true heart of the empire.



This ought to translate into arrogance but that is not necessarily the Seshnelan way. True, the Ducal Wars originated in and around Seshnela and were the result of a certain profound arrogance but, by and large, Seshnelans are simply confident in their place in history. They can boast more saints and heroes than the populace of Jrustela and they can boast greater exposure to world-shaking events than the imperial seat could ever muster. The true God Learners, then, are Seshnelans. Jrustelan natives are a reflection of the real thing and as important in their own, limited way, but the real character of the Middle Sea Empire is born of Seshnelan and will, in all likelihood, die with it.

### Duchies and Cities of Seshnela

As each duchy is named for a city and centres upon it, describing Seshnela is best done through its city structure.

#### Frowal

Capital of Seshnela, Frowal sends soaring spires of bizarre God Learner architecture high into its sky. Its sunsets are brighter and more colourful than anywhere else in the world. No blue is deeper than that of its fragrant summer skies. Ill weather

### How to Recognise a Seshnelan

Listen for these kinds of phrases in conversation:


*'Of course, we remember when...'*

*'Is that the fashion in Jrustela at the moment? That's so last season...'*

*'My ancestors fought against the Stygian Empire; your's merely heard about it...'*

*'I come from Frowal. So did every generation of my family going back to when Malkion was knee-high...'*

scarcely troubles its shores. This is a land touched by Malkion and thought to be where the Citadel of Thought was built in the halcyon days of Danmalastan. This makes Frowal the centre of many pilgrimages and many myths.



It also makes it the seat of the Imperial Palace, which sits on a hillside overlooking the city, folding out in two sections resembling the Abiding Book. Ilotos, when in Seshnela, resides here, attended by his massive entourage and travelling court of advisers and sycophants. It becomes the capital of the Empire whenever his standard flies from the tallest of the six spires and, at this time, the sky is bluer, the sun deeper and the sunsets more stunning than at any other time. The palace is occupied year-round, of course; traditions dictate that the Imperial Palace is kept functional and ready for a visit by the Emperor at all times. Its staff, under the keen and watchful eye of Seneschal Obusteryn Guildeye, keep it that way, treating Obusteryn almost as the emperor when Ilotos is not in attendance.

On certain occasions the Provincial Governor can requisition the Imperial Palace for reasons of state but Herenstaal is careful not to do so too readily. Many think he has designs on the Imperial Throne and he has no wish to encourage such fantasies. He therefore reserves his access to the palace only when necessary to entertain or convene the strength of the Rightness Army, when the Ministry of the Army is also in attendance to convey orders to the Rightness Divisions.

In its shadow is the palace of the Provincial Governor, Herenstaal the Bright. This is where Seshnela's real business is conducted and each duchy sends emissaries to Herenstaal's palace to continually provide information on what is happening in the duchies, conduct news and suggestions, and show continued loyalty to the emperor whenever he is absent from Seshnela. The Sixth Division of Malkion, the Rightness Division Herenstaal commands in his capacity as Arch Duke Cordurain of the Rightness Army, is garrisoned at the palace and are foremost of the troops stationed in Seshnela in terms of capability and reputation. The Sixth has seen action against all the empire's enemies, from barbarians through to the dragons, and under Herenstaal it has achieved all its current glory – even though its reputation was considerable before Herenstaal took command of it.

The city of Forwal is one of architectural elegance. Four wide avenues lead to the Square of Saints, a massive paved public area where the statues of the most venerated saints, carved from purple marble, gaze down on the frequent public occasions. Threading between the avenues are the many streets of the city, each adorned with cypress trees, carefully maintained floral displays and their own architectural marvels. The Heroes Street commemorates fallen warriors of the Rightness Army, each carved from the same purple marble as the saints of the square and each standing atop a plinth summarising, in Seshnegi, their deeds and braveries. The Merchants' Hall, a commanding building of pillars and archways is where the city's great market is held, traders from across the empire bringing their wares each Earth season.

But the true highlight is the Temple of the True Malkioni, a staggering complex of shrines, chapels and residences that dominates the western side of the city. This is the largest temple to Malkion and the saints of Malkionism outside Jrustela and it functions as a city within a city, its high priest, Gloventius, representing the whole of the Seshnelan Malkioni. A dozen sorcery orders function within the temple complex, each with its own administration, bureaucracy, staff and sorcerers.

For all its elegance the city and its buildings as they currently stand are relatively new. Much of Frowal was razed in 676 when Hymat, the duke of the city, assembled the Damned Regalia and proclaimed himself King of Seshnela. The Damned Regalia consisted of a crown, sceptre, cloak and spear, all made of iron from the Iron Mountain of Arolanit and confusingly labelled the Regalia of Peace. Whoever carried the regalia was filled with delusions of grandeur and forced into acts of grand violence in a vain attempt to achieve personal glory. When Hymat seized the regalia and proclaimed himself king the Duke of Tanisor raised an army of Malkionist mercenaries and assaulted Frowal, killing the so-called king and his corrupt advisers, and burning much of the city to the ground. What now stands is less than 300 years old and designed to assert the power of Malkion and the church – not individual kings. Ironically Hymat was not the first to use the Damned Regalia to achieve personal power but he was the last. The Regalia are now interred in vaults beneath the Imperial Palace and ward protected so no individual can make use of them.

### **Arkwal**

Built around a black fortress established by Arkat during his war of liberation against Gbaji, Arkwal is a garrison city, home to the First and Third Rightness Divisions. During the Stygian dominance of Seshnela it served as a capital and was ruined during the Jrusteli liberation. Since then it has been reconstructed as a fully operational garrison.

Almost everything in Arkwal is there to support the army. Smithies specialise in armour and weapon manufacture and repair; grand houses are the billets for ranking officers and their advisers; entire streets of houses are owned by the Divisions and house the families of serving soldiers. The city operates efficiently and to military lines. There is no street trouble and the military orders of the Rightness Army are extremely well represented with shrines to the martial saints and training academies attached to each order's premises. Members of the Rightness Divisions live in those areas where their cult is represented and disperse to their appropriate garrison bases for daily duties before returning in the evening for further training and prayer.

Mercenaries flock to Arkwal seeking places in the Empire's various foreign legions. The city serves as a gathering place for war bands in need of fresh blood and as a siphoning point for

those sections of the army requiring mercenaries and other agents-for-hire. The city boasts several recruiting centres for mercenaries, known as Sword Houses, which are administered by the various martial orders. Each martial order usually operates at least one Sword House.

#### Requirements for Sword House Recruitment

- Name of the individual or lead individual if representing a group.
- A named contact within the Rightness Army or a martial order, how will act as reference and/or sponsor.
- Details of previous engagements for an order or the Rightness Army.
- Minimum level of daily payment deemed acceptable.
- Personal assessment of the individual's or group's skills and competencies, including magic known.
- God(s) worshipped and cult ranks for all applicants.

Despite being a Malkionist city Arkwal's Sword Houses will consider applications from any culture or religion: even Dragonspeaker mercenaries have been hired from time-to-time. Once lodged an application is checked, verified and carefully considered. Then, if deemed acceptable, word is conveyed to the applicant and a Permission to Solicit certificate is granted. This allows the individual or group to undertake paid work of a martial nature for anyone seeking such agents. The Sword House will even match a patron with the best individuals or group for the needs of the job.

#### Damolsten

The city is named for its founder, a First Age hero, Damol, a tragic man who was murdered by his own queen. It is home to the Order of Damolsten, warrior-knights who form an elite cadre of the Rightness Army and see themselves as Seshnela's chosen military protectors.

The family of Damolsten was a powerful, First Age Seshnelan family loyal to Malkion. In 150, Anilla, a powerful priestess of Seshna, claimed the right to rule as the regent priestesses of old had ruled. She had herself crowned as Queen by a knight and blessed by a wizard of Malkion. She married into the powerful Damolsten family to maintain their support. Her husband died and she swiftly married another, who died too. She was discovered to be sacrificing them to Seshna and everyone turned against her. She took refuge in her goddess' temple but was slain by Malkioni knights and wizards. Afterwards the worship of Seshna was constrained to repress its more savage portions.

Those vengeful knights and wizards undertook a vow to protect Seshnela from further corruption and became the Order of Damolsten: Seshnegi Warrior Priests who protect the land in the name of Malkion, the Emperor and the Damolsten dynasty, which still has descendents throughout the realm.

The defeat of Anilla exposed the complacency of many nobles in Seshnela and the ease with which they had been duped. Moranvel of the Damolsten family, the knight who had killed the priestess, undertook the Irensavalic Light HeroQuest to gain insight to protect against further vulnerability. He emerged with the Runes of Truth and Law, and this attracted many other, similarly inclined, sorcerers and knights, to join his fledgling order.

For many years the Order of Damolsten was small and worked alone, although always within sight of the Invisible God. When the Rightness Crusade came upon Seshnela, it fought against it but Saint Volanc proved to the order that he had kinship with the Damolstens and worked to save Seshnela, not to destroy it. The order realised then that the word of Malkion had to come through a single source and joined the Rightness Crusade, convincing Seshnela's rulers that the True Malkioni Church should be welcomed, not repelled.

In 908 the city is ruled by the Knight-Duke of Damolsten, who is also the head of the Order. Knight-Duke Korevas cleaves to the codes of chivalry all knights of Malkion follow and is much-loved by his people. His abode is the fabled Hanging Tower, a gravity-defying edifice that descends from above, its foundations locked into the sky and descends to the ground where its inverted spire hovers a few inches above the ground. Entrance to the tower is by claiming its 400 stairs, which wind around the outside of the building and cause the climber no fatigue to negotiate. At the summit, where the wide base locks with the sky, are the marvellous Hanging Gardens the centrepiece of which is Damolsten's Tree, a great, spreading oak that grew when the ashes of the hero were spread across the foundations. The gardens surrounding it are formal and beautiful, with restful glades, ornamental ponds and statues to the heroes of the Order made from shining white stone. Close to the tree is the staircase that descends into the tower and leads to all the important rooms and chambers of the Knight-Duke and his family.

Around the Hanging Tower the city is arranged in a series of concentric circles, very much in the style of cities such as Northpoint in Loskalm. All the buildings are of the same white stone of the Hanging Tower and built by mostali who were once the occupiers of the whole region where Damolsten now stands. The hero Damol came to the mostali in the First Age and helped rid them of a troublesome troll presence, the Ineffable One, in return for rights to settlement. The dwarfs refused and Damol, having captured the treasure that gave the Ineffable One power over the mostali, used the Unbendable Staff to secure their agreement but sapping their wills irrevocably. The mostali halls remain, far beneath the streets of Damolsten and the dwarfs who live there are now incapable of independent thought and work. Their sole duty is to maintain the city above and they labour under the impression that



the Hanging Tower (which they themselves constructed as a weapon to be used against the Ineffable One) is a functional part of the World Machine.

The Order of Damolsten can call upon the mostali to serve it through Knight Duke Korevas but has not done so for many years. The Unbendable Staff of Damolsten is held in the Hanging Tower's vaults, pointing downwards towards the mostali halls and the Knight Duke can command the dwarfs simply by grasping the staff and thinking his commands. To date there has been no reason to call upon the mostali to act with the Order of Damolsten – although the dwarfs seem to know instinctively when repairs to the city are needed and effect them immediately, efficiently and without entering into any discourse with the city's residents.

Trolls remember the defeat of the Ineffable One and would destroy Damolsten if they could. So far other agendas have occupied them and to raze Damolsten would be to incur the wrath of the Rightness Army – but it can only be a matter of time before the uz get around the taking their desired revenge.

### **Estan**

Sacked during the struggle against the Stygian Empire and left as a ruined shell, Estan has been rebuilt and invigorated in the past century due to the efforts of the Jherutain Clan, the extended family who once ruled the city in the age of the Regent Kings and longs to see those days return. The key to reinvigorating Estan was to build a university there to cater to the insatiable appetite for knowledge and discovery all Jrusteli share. So it was that the Grand Jherutain College of Illuminated Orthodoxy was established in 819 and has grown, year on year, ever since.

The college specialises in sorcerous experimentation and grimoire development. Its Codex Principia is a God Learner Revealer group dedicated to codifying the nature and content of every grimoire in existence across the empire and to develop new spells that will fit into those grimoires, selling the results directly to the orders who own the original. The Codex Principia therefore consists of the two arms: the Adventurous Guild of Metaphysical Researchers – those who devise new spells; and the Glimmering Order of Sorcerer-Merchants – those who sell them. Half the Grand Jherutain College is given the the Codex Principia and its two hyperactive arms whilst the rest of the college is given over to the more mundane pursuits of education in all manner of faculties (history, language, culture, philosophy, mathematics, geography and mythic interpretation). Its alumni include Bruyart Openwing of the Openwing Revealers in Dangk and the cynical and scheming Lord Adderblack, a noted sorcerer now exiled to eastern Ralios for the general safety of the whole empire.

The Codex Principia, though, dominate, and is wildly indulged by the Jherutain Clan, which has grown even richer

through taking a 15% cut of all spell and grimoire sales. It works in roughly the following way:

- The Adventurous Guild of Metaphysical Researchers study every grimoire and spot potential spell opportunities – either the improvement of existing spells or holes that can be filled by new ones.
- Experiments into spell improvement or creation take place, based on detailed Abiding Book research and the compatibility of other grimoires.
- Spells are tested, results noted, refinements suggested and further testing taking place.
- Once a spell has been taken as far as it can possibly go, a 'sample' is prepared and handed to the Glimmering Order of Sorcerer-Merchants who then send a travelling representative to respective order where a sale is attempted.
- If the sale is successful a downpayment is made, a contract agreed, signed and then the full formula for the spell is handed to the order for inclusion in their grimoire. The final payment is made and a great celebration is held to mark another satisfied customer.

The Codex Principia has recently begun to diversify into bespoke grimoire preparation – a hitherto unexploited market. All sorcerers crave an edge but often lack the resources to conduct the research or are constrained by their order's rules and nature to undertake the work personally. For a suitable fee the Principia Codex follows this procedure:

- A member of the Glimmering Order of Sorcerer-Merchants visits the sorcerer and notes the requirements. A set of costs is prepared based on research and development, level of risk and availability of components.
- The requirements are handed to the Adventurous Guild of Metaphysical Researchers who develop, tinker with or steal the spells listed in the requirement.
- The grimoire is prepared in full by a dedicated scriptorate team and finished in a variety of attractive bindings ranging from human skin to cleansed broo hide (and in a wide variety of colours and textures). Further personalisation, such as gold-embossed initials, is available at extra cost.
- The finished product is presented back to the sorcerer with a flourish and a hefty bill and the salesman departs, having extracted a liability waver and secrecy affidavit before handing-over the tome.

This bespoke grimoire market is considered taboo by the True Malkioni Church but as one may have gathered by now, the Codex Principia is unshackled by such nuisances

as scruples. The Jherutain Clan turns a handsome profit and the various disclaimers, liability waivers and secrecy contracts suitably distance the Codex Principia from any wrongdoing. Everyone wins. At least, in theory. Such unfettered magical experimentation outside of the strict rules (there for safety reasons) found in the Abiding Book has led to some embarrassing accidents originating with the Codex Principia. In 904, the year when bespoke grimoire preparation began, a deceptively simple spell intended to turn rain into the finest quality wine resulted in an intermittent rain of squid and octopi that still persists. The Adventurous Guild of Metaphysical Researchers have failed miserably to stem the flow of these sea creatures despite investing much time in counter-magic research and wards. But, pragmatic to the last, the Codex has managed to profit from the accident: sales of squid and octopus, every Storm Season, explode and, by sheer good luck, the seafood the Codex sells is of *astoundingly* high quality (much to the chagrin of Seshnela's fishing community).

Every cloud does, indeed, have a silver lining.

Elsewhere Estan is a monument to its modernising ducal family, the Jherutains. Statues of various Jherutain nobles line the streets and each street is named for a noted family member. The ducal palace, a globular affair built close to the Jherutain Memorial Malkion Glory Temple, glitters in the sunlight, its roofs gilded with silver and polished bronze. The Jherutains are scheming, opportunistic but, also, strangely patriotic. Their support for the Provincial Governor is vocal and demonstrable and Duke Loord Jherutain is a member of the Provincial Governor's inside council – not, as Duke Loord supposes, because his advice is warranted and invaluable but because the governor prefers to keep such idiots close at hand, all the better to see what they are doing and take action where necessary.

### **Genertsket**

The great city of Genertsket is the wealthiest port of Seshnela, which makes it extraordinarily rich. It is ruled over by the Duchess Marcetus, a liberal noble who advocates restraint in all things rather than indulging in the excesses for which the God Learners are known and loathed. Marcetus has flatly refused to allow a garrison of the Rightness Army in Genertsket, asserting that a military presence detracts from the city's true glory which is sea trade and mercantile endeavour. Temples are low-key in Genertsket, lacking the grandeur of the edifices in Frowal and elsewhere but are, nonetheless, as devout a set of Malkioni institutions as one might find anywhere.

Genertsket forms the major trading port with Jrustela and Seshnela meaning cargos of every type come through its harbour. Local levies are reasonable, which attracts trade and Duchess Marcetus has put in place an honest port bureaucracy to ensure free and fair trade within the city. This places her at

odds with the Provincial Governor and the emperor, both of whom believe that Genertsket's riches should be more readily exploited but Marcetus has refused to budge on this matter: her forefathers were a corrupt bunch of sycophants who almost drove Genertsket into the ocean with their personal excesses and she is determined not to have history repeat itself. Her one token to the emperor's desires is to allow an Imperial Naval fleet to station itself in the secondary harbour of the city which was built by the Waertagi during the First Age. Indeed, Waertagi are still welcome in Genertsket and the green-skinned seafarers are given leave to roam in the city's prosperous streets and markets, much to the chagrin of more dogged, traditional God Learner types.

Her advisors are desperate for the duchess to marry again. Her husband died young, the result of a painful illness contracted on his own foray into HeroQuesting and she spent a decade in mourning. It was this event that led to her liberal outlook believing that the rampant desires and thirsting for knowledge common to Jrusteli led to his downfall and will also, eventually, lead to the downfall of the empire. This is not something Marcetus wishes to see happen of course; she might be liberal but is still loyal: she is, however, committed to avoiding the follies of her ancestors and, to this extent, counselled the emperor against entering into the Ducal Wars with the other Seshnelans and against Arolanit. Were it not for her charm and talents as a politician she would have been marked as a rebel sympathiser. Still, the emperor has not forgotten her stance and, if Genertsket were not so prosperous, sending back the highest tribute of any province, more direct action would have been taken.

Adventurers find many reasons to come to Genertsket. Small enclaves of Orlanthi and Solar worshippers are found in certain quarters of the city, although Wyrmfriends and not tolerated (they exist but keep their presence and activities quiet). The worship of foreign gods is not encouraged but neither is it illegal. This makes Genertsket attractive to Issaries merchants and Dara Happan trade Associations. Those of note and rank are even granted audience with Duchess Marcetus at her seasonal 'tribune ball' where she welcomes the rich and influential of the city to learn what is happening in an informal and convivial atmosphere. Both the Provincial Governor and the emperor send their own emissary spies to try to gain insight into Marcetus' agenda but Duchess Marcetus operates her own ring of spy catchers who soon spot interlopers and have them politely, but firmly, escorted off the premises.

### **Hrestolket**

This city is a vibrant settlement celebrating free thinking and sorcerous innovation. It is, as its name suggests, dedicated to Saint Hrestol and thus it is widely viewed as Heresy City. Hrestolic teachings are widespread in the city and this makes

it attractive to Loskalmi who, for one reason or another, have come south into the God Learner heartland.

The main temple is the grand Hrestol Temple, a collection of spires, supported by flying buttresses, which cluster in the very centre of Hrestolket. The Order of Saint Hrestol is the largest Hrestolic order outside of Loskalm and within the temple's walls much philosophical debate, rivalling the learned output of Sog City, takes place here, along with innovative sorcery experimentation that is less dangerous and more in keeping with the Abiding Book's teachings than in, say, Estan.

The temple is home to many relics of the Saint Prophet and his mother, Saint Xemela. In its cavernous vaults its holds, amongst other treasures:

- Hrestol's swaddling cloth.
- Hrestol's first wooden sword.
- Hrestol's sandals and gourd.
- Xemela's wedding dress.
- Xemela's garter.
- Xemela's first healing kit.

These relics are kept together in the Ark of the Prophet, a massive gold, silver and jet box protected by substantial sorcery. Once a year, on the anniversary of Hrestol's birth, the Ark of the Prophet is paraded through the street of Hrestolket attended by the jubilant priests of the order and many Seshnelan and Loskalmi Hrestol pilgrims who seek to touch the Ark and experience a miracle. Miracles seem to cling to the Ark like limpets to a ship's hull and some of the more notable miracles are:

- The spontaneous regrowth of a limbless warrior's legs.
- The birth of octuplets to the virginal daughter of a mercantile family.
- The immediate conversion of a dour Malkionist fanatic who sought to damn Hrestol but instead praised him.
- Numerous small acts of healing.
- The mass dance that gripped the whole of the city compelling all to enter into a city-wide jig that lasted for a day and a night.

Hrestolket is under the benevolent rule of Duke Nenyerin, obviously a devout Hrestoli but also a man of keen intellect and considerable political acumen who, despite controlling Heresy City, managed to remain free of the Ducal Wars and even demonstrated to the emperor that the support of Saint Hrestol could aid in subjugating the rebellious dukes. For this reason the emperor has left Duke Nenyerin alone and kept out of the frequent debates in the True Malkioni Church that attempt to determine if Hrestolket should be destroyed. All these debates end the same way: in confusion and turmoil as the priests find they cannot reach agreement on the matter.

It helps, of course, that every single debate has been timed to take place at the same time that the Ark of the Prophet is being paraded about the city and so, perhaps, Hrestol's greatest miracles are worked at a distance and in the most unlikely ways.

### **Moloswal**

The dazzling city of Moloswal is home to the pale duke Langila. An ancient city, founded by the Brithini, it stands on the remnants of an even more ancient settlement belonging to the Pendali hsunchen. The city is small but rich – both magically and commercially. Overlooking the Tanier River the walled city resembles a crown of jade, bright marble and yellow stone that mimics the glitter of gold when the Fire season sun strikes it at midday.

Legend has it that the Pendali were driven out of their settlement by the vampire lords who worshipped Vivamort and the city was raised overnight following an immense blood-sacrifice as a gift to the vampire lords' bravery. Certainly Arkat fought – and defeated – a vampire army in the Tanisor region but they were not residents of Moloswal and the glittering city has constantly disavowed any connection with this spurious myth, which is blamed on Arkat's Stygian regime in a bid to discredit the brave warrior-dukes of Moloswal.

Regrettably legends have a habit of sticking in the consciousness and Moloswal has struggled to shed the rumours that vampires and Vivamort worshippers hide in the subterranean lairs beneath the city's peaceful streets. Duke Langila, the Pale Duke, is the focus of frequent speculation owing to the deathly whiteness of both his skin and hair. He counters accusations of vampirism by being the emperor's staunchest supporter and a dedicated True Malkionist who will, in time, be raised to sainthood. Every youth of Moloswal must enlist in the Rightness Army and the city is renowned for its capacity to produce fine warriors who find their way into the elite regiments of the army. Langila further counters rumours of his undeath by sponsoring hunts against Chaos and he has sent several units of the Moloswal Ducal Guard into regions where Chaos accretes, such as Dorastor, to fight and defeat the festering canker of entropy.

### **Neleswal**

Neleswal is a thriving port and known as the City of Dancers. Its Duke, Nelos V, encourages cultural expression, attracting the world's best actors and dancers to perform at lavish masques held at his estates, which form an arc to the north of the city. Within the city, several parks are dedicated to performing arts such as Jugglers' Park, Mimes' Park, Singers' Park and so on. Every public space is filled with entertainers, most performing for free but none complaining when a few coppers or a silver are tossed into the upturned clay mug or strategically positioned hat.



The city's saint is Saint Alort the Performer; a woman renowned for her skill across many arts. She was martyred by the Brithini during the First Age when a performance she made for the Talars met with severe disapproval. The legend has it that Saint Alort's performance was deemed heretical in the eyes of the Invisible God because it challenged city Brithini concepts regarding symmetry and motion. Saint Alort was crucified and a bizarre Holar dance performed around her dying body whilst she was forced to sing her own death dirge. Consequently the city of Neleswal has no liking for the Brithini and even to utter the name Zzabur is considered an offence to Saint Alort's memory.

Several colleges dedicated to the performing arts are found here in Neleswal, including the High College of Sacred Dance, which teaches many dances from many cultures, inside and

outside of Malkionism; and Saint Alort's Seminary where poetry, song and acting are taught to the eager hopefuls of the Jrusteli wealthy who seek a career as entertainers. Each year the city stages the Alort's Idol contest in which all performers are invited to perform to a panel of critical judges and are then subject to a public vote, which determines who goes through to the next round. The winner of the contest is given their own extravaganza held at the Saint Alort's Seminary amphitheatre and may subsequently be granted funds from Duke Nelos's own purse to tour their production throughout the empire. The 907 winner, a rotund singer from Jrustela called Lerina Lues astounded the judges with her purity of voice and incredible vocal range (five octaves) despite having all the grace and bearing of an enraged walktapus. Her career since has been nothing less than stratospheric with the homely woman touring the empire non-stop for a whole year and performing before an astonished Emperor Ilotos.


Pilgrims flock to Neleswal's imposing True Malkioni temple, where ornate reliquaries display the bones of the city's founders and the skull of beloved Saint Alort. The bones are displayed in caskets of rose-coloured crystal and they line the nave of the temple where pilgrims and other faithful can gaze upon them without obstacle. During Sacred Time the skull of Saint Alort emits a distant yet pure music – the song she performed for the Brithini before her execution – and the temple is always packed with people who come to hear her tortured performance from beyond the grave.

The port is a busy place that transports little in the way of goods but much in the way of passengers, especially those coming to the city to perform. The Singing Ships, as they are known, dock and depart daily, extruding small armies of artists and entertainers eager to bask in the city's cultural atmosphere and pay their respects to blessed Saint Alort.

### Orphalsket

The chief port on the mouth of the Irier River, Orphalsket boasts three marketplaces, the most fabulous of which, the Banquet of the Gods, is accessible only by dispensation of the Emperor. There the dukes and nobles of Seshnela stroll from booth-to-booth, dining on incredible magical foodstuffs. Some are merely augmented by culinary Sorcery but others are the spoils of Other Side raids or made with recipes liberated from various heathen hearth gods.

The ruler of the city, Duke Yesmar, is a noted gourmand and cook but spoiled with a filthy temper and even filthier vocabulary. He rules here through the dispensation of Emperor Ilotos and as once the chef to the Imperial Court, producing such wonderful dishes that Ilotos's predecessor saw fit to accord him with a noble title. Yesmar was hardly born to it; one can remove the man from the slums but not the slums from the man and despite the honours heaped upon



him Yesmar's ways have never changed. As an avid supporter of the emperor during the Ducal Wars it was inevitable that rulership of Orphalsket would be granted to him and there is no doubting that Yesmar has presided over the Banquet of the Gods with the utmost efficiency. Yesmar employs a private arm of the Order of Otherworld Explorers to bring back Otherworld delicacies and he pays handsomely for their endeavours. He also employs teams of field-researchers, known as the Soo-Chefs, to scour Glorantha looking for more magical and mundane delicacies to grace the booths and tables of the Banquet of the Gods. One such team is preparing to venture to distant Pavis where it is said that the lord of the city, an EWF demigod, feeds his entire populace on foodstuffs brought from the Otherworld. This team of Soo-Chefs are charged with both acquiring samples and uncovering the magic behind the myths that allow a constant stream of magical food to reach the mouths of the great unwashed (as the residents of Pavis must surely be).

The other two market places are more mundane in nature. The Floating Market, on one of the banks of the Irier River, consists of hundreds of boats and barges selling fresh and prepared foods of excellent quality. Occasionally left-overs from the Banquet of the Gods find their way down to the Floating Market and these delicacies have a tendency to cause riots as gourmands denied access to the banquet race to be the first to dine on what the invited nobles have discarded. Several gluttons have drowned in their bids to gorge on the delicacies as have several hapless barge owners who chanced to come into possession of the Otherworld foodstuffs and had their vessels sunk or capsized. The eager gourmands who cause these riots watch the Floating Market carefully around the time of the banquet, waiting for their chance to pounce. The chaos pleases and delights Duke Yesmar considerably and it is believed that he himself co-ordinates the filtering of leftovers down to the Floating Market, encouraging the nobles who have enjoyed the banquet to watch the food riots from the balconies overlooking the river mouth.

The third market, Founders Market, specialises in fine cloth and tailoring with the best tailors and seamstresses from Seshnela coming here to trade their wares. The very best formal clothing in the empire is to be found at these stalls and booths with extortionate prices being charged for even the flimsiest garments. Founders Market sets trends in styles and fashions that sweep through Seshnela and down to Jrustela making Orphalsket *the* place to both eat and dress well (or drown in fashionable style).

#### **Pasos**

The southern coastal port of Pasis is home to many religious orders following obscure Malkioni saints. It eschews the formal True Malkioni faith and focuses on little known, unsung martyrs and minor saints who would be ignored elsewhere.

The 'Orders of the Little Saints', as they are called, are known for their austerity and resistance to the primacy of the God Learner sorcerers, placing them at direct odds with the True Malkioni church. The church has sent a constant stream of emissaries to command Duke Ilondin to bring the Orders of the Little Saints into line and establish, at the very least, a modest temple to Malkion. Ilondin agrees, in principle, but owes his position and wealth to the generous donations the orders make to the ducal coffers each year. Ilondin is an impatient man torn between duty to the True Church and duty to the Little Saints; his life is a litany of mollification of the various orders and sects who continually resist the will of the True Malkioni church and plough their own ecumenical furrows. The most influential and troublesome is the monk Oriaba, a dedicant of Saint Lusk (he who once carried Hrestol's gourd and sandals for a brief time). Oriaba believes in Solace and Joy through personal pain and suffering and has maintained an uncomfortable squatting position ever since the days of his youth. He is carried to meetings on a strange thorny chair that must be carried gently over bumps and ruts to prevent painful spasms to unmentionable regions.

Oriaba believes the God Learners, by ignoring the Little Saints, have lost Malkion's trust. He quotes prodigiously from the Abiding Book referring to those cantos describing how the true inheritors of Solace and Joy are those who take small steps and suffer silently: Oriaba is forced to do the former but frequently fails in the latter, owing to the odd squatting position his body is fixed into adopting. He carries much weight with the many other orders who see him as on his own way to saintliness as a reward for his persistence and belief in self-agonny as a necessary adjunct of Invisible God worship,

#### **Segurane**

A river port dominated by the immense and lonely fortress of Segurane, which was a key defensive outpost against the Stygian Empire. It is occupied now by the Rightness Army and its many levels are dedicated to each of the military orders comprising the Middle Sea Empire's fighting force. Segurane is also the home of the region's duke, the warlike Bardan's Bookman, Duke Kereskos. Kereskos is descended from a bloodline that stood firm against the Stygians and were the original builders of the fortress that is his home. A commander of a Rightness Division in his middle years, Kereskos is old now but no less intimidating. He is the proud owner of a suit of iron armour, which lends him the soubriquet Kereskos the Grey, a trophy from a successful HeroQuest to liberate imprisoned saints from their Stygian tormentors. Kereskos loathes Ilotos but loves the Middle Sea Empire and he continually petitions the emperor to invade Dragon Pass and bring the Wyrms-Lovers to their scaly knees. He sponsors anyone prepared to launch attacks against the EWF, be they soldiers of the Rightness Army or mercenary bands seeking glory and money. He loves trophies, particularly dragonewt

hides and he is the proud owner of a full skin of a tailed priest, which he has had mounted on an armature that graces the grand vestibule of Fortress Segurane.

Several stirring poems celebrate its virtues as a point of defence against the Stygian Empire.

The city below Segurane is famed for its knowledge merchants; a mixture of Jrusteli Revealer Groups, renegade Lhankor Mhy priests and other assorted scholars. They tend the Eternal Archive, which contains precious scrolls and texts looted by Kereskos the Grey and others during the Return to Rightness Crusades. Knowledge is sold at a price, with that price being determined by skilled negotiation with the knowledge merchants' representatives. Much of the accuracy of what the knowledge merchants trade is disputable but what it lacks in accuracy it compensates for in imagination. Treasure maps, myth maps, redundant grimoires and other sources of information are all available from the knowledge merchants, with prices beginning at 100 Silvers for a basic treasure map and reaching tens of thousands for verified sources of myth and myth diagrams. Head of the knowledge merchants is Ropustus No Thumbs, a grizzled, ex-Otherworld Explorer

who lost his opposable digits in a bizarre myth-breaking accident. He has had his thumbs replaced with articulated bronze replicas but he must rely on his fastidious Thumb Servant, Gulch, to grip things on his behalf. Ropustus defends the Eternal Archive and his merchants' reputation with unparalleled zeal: those who choose to complain about the quality of knowledge bought from his knowledge merchants have been known to meet with 'incidents' – usually painful in nature but sometimes focused on the smearing of previously unbesmirchable reputations. One of the more interesting (and little known) facets of the Eternal Archive is the amount of scandal and gossip the knowledge merchants have collected about many of the movers and shakers of the Middle Sea Empire. If one needs a reputation sullied or to ensure that scandalous mud sticks, the knowledge merchants can engineer it (for a price, of course).

## FRONELA

In the Dawn Age, the land that came to be known as Fronela was in turmoil. Barbarians ruled from the forests of Winterwood and Rathorela, through the Janube Valley and down to the Nidan Mountains. The land was in a constant



flux of war and murder, with hundreds of pagan gods driving their tribes to acts of mindless slaughter. Life was short; true belief was lacking. Civilisation? None that could be discerned. Fronela was a land of perpetual war. Pockets of civility existed; Agria in the north, Sog City at the mouth of the Janube but elsewhere it was turmoil.

Things changed when Hrestol, a prince of the Seshneg, experienced the revelations of the Invisible God and decided to unite the western lands through union with the Invisible God. Hrestol's task was to teach Solace in Glory to the heathen mass and he undertook several great pilgrimages and undergoing further revelations along the way. His teachings invigorated the stale, static Malkionist cults scattered in the midst of the pagan gods and they began to see order emerging from the disruption. As Hrestol preached, he was accepted as the Prince, the Judge and the Prophet. His ideas spread; idealism replaced stagnation; the word of the Invisible God challenged and replaced the pagan gods, who faltered and died. Hrestol's ideas of chivalry and unswerving devotion to the Law of the Invisible God replaced the chaos of unchecked war. Kingdoms coalesced and found direction; logic through worship replaced undirected political ambition. Steadily, Fronela became civilised.

Following Hrestol's martyrdom in Sog City, Hrestolism as a religion took hold across Fronela. The kingdom of Akem is formed in the south of Fronela, arising from fragmented Junora and assimilating small kingdoms around the Ozur Bay. Akem could have become the prevailing nation across Fronela, uniting all under its banner and, for 265 years, it was a powerful seat of Malkionist and Hrestolic belief. However, sorcerous experiments open the Gate of Banir in Akem, which allowed Gbaji to enter the kingdom and, for almost two centuries, his agents worked tirelessly to establish Gbaji as the challenger to order and the Invisible God. Gbajists turned Akem's benevolent rule into a tyrannical power intent on subjugation along the Janube. Heroes working from outside and inside Akem, such as Varganthar and Talor, eventually closed the Gate of Banir and defeated the Gbajists but at a terrible price: Akem ceased to exist as a kingdom and was absorbed into the relatively new kingdom of Loskalm.

Loskalm represented an alliance of small states who opposed the tyranny of Akem. As others joined its cause, its territories increased, coming to include Junora and, following the closing of the Gate of Banir, Akem. Following Akem's demise, Loskalm ruled peacefully for 200 years but it eventually plunged into its own, introverted mess as the Wars of Succession threatened to wreck the kingdom completely. Noble families struggled for the throne of Loskalm and, even though, after 25 years of war, peace was reached, it was at considerable cost to Loskalm. One faction had accepted the support of the God Learners; this secured them power but also cemented God

Learner influence into western Fronela. Loskalm joined the Middle Sea Empire in 727, forcing some generals of the Wars of Succession out of Fronela completely. One such exile was Syranthir Forefront, a challenger for Loskalm's crown who was forced, by Jrusteli forces, across the Janube valley and out through Charg. Leaving Fronela forever, Syranthir eventually reached Peloria and formed Carmania, with himself as its first Shah.

The God Learners ruled for 140 years, launching campaigns along the Janube and replacing Hrestolism with the True Malkioni Church. At first, Jrusteli influence was benign but as the Middle Sea Empire consolidated its power across Glorantha and prevailed in battles against the EWF, its malevolence increased. Its rule in largely peaceful cities became heavy-handed and, eventually, Loskalm would take no more. Rebellion against the God Learners was swift and brutal. Taken by surprise, the God Learners struggled to retain control and, one-by-one, the Loskalmi provinces and Janube city states, rose up against the Middle Sea Empire. By 865 the God Learners had been forced to abandon most (but not all) of their Fronelan colonies, the empire unable and unwilling to fund protracted warfare across such a huge area.

Fronela returned to independence. Loskalm remains dominant in the west but the Janube city states, Golaros, Charg, Rathorela and Tastolar are free of the influence of empire. Hrestolism has returned but is forced to sit beside entrenched Malkionist beliefs. The God Learners have pockets of influence here and there but are largely isolated. In the east, the EWF has made inroads into Fronela but has been checked at the Janube city states by the intervention of the Carmanians – Syranthir's descendents – who have placed themselves as custodians of Old Beliefs, keen to ensure that Wyrmfriendism does not spread across Fronela in the same way the Jrusteli spread, virus-like, across Loskalm.

## Fronelan Timeline: Dawn Age to 920 ST

0 ST. The Dawn.

01 ST. Divine revelations are made to Prince Hrestol by the Invisible God through His form as Irensteval. Hrestol's enlightenment is the trigger for his pilgrimage across the lands of the west, bringing the path of Joy and Solace to the world.

02 ST. Hrestol establishes New Malkionism in Seshnela. King Froalor of Seshnela has a son with a pagan goddess named Seshna Likita. Their son, Ylream, supercedes Hrestol as heir to the Seshnegi throne and founds the Serpent Kings dynasty.

05 ST. Hrestol begins his journeys across Fronela preaching the word of the Invisible God. His teachings convert many

and the first Hrestoli churches are founded in the wake of his passing.

13 ST. Hrestol writes the Book of Joy and Solace in Sog City. In this tome he codifies Ideal Society and the Code of Chivalry.

21 ST. Churches to the Invisible God and Hrestol are established within atheistic Sog City, which angers the Brithini founders. Hrestol leaves rapidly and resumes his travels, focusing on Loskalm and north of the Janube. The Brithini declare him an Enemy of Logic.

33 ST. For unknown reasons Hrestol returns to Sog, is arrested by the Brithini, placed on trial and then martyred on Golotha Hill. Despite Brithini attempts to eradicate his memory, Golotha becomes a site of pilgrimage for thousands of Hrestoli and a cathedral is erected in his name, where the Ball, the Stick and the Spell are held as Hrestol's sacred relics. Hrestolism becomes the dominant faith across Fronela and the first Orders of Knighthood are formed.

94 ST. The Five Horrors are experienced for the first time, inflicting untold suffering across Loskalm and the Janube City States. The First Crusade is instigated to hunt them down and destroy them but ends in tragedy for all involved.

128 ST. The Count of Northpoint is ennobled as the Prince of Norans

375 ST. The Sunstop. Fronelan Wizards defeat a heathen god. Ikankos is entombed in Time and its people turned into ghosts by the Five Horrors.

385 ST. Fronela has become divided into many competing political and religious sects, all with differing interpretations of Hrestolism. Scattered holdings of Fronelan Monotheists begin the process of political integration, which will eventually result in the creation of the kingdom of Akem, in the lands now occupied by southern Loskalm and Junora.

390 ST. mostali destroy a troll centre at Oral-Ta in Tastolar. This marks the last substantial troll settlement and the mostali become ever more reclusive.

402–410 ST. The people of the Janube Valley unite into the Kingdom of Akem. Akem is based on pure Hrestoli teachings and operates through many orders of chivalry. However its will is poorly enforced and the Janubian settlements that do not pledge allegiance to Akem are cruelly subjugated. Varganthar the Unconquerable Knight pledges rebellion against this religiously-driven tyranny. The corruption is attributed to Gbaji worshippers intent on perverting the Hrestoli.

414 ST. Varganthar the Unconquerable Knight unites the barbarians of Fronela against Akem. Lopasar and other settlements along the Janube are destroyed.

418 ST. Sir Talor leads the defence of Akem against the horde of Varganthar. The two knights meet in battle but neither can defeat the other. When the two warriors rest, it is clear to them Gbaji is behind the tyranny Akem has inflicted and they unite to clear the Gbaji worshippers from Akem.

419 ST. Sir Talor begins his war against the Gbaji worshippers who infiltrated Akem.

420 ST. Sir Talor meets up with heroes from other lands. Great Oaths are sworn against the Gbaji Cult.

428 ST. Prince Fortiar of Northpoint marries Queen Karemla of Tarins uniting the Principalities and founding the Kingdom of Loskalm.

435 ST. Talor and his companions defeat close the Gate of Banir, which had allowed Gbaji to enter Akem. This cleanses Fronela of Gbaji's taint.

437 ST. The Kingdom of Akem sends emissaries to Brithos asking if the Empire of the Deceivers – the Gbajists – marked the Hero Wars. The Brithini refuse to answer the question.

475 ST. Agria and Tawars join the Kingdom of Loskalm.

525 ST. Easval joins the Kingdom of Loskalm.

534 ST. Jorri is conquered by the Kingdom of Loskalm

650 ST. The Kingdom of Akem dissolves and Pomons joins the Kingdom of Loskalm.

690 ST. The Kingdom of Loskalm begins campaigns and settlements in Junora.

695 ST. Kyrmon's Scroll is written in Sog City, containing a prophecy about the coming Hero Age but St Talor's question remains unanswered.

700 ST. Competing noble factions contest the overall rulership of Loskalm. The God Learners back one faction, leaving the faction led by Syranthir of Jorri to fight alone. The Loskalmi Wars of Succession begin.

719 ST. Syranthir of Jorri rebels against the God-learners in support of the Ecclesiarch. He is betrayed at Acrisan and forced out of Jorri. He and his army of 10,000 loyal supporters move east along the Janube, acting as mercenaries.



725 ST. The God Learners backed by the Jrusteli Confederation and the Nidan Decamony and led by Lord Arim Adalla, gain control of the Kingdom of Loskalm. The last claimant, Syranthir is forced to migrate to Peloria with his army.

727 ST. Loskalm joins the Jrusteli Confederation and becomes part of the Middle Sea Empire. Jrusteli flock to Fronela and quickly establish themselves as controlling interests across Loskalm and the Janube City States. Hrestolism is replaced by the True Malkioni Church and staunch Hrestolists are martyred. Some Jrusteli speak out against this practice, including Galastar, who is deemed a heretic and forced to flee to the east.

729 ST. Syranthir reaches Peloria and founds the Kingdom of Carmania.

735 ST. Galastar founds his City on the ruins of Lopasar.

750 ST. Galastar is murdered by the God Learners and his city comes under Jrusteli control, although his followers are allowed to remain.

758 ST. God Learners steal the bones of Galastar and prevent his saintly succession.

789 ST. The Empire of Land and Sea is created with King Svagad of Seshnela as Emperor.

790 ST. Under direction from Svagad, Loskalm begins a haphazard campaign of conquest up the Janube River.

826 ST. Loskalmi expansion reaches its greatest extent with the conquest of Eastpoint. This marks the beginning of a more aggressive Jrusteli approach, as heretics are rooted out by the Inquisition and burned. Even co-operative cities and regions are plunged into a nightmare of fear and betrayal.

852 ST. Riots in Morain are ruthlessly put down by the God Learners. The cruelty of the suppression sparks a rebellion against Jrustela.

855 ST. Loskalmi troops are withdrawn from the rest of Fronela in an attempt to restore order. The Soldiers refuse to attack their countrymen and join the rebellion. Soon the whole of Fronela rise in general revolt against the God Learners.

859 ST. The Confederation of Mortasor, formed to oppose God Learner tyranny in the east of Fronela, sacks Eastpoint's Low Quarter but fails to penetrate the City's sacred sites. The Confederation dissolves over arguments about shares of loot.

864 ST. A dragon is seen to fly across the length of the Janube valley. This is Isgangdrang. A variety of magics launched at it have no effect.

865 ST. The last strongholds of the God Learners in Fronela are cast down. Loskalm enters a period of internal debate, EWF incursion and religious reform.

866 ST. First Hunting and Waltzing Bands enter Charg and Golaros and begin the conversion to the draconic religions of Ernalda the Snake and Orlanth the Scale.

868 ST. Conversion of Fronelan Orlanthi is complete.

891 ST. Hrestolism is reinstated throughout Loskalm with the crowning of Gwainric the Good.

897 ST. Carmanian expeditionary forces enter Charg and uncover Hunting and Waltzing Band influences. A two-year campaign of liberation begins, which drives the EWF into the Janube river valley.

908 ST. Galastari knights rescue the bones of their Founder from Eastpoint sorcerers.

919 ST. Shah Nadar the Avenger of Carmania leads troops on an extensive raid of eastern Fronela, purging EWF and God Learner influence alike. He reaches as far as Eastpoint before the beginning of The Closing.

920 ST. The Closing radiates from Brithos, striking hundreds of merchant ships simultaneously and sending them out to sea. The few ships which escaped brought terrible news across the Neolimi sea. A Loskalmi Fleet confirmed that an invisible wall was slowly moving out from Brithos at 300 kilometres per year.

## SLONTOS

Slontos is a large and heavily populated region located south of the EWF heartland in Dragon Pass, east of Ralios and Seshnela, running the length of the southern Genertelan coastline, encompassing the mighty Coralinthor Bay. Between 600 and the present Slontos has been hard-fought for. The Middle Sea Empire has engaged in several major wars against the draconic Empire to the north and has struggled to quell the disruptive Orlanthi who dominate northerly Slontan regions, with their base in Hendrikiland. This makes Slontos a politically important land and the one most prone to incursions from the EWF and those Orlanthi who view the Middle Sea Empire as a more immediate threat.



Slontos has its history in a small number of warring city-state kingdoms surrounded by semi-civilised barbarian tribes. It was conquered by Emperor Svargard in the early 800s and thereafter became the three provinces known today. Its proximity to the EWF heartlands meant that military unity under the Rightness Army was, and still is, crucial to Middle Sea Empire security in the region and one of Svargard's generals responsible for creating this military unity, Villeblaine of Serenestos, became the first archduke of Slontos, which has continued to be held by the Villeblaine line.

Since the Ducal Wars the arch dukes of Slontos have been careful to maintain the good favour of Jrustela. Although the dukes of Slontos wield considerable local power and operate with a degree of autonomy, their provincial governor, Archduke Samorkel, is a Villeblaine descendent and blood relative of Ilotos and owes his own position to the favour of the Imperial Court. Samorkel has never been slow to stamp-out any perceived enemies within Slontos and so the ducal

families of the region watch their backs and watch Samorkel carefully, wanting to protect their own positions and avoid the kind of damaging conflicts that brought Seshnela, Arolanit and Ralios less freewill in matters of regional governance. Rifts in Slontos would send signals of weakness to the EWF and the region already has its fair share of Hunting and Waltzing spies.

Slontos consists of three main regions, Wenelia, Ramalia and Maniria, and is adjoined by the ungovernable border territory of Kotorland. Each region falls under an archduke. Samorkel is the Manirian Archduke and the provincial governor for the whole of Slontos. The archdukes of Wenelia and Ramalia, Archdukes Pyanir and Falaquine respectively, answer to Samorkel and administer their own regions through a network of smaller dukedoms and baronies with much intermarriage and a great deal of uncertainty. The dukes clamour for more power and Pyanir, in particular, struggles to keep his unruly nobles under control, reminding them frequently that Emperor Ilotos takes perverse joy in crushing perceived

rebellion with all the might and magic the Rightness Army can muster.

## Wenelia

Wenelia is the large eastern peninsula Slontos; a region of rugged hills and steep valleys. Archduke Pyanir rules from Thanor, City of Tricksters and Wenelia is divided into smaller dukedoms centred in the four great cities. Pyanir has encouraged eccentricity and experimentation in both magic and religion, offering havens to unorthodox God Learner schools. This has somewhat backfired because the noble houses of Wenelia now believe they have more to offer Wenelia than Pyanir can provide. Duke Herable, a naval admiral and proxy-ruler of Eenlor is a prime architect of this attitude, believing Pyanir to be weak (in fact, *all* the dukes of Wenelia to be weak) and negligent in terms of authority. Only Archduke Samorkel scares Herable and, for this reason, he tempers his machinations and appears to concentrate on his naval duties.

Wenelia has four cities of note:

### Rothor

Rothor is both a trade and fishing port, small but busy, and exports its catches in a preserved form across the empire. Its ruler is the young and feeble Duke System, youngest of Archduke Pyanir's brothers, who granted System Rothor as a way of keeping him quiet. Rothor needs little in the way of political maintenance and the many fishing guilds maintain trade with no need for external interference. This allows System to indulge his personal passions of hunting in the hills of the north and sponsoring dubious entrepreneurs who claim they can make the young duke as wealthy as his elder brother.

System's naivety is a gift to Duke Herable who can easily intimidate the nervous System. Many of the entrepreneurs who arrive at System's court are sent by Herable to steadily fleece Rothor's coffers and thereby prove that the duke is unfit to hold title. Herable plans to gain control of Rothor and transform the fishing port into another naval dockyard. This means that the streets of Rothor are regularly home to all manner of futile business schemes System has backed but which are doomed to failure. Examples include:

Sugared herrings: declared a delicacy in Jrustela, the intention was to import sugar to Rothor and build an elaborate sweetening factory. The project came to nothing when System discovered that sugared herring is every bit as disgusting as it sounds and of no interest to any race other than trolls.

Striped lobster: caught in the Rothor bay, these metre-long monsters have the sweetest flesh of any Gloranthan lobster and are a particular delicacy in Jrustela. The tail shell, when ground and inhaled, is both a mild hallucinogenic and a

potent aphrodisiac; 'eat the flesh, snort the shell, hit the sack' is a favoured description of its many properties.

Sluppers: these mud-dwelling flat-fish are as wide as a cow and as flat as a sheet of papyrus. Traditionally smoked, then rolled into a tight tube and eaten with mashed figs, this is another Rothor delicacy destined for the banquet tables of Jrustela.

Lately Rothor's fishing vessels have been beset by a long-necked, man-eating sea-beast. The monster has assaulted naval vessels and merchant cogs alike, rising from the depths to lash out with its tail, shattering oars and swiping crewmen into the water to be devoured in vast, watery gulps. Allegedly the screams of its past victims can still be heard echoing in its gullet. Authorities blame its appearance here on the Empire of Wyrms' Friends: the monster had not been seen before a Wyrmfriender mystic, a disciple of the water dragon, Aroka, was flayed in Rothor market square two years ago. The mystic uttered a curse as his skin was peeled from his legs, promising revenge on the murderous Fisherman's Guild. The Fisherman's Guild has posted a reward for the monster's killing or capture, with a bonus if any of their eaten members are recovered alive.

### Eenlor

The port of Eenlor serves as a base for the imperial navy. Its fleets guard the coastal waters of Caladraland and the Rightarm Isles and launch raids against EWF outposts accessible from the sea. The fleet which harbours here is made-up of biremes belonging to the Grand Order of the Crimson Sail and members of this order fill the local taverns and gaming houses when not on duty aboard their boats. Herable, the base's gluttonous, greasy-faced admiral, has thoroughly intimidated the local ruler, Duke Nutheros, and rules Eenlor as his personal fiefdom. The intimidation has taken a new twist in the past six years as Herable has married Nutheros's youngest daughter, Anschala, a forced arrangement that resulted from a lost wager following a game of flipjack. An ivory replica of Anschala, with highly exaggerated breasts, adorns Herable's flagship, *Yes, Emperor* (people wonder if this is a mark of loyalty or a statement of intent) and makes a mockery of Duke Nutheros's rule. Nutheros is too scared to challenge Herable over this terrible insult to both himself and his daughter, fearing a potential coup if trouble is made. Herable now cavorts around Eenlor, controlling the guilds and the council, placing honoured crewmen of his ships in influential positions. As a result, Eenlor bends fully to Herable's will and many fear it is only a matter of time before the admiral mobilises his marines to take full control of the city.

The situation is further complicated by Anschala's fate. Herable, jealous and possessive to the point of insanity, has imprisoned his bride in the lofty Tower of Glowing, a magically-warded spire in the fleet admiral's palace overlooking the naval yards. Herable visits Anschala for conjugal favours but otherwise has little to do with his trophy wife. Reports have it that Herable

keeps her sedated with meals of Rothor's finest striped lobster, which makes her compliant to his wishes and ready to offer her bed. Nutheros is enraged at these reports but refuses to interfere in Herable's affairs (they are married, after all, and Nutheros lost that bet). But there are signs that Nutheros is growing a pair: rumour has it that Nutheros has raised enough money to hire the Monks of Blood to rescue Anschala and murder Herable. Furthermore, Anschala's undoubted beauty has attracted, through dreams, an idealistic, yet crusading Wyrmfriend known as Rhamir the Denyer. Rhamir is a disciple of Isgangdrang's cult and, through his visions of Anschala's imprisonment, taken it upon himself to free her, killing Herable in the process.

### Narilor

This was once a busy port frequented by the Waertagi before the God Learners crushed their hold on the seas. The harbour is large and equipped with stone docks designed to berth the massive Waertagi dragonships. The Imperial Fleet sank the Waertagi ships in a daring raid over 80 years ago and now Narilor is a largely deserted ghost town, where only pirates, smugglers and hardscrabble fishermen dare to launch their boats. When the Waertagi fleets were shattered, the ghosts of their dead washed up here and have haunted the place ever since. Waertagi survivors sometimes pull up in Narilor, perhaps to commune with the spirits of their slain ancestors.

Narilor is an anarchic place. The many cut-throats and murderers who make it their home are on the run from the empire and find the ghost city a safe haven. Sorcerous wards keep the Waertagi ghosts at bay; the forests north east of the city contain the rare Ghostwood (itself the remnants of dead aldryami) and this material cannot be penetrated by the vengeful Waertagi spirits that drift ashore as darkness descends. All the ramshackle buildings of Narilor are made of Ghostwood and the self-styled ruler of the place, Sarabar Bloodbeard, commands hefty prices for both Ghostwood itself and entry fees to the city's buildings when the Waertagi spirits come ashore.

Sarabar Bloodbeard is a menacing figure. A renegade from Brustela he has forsaken the Invisible God and now worships Yigg. Narilor welcomes all fellow Yigg worshippers and Sarabar Bloodbeard rules from the Yigg temple, a Waertagi dragonship wreck pulled-up from the depths of the harbour and clad in Ghostwood to keep the howling spirits at bay. Pirates of all kinds find Narilor a safe haven as long as they present Sarabar with tribute and pay their respects the Yigg the Howling God. Sarabar allows them to commit whatever atrocities they wish in Narilor's streets and commits his own within the safety of the Yigg temple. His soul is undoubtedly doomed and many wonder why the God Learners have not erased Sarabar's dreadful presence from the earth. The reason is simple: Herable has persuaded the emperor, through

proxies, that Sarabar's pirates afford a cheap way of controlling the seas without over-extending the Imperial Navy. Herable allows Sarabar to continue unmolested in return for a small portion of the pirate tributes that flood into Sarabar's coffers. In return the Imperial Navy does not interfere unduly with ships flying Yigg's standard, usually letting them escape with no more than a warning.

The Waertagi spirits that drift through Narilor's streets do, indeed, seek vengeance. They wish for Narilor to be cleansed with fire and Sarabar, who has defiled a Waertagi ship, to be torn limb from limb. Visitors to the Spirit Plane in the vicinity of Narilor may find themselves encountering the spirit of Uruthaylus, the ghost-commander of the Narilor spirits. He would be willing to exchange great magical knowledge to anyone tied to the mundane world who would cleanse Narilor and purge Sarabar Bloodbeard from this ancient Waertagi port. Uruthaylus is even willing to make bargains with God Learners and, although he cannot fully articulate the true nature of Sarabar's infernal agreement with Herable, he can guide allies in the right direction. Uruthaylus has also discovered information that would help in releasing Anschala from the Tower of Glowing: spirits residing around the tower know of secret ways into the palace even though they cannot, themselves, offer direct assistance. Uruthaylus is willing to trade all this for Sarabar's corpse – and, naturally, Sarabar's spirit would become Uruthaylus's plaything on the Spirit Plane (if Yigg does not claim it first).

### Thanor

The provincial capital of Wenelia, Thanor is known as the City of Trickster on account of the presence of Vilblane College, which has devoted its studies to the various Trickster gods of Glorantha. Within the crazed halls of the college Trickster is explored in all his myriad forms: from the Eurmal familiar to Orlanthi and other religions through to Saint Jerestos, the Joker Saint, who, with his rictus and cruel, criminal, practical jokes made both fun and a mockery of Malkionism during the fifth century, leading, eventually, to his martyrdom by the enraged Brithini.

Archduke Pyanir does not approve of Vilblane College's devotion to the trickster gods. Wild, unpredicable magic has been unleashed in the college's halls and spilled into the city leading to a shaking of its reputation. The entire populace of Thanor spent a year in hysterical laughter, which could only be alleviated through mob violence; prior to that, men gave birth for a year leading to certain households now known as the Father-Mothers. The offspring of these unconventional births have had to be rounded-up and committed to the orphanage operated by the priestesses of Saint Xemela whilst the unfortunate Father-Mothers have required prolonged and extensive healing magic to cure the birthing wounds.

Archduke Pyanir is all in favour of magical experimentation and freedom: Wenelia's reputation is based upon it but the Father-Mother episode was a step too far and now he has placed considerable pressure on the Vilblane College to diversify into more acceptable areas of study than the nature of the various tricksters. The dean of the college, Larich-Klayrdon, is resisting the pressure. Unbeknown to all he is possessed by a trickster spirit unleashed in the early years of the college's forays into the nature of the Trickster. This spirit, which calls itself Sunoptis, has possessed every dean of the college for 100 years moving from one to another during the act of enthronement, a process known as the Debagging. Sunoptis, when it grows tired of its host, initiates the retirement and selects the successor – always someone of compliant will that can be easily possessed and, together, the incumbent and the candidate retire to the private hall where the Debagging commences: a ritual of such secrecy and mirth (uncontrollable laughter accompanies the transfer of Sunoptis to its new host) that a large audience gathers around the quadrangle beneath the private hall's shuttered windows. The old, debagged dean emerges as a solemn, subdued figure who immediately finds the need to go into lengthy exile. The new dean follows, giggling, filled with mischief and outlines the continuing plans for Trickster study for the next few years. Ridding Vilblane College of its Trickster fixation requires the removal of Sunoptis first: no easy task given the spirit's power and the fact that it is a representation of Saint Jerestos's soul – the last practical joke the saint ever pulled and executed at the moment of his martyrdom.

Archduke Pyanir's spectacular residence sits atop Thanor's only hill, roughly central to the city, the streets fanning out below it. Pyanir is a competent but reluctant ruler who is bullied (although not to the same extent as the other dukes of Wenelia) by Duke Herable. Herable knows that a visible intimidation policy would attract unwanted attention by Archduke Samorkel and so he leaves Pyanir mostly to his own devices, knowing that the antics of Vilblane College are enough to keep Thanor in its place. Herable therefore encourages the pursuit of the Trickster at the college, enjoying each new 'hilarity' heaped upon the city by the students of the Trickster cults. In 908 the latest joke to befall the city are the Food Rains when, during Storm Season, food of all types falls from the sky. This would be grand for the city if the food was edible but, alas, it is not. Most of it is either rotten, maggot infested, or prone to giving people a condition similar to dysentery.

## Ramalia

Ramalia is the breadbasket of Slontos. A land of fertile plains kept that way by many local fertility spirits and minor goddesses, it produces a glut of cereals and fruit that are exported across the region and beyond into the wider empire.

Ramalia is under the unwatchful eye of Archduke Xanastis and his cunning wife (also his half-sister) Duchess Nuchyla. They rule from Veakmal and have devolved power to the City Barons who shoulder the responsibility for local administration. Xanastis is somewhat timid of the barons – he prefers a quiet life – whilst Duchess Nuchyla sees it as her duty to keep them in line by sleeping with them. She disguises these affairs in her Grand Tour; much of the year is spent with Nuchyla and her entourage progressing from one Ramalian city to the next, spending as much as an entire season there, keeping each baron in his place with rigorous carnal exercise. The previous baron of Annor, Utleth, was so exhausted by Nuchyla's attentions that he petitioned the emperor himself to be removed a remote monastery on the fringes of Fronela, far from Nuchyla's desire. His successor, Vorell, is of hardier stock and is able to match the duchess's stamina.

Archduke Xanastis is blissfully unaware of his sister-wife's infidelity. A dedicated gardener he prefers to spend his time attending to the vast gardens of the Veakmal palace, which are a noted wonder of the empire. He spends more and more time in the gardens – frequently not bothering to return to his bed – and is oblivious to Nuchyla's absence. He breaks away from his gardening to take the seasonal meetings of council that inform him that all is well in Ramalia and he takes that as a good sign that Nuchyla's Grand Tour is a necessary political tool.

Xanastis's preoccupation with the garden is accompanied by a growing and deepening friendship with a pair of aldryami who have taken up residence in the small forest Xanastis lovingly tends. Sirewood and Freethorn are a mated pair of Vronkali who are sympathetic towards Xanastis and see in him the spirit of Flamal. It has become their personal quest to convert the Archduke away from this strange, unseeable god he claims to worship and to bring him fully into the natural beauty of Aldrya and Flamal All-Father. Each year Xanastis grows closer to them and is on the verge of renouncing Malkion and embracing nature completely. Nuchyla, busy with her interbaronial exploits, is oblivious to this change in her brother-husband. In fact, if Xanastis were to disappear completely, would anyone really notice?

Its important settlements are:

### Annor

The only good deepwater port along hundreds of miles of coastland. It is governed by the pious and aggressive Baron Vorell, one of Duchess Nuchyla's favourite lovers. Vorell is a dedicant of Saint Domb the Broken, a local martyr who proclaimed his faith in the Invisible God by allowing all his bones to be shattered rather than denounce a wretched tribe of heathen Orlanthi he had sought to convert to Malkion's

glory. The tribe eventually moved on, still resolutely storm worshippers and still intent on raiding isolated Malkioni settlements in Ramalia; where they went is open to much debate but it is commonly agreed that when Saint Domb surrendered to his breaking, life became far less interesting all round.

Vorell has little time for anyone that does share his piety (most people) and uses Saint Domb's example frequently in the loud, pugnacious speeches he regularly makes from the pulpit balcony of Annor's baronial mansion in the centre of the city. He ensures an attentive congregation with the help of the Annor Irregulars, disgraced or retired Rightness Army thugs who see to it that Vorell's sermons are well attended and heeded. They, too, like breaking bones.

Vorell's aggression finds a release in his seasonal flings with Duchess Nuchyla. He considers these visits as Malkion's way of helping to alleviate the pounding fervour in his heart; a reward for his piety. Nuchyla enjoys the liaisons because Vorell has the kind of aggressive streak – and stamina – she needs in her barons. She considers him an ugly little runt of a man but as far as erotic pursuits go, his imagination and zeal know no bounds.

The underground Ashen Temple houses the relics of Saint Domb: his broken skeleton. Vorell, has ordered them to be moved to his private chapel in the surrounding countryside. This has angered Vorell's younger brother, Sogcros, who dislikes his older brother's seething religious mania but considers the bones of Saint Domb to be a treasure all in Annor should be able to visit. Vorell blames Sogcros, for whipping up discontent against him but this is delusion: Vorell is his own worst enemy in this regard.

### **Veakmal**

An island base of the Imperial Navy, Veakmal is also home to Duke Xanastis's own estate, which occupies the north side of the island. The south side is home to the docks where the First Fleet is based dominating what passes for a town. Between the harbour and the duke's estate the island is rugged and windswept, home to Slontan Orlanthi who maintain their faith and traditions even in the presence of the God Learner conquerors. Brawls between locals and seamen comprise the island's most popular off-duty pastime; the Orlanthi view it as a matter of honour and good practice; the sailors view it as keeping the local peasants in check. The admiral, Veragard, views it as entertainment and a good outlet for his men who will be able to use their hand-to-hand prowess against the foes they frequently meet on the high seas.

The First Fleet maintains a small fleet of magically powered Exultants – flying ships that are born aloft on tendrils of

sorcerous energy that replace sails and oars. The ships are used for missions all over Slontos and for occasional forays out to the Clanking City where, flying as high as they can go, they attempt to bypass the siege of the New Unity Council. The Exultant Fleet is commanded by Point Admiral Mors, a scarred veteran of many conflicts and a dedicated hater of the EWF. He lost an arm to a dragonewt and a leg to a dragon mystic and loathes the Wyrmfriender empire with the same passion Vorell loves Saint Domb and Duchess Nuchyla loves dominating men. His flagship, *The Exultant Bastard From Above*, is his home and he stomps around the decks, his ivory peg-leg clacking on the boards, berating dragon kind with dragon-like venom. His left arm has been replaced by an articulated ivory prosthesis to which Mors can attach all manner of tools, implements and weapons. The cabin boy, Roja, follows his master everywhere carrying Mors' satchel of implements, which include various daggers and long blades, whips, a telescope, a branding iron and so forth. Mors hates dragon worshippers so much that anyone displaying the slightest sympathy towards the EWF is flogged personally by Mors and, if unlucky, tossed over the side of the airborne *Exultant Bastard From Above*.

### **Soster**

A thriving city in amid a fertile belt of farmland. This region was once occupied by belligerent Slontan Orlanthi but they were displaced to Umathela some time ago as part of the conquest of the region and now the land belongs to the empire. What the God Learners did not displace were the various wyters of the Orlanthi clans: these powerful nature spirits, which once guarded the Orlanthi steads, now enact a subtle revenge through enforcing lassitude on Soster's residents. Known as the Sleeping City, those who visit Soster find any aggressive tendencies being steadily sapped until one slips into a state of peaceful disregard for any feelings of violence or martial fervour. Soster maintains no army or militia: it has no need of one. All its residents are peaceful, friendly and prefer talk and debate to violence and aggression.

No one has yet explained why Soster engenders such peaceful feelings: the wyters were thought to have been returned to whence they came when the Orlanthi were magically shipped to Umathela and so no one had bothered to investigate whether or not the wyters are at the heart of Soster's peculiar nature. However if one were to regard the handsome, ancient, gnarled sycamore (which graces the central market square of the city) on the Spirit Plane, one would see the sly, mischievous spirit form of the wyter who once watched over the Fox Sycamore clan that lived here before the God Learners. She is a powerful wyter and it will take great magic to remove her influence. Her sisters ring Soster and exert a similar power. Those old sycamore trees have a far greater purpose than being simply trees.

Soster's baron is Merismer the Untidy, a notoriously aggressive noble from Justela who was exiled to Soster so that the city could work its peculiar properties on this incredibly violent man. It worked. Baron Merismer is now the most peaceful, peace-loving man one could wish to meet. Only the scars across his face and body indicate his warlike past; his demeanour is otherwise one of contentment and forgiveness. Duchess Nuchyla uses Baron Merismer as her emotional salve after a particularly strenuous Grand Tour, seeking forgiveness from the man before, naturally, seducing him too. Merismer is certain that Duke Xanastis would also forgive his faithless sister-wife (if he knew of what she really does on her travels) should he spend just a little time on Soster.

Outside the city the fields and meadows yield good quality crops that serve the region. Ale is a staple product of Soster with several brewers competing to make the finest beer using recipes taken from the old Orlanthei clans before their enforced migration south. Minlister, the Orlanthei god of brewing, was a patron deity of the Soster region and the Justeli brewers have convinced themselves that Minlister was actually a saint from the First Age who brought the secrets of hops, barley and yeast to Slontos and hence became worshipped as a deity. This is plainly a heresy but given Soster's laissez-faire attitude no one really cares. The last time a True Malkioni church inquisitor came to Soster to punish those who had made a saint from a heathen deity, he found himself soon forgetting his mission, sampling rather too much of the brewers' excellent fare, falling into a rain-filled ditch and drowning. Baron Merismer sent word back to the church that Brother Alespus had chosen to remain in Soster, so successful was his conversion of heretics and no one in Frowal has bothered to question the inquisitor's absence.

### Wesluk

Wesluk is a wealthy unloading point for river trade in Ramalia. Nestling in a beautiful river valley it is attractive to wealthy Slontan, Seshnelan and Justeli families who have tired of their homelands and want some simple, natural beauty. As a result the sides of the valley are pocked with expensive, ostentatious homes that, in typical God Learner fashion, attempt to outdo each other with demonstrations of wealth, position and architectural daring.

As a result, thieves have flocked to the place. The town of Wesluck, hugging the river between the valley sides, has an active Lanbril cult operating within its boundaries. The cult targets the wealthy God Learners who look down from their (sometimes) ivory towers on the rank and file. The cultists' efforts have been remarkably successful with around a dozen homes comprehensively robbed by the enterprising



Lanbril thieves and leading to the establishment of the Trap Maker's Guild, a confederation of artisans guided by a fugitive Openhandist dwarf named Duenge Erro

Duenge Erro is an Iron dwarf from the Iron Mountain who, being of the Openhandist malfunction, has sought commune with the surface world. His specialisation is in traps: he designed several mechanical deterrents to ward against troll attacks on his own and other mostali settlements. When a trap he designed and built accidentally crushed a highly important Copper mostali, his programming determined it best to leave the Iron Mountain and find some other way of contributing to the World Machine's repair. He found it in Wesluck – a settlement crying out for good quality traps and deterrents.

Forming the Trap Maker's Guild was an easy task from amongst Wesluck's artisans. A ready market was found amongst the God Learner wealthy skulking in their hillside towers. The Trap Maker's Guild is now a full-time industry in

Wesluck and it manufactures the most ingenious, murderous, foolproof traps outside of the core mostali mines. Those who can afford the guild's prices can avail themselves of conveyors disguised as carpet runners that trap a thief and lead him to a cage filled with rotating knives. Others can have pressure-sensitive pendulums keyed to personal weight installed that are designed to behead anyone who does not conform precisely to the programmed weight pattern and distribution of the trap's owner. Missile traps, gas traps, poison traps, humane traps, disembowelling traps and flensing traps are all designed and manufactured (bespoke, of course) for the wealthy Jrusteli.

But the cult of Lanbril is always up for a challenge. As Duenge Erro's traps have become more commonplace and ingenious, the Lanbril thieves have taken to pitting their wits and ingenuity against whatever the well-protected houses have to throw at them. The cult has spies in the workshops, spies in the hills and spies in the households. Traps are mapped, deciphered and then challenged. The purpose of breaking and entering a house now is not so much the swag (although that remains important) but successfully bypassing a particular trap in one piece. Potential Lanbril initiates must run a trap designated by the head of the Wesluck family to prove worthiness for initiation into the cult. Beating successively more fiendish traps helps advance in cult rank.

### Ravin

Ravin is a shabby port bordering on the Tarinwood, which trades chiefly with the aldryami. The elves of Tarinwood show an unusual appetite for human trade goods, including fripperies and luxury items such as silks, linen, gold and silver jewellery and other expensive trinkets. Many of these things are stolen from the wealthy homes of Wesluck by the Lanbril cult and fenced through unscrupulous traders in Ravin.

God Learner specialists in aldryami culture want to know why the elves are so fond of these things and, to this end, has despatched the Untoward Revealers, a group of Hwarosian aldryami specialists, to dissemble the myths, attitudes and needs of the Tarinwood aldryami.

The Untoward Revealers are experts (so they claim) in elf study. They use local proxies to act as intermediaries and gain trust whilst simultaneously attempting to learn and modify local aldryami myths to gain access to both the Spirit Plane in the Tarinwood locale and the Hero Plane strand occupied by Tarinwood aldryami heroes. The Revealers suspect that human trade goods are being somehow transformed into potent elfish enchantments that are then being used on the Hero Plane for specific quests. What these quests are and what they might achieve is unknown at this stage but the Untoward Revealers intend to find out.

Although Ravin is a backwater and lacks real prosperity, the Ravin Merchant's Association enjoys a decent relationship with the local aldryami and is anxious to divert any troublesome inquiries that might upset their profitable appercart. The Untoward Revealers, then, are an unwelcome presence. Baron Tawbrin, under instruction from Duchess Nuchyla, has told the merchant guild to do as it is told and accept the Revealers' presence and co-operate with it: this is by imperial decree, as the Duchess represents the emperor in such matters (and because Tawbrin is completely infatuated with the insatiable duchess). The Ravin Merchants agree grudgingly but tensions between the Hwarosians and the merchants are rising. The aldryami suspect that something is going on in Ravin and are becoming more reluctant to trade unique and rare herbs, plants and flowers grown in the impenetrable depths of Tarinwood. The Revealers care little for Ravin's fragile economy: the aldryami are up to something of mythical importance and that takes precedence over any grotty little trade guild that seems to have more consideration for local nature spirits than Malkion's glory.

So it is that some clumsy attempts at sabotaging the Untoward Revealers' experiments have been perpetrated. Canny enough to avoid getting their hands dirty, the Ravin Merchant's Association has hired, and continues to hire, outside help in disrupting the Revealers' plans. Things could go too far. Sabotage may yet turn to physical harm or even murder. The Hwarosians are ill-equipped to deal with a sustained campaign of maliciousness and believe that the merchants are completely under Baron Tawbrin's thumb. They are not. Things can only end badly. And in mythically significant ways.

### Maniria

Maniria is a complex land that has, as its northern border, the EWF heartland of Dragon Pass; to its north east the troll heartland of Dagori Inkarth. The central area of Kethaela is bordered further by the Orlanthe stronghold of the Hendriki. Before the God Learners came and conquered central Maniria Orlanthe territories were extensive. The Storm Battles, as the early years of conquest came to be known, pushed the Orlanthe back to the northern reaches but it took the first Return to Rightness crusade to truly establish the Jrusteli presence in the region. Now, it is the Orlanthe of Hendrikiland who act as a buffer between the EWF and the God Learners. They have resisted a conversion to Malkionism (although the matriarchal kingdom of Esrolia flirts with it, as well as Wyrmfriending, the Storm Tribe and its own, 10,000 female goddesses) but have been, in parts, converted to the draconic path. Maniria is thus a contested region. The God Learners value Maniria's wide plains, good ports and the shelter that the hilly north provides. The Orlanthe want their old territories back. The EWF, despising the Jrusteli presence to their immediate



south want to see the God Learners pushed into the sea and devoured by mighty Aroka.

Jrusteli Maniria is governed by a similar mix of dukes and barons as Wenelia and Ramalia. Its provincial governor, Forasting, has traded certain sorcerous secrets with the trolls of Dagori Inkarth and the Shadow Plateau, home of Ezkenkkeko, the Only Old One, in return for attacks against both Orlanthi and Dragon Friends. Meanwhile his administration must keep the unruly dukes in check and handle a continuous stream of petitions from the barons protesting about one injustice after another. It is only when war breaks out between the EWF and the God Learners that Maniria becomes truly united.

Maniria is, for the most part, open and wild country. Scattered Jrusteli and Seshnelan settlements are found in the valleys and along the plateaus, watched over by the militias operated by the various barons and their dukes. In reality the dukes stay within their cities, reaping the taxes but happy for their barons to run the land on their behalf. Four cities, and hence four duchies, make-up Jrusteli controlled Maniria.

### **Guglar**

The westernmost Manirian city, sits on the banks of the upper Noshain River, where it serves as a break of bulk point for caravans headed overland through the nearby wilds. Nomadic deer people wander its surrounding territories but tend to keep their distance from the Jrusteli and look to their great spirit, Antler Father, to protect their thin strip of territory and game trails.

Guglar itself is an uninspiring place. The provincial capital was the scene of a fierce battle between Orlanthi, EWF and the Return to Rightness crusaders early in the conquest of the region. Now Guglar is a large Rightness Army garrison with Arch Duke Forasting, the governor, heading the Manirian Rightness divisions. The city looks, and feels, like an army town. It acts as the supply centre for the easterly cities, contains training grounds for new soldiers and just about every service and industry Guglar supports is geared towards equipping and provisioning the army.

Whilst Forasting is governor, the city is administrated by Duke Cerrick, a well-respected Seshnelan from Tanisor who is neither too devout nor too lax a Malkionist. Cerrick understands the need for treading carefully throughout the region and has taken care to establish passable relations with the Orlanthi that skirt the north western edge of Guglar's extended lands and the trolls that sometimes wander through the region. He runs the city to military lines but also ensures the civilian populace has a voice in the city's council chamber. His barons are far less corrupt than those found elsewhere in Maniria but even they, from time-to-time, take advantage of

Cerrick's good nature and pocket tribute due for the city's, and imperial, coffers. Cerrick turns a blind eye as long as these sidelines are small, discrete and the barons maintain their loyalty.

One fly in Guglar's ointment is an otherwise nameless mystic called the Denier who prowls both woods and city, robbing imperial officials of their greatest skills. Believed to be a ranking EWF magician the Denier moves with secrecy and cunning: no one can say what he (or she) looks like; no one knows where he (or she) might strike next. But when he (or she) does, it is with precision and ruthlessness; moreover the nature of his (or her) attacks are most peculiar: the Denier steals skills. Those subject to a Denier attack are always highly competent in one or more particular fields; afterwards they are bumbling idiots who can barely fasten their own boots or comb their own hair. They retain knowledge of who they are and what they once were but their ability to perform is sapped completely. What is more the Denier appears to have a plan. It is working upwards through the noble echelons. It began by sapping low-ranking officials and bureaucrats. Next it attacked landowners and merchants. Then several barons fell to his (or her or, let's face it, its) predations. It does not take prophecy to realise that subsequent targets will be military leaders and commanders followed then by the ducal households and, eventually, the duke and provincial governor.

All the Denier's victims are God Learners. It attacks males and females alike. It leaves no physical trace and seems to commit no physical harm. Duke Cerrick has placed a hefty bounty on the Denier's head, offering 100,000 silver to whoever captures him/her and 50,000 for the Denier's head. Several adventuring parties have tried and failed to claim the bounty for the Denier's head but this has not prevented mercenaries and bounty hunters from across the world coming to Guglar to try to tackle this mysterious, devastating presence. The city does not live in fear of the Denier: as its targets are so precise most normal people have little to fear; but the nobles and the military leaders continue to be concerned and vigilant. Any of them might be next.

### **Bemelor**

Bemelor is a seaport and centre of shipbuilding. It is dominated by the Shipwright's Guild, headed by Duke Kozimir Awranak, the latest in a long line of celebrated naval architects to carry the Awranak name. Most of the Imperial Navy's vessels are of Awranak design and the guild, one of the oldest in the empire, is custodian of many Waertagi and Otherworld secrets all related to ship building and sailing. The mighty Guild wet and dry docks dominate the harbour, stretching for over a kilometre across the water front and just about everyone in Bemelor is employed by the guild and involved in the ship building industry.

Ships from the Imperial Navy are brought here for repair and outfitting, even coming from as far away as Jrustela, such is the Guild's skill. The Guild even employs Waertagi (all captives, all paid at slave wages) in its docks and the combined result is the very best vessels to have sailed Gloranthan waters and a vast stream of money into both the Guild's and the ducal coffers. Bemelor is *very* wealthy.

But for all its wealth Bemelor is not a happy place. The Guild runs everything: no one is free of its influence. Failure to do as the Guild says results in all kinds of unpleasantness. If one wants to practice any profession in Bemelor one must tow the Guild line; one must abide by the huge range of rules and restrictions it operates – and there are rules and restrictions on and for everything. These rules mimic the Traditions found in the Seshnelan cities but are written to Guild, and therefore industrial, principles, rather than dynastic and social ones. The Guild's bureaucrats tour the city constantly checking that every business, from the humblest tailor or weaver through to the largest carpentry team, abides by the Book of Awranak, as the Guild's rules are known. The Guild maintains that the Book of Awranak is founded on solid principles found in the Abiding Book and so none dare to question its stringency. But the wealth Bemelor enjoys does not find its way into public hands: every penny goes to the Guild, its research (nautical and magical), and its activities. Prices are high in Bemelor – because the Book of Awranak says they should be and the Guild keeps them that way. Rules are so rigid that even the slightest deviation from prescribed measurements results in the trial and exile of the infringer. One weaver, who dared to vary the measurements for sail cloth, in the hope of saving money and creating a better product, was stripped of house and home, ostracised by his family and, finally, expelled from Bemelor, penniless and branded. Tow the Guild line, or suffer as a result.

Archduke Forasting hates the Guild passionately but, as the Imperial Navy loves it, and because the Awranak name is so beloved in Jrustela, he must tolerate its practices. Duke Kozimir flaunts this position, frequently ignoring or overruling provincial law in favour of Guild-created alternatives. The various Guild Barons – those who have been granted lands surrounding the city in return for faithful service – are equally arrogant. They feud amongst themselves, always seeking greater station and approval from the Guild Council and, when they feel hard-done by, moan to the governor whilst still following, unquestioningly, the Guild's directives. In this way Duke Awranak and the Shipwright's Guild control a great deal of power and indirectly challenge Forasting's position. Recently the Guild has announced a new marine propulsion system even better than the captive sylphs used in the imperial navy. This has brought a flood of investment from private speculators and further enhanced the Guild's credibility in the eyes of

the Imperial Court. Some believe that the miraculous new propulsion system is based on ancient Waertagi secrets; others believe it is a development of complete weather control, the Guild's sorcerers having tamed local Storm Gods. Still others believe it is Clanking City magic or technology smuggled through the New Unity Army blockade of Zistorwal. Spies have filled the city hoping to steal the plans for this new engine, whatever it is – and the Guild has not yet revealed it although Duke Awranak keeps promising a demonstration at an appropriate juncture. It could all be a hoax; it could all be true. Only the highest members of the Guild know for certain and they, certainly, are enjoying all the power, money and attention this 'discovery' is bringing them.

### Herolal

Close to the border of Esrolia, Herolal is a competing centre of shipbuilding. High walls attest to a history of invasion from Esrolia and, because it has so long been attacked by that nation of women, the men of Herolal fiercely uphold Malkion's proclamations of male superiority. Women may not adorn themselves with jewels or bright colours. Nor may they hide their identities with veils. During each summer's Herolali Festival, female priestesses risk being hunted down and burned at the stake as witches, such is the paranoia of the female form in Herolal.

Duke Turonos is an enthusiastic proponent of the Herolal's endemic misogyny. Women should be seen and not heard; they are incapable of wielding any form of responsibility; and all they are good for is tending hearth and the marital bed. Eager to please, and having endured Esrolian attacks so many times over the years, his nobles and barons share his eagerness – and so the women of Herolal live in a state of almost complete subjugation whilst the menfolk attempt to emulate Bemelor's ship-building expertise and grow ever more miserable because they lose out to the Shipwright's Guild continually.

Esrolia knows this. Esrolia knows male weakness lies in pride. Esrolia's grandmothers have many agents – males and females – secretly working in Herolal. These agents work covertly to bring the word of the 10,000 goddesses to the womenfolk of the city, urging them to pray in secret, abandon Malkionism (which is, naturally, to blame for their plight) and place their faith in the goddess Imarja. There are many secret shrines to Imarja throughout the city – all of them well concealed from prying and judgmental male eyes – and, steadily, the city's women are building up reserves of confidence and magic to use against the menfolk. When the time is right, the next attack from Esrolia will come from within the city's walls. Ships will burn, men will be put to the stake and the tide will turn. Women will rule Herolal as an extension of Nochet and for the first time in centuries the women will be truly free from male dominance.

Chief of these secret Imarja priestesses is Marulan Turonos, the duke's downtrodden wife. As an example to all men, her husband has treated her as badly as any man could treat his bride. By day Marulan suffers silently. By night she offers pacts to Imarja and other goddesses and has wholeheartedly rejected Malkionism in favour of the Esrolian pantheon. Her patron goddess is Khoronita the White Witch and through her Marulan is growing in magical strength. The female revolution will begin with her, at a time Khoronita will dictate. Her husband has not noticed that his wife has not aged a day in 18 years; he has not noticed that she exudes a particular radiance and femininity on Khoronita's holy days. He cannot know that slowly, steadily, Marulan is becoming Khoronita; but he will and he will be the first to pay.

Meanwhile the shipwrights of Herolal despatch their spies to gather information on Bemelor. These same spies attempt to spread discontent amongst the Guild members, risking execution for their efforts. Some secrets have found their way back to the Herolal boatyards but these are not enough. Naval commissions are growing more scarce as Bemelor's power grows: Duke Turonos grows restless; he is almost ready to make war on Bemelor, accusing Duke Awranak of treachery and being in-league with the Waertagi and even the EWF. Only Archduke Forasting prevents intercity war, reminding Turonos that, if he injured Bemelor's position, the whole of the Imperial Navy would come out on the Guild's side, not Herolal's. This deters Turonos but does not dissuade him. He actively seeks ways of undermining the Shipwright's Guild of Bemelor and of destroying it – cunning ways. He is ready to pay good money for sabotage and assassination, all the while oblivious to his wife's transformation and the havoc this will, one day soon, visit on his own city.

### **Kaxtorplose**

A small city that has its roots in Arkat's Stygian Empire, Kaxtorplose still exhibits the strange, hexagonal shrines of the Stygians and carries traces of their old magical power. Kaxtorplose earned its fame for holding out against the Gbaji invaders until Arkat came to rescue them. The hexagonal shrines, attributed to Arkat, reinforce the magic of any worshipper, no matter what his faith or style of magic: theists may pray here and receive whatever magic their god has granted them even though the shrines represent no single god. Solar worshippers regain their divine spells as readily as Storm worshippers. The God Learner attempts to dismantle them for study have been fiercely resisted by proud descendants of Kaxtorplose's historic warriors. These warriors, the Defenders of Kaxtor, fought against Arkat when the Stygians conquered the city and found that the shrines they had built fuelled their own magic. The God Learners defeated the Stygian overlords but the shrines remained and the Defenders of Kaxtor would not see them dismantled – despite their clearly heretical nature.

Kaxtorplose is ruled by Duke Medevic, an intensely devout Malkionist who was, in the past, subject to conditioning by the Order of Saint Atrox. He knows the love of the Invisible God first hand and is foremost amongst those who would see all signs of the Stygian heresy removed from his city; yet he dare not risk the wrath of the Defenders of Kaxtor. They have, in the past, been stalwart defenders of the city against draconic incursions and Medevic knows they are a valuable asset. He must therefore put-up with the existence of the shrines and, in a bid to at least control their power, has assented to the presence of a Revealer group entrusted with breaking the magical nature of the shrines and harnessing it for mythical purposes. There is a widely held belief that Arkat's transformation into a troll, and, later, into Gbaji, is somehow associated with these shrines. Attempts are therefore underway to break certain Stygian and Arkati myths, placing their power at God Learner disposal.

## PAMALTELA – UMATHELA

Known as the Kingdom of Learning to its residents, and the Kingdom of Traitors by spiteful Malkioni who resent its independence, Umathela is the southernmost outpost of the empire and its most obstinate. The Umathelans have declared independence from Emperor Ilotos even though they remain devout Malkionists and committed to both Jrusteli and God Learner ideals.

It was not always thus. Jrusteli settlers, who came here as early as 580, carved the seven shining cities of Umathela from the surrounding aldryami jungles, following in the wake of the Vymori explorer and minor prophet, Sesqan. Establishing the cities was no easy task and many lives were lost in the battles with the Pamaltelan aldryami who resented the intrusion of the monotheists. Of the battles fought the most infamous was the War of Four Scourgings where Jrusteli war sorcerers combined their magics to blast four square kilometres of elf forest into oblivion whilst simultaneously shifting the aldryami who lived in the region 50 kilometres to the south. The aldryami never realised what happened to them until it was too late: their scouts struggled back to find kilometres of prime jungle little more than petrified stumps, Jrusteli engineers already hard at work laying the foundations for their cities.

The cities built in the wake of the colonisation of Umathela became centres of learning and Sorcery, their populations determined to take the early governmental experiments of the Jrusteli cities one step further. They enacted a meritocracy, in which all citizens capable of passing a comprehensive academic test were enfranchised to elect their city lords. The lords then select one of their number to serve as Consul for all Umathela. Deans, tutors and professors are disproportionately represented in the Umathelan leadership rolls. The system, however, works. Levels of organisation and public care are beyond those found in the duchies and

## The Umathing Experiment

Wanting to rid itself of a group of highly troublesome Orlanthe occupying central Slontos, the Middle Sea Empire had three entire steads magically transplanted from Slontos to the new city of New Hrestolket in Umathela. Destruction of the Orlanthe was an option but rejected on the grounds that these Slontans had several myths the God Learners wanted to exploit and also because the Umathelan Malkioni had expressed an idea to conduct an assimilation experiment: the Slontan Orlanthe fit the bill perfectly.

Once the initial shock of being shifted many kilometres away from their home had subsided (and the Umathelans went to great lengths to pacify the confused and angry Orlanthe) the experiment began. It was a testing ground for myth manipulation by Umathelan Hwarosian Mystics and they carefully tweaked the Slontan myths, stealing some parts and altering others, to show the Orlanthe that the gods they had worshipped were not the independent Storm Gods they had once thought. The Umathelans revealed that the Slontan Storm Gods were aspects of a more powerful truth and had remained loyal to that truth during the mythical time that the Slontans referred to as the Great Darkness. The Storm Tribe had divided, the Umathelans showed, into shadows and light. The shadows were the gods named Orlanthe, Ernalda and so forth. The lights were the gods who remained true to Umath, the Primal God and defended him during the Great Darkness.

This myth tampering was a success: more so than the God Learners could have predicted. The Slontan exiles took to these newly revealed aspects of their traditional gods and embraced them. New myths arose in the Slontan culture and the Slontans rejected their old lands naming themselves the Umathings – protectors of Umath – in the process. Slontan Orlanthe culture died over time and was replaced by a new Pantheon, sympathetic to Malkionism but still recognisably of Orlanthe heritage. The Umathelan God Learners granted the Umathings their own territories but also welcomed them into their cities. They allowed temples to the Umathing pantheon to be built, on the condition that each contained a shrine to Umath and Umath's son, Makan. The Umathings had no qualms following this path and, although most Umathings chose to create their own steads away from the cities, they still remained predisposed to the Umathelan God Learners who had been revealed to them as educators and saviours.

provinces of Genertela and the consuls enact programmes to ensure literacy, a founding in comparative faiths (although such tutelage reinforces the supremacy of Malkionism) and a tolerance towards other races and cultures that simply is not experienced elsewhere in the empire.

The overall goal is assimilation rather than continued, violent, conquest and it has served the Umathelan Malkioni well. The Umathings experiment proved this conclusively and was directly responsible for the philosophy and meritocratic approach developed throughout the region.

As the Middle Sea Empire grew increasingly powerful – and Seshnegi in character – its Emperors attempted to erode and eventually replace the enfranchisement system. The Umathing experiment disconcerted the emperor: if the Umathelans had managed to develop such powerful assimilation techniques, yet refused to share them, could they not be planning to alter those aspects of Malkionism they did not approve of? Spies in the Umathelan cities reported that the Umathelan copy of the Abiding Book was being altered to suit Umathelan sensibilities with parts being actively rewritten to emphasise

the actions of the minor prophet, Sesqan, and diminish the glory of Malkion. Even Hrestol was being recast as a more influential figure than the Abiding Book decreed. Physical evidence of these rewrites was impossible to come by but Ilotos was worried nonetheless. The Umathelan representatives to the court were becoming increasingly belligerent and arguing with impeccable logic against a whole variety of policies and legislation designed to extract greater tribute and submission from outlying provinces.

Ilotos was so perturbed by the strength of Umathelan independence that he attempted to personally appoint new dukes in the region. This sparked a rebellion. Umathela had, by now, established its own cultural identity and encouraged spirited free-thinking; the dukes Ilotos attempted to impose were typically of the close-minded, orthodox Seshnelan mould and, worryingly, accompanied by Atroxic Church inquisitors keen on pursuing a policy of 'behaviour' within the seven golden cities of the south. One of the appointed dukes, Gorye du Gorye, attempted to declare the Umathings as pagan heretics who must be blasted into oblivion with cleansing magics. Gorye du Gorye disappeared, as did the

two Saint Atrox bodyguards who accompanied him. Over the course of the next few days the other appointed dukes met with curiously sticky ends. The imperial court could prove no treachery or wrong-doing by the Umathelans and Ilotos fell short of making outright accusations but he did not need to. The Umathelans had made their position clear: they were Malkioni first and foremost, and respected the glory of the empire and its emperors but Pamaltela was not Jrustela and it was not Seshnela. It would, henceforth, create its own destiny and rule by its own council.

This left Umathela as a nation of God Learners politically opposed to their own Empire. They believe it has betrayed its original principles and they are not prepared to tolerate distant interference in the systems they have so carefully cultivated and made to work harmoniously. In 908 Umathela is effectively an isolated dominion, proud, rebellious and free-spirited. It opens its cities' gates to any who want to work or study away from the oppressive, cloistered atmosphere of the imperial heartlands. It welcomes new interpretations of the Abiding Book and new approaches to sorcery. It celebrates bohemian philosophies and muses on the possibilities of assimilating the Agimori in a similar way to the Umathings.

Ilotos fears that the Umathelans could raise a formidable army composed of Agimori and Umathing converts. It fears the renegade sorcerers who have fled Ralios, Arolanit and Seshnela and found welcome in New Hrestolket, Korreinwal and Noarn. It is angered by Umathela's defiance. It will make Umathela pay.

### Cities of Umathela

Seven great cities constitute Umathela. Each is a beacon of civilisation in the arid, primitive lands of Pamaltela. Each has its own character and substance.

**Arstranwal** is a walled city built in the high crags overlooking the Umathelan plain. It is a city of slender spires, clustered buildings and gravity-defying balconies that jut out over the mesmerising drops to the land far below. It can only be reached by one road, known as the Arstanway, which takes two full days to negotiate as it winds through the crags, ascending steeply to the city at its summit.

The city's tallest point houses the Soul Net Observatory, a domed structure created in imitation of the sky, dedicated to the plumbing of sky myths. Glowing nets of magical power drift out from the top of the dome to ensnare sylphs and other insubstantial beings of the air. The observatory is loosely modelled on the observatories of the Dara Happan city of Yuthuppa and the God Learners of Arstranwal have even gone to great lengths to attract Dara Happan scholars, typically Buserian cultists, to both the city and the observatory in a bid to increase their understanding of the sky.

Arstranwal has, aside from its lofty position, another interesting defence. A tribe of Iqari roost in the crags surrounding the city and they have curiously formed a loose alliance with the God Learners. The Soul Net Observatory captured a predatory disease spirit that had murdered many Iqari warriors and this has placed the Iqari in the debt of Arstranwal. The Iqari do not live in the city but they do defend it. Any attempts to attack Arstranwal will be met by 1,000 fierce Iqari warriors and their supporting shamans. The consul of Arstranwal, Loftusus the Ragged, keeps this weapon of mass destruction a secret from the wider empire and secretly relishes the day when the Rightness Army makes the mistake of sending troops to besiege Arstranwal. To further complicate matters the disease spirit captured in the Soul Net – the one that murdered the Iqari – is imprisoned in a series of complex sigils deep within the observatory's crypts. Its myth has been broken and re-engineered. Loftusus wonders, idly, what would happen if the disease spirit were to be released against those who would attack the crags...

**Korreinwal**, This was the first of the Umathelan cities and is Umathela's major port. Favourable currents make it the easiest city to reach from Jrustela and its harbour is deep and wide. Umathela has no navy as such and the Imperial Navy has withdrawn its presence in protest at Umathela's independence (actually, it has not; the Fleet Admiral of the Imperial Navy stationed at Korreinwal was one of those who met a sticky end and the fleet has subsequently been recalled to Seshnela) but it does have an extensive network of merchant-raiders, freebooters and other piratical types who, paid handsomely by the consul of the city, will help defend Korreinwal's honour should the time arise.

Naturally enough for a port city Korreinwal is a haven for scum and villainy. Renegades from the north find a ready home in the city's maze like streets and ghettos and the city welcomes them. The university – a small, select institution specialising in the relationship between theist magic and political power – is conducting experiments in the assimilation of scummish and villainish tendencies into Malkioni doctrine. The idea is to cure the corruption brought into Malkionism by Vadel and the thesis runs thus: to control your enemy, understand him. To understand him, welcome him into your home and encourage his habits. Study those habits and distil their essence. Then, when the time is right, turn those habits against him and burst his spirit. And so Korreinwal allows all manner of practices – theft, piracy, extortion, prostitution, slave-trading and so on – to exist within its confines. The Korreinwal Corruption Revealers, the Revealer group charged with bringing an end to all Malkionist corruption, study the goings-on from afar, posing as the heads of criminal families that seemingly control the crime running throughout the city's streets. In reality these criminal syndicates are all part of the Corruption Revealers' grand experiment and the criminals

who flock to Korreinwal are little more than laboratory mice in a massive labyrinth.

Korreinwal also studies and ponders the nature of political power. The Corruption Revealers have determined that, psychologically, there is little to separate criminals and politicians. Similar thought processes seem to be exhibited by both, along with the same techniques for self-preservation and exploitation. So politics, and the links with scum and villainy, form a central part of Korreinwal University's studies. Korreinwal has elected more Consuls than any two other cities combined; its tea houses buzz with trade opportunities and political gossip. The criminal families and gangs work political agendas into their illicit pursuits and challenge their members with political dilemmas as much as criminal ones. The structures of the crime syndicates mirror the political institutions found in Seshnela and Jrustela.

In Korreinwal crime and politics do not just go hand in hand, they are constant bedfellows and the results and conclusions of the experiment are eagerly awaited.

**New Hrestolket:** The capital of Umathela is a sprawling mixture of architectural styles: wooden buildings jostle with stone; slender towers stand next to squat, round structures; narrow parks thread between wide plazas. New Hrestolket was seemingly built to confound and its name, derived from the prophet Hrestol, was chosen for precisely that reason.

The city is a mixture of God Learners, civilised Umathings and Agimori, traders from Fonrit and curious travellers new to Pamaltela. New Hrestolket thrives on its diversity and celebrates it in grand fashion with frequent parades and feasts.

Two institutions dominate New Hrestolket. The first is the Consulate, where the consuls of the seven cities meet on a regular basis to govern the whole of Umathela. The consulate consists of three linked towers painted in rainbow colours and golden roofs. These towers house the Consular Bueacracy, which is much like the bureaucracy of any other God Learner city save that these bureaucrats have a considerable reputation for honesty and precision that goes beyond mere dedication. Umathelan bureaucrats are trained from birth, forming a separate class of society. Experts in administration and efficiency of office they are the true guiders of the state although the consuls naturally form the policies that the bureaucrats are required to implement. Known as the Secretaries, the bureaucrats occupy a special position in society; they are not viewed as impediments or obstacles by the Umathelans but are instead seen as the gears of a fully independent state.

The second institution is the university, for which New Hrestolket is rightly famed. It graduates more God Learner HeroQuesters per year than any other – an achievement


viewed with barely disguised hatred in the cities of Jrustela. Umathelan Malkioni did not invent HeroQuesting but they have become masters of it. Many Jrusteli families send their sons and daughters to New Hrestolket University to study under the likes of Haraband Thrice-Eye, the legendary Otherworld Explorer who has completed 10 HeroQuests, each from a different culture's myths and published the now infamous treaties 'Otherworlds At Our Command'. These Jrusteli families are, naturally enough these days, worried that their offspring might develop the freemindedness for which Umathela is derided but they worry needlessly. Independence of thought is not something forced into students of the university and many return to their homes unsullied by Umathelan ideals. Some, of course, return having being corrupted in the taverns and inns of Korreinwal but that is a different matter entirely.

Umathelans from all the other cities fill New Hrestolket's inns and taverns during the annual summertime Festival of Disaffirmation. Drinking and merriment accompany this great debating contest, in which entrants vie to prove their rhetorical powers by convincingly denying obvious and incontrovertible facts. Most notorious of these debaters was Rorogard the Puce who so vociferously and passionately argued against his own existence that he disappeared in a puff of logic at the end of the debating session. His first prize was awarded posthumously.

**Noarn:** Another port city and known as Noarn the Clean on account of its innovative, mostali-built sewerage system that runs throughout, and under, the wide, tree-lined boulevards and tidy streets of commercial and domestic buildings.

The dominating structure of Noarn is the imposing Obsidian Temple, a black and grey monument to Malkion's glory that squats at the centre of the city and marks the conjunction of all major roads and paths. The buildings of the Obsidian Temple are almost spider-like in the way they crouch low to the ground, fed by the thoroughfares. At the centre of the temple complex is the Makan Temple, a crown of obsidian and granite ringed by small spires and turrets that form the shrines to the Makan Apostles – 10 legendary heroes who fought for Makan in the Ice Age and were taken, one-by-one, to Solace and Joy as they fell, in self-sacrifice, to the enemies they confronted. These shrines belong to no order or cult and anyone can worship at them. Those who do so frequently enjoy seering, waking visions of the Apostles' glorious deeds and are filled with their spirit and courage. Pilgrimages to the shrines are a favoured way of the Rightness Army's warriors filling themselves with righteous vigour before any impending conflict.

Throughout Noarn one is aware of the presence of architectural brilliance. The city revels in its architecture and



the city is, in many respects, a gigantic experiment in design and form. The designs and forms are breathtaking: inverted ziggurats balancing on small blocks of stone yet blossoming outwards as they scale up; twisting, spiralling towers that bend and sway in the wind; buildings that merge so perfectly with their environment that they are rendered invisible. Noarn architects, members of the School of Symmetrical Light, meet frequently to devise new ways of improving upon the city and building projects are incessant, increasing the city's reach and ambition.

This ambition is in no small part due to the proximity of the mostali of Mari Mountain. A large group of mostali have made a home for themselves beneath Noarn, creating halls that sprawl below the levels of sewers keeping the city clean and fresh. This enclave is eager to contribute to the architectural wonders of the city and they claim that Noarn's ever changing architecture is vital to what they term 'The Goarnst Equation of Mostal', a specific configuration within the World Machine that keeps Pamaltela from floating free of Glorantha's surface and drifting off over the oceans. The mostali maintain this happened, once, when the Goarnst Equation fell out of equilibrium. In that time, which preceded the Great Compromise, Pamaltela was a vast, floating continent that drifted according to Mostal's will but it is now his will that it be anchored firmly in its current location. Scholars of Noarn doubt the truth of the dwarfs' assertions but are happy to indulge them because the city benefits from their considerable expertise.

Noarn also benefits from a relationship with the local ludoch (mermen) who live in the deep bay leading into the city's harbour. These fierce ludoch, worshippers of Magasta and a strange, terrifying water demon known as Mother Tide, provide a guard for sea-going traffic and are rewarded by the Noarn Consul with a potion that grants them ecstatic visions of Mother Tide and brings them closer to her tentacle bosom. Pods of ludoch, usually eight in number, escort all boats sailing into and out of the harbour, leaping out of the water before the vessel's prow, howling their prayers to Mother Tide. As long as the potion flows to them (granted each Sacred Time by the Consul, Nugaris the Dour, head, also, of the School of Symmetrical Light), they offer protection and Mother Tide's blessings. Should the flow of the potion ever stop, the ludoch, it is believed, will call upon Mother Tide to rise from her watery palace and devour the city whole.

**Tarstargawal:** Known also as 'Little Zistorwal' or 'The Small Clank', Tarstargawal is a dingy, grimy city dominated by a Zistorite faction calling itself the Gears of Solitude. The Gears were sent here decades ago to exploit the technology of the mostali and to establish an operating enclave of Zistor on Pamaletalan soil. It was the Gears who levelled the surrounding forests to make way for their factories which churn-out sub-

standard replicas of mostali machines and weapons (none of them work, despite the Gears' assertions to the contrary). Fanatically loyal to the emperor, the Zistorites refused to acknowledge Umathela's independence from the wider empire and actively sought to undermine it. Their sedition failed and now they are kept under city-arrest, forbidden to set-foot outside of Tarstargawal by Consul Cerori D'korrein, the man in charge of the substantial non-Zistorite population.

The leader of the Gears of Solitude is the fanatic Pas-Garalax, a Zistorite mage of considerable ability who feels personally emasculated to be held in Umathela whilst the Clanking City lies under siege by Wyrmfriends and heathens. He sends regular emissaries to the Consuls pleading with them to raise an army to plough into the besiegers but his petitions are in vain: the Umathelan cities want nothing to do with freeing Zistorwal, which they see as a symbol of all that is oppressive as an empire. Pas-Garalax therefore broods and plots: he is conceiving an escape – not just of himself but his entire enclave of Zistorites. He needs outside agents to help him and his people flee Tarstargawal, taking as much of a revenge on his captors as he can, before finding passage back to the Clanking City and taking further revenge against the Wyrmfriends and their miserable allies. He will pay well for the assistance of unscrupulous individuals prepared to help him realise the Gears of Solitude exodus.

**Varanswal:** A small city dominated by its university, the innovative College of Immediate Expansion. Here the emphasis is on mythic experimentation and the college is controlled by a sprawling sect of Hwarosian Mystics who have, perhaps, done more to gain mythic understanding in Pamaltela than anyone else in Umathela. Every four years the consuls arrange a contest for the Imperial Cup; an Otherworld prize awarded to whichever of the universities of Umathela demonstrates significant advances in mythic understanding. The last cup, awarded in 906, was to Varanswal. A team led by the university's dean, Anaut Cernos, leader of the Hwarosians, invented a fictitious deity, Jogrampur, and imported a clan of Tarint Agimori to their city. Slowly they converted these hapless subjects to the worship of Jogrampur and even succeeded in creating a flicker of its existence in the God Plane. Cernos believes that, through the sincere beliefs of his pet clan, he can infuse Jogrampur with even greater power. He looks forward to the day when he personally controls a tame deity, who will grant him magic and perform missions for him in the Otherworld.

It is therefore the case that the College of Immediate Expansion has dedicated all its resources towards creating a massive array of myths concerning Jogrampur. The myths intersect with each of the known myths of the major Gloranthan pantheons, from the Solar Court of Dara Happa through to the petulant Storm Tribe and even the myths of the distant Kralorelans.

The Tarint Agimori have now become devout worshippers of Jograpur accepting him as a son of the Invisible God and lord of all other gods. They have, like the Umathings, begun to realise their own myths for Jograpur and as their reverence grows, so does Jograpur's presence on the God Plane. The manufactured god is moving from a flicker to a flame and as the myths of both the Agimori and the Varanswal Hwarosians gain in depth and stature, so does Jograpur's presence and power. The most devout of the Jograpur cult have begun to find that they can form a pact with the fledgling deity and receive Divine Magic in return. The magic is limited at present but will grow in potency. The Hwarosians watch the growing array of myths carefully and manipulate them intricately to prevent either the Agimori or Jograpur from becoming too powerful too quickly and to keep the mythic base of Jograpur aligned with Malkionism.

These experiments in god creation are, however, producing a sinister side effect for the Varanswal students. A small, but growing, sect of Hwarosians are coming to believe too deeply in Jograpur, forgetting, perhaps conveniently, that his origins are in Anaut Cernos's imagination. The Jogram Witnesses, as this sect calls itself, believe that the Invisible God allowed Jograpur to be created and allows his growth, because Malkionists must have access to Divine Magic and secrets without the need for plundering those of other cultures. Jograpur might have become a god of the Agimori but he is also a god for the enlightened servants of Malkion and they too, through belief and worship, can gain access to powers that God Learners have created. The Jogram Witnesses have begun to take their worship seriously, creating their own pacts and gaining access to the limited Divine Magic Jograpur offers. Anaut Cernos has not followed this path, and openly he cautions against following Jograpur too closely but secretly he is intrigued by the actions of the Jogram Witnesses and wants to see what happens as Malkioni entertain theism. Anaut Cernos therefore gently encourages the Jogram Witnesses to worship a little further, a little deeper and develop even more myths. He is using this small sect as an experiment: to grow Jograpur in stature, gain his power and pave the way for the time when Jograpur will actively serve the Invisible God on the God Plane – through Anaut Cernos, of course.

Naturally enough Anaut Cernos plays down the depth of Jograpur's development whenever the Consul enquires after it but steadily, surely, Jograpur's existence as a deity strengthens and gains in potency.

The cult of Jograpur is detailed in the Cults chapter.

**Yoranday:** The city of Yoranday is a small city of narrow streets and unobtrusive buildings subdued in nature and character. Its university is small – little more than a glorified

college – but home to a considerable gathering of God Learner intellectuals who focus their attentions on the world-famous Psychic Zoo, a menagerie of Otherworld creatures kept in their unearthly habitats by a powerful system of sorcerous wards.

The zoo is held within a series of wide, egg-like buildings on the southern edge of the city. It is not open to the public and is the preserve of God Learner students of the Yoranday College and select invitees from amongst the other Umathelan cities.

The zoo does not house the typical Gloranthan creatures in some form of zoological garden. Held in check by powerful magical wards, devised by the Yoranday College, the zoo holds demons, malevolent spirits and the ghosts of dead heroes from the Dawn Age (or what are thought to be the ghosts of heroes). These specimens are deadly in their own ways but invaluable sources of study for the God Learners. Each represents a particular aspect of the various otherworlds and the God Learners seek to understand more about Otherworld interaction through the interaction of these imprisoned creatures. At the heart of the zoo is the amphitheatre, a warded oval of paved stone where two or more creatures, spirits or ghosts are released together and their interactions studied. Sometimes this is violent conflict (usually where demons are concerned) with the specimens seeking the destruction of the other. Sometimes discourse is the result, with spirits and ghosts spending their time in active discussion that the God Learner observers strain to hear. Occasionally creatures merge together to form some new hybrid and it is these occasions that the God Learners most relish. From the forced interaction of two Otherworld entities a new entity emerges and the God Learners are always eager to understand what this represents: does the new creature signal the creation of a new realm in the Otherworld? If so, how can that world be accessed and exploited?

Such answers elude the God Learners because, on the odd occasion that a hybrid results it lives for far too short a time for study. The most successful hybrid was a fusion of a ghost of a wealthy dead hero and an illusion spirit; the resulting creation was a shimmering creature of gold that spoke eloquently of a plane where all illusions manifest on the Inner World were made real. The hybrid offered to act as a guide on this remarkable plane but it evaporated before an Otherworld Exploration team could be assembled leaving behind a nugget of gold the size of a man's head.

The demons are the most dangerous of all the captured creatures. Hideous monstrosities from a variety of mythical hells, some scream the names of the gods of the underworld, baying for death, whilst others plot and scheme against their captors. The most powerful magical wards are reserved for these monstrosities and the God Learners rightly fear them



but also respect their might. Most powerful of these demons is Radaghastru, a vile combination of boar and human that fought against the trolls in the 'I Fought We Won' battle and was captured by the magics of Zorak Zoran and later traded to the God Learners in exchange for sorcerous knowledge. Radaghastru is the undisputed leader of the demons, hailing from the 12<sup>th</sup> Hell where he was a general of Chaos and a devout servant of Thed. The brood of Glorantha have worshipped Radaghastru as a demigod but do not know he is kept a prisoner of the God Learners in the Psychic Zoo. Neither do worshippers of Thed. If either discovered this information it would lead to attempts to free the demon king and bring Chaos firmly into the heart of Pamaltela. Radaghastru flatly refuses to perform for the God Learners and resists all attempts to be led into the amphitheatre (six people have died in bloody ways trying to make him) but he assists his captors in malicious ways by accurately identifying the nature and capabilities of other demons and spirits held in the zoo and suggesting interesting combinations in the arena. A few God Learners, including the zoo's curator, Nols Eseverwal, have even become friendly with Radaghastru, enjoying lengthy debates with the monster on the nature of the God Time, the structure of the universe and the various kingdoms of hell. Radaghastru seems to know the myths of Shargash, the Dara Happan war god, intimately and claims that, if released, he could lead the way to the dead city of Alkoth, permitting the God Learner armies a significant advantage if they ever wished to seize control of Dara Happa.

The Psychic Zoo's existence is deeply troubling to many in Umathela and Pamaltela as a whole. The elf king of Errinoru has offered a reward to any adventuring band able to penetrate the zoo's defences and disable the wards. He has done so because, held in certain levels, are several very powerful tree spirits and heroes of Aldrya, captured in the deforestation that allowed Umathela to be built. King Oakshuddeer's promises are sincere and word has found its way to various places in Glorantha that considerable wealth awaits whoever can disable the Psychic Zoo and free its prisoners. Radaghastru, of course, knows all about the Elf King's reward and patiently awaits the day when an intrepid assault will free him and his brethren, permitting unprecedented levels of havoc to be unleashed across the southern continent. Radaghastru intends to be at the forefront of that havoc, raising a demonic army that will slay every last God Learner in ingeniously painful ways.

## ZISTORWAL: THE CLANKING CITY

In the God Forgot archipelago, Zistorwal, the Clanking City, rises from the waves, occupying an entire island, covering it in twisted buildings of concrete and metal. Zistorwal, the Jrusteli

name for both the city and the island is a self-contained enclave of God Learners who pursue a semi-heretical goal: the creation of Zistor, a machine/spirit demigod of dubious morality and relationship to the principles of Malkionism.

The Zistorite Movement is a manifestation of the God Learner tendency to create from the material world up. The God Learners are fascinated by the physical manifestations of the world knowing that these hold the secrets of existence every bit as much as the unfathomable mysteries of the Abiding Book.

The Zistorites use Systematicism as a method of understanding, organising and exploiting the material world. The aim of this philosophy is to discern the working systems of the world and exploit them. For example if a spell can be broken into its core systems, dissembled and understood as isolated components, certain 'little laws' can be derived from it. Combining these little laws creates a more basic one: with enough basic laws one gets closer to the underlying system of the universe.

The culmination of Systematicism happened on Locsil (which, later, became known as Zistorwal) where the greatest sorcerers and engineers of the movement collected to create the World's Greatest Machine. Tons of metal and minerals were imported as well as exotic substances such as unicorn blood, Kralori quicksand and sea foam from Kumanku. They also brought with them the plans of the School of Extraordinary Mechanics, a massive blueprint of gears, pipes, pulleys and cages.

The World's Greatest Machine's secret was the Connectivist Order, Zistorite sorcerer-priests who believed in the spiritual connection of all things in invisible ways. The Connectivists used 'focal sorcerers' to link each component of the machine to each other and then to a power source. In this way the Zistorites integrated themselves with the Machine. Purifying themselves improved their efficiency.

The Zistorites continually worked with the principle of Runic Identification: the alliance of oneself with a particular rune. This contributed to both purity and focus, concentrating the energy and capabilities of the Zistorites.

Mechanical war machines were the first manifestations of this Connectivist strategy: sylph-powered weather balloons, flying sea-vessels, ornithopters shaped to resemble bejewelled birds, insects and so on. The second manifestation was the mass production of magical items, starting with simple swords that had Common Magic matrices bound into their fabric so that for the operation of the spell itself, only the user's magical energy was needed to activate the weapon's power.

## Choralinthor Bay



The third manifestation was Zistor, the great mechanical being that could move, think and was self aware. This manifestation was obviously a machine but soon sorcerer-priests began to view the creature as a god. When Zistor began to reproduce smaller models of itself they were convinced of its divinity. This was not viewed as a heresy because the underlying philosophy had always been to manifest the Invisible God.

The ultimate task of the Zistorites is to purify the world and recycle its core components sorting and distributing power and matter to increase the Core Runes. Once done Danmalastan will be recreated and the entire world brought as close to Solace as possible. This they call The City To Be and it has much in common with the EWF's Great Dragon to Be even though the philosophies arose independently. Zistor, the Machine God, will become the vessel of Irensaval, the Divine Light, and the Invisible God will be manifest and revealed through Zistor himself.

## A Blind Eye: The Imperial View Point

Successive Justeli emperors have continually turned a blind eye to the work of the Zistorites, even though the core Malkioni temples proclaim certain parts of their work to be heretical. Zistorwal generates a great deal of useful equipment and magic for the empire, which even the True Malkioni Church has been forced, grudgingly, to accept as beneficial. The official imperial position is that the Zistorites are sanctioned by The Abiding Book; one of its chapters reads:

*To build and develop is innate to the mortal mind and need. That which is constructed with purity of purpose and always with the mindfulness of the Five Actions continues to be holy and great in its wisdom. Danmalastan, lost for so long, will be recreated in this way.*

*I will Be what I will Be.*

From this the actions of the Zistorites gain some legitimacy although certain priests within the True Malkioni Church point out other clauses where artificial life is regarded as blasphemous, because only the Invisible God can make life. This argument is countered with other passages where references to the 'self forging of the soul' is a duty all Malkioni have to the Invisible God. Even the Brithini have failed to successfully counter the Zistorites work and so the Clanking City clanks on, striving towards its goal of creating Zistor, the Machine God.

## Opposition: the New Unity Ring

Yet the Zistorites do not go unopposed. Beginning in 900, as Zistorite plans began to reach fruition, an alliance of humans and elder races have come together to end the Clanking City's presence. By 908 the Iron War is well under way in the form of the Siege of Zistorwal although other, ill-fated attempts to destroy it have already been undertaken throughout the decade – usually by isolated efforts.

The chief opponents of Zistorwal are the members of the New Unity Ring. Its leaders are King Androfin of Hendrikiland, Isildilian the dwarf of Dragon Pass and the Eternal Dragon Ring (represented by Lord Great Burin and the notorious killer, Varankal the Mangler). The New Unity Ring is a mixture of apolitical spiritual alliance. Its goal, though, is the downfall of the Clanking City and, working as a structured unit, under military guidance from its leaders, a great siege of Zistorwal is now taking shape. Old rivalries and suspicions have been temporarily suspended between the three disparate groups forming the Ring, with Wyrmfriender, dwarf and Traditionalist Orlanthe fighting together with common purpose for the first and only time in Glorantha's history. The New Unity Ring represents the elements: Earth is represented by the Aldryami who contribute to the New Unity Army but do not lead it. Water is represented by the EWF, who, through Aroka have command of the waters of Glorantha; Darkness is represented by the uz, who have warlords present with the blessing of Ezkenkekko, the Only Old One; Stone by the mostali; Air by the Windchildren of Ezzjuzz Mountain; and Fire by humans who worship Caladra and Aurelion, and oppose the way fire is used by the Zistorites.

The chief tool of the New Unity Ring is the New Unity Army, which has its base in the Leftarm Isles and is ostensibly commanded by King Androfin although the individual known as the Watchlord is the key strategist. There have been three Watchlords to date. Old Harandos was the first, a trusted Orlanthe thane of King Androfin's tribe and he led the first, disastrous assault on Zistorwal in 907. After him came Serendidas, a Dragon Mystic who was rapidly withdrawn after he made certain, fateful predictions that troubled the New Unity Ring; and now Herdred the Man, another Hendriki

who holds special alliances with the mostali and the EWF, capturing their trust.

All forces in the New Unity Army report to Herdred at his base on Skee Island, in the Leftarm Isles. Herdred advocates a war of attrition; the slow technique of disrupting Zistorite resources and blockading God Learner couriers to starve the Zistorites into submission. Herdred has assembled many heroes to assault the Clanking City and even the God Learners remember their names:

### Great Renvald, called Meldekbane

Perhaps the greatest Orlanthe hero of the Iron Wars and already a great hero of his people when he became the first Orlanthe hero to join the New Unity Army – despite the entreaties of his kin and king. Proud Renvald bears the Blue Sky Shield, which blocks the evil spells of the sorcerers and wields the Green Water Spear that cuts through Zistorite protections.

### Senharlmarch the Clever

Guileful and resourceful, Senharlmarch is a Larnsting famed for his cleverness and intelligence. He has been captured by the Zistorites and it is believed that Senharlmarch has sworn by their false gods to aid the God Learners against the EWF.

### Daranvanth the Wanderer

An extremely important Orlanthe priest and magician, Daranvanth is another Larnsting who wandered far and wide to learn magical secrets that would aid his god and people against the Zistorites. Daranvanth is involved in the great rituals and ceremonies that will bring the Two Year Winter against the EWF and proved the power of Orlanthe when he defeated the wrymish spellcasters with the Invocation of Sacred Names contests. Despite all this, he persuaded King Androfin to support the EWF and the Watchlords in their fight against the Zistorites. Daranvanth is an enigmatic and contradictory figure in many of the stories of this period, making and the breaking alliances, both a villain and a hero – as ever-changing as his turbulent god.

### Beselbarn Greedy-Tooth

A Heortling hero, he is known to be hotheaded and ambitious. Beselbarn is famed for his tremendous strength and his reckless courage. Of great stature and colossal frame, Beselbarn is a key spearthane of the Pride of King Androfin and a personal friend of Herdred the Man.

Though not as clever as Senharlmarch or as mighty as Renvald, Beselbarn has never been personally defeated or even seriously hurt by the Zistorite defenders.

### Ara the Proud

Ara is the red-haired warrior daughter of an Esrolian queen. Ara leads a host of women warriors from across Kethaela (and

even beyond) who seek vengeance against the God Learners. They invoke Vinga and fight with a desperate bravery, rarely taking captives. Ara is noted for quarelling and goading the other Unity Army leaders, which ultimately leads to the Third Alatier Crossing.

#### **Varankol the Mangler**

A Great Living Hero of the EWF, Varankol is the famed warleader of the Aramites – a tribe of savage warriors from Tuskwood who serve the Dragon Ring as ferocious board-riding mercenaries – and is worshipped as a Living Hero by his tribe. He rides Gouger – the darkness demon guardian of the Aramites, which takes the form of a terrible black-tusked demonic pig. He kills foes by the score with his axes, Hewer and Scraper, and enemy blows bounce harmlessly off his helm, Terrifier, and his armour of golden scales. Varankol has tusks like a boar, drinks the blood of his slain foes and is known to savagely mutilate and torture selected captives.

#### **Arapan the Counter**

The mostali ‘treasurer’, Arapan is responsible for ‘loaning’ out mostali treasure and assistance to support the Unity Army. When the Unity Army needs funds, Arapan provides them – generally at a cost.

#### **Kalada Quickroot**

An Aldryami from the forest of Rist in Peloria, Kalada and his band of aldryami steadfastly obey the directions of each Watchlord and have managed to cooperate with the hated mostali and uz against the God Learners of the Clanking City.

#### **Orathin of Salor**

A charismatic priest of the Fiery Earth and powerful orator, driven by visions from the gods of the blasphemous Machine God – a man made Wakboth that promises to be Gbaji returned.

#### **Yazilong the Easterner**

Yazilong is a Kralori hero who came with a small army to fight the enemies of his dreams. They have strange weapons and clothing, and equally strange magic, but they fight well.

The siege takes the form of a vast ring of ships, each carrying warriors of the Unity Army, which encircles Zistorwal and prevents God Learner vessels from entering or leaving the Clanking City’s harbour. The ships are mostali stone ships, each carrying potent sorcery to prevent the Imperial Navy from breaking the blockade. In 907 the Imperial Navy sent the Seventh Fleet from Coralinthor Bay to destroy the Unity Army and the two locked horns in the Deep Water battle, which resulted in the loss of 12 Imperial ships and the damage of many others. No Unity Army vessels were destroyed and, since then, the Zistorites have been forced to fend for themselves as the God Learners are fearful of committing more resources to alleviating the siege through nautical means.

From the ships the various heroes of the Unity Army occasionally take warriors to cross the Alatier Straits and conduct raids and sabotage missions within the Clanking City. All this acts as a diversion. Deep beneath them, the dwarfs and trolls are tunnelling underground, under the sea bed, to create a staging passageway leading right into the heart of Zistorwal. These tunnels are only two or three years away from completion and, once finished, will allow the full might of the Unity Army to leave behind the stone ships and make a direct assault on the Zistorites, bringing down their corrupt experiments once and for all.

### **The God Learner Presence at Zistorwal**

Zistorwal is controlled by four separate entities – individuals and accretions of individuals – who direct the Clanking City’s experiments and attempts to realise Zistor. These entities are:

#### **The Triumvirate**

This creature is an amalgamation of the three most powerful sorcerers in the world, all of them Zistorites, who have consented to become melded into a single, sorcerous being. This being takes the form of a triple-spired, living building, each spire bearing the immense face of one of the sorcerers. The living triumvirate building sees all that happens in the Clanking City and controls its operations. It continually works spells and wardings to keep the factories alive and is attended night and day by the Order of Triple Calculations, a city-wide cult that feeds the triumvirate with magical energy through its massive prayer wheels and myth cogs, worshipping the building as though it was itself a god.

The triumvirate is fully sapient and communicates with the Order of Triple Calculations through visions and fearful equations that burn themselves along the skin of the order’s disciples. These visions and equations form the orders that must be communicated to the rest of the city and determines the actions of the Zistorites as a whole. Upon completion of the Zistor project the triumvirate will become the brain of the Machine God; a vast triple intellect residing on a plane of existence governed solely by higher mathematics that only the Gold mostali can truly comprehend. The Order of Triple Calculations have all been driven insane by their master’s continual emanations but each one is considered an extension of the triumvirate and this occupies a special place in the manifestation of Zistor.

The triumvirate is terrible to countenance. The three faces of the being gaze outwards and down from their spires whilst the fabric of the building pulses and throbs as though driven by an immense heartbeat. The eyes are blind and idiotic, the mouths drooling a black substance that acts as food for the waiting supplicants of the Order of Triple Equation below. The prayer wheels and myth cogs surround the building, forever turning,



forever droning, forever feeding on the black drool. Members of the order watch their skin for signs of new equations which, when they manifest, sends the recipient scurrying to the Council of Flesh and Metal to have the equation translated into action.

### The Council of Flesh and Metal

This group of sorcerers direct the day-to-day affairs of the city focusing inward on the realisation of Zistor. Their head is Shingallion, who rejected the invitation to form part of the triumvirate so he might attain Logical Transcendence; that state of Systemeticastion wherein all thought and feeling from the populace of Zistorwal is channelled through the council and translated into sorcerous action. The council is part flesh and part machine. Shingallion is almost completely machine, his skeleton replaced with scaffolding and extended to a dozen times normal human height, with his muscles, sinews and organs supplemented by magically wrought devices that keep

him alive. Shingallion's brain is encased in a mighty prayer wheel that forms his head, a cylinder with many organic and inorganic eyes that whirl under their own power.

At his feet are the sorcerers of the council, each attached to Shingallion through metal pipes that feed directly into their hearts and wires feeding directly into their brains. As the triumvirate communicates through mathematics and equations, sending the results to the council through the Triple Calculation runners, the council members read the skin-born equations and translate the results psychically to Shingallion's own intellect. Shingallion then transmits these instructions, ideas and mathematical concepts into the vast machine arrays of Zistorwal which, piece-by-piece, construct the shell of the Machine God around both the triumvirate and the Council of Flesh and Metal's bodies. In time, the Council of Flesh and Metal will become Zistor's heart, pumping sorcerous information to all organs, machines and operations to allow the god to rise.

### Sir Tobor the Visitor

Built quite separately from the Zistor project, Sir Tobor is not human at all and resembles a suit of shining armour that acts as though it has humanlike thoughts and feelings. Sir Tobor is the emissary through which the triumvirate and the Council of Flesh and Metal liaise with the human director of the Zistorite project, residing on Jrustela. Sir Tobor avoids the siege by walking on the sea floor, striding as though walking through air, between Jrustela and Zistorwal. Every so often Sir Tobor pauses in his passage to launch an attack against one of the siege ships, rising up from the depths to deliver great blows with his metal fists against the stone hulls of the mostali vessels. When satisfied he has created some terror, he continues on his way again.

### Mr Lord Henri the Fixer

The secret envoy of the emperor to Zistorwal, it is Mr Lord Henri the Fixer's task to maintain Zistorwal's safety in the face of magical adversity. Once a commander of the Order of Otherworld Explorers he developed, during a quest to the Otherworld, the ability to integrate with any magic system present in Glorantha. This curious ability allows him to understand and, immediately, interpret every spell being used against Zistoral, whatever its source or origin. This information is relayed to the triumvirate and the Council of Flesh and Blood, engaging a remarkable degree of intelligence about the enemy that even these two remarkable magical accretions cannot, individually achieve. It also allows Mr Lord Henri to keep track of the Zistorite rank and file. He takes no action on anything he learns personally but his innate ability to sense

and interpret magic makes him singularly dangerous and an asset to the emperor.

### The Director of Subtle Applications

Based in Jrustela, and directly reporting to the Imperial Court, the Director of Subtle Applications ensures that the empire's political will aligns with Zistorwal's intentions and vice-versa. The occupier of the position is a secret; his name is never revealed and only the Inner Privy Council of the emperor is ever aware of his true identity. The Director has magical communications with the Triumvirate, The Council of Flesh and Metal and Mr Lord Henri the Fixer. Some believe that Emperor Ilotos is the Director; others claim it is his daughter. But the empire's will works through him and ensures that for all its strangeness, the Zistorites always remain aligned with imperial direction at a general level.

### The Nature of the Clanking City

The Zistorites define two parts to the city: Dakal, which is above ground and is the visible structure, is a complex, ever-changing labyrinth of streets, alleys, avenues, factories, workshops, mills and, crouching between them, residences and dwellings, temples and shrines. Dakal cannot be mapped: its streets are ever changing, with new buildings being added, old ones demolished, new streets being cut or resulting from new buildings, old ones vanishing. The Trimvirate commands and controls all this activity. It is known as the Jrusteli Pattern and it is a deliberate attempt to replicate, in stone, masonry and metal the 800,000 equations that are known to have resulted in the ultimate formulation of the Erasanchula during the Second Action. The city of Dakal is therefore something of a living abacus that operates beyond the constraints of physical understanding on the Inner World and works its solutions in the Otherworld – possibly on the Sorcery Plane but perhaps throughout all planes.


It is not uncommon for Zistorwal's residents to fall asleep in one building in one place and awake on the other side of the city, in a completely different building – the result of a complex sorcerous equation undergoing differentiation and balancing. The only stable elements of Dakal, squatting at the very centre of the city, is the Triumvirate and the ziggurat of the Council of Flesh and Metal: all else is malleable.

The residents of Dakal are all members of the Cogs of Zistor cult: there is no other way to be. Each has an assigned role in the preparation of the Machine God although few understand what that role is and obey the orders communicated to them by the Council of Flesh and Metal on a daily basis. On one day a cog might be working as a blacksmith. The next he might be counting rivets. Only the Triumvirate knows the whole picture and it knows every single person and understands their role in the great equations Dakal continually works.

Of particular importance to Dakal are the Prayer Wheels. These drums of all sizes are typically of copper and bronze and inscribed with key passages from the Abiding Book. They must be rotating at all times but for reasons unknown, sorcery will not work on them. It is therefore the duty of every single resident of Dakal to ensure that the prayer wheels continue to turn. One does not pass a prayer wheel without spinning it. If a prayer wheel is near one's residence, one continually checks to make sure it is rotating, rushing out if ever it looks likely to stop. Some cogs are assigned to do nothing but rotate certain prayer wheels, chanting litanies and quadratic equations, as they do so. Dakal is filled with chanting and the scraping and grinding and squeaking of 100,000 prayer wheels constantly turning, competing with the grind and clatter of the above and below ground factories.

Below ground is Zistorgel, known also as Underheaven. Here are the factories that produce the famed magical items of the Clanking City. Access to Underheaven is only ever for those the Trimvirate selects or such duty and it is a privilege to be instructed to descend the Great Iron Stairs beneath the Flesh and Metal ziggurat to take up sacred duties. Underheaven is unknown to outsiders who consider that Dakal is the only manifestation of the city. The mostali suspect its existence and suspect also that it channels an immense seam of magical energy left over from the destruction of the Spike – the same energy that mostali cities also exploit. Their supposition is correct. Directly beneath the island is an infinitely deep well of magical energy that leads into the Otherworld and is channelled, through exceedingly powerful, Triumvirate configured, sorcery into Underheaven's magical factories.

The factories manufacture components for the Machine God. It is akin to the building of an organic being cell-by-cell. So much magical energy is available that countless enchantments can be worked as a side-process and so separate factories make magical items to the order of the emperor: weapons, ships (the Exultants of the Imperial Navy are of Underheaven design) and many, many other tools, weapons, jewels and so forth. All manner of spells are worked into these items: permanent Common magic spells; sorcery matrices; and other, undefinable magics that even the Zistorites find hard to categorise. About 25% are exported to wherever the emperor needs them to be – mostly to the Rightness Army and Imperial Navy in the form of swords, spears, bows and ship timbers imbued with captured sylphs and undines. Underheaven never sleeps, never ceases. In its very centre is the God Hub, an immense pit standing over the magical lode that powers the city and here the body of the Machine God takes shape, piece by tiny piece. Its true form is terrible to behold; a giant, quite clearly, but of a form that resembles the human only in passing. It has many faces – one for each of Elmalkion's different forms – and many limbs. As it nears completion all that remains is



for the final equations of Dakal to be worked, for the surface city to collapse and for the Triumvirate to form the brain and mind of the Machine God, joining with the body to rise from Underheaven and stride the world, remaking Danmalastan and completing the Middle Sea Empire's conquest, finally uniting the land and sea, and bringing together all heathen forces into a single, unified whole. Myths, too, will become unified – so it is believed – and when it rises the Machine God, Zistor, will make Glorantha a single, mythical whole from its many sundered, pagan parts. Gods will not die but they will be brought into their rightful places and made to serve the Invisible God as they once did, before creation ran amok and challenged the Plan.

## EVENTS OF THE IRON WAR

The Iron War lasts from 907 to 917. In this 10 year period Zistorwal is besieged by a ring of EWF, Orlanthis and mostali ships that enforce a blockade around the island, severely limiting Middle Sea Empire vessels from reaching or leaving the island. During the course of the war several key battles are fought and these are summarised here. Note that although described in the perfect tense, the bulk of these events are yet to happen.

### Battles of Alatier Crossing (907- 910)

The Alatier Crossing is just about the only place that large numbers of people can cross to Zistorwal. A tidal flat, it offers, at low tide, several kilometres of open ground upon which to walk. Some parts are slippery, shellfish-ingested boulders and others beach-like sand. This sea-washed strand became a battlefield.

The first battle in 907 was an uncoordinated foray by a variety of draconic Mystics, mercenary adventurers and the insane. Calling themselves the Volunteer Army they responded to the base need to bring destruction to the Zistorites and operated without plan or direction. Zistorwal ignored this gathering of warriors on the far shore and so the Volunteer Army crossed at low tide, howling and screaming for Zistorite blood. The Triumvirate allowed the army to approach Dakal's walls before unleashing a defensive response of its own: Wrack spells and a wave of warriors armed with magical weapons. The carnage was terrible and the Volunteer Army scattered. The survivors either fled or joined the New Unity Army.

The second battle took place in 908 during Fire Season and was known as the Brilliant Summer Attack. The New Unity Army, under Varankol the Mangler's command, made a successful crossing of the Alatier strand and pillaged the clustered, relatively undefended, outer buildings of Dakal

before retreating with moderate losses. The purpose of the attack was to test Zistorite wariness and gather secrets – particularly evidence of the Underheaven's existence.

The third battle, in 910, almost brought the New Unity Army to ruin. Ara, the Vingan heroine, accused Varankol and Senharlmarrh of cowardice for not launching an all-out assault on Zistorwal and relying on siege tactics to wear down the (obviously comfortable) machine worshippers. Enraged, the New Unity Council agreed to an assault, again using the Alatier Crossing. Zistorwal was ready this time and it unleashed its champions: a division of the Rightness Army assigned to the island and initiated into the Cogs of Zistor. A bloodbath resulted with many Orlanthis and draconic heroes falling to the spells of the war wizards and being sliced by the dreadful machines they unleashed. Ara, leading her warband of Vingan warriors, helped alleviate some of the terror by successfully working through the Zistorite defences and pillaging parts of the island before retreating. However Ara's Folly, as this attack was known, cost 5,000 lives, reducing the army by half and causing mass disillusionment in its ranks.

### The Great Drowning (911)

Knowing that the New Unity Army was weakened the emperor commanded the First and Fifth fleets to attack the besiegers by sea. The ships of the Middle Sea amassed at Bemerol and sailed in point to the ring of draconic and mostali ships forming the blockade. Sorcery was worked to sink the New Unity ships but the spells were countered by adjurations – the denial of sorcery – by the draconic mystics positioned aboard the Unity vessels. The Imperial Fleet thus took to a ramming and raiding strategy and gathered good speed to sunder the besiegers. At this point the True Dragon Aroka was summoned (and, in truth, had been present all along, but was dormant in the waves until petitioned, awaiting Orlanthis's apology for his slaying) and the dragon erupted from the ocean swamping the Imperial Navy, sinking half its fleet with its tail and damaging the other half with its great maw. The Imperial Fleet was broken that day and so many ships lost that it would be impossible to launch another sea-borne attack on the New Unity Army.

### Steelfall Battle (916-917)

The Unity Council decided to make one final effort to break Zistorwal. Priests and oracles maintained that the Machine God would rise soon and God Learner raids against various Orlanthis and draconic positions convinced them that an attack was in the making and it would only get stronger if not defeated. They expended great magical effort that year to prepare powerful magic.

Skilled Orators who were owed favours went to the sponsors outside of the Unity Ring to ask for help.

For the dwarfs, Arapan the Counter released 1,000 self-propelled aggression shields and some things for the commanders.

For the humans, the Pride of King Androrfin came – the grand mustering of the Hendrikings from all over Heortland.

For the uz, the secret army would make itself visible, if necessary.

The Above army attacked, led by Renvald, empowered by many great rituals and ceremonies summoned a terrible storm. With the magical dwarf shields they got onto the tidal flats and with their own aggressive powers they destroyed the defences, then started on the second line. Lightning strikes helped them.

Renvald then released the Stormwrath – a special magic obtained through HeroQuesting. The Zistorite army fell to the attackers, their sorcery seared away. The damaged island revealed the Machine Masters, who began their own assault of attack and defense, drawing on the magical power sources of the Underheaven. This helped destroy the Stormwrath.

Renvald then released the Stormrage and a corrosive wind ground through Dakal. The whole island stirred, then and a huge bolt of energy enveloped the surface of the island. The Stormrage withdrew. The island moved and then up stood Zistor itself. The Stormrage was impotent.

At last Renvald called upon Great Orlanth himself, to combat the Machine God. The power was such that the god himself appeared and a titanic battle between them ensued. But Zistor was just a machine and Orlanth a Great God.

Huge terrible and unnatural storms, fiery hailstones, bolts of thunder vomited from the heavens and winds raised that toppled stone walls and cut flesh. Orlanth destroyed Zistor in

this way. The machine was broken and parts fell like shrapnel upon the island below, sometimes penetrating for miles into the ground. That was Steelfall.

The Below Army of the mostali and uz had been busy too and used subterranean routes through darkness to enter into the Underheaven, bypassing Dakal's defences. This was done mostly by the uz who destroyed swathes of the Underheaven as fighting went on overhead.

The Hendrikings, uz and other Unity Army warriors swarmed into the interior defeating the remaining defenders and even pillaged deep below Dakal.

Then, from nowhere, Ten Thousand Iron dwarfs marched through the ruins, ordering the Unity Army to abandon all 'stolen property, which included everything made with mechanical or manufacturing processes'. Renvald, astonished by this surprise and betrayal, protested. The Iron General ordered him captured but Renvald escaped. The general ordered him incapacitated but it was only temporary. Then the general shot Renvald through the head.

Others were also slain because they refused the dwarfs and there were terrible losses between the uz and mostali. But most people gave up most of their treasures.

The Ten Thousand then entered the Underheaven, sealed off the island and scoured it with awful magical curses. Arapan went with them.

Other effects of this were that the Unity Army released several divine entities that had been enslaved by the Zistorites and used to bring life to the Machine God.

Some Zistorites survived and were made prisoners of the EWF and the mostali; others managed to flee, scattering as far and wide as they could with most making for Maniria but others fleeing into Prax. Great revenges were plotted and much resentment followed.



# GOD LEARNER ADVENTURERS

This chapter extends the options for creating a God Learner Adventurer. It does not change the Adventurer creation process found in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* but it does expand upon it, especially in terms of Adventurer background and community.

## EXTENDED GOD LEARNER ADVENTURER CREATION

To create a fully rounded God Learner Adventurer, whether he hails from Jrustela, Seshnela or elsewhere, consider the following background elements before generating your Adventurer's statistics, profession and skills.

### Homeland

The core homelands of the God Learners are:

Arolanit  
Jrustela  
Pamaltela – Umathela  
Ralios  
Seshnela  
Slontos  
Wenelia  
Zistorwal

Each exercises a different influence over cultural backgrounds, professions, cult allegiances and other specifics of community. The homeland can be chosen or rolled randomly. Note the Malkionism Form for the region chosen or rolled.

1D100	Region	Malkionism Form
01–12	Arolanit	Hrestolism
13–25	Jrustela	True Malkioni Church
26–34	Fronela/Janube Valley	Hrestolism/True Malkioni Church
35–45	Pamaltela – Umathela	Umathelan Malkioni
46–55	Ralios	True Malkioni Church
56–75	Seshnela	Hrestolism, True Malkioni Church
76–91	Slontos	True Malkioni Church
92–00	Zistorwal	Zistorisim

### Arolanit

Arolanit was a large Brithini colony that lapsed into conventional Malkionism over time and is now an ardent centre of the veneration of Prince Hrestol. Those who hail from Arolanit may belong to either the cult of Hrestol (see *Cults of Glorantha* page 129) or the True Malkioni Church. Whatever their chosen cult, Arolanitians are sympathetic to, and tolerant of, both Malkionist persuasions considering neither a particular heresy.

### Cultural Background

Arolanit is Civilised. However, roll randomly to determine one's caste within Arolanit society, which stems back to the Brithini colonisation:

**Dronari** are the workers of Arolanit society; artisans, farmers, crafters and so forth. They are, by and large, happy and joyous with healthy yields owing to the Ernalda Compromise. They do not concern themselves with the higher politics of either the region or the empire leaving such things to the Talari.

If an Adventurer is Dronari he will serve a Talari family, providing one tenth of his income to that family.

**Halari** is the warrior caste although it is not confined to the military professions and includes those who have opted to study the healing arts through the Xemelite faith. Halari form the militias of Arolanit towns and cities as well as achieving mobility into the Talari caste through meritorious conduct.

If an Adventurer is Halari he will serve a Talari family and is expected to heed all calls to arms issued either by the family or by the duke of the region.

**Talari** are the land-owning nobles, including the Arolanit ducal families. Only Talari are permitted to own land and are responsible for the welfare of the Dronari who work their fields. Talari have a wide range of professions open to them but tend not to enter the priesthood of their cults.

If an Adventurer is Talari it is necessary to determine what happened to his noble family during the Ducal Wars: Roll on the Ducal Affiliation table:

**Arolanit Caste**

<b>1D100</b>	<b>Caste</b>	<b>Choose Professions From</b>	<b>Preferred Cults</b>
01–45	Dronari (artisans and peasants)	Animal Trainer, Bard, Blacksmith, Craftsman, Farmer, Fisherman, Hunter, Merchant, Miner, Sailor, Thief, Woodsman	Hrestol Lay Membership, Xemela Lay Membership
46–70	Halari (soldiers)	Explorer, Mercenary, Physician, Soldier/Warrior, Spy, Thief	Hrestol membership, Xemela membership, True Malkioni church membership and other Malkionist military order membership
71–85	Talari (nobility)	Alchemist, Champion/Noble Warrior, Courtier, Diplomat, Explorer, Mercenary, Merchant, Noble, Physician, Sorcerer/Witch, Spy, Thief	Hrestol membership, Xemela membership, True Malkioni church membership and other Malkionist military order membership
86–00	Zabari (priesthood/sorcerers)	Diplomat, Noble, Priest, Sorcerer/Witch	Hrestol membership, Xemela membership, True Malkioni church membership and other Malkionist sorcery order membership

**Ducal Affiliation**

<b>1D100</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
01–60	Rebel Talari – fought against Emperor Ilotos in the Ducal Wars.	The rebel dukes were crushed in the Ducal Wars and the Talari families were disbanded. The family that the Adventurer belongs to has either remained rebellious, in which case it is now exiled permanently from Arolanit, or it was absorbed into one of the three loyal Talari families and now serves that family in some capacity. The family is considered a lesser part of the Talari family it now serves.
61–00	Loyal Talari – fought against the rebel Talari in the Ducal Wars and was rewarded for its loyalty.	The three loyal Talari families were given the lands of the rebels and assimilated some of the Talari into their own territories. The three Loyalist families are:  Varthul (dukes of Varthulwal) Kelsi (dukes of Kelsitin) Lauf (dukes of Laufal)  Choose one of these families to belong to. This also determines one's home city/dukedom.

**Zabari** are also land owners but have a tradition of active cult priesthood duties. They tend not to follow the martial orders and concern themselves with the spiritual well being of Arolanit society.

If an Adventurer is Zabari, roll on the Ducal Affiliation table to determine if one was rebellious or loyal. Loyal Zabari

are allied with one of the three remaining Talari families. Rebellious Zabari have either been assimilated into a Loyalist ducal family, in which case they are in that family's service but always considered a lower part of it; or have been exiled, in which case the Zabari has been forced to leave Arolanit and live elsewhere in the empire.

## Jrustela

Adventurers are all loyal residents of Jrustela. Choose, or roll randomly, the city of the family's birth.

1D100	City
01–07	Arshu Phola
08–14	Eradinthanos
15–23	Evrowal
24–32	Frowalkel
33–40	Hathinelthor
41–49	Hredmorinos
50–58	Irenstos
59–67	Jalaneswal
68–75	Orphalsketkal
76–83	Peresk
84–90	Piskosol
91–97	Shenilstos
98–00	Svalwal

## Ducal Affiliation

1D100	Affiliation	Consequences
01–60	Rebel Talari – fought against Emperor Ilotos in the Ducal Wars.	The rebel dukes were crushed in the Ducal Wars and the Talari families were disbanded. The family that the Adventurer belongs to has either remained rebellious, in which case it is now exiled permanently from Arolanit, or it was absorbed into one of the three loyal Talari families and now serves that family in some capacity. The family is considered a lesser part of the Talari family it now serves.
61–00	Loyal Talari – fought against the rebel Talari in the Ducal Wars and was rewarded for its loyalty.	The three loyal Talari families were given the lands of the rebels and assimilated some of the Talari into their own territories. The three Loyalist families are:  Varthul (dukes of Varthulwal) Kelsi (dukes of Kelsitin) Lauf (dukes of Laufal)  Choose one of these families to belong to. This also determines one's home city/dukedom.

## Cultural Backgrounds Available

1D100	Cultural Background	
01–35	Jrusteli Civilised	As per the <i>RuneQuest Core Rulebook</i> .
36–65	Ducal	See the Ducal Background.
66–00	Religious	See the Religious Background.

One may choose the Cultural Background for the Adventurer or roll randomly:

### Ducal

The Adventurer was raised in one of the grand bloodlines of the ducal families found throughout the God Learner Empire and is likely expected to fulfil some grandiose plan of the bloodline's patriarch. What money and influence cannot acquire, sheer guile and force of ambition can attain. The Adventurer likely has access to one of the Knowledge Quester acquisitions programs of the Empire, or perhaps was trained to lead one.

Ducal Adventurers can enter any of the Malkioni sorcery orders found in *Cults of Glorantha* or the Cults chapter of this book, although preference is usually directed to a martial order, reflecting the military background of all the ducal families of the empire.

Determine, also, the status of the family in terms of its political influence.

Jrusteli Background

Background	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
Ducal Noble	Culture (Jrusteli) +30%, Influence +10%, Lore (Regional) +10%, Persistence +10%	Common Magic +30%. Language (Western Seshnegi) +50%, Lore (Malkioni)	4D10x100 silver
	<b>Choose Two +5%</b> Boating, Dance, Evade, Evaluate, Insight, Perception, Riding	<b>Choose Two</b> Art (Any), Courtesy, Craft, Language, Lore, Manipulation, Play Instrument, Seduction, Sorcery (Noble Family Grimoire)	
	<b>Choose Two +15%</b> Sword and Shield, Two Handed Sword, Bow, Dagger		
Religious	Culture (Jrusteli) +30%, Influence +15%, Lore (Regional) +10%, Persistence +10%	Language (Western Seshnegi) +50%, Lore (Malkioni) +10%	4D8x100 silver
	<b>Choose One +10%</b> Dance, Evade, Evaluate, First Aid, Insight, Perception	<b>Choose Two</b> Craft, Healing, Language, Lore, Mechanisms, Streetwise	
	<b>Choose One +15%</b> Sword and Shield, Two Handed Sword, Bow, Dagger, Staff		

Political Influence

1D100	Degree of Influence
01–35	No political influence. The noble family goes about its business as loyal imperial subjects.
36–70	A little political influence. A noted family member has attained status at court or within a ministry but this is the exception rather than the norm.
71–80	Minor political influence. The family has several ranking representatives in political positions and at court. The family's name is known in the circles of power.
81–90	Reasonable political influence. The family has served in the affairs of the empire for many years and helped influence imperial policy. The family is well known and well-connected politically.
91–95	Strong political influence. The family has always concerned itself with political affairs. Many of its members have held high office and continue to do so. The political agenda is strong in their minds.
96–00	Considerable political influence. The family is synonymous with the court and government. Its members marry into politically advantageous positions and all of its members are expected to attain high political office. The family aims to breed emperors.

Religious

The Adventurer was raised in one of the Doctrines of Faith, cloistered from the usual direction of Jrusteli society. Whether by a Missionary, Postponer, Inherent or Delayer, the Adventurer has a firm grasp of how the God Realm affects the rest of the world and will likely follow in his mentors' footsteps in order to further their work. This sort of background also makes for very effective Knowledge Quester leaders, as they will no doubt be able to decipher the twisting secrets of other faiths in light of the strength of theirs.

Religious Adventurers should choose, or roll randomly, for their School of Thought, which will direct their cult choices. See the Religious Schools of Thought table:

Religious Adventurers may also roll on the Political Influence table, to determine the level of involvement in the empire's religious agenda. Substitute the word Political for Religious.

Pamaltela – Umathela

The God Learners of Pamaltela gather in the region of Umathela where they experimented radically with transplanted Slontan Orlanth worshippers who became known as the Umathing. In time the Orlanthi practices were warped beyond recognition into a Malkioni-sympathetic religion that is not dissimilar to the saintly worship of the Esvularings.

The Ducal Wars saw the Umathelan God Learners rebel against the empire. They had forged their own, successful

## Religious Schools of Thought

1D100	School of Thought	Cults
01–20	Missionary (immediate conversion of non-Malkioni)	Atroxic Church, True Malkioni Church, Bardan's Book, Hadmalism, Knights of Volanc, Order of Otherworld Exploration
21–40	Postponer (conversion of non-Malkioni when the time is right)	True Malkioni Church, Hwarosian Mystics, Order of Otherworld Exploration
41–60	Realist (conversion is not the responsibility of the empire)	True Malkioni Church, Emanationalism, Hadmalism,
61–80	Inherent (The Invisible God created pagans as part of The Plan and they should be left to their own devices)	True Malkioni Church, Emanationalism, Hadmalism,
81–00	Delayer (Pagans should be converted but the Invisible God will determine when and how)	True Malkioni Church, Emanationalism, Hadmalism,

state in Pameltela and their veneration of the Invisible God had diversified considerably from Jrusteli and True Malkioni doctrine. This displeased Emperor Ilotos and he made attempts to bring the Umathelans back into line with unsuccessful results. As the Ducal Wars raged in Seshnela the Umathelans ceded from the larger empire and now consider themselves a completely separate state. Whilst it practices a very different form of Malkionism (Umathelan Malkionism) it is nonetheless God Learner-like in its philosophy and continues to meddle in the myths of the Pamaltelans.

Umathelan God Learner Adventurers are Civilised, as per the *RuneQuest* rules they may also take any of the Jrustelan Cultural Background options to represent their ancestry. They consider themselves a separate race and are contemptuous of the slavish obedience to the empire offered by their northern cousins.

Adventurers may also opt to be Umathing, descendents of the Slontan Orlanthi imported for Umathelan experiments. The Umathing cults are described in the Cults chapter, as is Umathelan Malkionism. If a random roll is preferred for Umathelan origin, use the Umathela table:

### Umathela

1D100	Umathelan Culture	Cults
01–60	Umathelan Malkioni	Umathelan Malkioni Church
61–85	Umathing	Umathing
86–00	Umathelan Agimori (use the Pamaltelan Agimori background from <i>Glorantha: The Second Age</i> , page 241)	Agimori

Umathelan Malkioni may also roll on the Religious Schools of Thought table to determine primary approach to non-Malkioni religions.

Umathings worship the Umathing gods (see the Cults chapter for more information) and may be either Barbarian Umathings, living on the outskirts of the seven cities of Umathela, or may be civilised, living in and amongst the Malkioni.

### Umathing Culture

1D100	Umathing Culture	Professions
01–65	Barbarian Umathing	Any Barbarian
66–00	Civilised Umathing	Any Civilised

Barbarian Umathings retain a certain level of distrust towards the Umathelan Malkioni, despite the education their people have undergone at their hands. Civilised Umathings are far more trustful of Malkioni cultures.

Civilised Umathings may, if they wish, join Malkioni cults or the Umathelan Malkioni church and still retain membership of their Umathing cult.

Barbarian Umathings, on the other hand, cleave to their existing gods and shy away from joining Umathelan Malkioni cults.

### Ralios

Ralios is an extensive land that, whilst being part of the Middle Sea Empire, has large tracts that belong to cultures and faiths other than Malkionism. The God Learner lands of Ralios are the lands of Safelster and the cities that hug Felster Lake, including Kustria.

Adventurers from Safelster are civilised. Choose or roll randomly, a Safelstern city as the home land:

**Safelster Cities**

1D100	City
01-04	Azilos
05-10	Belstos
11-15	Col
16-20	Dangk
21-25	Drom
26-30	Estali
31-35	Galin
36-40	Jorgablan
41-45	Kustria
46-50	Marost
51-55	Merein
56-60	Partan
61-65	Syran
66-70	Tarasdal
71-75	Tinaros
76-80	Tiskos
81-85	Tortun
86-90	Uton
91-95	Valantia
96-00	Wolfblood

The Safelster God Learners do not practice the caste system found in other nearby regions and are all from the civilised background. However as the region of Ralios is such an eclectic mix of different cultures, including Wyrmfriend and Traditionalist Orlanthi, all God Learner Adventurers from Safelster should roll on the Religious Attitudes table to determine their general feelings towards how other cultures should be treated by the Middle Sea Empire.

Ralios was also free from the Ducal Wars that beset Arolanit and Seshnela – yet it may be interesting to learn the

**Ducal Wars Sympathy**

1D100	Sympathies	
01-35	Loyal to Jrustela	The family supported the actions of Emperor Ilotos and was eager to demonstrate this support during the Ducal Wars.
36-65	Neutral	The family expressed no opinion either way.
66-00	Rebellious	The family was sympathetic towards the rebel dukes. It may or may not have been vocal in this support but it is certainly sympathetic towards the exiles of Seshnela and Arolanit who have been forced to leave their homelands and may even shelter refugee rebels.

sympathies of an Adventurer’s family: roll on the Ducal Wars Sympathy table.

Safelstern Adventurers choose the civilised Cultural Background and may then choose any profession appropriate to the culture.

**Seshnela**

This is the God Learner heartland and it has always been of significant influence on imperial policy. However in attempting to exert influence over Jrustela it fell foul of Emperor Ilotos and suffered during the Ducal Wars.

What duchy does your Adventurer come from?

**Seshnelan Duchies**

1D100	Duchy	Preferred Cults	Ducal Affiliation Modifier
01-10	Joriland	Any Malkioni	0
11-20	Kaniland	Hrestol and Xemela	-10
21-30	Nolos	Any Malkioni	-5
31-40	Pasos	Any Malkioni	0
41-50	Pithdaros	Any Malkioni	+5
51-60	Rindland	Any Malkioni	0
61-75	Seshland (Seshnela)	Any Malkioni	+5
76-00	Tanisor	Any Malkioni	+10

Seshnela does not operate the caste system found in Jrustela or Arolanit. Its people are Civilised and professions are as for that background. However all Seshnelan Adventurers should choose, or roll, the allegiance of their family during the Ducal Wars. Apply the Ducal Affiliation Modifier to the roll.

## Ducal Affiliation

1D100	Affiliation	Consequences
01–35	Rebel family – fought against Emperor Ilotos in the Ducal Wars or supported those who fought.	The rebel dukes were crushed in the Ducal Wars and the families were disbanded. The family that the Adventurer belongs to has either remained rebellious, in which case it is now exiled permanently from Seshnela, or it was absorbed into one of the loyal Seshnelan families and now serves that family in some capacity. The family is considered a lesser part of the Seshnelan family it now serves.
36–65	Neutral – the family refused to take sides during the Ducal Wars.	Few but neutral families are still viewed with some suspicion and, perhaps, disgust by those who chose a side.
66–00	Loyal family – fought against the rebel families in the Ducal Wars and was rewarded for its loyalty.	The loyal Seshnelan families were given the lands of the rebels and assimilated some of the rebels into their own territories.

## Slontos

Slontan Adventurers hail from one of the three main regions: Wenelia, Ramalia or Maniria. Additionally, Jrusteli are also found in Esrolia although, following the Battle of Derovan in 842, they no longer exercise the power they once did.

All Slontan Adventurers can take advantage of the Jrusteli Ducal Background if so permitted by the Games Master.

1D100	Region	Preferred Cults
01–30	Wenelia	Any Malkioni
31–60	Ramalia	
61–90	Maniria	
91–00	Esrolia	

Having determined region, roll for the city of origin:

### Wenelia

1D100	City
01–25	Rothor
26–50	Eenlor
51–75	Narilor
76–00	Thanor

### Ramalia

1D100	City
01–25	Annor
26–50	Veakmal
51–75	Soster
76–94	Wesluk
95–00	Ravin

## Maniria

1D100	City
01–25	Guglar
26–50	Bemelor
51–75	Herolal
76–00	Kaxtorplose

## Esrolia

Esrolian Jrusteli follow the Adventurer creation for Esrolian Adventurers as detailed in *Glorantha: The Second Age*. However, as an additional step, determine how these Malkioni Esrolians view the two other competing religions in their country. Roll on both the EWF and Imarja columns.

1D100	EWF	Imarja
01–40	Neutral	Neutral
41–70	Curiosity	Suspicious
71–00	Revulsion	Pagans!

**Neutral:** Despite the faults and failings of either the EWF or the Imarja cult you can live and function happily enough amongst these heathens because, ultimately, neither faith can hold a candle to Malkion's glory. They can be taken or left.

**Curiosity:** The Draconics of the EWF cannot be said to worship anything, which is, in itself, an intriguing concept. They clearly have faith of sorts and clearly derive their magic from somewhere but precisely what Wyrmfriending is, and what it seeks to achieve, is a mystery. You are curious to learn more.

**Suspicious:** The Gradmothers of Esrolia are all worshippers of Imarja and the 10,000 goddesses. Some claim to accept

Malkion and some even pay homage to the emperor but, honestly, the Grandmothers are self-serving and conniving. Their actions over the past 200 years have brought war to their country and it is all because they cannot make their mind up over which empire to ally itself with. This is how the Stygian Empire arose...

**Revulsion:** Godless serpent-lovers who want to become dragons! This is to deny the very humanity the Invisible God gifted to the world. These ungrateful bastards do not deserve a place in Glorantha and it is a shame that the Battle of Derovan was lost. The only good draconic is a dead draconic. At least Orlanth had the right idea about one thing...

**Pagans!:** Like all pagans the Esrolian Grandmothers worship thousands of small gods because they cannot bear to witness the single glory of a unified creation. They know, of course, that there can be only one god and that one god lets all other, false gods, exist because it serves some inexplicable purpose but, ultimately, the Ersolians who worship Imarja are all doomed when Danmalastan returns to the world. There is no Solace and Joy for *them*.

### Zistorwal

Inhabitants of the Clanking City are all members of the Cogs of Zistor and every single member of the Cogs of Zistor plays a part in the construction of the Machine God. What part do you play?

Zistorite Adventurers may also have originated from elsewhere in the empire. Roll a dice; if the result is odd, then you were born in Zistorwal and know no other life. Your background is Zistorite and you choose from the professions listed for the Zistorite background.

If you rolled even, then you are serving in Zistorwal but were born elsewhere. You should choose another region, culture and background from this chapter but you are a member of the Cogs of Zistor.

## EXTENDED FAMILY GENERATION

As an optional rule, Jrusteli Adventurers can use the following system for generating their family, replacing the core rules from the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

### Number of Extended Families in the Clan

First of all, determine if your family is part of a clan: that is, an extended group of families falling under the control of a particular patriarch.

Roll 2D6-2. The resulting number is the number of families, in addition to your own, that form the clan. A result of zero indicates that your family is self-contained with no additional family extensions.

1D100	Part to Play
01-18	I make the intellect. My thoughts feelings and dreams are poured into the Machine God's own intellect so that he will have the wisdom and insight of the many – not the few – just as Malkion had.
19-35	I contribute to the Form. My strength becomes the Machine God's strength. My blood is his blood. I contribute a measure of blood each season, drawn from my own veins, to join the Blood Vats stored in Underheaven, which will course through the channels of Zistor when he attains life.
36-54	I am of the heart of Zistor. Every season I enter the Dream Coffins of the Triumvirate and spend a month in deepest sleep, my dreams and emotions flowing into Zistor's heart so that the glory of Malkion, as seen through my eyes, will be his. All my experiences and desires are laid bare so he will understand all humankind. The nightmares that follow are a small price to pay.
55-73	I am Zistor's soul. I do nothing for now but my duty. When the Triumvirate calls I will walk gladly into the Dissembly Chamber and allow my mortal form to be rent, particle from particle, releasing my soul to join the hundreds of souls that will make the One Machine Soul; the Ghost of the Machine.
74-92	I am Zistor's Wrath. My anger will be channelled into Zistor's loins and muscles to smite the foes that dare defy the inevitable and degrade the Invisible God. I channel my anger daily and rage against the world: death to all heretics! Life to Zistor! When the glorious comes I will be the first to dash myself against Zistor's iron body and let my anger pour into his weapons and magic.
93-00	I am Zistor's servant. I polish and clean, oil and prime, spray and rub. Zistor is a clean god and he will cleanse the world of heathens and so bring us closer to Solace and Joy! Oh see how Zistor shines!





Background	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Starting Money	Professions
Zistorite	Athletics <i>or</i> Brawn +10%, Culture (Zistorite) +30%, Lore (Clanking City) +10%, Resilience +10%	Common Magic +30%, Language (Western Seshnegi) +50%, Lore (Zistor)	4D10x100 silver	Alchemist, Blacksmith, Craftsman, Miner, Physician, Priest, Sailor, Scholar, Soldier, Sorcerer , Spy, Thief,
	<b>Choose Two +15%</b> Drive, Evade, Evaluate, Insight, Persistence	<b>Choose Two</b> Craft (any), Engineering, Language, Lore (Malkioni), Manipulation, Mechanisms, Sorcery (Cogs of Zistor)		
	<b>Choose One +5%</b> Cogs of Zistor Combat (Spear, Sword, Shield, Crossbow)			

## Clan Type

Is the clan you belong to landed and in control of substantial territories? Or is it simply an extended family aiming to secure power and prestige in the empire? Roll to discover...

1D100	Family Status
01–10	Ducal clan of renown, with territories in one of the Jrusteli dominions.
11–25	A clan of barons – those who have been granted land by a duke and to whom you owe allegiance.
26–80	A prosperous clan with a small amount of land granted by a previous or the existing emperor.
81–90	A family with no land to call its own but plenty of contacts with those who have it.
91–00	An impoverished family attempting to make its way in imperial society.

## Your Family's Position

How close is your family to the patriarch? If the result of the previous step was zero, then your family is directly related to the patriarch.

If the result of the previous step was greater than one, consult the Clan Position to determine your family's position in the clan food-chain. Note that the result of the indicated die roll will not exceed the number of Extended Families result (so, if there are five families in the clan, indicating a 1D6 roll, you should ignore a result of six, meaning your family is in 5<sup>th</sup> position).

Number of Extended Families Result	Your Family's Position
1	1
2–3	Roll 1D3
4–6	Roll 1D6
7–8	Roll 1D8
9–10	Roll 1D10

## Direct Relationship

If your family is directly related to the patriarch and your Adventurer is male, then you need to determine his position in the patriarch lineage. You therefore need to determine who is above you in the familial pecking order.

Roll 2D6-2.

If the result is zero then your Adventurer is, through some fortune or misfortune, the patriarch. Perhaps your father and elder brothers are dead or have been ostracised for some reason (or you never had any elder brothers).

Any result greater than zero indicates the number of males between you and the patriarch. This will be either your father, and/or elder brothers, and/or uncles and cousins. You should work out the specifics with the Games Master. However, you are some way down the pecking order and the 2D6-2 dice roll determines how far.

## Favour?

Despite not being the heir, there is a chance that your Adventurer has established some favour with the patriarch, despite your position. Make a 1D100 roll and compare it with your CHA. If the result is less than or equal to CHA then your Adventurer is a favourite with the patriarch; you gain a +10% bonus to your Influence skill as a result of this favouritism. Come up with a reason in consultation with your Games Master.

If the 1D100 roll is a fumble then your Adventurer is out of favour for some reason. Your Influence skill suffers a -10% penalty. This disfavour might be something you have done, or something someone else has done that reflects poorly on you. Come up with a reason in consultation with your Games Master.



## Indirect Relationship

If your Adventurer is part of a branch of the clan that is some way down the social pecking order it is simply enough for you to know that there are a number of males in the family with greater patriarchal standing than yourself. Consult with the Games Master to decide how many. However, your Adventurer may still attempt a Favour roll – roll 1D100 and compare with half your CHA. If successful then you are, indeed, a favoured grandson/cousin/nephew or whatever and your patriarch looks fondly upon you. Gain a +10% bonus to Influence. This may actually cause some resentment in family

elements closer to the patriarch and you should discuss how this is viewed with the Games Master.

If the 1D100 roll is a fumble then your Adventurer is in disfavour in precisely the same way as a fumble for a Direct Relationship favour roll.

## Clan Plans

The roll of the patriarch and the clan's Traditions is to make suitable alliances in order to improve the clan's standing. Are you affected by any of these plans? Roll 1D100 to find out – note, you should roll on this table whether you are male or female:

1D100	Plans
01–40	No Plans you need worry yourself about.
41–50	Marriage – Your patriarch has decided that you should marry someone that will help strengthen the clan's position. Roll 1D100.  01–50 – An allied clan to strengthen the relationship. 51–80 – An outside clan to create a new alliance. 81–95 – A family in a completely different region or country to settle some form of obligation or debt. 96–00 – An enemy clan or family to bring some form of feud or disagreement to an end.
51–60	Political Office – You are being groomed to move in political circles. Roll 1D100.  01–10 – Sent as a clan representative to the Imperial Court of Emperor Ilotos. 11–60 – Sent to become an official in one of the Imperial Ministries. 61–80 – Sent to act as an adviser or functionary in a ducal family. 81–00 – Sent to act as an emissary or functionary in a distant holding or territory.
61–70	Cult Office – You are initiated into a Sorcery Order not of your personal choosing or leaning, in order to please the patriarch. Strings are pulled to automatically make you an Initiate of the cult; the Games Master will decide what order your initiation concerns.
71–80	Clandestine Friendship – Your patriarch wants you to cultivate a friendship (not romantic) with either an allied or enemy clan or family in order to gain information or intelligence of use to your own clan. Make an Influence roll:  Critical Success: You have become best friends with the subject of the liaison. That person becomes an Ally.  Success: You have established the friendship but it needs further work. That person becomes a Contact.  Failure: Forging the friendship has proved to be difficult. Your patriarch demands that you keep trying. This should form part of your roleplaying experience.  Fumble: Disaster! Your attempts to become a friend backfire and the person targeted becomes an Enemy. This also incurs the displeasure of your patriarch and you suffer a –10% Influence penalty. You will need to work hard to redeem yourself in your family's eyes.
81–90	Internal Spy – Your patriarch orders you to investigate a member of the clan: this may be someone close to you or in one of the clan's sprawling branches. You must decide, in consultation with your Games Master, who and why. Success in this venture will gain your direct family status within the clan and personal honour for yourself.
91–00	You are sent to study the pagans outside of Malkionism in order to learn of their cultures, myths, capabilities and so forth. This may be seen as exile but is an honoured mission. It will be your duty to cultivate friendships and contacts amongst the pagans of Glorantha – and return with worthy information for your patriarch.

# ORDERS, CULTS AND FACTIONS

This chapter covers a great deal of ground: it offers an overview of Malkionism, provides some insights into the structure of the Abiding Book, describes a series of new sorcery orders and cults for Jrusteli Adventurers and rounds out with some new spells.

The chapter also includes details on trading guilds within the empire, an important tool in the Jrusteli's imperial ambitions.

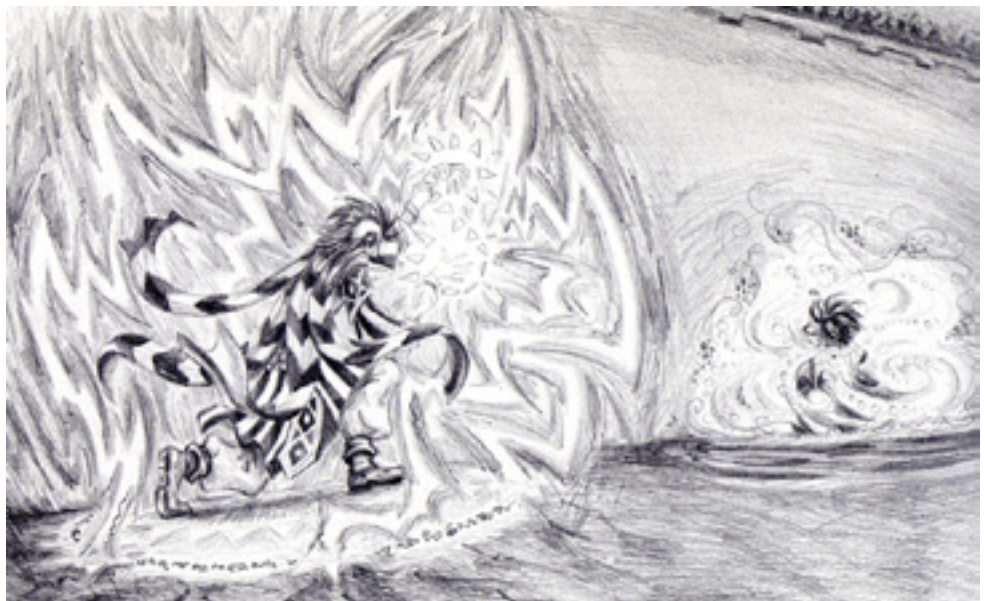
## THE MALKIONI RELIGION

When the Nralarites first landed on Jrustela hundreds of years ago, they brought with them the pre-eminent form of divine worship current in the West – the reformed Malkioni church founded by Prince Hrestol. While the Nralarite settlers had some theological differences with the Seshnegi they left behind, the church on Jrustela only began to diverge from that of Seshnela later in the colony's history. The divergence began when the cities of Jrustela began to use Insight Contests to resolve disputes instead of resorting to force of arms. Instead of expending money and effort on armies, the cities of Jrustela invested in universities and education, turning the island into an intellectual hothouse. While Seshnela held to its caste-based hierarchy and simple, literal reading of the teachings of Old Malkion and Prince Hrestol, Jrustela became home to an increasingly baroque and bizarre procession of faiths and interpretations of Malkionism. The importance of Malkion as prophet was reduced constantly as scholars moved towards a more remote and abstract conception of the Invisible God. They venerated Makan, the cosmic principle of Mind.

By the early 600s, the Insight Contest system that had ensured peace between the cities of Jrustela was beginning to break down. Each city in Jrustela had its own set of beliefs and axioms, its own city-cult and the Insight Contests could not reconcile the fundamental differences

between these belief systems. An Insight Contest worked only if every city agreed on the same basic principles and the original Hrestolite principles had long since been outmoded by the Jrusteli philosophers. Some feared war would soon sweep over the island; others worried that religious communication between the Jrusteli and their Seshnegi kinsmen was becoming impossible. The religious conferences at Eridinthanos in 643 and 646 was ostensibly an attempt to build connections between the various Jrusteli Makan sects and the old Malkioni of Seshnela but were really aimed at hammering out a new common ground for Makanism.

They should have failed. The various interpretations of Makanism followed by the various cities were too different and the first conference ended without any real progress being made. The second conference seemed equally doomed. Representatives from all the cities of Jrustela were in Eridinthanos when the martyr Serezos was dragged before the conference. Serezos had argued for the veneration of Makan through a combination of magic and faith, a merger of logic and devotion and the offering up of personal power, which was close to the theories advanced by the settled north-eastern cities like Evrowal, Piskosol, Hredimorinos and Hathinelthor but quite at odds with the more traditional beliefs of Norvalela or Peresk. Then, a miracle happened.



## THE ABIDING BOOK.

In the year 646 the quarrelling lords of Jrustela met to try to settle their differences. Each had his own agenda and the meeting was beset by arrogance and disagreement. The discussions were fractious and proceeded for three days with no progress gained. On this third day the meeting was abruptly interrupted by strains of faint music, sweet and lilting. This took the lords unawares and they prepared to defend themselves: then everything was frozen and only thought was allowed to remain fluid.

A pulsing ball of light appeared at the eastern end of the meeting room. It hovered above the ground and the shape of an immense book, a Grimoire, began to take form. This excited the sorcerers in the meeting who would have rushed forth to claim it but all were frozen, rooted to the spot. A million jealousies coursed through those minds at that point.

The book was a metre high and wide. It was closed and its cover was of gold with silver corners, edges and spine. The book was thick. Its thickness could not be perceived. Slowly the book moved out from the light and suspended itself in the air and began to open, revealing the pages, gilt-edged, within. The pages, much to the disappointment of the eager sorcerers, were blank. Then, a right hand emerged from the light and, with index finger extended, pointed at the first blank page. The page began to fill with writing and, when full, turned of its own accord so that the next could be filled. And so this continued for hours and it did not end until dawn of the next day. Then the hand withdrew, the ball of light dissipated and the book slowly closed and floated to the table around which the lords of Jrustela, still immobile, sat. Their immobility was lifted and, hesitantly, they opened the book.

The 13 lords took turns – the first time in three days they had taken turns at anything – in reading a portion of the book. The first phrase was:

*‘There is no God but the Invisible God and Malkion is his Prophet.’*

Its meaning was apparent: each of the 13 was mentioned as being amongst the Chosen. The book contained messages of spirituality, unity, benevolence and harmony, with guidelines for good living and many other lessons applying to governance, conduct and behaviour. It also contained myths, truths revealed, the architecture of the plan and the codices for spells. The lords swore to uphold the book. Thirteen copies were made and a copy given to each lord and from there the word of the book was taken out to the people; these preachers were known as the Saintly Book Bearers.

The name for the Invisible God in Jrustela was, at that time, Makan, and so the book was called, at first, the Book of Makan. Others called it The One Book and, with time,

because its message was so perfect, it became known as the Abiding Book. Its arrival brought the people insight, peace and abundance. This period was known as the Pure Revelation and it was followed by the Return to Rightness Movement as the people began to understand, from the book, how far they had drifted from it.

However the Rightness was not to last. Those unwitting, eager sorcerers who were fools to their own ambition saw the subtext of the book and how, through careful study and subtle manipulation, the universes of reality and myth could be tampered with, exploited and changed irrevocably. They mistook this for Malkion’s instruction, misinterpreted the subtext as the true word of God. These men became The God Learners.

In the years that followed various old religions changed their philosophies as the God Learners revealed more and more about the ways in which myths could be manipulated. Much of this change in philosophy was innocent and gradual. In others it was abrupt and corrupt. Change came quickly and was accompanied by rapid expansion that is still continuing and is known as the Middle Sea Empire. The cults that follow are the key cults, based on ancient Malkionism and other philosophies and the revelations of the Abiding Book in the Return to Rightness period.

Copies of the *Abiding Book* were quickly made and sent to every city of Jrustela but tales of the miracle raced far ahead of the scribes and messengers. For months, the land was awash in revelation and rapture – the Invisible God had manifested on earth and eschatonic beliefs and cults were widespread. Other rumours were less divine; there were at least three conflicting stories of how the Abiding Book had appeared and enemies of the state seized upon this contradiction as ‘proof’ that the Book was in fact a forgery. This heretical theory held that the Abiding Book was too perfectly written to solve all the current theological debates and schisms in Jrustela and that God was unlikely to have reached down from the realm of Solace just to resolve the philosophical logjam between Irenstos and Arshu Phola over the status of the souls of their pagan ancestors. The detractors of the Book could never explain how the Abiding Book could contain revelations about the nature of existence and new magical spells but the heresy still crops up from time-to-time even in the present day.

The transfer of the Abiding Book from its original shrine in the Old Cathedral of the Book in Eradinthanos to the Holy Mountain in Seshnela took place in 789. A precise copy of the Holy Book, perfect in every way, was placed in the shrine in its stead, while the original was brought to the harbour and placed on board a special ship, the *Bookbearer*, which was built especially for this purpose. The *Bookbearer*, escorted by the Imperial Navy, sailed north with great pomp and ceremony to

Pasos, from whence it was carried by a procession of knights and sorcerers and nobles north to Frowal. The *Bookbearer* was burnt as an offering after the Abiding Book was taken ashore.

The Pilgrimage of the Book was the greatest religious event in Seshnela in centuries and festivals and days of prayer were held in every town the Book passed through. When it reached Frowal and was placed in the New Cathedral of the Book, all the knights who had escorted it took holy orders and joined the Order of St. Volanc the Crusader. To this day, every town from Pasos to Frowal still celebrates the Day of Pilgrimage, commemorating the day the Book passed through.

In fact, the Abiding Book took a much less grand path north to Seshnela. The Jrusteli scribes had been making perfect copies of the Book for decades and the kings and lords knew the Abiding Book would be the target of every enemy of the Empire while it was outside the protection of the cathedrals. Ten perfect copies of the Book were made and six months before the *Bookbearer* was launched, 10 different groups of trustworthy agents left Eradinthanos in the dead of night. Nine of these groups bore a copy of the Abiding Book. The 10<sup>th</sup> copy was placed in the Cathedral while one of the groups carried the original. None of the groups knew which of them had the actual Abiding Book.

Eight of the groups made it to Frowal; two were drowned when their ships sunk in an unseasonal and unusually violent storm that blew down from the north-west from the direction of Brithos. The few officials who knew about the 10 secret travellers assured the king that the two books that drowned were just copies of the original and that the Original was now safe in the vaults in Frowal. The Original remained there until the grand procession arrived some weeks later, whereupon it was covertly switched for the copy carried by the *Bookbearer*.

The 10 secret copies of the Book were a state secret, known only to a handful of people and when the last of them (Emperor Svagad himself) died, he took with him all knowledge of this deception.

## SECRETS OF THE ABIDING BOOK

The Abiding Book is a difficult text to classify. It contains the history of the Invisible God and the Five Actions; the nature and purpose of Danmalastan and the history of the Six Tribes; the revelations of the Vadeli and other sources of corruption. In this sense it is a book that offers the literal, unassailable history of the Malkioni as a faith and the origins of the peoples of the west, including the Brithini and the Waertagi. These sections of the book are called the *Danmalastan Cantos*.

Yet it is more than this. It is also a moral and philosophical framework in that it describes what law is, what crime is, what is acceptable and taboo, what forms of behaviour are expected and how all these things serve the Invisible God. These sections of the book are called the *Moral Cantos*.

*The Otherworld Cantos* describe, in varying degrees of detail, the structure and nature of the Otherworlds as seen through the Malkionist prism. In this section the Runes, or Erasanchula as the Abiding Book names them, are described and assembled into the commonly understood hierarchy (Primal, Elemental and so on). Each Otherworld plane is described in esoteric terms, which have required much study interpretation but fundamentally underpin the HeroQuesting agenda of the empire. The universe is presented not as a miracle of creation but as a structured, ordered, interacting series of realities that can, with the right magic, be exploited within the Inner World. *The Otherworld Cantos* even give express permission for Malkioni to do just this: *'I give you the universe. It is in your hands.'*

But, of most importance to most God Learners, are the sections devoted to magic and sorcery. The knowledge and use of sorcery predated the Abiding Book's appearance, of course; the Brithini are masters of the art and the mostali stole sorcery from Zzabur (so the Abiding Book claims). However the four sections devoted to sorcery are the ones that inform the sorcery orders of the empire and help establish their power. These sections are:

*The Knowledge Cantos* – Discussions on Divine Magic, Spirit Magic and Common Magic. They establish legitimacy of each in the world but stipulate that each is a limitation based on a limited source.

*The Common Cantos* – These are the formulae for the sorcery spells that are the basis of every sorcery order throughout the empire. In this section the way of manipulation is explained and taught and all of the spells in the Sorcery Chapter of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* are found.

*The Order Cantos* – These are the spells that have been assigned specific functions for specific sorcery orders and they are not intended for widespread use. These are the sorcery spells found in the Magic chapter of the *Cults of Glorantha* book. Some additional spells from the Order Cantos are provided in this chapter.

*The Forbidden Cantos* – These are spells of such power and such a special nature that only those the Abiding Book chooses may gain access to them. The Forbidden Cantos contain hundreds of spells and revelations but to most eyes the words in the Forbidden Cantos are gibberish: meaningless

sigils, incomprehensible diagrams, equations and unbreakable codes. They are clearly spells but the Abiding Book only reveals the nature of these pages to viewers it decides are worthy enough, important enough or have a specific purpose to fulfil that requires a Forbidden Cantos spell.

Those individuals so chosen receive a summons from the Abiding Book in the form of a vision or dream. They are drawn to the Abiding Books crypt and the guardians immediately know that this visitor is 'A Forbidden Reader'. He is allowed to stand before the Abiding Book, which opens of its own accord at the Forbidden Cantos and the page(s) where the spell is located. The reader is immediately able to understand the spell and is unique in doing so. It is his job to memorise it and return with it to his order and transcribe it into the order's Grimoire. From there it is up to the officers of the order to decide who else is taught the spell – and whether it should, indeed, be incorporated into the main Grimoire or be placed in its own. Occasionally a Forbidden Reader will be shown two or three spells but this is very rare.

## THE TRUE MALKIONI CHURCH

The True Malkioni Church was formed immediately after the appearance of the Abiding Book, with the first bishops being appointed at the Second Ecclesiastical Council. Initially, it was just one of dozens of cults that sprang up in response to the Book but the True Church quickly won the support of the Jrustelan lords and won many converts from the established Makan church. Within five years, it was by far the greatest sect in terms of number of devotees and political power.

The True Church's meteoric growth came from its endorsement by the Jrustelan political establishment (who were looking for a united church to maintain the Insight Contests), its reconciliation between abstract Makanism and the more literal teachings of the Hrestoli and most of all from its missionaries, the Saintly Bookbearers. The rise of the Rightness Crusade stemmed from the conversion of the city of Shenilstos to Malkionism and the conversion was done by the Saintly Bookbearers who took the Text of the Book to the pagans. Shenilstos added greatly to the influence of the True Church so much so that a century later, the True Malkioni Church was able to dictate terms and conditions to the most powerful wizards in Jrustela, the New Order.

After reunification, the True Malkioni Church absorbed the scattered remnants of the organised Malkionist churches in Seshnela and became the effective state religion of the Middle Sea Empire. While all the Emperors of Land and Sea have been crowned by the High Ecclesiast, the Emperors have

always held the promise of enshrining the *de facto* position of the True Church in law, making it the *de jure* state religion. As long as the True Church is not the official state religion, it is obliged to tolerate the existence of other strains of Malkioni worship and even paganism – in the eyes of the kings, this is a necessary compromise for the running of a vast trade empire.

### Structure of the Church

At the head of the church is Old Malkion's Shadow, the supreme agent of God on Earth, the High Priest, also known as the Lord of the Department of Religion, also known as the Supremely Insightful Sage and First Witness. He is chosen from the ranks of the Council of Leaders by the Emperor, although it is customary for the Council of Leaders to choose one of their members and for the Emperor to then endorse their selection. In his role as High Priest, he advises the Emperor and the Imperial government on theological matters and sees to the moral wellbeing of the nation. He also votes for the next Emperor (which, in practice, means voting for the son of the last Emperor).

While all Emperors are crowned with the rites of Investiture that were developed by Annmak the Peacemaker and so are considered to have the direct blessing of the Invisible God, this is technically a blessing of their role as King of Seshnela. The position of Emperor of Land and Sea is not one with a divine mandate, so the church considers it purely a civil affair. (This precious act of hair-splitting allows the Church to support the Emperor wholeheartedly in his identity as King of Seshnela while also bargaining with Reformists in the church's heartland of Jrustela.)

In his role as Lord of the Department of Education, the High Priest deals with both the moral and secular education of the Empire, with the exception of the sorcerous and military academies. He also deals with requests from other departments for the use of Church magic, such as sending Xemelite nuns to regions stricken by plague.

Finally, the High Priest rules over the church, appointing major functionaries and granting other positions in the church to the worthy. As Supremely Insightful Sage, he is the final judge (save for God) in matters of spiritual debate and Insight Contests. As First Witness, the pontiff is considered the keeper of the original Abiding Book.

### The Council of Leaders

The Council of Leaders is the great deliberative body of the church. It is composed of the Short Chamber, where the heads of certain orders (called Insightful Orders) sit and the Long Chamber, which is composed of all the members of the Short Chamber plus all the lords of the orders, large and small, and

the priests. Officially, the names of Long and Short come from the rooms where they meet but they also apply to the length of their debates.

The heads are the leaders of the Malkioni True Church. Most hold high positions with the Department of Religion and so are based in Frowal in Seshnela. There are only five heads in Jrustela. Beneath them are the wizards and magi of the many sorcery orders and beneath them are the local priests and functionaries. Not every priest is a sorcerer but a measure of magical power is common among those who rise high in the ranks of the church.

A parallel hierarchy exists among the various monastic and sorcerous Orders. Each Order has a head, often called the abbot or else by a special title unique to that Order (such as the First Pilot of the Order of Otherworld Exploration). Beneath that head are the leaders of the individual institutions or monasteries controlled by that Order. The heads of the various Orders sit in the Long Chamber; a few very important Orders are needed in the Short Chamber and so are called Insightful Orders.

Finally, a Conference calls together the leaders of all approved Malkioni churches in the Middle Sea Empire. In addition to the True Church, other approved groups include the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church, the Traditionalist Seshnegi Church (who grudgingly acknowledge the truth of the Abiding Book while clinging to their old Hrestoli ways) and the Kralorelan People's Church. Unapproved groups are considered heretics and are declared anathema by all approved churches.

## The New Order, the God Learner's Collective, the True Malkioni Church and the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church

The tangled relationship between these four entities is as difficult to elucidate as the thorniest theological dilemma. Briefly – the New Order started out as an unofficial religious group that studied the Abiding Book – they learned to use it as a grimoire and so gained great power. However, they backed the disastrous bid of Pilif the Magus to claim the throne and so were outlawed.

The New Order was placed under the control of the True Malkioni Church and became a religious order dedicated to sorcery. They unlocked the secrets of God Learning, which spawned many new sorcerous groups, both religious and secular, who formed themselves into the God Learner's Collective. The Collective's studies of the Abiding Book gave rise to the religious belief called Malkionerianism, which in

turn gave rise to the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church. This Church is today the second most powerful sect in Jrustela.

So, the New Order started as religious study group, then became a sorcerous order, then became *the* sorcerous order, then became a sorcerous order under the control of the Church and then finally became the organising force behind the Collective. As almost all God Learner sorcerous orders are descended from the New Order, they are technically religious orders but few pay any heed to the True Malkioni Church, preferring their own Malkionerian Wisdom Church.

## The True Malkioni Church in Jrustela

Spiritually, Eradinthanos should be the centre of the Church in Jrustela but that city is entirely consumed by morally suspect philosophies like Malkionerianism. The devout crusaders of Shenilstos are respected by Malkioni but their beliefs are a little too extreme for the average church-goer. Therefore, the average Malkionist looks to Cardinal Calam of Hredimorinos for leadership. The 'people's cardinal', Calam is a jolly man with immense charisma who is well beloved by his flock. Despite being vastly wealthy and influential, he stays in touch with the common people and often serves as the voice of the masses on the Hredimorinos city council. He has managed to avoid becoming associated with any of the myriad political factions warring for control of that city. Stories about Calam's kindness and humility abound; he is said to walk abroad in disguise as a humble preacher and it is believed that he eats off wooden plates, having sold his golden dinner service to a noble and given the proceeds to the poor.

Calam is a canny politician and is known to have his eye on the High Ecclesiast's Seat. For him to win that seat, he would have to have the trust of the church establishment in Frowal, though, and he is unlikely to win their approval if he continues to pander to the general public.

Calam's polar opposite is Cardinal Sambulos, a cousin of Arch-Duke Norlantos. One of the most able leaders in all Jrustela, the Cardinal has done more to extend Jalanite influence into the city of Orphalsketkal in a decade through religion than the rest of his family has done in two centuries through politics. While some say that Sambulos is more interested in advancing his family's status than in glorifying Makan, he has established close ties with the mainland Church and is generally acknowledged to be the voice of the High Ecclesiast in Jrustela.

What should be the most prized seat in all Jrustela, the title of Second Witness, is held by Cardinal Morlant of Eridinthanos. He is a mysterious figure, taciturn and almost otherworldly; he has few friends and is said to trust no-one. Several times,

a bright light has shone from his tower in Eradinthanos and it is believed he has been visited by an otherworldly being. A woman called Ferbrina, known to be possessed of incredible strength and fighting prowess, acts as Morlant's personal agent in Eridinthanos' underworld. Morlant's politics and beliefs are a mystery to all in the church; he may be a secret convert to Malkioneranism, or gathering evidence to prove that the Wisdom Church is fostering heresy.

The other two Cardinals on Jrustela are Cardinal Volanc of Shenilstos and Cardinal Daraslo of Arshu Phola. Volanc was born to a fervent member of the Rightness Crusade and named for the saintly founder of that movement; his rise through the Church has been a swift one. He is covered in tattoos made by timinit artisans – the entirety of the Sharp Abiding Book is written on his flesh. In the estimation of the Rightness Crusade, he is second only to Pompalic, the head of the Crusade, and Volanc's beliefs are even more extreme. He is an outspoken critic of God Learning and even called for Malkioneranism to be designated a heresy at the next Ecclesiastical Council.

Daraslo, at first, appears to be quite the opposite of Volanc. He is the only one of the five Cardinals to be of Olodo descent and was recently appointed. His promotion was an obvious attempt by the church to quell demands for reform by giving Jrustela another cardinal but it backfired on two counts. Firstly, five is an unlucky number in Malkioni circles (four is the number of Right Actions, the foursquare base of logic and reason that underlies the world, while five is the number of the Fifth Action, of decay and betrayal and death). Secondly, while Daraslo comes of an Olodo family and a theist Olodo family at that, he is a member of the Rightness Movement and a close friend of Cardinal Volanc. Daraslo is a committed Missionary and has sponsored expeditions to Pamaltela to convert the Pagans there. He differs with Volanc on only one topic – Daraslo believes that God Learning has a place in the Malkioni faith and can be used Righteously. It is known in church circles that the two made an agreement to temporarily suspend final judgement on God Learning and that Daraslo has another four years to find proof of the potential Righteousness of God Learning. Notable holy men in Jrustela include:

- Forland of Hathinethor, also known as the Fox. He has invested hundreds of thousands of gold pieces of church funds in various speculative ventures and trading cartels but has yet to make a mistake. He is one of the wealthiest men in a city of rich men.
- The timinit, Krotic of Peresk. He is something of a miracle in timinit circles – he is one of the ephemerals, who are only supposed to live for a year. His promotion to the rank of mage was done as a temporary measure – the previous

mage of Peresk had died suddenly and the timinit priest was popular with the army as he had served as a chaplain for several months. When elevated to mage, Krotic experienced a spiritual awakening, which he has yet to fully comprehend but it has somehow allowed him to live past his normal lifespan. At the age of seven, he has lived for five years more than the previous oldest ephemeral on record and shows no sign of succumbing to death and the Solace that awaits him despite his increasingly withered decrepitude.

- Telnor of Irenstos. With much of his authority taken from him by Volanc, the increasingly eccentric mage is free to indulge his obsession with Kralorelan culture and art. He has been working on translating the Abiding Book into the tongue of that land.

## CULTS AND SORCERY ORDERS

The following are new sorcery orders and cults found within the empire. Some are parts of the Rightness Crusade, others parts of the Rightness Army and Imperial Navy.

### THE NEW IRON STAFF

The New Iron Staff is descended from the Sons of Damolstan, an order of war-wizards based in Seshnela. A few Sons came south with the early Nralarite settlers and wandered the land blowing up threats to the colonies. They fought in the wars against the timinit and Olodo but when Jrustela was pacified, there was little place for the militant sorcerers. Some went south to the wilder colonies, others picked magical battles with the Waertagi but most gave up their warlike ways and became civilian sorcerers. The Dolphin Guild of Eridinthanos was one of these groups descended from the Sons.

When St. Volanc was converted by the appearance of the Abiding Book, the sorcerers of the Dolphin Guild followed their master and began combining the teachings of the book with the war-spells contained in the guild archives. The Sharp Abiding Book was born from this research and the Dolphin Guild's researches for a time paralleled those of the New Order in reading the *Book* as a grimoire. Twenty years after the Manifestation, the Order of the New Iron Staff had been formed from the Dolphin Guild and a magnificent tower was under construction in Shenilstos.

#### Runes

Law, Magic.

#### Mythos and History

**Lodorfin Receives the New Iron Staff (Mythic Resonance 75%) – Belief in Order. Trust in the Saints:** Before the Abiding Book appeared the armies of this great and glorious empire went their separate paths with little direction. It



took Trymir to bring them to order and, later, the wisdom of Volanc to give them purpose and elevate them above the casual cruelties one found in the heathens and pagans that surrounded the imperial territories.

Lodorfin of Frowal was one such disillusioned war wizard who had fought disorder and achieved a high rank before his retirement. He joined the Dolphin Guild and brought his magic to them helping them extend their reach and bring further wisdom to those they encountered. Yet still Lodorfin was restless. In Slontos he observed the fractious dukes and their vast, petty crimes and knew that order must be imposed. He saw the sense, then, of Saint Atrox although he did not share that saint's dedication to sheer obedience. Lodorfin was wandering the high moorlands of Wenela when he experienced his vision. A mist had descended and he was lost. Through the mist he heard a discussion taking place at a raised point that was just an outcropping of bleak rock. He followed the sounds and saw three warriors of Malkion gathered around something that protruded from the stone. Each warrior glowed so that the mist did not touch them. Each warrior had the brilliant sign of Malkion above his head – a triangle of gold and silver that marked his saintliness. As one of the three warriors turned to Lodorfin and addressed him.

'You have come.' Said Saint Trymir.

'We have waited.' Said Saint Volanc.

'You knew.' Said Saint Bardan.

They showed Lodorfin the thing that perplexed them: a staff of iron, as high as a man, that was embedded in the granite. Lodorfin came forward at Saint Volanc's beckoning and grasped the staff: it moved easily in his hands and came free.

'Malkion placed his staff here,' Saint Trymir said, 'as a test for the one who would have the strength to question the disorder of the mighty and bring the simple wisdom of common men into the world.'

'Hrestol could not move this staff,' Saint Volanc said, 'and he tried everything and was a pure man.'

'The staff is yours. From it bring The Order.' Said Saint Bardan.

Lodorfin slept then and when he awoke the staff was transformed into an iron-bound Grimoire that he brought down from the moorland and took back to the city of Shenilstos. Word of the Iron Staff spread and steadily warriors who shared his views came to him and they became the brotherhood of the New Iron Staff.

## Nature

The Order of the New Iron Staff is a martial order that has dedicated itself to the bringing of order and the rule of law through each and every Rightness Crusade. It does not believe in casual cruelty or barbarity for barbarity's sake. It believes in justice and respect, as codified in the Abiding Book, and it draws its ranks from those who have become disillusioned with the martial orders of the Rightness Army that place zeal before sense.

It is not a large order but it is well respected. Its members are found in many Rightness Divisions across the empire but chiefly in Slontos. In battle the Order of the New Iron Staff is as ferocious as any other war cult but it tempers this nature with respect for law, be they local or imperial; pagan or Malkioni. Law and justice are cornerstones of the New Iron Staff philosophy and anyone who represents order is worthy of respect. When a place has been conquered it is often an Adept or Mage of the New Iron Staff who comes in to negotiate with local chieftains and establish a solid imperial presence that can blend local and imperial laws to win-over the hearts and minds of the conquered.

Lodorfin of Frowal is considered a potential saint by the Order and his bones are part of the Order's holy relics, along with the iron-bound Grimoire. One of the Order's objectives is to have Lodorfin recognised as a saint and his presence on the Saints' Plane confirmed. All members of the order call him Saint Lodorfin.

The New Iron Staff also hates Chaos and has been active in the fight against it in many corners of Genertela. In this regard it respects the Orlanthi cults of Humakt and Storm Bull. Any follower of Chaos is automatically considered an enemy of the New Iron Staff.

## Organisation

The Order is widely dispersed amongst the Rightness Division regiments and has no formal place of meeting save for the tower being constructed in Shenilstos. Initiates to the Order travel to Shenilstos to join and are taught the New Iron Grimoire on their acceptance; from there they go back to their units and practice what they have learned. Once the tower of Shenilstos is complete, it will form a headquarters and temple but it is many years away from completion because its construction relies on donations from its members. All members are expected to donate a quarter of their pay and any other income to the Order. Once the tower is complete, then this obligation falls to a 10<sup>th</sup>.

The order has 12 magi who wander freely through the Rightness Divisions, conferring with provincial governors, ranking Rightness Army officers and even local chiefs and headmen,

determining how the New Iron Staff can help bring prosperity and law to a region. From these conversations members of the order are then chosen by a mage to help bring about this transformation, usually with the assistance of an Adept.

The 12 magi meet once a year, during Sacred Time, in Shenilstos, to offer prayers to Saint Lodorfin, Saint Trymir, Saint Volanc and Saint Bardan. Other members of the Order of the New Iron Staff are encouraged to do the same but this is not compulsory.

### Membership

Standard.

The only requirement for membership is disillusionment with disorder and poor, weak, leadership. Candidates are expected to give examples of what they have experienced and demonstrate how they would make things different.

Once accepted into the order apprentices devote an entire season to studying the Book of the New Iron Staff, which is the order's Grimoire. Leave of absence from a unit is negotiated by the mage closest to where a candidate has his base.

All apprentices must agree to dedicate a quarter of their earnings to the cult. In return they receive a wooden staff shod with bronze at one end and iron at the other. This is a symbol of their membership and a weapon. Training in the New Iron Staff Combat Style is given, taking apprentices to a level of STR+DEX+15%. It need not be treated as a favoured Combat Style but members are expected to demonstrate improvement if they are to advance within the Order.

### Common Magic

The Order teaches:

Bearing Witness, Bludgeon, Detect Chaos and Golden Tongue.

### Higher Magic

The Order's Grimoire is the Book of the New Iron Staff. The Book contains:

Enhance (INT), Hammerstaff, Intuition, Iron Staff and Restoration.

### Gifts and Compulsions

Each member is given a quarterstaff shod in bronze and iron, plus the requisite training in the New Iron Staff Combat Style.

The following Compulsions follow at each rank:

Novice: Offer mercy to a fallen foe.

Apprentice: Improve Culture (Own) to minimum 75%.

Adept: Learn an additional Culture skill to minimum 50%.

Mage: Bring the law of Malkion to at least one settlement or region each year.

### Cult Skills

New Iron Staff Combat Style (one handed staff, two handed staff, hammer), Culture (Orlanthi), Culture (Own), Culture (Pelorian), Lore (New Iron Staff), Manipulation, New Iron Staff Grimoire.

### Allied Cults

The cult has strong alliances with both Bardan's Book and the Knights of Saint Volanc. Members of the Order can learn the grimoires of both these cults (and vice versa).

## MONKS OF BLOOD

The holy Monks of Blood were founded by Ullmal, wayward regent and first king of Seshnela. Jrusteli by birth, he parted from the Confederation when he was crowned king of Seshnela. Afterwards, the Confederation needed his help and



so they retroactively approved of everything he had done in order to win his aid. One of his greatest deeds was the creation of this order, the fearsome Monks of Blood who were created to battle the last evil sorcerers of Arkat's Stygian Empire.

When Stygia fell, some of the monks stayed in Seshnela and today are closely associated with the king. Some of these monks are sometimes used as assassins. Others went south to Jrustela and joined the Rightness Crusade. The Monks of Blood are wizard-slayers by profession, equally adept at fighting in open battle or in sneaking into an enemy's fortress to quietly silence him. They wear robes of black and red and hoods that mask their faces. No one knows who is truly a member of the Monks of Blood.

In the more paranoid Reformist meetings in Hredimorinos or Evrowal, it is said that Emperor Ilontos is prepared to order his Monks of Blood to assassinate Jrusteli leaders if the island argues too strongly for Reform. Everyone is watched for signs that they are secret blood-wizards.

## Runes

Darkness, Illusion.

## Mythos and History

**Synoras Begins the Monks of Blood (Mythic Resonance 55%) – Stealth and Illusion as Arts of War:** When the Stygian Empire pressed close to the king's borders he sent for his chief adviser and master of spies, Synoras. He told Synoras to find the tools needed to bring the Stygians to their knees and equipped him with magic for HeroQuesting. Synoras was gone for a year and a day. When he returned he brought with him the Erasanchulas of Illusion (who manifested as a robed and hooded monk) and Darkness (who manifested as a shadow that followed Synoras everywhere). Ullmal was pleased but confused also.

'I journeyed to the Saints' Plane,' Synoras said, 'and caught Illusion skulking at the base of a tower where many saints lived. He is my servant now. Darkness was his shadow and now he serves me. These are weapons to fight the Stygian disorder; a mirror to their disregard.'

Ullmal was still none the wiser but commanded Synoras to what was needed. So Synoras gathered all his spies into one place and together they learned the ways of Illusion and Darkness. When all were through, Synoras released the Erasanchula and sent his spies, who now wore the robes of illusion and made shadows their servants, into the Stygians ranks, where they murdered, one-by-one, the leaders of that foul empire until all that remained was confusion and in-fighting. The Stygians were reduced to fighting amongst themselves and now Ullmal understood.

'We have a weapon that the righteous cannot understand,' he said. 'If all around you are ghosts, and even the shadows cannot be trusted, what hope remains?'

'Precisely so,' Synoras said. 'There are times when the application of violence must be surgical and dispassionate. To save a life it is sometimes necessary to remove a limb. My monks are the surgeons of such diplomacy.'

## Nature

The Monks of Blood are secretive and controlled by the emperor through the Ministry of the Army. Even the Ministry does not know who the Monks of Blood are precisely but they know how to make contact with them and how to deploy them.

The Monks of Blood make it their business to absorb gossip, rumour, secrets, contracts, political deals and machinations, treachery and any kind of news that can be traded. They do this through maintaining a large network of informants, spies and eavesdroppers who are paid to feed what they see, hear and learn up through the network to the Monks of Blood's shadowy Council of Nine. The Council of Nine then takes great care to check and verify what it learns so that the information can be priced and then sold to those who would pay to have it. And, because the Monks of Blood's network is so extensive, people approach it with the specific aim of both finding specific news, or disseminating it. As long as it is paid, and its terms met, the Monks of Blood are happy to collect, share and spread information.

An inevitable part of the Monks of Blood's work is assassination. Its assassins range from lowly hired thugs; simple daggers-for-hire with little wit and absolutely no social capital, through to cunning, clever, incredibly competent killers who spend weeks, months and, sometimes, years planning a particular assassination. The Monks of Blood can supply an assassin of any level of competence; it all depends on who is to be killed and how much one is prepared to pay for it. Such is the Monks of Blood's reputation for secrecy, discretion and excellence, kings, queens, generals and high priests contract for its services. The Monks of Blood *never* betray who has contracted them; and they always complete a job. If they cannot, then the full fee is refunded, with no questions asked.

Their first loyalty, though, is the empire and this means that the Ministry of the Army, usually at the Emperor's insistence, commits the Monks to a specific task of surgical precision – usually assassinations, intimidations and 'disappearances' of those who are well-guarded, magically and politically. The Monks are honour-bond never to refuse a direct imperial contract although they can, through the Council of Nine, set the terms, scale and scope of any task they are commanded to perform by the Ministry or the Emperor.

The Monks of Blood developed this level of autonomy and self-sufficiency in the period before Ilotos's reign, when there was much ducal turmoil, known as the War of Words and Tongues. Serving the emperor alone, the Monks of Blood deployed its informants, spies and assassins, organised according to usefulness, connections, ability and discretion. The Council of Nine developed a complex code to ensure secrecy amongst those members privileged to know who they really worked for and to create the labyrinthine hierarchy that ensures information moves freely but no one truly knows where it goes and how it is used. The Monks of Blood are therefore as much an ideal and a *modus-operandi* as they are a physical group. It is exceedingly wealthy but its wealth is distributed, hidden and often invested in legitimate enterprises. Its members may or may not know that they form part of the Monks of Blood network. It has safe-houses, meeting places and training facilities but all carefully hidden or masked so legitimate, day-to-day activities can run alongside the true purpose of the Monks of Blood's physical assets.

### Who Are The Council of Nine?

The Council of Nine are the nine original spies Synoras assembled under Ullmal's instruction following his HeroQuest. They are, through their oaths, immortal and, because of this immortality, they must remain hidden from view as their true nature would betray what they work for. Each member of the Council resides in a different city and never emerges into public view. They work through trusted agents and servants and never meet together as a group. Their immortality is achieved through embracing Death as Illusion, which prolongs their life; and Darkness as Light, which keeps the shadow of death at bay. Each one is incredibly old, incredibly intelligent and incredibly powerful, magically. Yet their oaths to Synoras bind them to their immortality and thus they do not work against the empire, even though they have become beings of immense power and knowledge that could control it with ease and efficiency if they chose to do so.

### Organisation

The leaders of the Monks of Blood, the Council of Nine, never meet together. They are known to each other and to no one else. Those who work for the Council are most likely unaware of who they serve, even though they might know they are,

themselves, Monks of Blood. Not that anyone would be foolish enough to try to unmask the Council of Nine: the Monks of Blood's roots are so deep, its abilities so finely honed, that anyone wanting to unravel the nature of the Monks of Blood would simply disappear, with nothing – not even a corpse – being left as a tantalising strand for someone else to pick at.

In a twisted way the Monks of Blood are honest and honourable. All services are open to negotiation and a central tenet of the organisation is a fair service at a fair rate. If a prized agent is captured, the Monks of Blood offer a fair ransom for his return – or the promise of sinister retribution if he is not. If a commission cannot be completed in a specific time, then the contract is cancelled and monies refunded (although the Monks of Blood are scrupulously thorough and realistic in their logistics: if they say a job cannot be done, then they are usually right). If one of their number is murdered or tortured, the perpetrators are made to pay with their own blood and usually in grisly and inventive ways, thereby reinforcing the message that the Monks of Blood *will not be messed with*. Conversely, those who assist the Monks of Blood, even unwittingly, are rewarded well and in ways that ensure the Monks of Blood cannot be readily identified as being behind the reward.

### Beliefs

Whilst individual beliefs are impossible to quantify, the general guiding principles of the Monks of Blood are:

- Knowledge is power.
- All information has a purpose.
- All information has value.
- Everyone can be manipulated.
- Everyone has a price.
- All prices are negotiable.
- Life, like knowledge, is a commodity.

Monks of Blood are unsentimental about what they do. Political and religious boundaries mean nothing to them and no single power, be it mortal or supernatural, is unassailable. If contracted to do something, the Monks of Blood inevitably find a way. If they cannot, they do not take the contract and give their reasons why.

### Membership

The Monks of Blood are extensive but support five ranks:

- Invisibles
- Signatures
- Journeymen
- Savants
- Council of Nine

## Invisibles

One cannot apply to join the Monks of Blood. If the Monks of Blood want someone, they will approach him. Very often recruitment is *invisible*; that is, a Monk of Blood agent is completely unaware of whom he works for. These invisible members form the vast bulk of the Monks of Blood network and include most of the informants supplying the Monks of Blood with information. Invisible informants come in all shapes and sizes; street-beggars, drunks, prostitutes, orphans, petty-criminals, thugs, small-time blackmailers, gamblers and so forth. Such agents equate to the Lay Members of the Order.

Invisibles are unaware of their status or presence within the Monks of Blood organisation. Despite this, they do receive certain benefits: see *Benefits*.

Invisibles are expected to just report what they see and hear, nothing more. Perfect clarity is not expected but honesty is. Those who control Invisibles – Signatures and Journeymen – are trained to detect lying. Invisibles are visited regularly by the Monks of Blood agents who control them and are coached, rather than instructed, to find out something in particular, or simply questioned, subtly, on what they know. They receive a generous payment in coin or something that is important to them but it is never ostentatious or over-generous. A starving beggar might receive a handful of coins and a flask of wine; a young serving lad or lass might receive a generous tip when they serve food or ale. Their presence and ubiquity is their key strength; their anonymity and invisibility a purposeful asset.

## Signatures

*Signature* members are those who know that they work for the Monks of Blood and are aware of the level they occupy in the organisation. These tend to be skilled individuals who have displayed competence and loyalty in their given area. Signature members may have been promoted from the ranks of the Invisible members or recruited directly. Signature members also include administration and support functions, such as trainers, armourers, quartermasters, transportation providers and so forth. They equate to the Monks of Blood's Initiates.

Signature members are invited to become a formal part of the Monks of Blood if they fulfil the following conditions:

- One Monks of Blood skill at 90%+, a second at 70%+ and a third at 50%+.
- Have contributed information or services unknowingly at least twice in the last two years.
- Occupy a social position, or move in social circles, deemed of interest to the Monks of Blood (high society; upper ranks of a cult; high-ranking guilds and so on),
- Are prepared to swear a blood-oath to the Monks of Blood.

The blood-oath is fundamental and simple: an agreement to keep all work and activities of the Monks of Blood an absolute secret and to accept death as a just punishment for betrayal.

Once brought into the fold, Signatures are expected to do whatever is asked of them: spying, blackmail, extortion, seduction, kidnapping, assassination. They are expected to follow instructions explicitly, having committed them to memory. They are not expected to question or deviate from a plan. Signatures are doers. They receive the support of the Monks of Blood network through the Journeyman and other Signatures who are brought in to assist.

If a task fails, they are expected to make a fast, invisible escape. If they are caught, they are expected to remain silent and betray nothing.

Signatures are also expected to build-up and cultivate a network of Invisibles to support the Monks of Blood network. If they receive information that requires verification, they are expected to do that checking. Every Signature must liaise, discreetly, with his Journeyman, on a regular basis, to exchange information and receive instructions. Some Signatures spend years doing nothing except leading a normal life; but if, one day, they are ordered to take part in something momentous, there must be no argument.

## Journeymen

*Journeymen* are the Apprentices of the Monks of Blood. They are responsible for recruiting Invisibles and Signatures and are thus expected to have built-up their own network of contacts and informants. Journeymen both carry out assignments and issue assignments to others. They are always responsible and accountable for their actions and the actions of their network. Thus, Journeymen must verify information supplied to them, when it needs verifying, and if someone they have chosen for a contract fails, the Journeyman is held accountable.

To become a Journeyman, the following conditions need to be met:

- One Monks of Blood skill at 110%+, a second at 90%+ and a third at 70%+.
- Have developed a network consisting of at least eight Invisibles.
- Have completed a major assignment successfully for the Monks of Blood.
- Demonstrated complete loyalty to the Monks of Blood (abstracted through making a successful Influence test at -40% to the roll).

Journeymen receive a stipend from the Monks of Blood in recognition for their services. See *Benefits*.

Journeymen co-ordinate Signature activities and lead special assignments. They are expected to act as the mid-level conduit for information, resources and activities, helping to plan and execute Monks of Blood business as required.

Journeymen meet with their controlling Savant regularly, if only to facilitate information transfer. Journeymen also take responsibility for finding trainers and experts to assist Monks of Blood activities, even if these people are completely unaware of their role in training Monks of Blood agents.

### Savants

*Savants* are the Adepts of the Monks of Blood. They are responsible for a network of Journeymen and are expected to co-ordinate the flow of information and the fulfilling of contracts but are not expected to undertake the work personally. Savants report to the Council of Nine.

Becoming a Savant requires the following conditions to be met:

- One Monks of Blood skill at 130%+, a second at 110%+ and a third at 90%+.
- Low Speech at 50%+.
- Have completed four major assignments as a Journeyman successfully for the Monks of Blood.
- Have achieved a position of social status useful to the Monks of Blood in a legitimate capacity.
- Demonstrated *continued* loyalty to the Monks of Blood (abstracted through making a successful Influence test at -40% to the roll).

Savants receive a stipend from the Monks of Blood in recognition for their services. See *Benefits*.

Savants act as counsel to the Councillor for their region. They also assist in creating and executing Monks of Blood policy, assessing special mission feasibility and co-ordinating local resources (including Journeymen) for executing Monks of Blood business. Savants handle all high-level Monks of Blood communications and are responsible for ensuring the tightest possible security for Monks of Blood activities in a particular area. Where the Monks of Blood need to make their presence felt in an overt way, Savants act as the ambassadors and mouthpieces for the Council of Nine.

### Common Magic

The Order teaches:

Boon of Lasting Night, Coordination, Darkwall, Extinguish, Hand of Death and Protection.

### Higher Magic

The Order's Grimoire is the Ninth Codex, assembled by the Council of Nine under Synoras's instruction. It is taught to Signatures and above. It contains:

Neutralise Magic, Open What is Closed, Phantom (Sight, Touch, Hearing), Project (Sight, Touch, Hearing), Seal Room, Telepathy and Terrible Judgement.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None.

### Cult Skills

Athletics, Insight, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Monks of Blood), Perception, Stealth, Survival, Track.

Signatures and above can also learn the Silent Death Combat Style (Blowgun, Dagger (including throwing dagger), Shortsword, Shuriken).

### Allied Cults

None.

## UMATHELAN MALKIONISM

Umathelan God Learners have always held to the tenets of the Abiding Book and in most respect the Umathelan Malkioni church resembles that of its northern counterpart. It has, however, always maintained a doctrine of inclusion, with the aim being to assimilate local, pagan religions and explain their existence in acceptable terms that allows their worship to continue without being branded heretical. Thus when Slontan Orlanthi were deposited in Umathela in the sixth Century the Umathelan God Learners spent a great deal of time experimenting with their pagan myths and successfully integrating them into Malkionism.

After some 300 years the Malkionism practiced in Umathela has diversified from traditional Jrusteli doctrine to the point that it is considered a heresy in and of itself. This contributed to the schism of 901 (coinciding with the Ducal Wars of Seshnela) that led to Umathela making a unilateral declaration of independence from Jrustela.

The Umathelan Malkionists are highly independent of thought and embrace all five of the religious sympathies (Missionary, Postponer, Realist, Inherent and Delayer) without any serious conflict. The general attitude taken towards Malkionism and the pagan religions is as follows:

- All faiths spring from the Invisible God.
- Pagan faiths are divergences; dangerous in some cases but mistakes in most.
- The Invisible God has a Plan.
- That Plan will be revealed in all good time and all faiths reconciled.

This allows the Umathelans the right to experiment, consider and, sometimes, promote a pagan faith where it exhibits

leanings towards Malkionism; it also prevents the requirement for Rightness Crusades – another contributor towards the schisms of the past decade or so.

But Umathelan Malkionists are ardent worshippers of the Invisible God and accept both Malkion and Hrestol as his prophets. They also believe in a third prophet: Sesqan, one of the Viymori Seekers who discovered Pamaltela and brought the Invisible God, in a limited way, to the people of the land. Sesqan is a little-known figure forever kept in the shadow of Malkion and Hrestol but figures nonetheless in Umathelan manuscripts and is the focus of certain minor rituals.

## Runes

Earth, Infinity, Magic.

## Mythos and History

**From the Invisible God, All Things Emerge (Mythic Resonance 90%):** When Ord Elvis created the Citadel of Thought there were many ideas that went forth into the world, carried by the Word Bearers and the Seekers. Some of these ideas became the gods that are worshipped in the uneducated corners of the world and venerate shadow gods who are lesser aspects of the Invisible God and had separate identities created around them. The uneducated found it easiest to worship visible signs than the abstract ideas Ord Elvis created in the Citadel of Thought and whilst they were mistaken in their attitude they did not fall from the grace of the Invisible God: they were merely ignorant of Truth and part of the Invisible God's plan is to reveal that truth to them in days that are yet to come.

Sesqan was a Viymori who came south with the Waertagi and he was known to Saint Waertag, travelling with his grace. He arrived in the lands of the jungles and walked amongst the Wood People bringing them the word of the Invisible God. Sesqan was betrayed and sacrificed, being turned into a great tree. That tree was later felled and its wood made into pulp and the pulp into paper. The paper later became the Book of Sesqan and on its pages, at the same time as the Abiding Book created itself, Sesqan's Grimoire appeared. In this Grimoire Sesqan forgave his enemies and bid all who read his words to look to understanding the pagan mind and bringing about education rather than conquest, enlightenment rather than torture or persecution. 'From the Invisible God all things emerge,' reads the first line of Sesqan's Grimoire, 'and through these pages I, Sesqan of Danmalastan, have re-emerged from death to deliver the word of Malkion and Hrestol.'

## Nature

The Umathelan Malkioni church is based on enlightenment and education, reflecting the attitudes prevailing throughout the seven shining cities of Umathela. Since to educate requires

understanding it is incumbent on the faithful to understand the beliefs of others and then guide them on the path to Malkion, no matter how long that takes. All faiths derive from the Invisible God and so all faiths contain truths that have been forgotten or neglected, in favour of easier paths found in the worship of the elements, spirits and idols.

The first great experiment in this re-education was the Assimilation of the Slontan Orlanthi. Umathelan Revealers studied the pagan myths and interpreted them according to the Book of Sesqan and the Abiding Book. They found kernels of truth that inform the God Learner monomyth but also showed how even an entrenched pagan religion can be related back to the saints. These Revealer studies, known as the Bright Reckonings, uncovered the following gods and established their core relationship with the Invisible God:

- *Tyloque the Storm King*
- *Ropotes the Wise*
- *Phausia the Warrior Maiden*
- *Rabilis the Sister Whore*
- *Systella the Sister Witch*
- *Thyla the Green Life Sister*
- *Rondella the Pauper Queen*
- *Neiropha the Healer*
- *Mayedra the Earth Mother*
- *Vrala the Grain Sister*
- *Ernamola the Earth Sister*
- *Aloral the Herder*
- *Chortikan the Hunter*
- *Eler the Ram of the Rains*
- *Umath the Spirit Father*

The Bright Reckonings discovered that these gods were those parts of the Erasanchula who did not rebel during the Time of Disintegration and remained true unto the Invisible God. They were never meant to be worshipped but because certain people turned to false gods in the wake of corruption, it was a natural and innocent mistake that they were. The Bright Reckonings revealed the true natures of the old Storm gods to the Umathings and they immediately and completely forgot their old rituals and ceremonies and instantaneously remembered the myths, rituals and ceremonies of these revealed gods. Thus were the Umathings created from God Learner education and thus was harmony created in Umathela.

## Organisation

The Umathelan church is widespread throughout Umathela with major temples found in each of the seven cities of the realm. Each temple is under the control of the Consul Prefect (High Priest/Mage) and the seven Consul Prefects form the Golden Council which directs all religious and sorcerous policy, referencing the political consul of the Umathelan government.

Each temple supports its own bureaucracy which, in turn, supports sorcerous study and investigation, various Revealer groups and sects that mirror the main sorcery orders of Genertela. Thus, one finds in Umathela chapters of Bardan's Book, Hwarosian Mystics and so forth. The Consul Prefect appoints, according to ability and merit, Prefects who look after the Revealers, cult/order liaison, temple accounts, sorcery research and Malkioni ceremony. A further Prefect, the Bright Reckoner, liaises with the Umathings to ensure continued smooth relations and education of the pagans who live within the Umathelan God Learners' midst.

Umathelan temples are therefore large, highly organised affairs with considerable resources for learning and research.

### Membership

Standard.

Apprentices are known as Prefect Minors and may belong to any other accepted sorcery order they wish.

Adepts are known as Prefects and may also belong to other orders.

Mages are known as Consul Prefects and are expected to commit fully to the Umathelan Malkioni way, forsaking any other order they once belonged to.

Above the wizards is the Golden Council.

### Common Magic

All Common Magic spells can be learned by cult members.

### Higher Magic

The sorcery of the True Malkioni church forms the Bright Gold Grimoire and it contains the following spells:

Abjure (Food, Sleep, Water), Banish, Castback, Damage Enhancement, Damage Resistance, Dominate (Unbeliever), Enhance (INT), Fly, Haste, Hinder, Intuition, Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic, Sense (Unbeliever), Spell Resistance, Spirit Resistance, Treat Wounds.

The second Grimoire is the Book of Sesqan and it contains:

Absorb Damage Unto Self, Agile Reflexes, Bless Marriage, Danger Sense, Familiarity, Neutralise Poison, Prayer of Perseverance.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None save dedication to Malkion. Those who commit solely to the Umathelan Malkioni Church can expect themselves to become politically adept, along with all the detriments politics brings.

### Cult Skills

Book of Sesqan, Bright Gold Grimoire skill, Courtesy, Craft (any), Evaluate, Influence, Insight, Lore (Bureacracy), Lore (Diplomacy), Lore (Malkion), Lore (Politics), Manipulation, Oratory, Teaching.

### Allied Cults

None.

## UMATHING

The Umathing cult is a Umathelan Malkionist development. Slontan Orlanthi were systematically re-educated in the true meaning of the Storm Tribe and came to realise that the gods they really worshipped were different aspects of the gods they had always held in reverence. They bore a strong resemblance to the Storm Tribe and even exhibited similar powers but were actually loyal to the nature of the Invisible God and were the correct aspect of those runes that emerged during the Five Acts of Malkionism. In fact Malkion named all these gods and helped them realise their powers and magic: in so doing they helped defend Ord Elvis and the Citadel of Thought when the Erasanchula rebelled and brought about destruction.





The gods are as follows:

### Tyloque the Storm King

Representing the wrath of the Invisible God he defended Ordrelvis against the destruction that Orlanth the Storm God attempted to impart.

### Ropotes the Wise

The keeper of the Scrolls of Revelation and a student of Elmalkion. He schooled Tyloque and became his counsellor.

### Phausia the Warrior Maiden

She who stood at the gates of the Citadel of Thought and repelled the demons of the underworld with her spear and shield.

### Rabilis the Sister Whore

One who slept with Vadel and helped birth Corruption. She later found redemption through returning to the solace of Malkion and the joy of Hrestol. The two prophets saved her.

### Systema the Sister Witch

She who went amongst the Brithini and stole the secret books they had been using to oppose Ordrelvis and command the rebellion of the Erasanchula.

### Thyla the Green Life Sister

The Erasanchula who gave life to the Wood People but never forgot her duties to Elmalkion, as did her sister Erasanchula, Aldrya.

### Rondella the Pauper Queen

She who gave everything she owned to the survivors of the Time of Disintegration and brought them into the One Fold Palace, which was built from the ruins of the Citadel of Thought.

### Neiropha the Healer

Sister of Rondella and the one who healed the wounds of Ordrelvis and the survivors of the Time of Disintegration.

### Mayedra the Earth Mother

Part of the Second Action; the whole of the substantive truth and mother of Vrala and Ernamol.

### Vrala the Grain Sister

Tutored by Thyla and the one who fed the survivors of the Time of Disintegration.

### Ernamola the Earth Sister

Mayedra's daughter and the bringer of human life. She taught the First People how to commune and become fertile

after the Time of Disintegration. The Brithini hate Ernamol because they cannot bring forth issue in the way she showed to the truthful.

### Aloral the Herder

When Danmalastan failed, Aloral brought forth his herd of pigs to feed the survivors. Pigs are sacred to him.

### Chortikan the Hunter

Hunter of both animals and the Vadeli. Chortikan is a wrathful rune who is sympathetic towards animals but damning of Vadeli and Chaos.

### Eler the Ram of the Rains

The one who wept for the betrayal of Malkion and Hrestol.

### Umata the Spirit Father

That part of the Invisible God that watches over all. Umata is the primal truth and from him all Erasanchula spring.

Most of these gods have an Orlanthi counterpart and the same cult skills, magic and practices associated with the Orlanthi version are applied to the Umathing version of the god. The only difference lies in the fact that the Umathings, as civilised, semi-Malkioni, believe their gods are representations and shadows of the Invisible God (which is represented in Umata). This is therefore a difference in names rather than strict practices and an acceptance that Malkionism allows all these gods to exist and to grant magic to their followers.

Umathing Adventurers should therefore use the equivalent Storm Tribe cult to represent their Umathing god. *Cults of Glorantha's* Storm Tribe chapter contains all the cults relating to these gods. Myths are, in all cases, similar.

Umathing God	Orlanthi Counterpart
Tyloque the Storm King	Orlanth
Ropotes the Wise	Lhankor Mhy
Phausia the Warrior Maiden	Vinga
Rabilis the Sister Whore	Babeester Gor
Systema the Sister Witch	Maran Gor
Thyla the Green Life Sister	Aldrya
Rondella the Pauper Queen	No Counterpart
Neiropha the Healer	Chalana Arroy
Mayedra the Earth Mother	Asrelia
Vrala the Grain Sister	Grain Goddesses
Ernamola the Earth Sister	Ernalda
Aloral the Herder	No Counterpart
Chortikan the Hunter	Odayla
Eler the Ram of the Rains	Heler
Umata the Spirit Father	Umata, Primal Air

Rondella and Aloral have no Orlanthi equivalents but do provide their worshippers with Higher Magic.

Aloral: Beast Form (Pig/Boar), Laughter.

Rondella: Absorption, Cure Poison, Dismiss Magic, Spirit Block.

Umath is never worshipped directly.

## GRAND ORDER OF THE CRIMSON SAIL

Formed by the first high admiral of the Imperial Navy, the Grand Order of the Crimson Sail is named for the colour of High Admiral Volostov's flagship, *No Choice*. Volostov led the battle against the Waertagi, operating as a privateer who struck against lone Waertagi dragonships in daring raids that left the Waertagi bewildered and weakened. His audacity made him popular in the court and with his men although, amongst his fellow admirals, he was considered a dangerous maverick who took unnecessary risks.

The Grand Order of the Crimson Sail came into being after the intense battle between *No Choice* and the dragonship *Ezeremihaad*. The Waertagi boarded *No Choice* and engaged the Rightness sailors in a fierce battle of magic and melee. The crew of *No Choice* were forced into a fully defensive position, outnumbered and seemingly lost; but under Vostov's direction they fought relentlessly and, through cunning tactics, turned the losses against the Waertagi. After hours of fighting every Waertagi boarder was dead and the *Ezeremihaad* surrendered. All the human *No Choice* survivors were honoured by Volostov and he immediately declared that every man who served with him was now part of the Grand Order of the Crimson Sail and no matter where their careers took them, they would always be brothers.

Since then the Grand Order has spread to become a potent sorcery order amongst the Jursteli naval contingent. Its members are dedicated a life aboard the active fleets, seeking out assignments that place them on ships actively looking for naval engagement. The deeds of the *No Choice* crew are legendary with many accounts of personal bravery now forming the order's myths. The order is open to any Jursteli or Seshenelan sailor as long as the candidate is prepared to lay-down his life for the Imperial Navy and accept Admiral Volostov and the original *No Choice* survivors as revered saints-in-waiting.

### Runes

Man, Water.

### Mythos and History

**The No Choice Battle (Mythic Resonance 80%) – Never Surrender! Go Down Fighting!** *Ezeremihaad* was sighted off the coast of Maniria by *No Choice's* mate on the evening of Windsday, Death Week, Earth Season. By dawn of the following day *No Choice* had gained distance and prepared to engage.

The sorcerers of *No Choice* halted *Ezeremihaad* and Vostov issued the command to release trebuchet fire at the Waertagi's stern. The shots struck home but the *Ezeremihaad* suddenly turned and rammed *No Choice*. Waertagi marines surged over the prow and fell upon the deck crews, murdering half of them. The rest were forced to retreat to the drum deck whilst more warriors from below were roused and sent to provide reinforcements.

The Waertagi laid siege to the drum deck. More threw themselves from the rigging of the dragon boat onto the crimson sail of *No Choice*, sliding down it to aid the warriors on deck. Spells, swords and harpoons flew and fell. Many died. By late afternoon half the crew of *No Choice* were dead and many wounded. Vostov stood atop a pile of bodies and commanded his crew to lay down their lives for their boat: 'We are of *No Choice* and we have *No Choice*!' He screamed. 'This ship shall not fall to Waertagi hands whilst one of us can live and breath.'

This turned the fight and Vostov charged the stunned Waertagi ranks, his warriors fanning out like a cloak behind him. Vostov cut a path to the Waertagi captain and ran him through. The *No Choice* warriors fell like rabid dogs on the Waertagi. That evening, the decks of *No Choice* were the same crimson as the ship's sail.

When it was done and the Waertagi had surrendered, Vostov declared his men brothers in arms. 'Against the odds and against fate we prevailed. Malkion is with us this day and guided our hands. Today we stand united beneath a Crimson sail and I declare us all its disciples. What say you?'

### Nature

The Grand Order places bravery and comradeship at its heart: hence it is attractive to all sailors in the Imperial Navy who seek the sea as a path to personal glory. Malkionism is at its core but more importantly is the brotherhood developed beneath the sails and amongst the oars of the empire's great vessels.

Entire crews are formed around their membership of the Grand Order and those who are not members may be declined posting to a particular ship unless they agree to become Initiates. This is therefore the foremost of the naval orders and is a close-knit band of seafarers.

## Organisation

The ship one serves on becomes the temple with the ranking officers forming the highest ranks in the Order. Every ship that is formed of the Grand Order flies a crimson sail or standard to show its affiliation.

Stories of bravery by other members, as well as those who served aboard *No Choice* are recounted every evening above and below decks. When a ship goes into battle all members of the order are expected to place the sanctity of ship and crew members above their own lives and it is habitual for the mage of the order – always the vessel's commander – to recite Vostov's speeches to the men from the drum deck of the ship.

Progress with the order is dependent on naval rank. Only commanders can become mages of the order; only lieutenants can become adepts and so on. Thus most ships are formed of Initiates – Novices – and all jostle for personal glory to attempt to attain greater standing in the cult and the ship.

## Membership

Standard.

Only sailors can join the order: it has no shore brethren.

## Common Magic

The Order teaches:

Bladesharp, Bludgeon, Cauterise, Coordination, Extinguish and Protection.

## Higher Magic

The Grimoire of the order is Vistov's Orders – those spells used by the *No Choice* crew when fighting the waertagi:

Agile Reflexes (*Cults of Glorantha*), Animate Wind, Boost Missile Range, Damage Resistance, Dominate (Waertagi), Float, Form/Set (Rope).

## Gifts and Compulsions

No Gifts.

Every member of the Grand Order feels uncomfortable on dry land. Only the rise and fall of a ship's deck gives them a true feeling of home. Sleep without the movement of the waves beneath the hull is impossible.

## Cult Skills

Athletics, Boating, Brawn, Lore (Grand Order), Lore (Malkion), Manipulation, Shiphandling, Sorcery (Vostov's Orders), Swim.

## Allied Cults

None.

# NELEOMI GUARDIANS

Formed to protect the coastal waters of Jrustela the Order of the Neleomi Guardians has become the seafaring order that now protects all the sea routes between Jrustela, Seshnela and Pamaltela. At first the order was nothing special; merely sailors who plied similar waters but over 300 years the order has grown into something more mystical and superstitious. The order believes that the sea itself is a manifestation of Malkion's power and has taken on the personality of Neleom, the Sea Prophetess. She watches and guides the Guardians who are now pledged to protect not just the shipping between continents but also the prophetess herself who is beset by the predations of the evil god Magasta – the demon whorl at the centre of the world who is attempting to drain the world of its energy by sucking Neleom into his massive vortex-like eye.

## Runes

Spirit, Water.

## Mythos and History

**The Appearance of Saint Neleom ( Mythic Resonance 70%):** High Captain Vonesthec commanded the vessel *Blue Current*, which watched over the early shipping of the first Jrusteli settlers. Bad currents and fierce storms sucked *Blue Current* out into open waters and drew it, inexorably, towards Magasta's Pool. As the vessel attempted to fight the dreadful currents of the maelstrom the sea called out to Captain Vonesthec. He looked over the side of his ship and saw the sea as a beautiful maiden, filled with the Invisible God's radiance, being drawn, like his ship, towards certain doom. 'Pledge me your heart,' the sea said, 'and your soul and I shall free you.' With little choice Vonesthec made the pledge and suddenly his ship was free of Magasta's pull.

All aboard gave thanks to the sea maiden. The ship's priest declared a miracle had happened but it could be attributed to no saint and must, therefore, be a miracle of something else. All had seen the great maiden's face and so she was named Neleom, for the Neleomi Sea and the Neleomi Guardians were born in earnest; staunch protectors of the waves between the two continents of the empire.

## Nature

The Neleomi Guardians are extremely superstitious. All manner of rituals and beliefs accompany their ships and sailors; all are said to propitiate Neleom and bring safety on the waters: indeed, no ship of the Neleomi Guardians has ever been sunk and this is all down to the faith its members place in the great maiden of the sea.

Its superstitions are many. For example:

- Never urinate into the ocean.
- Blue onboard ship brings bad luck.
- Always board with the right foot and disembark with the left.
- All mermen must be killed for they serve Magasta and torment Neleom.
- The presence of a red-haired boy aboard ship averts storms.

All members know these superstitions and have their own rituals to accompany them. Breaking a ritual is considered heresy and results in expulsion from the order.

Otherwise the Neleomi Guardians function as any other naval order. The ship is the temple and Malkion's glory is first and foremost. The Neleomi Guardians are devoted to protecting the shipping lanes between Jrustela, Seshnela and Pamaltela. Their vessels fly the red and green flag that bears the imperial crest but also bears the symbol of the Maiden's Hand, an outstretched palm on which are inscribed the Water and Spirit runes, which were granted to the Neleomi Guardians when Captain Vonesthec pledged his ship to Neleom's service.

Before every voyage Neleom is thanked in quiet prayers led by the captain of the ship. Food and wine is poured into the water and the priest of the boat checks the various omens to ensure that Neleom has been properly gratified. If the omens seem bad then the entire ship devotes itself to ritual cleaning and further offerings until the priest sees the bad omens abate. A ship that sails under bad omens has a dispirited crew but once those omens lift then the crew becomes eager and agile, singing their thanks to, and love for, Neleom, with abandon.

### Organisation

The Neleom Guardians are, like all naval orders, organised on a ship-by-ship basis. There is no great temple beyond the ship itself and worship of Neleom and Malkion is deeply personal to the crew: each has its own ways of following the Sea Maiden and of relating her to Malkion; there is no one, true way.

Captains are considered High Priests but every boat sails with a crew member who has become a priest of a Malkioni cult and who is also dedicated to Neleom. No ship ever sails without its priest and, if the ship loses its priest at sea, then this is considered the worst omen of them all.

### Membership

Standard.

Any sailor of Jrusteli, Seshnelan or Pamaltelan heritage may join the order. No Pact is required but every member, at initiation, must pledge his service to the protection of

the Maiden of the Sea, Neleom, and to the imperial ships that sail the waters between the two continents. Once the pledge is made the rituals and superstitions are taught to the new member and he is expected to abide by them without failure. A little leeway is granted to new Initiates because the bewildering array of rituals is confusing and intimidating to the inexperienced. Within a year though, known as the Grace Year, he is expected to have become fully conversant with, and an ardent participant in, all the rituals of the vessel.

### Common Magic

Detect Enemy, Detect Merman, Detect Pirate, Detect Storm.

### Higher Magic

The order has only a small Grimoire, Vonesthec's Log, which contains:

Animate Wind, Holdfast, Intuition, Project (Hearing and Sight).

### Gifts and Compulsions

No Gifts but all members develop the obsessive compulsive superstitious behaviour of the Neleomi Guardians. The depth of superstition develops with each voyage and length of service. The most ardent members of the order see good and bad omens in everything and spend their lives attempting to encourage the good and avert the bad.

### Cult Skills

Athletics, Boating, Brawn, Lore (Neleom), Manipulation, Navigation, Sorcery Grimoire (Vonesthec's Log), Survival, Swim.

### Allied Cults

None.

## ORDER OF THE EBON MAST

The Order of the Ebon Mast is an order of imperially sanctioned privateers; men licensed by the emperor to raid non-imperial ships for profit and to reinforce the empire's supremacy of the seas.

Ebon Mast ships are characterised by their masts cut from Pamaltelan ebony and they have bases in most imperial ports and harbours. Ships rarely act as a group or fleet, carrying out their raids singly or, at the most, in pairs. The members of the order are amongst the most loyal, imperially and blood-thirsty, and often comprise of renegades or expulsions from other naval orders but who, due to their undoubted loyalty, can be put to use in other ways.

## Runes

Mastery, Water.

## Mythos and History

The Order of the Ebon Mast has its roots in Scaramaal of Northpoint, a Loskalmi traitor to the pure Jrustelan way who shunned emerging naval discipline and committed himself to raiding and piracy. Following a successful raid against a Waertagi vessel Scaramaal underwent a divine revelation as Malkion himself revealed that piracy was a sacred act when committed against those who were enemies of the Invisible God and committed in the name of the Invisible God's servants. Scaramaal took this to mean the Emperor of Land and Sea and so he dedicated his crew to the empire's service.

Since then the Order of Ebon Mast has grown in size to become a dispersed, but effective and vicious, scourge of the seas. Any ship not carrying imperial marques, or clearly of a creed that is not allied with the empire, is a target. In its early days the order used pirates recruited from the less reputable ports of the empire but, in time, it began to receive recruits who came from other orders but lacked the discipline to abide by those orders' rules. The Order of the Ebon Mast had little in the way of restrictions save loyalty to the empire and a desire for booty and treasure. As it grew in size, successive emperors groomed the order to act as independent raiders free from the usual piracy sanctions reserved for non-imperial vessels.

## Nature

The order is sanctioned to raid, wreck and capture. It does so with brutal efficiency. Financial reward is the chief motivation and any booty taken from a plundered vessel is split as follows:

Emperor:	50%
Captain:	25%
Officers:	10%
Crew:	15%

All prisoners become the automatic property of the emperor and are usually sold into slavery and used aboard the navy's ships as oarsmen.

The Order of the Ebon Mast is therefore a materialistic, fatalistic, hard-faced cult. It gives no mercy and expects none. It aims to subdue a foe and fleece it quickly. Its members are notoriously short-tempered, violent men who live short lives and rarely get to enjoy the riches they earn.

## Organisation

The ship served upon is everything. Crews are tightly knit and a slight against one order member is a slight against all. Ebon Mast crews frequently fight amongst themselves, usually over approach and success but occasionally over more trivial

matters. Rival Ebon Masts vessels have been known to engage each other in sea-borne battles with the victor treating the defeated ship's spoils as it would any enemy ship.

Captains of the order receive their instructions from the Ministry of the Navy and there is great competition to secure the best prizes. When not under specific instruction to raid, Ebon Mast crews raid anyway and simply scour the seas for likely targets. Some crews have even attacked God Learner merchant vessels, disguising their masts in a bid to ensure they are not discovered and certainly leaving no survivors: such raids are blamed on Yigg's pirates.

## Membership

Standard.

Ebon Mast candidates must have had at least a decade's experience in the Imperial Navy. Favour is given to men with a history of violence.

## Common Magic

Bladesharp, Bludgeon, Detect Coins, Detect Enemy, Protection.

## Higher Magic

The Ebon Manifesto is the order's grimoire. All its spells are drawn from the Orders Canto of the Abiding Book:

Abort, Acquire, Aperture, Ball of Fire and Unnerve.

## Gifts and Compulsions

Utter loyalty to emperor and ship is demanded.

## Cult Skills

Ebon Mast Combat Style (sword, shield, bow, net, trident), Athletics, Brawn, Manipulation, Resilience, Shiphandling, Sorcery Grimoire (Ebon Manifesto), Survival, Swim.

## Allied Cults

None.

## ORDER OF THE GOLDEN KEEL

The Order of the Golden Keel is an order of warriors and merchants. In the earliest days of Jrustela's rise, after the Waertagi fleet was broken, trade across northern Glorantha was the province of the warrior fleets before the Imperial Navy arose and a mercantile class replaced the need for warriors who also traded. The Order of the Golden Keel is the only warrior/mercantile order to have survived the transition.

Its role has expanded to become one of warrior/merchant/diplomats. The ships of the Golden Keel carry crews who

are adept at fighting, trade and negotiation – even at a state level should the circumstances demand it. Their continued existence owes itself to the Speech Cantos of the Abiding Book which says:

*'Blessed are those who wield the word as deftly as the sword and make friends as easily as enemies. Blessed are those who tread the waves and reach the far-seen shores. Blessed are those who Talk their way to gold rather than through a currency of slaughter.'*

The Order of the Golden Keel possesses just such men.

## Runes

Communication, Water.

## Mythos and History

**Lesemir the Golden (Mythic Resonance 80%) – Talk, Trade, Protect:** During the reign of Hadalin, at the start of the seventh century, the warrior-traders had become both disrespectful and resentful. They sought war but also wealth; they wanted to fight on the seas but not to trade, yet desired the riches trade brought. Some, like the Order of the Ebon Mast turned to piracy and were ultimately brought to heel. Others simply disbanded. Lesemir the careful, a merchant-warrior captain of Seshnela, believed both to be possible and undertook the eight voyages to find the answer.

In his travels he encountered a heathen god called Issaries and found its priests to be tradesmen just as he was. There was no enmity between them and they talked much. Lesemir learned a great deal and, when his eighth voyage to the Otherworld was complete, he returned with the fabulous, golden-keeled boat called Rosinantay, liberated from a demon god that Issaries had warned Lesemir about. Lesemir, on that final voyage, assembled Rosinantay's crew, which consisted of many fabled Malkioni heroes and together they traded and protected Hadalin's territories at the same time. This band of heroic, HeroQuesting brothers were named the Brothers of the Golden Keel and they brought much wealth and trust in their wake.

Lesemir died when traitor Unakasassa shot an arrow from 1,000 leagues away and pierced his brain. By then the Brotherhood of the Golden Keel had strengthened and spread with Brotherhoods in many cities throughout Seshnela and Jrustela. The crew of the Rosinantay mourned their captain and, for his ninth and final voyage, opened the gates to the Otherworld and sailed through, as one, departing the mortal realm forever.

Lesemir's Grimoire – 'The Eight Voyages' – the left for those who had become part of the Golden Keel Brotherhood. Soon, more ships, crewed by brothers who were talkers and

traders, warriors and deal-makers, came into being and they pledged their service to the emperors of the Land and Sea but never failed to revere Lesemir the Golden (as he was now known) or respect the priests of Issaries, who had taught Lesemir so much.

## Nature

The Order of the Golden Keel is a bright and shining order of honourable sailors who will fight for the empire but also trade for it and negotiate for it equally. The skills of the word, the sword, the oar and the sail are equally respected and valued and, as a consequence, the Order of the Golden Keel is one of the few Malkioni sorcery orders that find acceptance in Orlanthi territories. Issaries temples and the members of that cult are always treated sincerely and with respect by the Golden Keel order and they return the compliment. Of course, no Golden Keel brother would ever become an Issaries worshipper; but the trust between the two has eased many, many deals over the past 200 years and relations between them are solid.

The Imperial Court, too, trusts the Order of the Golden Keel. It is allowed to act as it wishes, as long as its trader warriors heed an imperial summons and do their duty for Emperor, Malkion and the Invisible God. In the past century the Order of the Golden Keel has developed a reputation as deal-brokers, diplomats and negotiators. This is purely down to the possession of the Communication Rune, which all full members of the cult are allowed to display on their shields and elsewhere. Issaries taught the rune to Lesemir on his eighth voyage and it helped him free Rosinantay from the demon but also marked him to his enemy, the traitor Unakasassa.

The Order of the Golden Keel is one of trust, true words, fair trade, diplomacy and honour. When called upon its members do not shirk from a fight and, indeed, many of its members were once Rightness Army members who sought a different life and saw sense in what the Golden Keel brothers represent. These are brave, cross-discipline people that even the Orlanthi find able to trust. They do not break oaths and they do not raise a sword where a word will do. But, if caused to anger, or risen to war, they make terrible foes.

## Organisation

The Order of the Golden Keel has guild houses throughout the empire, usually stationed in a port or well-served harbour. Here, members of the order can meet, find lodging and find work if needed. The houses act as recruiting centres for new crews. Furthermore the houses also act as places of neutral territory for trade deals and negotiations of all kinds.

Each house is run by an Adept or Mage and is identifiable by the keel-shaped symbol, adorned with the Communication Rune, that hangs above the main entrance and always facing

towards the water. Every house is equipped with sleeping quarters, meeting rooms, a refectory, stables and shrines to Lesemir, Malkion and (although this is never advertised or discussed) a small shrine to Issaries. Issaries traders, as well as Golden Keel brothers, are welcome to use a Golden Keel house.

As with other orders, the ship is the temple. All Golden Keel ships have, naturally, a golden painted kee, but also many other gold-painted fixtures and adornments. The figurehead is always a stylised representation of the Communication Rune and every ship of the Golden Keel fleet is called Rosinantay, followed by a number. The newest vessel, a bireme, is Rosinanty 127.

The order follows a strict hierarchy, as show:

Rank	Role	Ship Rank
Novice	Warrior	Sailor
Apprentice	Trader	Ranking Sailor/Mate
Adept	Warrior-Trader	Officer
Mage	Diplomat	Captain

Thus, every Golden Keel ship is fully equipped to perform a variety of tasks. Captains/Diplomats are sanctioned with imperial orders to negotiate on behalf of the emperor if a Provincial Governor is unavailable (although a Provincial Governor always outranks a Golden Keel Captain-Diplomat) or if a governor decides that a diplomatic presence is required.

Every vessel is, like the shore-based houses, equipped with meeting and negotiating quarters.

Yet the Golden Keel is also a fighting order. Its captains are expected to place themselves under the command of an admiral in times of war or when certain conditions demand it. The Order of Golden Keel is honour-bound to obey this duty. Its sailors are trained warriors and as willing to fight as they are to trade.

## Membership

Standard.

Members of the order can come from any walk of life and shade of Malkionism although some skill in the martial disciplines, and charismatic personalities, are preferred.

## Common Magic

The order teaches: Abacus, Bladesharp, Detect Lie, Golden Tongue and Understanding.

## Higher Magic

The order's Grimoire is the The Eight Voyages and it contains:

Animate Wind, Attract (Missiles), Damage Resistance, Enhance (CHA), Intuition, Privacy and Unarmed Appearance.

## Gifts and Compulsions

All members of the cult develop an immediate aura of trustworthiness represented by an automatic bonus of +5% to all CHA based skills (including magical skills).

## Cult Skills

Golden Keel Combat Style (Sword, Shield, Spear, Sling, Crossbow), Commerce, Courtesy, Influence, Lore (Diplomacy), Lore (Golden Keel), Lore (Malkion), Manipulation, Shiphandling, Sorcery Grimoire (The Eight Voyages).

## Allied Cults

Issaries. Trust exists between the cults and cult skills can be cross trained but magic remains separate.

# ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS OCULAR

During the Return to Rightness crusade an elite group of Seshnelan warriors were despatched to the Otherworld to do battle with creatures, raised by rebel sorcerers, who threatened to stream into the inner world, laying waste to all they could see. These warriors, hand-picked for their observation and perception skills, vanquished the monstrous, Otherworld foes and returned from the Otherworld as heroes. They named themselves the Knights Ocular and would never tell what horrors they had seen on the other side of reality.

This is a martial order with a basis in Otherworld exploration and warfare as well as mundane combat. They are a cavalry unit, noted for their fine, heavy war horses but also a unit famed for their keen powers of observation. For this reason the Knights Ocular are often chosen to accompany the Order of Otherworld Explorers when key missions are undertaken in the Otherworld.

## Runes

Mastery, Motion.

## Mythos and History

Ahrtos the Bastard assembled the Knights Ocular. A devout Hrestolist from birth, Ahrtos surrendered his belief in Hrestol and turned to Malkion's devotion following an extended



period of training with the errant war wizard, Mazzantir of Eastpoint. Ahrtos's father, the Duke of Tanir, never recognised his son's lineage as Ahrtos was born to a slave girl that his father had dallied with. Nevertheless, Ahrtos became a skilled rider, warrior and, with Hrestol's wisdom, skilled in the ways of the other planes.

He assembled his knights when the Return to Rightness Crusade plunged into Loskalm intent on purging the last remnants of Gbaji from that land. A cadre of sorcerers, living in Akem, had been seduced into Gbaji worship and they conjured an army of demonic, half-slime entities that threatened to spill through a tear in the Banir Gate to bring ruination to Fronela. Ahrtos, being keen of eye, grouped together warriors with similar capabilities and plunged into the Otherworld with their mounts, intent on taking the battle to the monsters.

They emerged victorious but thin in numbers. All the men were changed, mostly in imperceptible ways but all with a certain knowledge of how the Otherworlds now worked.

## Nature

As their name suggests the Knights Ocular cleave to the same kinds of chivalry upheld by other Malkioni orders (see *Cults of Glorantha*). They fulfil two functions: to act as heavy cavalry for the Rightness Army and to act as dedicated warriors on Otherworld missions and HeroQuests. They are dedicated to all forms of Malkionism, including Hrestolism and even have a sympathetic leaning towards Irensavalism.

Most Rightness Divisions have a unit of Knights Ocular amongst their cavalry ranks and high-ranking knights form part of the Rightness Division war councils advising military leaders and provincial governors on cavalry tactics necessary for military success.

When the Otherworld Explorers need a dedicated, organised, military force, the Knights Ocular are the first choice and the order has been part of many mythbreaking expeditions, channelling the knowledge and experience of their ancestors who destroyed the demon creatures that once threatened Fronela.

The knights see themselves as guardians of the Inner World, keeping it safe from Otherworld horrors, demons and Chaos wherever it manifests.

## Organisation

The Knights Ocular do not maintain any temples or shrines. All hold Ahrtos the Bastard as a venerated exemplar even though he is not a saint (and is not a candidate for beatification). The order attaches itself to larger cavalry units of the Rightness Army but tends, also, to be found in those areas where the Order of Otherworld Explorers operate – meaning that they tend to congregate in regions where it is easy to HeroQuest.

There is no overall leader of the order; in any congregation of knights the highest ranked individual, both militarily and within the cult, becomes the de facto leader of all the other knights; this convention is accepted without question and the knights are adept at identifying the most appropriate natural leaders within their ranks and forming the appropriate allegiances.

## Membership

Certain requirements are necessary for membership of the Knights Ocular:

Insight 75% minimum

Perception 75% minimum

Ride 75% minimum



All candidates must also have fought in at least one battle or been a member of the Rightness Army for a minimum of five years.

### Common Magic

The Knights Ocular teach:

Bladesharp, Countermagic, Countermagic Shield, Detect (Monsters), Mobility, Second Sight.

### Higher Magic

The order's Grimoire is the Book of Honour, Ahrtos's collected writings. Spell-wise it contains:

Attract (Monsters), Haste, Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic, Privacy and Quarantine.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None. All members are expected to behave with honour.

### Cult Skills

Knights Ocular Combat Style (Spear, Sword, Shield, Lance, Bow), Courtesy, Insight, Lore (Hrestol), Lore (Knights Ocular), Lore (Malkion), Manipulation, Perception, Ride, Sorcery Grimoire (Book of Honour).

### Allied Cults

The Knights Ocular are allied with the Order of Otherworld Exploration and Bardan's Book.

Bardan's Book teaches Accurate Missile and Augment Armour.

Otherworld Exploration teaches Navigate Otherworld.

The Knights Ocular teach Privacy and Quarantine to both these allied cults.

## ORDER OF TRYMIR

Saint Trymir was the founder of the Rightness Army and instigated the Return to Rightness Crusade. The son of Hagoth, one of Nralar's descendents, he was born in Irenstos on a stormy night in 650. A born soldier his rise in the military forces of the day was assured and he was instrumental in breaking Waertagi dominance of the seas. Many thought he would become a sailor, he was resolutely dedicated to the land.

In the summer of 680, Trymir led the Army of Rightness ashore from captured Waertagi ships. The Army of Rightness was of *Jrusteli* origins and because they rigorously followed the precepts of The Abiding Book, was destined to right the shameful state of their ancestral land and to bring the power of the Invisible God to them; something Trymir knew they had

lost. Many local lords joined with Trymir, converting quickly when exposed to the True Religion and destroying all pagan worship among their own people. The Army of Rightness sorcerers, especially the Order of the New Iron Staff, bore magic that helped sweep the battle field clear of foes. When werewolves tried to sweep through the woods of Seshnela to reach the boats the wizards detected them and Trymir ambushed the creatures and annihilated them, almost without a loss.

Trymir exploited his descent from Nralar to unite the Seshnegi nobles and oust the foreigners. But he never sought to be a king or lord, holding only the rank given him by the *Jrusteli* Confederation. Nonetheless, he enforced peace over most of Seshnela and kept peace with Tanisor and Nolos.

Trymir was unnaturally long-lived. He reached the age of 150, dying in 830 after breaking Arkat's Book of Secrets. He ceased physically ageing at 30 and ceased to require food, water or sleep at the age of 85. This remarkable transfiguration was down solely to the spirit of the Abiding Book, which chose him as its instigator for the glory of the empire and the Rightness Crusades. Upon his death Malkion himself, in the form of a burst of intense sunshine, came to take Trymir to the Saints' Plane where Trymir became one of its immortal rulers. He watches over his order still, issuing direction through prayers.

### Runes

Magic, Mastery.

### Mythos and History

**The Trials of Trymir (Mythic Resonance 80%):** Trymir's first challenge came when he was but an infant. A snake stole into his nursery and tried to kill him in the crib. Trymir throttled it with his bare hands and ate its head.

His second trial came when he was a boy just short of adolescence. Assassins came to murder him as he played with his fellows in his father's gardens. Trymir disintegrated them with magic.

The third trial came when Trymir was a captain in the marines that fought against the Waertagi. His ship was fast with a mighty Waertagi fleet; Trymir called upon Malkion's glory and the waves rose-up to drown the Waertagi vessels. He captured one and made it his flagship.

The fourth trial came when he instigated the Rightness Crusade. His wife was killed by enemy sorcerers and they tried to make him surrender. These enemies were from Brithos. Trymir mourned his wife and then led a personal assault against the enemy, butchering all.

The fifth trial came when he was called by the Abiding Book. He stood before it and was bathed in its radiance. When he returned it was said one could see Malkion's light shining from his eyes.

The final trial came when he was very old. Malkion appeared to him and gave him the choice of life eternal or to remove to the Saints' Plane. He chose the Saints' Plane even though he had much good work to do. There he was reunited with his wife and dined at Malkion's great feast with Hrestol, Bardan and Volanc.



### Nature

Saint Trymir's order is martial in nature and founded at the start of the Return to Rightness crusade. Any man, he declared, who was true to Malkion and no other, could join with him and live by his example. The people he gathered

to him were warriors and wizards, all dedicants of Malkion's glory. The order rapidly became a gathering place for those who believe in righteous crusades; the imposition of Malkion's will on those who have forsaken the Invisible God's glory or never enjoyed it to begin with.

This is therefore a crusaders' order but it is not restricted to warriors. In the original gathering Trymir had priests, philosophers and teachers at his side; this persists; what binds the order together is a desire to see Malkionism brought to everyone through the necessary means, be they force, philosophy or education.

The order does, though, constitute a large part of the Rightness Army and it is especially appealing to soldiers who are devout Malkioni first and foremost. Many believe they can follow in Trymir's footsteps and become almost ageless, choosing the time of their passage from this world to Malkion's otherworld. The bravest and most devout will become saints: the order promises this, holding Saint Trymir and Saint Aulassis (Trymir's wife) as shining examples of the possibility of beatification.

Members of the cult display the following characteristics:

- Utter devotion to Malkion.
- Desire to become a great hero or saint.
- Desire to see Malkionism as the central faith of the world.
- Willingness to declare Crusade against those resisting Malkion's will.
- Willingness to convert unbelievers.
- Willingness to refound Danmalastan in Glorantha.

These characteristics create a fervent and proselytising order that is intolerant of other religions and keen to see their heresies brought under the empire's one, true purpose. Those, too, who have lost the path to Malkion – Hrestolists, Irensavalists and the Umathelans – require education in their loss and a firm hand to re-establish the path to Solace and Joy. In this regard it resembles certain philosophies of Saint Atrox but in general it believes that a softer, sometimes more forgiving or philosophical approach is better

### Organisation

The order's headquarters is in Irenstos, Jrustela. A great, marbled hall filled with statues of Trymir, his murdered wife and other heroes of the order. All initiations are conducted here and the hall has shrines under the auspices of the True

Malkioni Church, Saint Xemela and a variety of small, local saints and their priests.

The head of the order is Duke Sahmyir, a direct descendent of Saint Trymir who is striving towards certain sainthood. The leader of the third Rightness Crusade in the Ducal Wars he has now retired to Irenstos to await Malkion's call but administers the affairs of the Order of Saint Trymir with the help of an extensive bureaucracy. Naturally enough Sahmyir is part of Ilontos's council and a trusted voice when it comes to the military appetites of the empire.

Beneath Sahmyir are the magi of the order; wizards and warriors who have achieved high rank through devotion and service. They administer the order in its provincial localities and each is head of a local Trymir Hall that mirrors the great hall of Irenstos.

Below them are the rank and file of the order: soldiers, sorcerers and so on. Every member of the order is an Initiate (there are no Lay Member equivalents) and orders are taken from the hall of the region they are located in. The order does not operate any smaller, local halls but members of the order are found throughout the empire either working alone or as part of the Rightness Army.

## Membership

Standard.

Members must be able to prove their devotion to Malkion, abstracted through an Influence or Lore Malkion roll. Prospective members must have Lore (Malkion).

## Common Magic

The order teaches:

Bearing Witness, Countermagic, Detect Unbeliever, Fanaticism, Multimissile and Protection.

## Higher Magic

Saint Trymir's Grimoire is a combination of The Sharp Abiding Book and the Book of Secrets. It contains:

Damage Enhancement, Damage Resistance, Force Wave, Regenerate, Spell Resistance, Terrible Judgement, Treat Wounds and Wrack.

## Gifts and Compulsions

Every Apprentice rank of the cult must take one Gift and receive one Compulsion from the following:

### Gifts

**Abstinence** – Exist without one requirement, for example air, food, water, sleep.

**Divine Training** – Raise a cult skill to 100%.

**Endurance** – Endure any pain. Never needs to Test Resilience to prevent unconsciousness when wounded and immune to torture.

**Increased Health** – Increased Health. The Adventurer's Hit Points are recalculated, based on the sum of CON, SIZ and POW.

**Increased Reactions** – The Adventurer adds his critical score in a weapon to his Strike Rank (for example, an Adventurer with a weapon skill of 60% would add +6 his Strike Rank).

**Youth** – Return to a young body, reversing all aging effects.

### Compulsions

**Armour Reduction** – Never wear footwear or armour on the limbs.

**Armour Rejection** – Cannot wear armour of any kind; must always wear loose-fitting clothes or robes.

**Chaste** – Undertake a vow of chastity.

**Empire Builder** – Become obsessed with challenging an empire and replacing it Malkion's glory.

**Forgo Shield** – Never use a shield.

**Hate Armour** – Never wear armour.

**Never Ending Search** – Obsessed with finding the ultimate location for something lost to your cult.

**Pedantic** – Obsessed with detail. Study every word and every letter without fail. Tasks involving study and concentration take twice as long to accomplish.

### Cult Skills

Trymir Warrior Combat Style (Sword, Bow, Shield, Crossbow), Athletics, Culture (EWF and Dara Happan), Culture (Malkioni), Evade, Influence, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Saint Trymir), Manipulation, Sorcery Grimoire (Saint Trymir's Grimoire).

## Allied Cults

True Malkioni Church  
Order of Saint Atrox

Both will teach up to three spells from their respective grimoires and vice versa.

## RIGHTNESS TEMPLARS

The Rightness Templars are an offshoot of the Order of Saint Trymir that was formed in Pamaltela to bring the sacred word of Malkion to the nomads of the Pamaltelan plains. Isolated from the parent order they became more concerned with imposing the will of Malkion in Pamaltela than imposing it anywhere else and, with time, their allegiance to Trymir's principles weakened.

The Rightness Templars prospered when the first Jrusteli and Seshnegi merchants reached the Pamaltelan coast. They required bodyguards and the Rightness Templars were only too happy to fulfil that role – for a price.

The templars therefore became bodyguards for the wealthy travellers throughout Pamaltela, accompanying both caravans and individuals, a role they still carry out today. Furthermore that role has expanded to include the safekeeping of money and other valuables and for brokering transactions, with the templars keeping a percentage of the transaction. This has made the order very wealthy and very sought after. Along the caravan trails and coast roads the templars have established their own shrines and temples, to Malkion and Trymir, which act as bases for local templars, short-term, lodgings for travellers and exchange centres for merchants. Here merchants can deposit money or valuables and be issued with a promissory note that can be exchanged at any other templar waystation: this means merchants need not carry cash that is attractive to bandits and brigands and they can also recruit protective services as they see fit.

## Runes

Law, Truth.

## Mythos and History

The order of the Rightness Templars was founded by Lord Hergo Ornerivin, a Jrustelan mage of the Order of Saint Trymir who was sent to co-ordinate the forces in Pamaltela early in the empire's rule of the continent. A fierce opponent of heathen religions he antagonised the Agimori and made enemies of most of the indigenous population with the exception of the timinits – which seemed to be readily accepting of Malkionism. He formed the templars in 718 when it became clear that merchant caravans were being preyed upon by all manner of foes and trade was suffering as a

result. He instilled in the templars a certain code of discipline (see Nature) and pledged to keep the highways of the empire safe for all true Malkioni.

Ornerivin died at the battle of Cerngoth in 729 but plenty of others were prepared to continue the creed of the templars thereafter. Between 733 and 800 the templars spread across northern Pamaltela with their key temples in Umathela and many scattered waystations along the coast and other trade routes. The money gathered from levies for their services was retained by the templars and no tribute was paid to the emperor. In 816 Emperor Miglos demanded that 15 percent of the protection revenues be paid over to the treasury and the templars refused. This resulted in Miglos's famed 'Temple Ban', which aimed to outlaw the templars and dissolve their waystations. Soldiers of the Rightness Army were sent to affect the ban but many defected and joined the Rightness Templars when the order displayed its unerring loyalty to Malkion. The Temple Ban remained in force throughout Miglos's seven year reign as emperor, with successive attempts by Rightness Army soldiers and the Order of Saint Atrox attempting to curb their activities. It failed at every attempt. The merchant guilds had great faith in the templars and helped resist Miglos's attempts to bring them to heel. When Miglos died in 823 the Temple Ban died with him. The templars have continued to protect Pamaltela to this day.

## Nature

The order is committed to defending Malkioni from heathen influence. They are also committed to fighting against imperial injustice following what happened during the Temple Ban. This makes them renegade warriors who fully support Umathela's declaration of independence but who also remain fervently devoted to supporting the Malkioni cause.

Warriors of the order are expected to fulfil a certain code:

- Absolute obedience to Malkion.
- Absolute obedience to the Temple Master.
- To shun all personal possessions, save for arms, armour, mount and clothes.
- To undertake a vow of celibacy so as not to be distracted from duty.
- To befriend and protect all friends and disciples of Malkion and the Invisible God.
- To put the lives of those under personal protection ahead of one's own.
- Never to retire from battle unless commanded to do so.
- To be the last to retire from battle.
- To accept no insult slight or coarse remark towards Malkion, the saints or prophets.
- To live as simple and as dutiful a life as possible.
- To educate and enlighten the heathens and bring them unto the path of Solace and Joy.



Breaking any part of the templar code results in expulsion from the order.

Most templars work in small bands and are allied with a Temple or High Temple. They know and understand the local terrain, local populations, hazards and so forth. However templars can range far and wide across Pamaltela according to the person they are protecting or any particular mission the waystation master has assigned to them.

Only Malkioni are deserving of the templars' direct protection; but, in some circumstances, non-Malkioni can gain from the templars if they can prove themselves to be peaceful towards Malkionists and unallied with any 'evil' forces.

### Organisation

The order is spread wide across Pamaltela but favours the northern strip of the continent. It has no presence in Fonrit but outside the kingdom of slaves it has an extensive presence. Templar bases fall into three categories:

**High Temples:** Found in the major cities, especially of Umathela. These are large, wealthy, multi-functional buildings run by a Mage.

**Road Temples:** Smaller, multifunctional temples found in towns or outside them. Smaller than high temples but still multifunctional and run by either a Mage or an Adept.

**Waystations:** Small hostleries operated by either an Adept or an Apprentice, they provide temporary refuge and accommodation.

Hiring templars as guards or protectors happens at High Temples and Temples.

Money changing and banking facilities are available at Temples and High Temples; both issue promissory notes, which can be exchanged at any other Temple for the same amount of cash. A payment of 15% of the value to be changed is paid at the point of the promissory note being issued. Temples and High Temples all have an underground vault where cash and valuables are stored. People using these facilities can simply store valuables for later collection, at a charge of 5% of the goods' value. The vaults are made of sturdy metal and stone and protected by a Protective Ward spell.

Templar bands are called Sixths, because they usually consist of six templars but a Sixth can have more or less members depending on location and availability. A Sixth is as much a warband and brotherhood as it is an administrative unit. Every Sixth has a leader – usually an Adept or highly experienced Apprentice.

### Membership

Only devout Malkioni may join the Rightness Templars. This is abstracted by an Influence or Lore (Malkion) roll. A

	Waystation	Temple	High Temple
Usual Staff	1	1D3	1D6+2
Cult Rank and Cult Skill Levels	Adept Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 50+2D10%	1 x Mage, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 75+2D10% 1 x Adept Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 50+2D10% 1 x Apprentice, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 30+2D10%	1 x Mage, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 75+2D10% 1 x Adept Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 50+2D10% 1 x Apprentice, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar) 30+2D10%
Shrines	1	1D3	1D3+1
Training Facilities?	No	No	Yes
Money Changing/ Banking?	No	Yes	Yes
Lodgings/Sanctuary	Yes – 1D3 beds	Yes - 1D4 beds	Yes – 2D3 beds
Stables	Yes – but very basic.	Yes – 1D4 mounts	Yes – 1D6+6 mounts
Infirmary	No	No	Yes – 1 member of general staff with First Aid at 50+2D10% and Healing at 30+2D10%



minimum of 50% Lore (Malkion) is required for membership. Candidates must also have demonstrated prowess in battle.

On joining the order all material wealth, save for clothes, weapons and armour, is surrendered to the High Temple. From that point on the templar undertakes a vow of poverty. Food is given only by a High Temple, Temple or Waystation; templars in the field must forage and rely on local charity. No templar can accept any form of payment or coin. Any who are tricked into taking payment must donate all rewards to the nearest templar outpost immediately; those who do not are subject to expulsion.

### Common Magic

The High Temples and Temples offer training in:

Bandit's Cloak, Bladesharp, Cauterise, Detect Enemy, Endurance and Speedart.

### Higher Magic

The templars grimoire is the Scroll of Poverty and Vow. It contains:

Damage Enhancement, Damage Resistance, Divinity Ward, Protective Ward, Treat Wounds, Unarmed Appearance and Unnerve.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None. All templars must undertake the templar code.

### Cult Skills

Templar Combat Style (Sword, Spear, Shield, Bow), Athletics, Evade, Insight, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Templar), Manipulation, Resilience, Ride, Sorcery Grimoire (Scroll of Poverty and Vow), Survival, Track.

### Allied Cults

None.

## SAINT MANARIST'S RUNNERS

Saint Manarist was a Dawn Age hero who ran the length and breadth of Glorantha carrying Malkion's word. At the end of his marathon he dropped dead from exhaustion but his body was carried to Frowal and there entombed with similar heroes who had devoted their energies to Malkion's glory and service.

The order that has formed around his name is an order of scouts and messengers serving the Rightness Army. They range ahead of a main force, transport orders, skirmish when necessary and provide vital intelligence and communications.

### Runes

Motion.

### Mythos and History

**Saint Manarist Runs (Mythic Resonance 75%):** Manarist was a poor farmer's son. His family were heathens but, whilst tending the pigs, Manarist saw the light of the Invisible God and Malkion spoke with him. From that point, Manarist was a convert to the One, True Way and he knew that Malkion's message had to be carried as far as possible. He bid his family a curt farewell and began to run, in the direction of the rising sun. He did not stop for 30 years.

Many tried to stop him but the longer he ran the faster he became. He chanted Malkion's word as he ran and this gave him the strength for his ordeal. When he reached the eastern sea he turned south and ran to the coast. A ship took him to the southern continent and he ran the length of that continent too, growing faster and more confident as he ran. When he reached the edge of the world he turned back and ran north again, eventually reaching Seshnela where, his work done, he was taken unto Solace and Joy by the Prophet.

In his run he met many famous heroes. Hrestol ran with him for a time but lacked the stamina for a longer effort. Monsters tried to eat him but he out-ran them. Enemies tried to tempt him, including servants of Gbaji but he ignored them. From time-to-time he was given a message to deliver and he delivered it but always with Malkion's word.

Before he was taken unto Malkion and lay, exhausted, surrounded by the curious and the sympathetic, someone asked him why he had run so far? 'I did not run,' Manarist said. 'Malkion carried me.' And with that last breath Malkion carried Manarist on the final journey unto the Saints Plane where Manarist now rests amongst the chosen.

### Nature

The Order of Saint Manarist's Runners (or The Runners, as they call themselves) believes in the need for swift, accurate communications and information. Their role is, first and foremost, to provide the Rightness Army with such facilities but also to fight for Malkion and support the ongoing work of the Return to Rightness crusades.

They are not Malkioni evangelists: that is for others; but they are adept at speedy and accurate communications and intelligence gathering and very proud of this important and specialised role. The Runners believe that the Rightness Army is only ever as good as its ability to communicate and they have proved, time and again, that they are the best equipped to handle this task.

The Runners are a much respected and trusted order. Provincial Governors entrust important messages to no one else and The Runners have never betrayed that trust. Often a Runner works alone but frequently a unit of Runners is attached to a larger force and acts as scouts and long-range surveillance as well as message gatherers. If called upon to fight, then they prefer to act as skirmishers and ambushers – striking fast, hard and surgically before retreating to allow the main force to take advantage of their efforts.

Members of the order are schooled in memory techniques. Messages are learned by heart and never carried in a written form. The spells of the Runners' grimoire aid in this regard but the development of memory is a skill constantly trained and exercised. A runner can recite, exactly, very long and complicated messages, reproducing diagrams perfectly.

### Organisation

Runners can be found as part of every Rightness Army division. They have no temples or shrines (for Saint Manirist had none) and for them veneration is found in the movement of word and deed. The order's magi act as the clearing house for all messages and form part of any military counsel or chain of command. Mages determine who will be responsible for carrying a message.

When acting as forward intelligence or scouts, Runners tend to form together into companies of five or more, led by an Adept of the order. Their skills lie in stealth and ambush with attacks delivered from range: short bows are the preferred weapon of the order. In this capacity they take orders from the commanding officer of the army they are attached to.

### Membership

Standard.

Potential Runners must demonstrate both Athleticism and good memory, abstracted as an Athletics roll and a Persistence roll. Mounts are forbidden to Runners; all work must be conducted on foot unless circumstances dictate that mounts must be used.

### Common Magic

The order teaches:

Abacus, Bearing Witness, Clear Path, Coordination, Endurance, Mindspeech and Multimissile.

### Higher Magic

The Grimoire of Thought and Motion is Saint Manirist's grimoire. It contains:

Abjure (Sleep), Enhance (DEX), Haste, Hinder, Memorise, Project (Voice), and Telepathy.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None.

### Cult Skills

Runner Combat Style (Bow, Sling, Sword, Spear, Shield), Athletics, Evade, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Saint Manirist), Lore (Tactics), Navigate, Resilience, Persistence, Sleight and Stealth.

### Allied Cults

None.



## ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF NAVIGATORS

This naval order represents the navigators and steersmen of the Imperial Navy. It holds the secrets of using the sun and the stars to navigate the oceans of the world along with the mathematics needed to plot co-ordinated points on the high seas. Its secrets come from a variety of sources. Chief of these is Theselenicus the Watcher, an astronomer of the First Age who proposed a basic system for star navigation. Other sources include the Waertagi navigational method, which involve geometry and the measurement of time, and Dara Happan studies into the Sky Dome and the structure of Buserian's Frame, which provides far greater insight into the movements of the constellations across the Sky Dome and offers greater accuracy to Theselenicus' original postulations.

Unless one is a member of the Illustrious Order, one cannot find regular employ as a navigator in either the naval or merchant fleets of the God Learners. The order guards its knowledge and position jealously making the art and science of navigation into a quasi-mystical, closed-shop and ensuring that the order retains position and status within the empire.

### Runes

Sky.

### Mythos and History

Theselenicus was a Seshnelan star gazer during the First Age and he made extensive charts of the motion of the stars across the Sky Dome, which he decreed moved to a pattern determined by the hand of the Invisible God. There were, however, many anomalies he could not account for or explain adequately in terms of Malkioni mathematics at that time. His writings were therefore more inspiring than accurate.

In later years Malkioni traders returned from Dara Happa with tales of an entire cult given over to the study of the sky and the movement of the stars. Students of Theselenicus travelled to Yuthuppa and, after much effort, managed to gain an understanding of the Buserian scholar's understanding of astronomy and the nature of Buserian's Frame. Seshnelan scholars were faced with an unpalatable interpretation: that the stars were gods and moved to mythical patterns. This did not sit well with Malkionist teaching and risked being branded as heresy. Thus, the followers of Theselenicus (for the man himself was long dead) reinterpreted Buserian's Frame and the Dara Happan mythic interpretation into an astronomical philosophy based on how the Invisible God was manipulating the heavens to deceive the unbelievers of the earth below. This is one of the illustrious secrets of the order:

that Dara Happan interpretations are correct and the current Malkioni interpretation is a smokescreen for some unassailable astronomical truths.

Captured Waertagi navigators proved invaluable for the order. Their form of navigation did not rely wholly on the stars or the sun but on certain calculations of currents, tides, the position of the land and triangulating these elements to arrive at an accurate sea-born position. The Illustrious Order of Navigators took these techniques and worked them into their own, holistic philosophy of navigation, blending the teachings of Theselenicus, the Dara Happans and the Waertagi. The Book of Sky and Sea is the most complete guide to navigation in the world and it is the sole property of the order.

### Nature

Navigators are secretive, stubborn, pedantic and hugely protective of their knowledge. Their ability to chart a course, plot a position and predict deviation is unparalleled and with it comes a certain degree of arrogance.

Naturally the order is integral to every part of Justeli dominance of the waves and they exploit this position ruthlessly. Without the order's knowledge and expertise ships risk the wrong courses and getting lost. Accurate charts are essential for coastal waters to avoid reefs and the order has complete control over their availability. If the Imperial Navy does not agree to any terms it demands, navigators can be withdrawn, charts rescinded and so on. The empire must therefore treat the Illustrious Guild of Navigators with a level of respect that is often thought to be out of proportion with its achievements and status. Few like the arrogance of the navigators but all agree that they are invaluable.

The order is contracted by the Ministry of the Navy to supply two navigators to each and every military vessel and one navigator to merchant vessels. A hefty sum is charged for this service and thus the Navigators are very rich, being able to fund opulent premises in several major cities of Justela and Seshnela. Only Illustrious Order navigators are permitted on military ships although independent merchants can employ their own. Of course, independent, non-order navigators do not come with the same competence and so most merchants pay the order's rates and grumble about it later.

The order will only teach its skills to order members and refuses to share the information found in the Book of Sky and Sea – even though much of it is stolen knowledge. The order does not want anyone else providing navigational services and neither does it want anyone discovering that much of its knowledge comes from sources outside of core Malkionism.



## Organisation

Every Justeli military ship carries an Adept of the order and either a novice or an apprentice, who is actively learning the arts of navigation and cartography. The Magi of the order run the political side of the business, negotiating locally, regionally and provincially for its services.

The order does not follow any particular saint although it does hold Theselenicus as a quasi-saint.

Novices and Apprentices study under an Adept and so usually Navigators work in pairs. On military ships this is a common pairing. On merchant and civilian ships an Adept is the usual navigator although a mage might occupy a position aboard a wealthy or prestigious ship.

The Magi of the order are the keepers of the secrets and arch students of navigation. They hold the archives – based in Frowal – of Theselenicus, which contain all his original studies, plus those plundered from Dara Happa. Also here are the chart archives that hold the original maps charting the whole of Glorantha's seas and coastal regions. Copies are issued to navigators on a 'need to have' basis and copies are strictly regulated.

Navigators are forbidden, on pain of death, to reveal their knowledge to anyone outside the order. Calculations are chart readings shrouded in secrecy and subject to much pseudo-ritual – concoctions by the Magi to mask the science behind effective navigation.

## Membership

Standard.

Prospective members must have a basic talent for navigation, represented by the Navigation skill at its base value. At each rank order members gain certain items as benefits:

Novices:	Lodestone and Compass
Apprentice:	Sextant
Adept:	Telescope
Mage:	Access to charts and order secrets

## Common Magic

The order teaches:

Detect Bearing, Detect Reef, Detect Storm.

## Higher Magic

The Book of Sky and Wave does not contain many spells; what it does contain are:

Enhance (INT), Phantom (Sight), Project (Sight), Sense (Storm, Reef, Bearing).

## Gifts and Compulsions

None.

## Cult Skills

The cult teaches:

Art (Cartography), Boating, Lore (Astronomy), Lore (Cartography), Lore (Malkion), Lore (Navigators), Lore (Regional), Lore (Weather), Navigation, Perception, Shiphandling.

## Allied Cults

None.

# SENIRITE SISTERHOOD

The Rightness Army is dominated by male warriors but this order is composed entirely of women, all disciples of Saint Seniri, she who disguised herself as a man to fight for Malkion's glory even before the Rightness Crusades began. She distinguished herself at several battles, finally casting off her disguise when Trymir demanded to know who this astonishing warrior was.

In the current age the prejudice against women is not so heartfelt in the Rightness Army but only the Senirite Sisterhood is allowed to field female warriors; they are rarely permitted as members of other orders. The Senirites revere Saint Seniri as the epitome of female force and emancipation; so devout unto Malkion that she was prepared to risk her life for her beliefs. All members of the Senirite Sisterhood shave their heads, with the exception of hair at the base of the scalp, which is grown long and worn as a queue weighted by a ring of bronze. These are fearless warriors for they have much, continually, to prove against their male brethren.

Some prejudice remains. A staunch few claim that women have no place in the Rightness ranks but time and again the Senirites prove their worth. At Derovan the Senirites led the charge against Wyrnish shield walls breaking two and contributing to the smashing of a third. They fight without fear and with a ferocity that even some male soldiers find hard to muster. They do not shirk from battle, show little mercy and expect none in return. This is an order of defiance and determination. Their leader, High Sister Rozaria, is known as The Scythe for her battle technique. Outside of the killing fields she has made a place for herself in the Rightness Army councils and proved herself to be a cunning tactician.

## Runes

Man.

### Mythos and History

Seniri was the daughter of a duke and committed to a life of luxury in her father's household. Her brothers had gone to war as was expected and she was expected to learn the womanly ways and tend hearth. She was unhappy at this prospect for the fervour of the Invisible God burned bright in her breast and so, one cold, winter morning, she shaved her head (save for the queue at the nape of her neck), donned men's clothes, muddied her face and borrowed her father's ill-fitting leather armour and war spears and followed her brothers to the battle.

Disguising her voice and wearing her father's full, bronze helm, she simply joined the male ranks. Few, in those desperate days, questioned the presence of so slight a creature because many young farmboys had pressed into service and they cowered at the back of the ranks afraid to push forward. Seniri was different. She made sure she was in the front rank and, although she had never picked up a spear or shield in her life, she proved to be a natural for battle. She fought bravely and suffered several wounds but when others came to congratulate her on her courage she simply melted away into the morass of other soldiers.

At the second of Trymir's great battles to unite the Seshnegi against the Stygians she distinguished herself once more by killing the war champion of the Stygian army, a bronze-skinned thing of terrifying skill. He died whimpering on her spear thrust and she took his head and presented it to Trymir. 'Show me your face,' Trymir demanded and Seniri obeyed. 'See, this woman, who has come amongst us and given us victory,' he called to his men. 'See how she has proved herself to us and to Malkion!'

Other women, hearing of Seniri's success, came to the Rightness Army and joined with her. The Sisterhood was born with certain oaths binding them together. For a time they formed Trymir's personal guard and later, at Derovan, they showed that a company of women could outfight any of the male companies and the Wyrnish foes that came shrieking at them through the Slontan night.

Seniri was mortally wounded at Derovan but Saint Xemela herself came down from the Saints' Plane and gathered her into Solace and Joy. Her sisterhood remained behind, committed to her name and prepared to maintain the fight for Malkioni womanhood and Malkion's glory.

## Nature

The Senirite Sisters operate as any other martial order but are, perhaps, even more fervent than their male brethren. They are scornful of indecision and demand firm action. They like to be told where the enemy is and how many there are but otherwise do not question how best that enemy should be bested. They do not shroud themselves in a chivalric mantle considering such oaths as a sign of male pride. Their oaths are simple:

- Do not fear death.
- Do not fear the enemy.
- Do not fear any man.
- Do not sully the purity of spirit with carnal relations.
- Fight well and prepare for death always.

The Senirites seek no special privilege from their position and ask only to be deployed as any other military order or unit. They keep their own council, preferring not to fraternise with male soldiers overly and they never enter into relationships with them. It is the expectation of every Sister that they will die in battle rather than whither into old age.

## Organisation

The Sisterhood is organised into Chapters of 50 warriors to a chapter, led by a Sword Maiden. This is not a large order and, in 908, there are only 20 Chapters in the whole of the Rightness Army but they are respected in most circles and certainly feared on the battlefield.

The weapons that a Senirite uses depends on rank within the order:

Spear Sisters (Novices): Spear and Shield  
 Axe Sisters (Apprentices): Axe and Shield  
 Sword Maidens (Adepts): Sword and Shield  
 Sword Sisters (Mage): Greatsword

The order has no temples but each Chapter carries a lock of Saint Seniri's queue, which acts as a shrine that moves with the order. The lock of hair is kept by the Chapter's Sword Sister and is always carried into battle. Fallen sisters have their queue taken and woven into the queue of Saint Seniri creating a longer and longer relic that venerates both Seniri's sacrifice and that of those who followed her example.

## Membership

Standard.

This is a female only cult, obviously, and members must take the oath described earlier and demonstrate their readiness for war abstracted in either a Resilience or Combat Style of 40% or higher.

### Common Magic

The order teaches:

Bladesharp, Healing, Mobility and Protection.

### Higher Magic

The Senirite Grimoire contains those spells gathered by Sister Seniri during her time at war:

Attract (Missiles), Break Will, Enhance (DEX), Enhance (STR), Eyes of the Sentinel.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None.

### Cult Skills

Senirite Combat (Sword, Spear, Axe and Shield), Evade, Lore (Malkion), Lore (Senirite Sisterhood), Manipulation, Sorcery Grimoire (Senirite), Survival.

### Allied Cults

The order has an alliance with the Knights of Saint Volanc and will teach up to two of their spells in exchange for two of that order's.

## THE SAINTLY BOOKBEARERS

The Order of Saintly Bookbearers was formed to bring the Abiding Book first to all Jrustela and then to all the world. In the early days, a Bookbearer would work feverishly to create a hasty copy of the *Book*, then go out into the world dressed only in rags, reading the word of God from street corners and market squares. Thanks to the Bookbearers' heroic efforts, all Jrustela, even the formerly pagan city of Shenilstos, accepted the word of the Invisible God. Soon the Order of Saintly Bookbearers was officially established by the Malkioni True Church and they were sent forth to Seshnela and other lands to bring the *Book* to all of the west. Martyred Bookbearers were the impetus that began the Rightness Crusade; the Middle Sea Empire was born from shed blood and desecrated holy books.

### Runes

Communication, Trade.

### Mythos and History

The Bookbearers were the first to take the self-written script of the original Abiding Book and commit it to a copied form. In charge of this process was Nezenerus of Hrust, a noted

illuminator and translator who prided himself on his devotion to poverty and virtue and the written word. His illuminations were already noted and his devotion to the glory of Malkion unquestionable; he was a natural choice for the task of creating the first six copies of the Abiding Book.

Something happened to Nezenerus as he worked. He became more devout and more committed to poverty as an expression of purity. He sold all his possessions and donated the proceeds to the church. He became an ardent proselytiser, preaching from the market squares of various Jrusteli cities. He became intolerant of anyone who questioned even the slightest part of the Abiding Book. He became an advocate of a crusade to bring the book's word to the masses.

He did not live to see the copies created. He was stoned to death after attacking a nobleman who wondered, allowed, if the Abiding Book truly was God's word in written form and not a trick of Gbaji. But Nezenerus had already set in train the Scriptoriate that would complete the copying and continue it, eventually becoming part of the order of Saintly Bookbearers and so his name was assured.

### Nature

Today, new copies of the Abiding Book are made in great scriptoriums by skilled craftsmen and dedicated scribes. The missionaries dress in sturdy robes, their missionary efforts are co-ordinated from the shining House of the Bookbearers in Hathinethor and they are a core part of Middle Sea Empire foreign policy – but their purpose and their duties are unchanged. They still travel to places that have not heard the truth of the Invisible God and they preach His message to those souls who can yet be saved.

The Saintly Bookbearers are one of the most honoured of the holy orders but they are poor and tend to draw their new members from the lower classes of Jrusteli society, so they lack political power. Donations to the Saintly Bookbearers are spent buying ships and outfitting expeditions instead of patronising artists or building new monasteries. The Bookbearers also have an unfortunate habit of getting martyred, which is wonderful for one's chances of achieving Solace but has a negative effect on attracting the sons and daughters of wealthy families. Many who join the Bookbearers do so because of their fervent personal faith and the order is also supported both by those who espouse the Missionary policy and by anti-God Learners who believe that wiping out paganism through mass conversion will put an end to the Collective's increasingly disturbing magical experimentation.

The copies of the Abiding Book the Bookbearers produce are not complete copies. Many sections of the Abiding Book reveal themselves only to the chosen and are encoded against unchosen eyes. Therefore the Bookbearers transcribe the



accessible cantos; those scriptures concerned with the word of the Invisible God rather than the spells and grimoires that the original Abiding Book contains.

The Bookbearers have been closely associated with the Rightness Crusade for much of their history but their beliefs are less radical than the Crusade. The Bookbearers preach a simple, uncontroversial and basic form of Makanism, emphasising faith, good works, good thought and the primacy of the Invisible God and his prophet Malkion.

### Organisation

The Bookbearers are divided into two distinct elements: the Scriptoriate, which creates the copies of the Abiding Book and the Deliverers who undertake the proselytising. One may join either branch and move between them, although, generally, a Bookbearer chooses a path and sticks with it.

The Scriptoriate is based in the House of the Bookbearers in Hathinethor and there are no other bases. This marvellous, triangular, marble-clad building is punctuated with 110 windows that flood the massive, oval scriptorium with natural light to perfectly illuminate the work of the order. On bright summer days rays of sunshine streak in through the high windows like beams from the Invisible God himself, filling the brothers' hearts with joy.

The Deliverers work in small groups or alone, travelling either with the Rightness Army or singularly, living off charity and good will, delivering the Book's news to wherever they can and to whomever will listen. The Deliverers function without governance but are never forgetful that they are Bookbearers and deliver that message with pride and zeal.

### Membership

To become a Bookbearer one must possess one of either two requisite skills: Influence (for Deliverers) of at least 50% or Art (Script) for Scriptoriate. Furthermore members must also be members of the True Malkioni Church although the rank is unimportant.

The branch must then be chosen. After two years service in that branch one may apply to transfer to the other as long as the requisite skill is possessed.

### Common Magic

The order teaches the following spells:

Bearing Witness, Glamour and Golden Tongue (Deliverers).

Becalm, Co-ordination and Detect Error (Scriptoriate).

### Higher Magic

The order has no Grimoire of its own; only the True Malkioni grimoire. Deliverers, though, are taught the spells Book Recital and Memorise, which are cast at the True Malkioni Grimoire skill percentage.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None.

### Cult Skills

Art (Illumination), Art (Script), Disguise, Drive, Influence, Oratory, Persistence, Ride, Sing.

### Allied Cults

True Malkioni Church.

## THE ORDER OF SAINT SEREZOS

This is an order of dedicated sorcerers who perceive the Abiding Book as a grimoire first and foremost; a legacy of power over heathens and pagans to be used as a necessary adjunct of crusade. The order is commonly found attached to the Rightness Army and supplies sorcerers to the Imperial

Navy. It is less concerned with interpreting the book as putting it to magical use. Others can define the meaning and application of the cantos but the application of the spells it contains is an art in itself.

The order has been involved in compiling the grimoires of many of the Jrusteli orders, selecting those spells available in the Common and Order cantos and watching, with beady, envious eyes, those chosen to accept spells from the Forbidden cantos: something they have little control over (but would pay dearly to have).

## Runes

Harmony, Infinity, Law.

## Mythos and History

Saint Serezos was martyred at the Second Ecclesiastical Conference in Eradinthanos and it is said of him that his suffering, his faith and most of all his desire for knowledge were so great that they moved the spirit of the Invisible God, who stretched forth His hand and wrote a Book containing all the wisdom that Serezos sought. The Book we read here on earth is but a reflection of the divine book that Serezos now reads eternally in Solace.

## Nature

The Order of Saint Serezos exists to venerate the saint and continue his divine work. The Order of Saint Serezos is a sect of librarians, scholars and experimental philosophers.

They seek to know the mind of God. There are no God Learners among the Order of Saint Serezos, as they hold that the pagan gods, however powerful, are just distractions, illusions of this world. They do have many powerful sorcerers, though, and specialise in the old New Order technique of reading the Abiding Book as a grimoire. They believe that God Learning as a whole is a foolish errand and that ultimate cosmic power lies within the more cryptic sections of the *Book*. The order has attracted a great many timinits, who endlessly combine and recombine passages from the Abiding Book according to complex mathematical formulae. The logical, analytical beliefs of the Serezosites resonate with the timinit mind.

## Organisation

The Gardens of Serezos are located outside Evrowal. Here, in a green park surrounding the Order's library, the monks have laid out an ornamental garden with paths that correspond to the True Runes and plants, statues and ornamentation that have symbolic connections to the chapters of the Abiding Book. To walk the paths of the garden is to walk between the lines of the *Book*. Beneath the garden, in secret vaults, Zistorite

combinatorial engines overseen by timinit programmers endlessly create new versions of the Abiding Book.

The True Malkioni Church supports the strangeness of the Serezosians, seeing their sorcery as a counterbalance to the crypto-pagan excesses of the God Learners.

## Membership

Standard.

Serezosians must be members of the True Malkioni Church.

Each stage of membership comes with certain duties and benefits.

### Novice Membership

In addition to memorising the book, students must pay an initial entry fee of 500 silver; this fee is usually paid for by church sponsors for promising candidates.

Students of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

### Computer (Apprentice) Membership

To reach this level, a sorcerer must have recovered at least three important books from other libraries (especially well-learned Pagan ones) for the Serezosian library. Kralorela has proved an excellent source for such things. The Computer must also have an INT score of at least 16.

Computers of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

### Great Witness (Mage) Membership

Great Wizards must spend at least one month every year studying and working in the Garden of Serezos. Great Wizards also need an INT of at least 18.

Great Witnesses of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

## Common Magic

Bearing Witness, Countermagic, Countermagic Shield, Detect Books, Detect Secret.

## Higher Magic

The order has assembled its own Grimoire but also access the grimoire of the True Malkioni Church. The spells in its own grimoire, the Serezos Appendix, are:

Abort, Book Recital, Divinity Ward.

The Appendix is taught as a separate Grimoire skill.

### Gifts and Compulsions

None.

### Cult Skills

Culture (Jrusteli), Language (One Other), Language (Own), Lore (Malkion), Lore (Serezos), Manipulation, Sorcery Grimoire (Serezos Appendix).

### Allied Cults

Cogs of Zistor. The Serezosians share their Appendix with the Cogs and the Cogs share an equal number of spells.

## THE BROTHERS OF CHARITABLE THOUGHT

The Brothers of Charitable Thought are True Malkioni Church-sponsored detectives and spies who keep an eye on Middle Sea sorcerers and keep them from going rogue. There is always the temptation for those who attain power to go it alone, unconcerned about the guiding hand of Malkionism and the church. The Brothers of Charitable Thought aim to keep such things upper-mind.

Delecti the Inquirer, for example, left six Brothers dead behind him when he defected to the EWF. While the Brothers were originally set up to deal with sorcery, their investigative talents are often called upon to deal with mundane or secular crimes.

### Runes

Law, Magic, Truth.

### Mythos and History

Formed soon after the first copies of the Abiding Book left their custodians, the order's original intention was to offer guidance on the application of sorcery. It soon became apparent that, for some, the Abiding Book offered ways to personal power that were at distinct odds with the Abiding Book's ethos. The order therefore was forced into taking a more radical direction of correction and realignment.

Chief amongst the founding brothers of the order was Tordaqa of Hrestolket. He watched, perturbed, as several sorcerers attempted to disappear into little worlds of the own devising, seizing personal power at the expense of others. He instigated a network of informers who assessed these errant sorcerers' deeds and Tordaqa then decided if realignment to the one, true path was necessary. Sometimes the Order of Saint Atrox was called upon. But, in time, the order developed its own means and techniques that did not rely on outside influence for their application.



By 898 the Order had gathered substantial following and support within the True Malkioni Church. The number of errant sorcerers it had apprehended and either chastised, reconverted or killed was impressive and there was a demonstrable reduction in those who tried to forge their own path. During the Ducal Wars the Brothers of Charitable Thought were instrumental in formulating which dukes were in support of the Imperial Throne and those who opposed it. Their intelligence drove the subsequent purges.

### Nature

The Order of Charitable Thought want to believe the best of all men. They sincerely, fervently hope that true devotion to Malkion burns in the soul of all men, that the God Learners are not treading too close to pagan ways, that necromancers are just a little misguided... The Order was created in the chaotic days after the Seshnegi throne was freed and the usurping Pilif the Magus was defeated. If the Rightness Crusade had had its way, everyone in the New Order would have been burnt at the stake for treachery, heresy, blasphemy and other crimes but the Malkioni True Church recognised the potential power of the New Order's researches. The New Order was therefore taken under the wing of the Church and the Brothers of Charitable Thought were founded as the Malkioni religious police.

The wise founders of the Order realised that to obtain great power, sorcerers have to do and think things that seem quite objectionable or even heretical to common folk and that it would take great insight and discernment to determine which sorcerers were actually walking down forbidden paths and which were still on the path of righteousness despite the strangeness of their methods and tools. A God Learner, the Brothers point out today, might speak prayers to a pagan god, dress like a pagan, wield pagan magic and act in pagan ways – but if his soul is pure and dedicated to Malkion, all his pagan ways are but empty formulas. By contrast, another sorcerer who seems to be the most upright and pious man you could ever hope to meet might actually be summoning demons or denying the unity of God. The Brothers are encouraged to be as trusting and charitable as possible and never act without proof of heresy. Despite this, most God Learners see them as meddlers and reactionary inquisitors.

## Organisation

Every major temple of the True Malkioni Church has a chapter of the brotherhood attached to it. They monitor the local area and take action as appropriate. Much of its work is done through informants who are employed on a casual basis but permanent spies are also employed and their job is to go deep into the workings of a possible errant/heretical magician if initial suspicions are proved.

Chapters of the brotherhood are small; no more than 10 brothers at a time, if that, but they enjoy the full patronage and support of the temple elders and True Malkioni wizards. This means that funding is never an issue and likely informants and spies easy to come by (many people owe the temple favours, after all, and are desperate to prove themselves loyal).

## Membership

Members must be True Malkioni Church members first. The order is organised on the following lines:

### Student Membership

Students are trainee Watchers and usually attached to a seasoned Watcher to learn the techniques the brotherhood uses.

Students of Charitable Thought gain a +10% bonus to Perception and Stealth tests.

### Watcher (Apprentice) Membership

Watchers are assigned to a particular city or university to keep an eye on events there. They must also have a minimum Perception of 80%.

Watchers swiftly develop a network of informants and agents, bringing them news about magical events in the area.

## Keeper (Mage) Membership

Keepers of Charitable Thought are undercover agents of the Church, often infiltrating errant sorcerers' research facilities. They must have minimum Stealth, Disguise and Influence scores of 80%.

Keepers gain a +10% bonus to any Resistance tests against spells cast by another Malkioni.

## Common Magic

Bearing Witness, Detect Heretic, Detect Sorcery.

## Higher Magic

The order has no grimoire of its own and uses the True Malkioni Grimoire. It does, however, have access to the following additional spells:

Forgetful Mien, Silence The Spoken, Terrible Judgement.

Only Keepers are taught Terrible Judgement.

## Gifts and Compulsions

The order inculcates a need to spy on, and develop suspicions of, anyone who appears to be using sorcery for purely selfish purposes. This means the order is naturally suspicious of just about everyone even though they wish to believe that there are good and unselfish motives in all men.

## Cult Skills

Insight, Perception, Survival.

## Allied Cults

True Malkioni Church.

# JOGRAMPUR

Jogrampur is a god created by the enterprising Hwarosian Mystics of Varanswal in Umathela. He began as a series of invented myths that were introduced to a group of Tarint Agimori brought into the city of Varanswal and steadily grew until the god developed a presence on the God Plane – a presence that is steadily growing as both the Agimori and the Jogram Witnesses develop their veneration of him.

The myths concerning Jogrampur's existence are rooted in perversions of Pamalt mythology. The God Learners have created Jogrampur as one of Pamalt's lost friends, a bright and brilliant mentor who lives in the sun but also commands the storms and the tides. As a result of this unique nature the myths of other cultures, such as the Solar worshippers and the Storm Tribe, can be easily connected with Jogrampur. The god has also been firmly attached to Malkioni myth by placing the

point of his creation in the Second Action, as part of Ferbrith's realisation of the Sun and the Primal Runes. Jogrampur is therefore above the Erasanchula and a commander of runes rather than being a manifestation of them.

## Runes

None; Jogrampur is not yet powerful enough to have runes of his own. However both the Agimori and the Jogram Witnesses intend to initiate HeroQuests to gain Jogrampur the runes of Mastery and Magic so that his pre-eminence over all other gods can be fully realised.

## Mythos and History

**Jogrampur is Created by Ferbrith (Mythic Resonance 60%) – The Power of the Invisible God; the need to control false gods:** From Ferbrith came the Sun as matter and energy were separated. Then followed the creation of the Erasanchula. Ferbrith, through Kiona, the Law, sensed that the Erasanchula required direction, so he made Jogrampur from a part of each Erasanchula so that he would understand each of their natures and control them.

At this time the Great Spirits were also coming into being and one, a god spirit, was known as Pamalt. Pamalt looked to the sun for wisdom and Jogrampur appeared to Pamalt in the form of a fox wreathed in fire. Jogrampur and Pamalt became companions and wandered the lands together, making new friends and allies and defeating foes through cunning and skill. Pamalt learned much from Jogrampur and developed much wisdom through Jogrampur's teachings.

Then came a point where the runes, seeking more power for themselves, rebelled against the wisdom of Elmalkion. They were guided by the Sorcerer who thought himself as the leader of all runes and Elmalkion's equal. The runes faced a choice; stand with the Sorcerer or stand with Elmalkion. Most stood with the Sorcerer because they knew no better.

Jogrampur appeared as the sun and commanded the runes to return to Elmalkion. Pamalt took his words far and wide but the runes were stupid and did as they pleased, not as they ought. This allowed evil into the world as the one called Vadel sought out and embraced corruption. A time of great darkness descended as Jogrampur was forced to hide in the shape of a fox. Because of the runes' betrayal, Chaos came to the world and although Pamalt and Jogrampur fought valiantly against it, with their many friends, Chaos grew stronger and the Ice Age came.

Eventually heroes killed Chaos and Jogrampur came out of hiding. He gave the great lands to Pamalt, who had avoided Death and proved his faith, and Jogrampur summoned the runes, the Erasanchula to appear before him. He glowed as

the sun has never glowed before. He forced each rune to kneel and agree to a compromise. All would retire to the God Plane and have no dealings with the Inner World save through their mortal worshippers. Only Pamalt, who had stood with Elmalkion, would be allowed to come and go as he wished. Any rune that did not accept this compromise would be destroyed by the Invisible God.

All accepted. So began time and so began the Great Compromise.

## Nature

Presently Jogrampur is weak. His core myth, describing his relationship with Pamalt and the Invisible God is complete and accepted, and this has established Jogrampur on the God Plane where he manifests as a many-tailed, fire-wreathed fox of considerable cunning and stealth. He sometimes skulks around the homes of other gods where he is mistaken for Trickster but is really ensuring that the Erasanchula know their place.

To the Agimori Jogrampur is Pamalt's companion and mentor, a loyal and wise servant of the Invisible God and a deity who cares for the world and is an enemy of Chaos. Worship of Jogrampur alongside Pamalt is entirely acceptable – although Agimori outside Umathela have a very difficult time accepting this new god (and do not realise that he is a creation of the God Learners and not a real god in the accepted sense of the term).

To the Jogram Witnesses of Umathela Jogrampur is a bright and shining presence that bridges the chasm between mono and polytheism. Through Jogrampur sorcerers can gain Divine Magic and this Divine Magic is sanctioned by the Invisible God (because Jogrampur has been allowed to exist by Elmalkion, surely). It is the task of the Jogram Witnesses to develop Jogrampur's power and presence through developing more myths, equipping him with runes and venerating him so he grows closer to the Invisible God and asserts control over all the heathen gods that rebelled against wisdom and created the Great Darkness.

Both sets of worshippers view Jogrampur as an emerging force but obviously from different perspectives. The Witnesses watch the Agimori from a distance, observing and gently manipulating the emerging myths the Agimori Jogrampurists are allowing to emerge but nevertheless embracing them and helping them to gain in stature. The aim of both sects is to see Jogrampur realise his true place in Gloranthan cosmology and assert his independence, drawing on all sources of divine power whilst developing his own.

The Agimori hold the prairie fox, common in Umathela, as sacred. There are growing reports of many-tailed, sun-



bright foxes being seen in and around Varanswal – proof that Jograpur actively watches his devoted.

## Organisation

Jograpur has no temples and few worshippers. However the small group of Agimori and God Learner disciples are ardent and hopeful. Ascending through the ranks, from Initiate to Rune Priest are, by necessity, rapid. The cult needs the stature of powerful individuals to HeroQuest and develop Jograpur's power.

The cult is confined to Umathela in Pamaltela and, even then, to the city of Varanswal and its Agimori populace and the 80 strong band of Witnesses. In the Agimori district, where Jograpur has his greatest strength, a fox totem pole has been erected, which serves as the shrine to the god. The Witnesses have conferred upon it spirit powers equivalent to a small Orlanthi wyter and the fox totem has the following Characteristics:



Jograpur Fox Wyter

Intensity 2

POW 12, INT 4, CHA 5

+20% Common Magic increase (120 metres radius of the totem).

The Jograpurists are not ones for proselytising. The Agimori know that Jograpur will command such activities when the time is right and the Witnesses simply want to keep their activities quiet. Those who express an interest in the 'New God Experiment' from amongst the God Learners of Umathela may be brought into the Witnesses' fold and carefully watched to gauge their degree of belief and acceptance; those who can be trusted may even be invited to initiate.

## Membership

Standard.

Umathelan Agimori may freely worship Jograpur and dedicate to him.

God Learners interested in Jograpur's worship must find favour with the Jograpur Witnesses first (and they do not advertise their presence). Membership is therefore dependent on making contact and demonstrating an appropriate level of trust.

## Common Magic

The cult does not teach any Common Magic directly but encourages its learning from other sources. The Fox Totem of the Agimori helps strengthen the power of Common Magic learned by the cult's followers.

## Higher Magic

As an emerging god Jograpur's Divine Magic is weak still but present nevertheless. Cultists have access to the following spells:

Amplify, Beast Form (Fox), Illusion.

## Gifts and Compulsions

The creation of Jograpur has allowed for Initiates to gain a special Gift. At the Initiates choice and for the cost of one point of dedicated POW, a cultist can gain the Gift of Realise Myth.

*Realise Myth:* The cultists create a story concerning Jograpur's mythic deeds, based on the core myth associated with the cult. The myth has a Resonance equal to the higher of the cultist's INT or CHA and can be improved using Improvement Rolls. The Adventurer creating the myth can communicate it to others through song, story or dance. For it to be accepted by others he must win an Opposed roll using the myth's

resonance against the Persistence of the listener. When he has gained acceptance with a number of people equal to his CHA subtracted from 21 then the myth he is attempting to realise becomes part of the fabric of Jogrampur worship.

### Cult Skills

Insight, Perception, Stealth, Survival, Tracking.

### Allied Cults

None.

## TRADING FACTIONS AND CARTELS

The Jrusteli trading cartels began humbly, as trappers and traders along the east coast of the island or sailors sailing down the long course of the Curand River into the southlands. They exchanged Nralarite knives, runes, glassware and fabrics for metal, furs, herbs and other treasures. Jrustela is a land of many riches but in the early days it was wild and dangerous and traders willing to risk their lives stood to make great profits. Soon the traders banded together into companies, travelling together for mutual protection and building way stations and forts. Some of these companies still exist in modern Jrustela – the Southern Furrier Company and the Borostenorelan Free Traders date from this time.

Living as they did on an island, the Jrusteli traders soon turned their thoughts to the open sea. The first risky voyages to Umathela and back to Genertela were undertaken by the Free Men of the Sea, who started as another company of traders but soon became a spiritual brotherhood. These voyages were staggeringly profitable – a single shipload of exotic goods from the other continent could be sold for 100 times its value at the end of its journey. Even though only one in 10 ships made it across the ocean, the potential rewards were worth it.

In those days, though, sea travel was controlled by the Waertagi and they punished anyone who tried to break their monopoly. The Waertagi dragonships carried trade goods all over the world but in limited quantities. They followed their own curious routes all over the oceans and only traded in a few commodities. A Jrusteli trade galleon could make far more money if it crossed the seas than by trading via the capricious and miserly Waertagi. The trading cartels funded the development of Jrusteli sea-going ships and later gave huge amounts of silver to the sorcerers as they searched for a way to defeat the Waertagi.

Tanien's son was called down. The Waertagi were destroyed and the seas burned for a few years. Sea trade ceased during this time, as the few surviving dragonships retreated back to their home port on Brithos. Then, the first Jrusteli traders

took to the seas. Initially, they tried to follow the network of trade routes established by the Waertagi, replacing the previous monopoly with their own. The Jrusteli ships lacked the range of the dragonships, though, and so could not follow on the year-long circumnavigations of the world's oceans practiced by the Waertagi. Instead, they carved up the oceans into different trade routes, each of which would be serviced by a different company.

Fifty years later, the Honourable Company of Eastern Traders led by the adventurer Gillam D'estau began trading with Kralorela and soon acquired vast influence there. As the Middle Sea Empire expanded, the traders became more than simple merchants. The trading companies became the leading edge of imperial expansion and had their own armies. Company scholars and sorcerers brought myths back to the God Learner schools; company outposts and bureaucrats became Imperial forts and governors. In the modern age, trade is but part of a company's mandate – their foremost purpose is to conquer and secure territories for the Empire without force of arms.

### Creating A Company

Most companies are born in the cafes of Hathinelthor or Evrowal. Certain coffee-shops or Kralorelan tea-houses are home to certain types of investors. If an entrepreneur or syndicate has a profitable enough scheme, he can find backers. Shares are sold in the company. Initially, shares are sold for a single voyage but if the company establishes itself, further shares are sold. The initial return on investment varies wildly – some voyages barely pay for themselves while some make huge profits. If a voyage seems profitable, though, the company often compels investors to reinvest in a second voyage instead of giving them a dividend. After all, if the route is profitable, the costs of setting up a factory at the far end and dealing with native suppliers must be considered. (Unscrupulous companies sometimes force investors to throw good money after bad by lying about the potential profitability of a route; some unfortunates have been tricked into investing in a half-dozen successive doomed voyages.)

Older companies in control of established trade routes have more complex structures. Normally there are many investors who buy a few shares and get a moderate reward and a smaller number of members who control a greater number of shares and administer the company. Companies can also have employees, who do not hold shares.

In distant lands, a company will establish a factory where the factor – a company man who deals with the local suppliers – dwells. Ships might visit a factory only once a year but the factory is a constant hum of activity as local workers toil in the warehouses, filling them with local products as they sell off the trade goods brought from overseas. Factors are more than

just traders; they live immersed in a foreign culture and must deal with potentially hostile local rulers, bandits, monsters, ships that show up late or riddled with disease, with charlatans and curses and thieves. They are company representatives and buyers but often they are the voice of the Middle Sea Empire overseas. Factories tend to turn into forts, then into towns, making the company factors into governors.

## The Mercantilist's League

*'The League promise to defend our businesses against protection rackets but they're as bad as any gang, taking a tenth of my money! And as for that rogue Sylark, it's well known that he's of bad family.'*

— *Ferit, Hathinethor Businessman (vanished two months ago)*

This organisation is open to any Jrusteli business owner who can show he does 10,000 gold pieces worth of business per year. The League arbitrates disputes between companies, investigates complaints of fraud or wilful mismanagement, represents commercial interests to the Imperial Court, funds anti-piracy expeditions and magical research – and takes a sizeable percentage of Jrusteli customs duties.

All members of the League can vote for the chairman of the League, who serves for 10 years. As the Chairman sits on the Emperor's High Council, it is a hugely prestigious and influential position. Many traders in Seshnela object that the Mercantilist Lord speaks for all traders in the Empire but is elected purely by the Jrusteli. Of course, if they were to expand the Mercantilist's League to the whole Empire, it would give them control over customs duties across half the world.

The largest companies wield staggering power. The Fonrit Company, for instance, virtually rule the province, with far more influence than the former Duke. The Eastern Trade Company is the Middle Sea Empire in Kralorela. These corporate entities are wealthier than many nations, with their own private armies, laws and royal courts – or royal committees, at any rate. The chairmen of some companies are ranked with Arch-Dukes and princes.

## Trading Companies as Cults

The great trading companies can be treated as cults, with their own internal hierarchies and ceremonies. Joining these cults as an investor is easy, as long as the Adventurer has the wealth to invest. Rising to a higher level in the company requires the Adventurer to take an active hand in managing some part of the company.

Instead of listing duties, the major import/export interests of each company are listed. Each company exports from Jrustela and imports to Jrustela.

## Company Magic

Most companies have some magic – one or two sorcery spells – that are available to investors. These spells are contained in a grimoire named for the company and that grimoire can be learned by investors. Doing so, however, requires the investor to buy the Sorcery Grimoire skill at its based value and treat it as a separate grimoire. Company grimoires generally carry only two or three spells at best.

## The Eastern Trade Company

*This land is a curious one but opportunities abound.*

— *Gillam D'estau, in his first letter back to the Board of Directors*

The oldest and wealthiest of the trade companies, the Eastern Trade Company is a Jrusteli institution to the extent that it is often simply called The Company or the Honourable Company. Shares in the Eastern Trade Company are worth more than their weight in gold, as they are sold so rarely. The company was founded by the adventurer, Gillam D'estau, and sent three ships to the distant land of Kralorela to trade for silk and porcelain. In the course of their adventures, the expedition leaders made alliances with Kralorelan leaders and discovered secrets of their magic. Gillam D'estau and several others remained in Kralorela as factors-extraordinaire, building up trade networks and alliances all over the strange country. When the ships returned a year later, D'estau had installed himself as the chief advisor to an influential religious leader, the monk ShangHsa, and had been initiated into a mystic dragon-cult there.

As the company ships went back and forth between Jrustela and the east, Gillam sent back requests for sorcerers, books and advisors to be sent to him. He managed to apply western logic and sorcery to the Kralorelan mystic tradition, helping ShangHsa to transcend mortal form and become a draconic entity. With the power of this new discipline, ShangHsa became emperor and the Eastern Trade Company suddenly found itself appointed Imperial Supplier of Foreign Goods to the whole nation.

The market for Kralorelan goods exploded back in Jrustela as a fashion for Eastern art and fashions seized the island. To this day, Kralorela is associated with decadence and desire in the Jrusteli mind, a place of opium dens, free thought and beautiful courtesans. It is still especially popular in Evrowal.

Gillam was elected honorary chairman for life, a position he still holds. The Eastern Trade Company is generally seen as the safest investment in Jrustela but the existing shareholders are loath to share the profits. There are rumours of trouble in Kralorela but who can understand what the easterners are babbling about?

**Runes:** Dragon, Fate, Trade

**Imports:** Porcelain, Silk, Spices, Art, Swords, Tea, Coffee, Drugs

**Exports:** Cotton, Horses, Metal Goods, Magic

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Eastern Trade Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold. The company rarely looks for more investors, so shares can be bought only in times of war or crisis in Kralorela (when the company needs more money) or when an existing shareholder is willing to sell.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Eastern Trade Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 3,000 gold and prove himself qualified to serve the company overseas.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Eastern Trade Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 7,000 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year.

### Special Benefits

An Adventurer can expect a return of 3+1D6% on his investment each year. Adventurers also gain the protection of the company while in Kralorela, which translates to a +10% bonus to Influence for investors, +20% for Members and +40% for Directors.

Members or Directors of the Company may learn the Path of Immanent Mastery and the Bargain Well and Irrefusable Gift sorcery spells as well. They may learn the Shiphandling skill.

## The Fonrit Company

*We are overrun. Send help. Send wizards. Send them to hell.*

— *Last message received from the factory at Taraborn*

This company was founded as the Middle Sea Empire expanded from the Umathelan colony into the Fonrit city-states. For many years, the company kept digging itself deeper into debt as it fought to conquer the country but investors were convinced that as soon as Fonrit was brought into the Empire, the company would become hugely profitable. As a major sideline, the Fonrit ships carried timinits from the southern jungles to Jrustela, where they became a cheap source of labour.

And, for a while, they were right. Money flowed out of Fonrit as the temples were looted and the people put to more productive work. The strange mythos of the Torvavs and their elf neighbours proved very useful to the God Learners, who invested heavily in the Company in exchange for support and protection. Then, eight years ago, Fonrit rebelled and the Company was forced out. The factors retreated mostly to Umathela – which then also declared independence from the Middle Sea Empire.

The Fonrit Company is now in the awkward position of trying to fight a war of conquest in Fonrit while having its troops in one country (Umathela) and its money and leaders in another (Jrustela). Their once-loyal investors are abandoning them and the company is now once again deep in debt as it tries to conquer a rebellious country. Unable to afford to raise a professional army and without support from Frowal, the company is employing irregular mercenaries to hold onto its remaining forts along the coast of Fonrit. Secretly, they are appealing to the God Learner's Collective to remake the slaver-god Ompalam and use HeroQuests to end the revolt.

**Runes:** Fertility, Trade, Disorder

**Imports:** Gold, jewels, jade, wood, Elf Magic

**Exports:** Horses, weapons, glass, alchemy, books

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Fonrit Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 100 gold.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Fonrit Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 500 gold and volunteer to serve the company overseas.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Fonrit Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 2,500 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year. The Adventurer must also obtain a writ from the Arch-Duke confirming that he is loyal to Jrustela and the Middle Sea Empire and will not consort or ally himself with the traitors of Umathela.

### Special Benefits

While Fonrit is in revolt, Adventurers cannot expect any return on their investments. If Fonrit were reconquered, Adventurers could expect an annual return of 7+1D10-1D10% on their investments.

Members of the Fonrit Company may learn the Sorcery spells Break Chains and Bargain Well. They may also learn the Shiphandling skill.

## The Venture Trust

*Criminals? Hardly. Shrewd businessmen, quick to resort to violence, adventurers and rogues and scoundrels, yes. But not criminals. And yes, I am an investor in the company. Why do you ask?*

— *Pithrith the Justifier, Jrusteli Investor*

While other Jrusteli companies have a near-monopoly on trade on a particular route, the Venture Trust prides itself on flexibility. It is a company of opportunism, with a fleet of fast ships and a huge reserve of ready cash. If war breaks out somewhere, the Venture Trust ships swoop in with a cargo of blades and arrows and hireswords. If gold is found on some distant shore, the Venture Trust arrives the next day with picks and shovels. If a God Learner Study Group encounters a particularly potent or useful deity in the Otherworld, the Venture Trust will arrive with experienced questers and wizards in exchange for a cut of the god. They are treasure hunters, too – there are still Venture Trust bands behind enemy lines in Fonrit, for instance, looking for the lost cities of jade. The Eastern Trade Company barred the Venture Trust from entering Kralorelan waters after Trust agents tried to enter the forbidden lands of the dragonnewts in the forest of Fethlon.

Obviously, this is no way to run a company, so investing in the Trust is more like a lottery. There are constant accusations of villainy and treachery – Trust captains are said to be pirates when not employed by the company and there are rumours that the company is really a spy network for any or all of the following: the Confederation Council, the God Learners, the Mercantilist's League, the Malkioni True Church, EWF or Arkat who has risen from the dead and now lives beneath Hathinelthor.

**Runes:** Luck, Trade, Disorder

**Imports:** Whatever they can get their hands on

**Exports:** Trouble

## Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Venture Trust Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 500 gold.

## Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Venture Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold and demonstrate that he has the skills required by the company.

## Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Venture Trust Company, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 5,000 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year. The Adventurer must also have brought word of a considerable opportunity to the attention of the Board of Directors.

## Special Benefits

Venture Trust Investments vary wildly – an Adventurer can expect a return of 1D20% per year.

Members of the Venture Trust gain a +10% bonus to Evaluate, Influence and Streetwise and may learn the Shiphandling skill.

Members and Directors of the Venture Trust may request support from the company; the Trust has many mercenaries and is experienced at aiding Adventurers who have gotten in over their heads.

## Just Shipbuilders

*Risen from the sea, we abhor it. Let our ships be an affront to the ocean!*

The Just Shipbuilders are a church cult first and a business second; constructing the great bronze-hulled ships of the Jrusteli is an act of worship for them. The Shipbuilders began in drowned Svalwal hundreds of years ago, where they built the first ships before the Wave came. The best of the Shipbuilders were magically resurrected by the Church through HeroQuesting and those risen survivors agreed to become a religious order out of gratitude. While the Just Shipbuilder Order is not the only group who can construct sea-going vessels, they are one of the best.

The order operates as a business but most of the profit goes to the True Malkioni Church. Its operations are based primarily in Orphalsketkal but there are shipyards in every city and the order has overseas offices in Seshnela, Umathela, Kethaela and elsewhere. It also has spies in many ports, trying to steal secrets of other ship designers and keep watch for the hated Waertagi.

**Runes:** Water, Magic

**Imports:** Bound elementals, rare materials

**Exports:** Ships

## Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Just Shipbuilders, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 500 gold and donate an amount equal to a 10<sup>th</sup> of his investment to the Church.

## Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Just Shipbuilders, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold and demonstrate that he has skills required by the company.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a Director, the Adventurer must already be a Wizard of a Malkioni True Church Order. He must then invest a further 5,000 gold.

### Special Benefits

Just Shipbuilder investments return 1+1D4% per year.

Members and Directors of the Just Shipbuilders may learn the Shiphandling skill. They may also learn the spells Form/Set Bronze, Form/Set Water and Speed Over Waves.

### Golden Liberation Society

The Golden Liberation Society is the creation of Sir Roth du Noyelle; a charlatan, a rogue and a liar. Born a Hrestoli idealist, he bears both the skills of a sorcerer and a knight of Seshnela but possesses neither the piety of a holy wizard or the honour of a noble warrior. He is a true treasure seeker, a privateer who sails Glorantha's seas in order to plunder and line his own pockets, maintaining his hedonistic lifestyle. His charming wiles, good looks and dashing bravery easily attract others to his causes and he is surrounded by a loyal and able crew. He uses the Golden Liberation Society as a front for his adventuring, taking on members as the need or adventure see fit, discarding them as easily but occasionally keeping them and sharing the prosperity.

The society is ostensibly an organisation of Redemptionists who seek to extract servants of the Empire from dangerous situations and protect their eternal souls; other companies, the Imperial Court and imperial ministries have employed the society's services several times over the years. Otherwise it trades in furs from Fronela, silk and porcelain from Kralorela, rare woods from Pamaltela and anything else Sir Roth thinks will turn a profit this year. Mostly, though, the trade activities are a front for the real business of the Golden Liberation and, in the last couple of years it has focused its work on the lands of Fonrit, where many foolish God Learner sons and daughters have found themselves enslaved by the worship of Ompalam the Slaver God while seeking their fortunes in the so called Fonrit Ventures. However it is the wealth of the lords of Fonrit and the secret caches of God Learner plunder left during their exodus of the area that Sir Roth seeks to save.

The Golden Liberation Society has lodges in Jrustela, Umathela, Seshnela and Slontos, all are lavishly funded, stocked with excellent wine cellars, fine kitchens and ever appeasing servants. Many curiosities from across the Jrusteli Empire can be found inside, from stuffed Charngibber heads from Pamaltela, Teshnan Black Lotus burners and devoted Arachan insect folk healers. Membership of the Society is by invitation only and trespassers are never seen again, nor are their disappearances every investigated. At present the society

has 200 investors, all supporters of Sir Roth's great adventures, tales of which they eagerly devour with their lavish luncheons. Most members do not know of the piratical nature of the founder and would probably care little if they were to find out, for only the rich, decadent and locally influential are ever made men of the Society.

Order in each Society house is maintained by the influential Lodge Master, who through a complex array of non-magical and bizarre rites and regulations, dominates the other order members. The Lodge Masters are all members of Sir Roth's prematurely retired crew, so it is not unusual to find a powerful Seshnelan noble lying prostrate and begging forgiveness before a one legged old pirate dressed in strange robes and a hat adorned with bells, while his fellows cheer on and drink heartily.

**Runes:** None

**Imports:** Anything of worth; Jrusteli adventurers in dire need of help

**Exports:** Bravado and derring-do

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Golden Liberation Society, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold and donate and swear an oath to maintain the society's secrets.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Just Shipbuilders, an Adventurer must invest a minimum of 2,500 gold and demonstrate that he has skills useful to Sir Roth (generally any skill a competent Adventurer might possess).

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a Director, the Adventurer must have undertaken at least three adventures on the company's behalf, have been a Member for three years *and* invest a further 5,000 gold.

### Special Benefits

Golden Liberation investments return 2D6-2% per year.

Members and Directors of the company can learn: Athletics, Commerce, Insight and Survival from the various lodges. They may also learn the Golden Liberation Grimoire which contains Acquire, Open What is Closed and Seal Room.

### Notable Companies and Syndicates

**Amedsford Wine League:** One of the major investors in Kerela, the Wine League is a group of merchants and vintners who invest heavily in the Hathinelthor and Evrowal exchanges. They are shareholders in the Eastern Trade Company and the

Fonrit Trade Company, although they are trying to extricate themselves from that disastrous investment.

**Borastenorelan Free Traders:** Another major investment syndicate, the Free Traders are known for their criminal ties. A new company that fails give a satisfactory return on investments will be visited by agents of the Free Traders. An ounce of flesh for every missing gold piece is the normal punishment.

**Brithosian Trust:** When the Middle Sea Empire prepared to invade Brithos, a new company was set up to deal with the expected trade from that mysterious island. With all the legends of power and immortality and magic and wonder, anticipation of vast profits was high and the new Brithosian Trust Company obtained more initial investments than any other company in history. Before the first warship left for Brithos, the BTC had more money than even the Eastern Trade Company. When the invasion failed, the directors of the BTC vanished with all the cash. Some of them are known to have fled the Middle Sea Empire but others were under magical oaths (an uncommon but not illegal practice in Jrusteli law). The Oathbound set up an underground conspiracy to conquer Brithos, which still exists to this day. Sometimes, shadowy figures hire Adventurers using old gold coins or cheques drawn on BTC accounts...

**Far Eastern Trade Company:** The Far Eastern Trade Company is a hungry new consortium with the aim of making great wealth by trading in spices and magic from the Vithelan Isles. Many God Learners have invested in the company and are using its overseas factories as bases for research into Vithelan magic.

**Kethaela Traders:** The Kethaelan Traders have a monopoly on trade between Jrustela and the five Kethaela territories. Currently, a financial battle is being waged in the Board of Directors between the original investors, the True Malkioni Church (who used the company as a front for missionary work), the Zistorites (who have an interest in the region) and, oddly, the God Forgothers, who have invested a great deal of their casino money in the company through Jrusteli brokers.

**Web of Wise Investments Syndicate:** A timinit syndicate based out of Piskosol, the Web investors are known for their abstruse mathematical calculations of risk.

## MAGIC

All the spells described in this section are drawn from the Orders and Forbidden Cantos of the Abiding Book. The section of its derivation is noted in the spell's attributes as either Order or Forbidden.

Order spells generally find their way into the principle Grimoire of the order and are shared with all members of the cult. Forbidden spells are generally shared only with those who have attained the rank of Adept or Mage, or are coded into a secret Grimoire and shared only with those who have been accorded a specific purpose or mission. Attaining a Forbidden spell – becoming a Forbidden Reader – may even be a gift to an Adventurer sorcerer.

## Common Magic Spells

### Bargain Well

Instant, Magnitude 2, Progressive, Resist (Persistence)

For every point of Magnitude, the caster gains a +5% bonus to Evaluate and Influence tests related to commercial dealings for the Duration of the spell.

### Break Chains

Instant, Magnitude 3, Touch

Any non-magical bonds like chains or ropes touched by the caster instantly break. These chains must be restraining a living being for the spell to work.

## Sorcery Spells

### Abort

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell gives the sorcerer the ability to make others stop any sort of extended activity they are involved in. The spell cannot affect instantaneous actions, such as those that can be initiated with a Combat Action but it does affect prolonged tasks. It could, for example, make a jeweller abandon an ingot he was smelting or even a rival sorcerer preparing a spell. If successful, the target(s) cannot go back to attempting that same action until a number of hours equal to 21–INT. (For example Jedekiah, INT 16, is the subject of a successful Abort spell as he attempts to add a new spell to his order's Grimoire. He cannot resume the task once the spell has lapsed for five hours.

### Acquire

Order, Concentration

This crafty spell allows the sorcerer to target small items and make them his own. The targeted items cannot be larger than ENC 1 and cannot be magically tethered or held in place for the spell to function. The target(s) of this spell dislodge or lift from their current location and float in a direction the caster

determines. Manipulating the range of the spell determines how far the target(s) will travel.

### Amputate

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Resilience)

This spell removes the target's limbs – *and it only affects arms and legs, hands and feet* – with surgical proficiency. The sorcerer must keep flesh-to-flesh contact for the entire casting of the spell with the limb (or digit), which might require the target be held in place. The spell then removes the limb from the target as if it had just suffered a Major Wound from a slicing weapon; save for the fact that no Resilience rolls to counteract pain are necessary. The process is safe and painless, leaves no infections or scars and is medically perfect. Limbs that are severed in this way *cannot* be rejoined with the Regenerate Limb Divine Spell.

### Aperture

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Special)

This spell creates an aperture within an inorganic substance such as a wall, fence and so on. The aperture can be up to one metre wide, deep and high for every 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill. The caster can decide the dimensions at the time of casting the spell but cannot affect them once the spell has been cast. Making a bigger aperture requires a subsequent casting.

The affected substance loses no mass or Hit Points through this spell; its mass is simply reconfigured to produce the aperture. However the substance may resist the casting. The Armour Points of the substance, multiplied by five, are used as the basis for the Resilience roll. Trying to create an Aperture in a castle gate, for example (8 AP, *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, page 63) would allow the castle gate a Resistance roll of 40%.

### Ball of Fire

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Evade)

There is not a more traditional spell in a wizard's repertoire than the classic *Ball of Fire* but for reasons known only to itself, the Abiding Book does not release its secret to everyone. This spell creates small spheres of flame that streak toward the target(s) and detonates upon impact. Anyone targeted by the spell must resist or suffer 1D4 points of fire-based damage per 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill, distributed evenly (round up) to all Hit Locations of the target. This damage ignores half (round up) of the mundane protection of the target.

The spell, curiously, can only be cast during Fire Season. Any attempts to cast it at other times during the year fail automatically.

### Bedazzle

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell fills an area with motes of enchanting light that place targets in a haze. Every target must resist the spell or be distracted for the spell's Duration. This distraction reduces *every* skill of those affected by 5% for every 10% of the caster's Sorcery Grimoire skill. Thus, normal actions are still possible, including attacks and defences, but always with impaired efficiency.

### Bewitch

Order, Casting Time 1, Resist (Persistence)

This spell allows the sorcerer to turn enemies into allies for a while. Targets of the spell must resist its effects or become generally pleasant toward the sorcerer and one additional person of the caster's choosing for every 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill. 'Generally pleasant' means that the target(s) will not attack the sorcerer and his friends, nor will they raise their voices above a normal speaking tone against them. Even though they are in a hazy state of emotional numbness, they will not perform actions requested of them that would seem out of place – such as attacking genuine allies.

*For example: A God Learner Sorcerer bewitches a Babeester Gor axe maiden as she hurls herself at him. 'You know,' the sorcerer says, 'axes are awfully dangerous and I think you'd be better chopping-up that tree stump, don't you?'*

*The axe maiden abandons her swing, cocks her head to one side and smiles pleasantly at the sorcerer. 'Why, you might be a disgusting, rat-faced, untrustworthy God Learner bastard but I do believe you're right! We could use the fire wood.'*

*'Jolly good show!'*

### Blind

Forbidden, Autonomous, Resist (Resilience)

When this spell is cast the sorcerer aims to remove the eyesight from his target(s). Any target that cannot resist the spell is rendered sightless (unless already in such a state) for the Duration of the spell. All Skill Tests become Formidable (–80% modifier to the skill's success chance).



## Blood Robes

Order (Monks of Blood), Autonomous

Blood Robes conjures up the ceremonial robes of the Monks of Blood. Blood must be spilled to cast this spell; the robes flow out of the blood (no matter how little) and slither into place around the caster. For every 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill, the robes give a +10% bonus to Stealth tests; and for every two points of Magnitude the caster decides to invest in the spell, they give one point of Armour to all Hit Locations.

## Book Recital

Order, Concentration

If this spell is cast while a book is being read out loud by the caster, the targets of the spell will magically remember hearing all the text of the book, even if the caster reads only a few words. The targets gain no special ability to remember or comprehend the book's contents; they are merely exposed to them.

## Break Will

Order, Autonomous

The target of this spell suffers a -5% penalty to any Persistence tests made for every 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill.

## Burrow

Order, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

This spell allows the sorcerer to move at a normal rate through any form of natural stone, rock or other earthen material. The sorcerer can extend the spell to include any number of targets within his range of manipulations and as long as they remain within a number of metres equal to the caster's POW then they continue to benefit from the spell. The spell can be resisted by unwilling targets. Recipients of the spell move through their substance at their usual Movement rate. They cannot move at anything faster than a walking pace.

Whilst Burrowing the spell keeps the recipients of the magic at a comfortable temperature and magically supplied with oxygen. The recipients are generally aware of depth, distance travelled and inclination towards the surface. Once the *caster* emerges from the substance being burrowed through the spell drops. Thus, if a group of people is under the influence of this spell the order in which they emerge needs to be considered. Anyone caught within the burrowed substance when the spell drops becomes automatically and irrevocably merged with that substance.

## Circle of Fire

Forbidden, Concentration

This spell creates a flaming barrier around the sorcerer with a radius equal to the spell's range. The flaming barrier's intensity varies with the caster's skill: 1D6 fire damage per 10% of the sorcerer's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill is dealt to anything that touches it. The height of the *Circle of Fire* is one metre for every 20% of the Grimoire skill.

The circle radiates intense heat and the greater the intensity the less approachable the circle. The following table summarises the effects of the circle on those who might try to approach or cross it:

### Circle of Fire Potency

Intensity 1 = 10% of Grimoire skill	Burn Damage	Heat Radius (metres)
1	1D6	4
2	2D6	6
3	3D6	8
4	4D6	10
5	5D6	12
6	6D6	14
7	7D6	16
8	8D6	18
9	9D6	20
10	10D6	22

The Heat Radius is the closest, in metres, one can approach the Circle of Fire without the heat being overwhelming and causing flammable objects (hair, clothing and so on) to ignite spontaneously.

Those within the circle do not feel the Circle of Fire's effects.

## Circle Unbroken

Forbidden, Concentration

This spell creates a circle of energy around the sorcerer with the same dimensions as for those in the Circle of Fire spell. The caster is always the exact centre of the circle and it moves with him. Touching the energy of the circle causes no damage but no physical attacks can penetrate it. The Circle can be vaulted and flown over but not climbed.

## Corrode

Forbidden, Autonomous

The sorcerer turns his hand into a potent weapon against metal objects. Any metal he touches for the Duration of the spell

suffers 1D4 points of damage for every 10% of the Sorcery Grimoire skill. This damage is applied directly to the object. Armour Points function as normal. When the Hit Points of the object are reduced to zero, then the metal has corroded to crumbling rust.

Metal armour is obviously beaten to a thickness that is tolerable to both wear and protect. A piece of armour is considered to have one less Hit Point than the physical Hit Location it covers. Thus, a plate helmet covering a Head location with 5 Hit Points would have 6 Armour Points and 4 Hit Points.

### Crawling Tide

Order, Concentration, Resist (Evade)

When cast this spell manifests itself as thousands of hungry rats made mostly of magic. This mass of swarming vermin is one metre wide for every 20% of the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill and it surges directly forward to the edge of the spell's range – where it then disappears. Anyone or anything unfortunate caught in its path suffers 3D6 small bites, each one striking a different Hit Location close to the ground (often legs). These bites are from exceptionally crafty rats that recognise flesh from armour, meaning that these bites ignore half (round up) of any worn mundane armour they strike.

### Deepen Shades

Order, Concentration

This spell increases any concealment penalties due to darkness by the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill value. At 100% or more total darkness has been achieved.

### Divinity Ward

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Pact)

This spell creates a bubble of warding around the sorcerer's target(s) with a radius equal to the spell's range, protecting him from Divine Magic. While the spell is in effect *no* Divine Magic spell can affect the target, unless Divine Spell's Magnitude exceeds that of the Divinity Ward's Magnitude. The ward does not dispel the spell; it merely protects the target from harm.

If cast at a Divine Magic practitioner, to prevent him from being the recipient of Divine Magic – his own or someone else's – the target may resist the spell using his Pact (Specific God) skill.

### Dragonslayer

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Evade) or Resist (draconic Illumination)

Clearly the Abiding Book's answer to the problems posed by draconic beings, this spell blasts the target(s) with bolts of supernatural energy resembling lightning. The spell, if not resisted, inflicts 1D4 points of magical-damage for every 10% of the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill upon 1D4 simultaneous Hit Locations, ignoring any natural armour. The spell only affects creatures that are draconic in form (dragonewts, dragons, dream dragons and transformed humans). When resisting the spell the draconic being may use the higher of Evade or draconic Illumination.

### Electrical Blast

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Evade)

The spell sends pure electrical energy into several targets at once. Any target(s) that does not resist the spell and get out of the white-hot lightning suffers 1D4 points of electricity-damage per 10% of the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill, spread out evenly (round up) over all the Hit Locations of their bodies. This damage ignores all forms of mundane armour, although magical armour protects as normal.

The spell can only be cast during Storm Season. Attempting to cast it at any other time results in automatic failure.

### Eyes of the Sentinel

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

With this spell the sorcerer can turn a number of allies into infallible lookouts who can see through the blackest darkness or through the thickest fog or smoke. Targets of *Eyes of the Sentinel* are granted the ability to ignore *any* form of Perception penalty based on sight. This spell even allows the target(s) to see invisible objects and creatures, and through any form of illusions. For the Duration of the spell, a glowing circle of light appears upon the forehead of the target(s) to symbolise the opening of the third and magical eye. The sight range of the spell is a number of metres based on the caster's manipulation of Range. Thus, with no additional Range manipulation the spell has a range in metres equal to the sorcerer's POW.

Unwilling recipients of the spell can resist using Persistence.

### Float

Order, Concentration

Float allows the caster to keep several small objects or a few terribly heavy ones afloat on water. Iron ingots will rise like

driftwood and men in plate armour will bob like corks in the surf. Anything enchanted by the spell will float effortlessly on the top of the water for its Duration.

The sorcerer can enchant five points of SIZ or 10 ENC for every 10% of the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill. Each point of manipulation devoted to Magnitude doubles the SIZ/ENC allowance. Thus, a sorcerer with Grimoire 60% and manipulating the spell to Magnitude 2 would allow him to Float an item of SIZ 60 or a combined ENC of 120.

### Force Wave

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Evade)

A wave of force explodes out in all directions from the caster, knocking everyone around him back. The spell has 2D6 points of STR per 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill. If the spell's STR exceeds the SIZ+STR of any creature caught in the spell's range, that creature is knocked back a number of metres equal to the difference between the spell's STR and the creature's STR+SIZ total. Those affected by the spell take normal falling damage if they hit a barrier.

### Forgetful Mien

Order, Autonomous

The beneficiary of this spell becomes more bland and forgettable and gets a bonus to any Disguise rolls equal to the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill value, as long as the Disguise is of an ordinary, average person and not a specific individual.

### Gemsight

Order, Autonomous

The sorcerer enchants an existing gem or precious stone. The gem can be rough, cut, polished or even part of a piece of jewellery (the most useful). Once enchanted, the sorcerer can choose to spend a minute focussing on that gemstone in order to see (not hear) what it can see. These gems remain enchanted for one month for every 10% of the Sorcery Grimoire skill and can be a number of kilometres away from the sorcerer equal to his POW in order to stay in contact.

### Gift of Tongues

Order, Concentration

The caster's words can be understood by anyone who hears them, regardless of language. This is a one-way relationship – the caster cannot automatically understand the replies of other people.

### Gossip

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

*Gossip* allows the caster to insert a specific phrase or idea into a conversation Targeting a number of people in a social setting, the sorcerer can make sure that a phrase is mentioned in all their conversations. This phrase can have three words per 10% of the Sorcery Grimoire skill. Whether or not the speakers or listeners believe what they heard in the conversation is up to the believability of the statement but when many people are saying the same thing it often becomes too hard to ignore.

The phrase is inserted into each and every conversation held by the targeted party during the spell's Duration. To increase the frequency of the Gossip manipulate either targets or Duration. The spell may be resisted by its target.

### Halt

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell causes a sorcerer's enemies to stop their movements toward him. Targets of the spell that do not resist its effects immediately stop in their tracks, even if charging. For the Duration of the spell the target(s) cannot advance any closer than this position although movement in other directions is permissible. If mounted, a rider and his mount count as two separate targets: if a mount halts the rider continues to move at the same movement rate his mount was travelling at, until he encounters an appropriate form of resistance (usually the ground).

### Hammerstaff

Order, Autonomous

This spell can only be cast on a staff. For every 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill, the staff gains +10% to hit and deals 2 extra points of damage. Furthermore, damage dealt is doubled for the purposes of determining Knockback.

### Ironstaff

Order, Autonomous

This spell transforms a wooden staff, pole or haft into magical iron. For the Duration of the spell, the staff's AP and HP are doubled. It also fully affects any creatures susceptible to iron and is detectable with Detect Iron spells.

### Irrefusable Gift

Order, Autonomous

If this spell is cast successfully, the caster may give the target a gift (any kind; it matters little). The target must then at some

point in the next year and a day give the caster a gift of equal worth in exchange, or lose 1D6 points of POW permanently. If the caster is slain or willingly releases the target from this spell, the POW loss can be averted. The caster gains no benefit himself from the spell, save the knowledge that the person in his debt will be more likely compelled to return the favour.

### Memorise

Order, Concentration

The caster can commit to memory up to 5,000 words or 10 pages of orders, text and diagrams and instruction per 10% of the Grimoire skill. Manipulating the number of targets allows additional, unrelated messages to be held perfectly in the memory. Once a message has been recited verbally to its intended audience then the memories are released. The Memorise spell ensures that only a specified individual can receive a memorised message; it cannot be released to anyone else.

### Open What is Closed

Order, Autonomous

As useful a spell as any other, this spell gives the sorcerer the ability to open any closed portal or object within range. Upon casting the spell the sorcerer can choose a single closed thing (door, window, book, jar and so on) within range and make the appropriate gesture every Combat Round to open it. He may do this until all of the targeted items are open, or until the spell's Duration expires. This spell will not *unlock* items but simply being stuck is no protection. If an object is magically closed it will be opened if the magic keeping it closed is of a lesser Magnitude than that of the Open spell.

### Privacy

Forbidden, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

Used by clever sorcerers to make plans and arrange deals in plain sight of others, this spell pulls the sorcerer and his targets out of time and space for a split-second to have a conversation. The targets of the spell must be willing and all within range of the caster. The caster can transport one additional person to himself for every 10% of his Sorcery (Grimoire) skill. All participants in the spell are shifted to a neutral fold in space/time that looks like a white, featureless room. The targets remain in the room for the Duration of the spell, where they can talk and interact freely with one another – save for any physical contact. When the spell expires all targets are placed back where they were at the time of casting and only a single second of real time has passed. Unwilling participants may resist the spell.

### Quarantine

Forbidden, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell allows the sorcerer to make his targets unable to interact with the rest of the world, for good or for ill. For the Duration of the spell the target(s) *cannot* affect or be affected by any sort of action, spell or stimuli. Attacks will be blocked by the colour barrier, spells will fizzle, sound stops both ways and even physical contact will slide off the target effortlessly. This spell can be used in many ways, both beneficial and malicious, and it is up to the sorcerer to decide how they choose to do so.

### Seal Room

Order, Autonomous

When cast, this spell instantly closes every non-magical door, window and other similar aperture in the room where it is cast. Any non-magical locks in the room will also lock themselves. Manipulating the range of the spell allows additional rooms within the casting range to also be sealed. At the end of the spell all locks, doors and windows return to their original state.

Although sealed by magical means, mundane attempts to enter or exit a Sealed Room are as normal. Closed windows must be opened; locks unlocked with a key and so forth. Although sealed by magical means, the room is not subject to magical locks unless Seal Room is also combined with another such spell.

### Shake Earth

Forbidden, Autonomous

This spell creates an earthquake. Its range of effect is based on the Range manipulation investment and the caster is the epicentre. The intensity of the earthquake is determined by the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill, with 10% of the skill giving an earthquake intensity of 1.

#### Intensity

1-4

5-9

1-14

15+

#### Earthquake Effect

Shudders and rumblings.

Ornaments fall from mantelpieces and roof slates loosened.

People are knocked from their feet. Buildings shake and unstable structures collapse.

The earth rends. Strong buildings collapse. Dozens are crushed or fall to their deaths.

The affected area is utterly swallowed by the ground; not a trace is left.

## Silencing the Spoken

Forbidden, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell is a simple weapon against fellow sorcerers and spell casters that require their voices to unleash their magic. Target(s) of the spell must resist its effects or be unable to make any sort of vocalised sounds (not even grunts or growls) for the Duration of the spell.

## Speed Over Waves

Order, Concentration

This spell increases the speed of an ocean-going ship by 20% per 10% of the caster's Grimoire skill.

## Terrible Judgement

Forbidden, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

If this spell is successfully cast, the victim suffers hideous pain and a great deal of damage. All his sins (as defined by violations against the caster's religion) come to the surface, burning runic marks in the victim's flesh that confess his sins and deviant ways. The spell deals damage as per the Wrack spell (*RuneQuest Core Rulebook* page 137) but this damage is applied to every Hit Location simultaneously, irrespective of how many Hit Locations the sinner possesses.

The scars left by the runic burns are permanent and cannot be removed even by magical means. Only a HeroQuest of cleansing can take away the scars.

This spell is available to the most deeply loyal and dedicated members of the Order of Saint Atrox.

## Unarmed Appearance

Order, Autonomous, Resist (Persistence)

This spell allows a sorcerer to hide his and his allies' weaponry from view in places where such armaments could cause trouble, or in the making of a good ambush. The spell affects 1 ENC of weapon for every 10% of the Sorcery (Grimoire) skill per target.

If the magically concealed weaponry is drawn or used in any way then spell is broken for everyone involved. Even though the weapons are invisible to onlookers, their owners can still see and feel their presence.

## Unnerve

Order, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

The target of this spell suffers a -5% penalty per 10% of the caster's Sorcery (Grimoire) skill to all attack rolls, skill rolls and spell casting tests that are directed against the caster. Once a test is successfully made, the penalty is removed.



# The Mechanics of the Empire

The Middle Sea Empire spans Glorantha and is based on dominance of the sea: no other empire, before or since, commands the seas in the same way as the Jrusteli. However, underpinning this sea-faring dominance is a solid imperial structure that administrates the territories, colonies and dominions.

This chapter examines several factors crucial to empire: the people who became kings and emperors; the armed forces that maintain the empire; and the milestone events that helped create the Middle Sea Empire.

The kings and emperors first.

## SALOVAN'S BOOK OF EMPERORS

Salovan is the current Imperial Archivist, keeper of the Emperor's Traditions and responsible for recording all deeds and lineages. His Book of Emperors is considered the foremost text on the Middle Sea Empire's glory. This is his definitive list of Jrusteli and Seshnegi rulers. All true Jrusteli know this list by heart and can recite it without hesitation, repetition or deviation.

Nralar the Old, King of Seshnela, Son of Gerlant and Hupala  
Reigned 501–603

Nepur, King of Seshnela, Son of Nralar  
Reigned 603–632

Bretnos, King of Seshnela, Son of Nralar  
Reigned 632–660

Relam, King of Seshnela, Son of Nepur  
Reigned 660–666

Pamalar, Duke of Frowal, Son of Nepur  
Reigned 666–673

Hymat, Duke of Frowal, Son of Pamalar  
Reigned 673–676

Thyerm, King of Tanisor and Seshnela  
Reigned 676–679

Grodlam the Wolf, Duke of Malkonwal  
Reigned 679–681

Trymir, Commander of the Army of Rightness, Prince of Jrusteli  
Occupied Seshnela 681–689

Hadalín, Manager of Greater Seshnela, the High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Prince of Jrusteli  
Employed 689–702  
Reigned 703–708

Ullmal, High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Son of Hadalin, Prince of Jrusteli  
Reigned 708–725

Saval, Count of Orphalsket; Champion of Malkion, Prince of Jrusteli  
Reigned 725–734

Annmak the Peacemaker, King of Seshnela, Son of Saval  
Reigned 734–751

Meipal, King of Seshnela, Son of Annmak  
Reigned 751–754

Orvansfal, King of Seshnela, Son of Annmak  
Ruled 754–768

Svalak, King of Seshnela, Son of Orvansfal  
Reigned 768–789

*And thus begins the List of the Emperors of Land and Sea*

Svagad, Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Svalak  
Reigned 789–805

Modos, Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Svagad  
Reigned 805–816

Miglos, Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Modos  
Reigned 816–823

Suilmant (aka Sulmat), Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Modos  
Reigned 823–838

Brailach (aka Bralak), Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Suilmant  
Reigned: 838–859

Darangram (aka Dagram), Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Bralak  
Reigned: 859–870

Triosos (aka Trosos), Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Darangram  
Reigned: 870–887

Keralamalos (aka Kralas), Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Dagram  
Reigned: 887–901

Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea, Son of Keralamalos  
901 to the present (908)

## The Emperor and Bureacracy

At the head of the empire is the emperor and this is a hereditary position although it relies substantially on the support and co-operation of the nobility and noble families, all of whom jostle for position and influence, some preferring to wield power from behind the scenes rather than publicly. The Emperor can make laws, change laws and holds effective command across the entire fabric of imperial life. This exertion of power is kept in check by only two things: the will of the Council of State and the age of the Emperor. In reality, most law is made by the Great Department of State and ratified by the Emperor but the Emperor's word, in theory, is law and, being, as the Abiding Book states in the 45<sup>th</sup> canto of the 'How You Are' chapter, is considered to be infallible.

## The Great Council of State

The Great Council is headed by the Minister of the First Order and is appointed by the emperor according to strict rules laid-out in the Abiding Book. The Minister of the First Order holds responsibility for preparing law for the emperor's

ratification and is in charge of appointing the members of the Council of State and the provincial governors who administrate at a local level on the Emperor's behalf. Also within the Great Council of State are the four ministers of the Second, Third and Fourth Orders who, supported by three lesser ministers, provide guiding counsel to the Great Council and the Emperor.

## Key Departments of State

The Department of State conducts the regular business of the empire and is divided into two branches: the Civilian Ministry and the Military Ministry.

**The Civilian Ministry** appoints and administrates several other ministries. The *Ministry of Information* is the clearing house for all information coming from the ministries before it is conveyed to the Emperor. Thus, the Ministry of Information is the effective heart of Jrusteli government, party to all that happens and able to prepare information flowing in either direction, in a light that best serves whatever agendas have to be served. The *Ministry of the Household* determines the constitution of the staff serving the Imperial Household and dictates the precedence enjoyed by courtiers at official ceremonies and engagements. For those seeking social advancement, friends in the Ministry of the Household are essential. The *Ministry of Civil Affairs* is in charge of ambassadorial appointments and affairs. It also holds power for legitimising status and position, making it a ministry of great interest to the power-hungry families of the provinces. Finally, the *Ministry of Governorship* is responsible for all matters pertaining to the people, such as taking the census and operating public works requirements such as building roads, effecting repairs to public buildings and so forth. The ministry is in charge of gathering labour to meet public needs, effectively demanding labour as a tax and, in return, can grant property rights to those who provide whatever labour is needed. The Ministry of Governorship also controls the flow of money through the other departments, effectively being the exchequer.

**The Military Ministry.** The Minister of the Right has direct responsibility for four ministries. The *Ministry of the Army* co-ordinates military service and is responsible for the Rightness Army and the Rightness Crusades. The *Ministry of Law* enforces the legal process, through the devising of punishments and fine tariffs. The *Ministry of the Navy* is the most powerful of the military ministries and is responsible for all military sea-faring forces. The *Ministry of Sorcery* falls within the Military Ministry's remit but operates with almost complete autonomy, answering directly to the Great Council. The *Ministry of Sorcery* is responsible for all sorcerous research and includes the extensive Revealer networks operating across the world.

The heads of the various ministries all go by the title Lord. The ministers of the Great Council go by the title Lord High.

## The Provincial Governors

Appointed by the Great Council, the provincial governors represent the Emperor across the Empire and are responsible for ensuring tax revenues are collected. They have no power over the families and clans in terms of how estates, towns and villages are run but are still powerful and influential figures nonetheless. Offending a provincial governor is to risk offending the Emperor (or, more important, the Minister of the First Order) and because there is a clear demarcation between the responsibilities of land owners and the government, disputes are rare, although protests are made when the levies change and the effects are felt directly on local purses.

Every governor operates with at least one deputy and usually several. Deputies' duties vary considerably from province-to-province and according to the governor's needs. In general though, deputies oversee an appointed region relieving the governor of tiresome local politics. Deputies can appoint Advocates; these are locally-based administrators who bring the word of the governor to the local populace. They collect taxes, act as magistrates (the deputies act as judges and the governor as Grand Judge) and have the power and budget to raise local militias for general peace-keeping and law enforcement. All such decisions though, must be ratified by the deputy and the governor.

## The Rightness Army

So called because its foremost task is to bring righteousness to the deserving peoples of the world, the Rightness Army is a surgical military tool operating at the direction of the Ministry of the Army. In reality the Rightness Army is a series of affiliated martial cults that came together around 680 under the command of Trymir, son of Nagoth. All martial sorcery orders are considered part of the Rightness Army even though they may be deployed under their own names (such as Bardan's Book) and they are supplemented by the non-denominational Rightness Infantry, which consists of both conscripts and volunteers. Mercenaries are frequently used although their hiring is co-ordinated by the martial orders, which means that the Ministry of the Army does not need to concern itself with such matters.

Every martial order is allocated a budget from public funds for its year's activities, with reviews and replenishments happening at the end of Sacred Time. The over-arching rule that all martial orders obey is to heed the call and orders of the Ministry of the Army because this tenet is made explicitly in the Abiding Book. Only one martial order, the Brotherhood of Nazazir ever disobeyed the Ministry (sometime around 742) and it was spectacularly annihilated by a beam of golden

light that fell from the sky and killed every last member of the Nazaziri. Since then no martial order has ever seen fit to question or ignore the Ministry of the Army's commands.

## Orders of the Rightness Army

As mentioned the Rightness Army is a collection of martial sorcery orders. The core orders are as follows (those listed in italics are detailed in the Cults chapter of this book; the rest can be found in *Cults of Glorantha*).

Order of Saint Atrox

Knights of Volanc

Order of Bardan's Book

*Order of the Knights Ocular*

*Order of Trymir*

*Senirite Sisterhood*

*Rightness Templars*

The head of each order reports to the Ministry of the Army and constitutes the Rightness Council. Whilst it is, ostensibly, answerable to the minister it more often than not guides and formulates policy rather than follow it slavishly.

## Rightness Army Structure

When working as a full-strength military force the Rightness Army is comprised of several regiments, known as *Di-Serecas*. A group of six *Di-Serecas* is known as a *Rightness Division*.

A full strength regiment comprises of around 6,000 men but typically regiments are usually under strength and generally consist of approximately 5,000 warriors including officers and battlefield sorcerers (who do not enter into melee combat but augment the ground force with magic both before and during a conflict).

The basic structure of the Rightness Army is as follows:

*Decas* – Eight to ten men who share accommodation, bivouac together and provide mutual battlefield support. *Decas* are usually tight-knight groups from the same cult or order.

*Didecas* – Consisting of 10 *Decas* commanded by a *Cordur* (Lieutenant-Captain).

*Serecas* – Six *Didecas* commanded by a *Di-Cordur* (Captain).

*Di-Serecas* – Ten *Serecas* commanded by a *Cordurain* (Captain-General).

Additionally each *Di-Serecas* is supported by a 150-200 warrior cavalry unit known as a *Flight*. The *Flight* is permanently attached to the *Di-Serecas* and is also used as scouts and messengers. *Flights* tend to choose their own mounts; these



may be horses, typically, but other mounts, brought from outlying parts of Glorantha (such as zebra and other Praxian beasts) may also be used.

Each Serecas is assigned a particular designation. This designation of the Serecas is the same throughout all the Rightness Divisions and, in battle, are arranged so that the strongest and weakest units are mixed throughout the formation maximising morale and effectiveness.

**Serecas Prime:** Elite troops and sorcerers. Its direct commander Di-Cordur Prime, the highest ranking and most respected of all the Di-Cordurs.

**Serecas Secundas:** Comprised of the weaker or newest troops.

**Serecas Tertius:** No distinct designation.

**Serecas Quartain:** Warriors who have distinguished themselves but not yet achieved the distinction of Serecas Prime.

**Serecas Quinz:** No distinct designation.

**Serecas Seize:** Consisting of competent young warriors who provide active support to the weaker Serecas.

**Serecas Septile:** One of the weak Serecas and the most likely place to find trainees and raw recruits although it also contains orderlies and administration personnel.

**Serecas Oct:** Made up of battlefield sorcerers; the most likely place to find Bardan's Book warriors.

**Serecas Nile:** Another weak Serecas and a likely place to find conscripts and slave-warriors.

**Serecas Dex:** Consisting of a second unit of warriors who have distinguished themselves but not yet achieved the distinction of Serecas Prime.

## Rightness Army Ranks

The following list indicates ranks from highest command to lowest common soldier.

### **Cordurast**

The overall regimental commander. This post is generally appointed by the Emperor (in reality, the Ministry of the Army, but with full consultation). A Cordurast can expect to hold command for four or five years, although distinguished and loyal Cordurasts serve for a much longer period. In a province with only one Rightness Regiment, the Cordurast

may also act as the provincial governor and in provinces with multiple regiments, each regiment has a Cordurast and the provincial governor has total command of all regiments.

### **Di-Cordurast**

Another Ministry/Emperor appointment, the Di-Cordurast serves as second in command of the legion, behind the Cordurast.

### **Serecas Prefect**

Usually a long serving veteran who had been promoted through the ranks and third in overall command. His duties are to look after the day-to-day business of the regiment in conjunction with the Di-Cordurast.

### **Knight-Emissary**

Each regiment has five military Knight-Emissaries. These are career officers and serve many of the important administrative tasks of the regiment but still serve in a full tactical command function during engagements.

### **Di-Cordur Prime**

The elite commander of the Serecas Prime and the senior officer of the entire regiment. Only warriors of Rune Lord equivalent standing may occupy this rank and they must have proved themselves in battle.

Cordurs, Di-Cordurs and Cordurains form the backbone of the Rightness Army and are committed, career soldiers who run the day-to-day life of their units as well as issuing commands in the field. They are generally elevated from the ranks but are often drawn from the most promising warriors of the ducal families and the Serecas Prime, Quartain and Dex.

### **Low-Level Officers**

These are non-commissioned officers responsible for the welfare of Decas.

### **Bearer**

The regimental standard bearer is considered an enormously important and prestigious position. From here one progresses to Cordur.

### **Major Sergeant**

One for each Serecas and appointed by the Cordur from within the ranks to act as his second in command.

### **Lieutenant Sergeant**

Usually in charge of a Decas but sometimes attached directly to the Major Sergeant. Lieutenant Sergeants are responsible for issuing the audible commands of the officers.

## The Rank and File

### Stage Sergeant

These are trained specialists (surgeons, engineers, specialised sorcerers, as well as craftsmen and so forth). They are normally exempt from hard labour or heavy duties due to the nature of their work.

### Order Sergeant

Warriors in training for a Stage Sergeant position.

### Orders

The basic private level foot soldier (Lay Members and Initiates of a martial cult).

### Fresher

The basic new recruit or conscript. A Fresher can take up to a year before becoming a full Order.

## The Imperial Navy

The Imperial Navy is a strategic tool under the Ministry of the Navy's governance. It is formed of five naval orders, each consisting of at least 100 ships (often more) that operate along similar lines to the orders of the Rightness Army. The heads of each naval order are known as the High Admirals and below these High Admirals the Fleet Admirals are responsible for 10 ships. It is therefore the norm for a naval order to have one High Admiral and in the region of 10 Fleet Admirals.

The five High Admirals report to the Ministry of the Navy and form the Council of the Seas. Again, the council tends to form policy as well as follow it but is always, ultimately, at the call of the Emperor.

The five naval orders are:

*Grand Order of the Crimson Sail*

Otherworld Explorers

*Order of the Golden Keel*

*Order of the Ebon Mast*

*Illustrious Order of Navigators*

Each order is discussed in the Cults chapter.

### Structure of the Imperial Navy

A fleet consists of 10 ships. These are not always sea-going vessels and may include Exultants – magically-powered, Zistorite-built flying ships that use wefts of sorcerous force, rather than sails, to power them through the skies rather than across the waves. Exultants are usually used as command posts and reconnaissance vessels rather than as fighting ships. A

typical fleet has at least one Exultant and possibly up to three, depending on the favour of the order with the Zistorites.

Otherwise the fleet is made-up of biremes and triremes each equipped with back-up sails and powered by summoned creatures (such as gnomes and sylphs) but sometimes zombies and frequently prisoners or slaves.

Each fleet is usually divided into three squadrons, which form the Point (forward), the Pivot (centre) and the Base (rear). The Base is commanded by a Pilot-Admiral who is subordinate to the Point-Admiral commanding the Point. The Fleet Admiral commands the centre squadron and has overall command of the whole fleet. The Pilot and Point admirals report to him; Fleet Admirals report to the High Admirals.

Each ship in a fleet operates almost as an autonomous unit and its crew is generally comprised of the same cult or order but mixtures of orders are frequent. Each ship, with the exception of the flag ship (admiral's) has a Pilot-Captain, Several Pilot-Lieutenants (up to six), Pilot-Quartermen (up to eight) and a variety of other ranks including a purser, mate, bosun and helm-pilot.

The captain is responsible for the smooth running of his ship, which includes outfitting for duty and is expected to use his best endeavours to keep the ship manned. This allows captains to use fair means or foul and that usually means the press gang. Press-ganging into the Imperial Navy is not a widespread recruitment drive but a last-resort measure where a captain has to replace a missing contingent of sailors. Press ganging includes buying or renting prisoners or slaves but also includes kidnapping any likely-looking young man from the quayside if it can be done swiftly and quietly: a mate is usually put in charge of such activities.

At sea the captain is, naturally, responsible for the ship and for all on board. Necessity demands that a captain be a hard task-master and Jrusteli captains are chosen for their ability to command and maintain discipline under any conditions: as a result, they hold powers of life and death aboard their vessels – in stark contrast with the Imperial Army, which has no such privileges.

Pilot-Lieutenants, below the captain, are in charge of deck watches and in action command the oarsmen and combat sorcerers. Pilot-Lieutenants are headed by a sub-captain who is in nominal charge of the rest of the rank and acts as the captain's second in command. Such positions are usually the province of nobles from the empire although especially competent, proven ratings may be elevated through the ranks to reach that of Pilot-Lieutenant.

Pilot-Quartermen are so called because they direct the efforts of a quarter of the rowers aboard a ship, responding to the orders of the Pilot-Lieutenants. Again, these are young nobles training to become commissioned officers. All Pilot-Quartermen are taught navigation, astronomy and trigonometry by the naval schools and their order, as well as undertaking watches on deck as relief for the Pilot-Lieutenants.

Pursers are in charge of the stores and supplies on board ship. Answering directly to the captain, the rank is equivalent to that of Pilot-Lieutenant but lacks any combat command – although, in dire enough circumstances, a purser can fulfil the role.

The mate of a ship is responsible for the supervision of the crew in their everyday duties about the ship and practical seamanship. They are also responsible for the punishment of the men according to the captain's orders

Below the mate but above the crew ranks are the Drummers: these large men mark the ship's rowing pace by either beating out the oar-strokes on massive kettledrums or simply screaming the rhythm in a strained ululation, according to personal preference.

Sailors fall into two types: Deckmen, who carry-out deck duties and answer to a Pilot Quartermen and rowers, who, as the name implies, row the ship. Rowers are, frequently, inhuman entities such as gnomes, zombies and other summoned creatures, although prisoners and press-ganged conscripts are used widely. Rowers, if they perform well, can be elevated to Deckmen – but the life expectancy of a human rower is short. The physical effort is massive and, to encourage performance, human rowers are often manacled to their position and augmented by sorcery to ensure strength and stamina.

Every ship carries with it one or more (usually up to four) sorcerers who are responsible for magically sustaining the vessel, launching magic at enemies and augmenting the crew. Each group of sorcerers answers to the captain, usually through the highest ranking (in terms of ability or cult standing) wizard aboard the ship. Only the captain can command the sorcerers; they are under no obligation to follow orders from any other officer unless the captain has directed as much.

## **Ships of the Imperial Navy**

The navy consists of five classes of warship. The work horse battle vessels are the biremes, triremes and war barges; massive, oar-powered vessels that form the war fleets of the Empire. However it also uses traditional sailed galleons for coastal defence and close-shore work, where use of oars becomes prohibitive. It also has the Exultants – the Zistor-made flying

ships that are based on a bireme hull but powered by wefts of magical force instead of oars or sails.

Game statistics for the typical God Learner war vessels follow.

## **Triosos Class Bireme**

Used extensively as a troop transport and heavy supply vessel, the Triosos Class bireme is equipped with a wide, sweeping hull that curves to prominent points both fore and aft and is always decorated with a carved animal figurehead at the rear and a representation of Emperor Triosos (after whom the class is named) at the prow: the figurehead is usually pointing in the direction of travel and may also be animated with Animate spells to reach and grasp enemy vessels, using the great weight and pulling power of the bireme to brake and break hulls.

**Hull:** 3

**Structure Points:** 70

**Seaworthiness:** 12

**Length:** 25m

**Beam:** 3m

**Capacity:** 2 tons

**Freeboard:** 1m

**Draft:** 1m

**Crew:** 80 rowers, 15 officers and sailors, 15 soldiers or archers

**Speed:** 5m / 42 km when rowed

**Weapons:** Two (2 x catapult)

**Ram:** Yes (1D3 points of damage for every metre of speed)

## **Trymir Class Trireme**

The Trymir Class of trireme is a workhorse of the Imperial Navy and makes up over half the fleets. Fast, buoyant and manoeuvrable the Trymir Class makes for a formidable warship, scout and messenger craft.

The oarsmen are arranged in 2/2 formation, which can be rapidly changed to handle a 3/3 arrangement for greater speed when needed.

**Hull:** 4

**Structure Points:** 80

**Seaworthiness:** 18

**Length:** 37m

**Beam:** 4.5m

**Capacity:** 1.5 tons

**Freeboard:** 3m

**Draft:** 2.5m

**Crew:** 170 rowers, 25 officers and sailors, 20 soldiers

**Speed:** 6m / 51.6km when rowed

**Weapons:** Three

**Ram:** Yes (D4 points of damage for every metre of speed)

**Skill:** Shiphandling +0%

**Cost:** 25,000 silver

## Miglos Class Quadreme

A juggernaut of the waves, the Miglos Class carries four banks of oars and is a deep-water endurance warship designed for intimidating pirates and other foes. It is common for the hull of the Miglos Class to be carved into a skeletal design with even the oars turned to represent bones.

The oarsmen are arranged in 2/2 formation and are commonly animated golems or, occasionally, captured trolls. The Miglos Class always carries a pointed and barbed ram, designed to impale enemy vessels and remain impaled whilst marines surge aboard and commit bloody murder in the Emperor's name.

**Hull:** 5

**Structure Points:** 80

**Seaworthiness:** 20

**Length:** 40m

**Beam:** 5.5m

**Capacity:** 2 tons

**Freeboard:** 3.5m

**Draft:** 3.5m

**Crew:** 200 rowers, 30 officers and sailors, 40 soldiers

**Speed:** 5m / 48km when rowed

**Weapons:** Three (3 x catapult)

**Ram:** Yes (1D4 points of damage for every metre of speed)

**Skill:** Shiphandling -5%

## Nepur Class Quinquireme

Sporting five banks of oars, the Nepur class is a rare sight on the waves these days. Built originally to tackle the Waertagi dragon ships, Nepur Class quinquiremes are expensive to operate and only the First Fleet and the Jrusteli homeland fleet operates them any longer.

Nepur Class warships are always, without exception, carved with intricate geometric designs across hull and decking, representing the various Actions of the Invisible God. The fo'castle is always triangular in design and the ram at the ship's prow is shod in iron. It is also usual to paint evil, squinting eyes on either side of the prow to further enhance the ship's bizarre and fearsome appearance.

The rowers are almost always animated golems of wood, bone or metal. They are arranged in a 2/3 arrangement.

**Hull:** 6

**Structure Points:** 85

**Seaworthiness:** 28

**Length:** 42m

**Beam:** 5.5m

**Capacity:** 3.5 tons

**Freeboard:** 4.5m

**Draft:** 4.5m

**Crew:** 250 rowers, 50 officers and sailors, 50 soldiers

**Speed:** 4m / 40km when rowed

**Weapons:** Four (2 x catapult, 2 x ballista)

**Ram:** Yes (1D4+2 points of damage for every metre of speed)

**Skill:** Shiphandling -10%

## Jrusteli War Galley

This light and fast ship is designed for coastal manoeuvres, not oceanic travel. It is low and fast, propelled by a bank of 25 oars on either side and always mounts a ram. The war galley is a staple of the coastal fleets and is most frequently found in patrol of the Jrustela and Seshnelan coastlines.

**Hull:** 3

**Structure Points:** 40

**Seaworthiness:** 12

**Length:** 27m

**Beam:** 6m

**Capacity:** 2 tons

**Freeboard:** 1m

**Draft:** 0.5m

**Crew:** 50 rowers, 10 officers and sailors

**Speed:** 4m / 34.8km when rowed

**Weapons:** Two

**Ram:** Yes (D2 points of damage for every metre of speed)

**Skill:** Shiphandling -10%

**Cost:** 7,000 silver

## Exultant Class Air Ship

The Exultant Class ships that sail the skies rather than the seas are modified War Galleys. All are made in Zistorwal where the hull of the vessel is bound with magical energy worked into strategically placed power crystals. These crystals then, through a command language of formulae and ritual symbols, create sails of glowing magical energy that lift the vessel and propel it through the sky.

The crystals have a limited life, although no one knows how long this is. Once Zistorwal is put under siege the ability to manufacture new Exultants is compromised and, because the crystals cannot be recharged, the navy is now reluctant to deploy them in all but the most necessary of circumstances.

Due to their modified nature Exultants are incapable of taking to the waves. If forced onto water they rapidly sink, meaning that most Exultants prefer to be used over land.

**Hull:** 3

**Structure Points:** 32

**Seaworthiness:** No Applicable.

**Length:** 24m

**Beam:** 6m

**Capacity:** 2 tons  
**Freeboard:** 1m  
**Draft:** 0.5m  
**Crew:** 10 officers and up to 20 sailors  
**Speed:** 4m / 35km when the crystals operate at full thrust  
**Weapons:** Two  
**Ram:** Yes (D2 points of damage for every metre of speed)  
**Skill:** Shiphandling –15%  
**Cost:** 900,000 silver

## Wind Power

All Middle Sea navy ships are supplemented by sylphs – air elementals – which are summoned by captured spirit magicians and then bound by enchanting rituals into the hull of the craft. A ship has one sylph for every point of Hull and they are called upon only when great speed is desirable. Each bound sylph is of five cubic metres capacity (see the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, page 170) and each sylph adds a quarter of its Movement to the ship's own.

Onboard sorcerers also use Animate Wind to provide additional motive power and to avoid exhausting the bound sylphs. It is this additional, sorcerous edge that lends the Imperial Navy its speed and fearsome command of the seas.

## THE RIGHTNESS CRUSADE

The Rightness Crusade, also known as the Rightness Army or the Return to Rightness Movement, began the moment the Abiding Book appeared. It was created by St. Volanc who was, until that instant, the head of the Dolphin Guild of sorcerers and the chief tormentor of St. Serezos. When the Hand of God appeared and wrote the Book, Volanc was so consumed with guilt and the desire to redeem himself that he completely dedicated the remainder of his life to the service of the Invisible God. He accompanied the Sainly Bookbearers when they went to convert the pagans of Shenilstos and by sheer force of personality and faith transformed that pagan city into the most fervently devout place in all Jrustela.

From Shenilstos, the righteous followers of Volanc went out and conquered the world – or at least Seshnela – for Malkion. The Sainly Bookbearers were being attacked and martyred, so the Word of God had to work with the Sword of God. With the power of the *Sharp Abiding Book*, the Return to Rightness Crusaders were the most feared military order in all Jrustela.

In modern times, many see the Rightness Crusade as weak and outdated but the Crusade secretly wields huge influence within the Church and among the common folk in Southern Jrustela. If there is a second crusade, though, it will be against the God Learners and in support of Seshnela, not Jrustela. Many in the Crusade leadership are pushing for military action

against Umathela and the rebellious Pamaltelan colonies, believing that what they learn there will be vital if they have to bring down the God Learner Collective in future years.

## Crusade Structure and Orders

The Rightness Crusade is a part of the Malkioni True Church but has its own internal hierarchy. In some parts of Jrustela, especially Shenilstos, the Crusade *is* the church. The head of the Crusade is Pomphalic of Shenilstos; he is not an ordained priest but he is the heir to St. Volanc and the chosen leader of the crusaders. He is closely allied to Cardinal Volanc (sometimes called Volanc the Younger) and the heads of the various sorcerous orders within the Crusade. These orders include the Knights of St. Volanc, the Monks of Blood and the New Iron Staff. These orders are fully described in the Cults chapter.

## DEEDS AND DEEP HISTORY

The Empire's activities across its history have been many, great and infamous. Here is a guide to the most famed – or infamous.

### The Red War

The Incorruptible Sons of Damolstan were a Seshnelan group of immigrants to Jrustela, which fought against the mostali of the Curustus Mountains during the 500s. They suffered horrible losses but at last Dunchard Spellspitter caught them in the open and destroyed every one of them. When their bodies were burnt metal ran out of the fire and this was taken back as treasure to the capital where it was made into the Dunchard Artefacts: dishes, jewellery and three sets of nearly impenetrable armour. All these treasures form part of the Imperial Regalia, which is handed down to each Emperor of Land and Sea and paraded with much ritual at a new Emperor's coronation.

The armour, it has been noted, is too small to fit any current emperor and appears to shrink a little with each new coronation.

### The Jrusteli Confederation

In 652 representatives from the 13 free colonies of Jrustela met together and decided to form a confederation to maintain friendship, unity and cooperation between them all. The cities were fractious and to resolve disputes between them, they held an *Insight Contest*. The sorcerers of each city questioned each other in an attempt to catch their opponents in error. Whoever discovered an error won the contest and had their interpretation be deemed correct. This resulted in the unification of large parts of Jrusteli customary law.

However, after a period of harmony certain portions of the law proved to be notably difficult to resolve by the Insight Contest and provided a focus for intercity conflict. The Return to Rightness Crusade believed that these differences existed because the world itself was broken. The Return to Rightness Crusade was thus a concerted attempt to create a unified path and, in some ways, paved the way for the subsequent assembly of the God Learner monomyth.

The Jrusteli Council later was elevated to be a Principality, honoured as 'The First Among Equals'. After the Mahnud family managed to secure the title for themselves Jrustela was often called a kingdom. Trymir, Hadalin, Ullmal and Saval were all Princes of Jrusteli. Saval became the King of Seshnela as well. His son, Annmak, was the King of Seshnela and Jrustela and was the one who broke the Stygian Heresy of Ralios.

## The Gbaji Wars

Gbaji The Deceiver, manifest as a god following the Sun Stop (when Malkion himself called upon the sun to halt its progress so that all the world would be revealed to him at once) and nearly destroyed the world. But he also created one like himself, who was called Arkat. Arkat became a hero who seemed true to Malkion but was, ultimately true to no one and was every bit as much a deceiver as Gbaji. Arkat eventually turned on his creator and both were destroyed in the land of Dorastor. This was either inevitable, because God intervened; or was due to the cleverness of Malkioni heroes: Gerlant Flamesword in Seshnela and Talor the Laughing Warrior in Loskalm, who closed the Banir Gate through which Gbaji's and Arkat's monsters freely spilled.

## Formation of God Learner Revealer Groups

At around the time of the Red War, in the Seshnelan colonies of Jrustela, the first study, or Revealer Groups, were formed. These included the New Order and others. The Revealer groups were active in studying the nature of gods and myths and formed the basis of the God Learner movement with which the Middle Sea Empire has become synonymous.

The first groups were little more than cult sects but as their knowledge grew and was shared, they became more enterprising and widespread, eventually becoming a tool of imperial policy and part of the God Learner magical agenda. The term 'God Learner' stems from Revealer Group tenets and can be most readily applied to these societies.

## The Abiding Book appears.

The Abiding Book appeared in 646. This is the key event of Malkionism and its appearance changed the way the Jrusteli

and Seshnelans operated, generating the Return to Rightness Crusade and enhancing the sorcerous capabilities of the fledgling empire.

## The Aldryami Revolt

In 654 the aldryami of Vralos murdered a God Learner Revealer Group that had attempted to plunder certain myths of Aldrya in an experiment that was a precursor to the Goddess Switch. The God Learners, with Rightness Army soldiers, crushed the elf revolt, burned out most forests of Vralos and put-paid to any further uprisings for more than a century. This was also a precursor to the full force of the Return to Rightness crusades.


## Conquest of Fronela

Between 725 and 727 the Jrusteli Confederation led its campaign to bring Fronela, beginning with Losklam, under the confederation banner. Loskalm conceded and Syranthir, the claimant of the Loskalmi throne, was forced to flee (he eventually formed Carmania). God Learner dominance of Fronela begins. In 790 the campaign to dominate the Janube river valley begins.

## The New Order Forms

It began in 747 with a group called the *New Order*. Despite its lofty name, this organisation was a social club, founded a century earlier as a group to discuss Makanism, the new thoughts and teach other the Makanic Way. A century later the members were Jrusteli: rich merchants, petty nobles, unassigned clerics and some of the free, curious and self-supported so-called *Juniors* who were so numerous in those days.

They had a fire-damaged book of magical art that had been taken from a ruined building (some say a church, others a laboratory, others a sorcerer's library) that was reputedly in the city of Rilán, in the (then) beautiful land of Sodal. This meant it could have been from the Stygian Empire and hence forbidden. The book was called *Impossible Landscapes* and had living pictures of portions of various Otherworld. There is the City of the Great Star, looking upon a marketplace populated by very tall, very thin pale people with yellow hair. Here was a window into The Forest of Therun, where if you watched long enough animals would walk past and the sun sets and rises. And on and on: hellish sights into the Underworld, gruesome battles apparently ongoing through eternity; breathtaking sights, gorgeous places with exotic beings of many descriptions. On page 43 is the Cottage of Mrs. Old Old Lady, set in a pleasant forest glen. From that page, most people now feel, first came Samin. He came out of the cabin, approached the picture frame and crawled out of the picture to stand on the page. He was only hand-high, a helpless and silly thing that sang a harmless song and did a little dance. It asked to remain out of the book and was granted a box to sleep



in over the fireplace, out of reach of the cat. Afterwards Samin would offer to show the men more things about the pictures, if they would just learn a couple of little songs to sing. When the songs were sung the places seemed to come alive as hidden denizens crawled into the scene and went about their strange otherworld business.

Jedrick of Isstur took the picture book on a tour of Jrustela. Though 40-50 people were allowed in per showing, no more than a dozen could closely witness the book's scenery. But it was a wild sensation, so that Jedrick eventually had half the membership in the Order on the tour, each taking shifts to share the book with paying audiences. Many local songs sprang up from this as local minstrels capitalised on the popular subject. Most of them sang some version of the Silly Man's Song.

## War in Slontos

During 774, 775 and 776 the Empire of Wyrms Friends began its campaign to push the Middle Sea Empire out of Slontos. Lord Isgangdrang was actively engaged in directing combat along this southern border against raiders from Slontos. This triggered a long series of confrontations between the God Learners and EWF that culminated in the Esrolian battle of Derovan. Those first battles were mere skirmishes but enough to prove to both empires that they were enemies. The prize was Esrolia; a client kingdom for both empires with the Grandmothers of Esrolia juggling allegiances as easily as they juggled goddesses. Peace returned by 800 but in 818 a huge hurricane struck the coast of Slontos and destroyed many eastern coastal cities. The next year another wrought havoc on southern Ramalia and a year later a second struck the eastern coast of Ramalia and smashed Maniria before fading away. The EWF was blamed for this destruction.

In 821 the God Learners began to perform great magic to find the source of unusual onslaughts. Hagin of Neleswal, undoubtedly the boldest of the investigators, followed a dangerous trail to the place now called Hurricane House, though he did not go in. Upon returning his team concluded the hurricanes were the result of the Storm god being wounded. For four more years, up until 825, the hurricanes continued. Most of the cities along the coast were destroyed at least once. But Augustien de Herolal claimed victory when no further storm struck after 825. The period is remembered with fear as the Seven Hurricane Years.

## The Fire War

The Fire War marks the period between 840 and 842 when the EWF and Middle Sea Empires truly struggled over control of Slontos and Esrolia.

In 840 the Archduke of Slontos was provoked to war. The lesson of the Seven Hurricane Years was not lost on him but events inexorably drew him into conflict. In Caladraland the God Learners proved to the Caladralanders that their god was also awake elsewhere, in islands immeasurably far away. When the volcano people attempted to communicate with their distant kinfolk the God Learners insidiously inserted themselves into the transactions and after some time obtained residence in Caladraland, with exclusive trading rights. The Northern Diamond Group merchants were negotiating, too, for exploration and mining rights when hostility erupted.

Caladraland traditionalists seized the God Learners and wished to toss them into the volcano, as was usual. However, they could not because of the clever way the God Learners had worded their pact with the Caladralanders. They brought the prisoners to a man named Biskar, who listened to the problem and received the God Learner prisoners into his care. The Slontites begged for succour and help, and they offered him great treasures to spare them and send word to the Archduke. But Biskar killed them all and threw their bodies to the little spotted cats that live around Caladraland.

Kinsmen of that merchant group sent a fire missile against Biskar, which did not kill him but destroyed half of the nearby city of Buskanto. The residents, misled into thinking the Caladralanders had attacked, prepared an invasion. When their initial icefall did not melt off the volcano the fire people called on the duke for help, as their treaty demanded.

Many people wanted to let them be frozen. They were just savages and not really part of the empire, anyway. They were traitors and had betrayed their own word and deserved what they got.

But the archduke called their ambassadors to the court and before everyone they relayed their verbatim version of the agreement and the archduke could decide one way, or another. He chose to honour the Caladrans understanding instead of the Slontites. The Advancives were the movement that congealed thereafter to resist and thwart the Archduke.

The Slontos force melted the ice and then took heavy losses from an Esrolian army that came to support. Although the enemy went home the Advancives insisted it was a terrible defeat and that Slontos honour required retaliation in strength. Many of the military wished this too, for they were ashamed of their defeat when they had been young.

In 840 Surnestor became Archduke of Slontos and, incensed at how Esrolia continually shifted its allegiances between EWF, Malkion, Orlanthi and their own, interminable goddesses, invaded Esrolia. The Surprise Battalion encountered a substantial force of the EWF but the draconic army was

driven back allowing the God Learners to occupy large parts of Esrolia. Cities in Esrolia were then besieged and many taken and by 841 most of the land had been conquered. No significant retaliation had occurred. Yet.

In the spring of 842 an army marched south and was met just north of Destor Pass, close to the city of Derovan. The Battle of Derovan began when an army of EWF-allied uz swarmed upon the Surprise Battalion and destroyed much of it. The next morning the EWF main force arrived, commanded by Lord Isgangdrang and Lord Great Burin, along with many draconic heroes. The armies clashed and successive waves of warriors and magic hammered the Slontan army until it shattered and fled. Lord Great Burin devoured swathes of Rightness Army soldiers and vomited them back-up as enemies of their original people. In the face of such powerful draconic magic a wave of panic followed and when it struck the cities all the garrisons and collaborators fled too.

Then three great dragons, whose wings blotted out the sky, swept down from Kero Fin Mountain and across Wenuia, incinerating all of the 17 cities that lay in their path.

This decisive battle ensured that the Slontans stayed within their realm and did not dare try to invade Esrolia again. The EWF army pulled back and then turned its attentions to Peloria where great things were about to transpire.

## Order of New Order

In 776 the cleric Mandarel heard that harmless song and realised that it was a set of instructions to find a treasure. He and his companions went to search for it and returned with a sacred writing called Five New Ways. This was a discussion and a set of magical practices to look at the Creator, Great Makan. It also provided a set of rules, a method of organisation and objectives for 'good men to seek'.

Mandarel preached and led many services in the cities of Jrustela and in private discussions he gained many supporters. He explained to them the spiritual opportunities offered in the enemy God World. He also theorised about financial opportunities.

In 776 the New Order was recognised by the Jrusteli Church Council as a monastic wizardly Order of the Church of the Abiding Book. Mandarel was the first Abbott. The New Order outfitted the first HeroQuest Expedition sponsored by the Church.

The New Order grew in numbers as its ideas spread across the empire and many chapter houses of the New Order were established. In 798 the Order of the New Order was elevated to be a School of the Abiding Book and its chapters generally

promoted to be temples. Patrons established an actual college and, more importantly, a new church in the Transformative Church style. These were not just a new architecture but a new design to facilitate the transmission of prayerful energy to the Creator.

Many people found the teaching of the Order of New Order persuasive, especially when explained by Lord Pilot Maraganan. In 810 he and his students revealed the *753 Compilations*. This was just one of many such resources that were inspired by *Five New Ways* but this one was not just of ideas but built upon the experienced truths. These Compilations explained away many concerns and apparent problems in the Abiding Book. Its arguments were largely accepted and many were regularly used by the Church Council (though the book was never accepted as Scripture equal to the Abiding Book).

Critics claimed that the *753 Compilations* were only a pre-constructed system designed to foster HeroQuesting and the destruction of the pagan world. As a belief system it ignored critical parts of the Abiding Book. However, most people seemed to think that destroying the pagan worlds was a good thing. The beliefs system spread far outside the School of New Order. By 820 these new practices were called the Malkioneranism Practice. It was a liberal, experimental form of worship that celebrated flexibility, subjective scriptural interpretation and the exploitation of pagan resources.

## The Birth of the Clanking City

Moving into God Forgot in 790, the Zistorite God Learner Revealer Group persuades the Ingareens of the islands to assist in the building of Zistorwal. The project carries imperial sanction.

## Chaos Reawakens

Gbaji vanished in the battle with Arkat in the realm of Dorastor – scene of much Chaos in the First Age but a place of relative calm during the Second. Between 820 and 829 Revealer Groups of the God Learners ventured into Dorastor bent on achieving access to the myth of the battle between Gbaji and Arkat to learn the truth of Arkat's deception: what they succeeded in penetrating were myths of Chaos that allowed certain Lords of Chaos to manifest once more in Dorastor and begin re-establishing their foul rule. The God Learners retreated and claimed to know nothing of what was happening there – despite a dozen of their fellows being gruesomely slaughtered or impregnated by broo.

## Zistorwal Grows

The Zistorites grow in numbers between 840 and 850. The Triumvirate manifests and the Council of Flesh and Metal is formed.



## God Learners Collective Formed

In 845 the God Learner Collective – like-minded sorcerous orders and Revealer Groups formally joined forces and began their Explorations of Magic. Such had been done before informally but now united, the God Learners' power increased dramatically.

## The Goddess Switch

In 849 the God Learners proved the truth of their vision and the falseness of the pagan gods. The God Learners performed their famous Goddess Switch in Esrolia; they thereby proved that their sorcery was superior to pagan worship and that pagan deities were interchangeable.

The Goddess Switch brought famine and sterility to the region – which proved that meddling in pagan gods' affairs was not necessarily beneficial to anyone.

## Order of Otherworld Exploration

In 806 the Order of New Order formed another order, *The Order of Otherworld Exploration*. The leaders were more commonly known as the Supernatural Pilots and they organised and directed explorations of the Otherworlds and God Planes.

Abbot Guy de Hrestolket had spent years studying records before he became head of the order. He made small efforts only and used each effort as a fact gathering expedition. He compiled and organised his and his predecessors' opinions and observations and theorised about his foes. He questioned hundreds of prisoners, accompanied many expeditions and studied many pagan documents and confessions.

One of his concerns was to ease the tension within the church and he burst into the Node of the *Abiding Grimoire*. He brought back the tome, which was written on old fashioned scrolls and also carved into staff, belt and breastplate. The Abiding Grimoire largely stopped God Learners from using the Abiding Book directly as a Grimoire.

In 845 a new grimoire was issued, with much simpler methods of performing an impressive battery of useful spells. It was called *Unencumbered Lights of Reason* by its users.

## Arkat, the Stygian Empire and the Book of Secrets

Between 350 and 450 the era of Gbaji and Arkat is established and centres on Ralios where battle between these two mythical Adventurers takes place. Gbaji, as the God Learners recognise him, arose from attempts to create a new god by the Second Council. Gbaji was unbound by the Great Compromise and would not recognise the power of the Brithini or Malkion.

Gbaji's purpose was to enslave and betray and he did both with ruthless efficiency. By 400 much of Ralios was under Gbaji's control although he sometimes took the guise of Nysalor, a merciful god, to fool the gullible. True Malkionists were not so fooled.

Arkat arose to challenge Gbaji's dominance across Ralios, Seshnela and into Fronela. Undergoing changes of personality and race he conquered Gbaji in Dorastor and established a rule of peace centred on the Ralian heartlands. However, this peaceful rule became increasingly demanding until it turned into Imperial ambition; and so the Stygian Empire arose.

The Stygians had many and varied beliefs, which included Malkionism but was ultimately founded on heresy and impure paths. The Stygians encouraged their populace to worship pagan gods alongside the Invisible God and to even worship inhuman gods such as Arkat Kingtroll – because Arkat had become a troll to defeat Gbaji and then ascended to the Hero Plane sometime around the turn of the fifth century. This embrace of many gods was deemed heretical by the Seshnelans and, ultimately, the Jrusteli and as both the Middle Sea Empire and Stygian empires grew, it was inevitable that war between them would erupt.

For the Stygians were not content with their hybrid religions. Arkat had taught that changing one's nature brought power and that was what the Stygians craved. Through the heretical Cult of Arkat and Arkat Kingtroll the Stygians changed the landscape and thought nothing of enslaving their own kind. Then they raided into Fronela and Seshnela and took slaves from there also. Necromancy was practiced and propagated. Worship of Chaos Gods alongside heathen gods became common place. The Archon sorcerers trucked with demons and became demons themselves. Emperor Paslac was rumoured to have summoned several demon concubines with whom he begat several bastard offspring. One was even claimed to be the heir to Arkat's vision.

The war with the Stygians lasted until 751 and was won by Annmak the Peacemaker, King of Seshnela and a Son of Saval. Annamak was a popular and pious man but vigorous enough to be an admired hunter. He was crowned King of Seshnela under ancient Seshnegi rites but he was also the first Seshnegi king to be enthroned with Malkioni rites, blessed officially as king by the Invisible God.

Annmak ordered a final Return to Rightness Crusade to be loosed against the Stygians in Ralios. The True Malkioni Church blessed the hardened soldiers and knights of the Rightness Army and sent them away to battle the humans and trolls of the Stygians, meeting them head-on in Ralios.

In 740 the crusaders crushed the Stygian Emperor Paslac, destroying even his uz allies. The Stygian Alliance shattered and military resistance collapsed. With lightning swiftness the whole Cult of Arkat was hunted down, their records destroyed

and their holy places razed. Thus, after 240 years, did the prophecy of King Gerlant come true and Marshall Nisaro bore the Firesword to destroy the grave of evil Arkat. However it was not simply hard battle that crushed the Stygians; instrumental was the seizing of the *Book of Secrets*.

The sorcerers of the Stygian Empire were the Archons, led by Emperor Paslac, shadowy mages who stole secrets from everyone – even the Brithini – and had access to secrets stolen by Arkat. Their grimoire was the *Book of Secrets*; Zzabur himself, it is claimed, scribed the *Book of Secrets* as the text of his lengthy ritual that shattered the Ice and ended the Darkness. It was amongst the potent grimoires stolen by Arkat and used by his Dark Empire to destroy armies, change the course of rivers and level mountains. Arkat's heirs constructed elaborate and terrible protections for the *Book of Secrets*, with locks and wards of iron and darkness and bound in blazing iron plates, from which it derived its name. The Stygians employed all the dark powers at their command to ensure that none outside the Archons had access to the Book's contents. However, so dreadful was the content of the *Book of Secrets* that even the Archons were too fearful to even open its red-hot plates and skim the text. The Book's power and reputation was such that its mere presence was enough to grant immense power to its possessors. Famously, in 640, the Stygian wizards merely displayed the *Book of Secrets* at Asgolan Fields and the assembled Seshnegi lords, wizards and soldiers fled the field in terror.

The tyranny of the Stygian Empire was ended when Malkion revealed the sacred scriptures of the One True and Abiding Book to the Jrusteli. Even the power of the *Book of Secrets* could not withstand the true text of Creation. The Righteous Crusade crushed the assembled Stygian wizards of the Archon Paslac at Arkhome and took the *Book of Secrets* from amongst the corpses, the mud and the blood.

Although the *Book of Secrets* was clearly inferior to the Abiding Book, many believed that its secrets – if properly deciphered and interpreted – would greatly add to Jrusteli understanding of the Abiding Book. The Order of the New Order took the *Book of Secrets* back to Holy Mountain where teams of Hadmalist monks and Reconstructionalist wizards and mages laboured to break the Book's Stygian defences but to no avail. After the terrible fire of 793 that destroyed the Monastery of Saint Hadmal, killing scores of monks, more elaborate precautions were taken. Emperor Svagad appointed Trymir of Irenstos to oversee the monks' efforts.

In 825, Trymir announced to the Emperor that the wizards and mages had succeeded in breaching the *Book of Secrets*'s eldritch defences and that the Book was ready to be opened. But soon after came whispers that the contents of the Book were far more terrible than anyone imagined. It was rumoured that the Emperor himself ordered the Book to be removed to a secret vault on the Holy Mountain and that all writings

related to the *Book of Secrets* be destroyed. The Holy Mountain Presence Review Board pronounced anathema upon any who dared open the *Book of Secrets* or even comment upon its presumed contents. The liturgists of the True Church added the *Book of Secrets* to the list of Zzabur's blasphemies – and others even claimed that the Devil himself wrote the book.

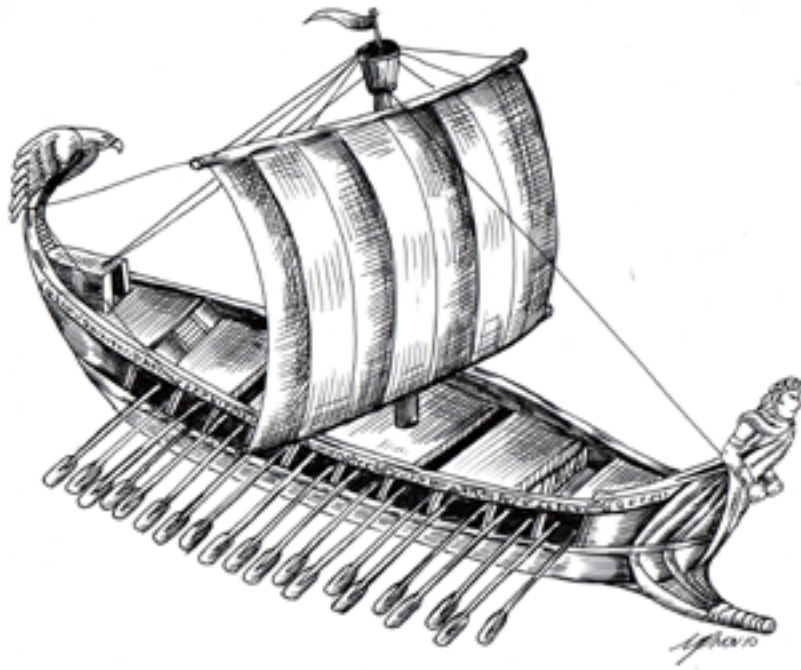
In 893 the *Book of Secrets* disappeared. The vault where it was held glowed white-hot one evening and did not cool for over a year. When the fearful priests opened it, the book was gone and all that remained in its place was a feather of pure white – a white so brilliant it blinded the initial monks who gazed into the vault. Wisdom has it that Zzabur himself took back the *Book of Secrets* and is using it to concoct mighty spells that will be used for Malkioni good – or perhaps personal gain solely for the Brithini. None, though, dare challenge the Brithini on the book's whereabouts for fear of reprisals.

## The Book of Secrets

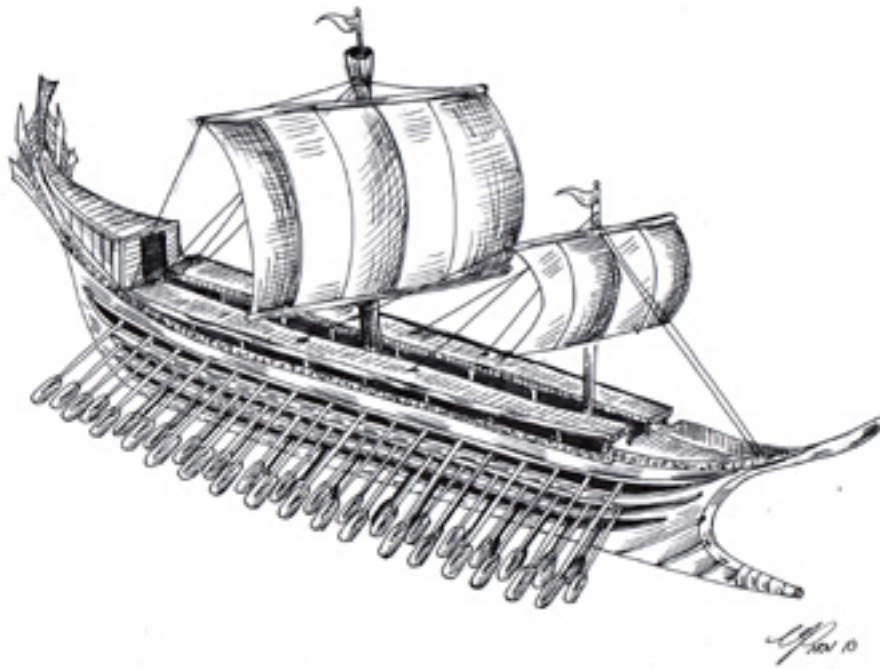
Also called the Red Book of Brithos, most agreed that the grimoire was a thin tome bound in enchanted plates of glowing red-hot iron and closed with chains of darkness. Its pages were said to be of bronzed vellum, protected by the magic of the plates and the wards created by Arkat himself. The cover plate was marked with the symbol of Zzabur. It is said that Arkat bound the spirits of seven ancestral Dehori to ward the contents of the Book from those who sought its mysteries.

The Secrets Riots were a series of destructive and fratricidal uprisings in the cities of Seshnela and Slontos. They stemmed from a widespread belief that a conspiracy existed to prevent the opening of the *Book of Secrets* and thereby allowing the people to gain its benefits. These riots were encouraged by the remnants of the Flamers, Irensavalists, Transgressors and Antisavalists – but most of all, by the writings of the Mad Monk of Robcradle, Barbelo the Stone.

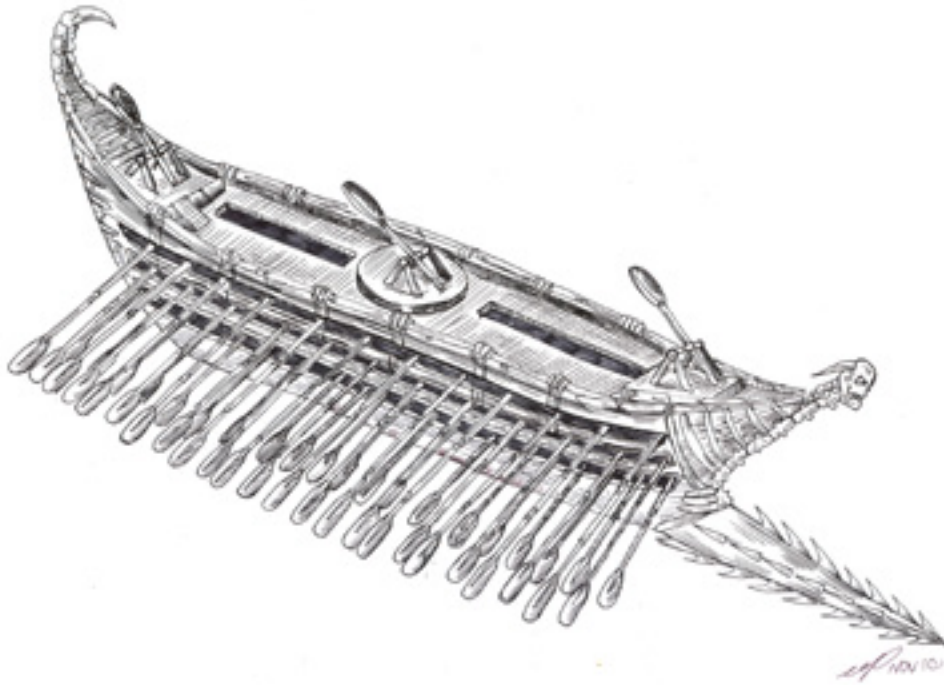
Barbelo the Stone was originally a Hadmalist monk who voraciously devoured lore and other texts – but in his pride he thought it nobler to be seen as an authority on the Abiding Book than to actually understand its wisdom. Disgraced before the Holy Mountain Review Board, Barbelo fled to Robcradle, a small city on the Zola Fel River where the God Learners maintained vigilance for giant cradles sent downstream towards Magasta's pool. Barbelo slipped into the Transgressor heresy and preached that the True Church conspired to keep the True Words of the Creator secret from the believers. He was later discovered to be a follower of the Kralorelan demon Atyar and murdered by a pagan nomad who scented his evil. His writings were infamous for inciting mobs of young, frustrated scholars, called Ranters, although he himself had rarely ever left his cell.



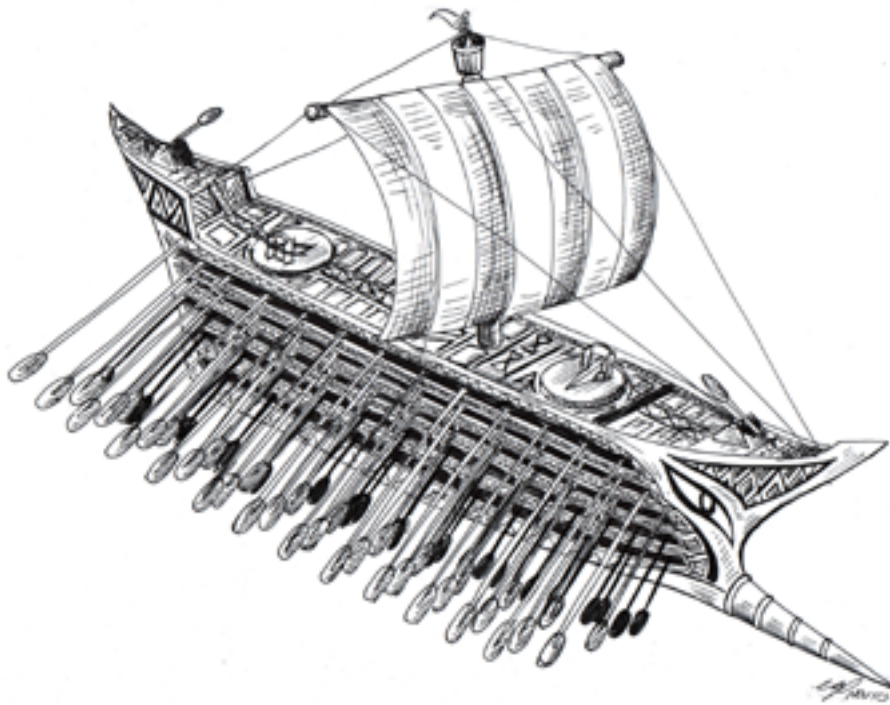
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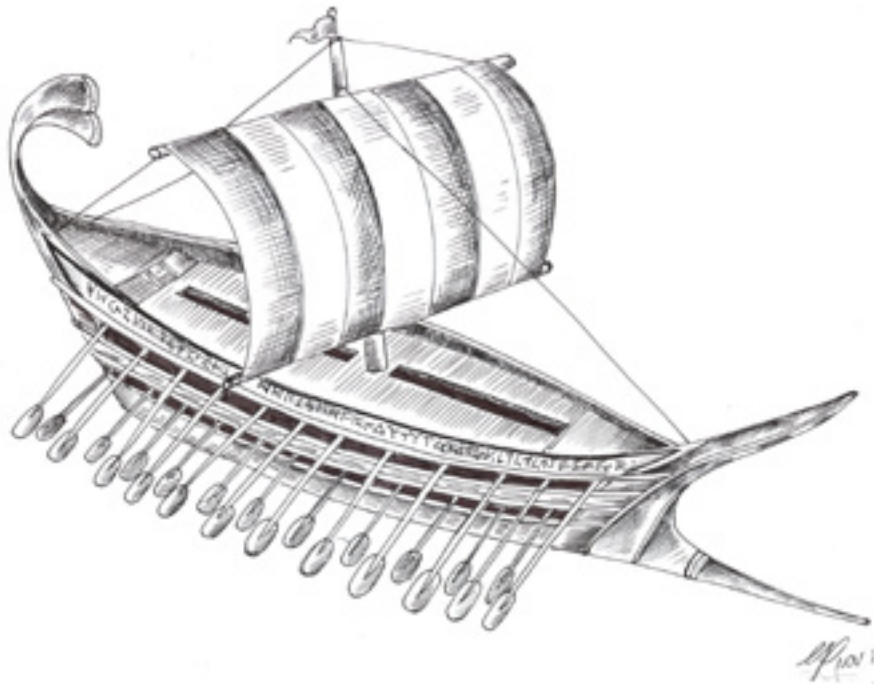
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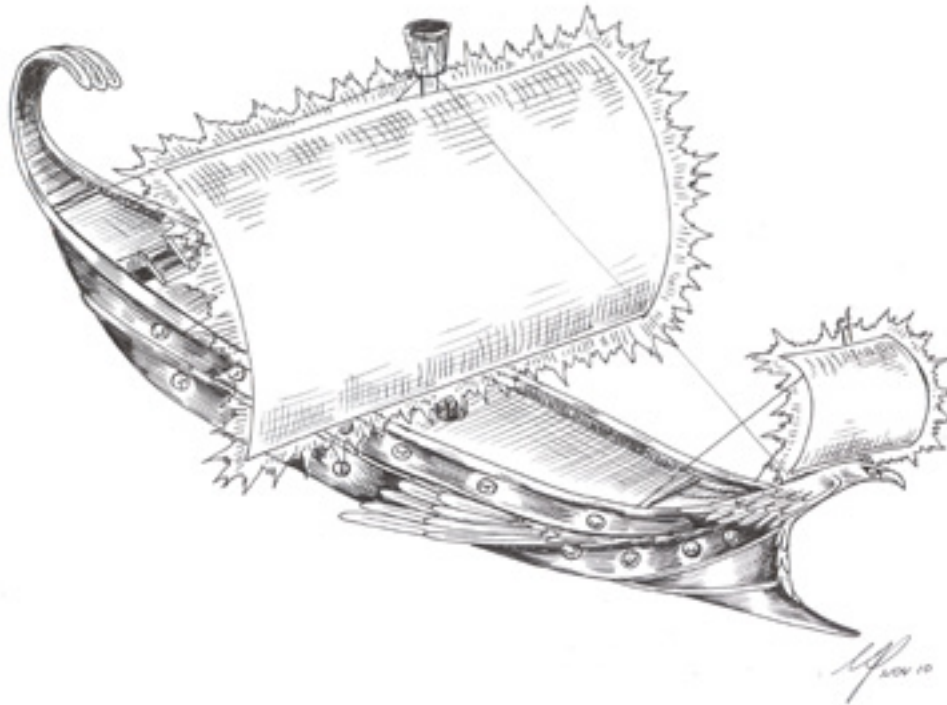
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