



THE UNSPOKEN WORD PRESENTS

TARSH IN FLAMES!

UWI THE REPRINT



**THE CULT OF MARAN
ARMIES OF TARSH
FURTHEST EXPLORED
HEROES AND FOES
THE TARSH GAZETEER
AND MORE....**

The award-nominated and out-of-print Tarsh in Flames returns in a limited edition reprint. Welcome to the land of Tarsh, furthest ally of the Lunar Empire, at the front line of the wars in Dragon Pass!



The Unspoken Word
A Gloranthan magazine

Editors

Mark Galeotti
Simon Bray

Address

The Unspoken Word
PO Box 278
Crewe CW3 9YY, UK

Website

<http://www.celtic-webs.com.theunspokenword>

Webmaster:

Wesley Quadros

Subscriptions

Full details are on page 54

Welcome to the first issue of ***The Unspoken Word***, a new magazine to explore the world of Glorantha! Each issue will have a theme: this looks in detail at the land of Tarsh, UW2 will cover bandits, outlaws, pirates and other ne'erdowells from all across Glorantha, while UW3 will focus on the Far Place region of Dragon Pass.

We need and want to give thanks to Pete Nash for coming up with the name for this venture, but especially to Greg Stafford and Steven Martin at Issaries, both for giving permission to print the full Maran cult write-up and also for all sorts of help and advice. This magazine is *not* some sort of official Tarsh supplement, but it has been immensely enriched by their input.

We are always looking for new ideas and prospective writers and artists. Details are on our website, but the first point of contact for writers is Mark (Mark@Galeotti.fsbusiness.co.uk) and for artists is Simon (Simonbrayuk@aol.com).

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TARSH IN FLAMES!

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Back Cover: ***Map of Tarsh*** by Wesley Quadros. This map draws on materials from maps by Greg Stafford but is a work-in-progress and final details may differ.

Authors: Simon Bray, Ian Cooper, David Dunham, Mark Galeotti, Martin Laurie, Peter Metcalfe, Michael (MOB) O'Brien, Wesley Quadros, Roderick Robertson, Greg Stafford, Ian Thomson

Artists: Jimmy Almen, Shaun Appleby, Max Bertuzzi, Simon Bray, Dario Corallo, Mark Galeotti, Juha Harju, Jarku Jarvinen, Yarb Nomis, Wesley Quadros, Markku Silvennoinen, Rod (Jaega) Smith, Trish (Binki) Toms, Gregory C Walsh

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Tarsh

An Introduction to

Tarsh

The official Issaries *Tarsh Liberated!* Book will concentrate on events in the 1630s, so this magazine generally looks at background and Tarsh during the 1610s and 1620s.

A country of contradictions. Proud of its independent and war-like traditions but now also proud of being part of the empire, whose missionaries are amongst the most evangelical and whose nobles work at lunar decadence with a will. Orlanth and the more evident storm deities may have been suppressed, but this is still essentially an Orlanthi culture, albeit with heavy earth-cult overtones. Proud and martial, rich and decadent. Beneath the placid prosperous façade, though, is a country of intrigue and opportunity, of discontent and... adventure!

We are the people of Tarsh, sons of Arim and daughters of Sorana Tor, farmers and warriors, poets and kings. Once we followed the ways of Old Gusty, Orlanth, but now we have become more civilised. True, some of us still gather in secret to celebrate his holy days and others only turned from his path because of royal decree. But our crops are plentiful, our lands are peaceful and the Earthshaker is quiet. Life is good, and don't believe those rabble-rousers who would tell you otherwise. What use have we for Hero Wars?

The Countryside

Fertile rolling plains and wide, gentle valleys, interspersed with hills and mountains in sharply defined highlands. Despite the moderating influence of the Glowline, the climate is scarcely any more clement and regular than that of the rest of Dragon Pass, but overall this is a land of productive fields and bountiful harvests, of plainsmen as much as hill and woodland folk.

The basic settlement is not a stead but a smaller farm, generally with a longhouse for the extended family (perhaps up to two dozen adults and children) who own it, quarters for their few slaves and barns, surrounded by six or seven fields. However, even now Grazer and bandit raids are not unknown, so most farms will also have a stout wooden fence. In the villages, longhouses are generally grouped in squares around a central allotment or replaced by square extended family blocks. To the north, the countryside is marked less by farms and villages and more by the great latifundia which are the slave plantations, growing maize for sale throughout the empire. Many are state-controlled.

Of course, the countryside is cut by roads, proper imperial roads, maintained by troops and labour taxes. Some may be simple dirt tracks with ruts for carts, but paved roads are not unusual, each with their milestones showing the distance to the nearest city and to Glamour. There are even strange imperial totems known as signposts!

This is land with a long history, and is rich in ruins, old earth shrines, surviving storm-rune menhirs atop windswept hills and other traces of elder ages.

The Towns

Tarsh is relatively heavily urbanised, a product of both its prosperous agriculture (producing the surpluses to feed an urban population) and also regular Grazer raids. Villages tended to cluster within a few hours' march, so that their fyrds could support each other.

In some cases, successful villages effectively drained the populations from the others, especially when they managed to build defences. These were the beginnings of the modern cities, all of which are now over-crowded, but still show many of the features of the old villages, including the square family blocks.

History

Most Tarshites are of Alakoring stock, the descendants of the clans which followed Arim the Pauper into Tarsh and over the Danger Line around 1330. They then mingled with the Heortlings who had moved into Dragon Pass from the south, but retained a distinctive identity of their own.

The Tarshites have a long and proud history, and one based on their identity as a kingdom rather than a people. They held back the empire and Grazers a century and a half, and eventually joined the empire (albeit not exactly wholeheartedly) not as conquered subjects but as favoured allies thanks to HonEel. His successors have generally been both loyal imperial allies and also the architects of an economic, political and military renaissance. This has left its mark throughout the country, from the gleaming new cities to the farms, where stockades can now be allowed to fall into disrepair, now that Grazer raids are rare and patrols frequent.

The People

Think of Orlanthi without Orlanth, living in plains rather than amidst mountains. Much of the culture is recognisably Orlanthi. However, the emphasis is more on family and kingdom rather than clan, which is an economic rather than political unit. As befits both lunar egalitarianism and the particular respect for the Earth cults, women are more likely to be found in positions of responsibility.

There are subtle distinctions across the country. The further south and east you go, the sharper the divisions, between supporters of the new order and those who cling to the ways of Orlanth or the Dark Earth Goddesses. To the north, there are Sairdic influences, including the raising of goats and the domestication of dogs instead of the alynx. Lunar-style slavery is increasingly supplanting Orlanthe thrall-taking, although again this is more a feature of the north than south. This is also beginning to create a whole new class, the freedman.

Politics

On a clan level, there is much less distinction between carls and cottars. The political importance of the clan has also declined, though: families and villages are the key social building blocks. Villages are governed by a Village Ring (of the Elders), while clans are largely administrative units within the tribe. Each clan has a chief and a Ring (generally of 13 or even more members, to dilute the power of the priests – a traditional Alakoring concern). The chief has considerable local authority, but arguably more powerful is the representative of the tribal chief, known as the shrieve, who administers justice and raises taxes within the clan tula in the tribal chief's name.

Tribal chiefs are appointed by the King, an increasingly vexed issue as lunar citizens and royal favourites supplant popular local blood-lines. To a considerable degree, the King is trying to use his powers of appointment and taxation to impose a more Dara Happan model of central rule over a kingdom still with strong tribal power structures. A useful informal guideline about loyalties is whether a tribal ruler continues to use the traditional but technically illegal term 'tribal king', calls himself the approved title of 'armsman' or sticks with the neutral 'chief'.

The Provincial Overseer is officially superior to the High King, but rarely interferes directly.

The nobility thus exists at two levels: the tribal chiefs and their thanes, largely based in the towns, and the Furthest-based court of the King. The latter are generally solidly imperial, which tends to manifest itself in extremes, whether the martial ardour of the Phargentites

or a devotion to decadence second only to Glamourite high society. The practices of Darts Wars and gladiatorial games have even been introduced (including mythically-symbolic bull-fights against wing-clipped Skybulls). Of course, what comes naturally in Glamour really needs to be worked at in Tarsh!

Gods

Orlanth's worship is proscribed, although how tightly this is enforced varies wildly. Most of his subcults survive, treated as independent deities. The attributes of kingship are now held by the Cult of Alakoring Rex.

Ernalda, though, is respected as both the sister of Maran and also, since HonEel's interpretation of the Tarshite land rites, 'She Who Waits' within the Lunar pantheon. All the earth deities are worshipped, with an interesting conflict existing between the 'official' (and rather less bloodthirsty) Maran cult and the Exiles.

There is a clear process of assimilation at work, with attempts being made to find acceptable roles even for the most inconvenient deities, such as Babeester Gor's axemaids, now also executioners. Indeed, it is worth noting that Tarshite religion is a fairly bloody affair in general – live sacrifice is quite common.

Over a century of imperial contact and missionary work has also brought new deities. The Provincial Church of the Seven Mothers is strong here, its local members burning with the fire of the newly-converted. There is also a rich pantheon of local and city gods, village wyters and hero-cults.

Conflicts

Beneath the surface it is therefore clear that there are a number of serious conflicts within Tarsh, ready to erupt. These include:

⌘ A divide, between the assimilated and those clinging to the old Storm Ways. To some, this is north-south, but it is better seen as a contest between the traditionalist uplands and the cosmopolitan and lunarised river valleys.

- ⌘ A political struggle for authority between the Crown and tribal hierarchies.
- ⌘ Rivalries between the main noble houses, made fashionable by the importation of the Dart War.
- ⌘ Traditional feuds and rivalries between tribes, exacerbated by new religious and political differences and the machinations of Furthest.

Enemies and Rivals

Energetic, ambitious, proud and wealthy, no wonder the Tarshites have enemies. Their main rivalries and conflicts are with:

- † The Tarsh Exiles: a challenge to both the political legitimacy and religious authority of the Crown.
- † The Sartari: backward and wayward cousins. Tarsh has territorial claims to much of north and west Dragon Pass.
- † The Grazers: many not only fear the Grazers but also respect them. Some would even prefer an alliance with the Grazers to allegiance to the empire.
- † Chaos of the unreconstructed kind that periodically vomits forth from Snakepipe Hollow.
- † The Tusk Riders of the Stinking Forest: a perennial problem, although there are also persistent rumours that Slavewall's markets also supply some of their sacrificial victims.
- † The Queendom of Holay: Tarsh's main political rival within the Empire, epitomised by the struggle over the Matrimony Tribute.
- † Balazar: a favoured source of work-slaves, but now also the theatre for an increasingly active struggle between Holay, Tarsh and, to a much lesser extent, Imther.

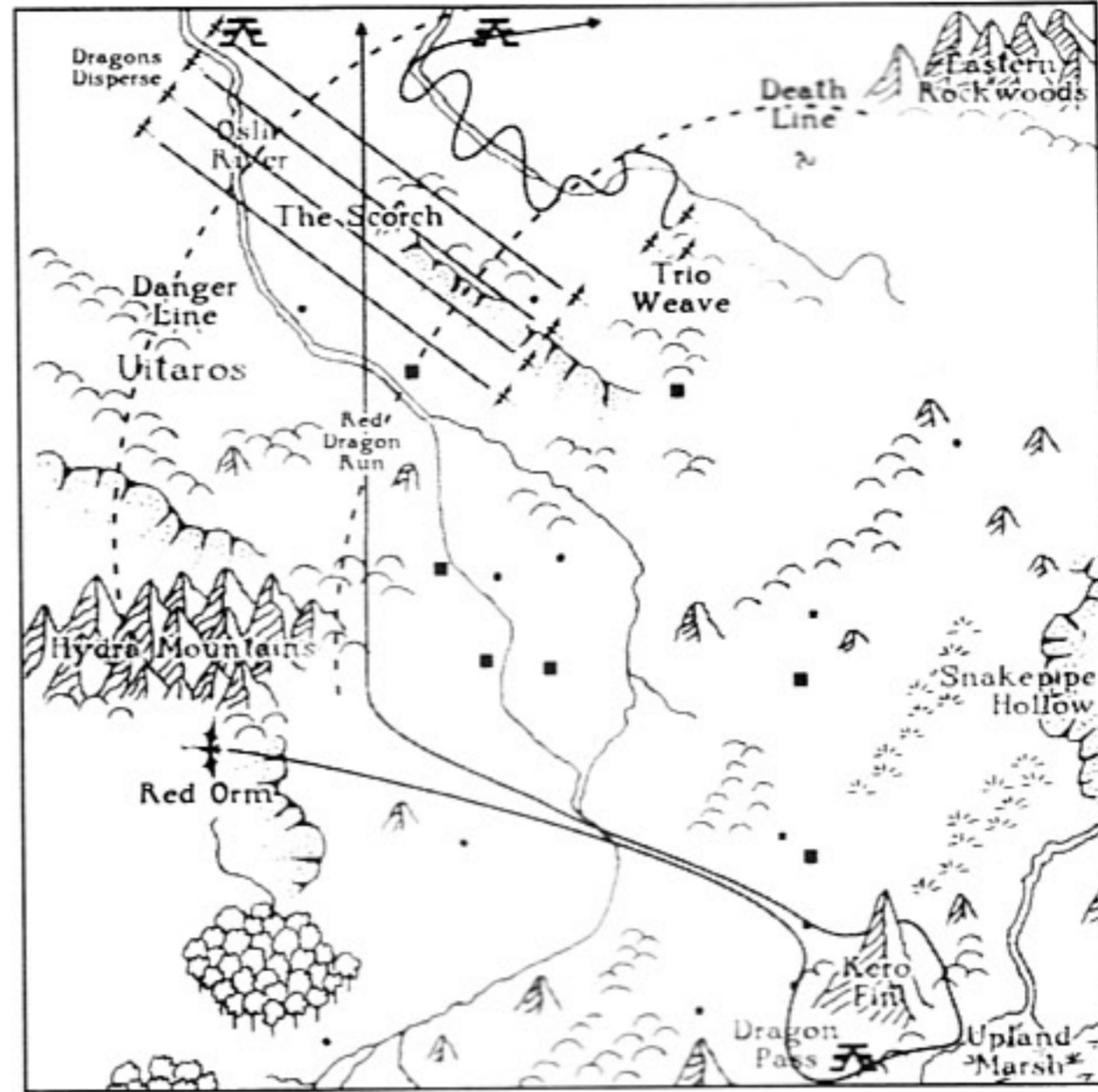




Notes on the History of Tarsh

Greg Stafford

The lands now making up Tarsh were among the north-western reaches of the EWF. As such, they were ravaged when the Pelorian element of the Invincible Golden Horde marched down to Dragon Pass. This was, however, nothing to what would follow in the Dragonkill...



and cities beneath it, devouring upon occasion. Then it flew out of the area on the path shown. It is a fairly straight line, heading north and away. Behind it was left a half mile swathe of burning that was so hot it actually gouged out the earth it torched.

What the Dragons Did: five features of note

Trio Weave. A trio of dragons lazily swept back and forth over the Black Eel river, casually blasting away any man-made objects. They did not try to get all the people so some residents survived, but they did not stay afterwards.

Danger Line The Danger Line was not official nor was it marked, but within this rough line, people were in acute danger of being attacked by the dragonewts or their servants (of which the hydra is considered to be one). For a long time, many dream dragons were encountered here, but they seem to have faded of themselves, for no sweep of dragon killers goes through here in Tarsh history or legend.

Burnt Road The Red Dragon rose and a range of hills disappeared. It circled around Kero Fin a few times, scorching the armies

The text is by Greg Stafford, the maps are by Shaun Appleby, from originals drawn by Greg Stafford. Both text and maps are © Issaries Inc. 2001



Death Line Rather more emphatic than the Danger Line, no one ever returned from beyond the Death Line. Within it were many dragonewts and other nonhumans who destroyed all humans to come this far, without fail.

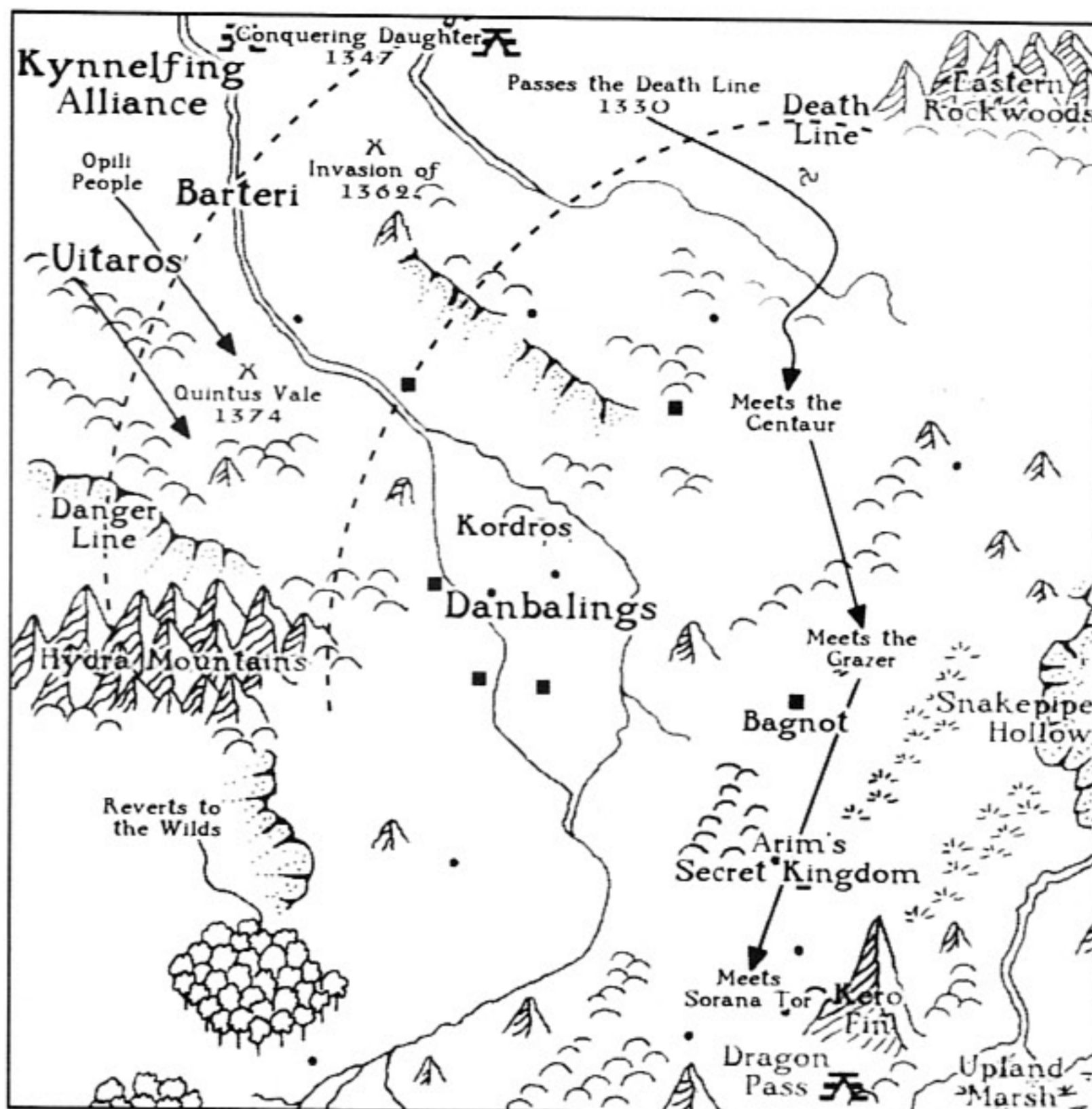
Scorch One of the last actions of the Dragonkill: a dozen or so dragons lined up wing to wing and slowly flew in formation in this north-westerly direction, burning everything they passed over. The huge swathe was lifeless afterwards. At first, nothing regrew; plants crept in slowly along the edges and riverbanks.

After the Dragonkill, Tarsh remained a desolate land, abandoned to the dragons and their kin. Until one man dared lead his people south to reclaim it for humanity...



Arim (1330-1368)

The Kynneling Alliance was a union of king and high kings, who sought decisively to defeat the new form of Dara Happans who came upon them from the north. This was their first great confrontation with the Lunar Empire for most people. Many fled the wars, and considered that the Dangerzone and even Deathzone safer than facing the imperial chaos things that were surely going to come. Those who left called themselves explorers, though



those that stayed called them cowards.

Arim the Pauper, a priest who became a king, is only one such hero entering Dragon Pass at this time. His success has been magnified to be a dynasty in the *Composite History of Dragon Pass (ChoDP)*, but this is clearly a pumped up version of real events that show a succession of sacred kings, not a political dynasty. In fact, the population of Arim's land was never large enough to be dynastic or to take command of the whole land as is implied. His capital was Bagnot, or a place near to it. The Arim Vale was where most of his people lived.

Map notes:

In **1330**, Arim and his people pass the Deathline, as noted in *ChoDP*. He met the Centaur Henereel and the the Grazer Benst Beel near to modern Bagnot. Finally, he met Sorana Tor met at Maran Gor temple.

The **Conquering Daughter's Victory** of 1347 was the end of Orlanthe independence for Holay, after which many refugees came to Dragon Pass. For many, their goal was Arim's Secret Kingdom. It did not remain secret, but this name stuck because people elsewhere continued to seek the 'secret kingdom' when fleeing the empire. It was a sacred community and quite different from their former tribal life. Over time, though, it became more recognisably

a political unit. Of course, the Empire sent spies and explorers to find this 'secret kingdom,' eventually provoking the invasion of 1362.

Uitaros. An old tribe in the area already, they infiltrated parts of the Dangerzone early, probably earlier than Arim.

Danbalings. A (temporary?) tribe of the clans of and around Kordros Island. Danbal is mentioned as a rival of Arim's for some minor things, a daughter of his marries an infamous Uitarosing bandit, etc.

Karvenings. Another rival collective, being the earliest stages of organisation among the clans here. Arim called them, "wretched follow-afterers, unable to even find their own way and sniffing at our heels like anus-sniffing dogs."

Battle of Falling Hills, 1362. This was largely an invasion by the Holayans and other provincial forces, backed with some Lunar troops. For Holay it is considered to be an invasion of the frontier kingdoms with a clear-cut proselytisation bent, "Bring them the Moon!" Arim was war leader for Orlanthe from many tribes and independent clans for this battle. His victory at the battle (due to the Earth Shakers) ensured his fame and subsequent peace from his neighbours, as well as attracting more settlers and refugees to his leadership.

Barteri. The earliest appearance of this tribe is after Falling Hills. The Barterings united the local clans and threw out their Holayan chiefs and tribute collectors for a while. This area remains a war zone, sometimes free, sometimes ruled by Imperial Holay or upriver Tarsh. The Barteri disappear in this shuffle, as do several other temporary affiliations. The modern Tremarki are heirs of this tradition.

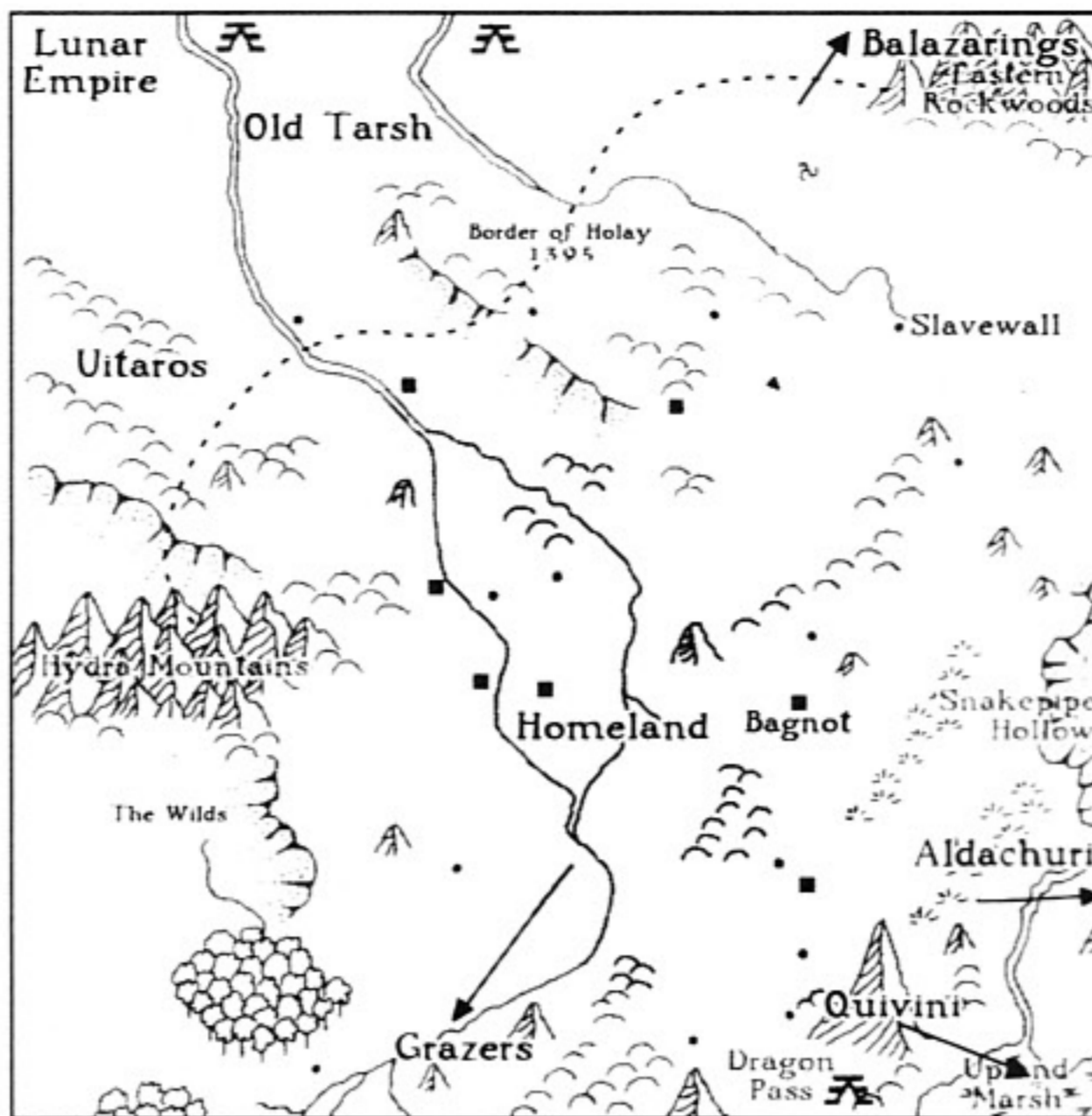
Arim died in 1368, having become King of Dragon Pass through his marriage to Sorana Tor. His son Varstapoor was elected the new king and ruling in a magical partnership with his forceful sister Vestenbora. Varstapoor's son Ovtarien succeeded him in 1375, but was deposed in favour of his son, Yarandros, after fomenting a disastrous war with the Grazers, previously allies of Tarsh against the northern folk.

Yarandros, 1395-1440



Yarandros ruled during the time of Sheng Seleris and this explains how he was able to get so powerful without Dara Happan opposition. The homeland of his Kingdom of Tarsh was Arim's Secret Kingdom and the Kordros Island regions, with the capital at Bagnot.

The map shows the 1395 border with Holay. However, Yarandros claimed most of Holay as "Old Tarsh," invoking "old Berennething kings and heroes, lords of Saird and even dragons of old." In other words, these were entirely bogus claims, and the real basis of his authority was his military prowess. He did, however, raise a memorial to the Berennethings in Holay.



Yarandros ruled the **Aldachuri**, a tribal group around Aldachur, the **Quivini** and also the **Grazers**. However, the **Uitaros** were still a strong tribe up in the hills. Yarandros did not conquer them; instead, he had to negotiate: "those wily oldsters of the hills. Isn't dirt their own mother up there? Ask the old man what he wants this time. Tell him I will never pay 'Arim's tribute' - and on the fourth demand you can give in to him. Dishthane, start to assemble the payment."

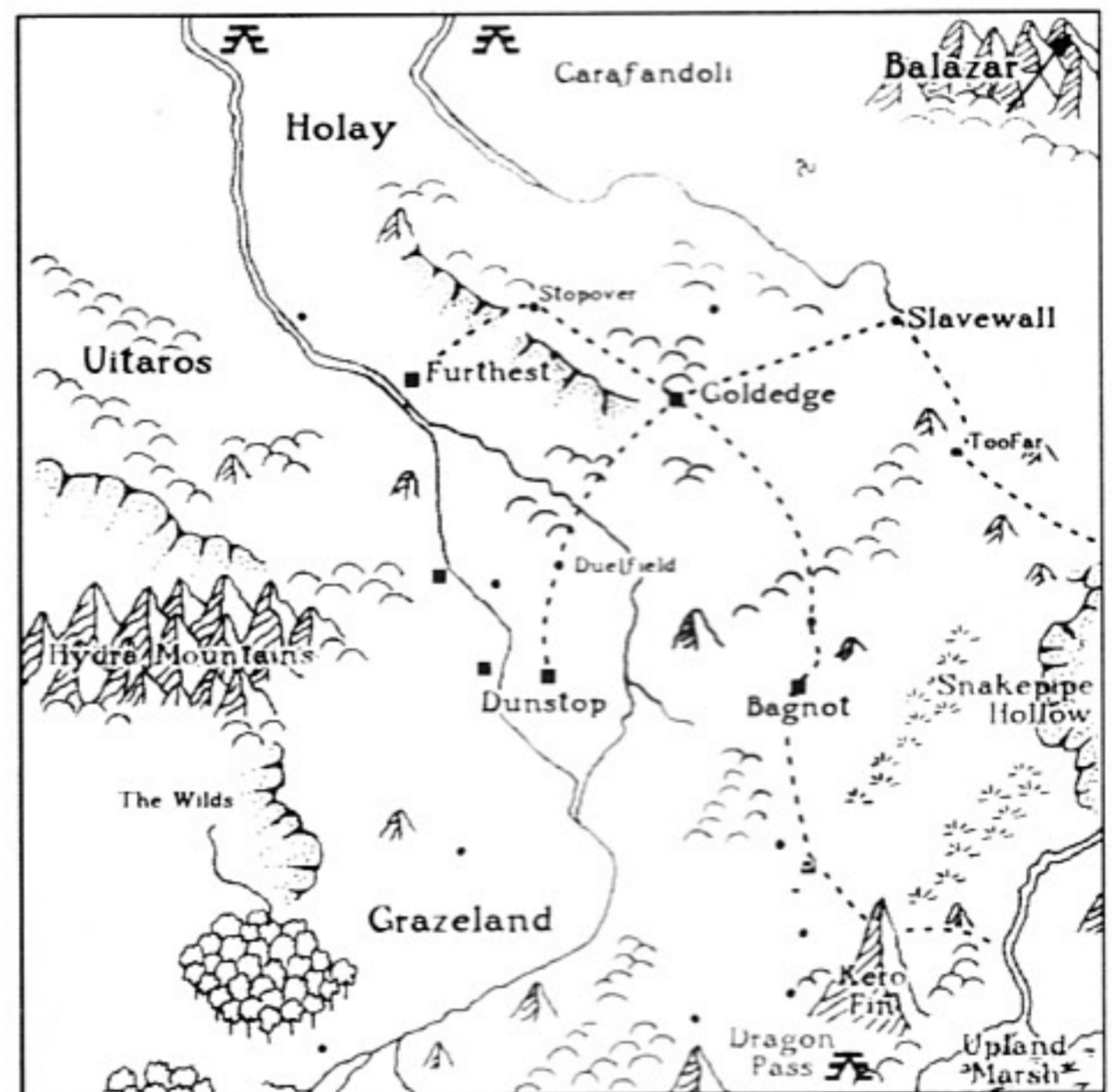
Slavewall was established about this time by a ruthless warrior band. They had something from their wars against the nomads that let them beat their rivals, and to make most of the clans around them their thralls. They then encouraged the thrall clans to help on raids to get slaves, so that their own kinsmen would not be sold.

Yarandros had changed Tarsh. Kingship became as much a matter of heredity as election. However grudgingly, the Uitaros had been brought into the fold. Claims had been made to a 'Greater Tarsh.' Tarshite forces ranged from Holay to Prax. Much of this was to appear to have been undone by his

successor, Orlos. He was a wise ruler but was to be laid low by one disastrous mistake: unleashing the chaos of the Mad Sultanate of Tork. His death plunged Tarsh into a ten-year civil war which would leave the kingdom divided and vulnerable.

Illaro, 1455-1470

This final map is the setting for HonEel's arrival in Tarsh a couple of decades later. Illaro, of the Hendarli, would start the reconstruction of Tarsh. His sons Tastinim and Halfotoor and grand-son Marofdul continued his work, but his great-grandson,



Pyjeemsab, would fall victim to the wiles of HonEel, delivering Tarsh to the empire and preparing the way for the great wars for control of Dragon Pass.

People of Tarsh

People of Tarsh

Mark Galeotti & Simon Bray

UPLANDERS

Kornos the Hunter is of the Enkili, famed for his skill with throwing axe. A devotee of Ormalaya, he is also a secret initiate of Orlanth Thunderous. In the guise of hunting, he carries mess-ages between the godar and thus knows every track and hide of his native woods. He has vowed not to take a wife until the winds blow free, although he has a sweetheart in a half-dozen villages. He once slew an Aramite with his bare hands and made its tusks into pipes; a grateful godi later invested them with the power to whistle up a wind.

Life in the uplands is tough and traditional, and has been least affected by Tarsh's new-found wealth and lunar influences. Kornos lives in a small steadhouse, one of a dozen or so which make up his home village. There are no slaves to do the hard work, and traders, officials and priests visit but rarely. The villages know of the Great Ban on Orlanth, but this is often ignored, and many have a nearby hilltop consecrated to the Storm. Nonetheless, they are loyal Tarshites, who probably regard this as one more idiocy of the effete Valleyfolk, something which will pass. Whereas most Tarshite men shave, beards are more common, sometimes as a gesture of hidden defiance. Upland women are typically strong of arm and will, many directly worship Maran and other Dark Earth goddesses and daimones rather than Ernalda, but none defer to their menfolk. To the south, Uplanders keep alynxes, but to the north, dogs are more favoured.

Very broadly, the people of Tarsh can be divided into three broad groups. The Uplanders of the hills and border marches are still truest to their old ways and live a life much like that lived elsewhere among the Orlanthi of Dragon Pass. The Lowlanders have begun to be affected by trade, foreign influences and a centralising and interfering regime in Furthest. However, the Valleyfolk are the wealthiest but also the most influenced by new ways. This if, of course, only a crude caricature of the real complexities of Tarsh.

LOWLANDERS

Engarnos Plough-and-Sword is a respected carl of the Hengkisi. An initiate of Barntar, much of the time he appears just a happy, hard-working and prosperous farmer, caring for his prized Lodril plough, treating his farm-slaves fairly, indulging his beloved wife and children. He is also an Initiate of Starkval, though, and when raiders near, dons his mail, lifts the Ever-Sharp Axe of Ranos that has been in his family for generations and becomes the canny captain of the village fyrd. He is proud that his eldest son has joined the Army of Tarsh, and enjoys the tax concessions this brings.



The Lowlanders are the backbone of Tarsh, warrior-farmers as used to battling off raiders and bandits as tilling the rich fields, and cheerful and able at both.

Engarnos runs his own farm, which is a court-house of four long-

"Not valleys, nor peaks"

- Lowland expression for an ideal compromise

houses grouped in a square, close to the village palisade, with fields and pasture land outside and animal pens within. The village headman may have built himself a lunar-style villa to display his wealth and loyalty, but probably uses the central atrium to pen his livestock at night. They have generally accepted the Great Ban (on the worship of Orlanth), but are still unconvinced by lunar ways.

Nonetheless, with such prosperity now coming their way, they are content. The



position of Lowland women is more traditional, Ernalda is strong, and their domain remains the hearthfire and loomhouse.

VALLEYFOLK

Belkar of the Kordrosi now calls himself Belkades since applying for Imperial Citizenship. He is still loyal to the tribe and a member of the village militia, but his regular dalliances with a Holayan trader have opened his eyes to the new order. An initiate of Poverri, he has begun to learn some of the ways of the Red Goddess. He supplements his fishing with seasonal work on the maize fields of Kordros Island, and his great strength and endurance make him welcome in the local farms, though some of his neighbours do not trust his conversion and new airs.

Valley life has seen the greatest changes, as the Oslir trade brings wealth, cultural influence and unprecedented opportunity. While many Valley villages are still in the traditional style, more and more are being rebuilt in northern style, with villas and stone houses increasingly visible as new settlers move in or existing families gentrify. Worship of Orlanth is rare, and lunar and other imperial deities are beginning to become popular. These are still Alakorings, though, and retain the old virtues, even if life is rather more orderly, predictable and comfortable than in the old days. Furthermore, the growing

☒ Women in Tarsh ☒

"Both, not 'this' or 'that'"

Tarsh Ernalda saying

The role of women within the original Alakoringite society of Tarsh was already strong, even before the arrival of the empire. The presence of Maran and other Dark Earth goddesses meant that their mythic role was rather more than just to be the passive and nurturing side to man's active, creative Orlanth ways. Their role and opportunities have only increased, though, and now there are female units within the army and women involved in every aspect of daily life and governance. This does not mean that traditional attitudes and prejudices have disappeared, though - just that women have greater opportunities to challenge them.

importance of the lunars, as well as new opportunities for skilled work, has brought growing status for Valley women. Female managers of slave-farms, traders and even officials are increasingly common.

Tarshite Keywords

Mark Galeotti & Simon Bray

Cultural Keywords

Tarsh Man

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (*fyrd* combat or Axe & Shield); Farming; Running

Mental Abilities: Tarsh Geography¹; Alakoring Custom²; Alakoring Myths²; Know Local Area

¹ Can be used as Dragon Pass Geography, but with a -3 improvisational penalty.

² Can be used as Heortling Custom or Myths with a -3 penalty

Relationship: To Family; To Tribe; Worship Tarshite Pantheon (see page 17).

Magic: All men initiate or devote to a suitable god.

Tarsh Woman

Physical Abilities: Housework; Spinning & Weaving

Mental Abilities: Tarsh Geography¹; Alakoring Custom²; Alakoring Myths²; Know Local Area

Relationship: To Family; To Tribe; Worship Tarshite Pantheon (see page 17).

Magic: All women initiate or devote to a suitable deity.

Occupational Keywords

The keywords from *Thunder Rebels* and *Storm Tribe* are appropriate for use in Tarsh, albeit different gods may be worshipped - see page 18. Relationships to clan will generally instead be to village or tribe (the latter for weaponthanes, who are known as huscarls in Tarsh). Also, the basic Close Combat technique for Tarshite warriors is Axe & Shield, while Ranged Combat (Throwing Axe) may replace Ranged Combat (Javelin).

In the cities and the more lunarised valley tribes, the following Lunar occupations may also be chosen: Petty Nobleman, Scholar, Trader and Missionary. New occupation keywords include Slave, Gladiator, Entrepreneur and Tarsh Soldier:

Slave

Thralls are temporarily taken into servitude and will generally have the skills and qualities of their original occupation. However, the influence of the empire has ensured the spread of a separate class of slaves, quite possibly born and bred to serve, represented by this keyword.

Physical Abilities: Carry Heavy Burden, Perform Menial Tasks, Be Unobtrusive, Go Without Food, [Special*]

Mental Abilities: Flatter Owner, Look Busy, [Special*]

Personality: Hard Working, Servile, Patient, Loyalty to Master.

Relationship: To Master, To Other Slaves.

Magic: Masters may allow slaves to worship their own original deities or may force them to worship their gods and goddesses. More typically, the slave worships a deity appropriate to his skills. Slaves do not usually have the time or commitment to become Devotees.

Living Standards: Usually Poor or Common, although some slaves live as richly as their masters, while others live in abject squalor. Many slaves have a 'nest egg' put away with which to eventually purchase their freedom.

Equipment: Clothes as chosen by the slave's master, could be anything from rags to fine robes. Tools to perform profession, pallet bed within master's house. Food and drink as provided by their master.

*Slaves may have two additional professional skills, these may be either physical, mental or one of each. These skills are used by the slave to slowly buy their freedom and by their masters to earn wealth.

Sample Slave 'Professions'

King's Road Labourer *Physical Skills:* Work in all weathers, Work hard.

Furthest Slave Scribe *Mental Skills:* Beautifully Write (language), Remember Message.

Slave Farmer *Physical Skill:* Work in all weathers; *Mental Skill:* Farming.

Slave Crafter *Physical Skill:* (Craft); *Mental Skill:* Find Necessary Supplies.

Oslir Galley Slave *Physical Skills:* Pull on Oar, Avoid lash.

Gladiator

Not for you the specialised fighting styles and exotic opponents of Glamour or the arenas of other imperial metropolia. While gladiatorial combat has become popular in Tarsh, not least because it draws on the traditions of combat-sacrifices to the Dark Earth goddesses, it is still a relatively simple art. You are a pit fighter rather than a combat entertainer, perhaps a foreigner, captive or debt-slave, for whom survival and freedom depend on guts, strength and skill. Do well, and



you can become free and rich, a bodyguard, trainer or pampered trophy. Do badly and you die, unmourned and unremembered.

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (preferred style or weapon), Keep on Fighting

Mental Abilities: Identify Foe's Weaknesses, Play to the Crowd

Personality: Fierce, Determined

Relationship: None generally

Magic: Most gladiators seek any edge they can, and may initiate to a suitable deity. Ring-masters gladly support this, as it leads to more exciting combats.

Living Standards: Usually Poor, although successful gladiators receive gifts from their ring-masters and admirers, with which some manage eventually to buy their freedom.

Equipment: Weapons and armour.

Entrepreneur

Tarsh is going through an economic boom, bringing all sorts of new opportunities. Not for you the market trading and caravans of the merchants, you deal in schemes and scams, government contracts and high-risk, high-return ventures. Maybe you are a property developer, knocking up cheap and dangerous tallhouses for the Furthest poor, maybe a loanshark - sorry, banker - and maybe a dealer in maize futures. Don't worry about the details, though: tomorrow you'll be doing something else.

Physical Abilities: None

Mental Abilities: Reach Understanding with Official, Impenetrable

Accounts, Lie, Fawn

Ingratiatingly, Spread Gossip

Personality: Greedy, Thick-Skinned, Imaginative

Relationship: None, usually, although there could be some To Patron or To Family.

Magic: Could be Etyries or Harst, but will often be some local ancestor or daimone. Entrepreneurs rarely have the time or motivation to be devotees.

Living Standards: The default level is Common, although it could be anywhere from Poor to Very Rich.

Equipment: Flashy clothes, a burly 'assistant'.



Tarsh Soldier

Tarsh is a militaristic country with a proud tradition in war. As well as clan warriors, there are many soldiers in the Army of Tarsh. These are not simply clan or tribal warriors, in the Orlanthe tradition, but disciplined professionals. There are many kinds of units in the Army of Tarsh, from women warriors to elite heavy cavalry (see page 21). Overall, though, there are three main types of unit:

Heavy Foot: Huscarls generally fight in shieldwall formation with axes, wearing long shirts of bronze mail.

Light Foot: Essentially *fyrd* and Shieldwall Regiment units, they are only lightly armoured and many soldiers will carry throwing axes or javelins for skirmishing.

Horse: Medium cavalry, with light mail shirts, who throw javelins in the attack and then follow home their charge with axe and spear.

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (appropriate style), Bear Loads, Make Camp, Scan Terrain. For Heavy Foot also Run in Armour, Hold Shieldwall. For Light Foot, also Ranged Combat (throwing axe or javelin) and Dodge Attack. For Horse, also Mounted Combat and Ride.

Mental Abilities: Army Regulations, Scrounge, Swear, Unit Traditions (officers get Give Orders and Unit Tactics instead of Scrounge)

Personality: Brave, Loyal

Relationship: To Unit, To Commander.

Magic: Most Tarshite soldiers are initiated to both the regimental *wyter* and a soldier's god.

Living Standards: Common.

Equipment: Usually provided by the unit.

People of Tarsh

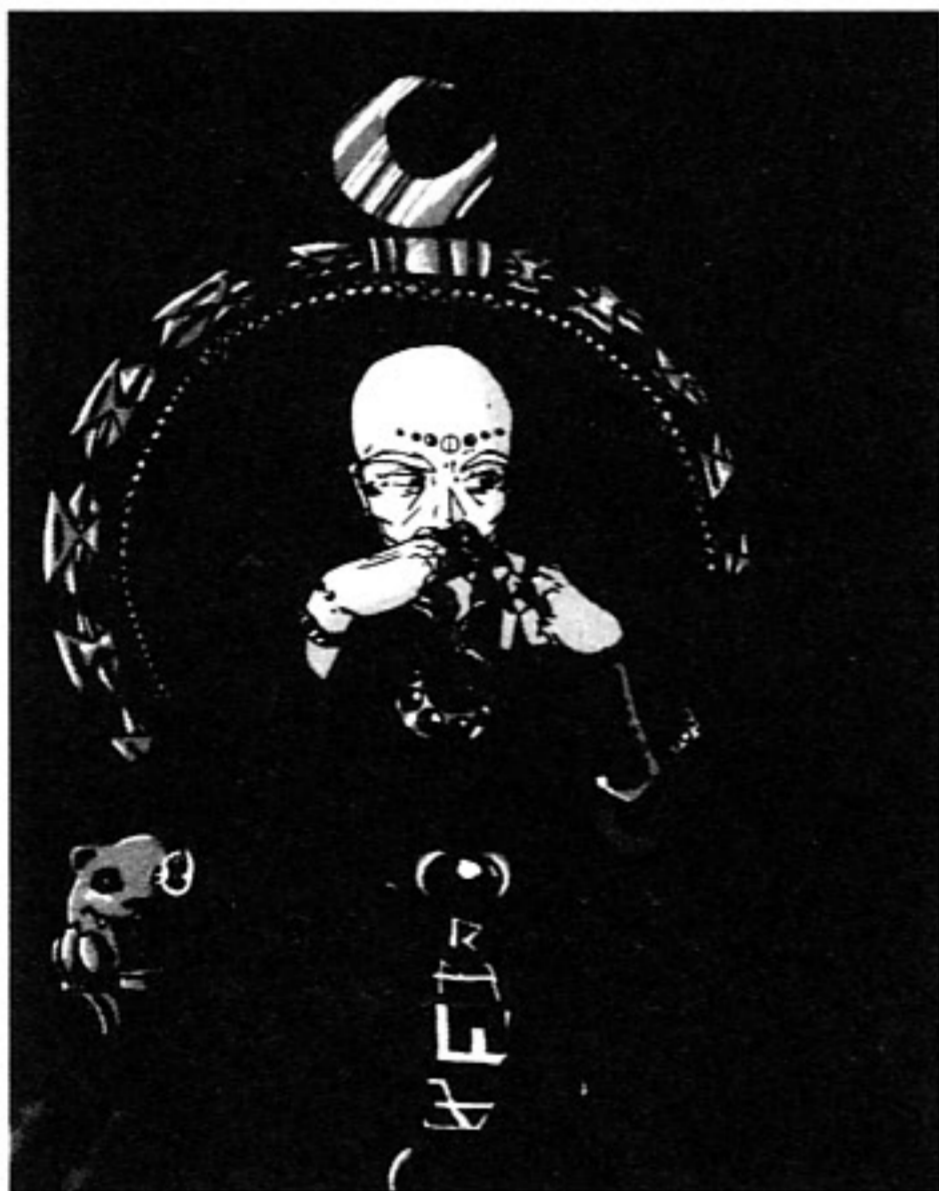
Movers and Shakers of Tarsh

Peter Metcalfe

Moirades

King of Tarsh

Philosopher King 15w3, Heroquester 10w3, Long-Term Planner 5w2, Insane or Illuminated 10w2



Moirades lives, despite the reports of his death in 1610. Yet he is no longer interested in the day-to-day rule of Tarsh, which he has entrusted to the Royal Council, headed by his son, Pharandros. Instead, the king plans a mighty spell to transform all of Tarsh, while powerful men manoeuvre for power in this, the richest and, some would say, most pivotal of all the empire's provinces...

Almost killed by a crippling transformation in 1610, Moirades seldom emerges from his luxurious palace these days. Yet he is no invalid for the experience has deepened his comprehension of the Lunar Mysteries beyond mortal limits. Moirades allows his son, mere student that he is, to dabble in petty politics in his name while he concentrates his energies on a vast spell to transform Tarsh.

Fortunes have already been spent to prepare the spell and many more are required for its completion. He plans to build seven sprawling palaces, to drench the land with massive lunar energies. Such is their magnitude that a rash of disappearances, atrocities, chaotic transformations and other disturbing events are likely to plague the lands nearest to the temples. Moirades knows that such ripples are nothing compared to what Tarsh will become.

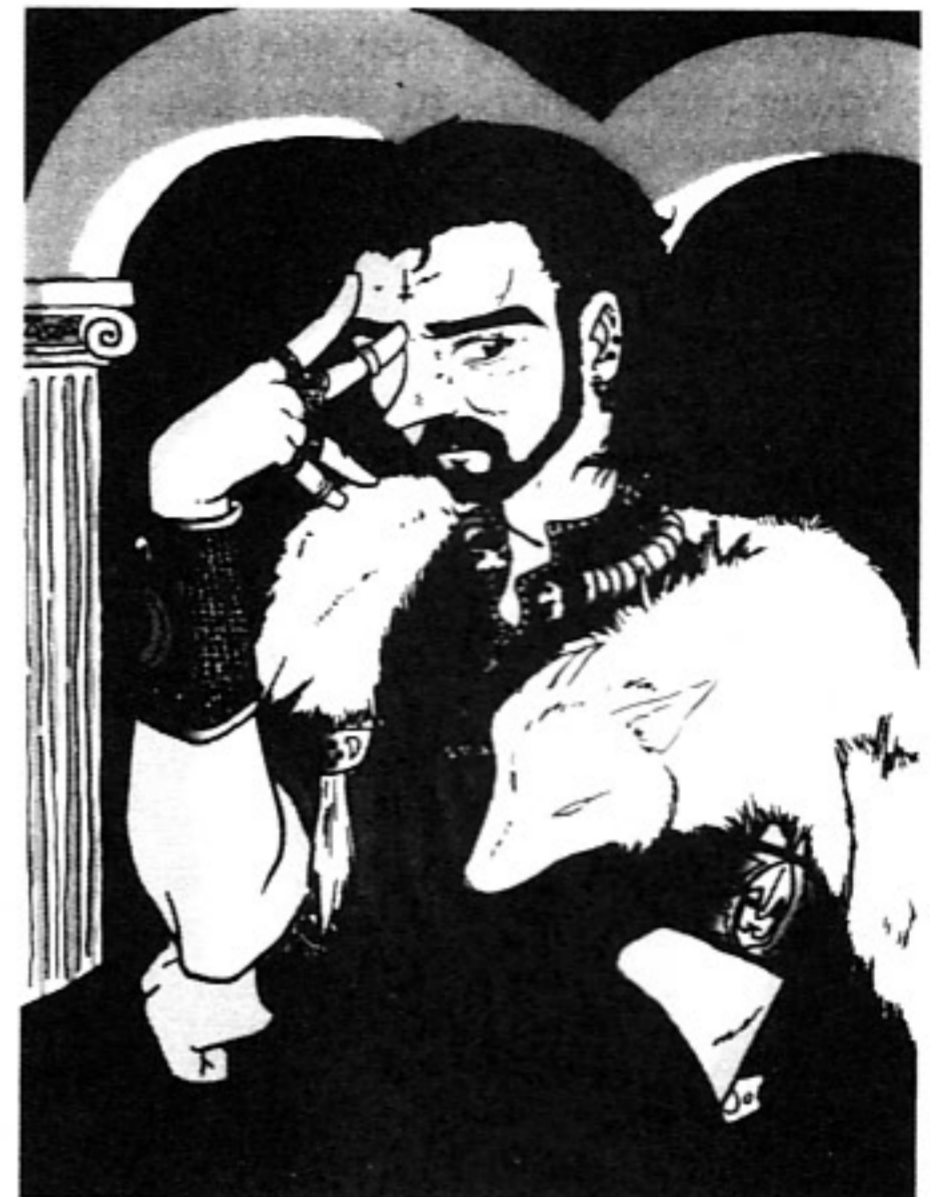
After laying the groundwork for the spell, Moirades has begun to prepare Tarsh for the change. The first sign of this was the *Khorz* decree that mandated Dara Happan titles for all officials. Moirades was no longer King but the Radiant *Khorz* of Tarsh. Despite the outrageous insult to Tarshite liberties, both traditionalist and lunar, the spell's momentum was such that only a few hundreds lost their lives in the ineffectual uprisings that followed. Pleased at the result, Moirades plans further decrees.

Pharandros

Prince-Regent of Tarsh

Competent Administrator 5w2, Initiate of Yelmgatha 5w, Lunarised 15w, Worry 10w

Once a dashing student at the University of Glamour, who even heroquested to win initiation to Yelmgatha, Pharandros became the uncrowned king of the Firstbloods when Moirades fell ill. He



decided not to depose his father then but bitterly regrets that decision now as he contemplates the spell that his father works. What worries him is not what has already been done but what Moirades intends the spell to do. The few audiences he has had with his father have disturbed him greatly – if the Provincial Overseer or Tatius the Bright even heard a word about them, then the Empire would descend upon Tarsh in such a way to make the conquest of Sartar look tame in comparison.

Elsewhere on the personal front, he sees little for comfort. Sick of being ignored by Moirades, his mother has taken up residence with an uncouth Sartarite pretender. Pharandros cannot quite bring himself to ask her about the rumour that she picks the lice from the pretender's hair. Once proud to be brother-in-law to the Great Fazzur, now the relationship causes him nothing but embarrassment as his dishonourable conduct has been unmasked. Even worse, Fazzur refuses to acknowledge that his deeds were shameful and accuses Pharandros of treachery against his kin.

Buffeted by his family affairs, Pharandros has taken to burying himself in the affairs of state. But for every woe that Pharandros lightens, the misdeeds of his kin threaten to unleash ten more. The antics of his mother scandalise many in Tarsh and undermine his authority. Spiteful Fazzur threatens a coup to avenge himself upon all those that wrongs him yet his tainted stature is still so great that Pharandros cannot have him imprisoned. Lastly his father's spell threatens to cast down every gain that Pharandros has made. Civil war was only narrowly averted when Pharandros decided that the *Khorz* Decree shall only apply to official documents and not to speech and letters. But how is he to conceal seven great new temples and the consequent inrush of chaos? Sooner or later, Pharandros fears that the dam will burst and a sea of calamities flood the kingdom.



Mutius Thrax

Royal Marshal

Field Commander 20, Administrator 1w3, Initiate of Starkval 20w, Well-Connected 20w

Best known for his futile invasion of the Stinking Forest, immortalised by the Furthest Dramatic Re-enactors as 'The Phantom Pig-Hunt', Mutius has owed his rank more to his administrative talent and his standing in the powerful Thrax family rather than any ability in the field.

When Tatius denounced Fazzur for his misconduct during Starbrow's revolt, Mutius agreed that Fazzur's

conduct was wanting. Not wishing a rift between Tarsh and the Empire (in which Tarsh will only be the loser), Mutius had the unenviable task of convincing Pharandros that Fazzur had to retire. But the naive Prince-Regent had to make Fazzur General of Tarsh, intending that he be allowed to command the Tarshite Army in the field.

Predictably, Fazzur has abused his position to cultivate support among hot-headed junior officers, corrupting them with extravagant promises of loot and glory. Mutius has been busy checking this subversion by various means – applying pressure on many to sever their links with Fazzur, transferring unreliable officers elsewhere and convening sessions of the Court of Honour to punish obstinate troublemakers. But so long as Fazzur remains free – the Prince-Regent cannot bear to have him arrested – Mutius fears civil war.

Fazzur Wideread

General of Tarsh

Field Commander 1w4, Understand Foe 5w3, Charismatic Leader 5w3, Devotee of Yanafal Tarnils 20w2, Resentful 5w

A famous general now twice-disgraced, Fazzur now broods on his estates. Being disgraced is nothing for Fazzur for he knows that both were motivated by spite. The first disgrace when the pygmy SorEel, resentful at being made to look a fool during the invasion of Pavis, use the opportunity of Moirades' stroke to dismiss him from the army. But Fazzur came back and went on to crush Starbrow's revolt and invade Heortland. He also became SorEel's superior and amused himself by politely declining SorEel's repeated requests for a transfer from Pavis.

The second disgrace occurred when Fazzur was made the scapegoat for the setbacks that occurred during the invasion of Heortland. Everybody knows these charges are false and that the real reason was that Tatius the Bright could not tolerate Fazzur having succeeded where Tatius's cousin, Euglyptus, had so miserably failed. Euglyptus was so incompetent he even had to be shown how to die. Tatius however had the Emperor's ear (through seducing his cupbearers) and so managed to create numerous obstacles for the invasion of Heortland. When these came to



light, Tatius blamed on Fazzur and so had him dismissed.

What hurts Fazzur more than any disgrace is that the Tarshite Court no longer supports him. Moirades is an addled fool, blithering about liberation (whatever that is), but Pharandros, his own brother-in-law, could have at least prevented Tatius's intrigues. When Fazzur returned to Tarsh, Pharandros greeted him with a great deal of ceremony and honoured him with the rank of General of Tarsh. Fazzur now feels nothing but loathing for the spineless wretch.

Despite his disfavour, Fazzur is not alone. Many young officers still adore him and mutter darkly about the shameful treatment of so great a Tarshite. Fazzur has cautioned them against hasty action by noting that his greatest victories were gained by striking when the time was right. He watches from his estate, looking for a mistake by either Tatius or Pharandros. When that happens, he will strike...

Anders Olevson

Royal Dishthane

Canny Trader 20w, Initiate of Garzeen 1w2, Manage Money 5w2, Rich 10w2, Honest 10w, Follower of Jernotian Way (Support Balance) 20w

When Pharandros needed a man of unimpeachable honesty to track the expenses of the Seven Palaces, he looked no further than Anders Olevson. Anders, a wealthy merchant, had previously amazed the people of Bagnot by his persistent refusal to offer or accept bribes. Although he performed his



his control over the firefighters and the nightwatchers. He is fantastically rich and mocked by the Dramatic Re-enactors as the Lord who collects one finger in ten from his peasants.

Despite this avarice for both wealth and power, Bolin is popular for he sponsors the sacral bullfights. As a patron of Bisos, Bolin has imported an archaic Pelandan ritual to Furthest. Crowds, jaded by the spectacle of lions and Orlanthe, have been impressed by the elaborate acrobatics of the blue-painted bullfighters and the risks they take. They are awed when the combat is over and the bull rises from the dead to slay the fighter with a swift cut. If the bullfighter has fought well, the Bolin gives the thumbs up sign for him to be

resurrected. If not, then Bolin gives the middle finger sign.

task with his customary diligence. Anders impressed the council with numerous suggestions of how the expenses could be reduced without offending the King. When the position of Dishthane fell absent, even the King had no problem in accepting Anders.

Council politics since then has been complicated by Ander's philosophy. The quaint lunar doctrines that make him incorruptible also lead him to believe that the dominance of any one faction is an error to be avoided. Thus he switches sides on the issue of Fazzur, the King's Spell, Furthest versus the Lesser Cities, depending on the strengths of the factions. His weathervane vote has aroused considerable resentment at the council at times, but he always provides clear and cogent reasons why he is voting as he does and not as he did the last time. So long as the balance is maintained, Anders hopes that Tarsh will weather the coming storms.

Bolin Bullroarer

Tonsrrieve of Furthest

Administrator 10w, Initiate of Harst 10w, Initiate of Bisos 10w, Rich 10w3, Greedy 15w

Bolin became Tonsrrieve after the remaining competitors in the last Dart Competition were too weak to survive another round. No dart competitions have been needed since then for Bolin's supremacy within Furthest is unchallenged due



Because of Furthest's pre-eminence in Tarsh, Bolin works closely with the Royal Council. Knowing that a thriving Furthest is best for him, he advocates policies to that end. He frets occasionally about the looming crises on the horizon: Moirades' spell and Fazzur's discontent.

Jarsandron Tenherds Grazer King

David Dunham

Jarsandron Tenherds became Luminous Stallion King of the Grazers in 1606 after Endarsdron the Black was killed by unknown assassins. He realised that the balance of power in Dragon Pass had tilted towards Tarsh and their Lunar allies. One of his first actions as king was to patch up relations with Moirades, who had been humbled by Endarsdron's campaign of night time attacks. This paid off in 1610 when Grazer mercenaries were part of the Lunar army which conquered Pavis, settling an old score.

Pharandros became Regent shortly afterwards, and Jarsandron sought to continue the friendship with Tarsh. He mostly ignored the Grazers, and refused to hire them to help put down Starbrow's Rebellion in 1613.

The following year, Jarsandron led a raid into Sartar, not realising that some of the clans he attacked had switched their allegiance to Tarsh. Pharandros was furious, and demanded reparations. In exchange for this insult, the Grazers raided Tarsh, and Tarsh counter-raided (suffering an embarrassing defeat).

The next year, Pharandros sent a massive army into the Grazelands. Jarsandron called on the ancient alliance with Ironhoof, and made several quick raids against the army. He stationed beastfolk to defend the vendref, then lured Pharandros back and forth across the Grazelands, occasionally skirmishing but never engaging in battle.

Jarsandron attacked Tarshite foraging parties, and captured a supply caravan. At the end of Fire season, Pharandros returned to Tarsh, contenting himself with razing a few vendref settlements.

The invasion had been costly to both sides, so Jarsandron sent emissaries to Fazzur, offering an annual tribute. He satisfied his own nobles by insisting that the Lunars hire Grazer mercenaries. Fazzur agreed to this, and helped reconcile Pharandros and Jarsandron.

People of Tarsh

**"We shall have
tribes, and none
shall sunder them."**

**-- Arim the Pauper,
on founding his
kingdom**

The Tribes of Tarsh

Mark Galeotti

The tribe is the basic administrative unit of Tarsh, but these are rather different from their Sartari counterparts. For a start, they are larger. Tarsh has a total population of 360,000, double that of Sartar. However, while Sartar has 24 tribes, Tarsh has but 20, mostly reflecting those original tribes which followed Arim into the region. Before the coming of the empire, each Sartari tribe was essentially an autonomous kingdom.

Tribal Chiefs

Tribal chiefs in Tarsh are appointed by the King, an increasingly vexed issue as lunar citizens and royal favourites supplant popular local blood-lines. To a considerable degree, after all, the King is trying to use his powers of appointment and taxation to impose a more Dara Happan model of central rule over a kingdom still with strong tribal power structures. A useful informal guideline about loyalties is whether a tribal ruler continues to use the traditional but technically illegal term 'tribal king', calls himself the approved title of 'armsman' or sticks with the neutral 'chief'.

Most tribal chiefs treat their lands as personal fiefdoms. However, this is still an Orlanthe society, even without Orlanthe, full of bloody-minded armed individualists. A wise chief knows not to push too far, and wise appointees generally come either from within a tribe or are figures with enough prestige that a tribe feels honoured rather than slighted by being 'given' him. Armsmen vary widely, from lunarised Furthest yes-men like Andersven of the Tremarki to charismatic local strongmen like Vokornos Staghead of the Mellmuri, appointed for the simple reason that previous, more loyal but weaker candidates, all mysteriously died in office.

The Clans

Beneath the tribes, though, the clans are much less important: families and villages are the key social building blocks. Each clan has a chief and a ring. The ring is larger than those usual in Sartar, with 13 members. This is a traditional Alakoringite practice, to dilute the power of the priests. The chief's role is generally in decline, though. Arguably more powerful is the shrieve, a representative of the tribal chief, who administers justice and collects taxes within the clan tula in his name. Thus, a clan chief often has little more than a ceremonial role, as front-man of the family heads. He does not even personally command the tribal militia: that falls to the Constable, another appointee of the armsman, albeit from the clan's warriors.

The clan chief is technically subordinate to the tribal chief, not the shrieve. However, in practice the shrieve tends to speak with the armsman's voice. There is still a balance to be struck, though. A powerful clan chief may dominate the shrieve, while the shrieve, usually not being local to the area, needs the knowledge and authority of the clan chief to do his job.

Towns and Villages

The population is also unusually urbanised, with around a fifth of the total living in cities: Furthest itself has a population of 20,000 or more, the other 10 towns generally between 2,000 and 5,000. Cities and towns are considered as clans in their own rights, run by an appointed tonsrrieve, advised by his own City Ring.

Villages are governed by a ring of Elders. Day-to-day decisions, from when to sow the seed to the sort of customary law cases generally resolved within and between families, is handled by families or the Village Ring. The village has its own fyrd, although in the valleys this is increasingly becoming known as the militia, and in some cases paid warriors are replacing the traditional muster, especially as unarmed slaves take over tilling the fields in place of armed cottars.



The Tribes

Tarsh has 20 tribes, with 3 additional administrative units regarded as equivalent, which are starred in the following list. At the end of each tribe are listed all its component clans.

Angardos

Founded by the shaman Gardar Noisy Silence, this tribe's lands are unusually rich in spirits (did Gardar cause this or is this why he chose the region?). The Fallen Hills are still a sacred place for Maran Gori, who dominate the Fallen Hills and Wasted Earth clans. The tribal chief rules from Gardint. [Arealosi, Back Wardens, Deepvale, Echo Hollow, Fallen Hills, Gardini, Istripi, Kalenning, Morven, Old Hush, Wasted Earth]

Barastaros

Despite its traditional name, this is essentially a reinvented tribe, largely made up of colonists from Holey and Aggar settled around Copper Town, following the expulsion of the original Barastarosi from the Tremarki. [Autumn, Barastari, Copper Town, Quintal, Merearning]

Breagalos

An ancient tribe, conquered by the moon-hating Mitchuinn tribe in the 1340s but subsequently restored as the Mitchuinn's fortunes waned and they fled, to become a clan of the Exiles. The Breagalosi are thus almost comically touchy about their history and reputation, and most adults can recite their family tree for fifty generations. [Culthos, Drayvan, Ereaning, Igarni, Ologolosi, Prand, Proud Spear]

Blackwater

Founded by one of Arim's followers who, delayed by illness, then made an agreement with the spirit of the Black Eel River, which agreed to rush his southwards to catch up with his leader in return for annual propitiation. The Blackwater Tribe still have great annual rituals, the wealth of Tarsh allowing them to become increasingly extravagant, with golden icons thrown into the river and floating lanterns turning it into a ribbon of light at night. [Borning, Eel Valley, Five Axe, Kalling, Northbank, Riversighting, Southbank]

Carafandoli

The northernmost tribe, ruled from Tarshford. Expeditions from the tribe increasingly frequently raid Balazar for captives for the growing number of slave farms across northern Tarsh, and Tarshford itself now has a sophisticated slave market, now even dealing in 'futures' as new expeditions set forth. [Caraf's Axe, Caraf's Helm, Daranning, East Hill, Fordings, Kolo's Forest, Mareandoli, Paltop, Riverfork]

Enkili

Famed warriors of north-eastern Tarsh, whose woodland and hillside villages in the Rockwoods often bear the brunt of troll and bandit raids, although they also trade much with the uz. Their culture has a heavy Sairdic influence, including the use of dogs for war and hunting. [Blacktooth, Hillside, Open Door, Redtooth, Stormhound, Strongwall, Windwalker]



Firstbloods

The royal house. When Illaro Blacktooth of the Hendarli was chosen as king in 1455, he also became head of Arim's Firstblood tribe of south-eastern Tarsh. Technically, the territory currently controlled by the tribe is only part of the lands it claims, as it still formally asserts its right to most of Arim's original 'Secret Kingdom', including the whole Arimland Valley, which now stretches into the disputed Shakelands. As rule descended through his bloodline, the tribal and national crowns became regarded as one and the same. Today, the King is King of Tarsh and also Uncrowned King of the Firstbloods (among his many titles) – a proxy, known as the Vassal of the Wyvern (after the

crown's emblem), acts as tribal chief under the King. Bagnot is the effective capital for day-to-day tribal life, with distant Furthest being the national capital, under the King's Tonsrieve. [Aramtor, Bagnoting, Bloodling, Clawfoot, Durening, Furthest, Hafthaven, Haltering, Ingafni, North Valley, Orindori, Six Hills, Torparni]

Geroini

The front line Tarshite tribe (which includes the Berelenos and Tortari, two conquered clans once of the Kerofini), and a study in contradictions. On the one hand, worship of the Dark Earth cults and even Orlanth is strong, on the other hand, the King has worked hard to pacify them, granting tax concessions and settling retired soldiers here. This is therefore a wealthy but volatile tribe, and the fragile health of the present chief means that a potentially divisive new appointment is imminent. [Arknoros, Berelenos, Broken Axe, Greenboar, Icerni, Lirun, Nosebiter, Olavi, Tortari, Valaring]

Hardhill

Until the creation of the Yarandrosi 'buffer tribe', the Hardhill villages of Sikithi Vale often suffered the brunt of Grazer raids, and their people still have a reputation for taciturn endurance. The term a 'hardhill shieldwall' is widely used in Tarshite speech for an immovable obstacle. The area immediately around the dragonewt city known as Stones Above Souls is avoided, and is heavily inhabited by wyverns. [Aulding, Backstop, Blackstead, Porryd, Erendili, Odrindar, Lockshield, Vesturgarings, Vrandil]

Hengkisi

The Enkili claim that this tribe was an off-shoot which migrated because it could not cope with the rigours of life near the Rockwoods. The Hengkisi, by contrast, claim to have been founded by the hero Hengkot Kings-Bane, a Heortish

settler. Either way, this is one of the more divided and fractious of the tribes, split four ways. The Flatlanders are a pro-imperial faction motivated by the opportunities for lucrative trade. The Royalists favour strong central rule from Furthest. The Sons of Hengkot mistrust powerful government and covertly favour Orlanth-worship. The Redeemers seek to prove their individual and tribal strength. At present, Armsman Fendares, a Royalist, is trying to woo both the Flatlanders (with the promise of domestic peace) and the Redeemers (by raising a regiment for war with Sartar). [Alaxi, Cottrick, Golotharing, Latrakaros, Lengkorling, Linkwen, Millstanding, Offwater, Righthander, Satravalosi, Tunset]

***Kerofini**

This is the official term used by the Tarsh government for the Exiles (and a very anodyne one, meaning just 'people of KeroFin'). Furthest officially considers them a Tribe of Tarsh over which it claims notional authority. Try telling the High Priestess of the Earthshakers that. To call them the Kerofini is an official Tarshite affectation, and an offence to the Exiles themselves. The Exiles divide themselves into 4 tribes, the Marantaros, Iristaros, Hendarli and Mitchuinn, even though these are more the size of Tarshite clans, and indeed are referred to as 'clans of the Kerofini Tribe' by Furthest.

Kordrosi

The dominant tribe of the fertile Kordos Island, which also dominates Dunstop. The island has an unusual number of magical sites and local cults, from Duelfield and Marof's House, to the EWF-era Bent Spire, just outside Dunstop. Of the EWF settlement Kordros City, at the northernmost end of the island, little is left, although tales talk of strange forms appearing on days of portent. [Cerunni, Chai's Rapids,

Dunstoping, Greygoose,
Marofing, North Island,
Strongarm]

Markstor

Their lands are west of Goldedge, and include Grizzly Peak, still haunted by the angry spirits of the Exile army smashed there. This may explain their reputation for melancholy and pessimism. [Craftwell, Dagameting, Domborosi, Ebwilli, Either Wall, Haraliding, Potharanti, Shortarse, Tower-leaping, Tremethi, Weagolosi]

Mellmuri

Slave-takers and -traders, mistrusted by many and regarded as little more than bandits. But they hold Slavewall and are strong and wealthy. Much of their land is technically outside the formal territory of the Kingdom of Tarsh (and definitely beyond the Glowline), but this is largely ignored by the Mellmuri and Furthest alike. [Black Eels, First In, Gopi, Marandatholi, Slavewall, Voivarnil]

Norokoffi

Once a tribe of south-eastern Tarsh, the Norokoffi were driven north by rival tribes and since then have worked through guile and trade more than force of arms. Now dominated by the dynamic traders of Talfort, this tribe is under pressure. The Talforti have become too powerful too quickly. Only the Delboyi merchants can match their wiles, and although the tribe as a whole is wealthy, the conspicuous consumption of the city folk has begun to generate a backlash among the other clans, and even a covert revival of Orlanthi traditions. [Delboyi, Falulfing, Mitre, Monocorunni, New Mantle, Norlov, Peacewarden, Rurovi, Talforti, Wideriver]

Osoforontosi

Known as the 'Womens' Tribe', given their long tradition of tribal queens, this tribe is now

in competition with the neighbouring Pomini for control of Goldedge. Ossoforontosi and Pomini thanes alike are pouring much of their new wealth into developing the town, to outdo their rivals and show their right to control it, in what is now known as the 'Architects' War.' [Alakiri, Andristing, Blue Hollow, Forontosi, Light-raven, Oca, Ossoring, Thirdwing]



Penthoi

Based around Pennith, this tribe is finding prosperity an uncertain blessing, as the wealth from its fields makes even cottars rich, and large slave-farms take over ancestral grazing land. The old social order is unsettled, and not only are lunar and other foreign faiths finding new adherents, as are all sorts of other cults and movements, some bizarre but harmless, others dark and dangerous. No one has still managed to discover the reason for the madness which gripped many of the elders of the Nimindings a few seasons back and led them to burn down the clan hall, with themselves in it, while they sang hymns in some inhuman yet unknown tongue. [Big Wheel, Dunduki, Ferrathiri, Goldfield, Niminding, Pennithi, Seven Ox, Vokari]

Pomini

Once a powerful warrior tribe, who displaced the Norokoffi, the Pomini have settled down to a life of more comfort than combat. The Ossoforontosi's rivals for control of Goldedge: they may be a little less wealthy than their opponents, but they appear to be the more imaginative. This is also reflected in their artistic talents, ranging from the high drama of Pomini market traders to the

low harmonies of the tribal warhorns, each carved from a single mammoth tusk. [Altsuri, Aransholme, Ingov, Knifered, Parvaring, Potkettle, Trakoti]

***Sun Tribe**

This is essentially an administrative unit for the Tarsh Sun Dome Temples, Ever-New Glory. It includes the members of the temple and their followers, who farm the temple lands.

***Temple Lands**

The environs of the Temple of the Reaching Moon are officially a diocese of the Provincial Church, although in practice the main authority there is the Imperial army and the zealous warrior-priests of the Reachite Regiment.

Tremarki

Arguably the least active tribe, content to see slave-farms multiply in its lands. The high spirits of its young men tend to be channelled into occasional cattle raids into Holay. [Bangori, Barulkini, Bromading, Capacotti, Firelighter, Nurvenning, South-point, Terulkini, Ulkini]

Uitaros

This eastern tribe is scattered across the woods in the foothills of the Hydra Mountains. Most Tarshites have forgotten its proud past as one of the main tribes which settled the region and instead dwell on its unsavoury reputation for banditry, in-breeding and backwardness. Indeed, the stupid-Uitaros-who-thinks-he's-cunning and the Uitaros-who-worships-a-demon-in-his-barn are staple figures of Tarshite humour and storytelling. Sadly, most Uitarosi seem to have forgotten this past, too, although the fiery young Downland chief, who calls himself Angwill Uitarsson, seems

to be waging a campaign to revive the old stories. Unlike most Tarshite tribes, it largely practices hunting and slash and burn agriculture. [Black Woods, Downland, High Hills, Isuring, Oiroiroi, Tururing]

Yarandrosi

Descendants of the Grazer Vendref who joined Tarsh during the reign of King Yarandros, now assimilated and settled in southern Sikithi Vale. They are used to Grazer attacks, which have assumed the status of ancient feud, hence the high palisades around their villages and their strong fyrds (as well as a number of warriors devoted to Yara Aranis, Horse-Eater). They also nurse dreams of seizing the Grazer town of North Post, and one clan has pledged itself to this mission, changing its name and beginning to restructure itself as a war clan. However, they also retain some traditions of their Grazer past, including the worship of Kanestal Onehand. They are technically vassals of the King of Tarsh rather than Tarshite citizens, but the King graciously extends to them the same rights and duties as any other citizen. [Breakers, Copper Ovens, Everloyal, Golden Turret, Horseditch, Never Slave, North Post, Our Home, Redwall, Royal Gift]



Gods of Tarsh

Mark Galeotti

It was Storm Home, but not as I had known it. I knew at once that it was different, strange, uncanny, but it took me a moment to realise quite what was wrong. The winds. The winds that rushed about the Storm Realm, exuberant and untamed, sometimes cutting, sometimes uplifting, but never still. Winds there still were, but these were but feeble imitations, gentle gusts which played with my cloak, when Orlanth's breath would have torn it from my back or turned it into a very windsock. Perturbed, I quickened my pace and began to see subtle differences. The Thunder Barracks were still there, but many of the banners above them were unfamiliar to me, and many of those I had expected to see were absent. Barntar's Sead was larger and finer than I remembered. Quite why I found that even more disturbing, I did not know, but I pressed on, only belatedly realising that alongside the fields of golden grain and mellow barley was a crop I had never expected to see here. Amidst the rich red maize of this seventh field was a dully-glowing stone doorway leading to a realm far away. Even from here, I could smell the taint of the Moon!

I ran, as before me Storm Village unfolded as in a dream, a nightmare, at once recognisable and yet different. Heort's Staghall - gone. Victory Hall, now just part of Cloudbreak. Issaries' Marketplace greater than ever, but alongside the Trading Man was a young woman, with guile in her face and the mark of Shepelkirt on her hood. Heart in my mouth, I skidded to a stop before Karulinoran and pushed through the great doors.

Orlanth's Great Hall was empty. No mead flowed from Minlister's Pot. No warriors thronged the benches and tables. No songs and boasts filled the air. Instead, a sullen and musty breeze stirred the dust, and cobwebs hung heavy from the rafters. No, it was not empty, not quite. As I squinted through the gloom, I saw a number of faces I recognised or half-knew.

The first was a burly warrior, axe on his mailed shoulder. I did not recognise his tattoos, but greeted him as one of Orlanth's folk.

'Brother, where is Orlanth?'

'Orlanth is dead', he replied in his guttural Tarshite accent. 'We await another fit to sit upon his throne.'

"Where is Orlanth?"

I recoiled as if struck. Before I could clap hand to sword hilt to refute this sickening lie, he was gone. In his place, another warrior, one whom I knew well.

'Starkval, loyal guardian. Where is Orlanth?'

He turned dull eyes upon me. 'The king is gone. We guard his stead, for the day he returns.'

And he too was gone. I saw a third figure, silhouetted against the dull coals of the faltering hearthfire.

'Ernalda, Great Lady. Please, where is Orlanth?'

She turned to me and straightened, and suddenly the hall that was dark was bright again, and life hummed through the air and the star birds broke into song above.

'He is not here now. But he bides.' Her eyes flicked to the High Seat at the end of the Hall. 'Behind the Ninth Door.'

From the recollections of
Hruflac Potquester

Until a chance encounter with some Tarshite heroquesters sucked Hruflac into their vision of the Storm Realm, he had thought it was immutable. To the people of Tarsh, though, 'Orlanthi without Orlanth', this is a confusing time, a confusion which is mirrored in their faiths. In many ways, they are in a time of transition. The Kings of Tarsh have laboured long with their lunar allies to displace Orlanth. In his place their hope in due course is to make Doburdun, the rather more biddable Darseni Thunder God, Prefect of the Storm Tribe.

Author's Note

This article is an attempt to try and puzzle out how you can have Orlanthi without Orlanth. Although Greg Stafford has been generous with suggestions and information, this is in no way an official answer.

Gods and Goddesses of the Tarshites

	Cities and Valleys	Lowlands	Uplands
Power & Rule	<u>Alakoring</u> (royal/tribal), <u>Dar</u> (tribal/clan/village), <u>Orendana</u>	<u>Alakoring</u> (royal/tribal), <u>Dar</u> (tribal/clan/village), <u>Orendana</u>	<u>Alakoring</u> (royal/tribal), <u>Dar</u> (tribal/clan/village), <u>Orendana</u>
Fertility	Esra, Orane, Pelora, Suchara, Usara, HonEel	Esra, Orane, Overdruva, Pelora, Suchara, Usara, HonEel	Esra, Orane, Overdruva, Pelora, Suchara, Usara
Farming & Animals	<u>Barntar</u> , Durev, Voriof, Heler, Orane, Entra, Nevala, Isbarn, Uralda, Redalda, Lodril, HonEel Cornwoman	<u>Barntar</u> , Durev, Voriof, Heler, Orane, Uralda, Entra, Nevala, Isbarn, Redalda, HonEel Cornwoman	<u>Durev</u> , Barntar, Voriof, Orlanthcarl, Heler, Orane, Overdruva, Entra, Nevala, Isbarn, Redalda
Home & Family	<u>Durev</u> , Barntar, <u>Orane</u> , Esra, Mahome, Eninta, Vela, Nandan	<u>Durev</u> , Barntar, <u>Orane</u> , Esra, Mahome, Eninta, Vela, Enferalda, Nandan	<u>Durev</u> , Barntar, <u>Orane</u> , Esra, Mahome, Eninta, Vela, Enferalda
Warfare	<u>Starkval</u> , Yavor, Yelmalio, Humakt, Heler, Maran Gor, Vinga, Yanafal Tarnils	<u>Starkval</u> , Destor, Yavor, Elmal, Humakt, Heler, Maran Gor, Babeester Gor, Vinga, Yanafal Tarnils	<u>Starkval</u> , <u>Destor</u> , Yavor, Elmal, Humakt, Heler, Maran Gor, Babeester Gor, Vinga
Crafts	<u>Orstan</u> , Durev, Gustbran, Minlister, Lodril, <u>Pella</u> , Orane	<u>Orstan</u> , Durev, Gustbran, <u>Pella</u> , Orane	<u>Orstan</u> , Durev, Gustbran, <u>Pella</u> , Orane
Knowledge & Lawspeaking Trade	<u>Lhankor Mhy</u> , Andrin, Kev, Irippi Ontor Etyries, <u>Issaries</u> , Harst, Asrella, Uleria	Lhankor Mhy, <u>Andrin</u> , Kev Etyries, <u>Issaries</u> , Harst, Asrella	Lhankor Mhy, <u>Andrin</u> , Kev <u>Issaries</u> , Harst, Asrella
Hunting	<u>Odayla</u> , Yinkin, Jajagappa, Kenstrata, Orogeria	<u>Odayla</u> , Ormalaya, Yinkin	<u>Odayla</u> , Ormalaya, Yinkin, Destor, Tatouth
Music & Entertainment	<u>Donandar</u> , Drogarsi, Skovara	Donandar, <u>Drogarsi</u> , <u>Skovara</u>	<u>Drogarsi</u> , <u>Skovara</u>
Water & Fishing Healing	Poverri, Oslira Chalana Arroy, Bevara, Jera, Orventill, Vorela, Votenevra, Deezola, Erissa	Poverri Chalana Arroy, Bevara, Jera, Orventill, Vorela, Votenevra, Deezola	Poverri Chalana Arroy, Bevara, Jera, Orventill, Vorela, Votenevra
Spirits & Spirit Traditions	Jakaleel, Serdrodosa, Ty Kora Tek	Serdrodosa, Ty Kora Tek	Kolat, Serdrodosa. Ty Kora Tek
Law & Order	<u>Starkval</u> , Rigsdal, Danfive Xaron, Babeester Gor	Starkval, Elmal, <u>Rigsdal</u> , Babeester Gor	Starkval, Elmal, <u>Rigsdal</u> , Babeester Gor
Crime & Banditry	Desemborth, Destor, Finovan, Gagarth	<u>Desemborth</u> , Finovan, Gagarth	Desemborth, <u>Finovan</u> , Gagarth
Other	Eurmali, Doburdun, Teelo Norri, Rufelza, Niskis, Orvanshagor, Mastakos	Eurmali, Niskis, Mastakos, Orvanshagor	Eurmali, Niskis, Mastakos, Orvanshagor, Vanganth

This chart gives a general sense of the deities worshipped in each region of Tarsh but, as ever, this is only an (85%) 'Orlanthi all.' Deities underlined are the primary ones, most generally worshipped.

Over generations, the apparent defeat of Orlanth, the desecration of his holy places, the persecution of those openly worshipping him, the rewriting of myths and terrible and subtle heroquests, all have done their work. Besides, the peace, stability and wealth of the new order has not only seduced many, it has

also suggests that the new ways are powerful and blessed.

To most Tarshites outside the traditionalist uplands, Orlanth's laws and virtues may still be valid, but he does not rule the Tribe. Is merely absent? Vanquished? Until Orlanth is, as the empire promises, dragged in chains

through Furthest, no one is sure. This is, however, an essentially artificial, transitional phase. If the Storm Realm is to survive, it must have a king. The Hero Wars will see this dilemma resolved one way or the other.



Find A Way for Destor's Movement affinity), then the cultist gains that affinity, but only the feats listed for the subcult. That affinity is 'capped', though – no new feats can be learned for it, and all other feats must be improvised. Thus, the Destori could Find A Way normally, but would have to take an improvisational penalty to Run Up Cliffs.

Ernalda

Ernalda and all the Earth Goddesses are important in Tarsh. Since HonEel's successful intrusion into the Stone Queen Rebirth rites at Heruvernald, the Tarshite Ernalda have accepted the Red Moon's place in the cosmos. Their motto, 'Both, not "this" or "that"' has become

one of the binding creeds of the new, imperial order. Most women initiate to Ernalda. However, all the Earth Goddesses are strong and respected, from Maran to Babeester Gor. Only Erantha Gor, identified with the Exiles, is treated with suspicion.

Other Deities

In part because of the campaign against Orlanth – as well as the cosmopolitan influences of trade and occupation – worship is more varied than amongst Sartari. Barntar has largely eclipsed Orlanthcarl, who is only found worshipped in isolated upland steads. Other Lightbringer deities, from Saird and even Pelanda and Dara Happa will be found, especially in the river valley lands. There are even deities whose worship Sartari would regard as anathema. Especially to the north of the country, for example, where Sairdic traditions are strong, dogs are pets, guards and work-beasts: here are even

To the north, the legends may tell of how Shargash tamed Oslira, but in Tarsh each year sees the Beating of the Oslir, a huge celebration in which heroquesters re-enact the myth of Ersenvoora and Oslira. Ersenvoora, whose unspoken and unconsummated love for Arim is a staple of Tarshite stories, took Oslira to task when she flooded Kordros Island. Once she gifted but Oslira would not relent; twice she begged, but Oslira would not listen; thrice she threatened, but Oslira was defiant. So she took her axe called Eager and her mattock Doughty and challenged the unruly river. Oslira was the mightier, and eventually prevailed, but even her waters could not sweep Ersenvoora from her people. Chastened, Oslira returned Ersenvoora to her people and agreed not to flood Tarsh. But Oslira has a poor memory, and each year she must be reminded. The ritual takes place at a different place each year, gifts are thrown into the river and then heroquesters must fight it. At least one is usually drowned in the process.

The 'Orphan Thunder Brothers'

Tarshites still worship most of the subcults and aspects of Orlanth, albeit as distinct deities rather than aspects of the Storm King. This way, the subcults fill the functional roles necessary for Orlanthi society. Thus, Drogarsi still plays, Durev still herds and Starkval guards them both.

Some subcults are not generally worshipped, either because they are too closely linked with Orlanth (such as Ohorlanth and Orlanthandrin) or because they are not of the Alakoring tradition of Tarsh. Thus, Alakoring Rex is the cult of kingship, replacing Orlanth Rex. Heort, Jarani and Vingkot are regarded as 'not of our tradition.'

This, incidentally, is also reflected in the weather of Tarsh. In particular, the Great Ohorlanth Storm of Sea Season rolls over the region, on its way to Dragon

Pass. It is described formally as 'the Dragon Storm' but colloquially as 'All Mouth No Trews', because it promises much but never delivers! Only over the Pass does it let loose its life-bringing rain. Tarsh is instead watered by 'Heler's Blessings', the flocks of sheep and ram clouds following in its wake.

Tarshite Characters

All this has serious implications for Tarshite characters. Many cults and subcults will not be available unless they chose explicitly to worship banned faiths. Except in such brave but dangerous cases (the worship of Orlanth is technically punishable by death), then the following guidelines apply.

Characters may not worship, initiate or devote to any of the aspects of Orlanth, only directly into subcults, which are regarded as cults in their own right. Where subcults provide just feats to add to an aspect's affinity (such as

King-Cults

Arim the Pauper. All Tarshites give thanks and offerings to Arim on the annual feast-day of First Step (Storm/Death/Fire), which celebrates the day he led his people over the Deathline. Few specifically initiate themselves to him, as to do so is to accept a heavy burden of duty, always putting your people above yourself. Affinity: **Lead by Example** (Inspire, Take On Burdens, Know Right Path)

Yarandros. Yarandros 'Charge-Crazy' was a mighty and inspiring war leader, a king who leapt walls, roamed far and wide and inspired a hundred tales. He is favoured by warriors and horseman, especially to the south, near Grazer lands. Affinity: **Charge-Crazy** (Lead From The Front, Tame Horse, Impossible Horse Leap, Charge Like Thunder)

Ancestors

Potov Never-Be-Ready. One of the best-loved ancestor cults of the Pomini, proverbially never prepared for anything. Children are reared on such stories as Potov's Wapentake (when he had to turn up with a rake in his hand and a cauldron on his head) or Potov's Wedding (when everyone told him it was taking place a day earlier, so he would be ready). However, for all this, he always manages somehow to muddle through, and his wide following is as much for his initiative as his optimism. Affinity: **Make Do** (Come Up With Alternative, Use Object For Unfamiliar Purpose)

Ingarde Ringbinder. Ingarde is an ancestress of the Penthoi, but her worshippers are found across Tarsh, for they are matchmakers. Most of Ingarde's worshippers are simply local busybodies (although many a maiden has secretly buried a statuette of Ingarde fashioned from honey and nuts by the stead of a young man she hopes will come a-wooing). However, others are travelling professional matchmakers. When one of these Ringbinders visits a village, it is not long before potential male and female suitors are visiting 'for courtesy's sake', leaving some gift, hoping she will speak well of them in the next village along. Affinity: **Matchmaker** (Bless Marriage, Sense Hidden Qualities, Convince Suitor)

above summarises two king-cults and two sample ancestors, but characters and narrators are encouraged to create their own, appropriate to their village, clan or tribe. The Kordrosi are especially prone to worship a half-dozen ancestors and local petty herocults.

Spirits

Parts of Tarsh are also strong in animist spirit practices, especially the woods of the Angardos (where Kolat rules) and the Degars Hills north of Goldedge, where Ossoforontosi Earth Witches of the Serdrodosa Tradition bind the Six Stone Sheep with copper bells and bone pipes. It is even rumoured that some in the Hydra Hills worship and propitiate that terrible monster (see page 45).

shrines to Jajagappa Hunter, Dog Father of the Jajalorings.

The Lunar Provincial Church is strong in the cities and has some power and adherents in the countryside, especially along the river valleys. Lunar cults have proven most successful where they have proven useful, such as in the markets and mansions sponsored by Etyries. As well as worshippers of the Seven Mothers, there are also those who worship constituent deities directly. There are, for example, soldiers who worship Yanafal Tarnils as a war god rather than as one of the Mothers.

Ancestors

Tarshites especially worship ancestors, king-cults and local heroes. Many will be initiated both to a major cult and also to an appropriate ancestor. This is an extremely important part of Tarshite life and faith. The box



The Army of Tarsh

Martin Laurie

The Kingdom of Tarsh boasts the most powerful force in the Provincial Army. With a potential of some 20,000 men and women under arms in organised regiments, the Tarsh Army is the vanguard of the Empire in Dragon Pass.

Evolution of the Tarsh military

Arim the Founder first brought unity to the scattered tribes in northern Dragon Pass. To fight the Empire he required organisation at a tribal, then kingdom level. The Grazers provided a strong auxiliary force to the Tarsh fyrd shieldwall and mounted raiders. The earth-shaking power of the king and his supporters was another key asset, as demonstrated at the Battle of the Falling Hills in 1362.

After the Battle of Quintus Vale (1374), when a combined force of Tarsh tribes, Grazers and Imperial allies fought off a previously unbeatable nomad army, the Tarshites also began to learn from the imperial art of war. The reign of King Ovtarien (1375-95) was thus a landmark era for Old Tarsh. The union of Tarshite

determination and generalship with Grazer speed, mobility and firepower was to prove successful. However, his son, Yarandros, correctly identified Tarshite reliance on the Grazers for cavalry as a weakness.

A whole generation was raised on the tales of conquest and the presence of plunder from the oft-raided Empire, which in turn fuelled even more raids that eventually became constant. The Empire's relative weakness was ignored and the euphoria of success clouded long-term strategy, with catastrophic results for Tarsh in later years.

King Yarandros was to prove a mighty warlord, whose long reign (1395-1440) and the unifying efforts of his father, turned what had previously been a tribal confederation into a strong Kingdom, ruled by the iron hand of a warrior king. The success he had against the Empire and the Pentans who occupied much of it was attributable to his efforts at building his own cavalry and recruiting Praxians on a scale never seen before. His efforts in building his own cavalry left Tarsh without their old Grazer allies for all of his reign but created a new arm for the Kingdom.

The death of Orios in 1448 marked the zenith of Tarsh power as an independent state. At that time Tarsh controlled most of Holay, Far Point and western Balazaar. Even the turbulent Quivini lands were claimed. However, the civil war which raged 1449-60 was a disaster for Tarsh and its military. Highlanders fought lowlanders, city peoples fought mountain folk and the Earth temples fought the King's men.

The Tarsh army was divided and Holay seceded. When Illaro finally emerged as King of Tarsh, he ruled a much reduced state and a very different army. The heavy cavalry were largely destroyed or split, for they were the very nobility who fought each other so fiercely for control of the kingdom that there was little left. The army lost its professionalism and became, once more, a largely Orlanthe force of fyrd and warband.

With the rule of Phoronestes, Tarsh became a part of the Empire, though southern Tarsh was still independent and bellicose. His reign saw a slow but sure integration of the northern and lowland Tarshites into the Imperial system. In war, the Empire provided strong forces to bolster their 'allies' against the southerners and over time their forces made significant progress.



Palashee Longaxe (1538-55) brought few lasting changes in tactics or material, but he did reforge Old Tarsh pride that was used to great effect by his successor. He used his highlander forces alongside the lowlanders and was a king who stood foremost in battle, as in the days of Yarandros. To that end his household fulfilled much the same function as Yarandros's Chargers. Palashee also cleverly allied himself with the new Kingdom of Sartar who sent many men to aid him.

However, it was the Great King, Phargentes, who created an aggressive state with the resources to build an army to match its ambitions. He was also a heroic leader, like Palashee and slew that great fighter in personal combat. So aggressive was Phargentes that he led attack after attack against the enemies and recalcitrant allies of his

kingdom. So ferocious was his personal onset that he was named Kingslayer for the six enemy kings he killed with his own hand. Phargentes was also a master strategist and a brilliant politician. He used his power over the Provinces to make Tarsh as a great power within the Empire. With seemingly endless funds and Imperial backing he drove the Exiles back and established strong borders everywhere. His son ruled over a strong kingdom but his father's legacy of war left him locked in combat with the growing nation of Sartar. Time and again Sartar opposed Tarsh interests in the Pass. Eventually such opposition led to an Imperial force being sent to Tarsh and the Emperor coming in person. With the defeat of Sartar and the occupation of most of the Pass, Tarsh has become the central player in the plans of the Empire in the region. The wealth and influence

that flows through Tarsh to fund the wars has enriched and empowered the country immensely.

The Provincial Army

The various kingdoms that form the provinces provide a number of regiments to the Provincial Army, determined by population and economy. The units of the kingdoms are categorised in two ways, territorial or regular. The territorials have a full time cadre and their full authorised strength is usually only raised when the kingdom was under attack. It is a form of military obligation but the king of the province has the power to march them to war outside his lands if he so chooses. When the territorials are used in this fashion, they are paid as regular troops by Provincial law. Understandably, most of the provinces cannot afford the cost of such a levy very often

The Army of Tarsh

Regiment	Type	Full time	Part time	HQ/Temple	Origin	Weapon	Combat Skill	Armour
Kingslayers	Huscarls	500	0	Furthest	LT	W, S, A, Sp	5w2	Ch (7)
Moirades Philosophers	Mounted Priests	0	200	Furthest	ML	S	15w	L (2)
Yarandros Chargers	Cataphracts	0	500	Bagnet	OT	L, S	5w	Ch (5)
Bagnet Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Bagnet	LT	Sp, A	18	HL (3)
Bovakite Light Foot	Skirmishers	1000	0	Talfort	OT	J	8w	L (2)
Talfort Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Talfort	LT	Sp, S	16	HL (3)
Tarsh Heavy Foot	Huscarls	1000	0	Furthest	OT	Sp, A	10w	Ch (5)
Tarshite Light Foot	Skirmishers	1000	0	Slavewall	ML	J, S	5w	L (2)
Slavewall Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Slavewall	LT	Sp, S	18	HL (3)
Phargentites	Cataphracts	500	0	Dunstop	LT	L, A	10w	CP (7)
Retvetites	Lancers	100	400	Furthest	ML	L, S, A	8w	R (4)
Reachites	Warrior Priests	100	200	RM Temple	LT	S, A	17w	Ch (6)
Goldedge Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Goldedge	LT	Sp, S	17	HL (3)
Quintus Valen	Highlanders	200	800	Copper Town	OT	A, S	19	HL (3)
Glory Spears	Phalangites	200	800	Sun Dome	Y	P	1w	R (4)
Pennith Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Pennith	LT	Sp, A	17	HL (3)
Gardint Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Gardint	LT	Sp, A	17	HL (3)
Green Bows (Female)	Skirmishers	200	800	Goldedge	OT	B	2w	L (1)
Green Bows (Male)	Skirmishers	200	800	Dunstop	OT	B	2w	L (1)
Furthest Cavalry	Lancers	100	400	Furthest	ML	L, S	18	R (4)
1st Furthest Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Furthest	LT	Sp	15	HL (3)
2nd Furthest Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Furthest	LT	Sp	15	HL (3)
Furthest Horsewomen	Lancers	100	400	Furthest	ML	L, S	2w	R (4)
Kings Own Lancers	Cataphracts	500	0	Furthest	LT	L, S	12w	CP (7)
Dunstop Foot	Shieldwall	200	800	Dunstop	LT	Sp, S	18	HL (3)
		7500	12500					
		Total	20,000					

Key

Weapons		Troop origin		Armour	
Lance & shield	L	Lunar Tarsh	LT	Chain	Ch
Sword & shield	S	Old Tarsh	OT	Leather	L
Spear & shield	Sp	Yelmallio	Y	Ring	R
Bow	B	Modern Lunar	ML	Cuirboilli	C
Javelin & shield	J			Chain & plate	CP
Axe & shield	A			Table also gives armour rank values	
2 handed Axe	W				
2 handed spear & shield	P				

(or at all, in some cases, without Imperial or Provincial Government funding).

The Provincial Army troops (those in regular units and serving as cadres in territorial units) are full time soldiers, like the Imperial forces, and are bound by provincial edict to train their officers at the Provincial School of Battle in Mirin's Cross. The Provincial Army officer corps is proud of its difference in style and capability from the Imperial Army. They consider the Heartlanders lacking in true martial ardour: they recognise their skill, but think they are soft at heart. It is this barbaric, warlike heritage, covered by a veneer of civilisation, which makes them such fine troops. The various highlander units are particularly known for their aggression and fearlessness in battle.

Only the Provincial Overseer and the Emperor can call upon the Provincial Army units. They can then be assigned to an army, which may or may not include Imperial regiments. Efforts are made to spread the load of the call up across the various kingdoms in the Provinces so an army sent to

their reluctance, known as the War Tax of 1611. The revenue generated from this Tax has been largely transferred to Tarsh to aid the Kingdom in supporting its huge military and aggressive expansionism. The War Tax is universally unpopular with the Provinces, other than Tarsh.

Regiments of the Tarsh Army

Kingslayers

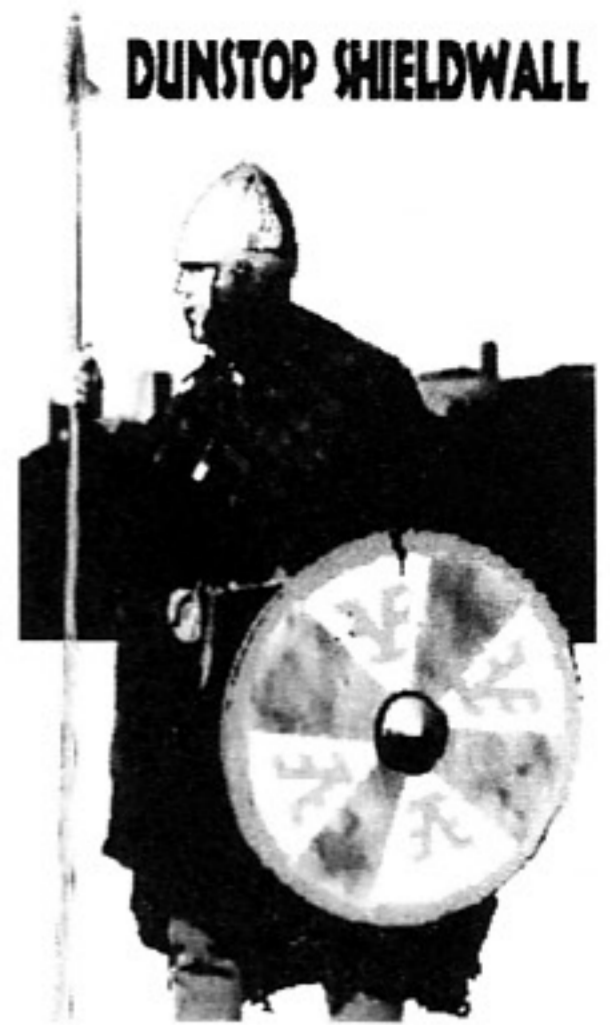
Leader: Pordangor Fastblade.

Famed for his speed and strength with the two handed axe, his preferred weapon. He is loyal to the king but eager for battle, a strong adherent of the Conquest faction in the court.

Notes: Headquartered at the Iron Barracks next to the Royal Palace, this is the personal guard of the King. An elite Huscarl guard formed by Phargentes near the end of his reign, they take their name from their founder, and seek to stand with their King in glorious battle. They are heavy infantry, all accomplished horsemen, used to riding to battle, then dismounting. They prefer the long

two handed axe as a weapon and are feared for its use. However, they are equally skilled with sword, spear and shield. They wear only the best iron chain and panoply, made in the King's Armoury. All have taken Phargentes as their hero or subcult, depending on their main cult.

way and are officered by men who have learnt the same tactics. However, due to the origin of the troops there are some regional variations in quality. The Furthest Foot regiments are denigrated among the Shieldwall units as somewhat lacking in the spirit and skill of the units recruited from more traditional and rural areas.



DUNSTOP SHIELDWALL

King's Own Lancers

Leader: Jostharos the Prince. His epithet is only used when he is not around, for though he has the classical good looks, the stature and bearing to be a Prince, Jostharl is a man in love with war and the glory of personal combat. He will challenge anyone to battle and only his staggering personal courage and skill have kept him alive till this point.

Notes: A cataphract regiment formed during the rule of Phoronostes to satisfy the King's desire for a heavy cavalry unit like the ones he had seen in the Heartlands. Initially the unit was a show regiment and had the finest equipment and the stateliest of soldiers, mounted on the finest grey chargers. The young King would not allow his lancers to fight, keeping them with him as a parade formation or showy bodyguard and for that reason the regiment was named 'The Princes' by the rest of the army. With the coming of Palashee, the unit was virtually destroyed and was reformed in exile by Phargentes but had a very different character. Gone were the peacocks, instead a hardened unit emerged from the war against the Exiles, skilled and aggressive at the charge. For all their new war skills the regiment is still called 'the Princes' to this day.

Furthest Horsewomen

Leader: Levru Redhair of the Vingan cult and leader of the warlike women of Tarsh.

Notes: Though based in Furthest, this unit draws its part-time members from across Tarsh and thus takes some time to complete a full muster, 3 weeks being standard. The unit follows Vinga and was a creation of the wife of King Phargentes, Queen



Typical Kingslayer

Close combat (Spear & Shield, Sword & Shield, Two handed Axe) 8w2; Ferocious 15w, Shield wall 12w, Great charge 10w; Magic: Combat affinities 5w; Phargentes affinity **Indefatigable** 5w (Relentless blows, Harry foe, Force duel, Sense weakness, Intimidate)

Dragon Pass would include troops from Vanch, Aggar, Imther, Holay and Tarsh, not just one Province. However, this policy has caused problems due to political concerns. Tarsh is ever keen to prosecute the wars in the Dragon Pass region, but other Provinces see this policy as aggrandisement for Tarsh, rather than the Provinces as a whole. Tarsh, they argue, gains the most from the conquered lands. As a result, the other Provinces have proved reluctant to send their men to fight in distant wars, unless under direct command from the Emperor. The Provincial Overseer has responded by cutting the forces required from the discontented provinces but demanding a tax on

The Shieldwall Regiments

The Bagnot, Dunstop, Furthest 1st & 2nd, Cardint, Goldedge, Pennith, Slavewall, Talfort Foot

Throughout the Provincial Army, the tough Shieldwall units of Tarsh are renowned. Though mostly part timers formed around a cadre of full time soldiers, the strong Tarsh tradition of fielding large armies centred on a durable shieldwall has persisted to this day. The Shieldwall Regiments are a continuation of that heritage in a system that maintains tribal effort yet unifies it within the Provincial Army structure. Each regiment is similarly equipped, from equipment depots approved by the Provincial Army. They are trained to fight the same

Red Orsilla of Saird who was every bit the warrior that her famous husband was. The unit has been courted by the Natha cult in an attempt to bring the Red women into the fold but they have remained stubbornly independent of such influences.

Glory Spears

Leader: Korestran Six-shields. He is so named for his ability to leap six shielded phalangites while carrying his pike and full panoply. Korestran is ageing but solid, a veteran of many actions, though loyal to the kingdom, he is first and foremost concerned with the survival of his regiment and way of life.

Notes: The only full Sun Dome Temple in Tarsh is responsible, by Royal Charter, for all Yelmations in the Kingdom and is obligated, in return for the privileges of self-government, to provide a full regiment of Yelmalian phalangites for the Provincial Army. Due to the scattered nature of Yelmatio worship across Tarsh, the full regiment takes some 3 weeks to muster and shake down, but half of the regiment can be ready to march within 2 days.

Quintus Valemén

Leader: Brulgard the Pillager. The most famous raider in Tarsh, Brulgard has thrice had sentence of death passed on him for his raids into neighbouring lands without Royal authority, then had them commuted for his successes in battle.

Notes: Known by the rest of the army as the 'Tough Bastards', the Valemén prefer sword and shield but like the javelin too. A part time formation based in Copper Town with cadres drawn from the chieftain's house troops, it is recruited from the hardy clansmen in the hills around the dangerous Hydra Mountains. Their reputation for toughness and warrior spirit is unmatched in Tarsh. Discipline can be lacking, especially on the charge, but their headlong screaming attack and familiarity with hill and forest fighting has made them a favourite for dangerous duty in Sartar.

The Tarsh Heavy Foot – The 'Quivers'

Leader: Rangor Knight-Cleaver. He earned his command at the battle of Jansholm when he rallied the Quivers as they began to give way under the charges of the Knights of Malkonwal. Rangor stood by the standard and slew all who came within the range of his axe till the regiment reformed behind him and the pile of corpses on which he

stood. He has fought to the blood with Pordangor of the Kingslayers for the honour of the regiment and neither could prevail.

Notes: A strong regiment of Old Tarsh Huscarls who earned their name at the Battle of Quintus Vale when the Pentans shot so many arrows into their armour and bodies that they could barely be seen for fletching. They have a long-standing and increasingly bitter rivalry with the Kingslayers which often turns violent when the two groups meet. The Quivers are by far the older regiment and have a more prestigious history, but their status in Lunar Tarsh is forever marred by their Old Tarsh heritage.

Yarandros Chargers

Leader: Freidar Fazzursson. Youngest son of Fazzur Wideread and the most headstrong, he worked hard to command the regiment and is a horseman without peer, having defeated even Grazers with his skill. Committed to his family and father, Freidar is a patriot of Tarsh and worships Yarandros as his only disciple. It is said that he is so like him that even if he herofomed his god, there would be no telling the difference between the two.

Notes: The regiment was formed by Yarandros Charge Crazy, now its patron deity. Though the unit has been destroyed several times, it has always retained its standard and temple and thus has always been reborn, drawing on followers of Yarandros across the kingdom. The regiment is less popular with the more Lunarised Tarshites, being seen as firmly 'Old Tarsh' in its leanings. As a result, the Chargers are less well appointed than other regiments but few can stand before their charge. They still ride Grazer-bred horses, though the men of the unit have to pay the cost for those expensive mounts from their own pockets, unlike the King's Own Lancers.

Furthest Cavalry

Leader: Obophius the Rich is a powerful mercantillist in Furthest who funds the regiment from his own pocket as a 'favour' for the King and Empire. He is universally disliked among the Army commanders and the Phargentites but tolerated by the King thanks to his ability to finance the Crown large loans at low interest.

Notes: The regular part of the regiment serves as the guild guard and the part-time membership is mostly formed from the sons of powerful merchant families. They

are boastful of their Lunar nature and denigrate Old Tarsh units whenever they appear in the city. The watch tends to look the other way when several Furthest Lancers gang up on a Charger or Quiver to give them a beating and occasionally these excesses provoke the older regiments to respond in kind, usually fatally for the lancers.

Green Bows

Leaders: Leik the Bowyer (Male); Lyza the Fletcher (Female). As befits the traditions of the regiments the two leaders are man and wife.

Notes: Two units, one male and one female, follow the Old Tarsh ways and worship the GreenBow cult. This ancient Elf Friend cult dates back to the First Council days and was kept alive in Saird until it returned to the Pass with Arim. All carry bows similar to Elf bows, grown for him or her. The units serve Tarsh as her archer elite and are rightly feared for their forest craft. The regiments are only mustered in time of war, otherwise their full-time members serve as scouts across the kingdom and in neighbouring lands.

Reachites

Leader: Kurrash Khan-eater. Originally from Oraya, he is intolerant of Tarsh and its provincial ways but serves his Temple loyally. In his youth, he personally slew three tribal Khans from Pent in battle and ate their hearts to gain their courage. He is allergic to horses.

Notes: Warrior priests of Yara Aranis who guard the Reaching Moon Temple and sally out to punish the foes of the Empire. They are



particularly keen on killing horse-riding folk and their best magics are reserved for that. However they will kill anyone who stands in their way and are fearless in battle. The unit is recruited from across the Empire with many being Heartlanders – its inclusion in the Provincial order of battle is purely for convenience rather than tradition.

Retvetites

Leader: Yorranth the Lame. A one legged soldier of thirty years' experience, he is stoutly loyal to the King but his greatest love is for Fazzur, whom he and his men esteem above their own lives.

Notes: The regiment is composed of retired veterans. In return for a yearly stipend, they serve in a part-time capacity. The full-time cadre serves as guards for the barracks, armoury and Commissariat. The younger soldiers call these old salts the 'Grumblers' for their habit of loudly complaining about the sad state of current affairs and how much better the army was in their day.

Tarshite Light Foot

Leader: Ruganath Tuskbane. One of the greatest hunters in Tarsh, he is famed for entering the Stinking Forest on a frequent basis and coming back with the tusks of a Tusker and the skull of its rider. He is a Mellmuri and has many of his tribe in the regiment. Some say he cares more for what the tribal chief says than the King in Furthest but none would doubt his ability to hunt down those who said that too loudly.

Notes: A full-time regiment of skirmishers using Imperial peltast training, married with the cross country skills of the Orlanthe. The regiment is very much a child of Slavewall and the area around it. They were heavily used in the Starbrow rebellion and have aided Harvar Ironfist in suppressing rebels in the deep hills.

Bovakite Light Foot

Leader: Heleric the Hurler. A short man with shoulders like boulders, he holds the Imperial Army games record for throwing the javelin without magic. He is from Talfort and his father is high priest of the Dragonwatch there. Heleric hates Dragons of all kinds.

Notes: The unit is northern Tarsh/Holayan and follows Bovak, the hero of the regiment. Bovak was a relentless warrior, skilled in the skirmish battle beyond all others and he served King Yarandros for decades, screening the shieldwall and flanking the enemy through difficult

ground. The regiment still considers itself the best light infantry in the Provinces, and many would agree.

Moirades Philosophers

Leader: Argrand the Learned is head of Moirades' personal library and his most favoured master of polemics. A potent sorcerer of the Makabean School, he has found and mastered several grimoires from different orders that the Tarsh army has fought and plundered.

Notes: A rather uncoordinated regiment that was the brainchild of the old King. He organised all the various priests, philosophers, sorcerers and sages that hang around his court into a unit of sorts, in an attempt to copy the formidable College of Magic. To date this has not been a success as the regiment is unable to form a Wyter. The King is hoping that, after his death, the regiment will be able to form a wyter around the worship of him. In battle, they tend to do their own thing with their magics but as they are all skilled it has an effect, if not quite as devastating as a Field College.

Logistics & Mobilisation

Tarsh is well supplied with a sound infrastructure. Thanks to the central nature of Furthest and the road network built by Phargentes, powerful armies can be assembled quickly and supplied with ease. The Empire uses the Kingdom as its forward supply point for all operation in Dragon Pass. The Osir sees a tremendous amount of military traffic, which is then dispersed throughout the region of war. For the invasion of Sartar, significant depots were built in advance of the main attack so that supplies for all the Imperial regiments were on hand. For continuing operations, Tarsh contracts many merchants to move the supplies into the Pass. The Imperial and Provincial revenues that have poured into the kingdom have been staggering. Dissemination of supply is contracted to the merchants of the Provinces who compete fiercely for the rich military contracts. Guards are assigned from

regiments not on active duty in the war zones.

House & Temple Troops



It is forbidden to have personal troops that are not part of the territorial units without an express edict from the King himself. Even the armsmen of the tribes have to integrate their personal guards into the regiment of the Provincial Army. In practice only the Phargentites and a few other favoured nobles are allowed house troops.

However, this stipulation has often been 'avoided' by some Tarsh nobles as the fashion of Dart Competition has taken off in the Kingdom. Many nobles hire 'servants' who are amazingly good with weapons and other combat skills. Likewise many temples to warlike deities include 'priests who can kill a trained huscarl in moments.

The standing regiments are usually billeted in the citadels or barrack of their home city or the surrounding towns. The regimental standard and temple are the headquarters of the formation but it is not unusual for a large percentage of the regiment to be billeted elsewhere. Typically, the depot company (or 'hundred') of the regiment is located at its HQ, along with the non-serving but highly regarded Invalids.

A shieldwall unit takes up to three weeks to muster and shake down from the call going out. The regular regiments are usually ready within a week.

Tactics

Normal deployment of the light infantry is as open order skirmishers in battle for constant harassing fire of the enemy line. If the enemy have skirmishers out then they engage them in battle.

Lightly armoured, the shieldwall relies on mass and solidity. It does not break formation and is trained to march as a group and stand together. They are the lynchpin of the army,

trained in nothing else. Should they be flanked then they have sufficient manoeuvring skill to refuse the flank. When engaged by enemy skirmishers, the shieldwall must endure the enemy fire till it meets the enemy main fighting line and pins it in place, fighting shoulder to shoulder with spear and sword until the decisive components of the army triumph elsewhere on the field.

Heavy Infantry play a similar role but are the decisive arm of the infantry battle. The shock of their charge and their skill give them great killing power, so they close with the enemy and break them. They are particularly good at holding a vital part of the line or taking on the enemy's elite foot.

Lance-equipped, the medium cavalry are mounted on average horses, little better than ponies, and so do not attempt to engage a good heavy force. Their job is to charge and drive off enemy skirmish cavalry and, through flanking actions, to endanger the enemy rear. If opportunity presents itself, then a charge is permitted. In pursuit the medium cavalry come into their own and are relentless and effective against a broken foe.

The heavy cavalry form the truly decisive arm of the Tarsh army. With the shock effect of their charge, heavy armour and weapons and the high levels of skill expected of an elite formation, the heavies can win or lose the battle. Their charge is boot to boot for maximum shock effect and once launched, is carried out at the gallop till the final moments before impact.

Operational Art

The primary elements of Tarshite operational art are to form a central shieldwall, with flanking cavalry forces, screened by the light infantry. A reserve is always kept, preferably for both flanks and the centre. If enough troops are available for a flanking column then that is attempted, though only in ground suitable for concealing the movement. Pinning the enemy force in an attritional struggle and then dislocating their line with a successful flanking attack is the epitome of the Tarsh military manual.

Strategy

Tarsh military strategy is complex and determined by a number of historical and geographical factors. There are three main schools of strategic

thought in Tarsh and they have each held sway at court at times.

The Hegemony Strategy

Style: Machiavellian manipulation of events and peoples, as formulated by both Moirades and Fazzur.

Tarsh has rightful hegemony over the lands around it. The use of military force is a failure in our political efforts. Tarsh can dominate the surrounding regions politically, economically and mythically, using force only as a tool of policy. That said, it is a given that Tarsh *should* have hegemony over Holay, Balazar, Sartar and the Grazelands. All lands bordering Tarsh are within our sphere of influence and thus viable objects of control directed policy. By controlling them, they fight our wars for us and provide ready markets for our superior goods and skills.

The Conquest Strategy

Style: Blatant militarism, conquest and aggression.

Once Tarsh controlled Holay, Balazaar, Quivin, Far Point and Kerofinela. They were ours and should be again. They are weak peoples who need the strength of Tarsh, to serve as a spine, to drag them from their folly and ineptitude. Therefore, this strategy calls for war, for only in war can these lands be truly brought within the dominion of Tarsh. Economic control and political alliance are no substitute for direct military action. The conquest of Sartar is the first step in recreating that dominion. Once Sartar is integrated into the Kingdom, we can use the increased wealth and resources to prepare for the next wave of conquest in Holay and Balazar.

The Imperial Strategy

Style: Patriotic self interest. We are no longer alone.

We stand as the vanguard of a mighty Empire. The Empire gives us unlimited opportunity to sequester

troops, funds and magical aid for our own purposes, but we must be astute in playing the Imperial game. Though we are vital to the Empire, there are others, like Holay and Sylila, who would usurp our position and sublimate our victories into their own quest for power. Therefore war, politics, economics and magic are all tools to be used within the Imperial game, which is the greatest game of all. We cannot triumph alone, so we must be the leader of the pack but above all, we must ensure that the pack survives. Without it we are a lone wolf in a hostile land.

The Insanity Crusade

When King Orien's army was destroyed by the Tork host, some survived the defeat and swore to return to the Sultanate of Tork to retrieve their lost kin. Thus was the Insanity Crusade born. Over time, as the lifespan of any kin that might have lived ended, the Crusade took on a life of its own as they changed their goals from rescuing those alive to freeing those dead. Every few years a new crusade is launched into Tork, for the priests of the Crusade have seen the spirit of King Orien is still alive and captive in the mad lands. They intend to free it and others for the proper funeral rights. The Insanity Crusade is the only legal chaos fighting group in Tarsh. They are often hired to kill chaos, wherever it appears and though they worship a proscribed deity – Urox, – there is a special dispensation allowed for his worship provided the Crusader joins a crusade within a ten year span him becoming a member. All Uroxi in Tarsh, chosen at their initiation, are forced to join the Crusade or be outlawed or executed.

The Map of the Lunar Empire

Tarsh is but one small part of a mighty empire, stretching from the icy waters of the White Sea to Dragon Pass, from the Sweet Sea to the west to the fringes of barbarian Pent to the east. All this and more is lovingly detailed in the full-colour poster-sized official Lunar Map, drawn by Martin Laurie and Wesley Quadros from Greg Stafford's maps and ideas. Produced by The Unspoken Word on license from Issaries, this limited-edition masterpiece can be yours. Order details are on page 54.

The Phargentites

Martin Laurle

The dominant military aristocracy formed by Phargentes to break the power of the tribes who had supported Palashee. Initially these men were drawn from the supporters of the Lunar Tarsh kings who followed them into exile when Palashee came to power. They were often of ignoble blood, yet proved through loyalty and long service that merit mattered more than birth. Phargentes used this concept to create a new aristocracy, loyal specifically to him. Given that their titles are not inheritable, the new nobles are dependent on the largesse of the King alone. His success is their success.

The Phargentites are not part of the Provincial Army. Though often also Generals of the Provincial Army, they are not within its rank structure as a group. Commanding the Tarsh military, both in an out of the Provincial structures, their ultimate loyalty is to the King.

They acquire a right to accrue titles, giving significant income potential. The titles are usually honorifics with a stipend attached. Thus a Phargentite might be Shieldsman of Boldhome, Earl of Jansholm and Count of Karse without having any lands in those places, simply having served successfully there. The king would then give a stipend for each of those titles.

They are also allowed to maintain a personal guard for their own protection and status. This is a significant allowance for it creates a body

of armed men independent of any structure inside and outside of the Kingdom. Typically a Phargentite maintains upward of a hundred men. The Phargentites regiment in the Provincial army is a voluntarily provided force formed from these guards. Its exact size varies according to how many troops are sent and who leads the unit.

Phargentites must be appointed by the King and be initiates of devotees or the Phargentes cult. They must also have proven themselves as warlords, by heading an army, commanding a regiment for at least ten years, defeating an enemy commander of equal or greater status in hand to hand combat or leading a regiment in victorious battle.

Famous Phargentites

Pharon the Snake - Famous for his cunning in battle and his preference for felnts and maneuvers.

Dorlev the Charger - The most impetuous of the Phargentites, he often leads the regiment and is currently the only Phargentite appointed for killing an enemy general in personal combat. He scaled the Building Wall and slew an Esrolian general after hacking his way through her bodyguard.

Stonewall Gerthansson - At the battle of Jansholm, this man so well led his Shieldwall regiment, the Talfort Foot, that they stood off three charges of knights and two of berserk hillmen. The watching generals said that his men stood 'like a stone wall', hence his name.

Battleaxe Durkot - A dour man of great skill with an axe, though past his prime. Once a fierce warrior, old age has made him more prudent.

Bowdrik the Angry - The most foul tempered man in Tarsh, Bowdrik is also the harshest disciplinarian in the Kingdom. He has killed men for a sour look. He prefers to command the foot and likes the battles of attrition.

Jordhll Gatebreaker - A mediocre general but a learned engineer and master of siege warfare. He is the court expert on such matters and regularly travels to the Heartlands to read up on new ideas or debate with the scholars there.



Phargentes, on the eve of his battle with Palashee. He bears the axe later to be known as Longnose, and Horfundel, the scimitar he was gifted by his brother, Philligos.

A Gazetteer of Tarsh

Mark Galeotti

Arim's Footsteps

Not a place as such, but a pilgrimage route following his progress, from Warnstone (symbolic of confidence and determination), to Borni's Landing (loyalty), Stopover (care for followers, harmony with the earth), the Arim's Lake (negotiation and friendship) and concluding at the Bagnet Arimstone (authority and success). For some pilgrims, this becomes a difficult and powerful heroquest.

Arim's Lake

Here Arim met and befriended Benst Beel.

Arim's Necklace

An ancient chain of small forts, from Dunstop to Goldedge to Slavewall. Most have been abandoned to the elements or been plundered of their stones for local village buildings, and a few have become bandit haunts.

The Arimstones

There are two Arimstones. One, outside Bagnet, marks the conclusion of Arim's journey south, and is a place of power from which Arim used to preach to his people. Once, a dragon was seen far to the north, and the people cowered, expecting a new Dragonkill. Instead Arim broke off part of his stone and hurled it at the dragon (almost certainly merely a dream dragon), which exploded into a cloud of dust and gems. The rock landed in the Svenarki hills, north-east of Goldedge, and is sacred to Orvanshagor.

Arimvale

The heart of Arim's Secret Kingdom.

Bagnet

Once Tarsh's capital, Bagnet still resents the rise of Furthest and the new order. Although it is still the tribal capital of Arim's Firstblood tribe, many within the city, while happy to share in the wealth of the new Tarsh, harbour sympathies with the old days. There is a small but determined underground cadre who still worship Orlanth and unofficial contacts with the Exiles are also common. Efforts have been made to win over the populace, ranging from the tax concessions on the city's Low Market to the revival of the traditional First Stone Feast, in which slaves costumed as figures from Bagnet's history distribute meats, mead and sugared grapes in the Sundial Square. Nonetheless, dissidents continue to cause mischief, ranging from chalking scurrilous graffiti on the walls to murder and intimidation.

Benst Falls

Every year, Arim and Benst Beel would meet here, and this place is still important to Tarsh-Grazer relations, and in its time has been used for negotiations, markets, exchanges of prisoners and presentation of tribute. Each year, pilgrims from North Post tie thousands of fine ribbons to the stunted trees above the falls as a sacrifice to the spirits. Most years, they have been stripped by local Tarshites and sold on before the week is out. The Grazers say this is why the Tarshites have never been at peace with their spirits. The Tarshites say this is why they are rich.

Bent Spire

Of all Tarsh's EWF-era ruins, Bent Spire is the most clearly defined. Once a small city famed for its radial street pattern and tall towers, the layout is still visible on the ground, and while most of the stone ruins have crumbled into scree or been cannibalised in the building of Dunstop's walls, the Bent Spire itself survived, weathered but intact. A hooked spear of natural stone, it was hollowed out to form many irregular chambers connected by passages that seem to follow no logic, even sometimes becoming vertical shafts before winding back on themselves. The Spire has long since been picked clean by treasure-hunters and scavengers, but there are those that say that following specific routes can take a hero to many different times and places.

Big Orvon

Orvon was one of the gentlest but also laziest of Arim's followers. One day he lay down to sleep and turned into this hill. One day he will awake, they say.

Borni's Landing

Borni Wordbinder was Arim's herald, but when he was delayed by illness and had to be left behind, he made an agreement with the spirit of the Black Eel River. It agreed to rush him and his people southwards to catch up with Arim in return for annual propitiation. His people gratefully took the name of the Blackwater Tribe and at the centre of their town is the great log of a giant tree, fifty man-heights long, on which they were borne. The town is uniquely unwallled, but three fortified bastions around it house vigilant soldiers. A local mine is the sole domestic source of lead in Tarsh, which is formed into cakes marked with the Black Eel.

Bush Range

A haunted no-man's land between Tarsh and Wintertop, studded with ancient ruins and roamed by dinosaurs, but nonetheless slowly being settled by smallholders and refugees.

Copper Town

A wild and woolly frontier settlement, a mining boomtown seething with every kind of prospector and charlatan. See page 42



Benst Falls



Bent Spire

Dancing Sisters

Two leaning pillars of rock which, since the Battle of the Dancing Sisters in which HonEel's forces destroyed an army opposed to her rule, have wept tears of citrine and sardonyx on its anniversary.

Duelfield

When Marofdul assassinated his uncle, King Halifitoor, he did it with reverence and respect. Halifitoor's body was ploughed into the land while a blind priestess of Sorana Tor keened for his soul, and a simple altar made of the kidney stone of a dinosaur was erected in his memory. This place is still beloved of the Earth Goddesses, blessed with rich harvests and dark soil.

Dunstop

Its location close to the traditional Grazer lands of Sikithi Vale, has meant that Dunstop is at once a trading city and a military station, its parallel roles reflecting the complexity of Tarshite relations with the Grazers. As a result, it has a reputation as a rough and martial city, whose people are pragmatic and forceful. The city is ruled by the Kordrosi, who have provided an unusually consistent series of kings and now armymen. As a result, Dunstop now has stone walls to rival those of Furthest, studded with a weird and wonderful array of towers, bastions, fortified gates and murder holes. Inside, attempts have been made to reconcile the different needs of trade and war by dividing the city into three rings, each known by the name of the tribal king who established it. The innermost, Ovurlan's Ring, is a complex of barracks, fortified palaces and storehouses. Beyond this is Kabrela's Ring, characterised by its three great markets (one for livestock, one for foodstuffs and day-to-day essentials, and Issaries' Mount, a specialised one which only opens once a week, for war horses, precious metals, icons and similar treasures), its artisans' workshops and its higher-status housing. Outermost is Baburlin's Ring, a sprawling maze of alleys and byways (no effort is made to regulate them as their very convolutions make them easily defensible), cut only by the three wide roads leading from the main gates to the centre of the city.

Ever-New Glory

The Tarsh Sun Dome Temple, focus for a small community some 6000 strong, who eke out a relatively poor living in their hillside villages thanks to employment by both the King of Tarsh and, occasionally, the Provincial Overseer for war in Dragon Pass.

Fallen Hills

Here Varstapoor and Vestenbora buried an invading lunar army in 1362, raising a range of hills with one great quake and then dropping it on them with another. Crushed helmets and bent spearheads still litter the sides of these uneven and misshapen hills. The hills have also been used as the starting place for a number

of traditional Tarshite heroquests to gain power over the shaking earth or bring doom to the empire. As a result, they tend to be aggressively patrolled by the Three-Sword Guard, a small but magically potent unit of the imperial army, vigilant for unauthorised heroquests.

Furthest

Famously wealthy and infamously decadent capital of Imperial Tarsh. See page 32.

Gardint

The well-fortified capital of the Angardos tribe, although the city within the walls is ramshackle and over-crowded as its defensible location has also precluded expansion or the usual sprawl of poor housing outside the walls. The picture shows the view from across the Black Eel river, where the ancient stone Bridge of Four Heroes cuts across in front of the city's Eastern, or Soldier's Wall. Raiders seeking to use the bridge to attack the city must then travel a zig-zag route up the hillside, all the time under fire from the defenders. This is just one of the many cunning designs which have meant that this city has never fallen to assault.

Glowline

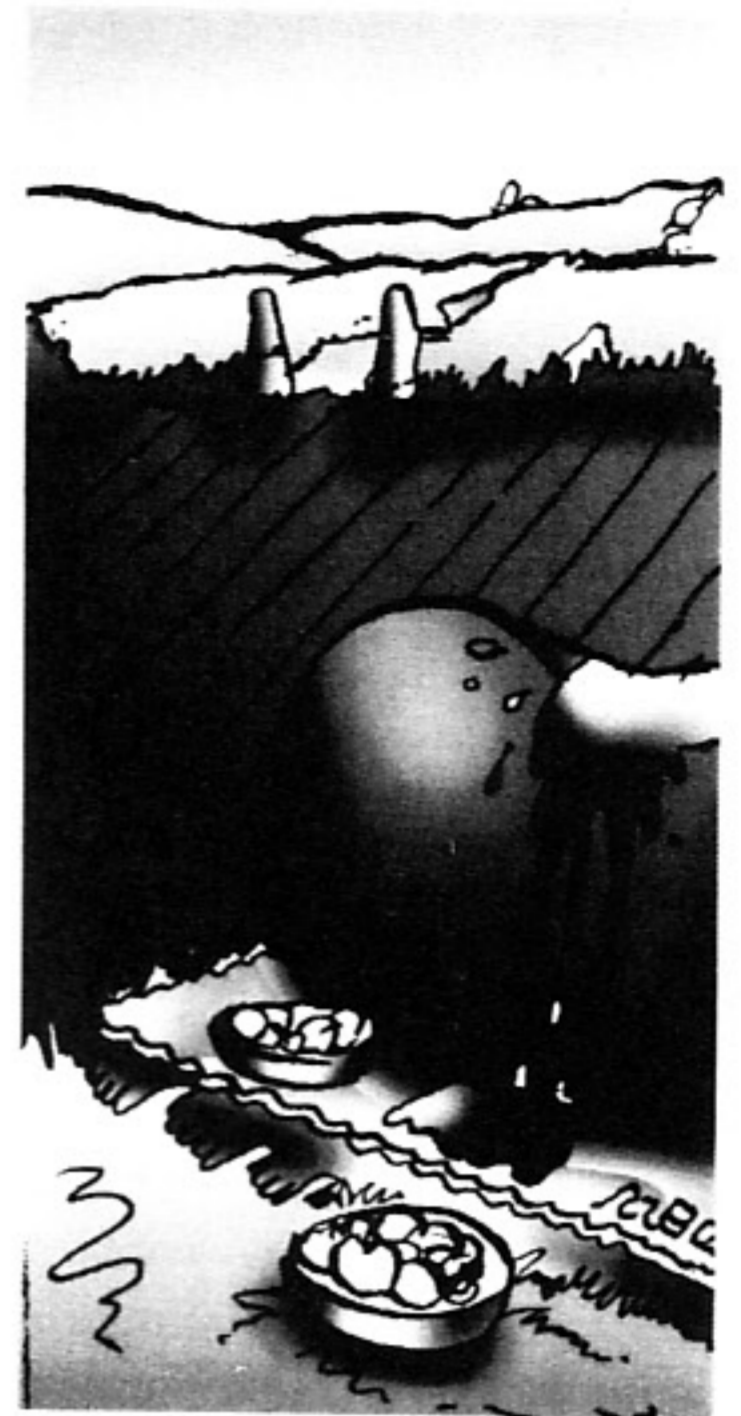
The edge of the full powers of the Red Moon, defined by a pale red haze.

Goldedge

The city of Goldedge seems to be trying to outdo even Furthest with its extravagant new projects. This to a large extent is because of the competition between the Ossoforontosi and Pomini tribes. Both tribes are pouring much of their new wealth into developing the town, to outdo their rivals and show their right to control it, in what is already being called an 'Architects' War.' The Pomini may be a little less wealthy than their opponents, but they appear to be the more imaginative, and their seven-towered City Manse, which is due to be completed within the year and be covered with a bas-relief history of Tarsh, is expected to be a marvel. Even so, the town attracts entrepreneurs, architects, confidence tricksters and dreamers from far and wide. The Kitchenvale in which it lies, though, is a spectacular but barren stretch of broken waste and bubbling geysers. Grandiose projects to pipe the boiling waters from the hot springs at Ma's Soup Spot are unlikely to come to much, though, as those who do not damn them as impractical damn them as impious.

Grizzly Peak

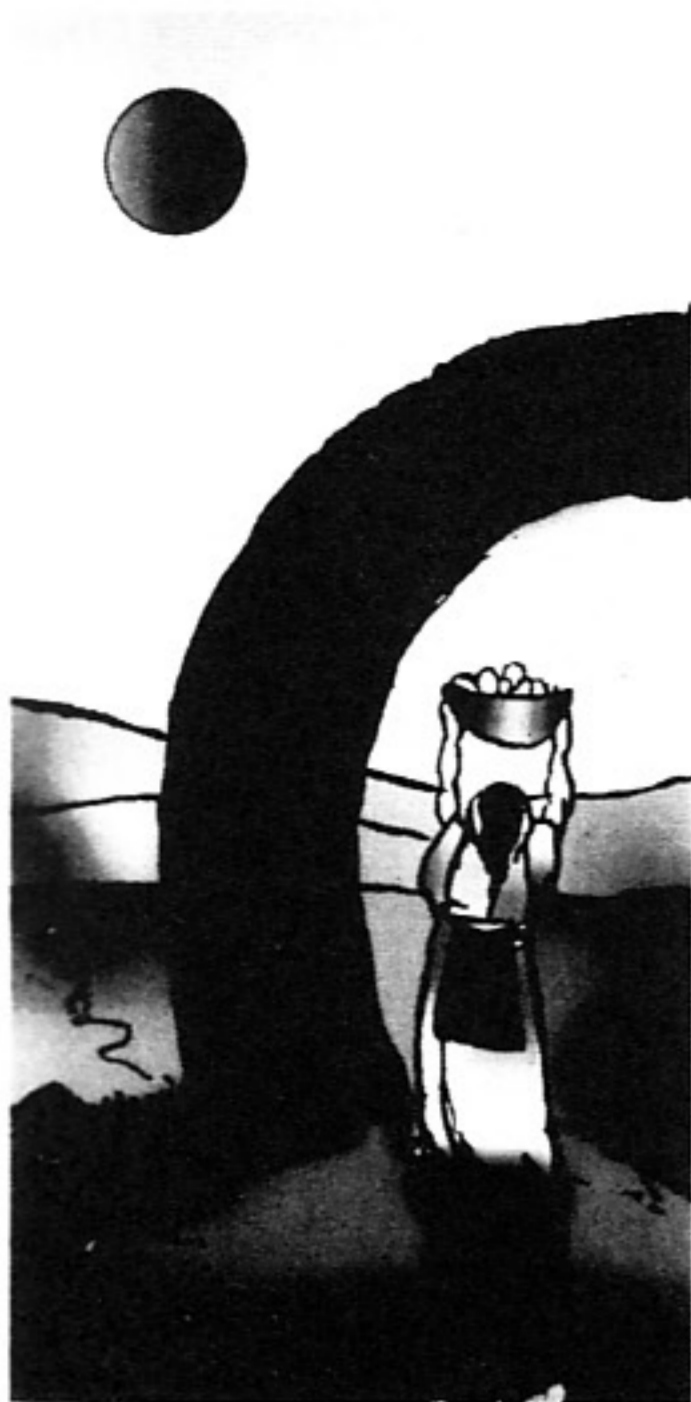
A dark and forbidding mountain, still haunted by the angry spirits of the Exile army smashed there in 1582. Devotees of earth cults here will be able to feel the bitterness of the battle in the very bones of the mountain (they suffer a constant Oppression 16 distracting and depressing them), although they will also be safe from the ghosts which occasionally rise from the stones like an angry mist.



Duelfield



Goldedge City Manse



The Hoopstone

Heruernalda

The greatest temple to Ernalda in Tarsh. It is also the simplest in appearance, merely a square stone building much like a loom house, albeit larger, with three low stone tables in the field before it. On closer examination every surface only looks rough because it is completely covered in a filigree of fine carvings, as ancient runes and images recount the myths of Ernalda. The sacrificial tables are known as the Guesting Stones: one is dedicated each to Maran, Sorana Tor and Esrola. A wide, copper-valved passage leads down into the ground from the inside of the building, though, past Babeester Gor axe maidens and even less appealing guardians, into the heart of the temple. This is where HonEel intruded into the rights of Ernalda and proved that she was the One Who Waits of the lunar pantheon.

Hoopstone

One of the many foci of earthpower in Tarsh, the largest of an ancient stone circle blackened and slagged by dragonfire during the Scorch. The Hoopstone is a symbol of the endurance of the Earth and determined individuals may make pilgrimage to the site before setting out on some arduous task. The Hoopstone is inhabited by an earth daimone, Koran Ogora, who rarely responds to worship but whose silent and stubborn presence contributes to the melancholy gloom of the area.

Hydra Hills

Rugged hills, as feared for the degenerate backwoodsmen who live there as for the Hydra itself.

Kordros City

Little remains of this EWF city, just a few standing stones and fallen lintels, scoured by wind and weather. Strange forms appear here on days of portent, shades of ancient people carrying out mysterious rituals. This is a 'thin place', in which barriers into all the Otherworlds are one μ weaker than usual.

Kordros Island

The richly fertile tula of the Kordrosi, now a patchwork of fields and orchards, many worked by slaves. It is magically potent, with EWFish ruins and more recent places of power. As a result, the people of Kordros are deeply suspicious, and their lives are an unending cycle of petty prayers to this earth-daimone and propitiations of that ancestral spirit.

Marof's House

A small temple, built over the grave of Marofdul, ninth king of Tarsh. An earth-king known for his harsh judgements and oracular powers, his shrine is regularly visited by all kinds of people seeking foreknowledge. A great copper urn of stone plaques, each bearing a symbol is upended over a stone table. Marofdul's spirit arranges the plaques to form a message, which is then interpreted by one of the Brides of Marof, a small ancestral cult of his wife, Chafara. The

authorities are concerned about the frequency with which the oracle now predicts doom, but to date have done little beyond petitioning the Brides to be more upbeat in their interpretations.

Mitchuinn's Rise:

The ancient hero Mitchuinn, foe of the empire, was mortally wounded during an attack on Hwarin Dalthippa. He never quite made it back to his ancestral seat and was burned on a pyre where he died, less than a day from his hall. The Rise is sacred to all Moon-haters and is thus guarded by a small Imperial keep garrisoned by the Three-Sword Guard.

Pennith

A medium-sized town, famous for the quality of its beers (especially Pennith Amber and Pennith Black), reflecting the continuing influence of its city-cult of Trow Broadvat, an ancient priest of Minlister. The annual Broadvat Jamboree is not only Trow's holy day and an excuse for wild and bibulous celebration, it is one of the most important gatherings of the so-called 'beer barons' of Tarsh, who meet to cut deals and set prices for the coming year. While most Tarshites drink local ales, the respect for the Pennith beers is such that some suggest that the 'beer barons' could topple a dynasty or crown a king.

Pigs' Pass

A pass once much used by Tusk Rider raiders.

Quintus Vale

The rough and relatively infertile lands of the Barastarosi. Blessed by Asrelia, the region is rich in metals, and thus mines, old mine workings and individual prospectors are a common sight, as are bandits seeking a more direct route to riches.

Raider Hill

Stories tell of the Great Heifer Heist on Holay, some time during the reign of Orios, when "seven times seven clans each sent seven raiders, who each came back with seven cattle". While essentially a folk tale, deep within the Finovani Hills is a low mound on which are cut seven chalk cattle. This hill is sacred to Finovan, and those who would raid Holay.

Sikithi Vale

South-western Tarsh, once regularly raided by the Grazers, now dominated by the fortified villages of the Yarandrosi and Hardhill. Werewolves used to be a serious problem here, and are still an occasional threat.

Slavewall

A grim trading town at the edge of the kingdom and the capital of the Mellmuri tribe. Rebuilt after the devastation of 1490 as a fortified station, it is not only the site of a huge slave market dealing in captives from as far as Balazar and Prax (and, truth to tell, many actually taken by the Exiles), but this is still the city's main clam to fame. Its Great Redoubt is known as the Bastion of Tears, after the plaints



Raider Hill

and lamentations of the captives driven through it on the way to the slave markets. Suggestions that some end up on Aramite altars in the Stinking Forest are fiercely denied, but the Mellmuri did refuse to support Mutius Thrax's invasion of the forest in 1616.

Stones Above Souls

A city of the dragonewts, and thus a dangerous and confusing place, avoided by all but the wisest and the most foolish. Fourteen glossy green pyramids ring its central complex of towers, domes and flying bridges. The dragonewts themselves rarely travel far from their city, except when carrying out the irregular and bizarre ritual the Hardhills call the Drunkards' Walk. A procession of dragonewts of every kind, and other, even less comprehensible beasts, set forth from their city and follow an erratic, meandering route taking them to the river bank, where they all leap into the waters. They then return to Stones Above Souls, hooting and booming, but some observers have claimed that more return than set out. Some scholars believe that they are re-enacting a ritual of friendship established by Palashee Long-Axe, and await a proper reception.

Stop Here

A large village built around one of the largest and most elaborate mansions of all the Provinces, a showcase funded by the cunning and inventive Temple of Etyries Audacious in Filichet. Warm springs bubble through the marble bathhouse. The Hall of Kocho Gastronome caters to every appetite, from passing labourers after a 'pig-on-a-stick' snack to sustain them while returning to their villages to visiting dignitaries eager to savour the famous nineteen-course Banquet of Kocho's Span. The mansion has never made a profit in its twelve years of operation, but given that the last visiting inspector from the Provincial Overseer's office described it as 'as powerful a pacifier as a thousand hoplites', the subsidies show no sign of drying up.

Stopover

Here Arim's people rested, and he cleft open a rock so that his followers could refresh themselves with the warm milk of the Earth. Now, mere water flows from the spring, except on rare days when a hero carries out the Arim's Footsteps quest.

Talfort

A prosperous trading city, from whence the great grain barges set off down the Oslir into the empire. See page 50.

Tarshford

The capital of the Carafandoli is a relatively old-fashioned town, still boasting a wooden stockade and traditional courtyard stead type buildings. Until recently, its main claims to fame were the glowing stones which mark the ford itself and the menhir just

outside the stockade, on which are carved depictions of the Seven Great Heroquests of Tarsh. Having missed out on the initial trade boom of much of Tarsh, it is now catching up thanks to the growing demand for farm-slaves. Expeditions from Tarshford raid Balazar for captives with increasing frequency, and the city itself now has a slave market second only to Slavewall's. However, thanks to the initiative of the famously cunning tonsrrieve, Gorodes of the Many Angles, this is now pioneering the novel notion of a 'slave futures market' whereby traders bid on first refusals on expeditions' stock even before they set out. Few outside Tarshford understand such subtleties.

Temple of the Reaching Moon

A mighty symbol of the Red Moon's might. Ruzelza's radiance is captured and magnified by the great red orb above the building, maintaining the Glow Line and suffusing the region with lunar energies. As much fortress as temple, the towering building is home to crack lunar guards and scurrying hordes of Eyzaali lunicians. Warding magics and humourless soldiers keep the unauthorised from approaching within five key miles of the temple.

Three Ribbons and Five Chambers

The villa of a retired imperial soldier from far away, Palatinides of Tervan-by-Spol, who has turned it into a shrine to his quest for the Young Air Elemental, a cosmic precursor whom he believes is somehow lost and whose discovery will make the world whole. Most people regard him as a harmless eccentric.

Too Far

A shabby little town, little more than a waystation on the road to Aldachur, inhabited by sutlers, innkeepers, horse-traders and tax agents.

Travelling Stone

An unearthly stone, sacred to Larnste, God of Change. See page 53.

Warnstone

When Arim was crossing the Death Line, twenty of his ancestors appeared, pleading in vain for him to turn back. This is the first of Arim's Footsteps.

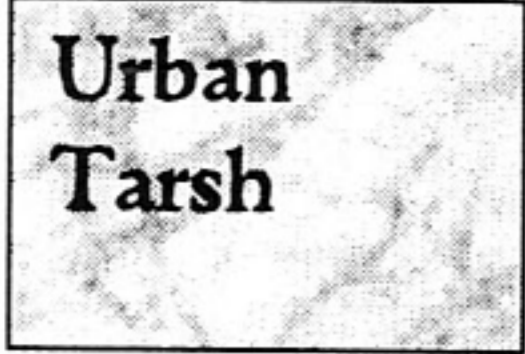


Stopover



Temple of the Reaching Moon

Warning! Many of these locations are based on names from Greg Stafford's original maps. However, the detail provided here is entirely unofficial



Furthest: child of the new Tarsh

Mark Galeotti
with Simon Bray & Wesley Quadros

*"A gleaming jewel, a white-walled haven,
Tallhouse, temple, circus, hall.
Its houses stone, its piazzas paven
A city fit for travellers all."*

-- Drofats the Dittyman

Furthest, the Tarshite capital since 1492, was originally intended as a showcase imperial-style city, and has since been regularly expanded and improved as successive kings assert their authority and claims to fame and, more recently, to reflect Tarsh's new-found wealth. This is a strategically- and mythically-important place, after all, as a city has been on this site – off and on – for over six centuries. So the lunarised city build on the foundations of an old Earth city built on the ruins of a EWF city. Not only is there a spiritual layering, with old ghosts and spirits (including some bizarre EWFish one) but also a physical layering. Underground ruins, catacombs and vaults are used by followers of the Dark Earth goddesses. Unexplained holes open as foundations give way, and the remnants of the old city are an enduring hazard to attempts to build a city-wide sewerage system. Indeed, the Union of Sanitary Excavation, a rag-bag collection of mercenaries hired to spearhead this operation and clear the underways of often monstrous obstacles, is one of the toughest herobands in the city.

Approached from a distance, the city makes an undeniable impression. Enclosed by great sweeping white walls (which are regularly whitewashed rather than really being all marble), the even and well-maintained paved roads into the city pass through



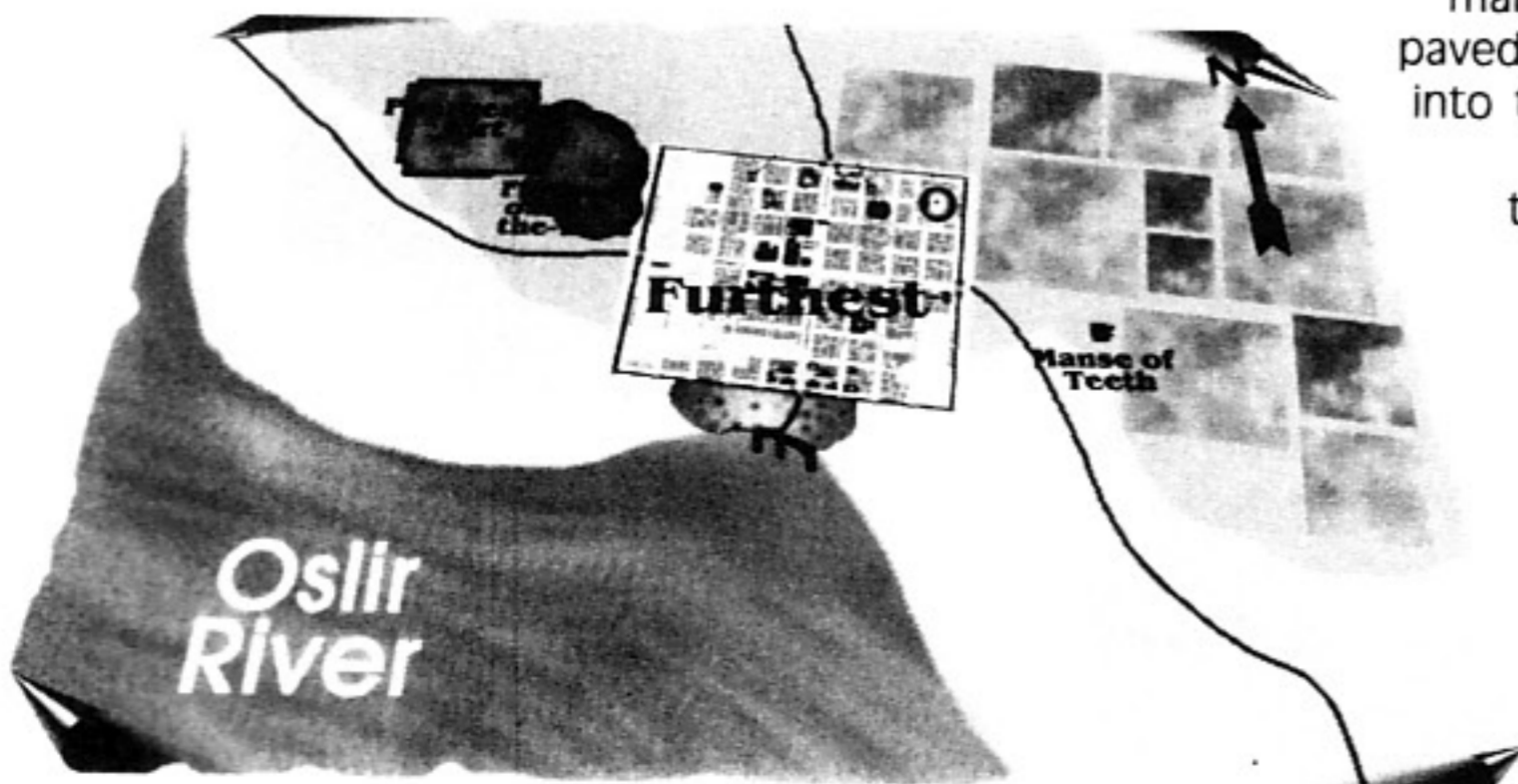
dramatically-carved gates. The square fields around the city are slave-worked and –managed under the auspices of the Royal Dishthane's office, with the exception of the First Field, sacred to the Earth Ladies. Close by is Sorana Tor's Manse of Teeth.

On the other side of the city is the sprawling military encampment, officially the Field of Swords but generally known as Phargentes' Fort. Thanks to its position between the fort and the city, the shantytown of Furthest-Outside-the-Walls has also become the unofficial haunt of camp-followers and eager recruits, as well as the dispossessed, the foreign and the thrill-seeking.

The city's regular population is around 20,000. The most impressive portal is the Barbarian's Gate to the east, which looks out towards Sartar, while a loop of the Oslir lies lazily along the city's southern walls, along which are the three sets of jetties, for the Slave Market, the Fish Market and Port Furthest.

Inside, the city is dominated by a grid-pattern layout. However, the rather less orderly plan of the Old City still survives in the maze of often temporary alleys within the blocks. While the main roads are generally paved or cobbled, between the tallhouses, courtyard villas and temples of each block are twisting and overshadowed backstreets, unexpected little squares and furtive corners. It is still quite usual for an alley mouth to be blocked one day by the erection of a new wooden building or for a new route to open when city workgangs tear down another unlicensed construction. For all the neatness of the official layout, day to day navigation through Furthest can still be an adventure!

The layout of the city is dappled by numerous squares and piazzas, with fountains, gardens and statues (including ones designed and created by the noted Cassidor and Ineldus).



Union of Sanitary Engineers

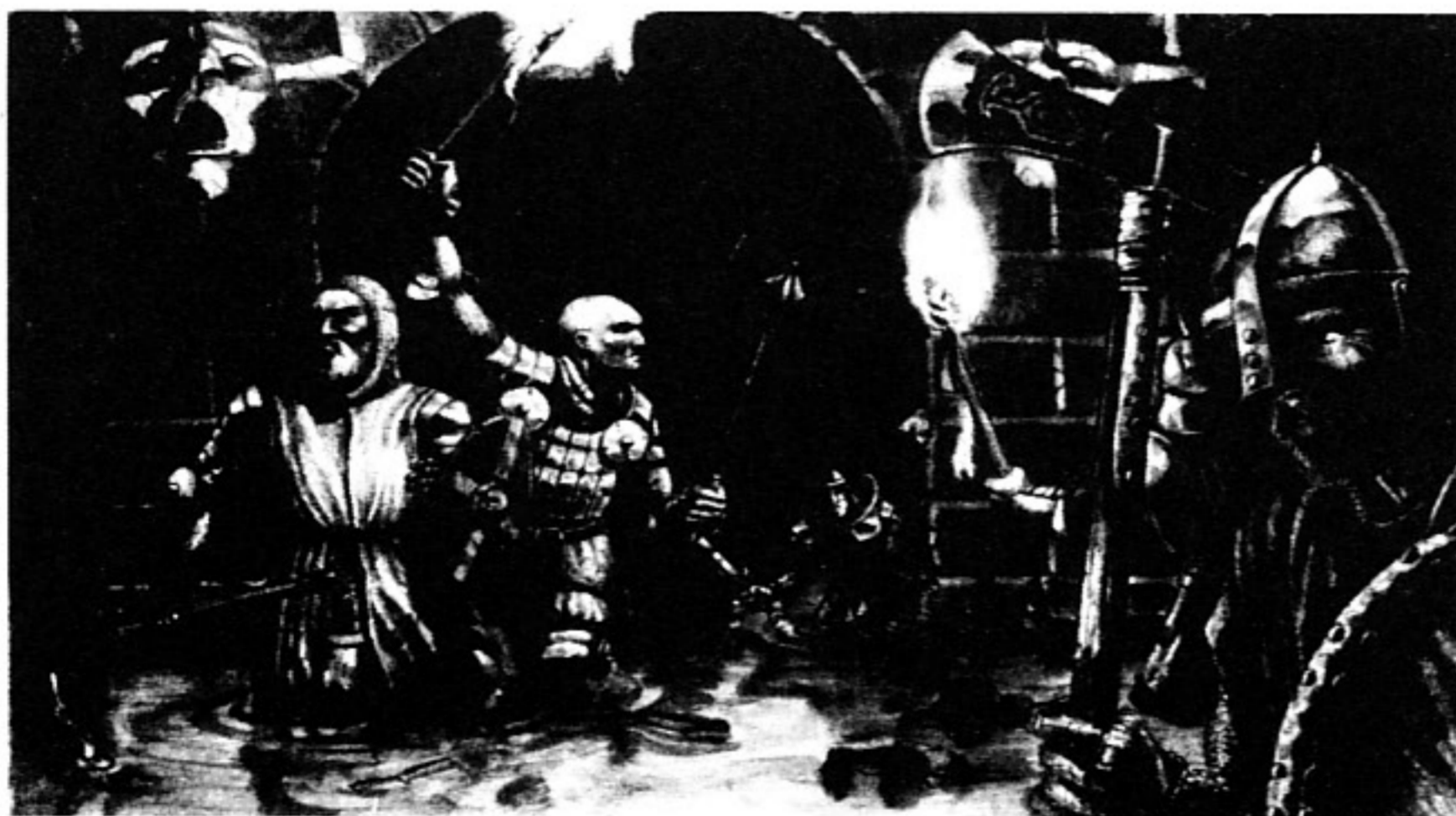
Don't Talk to us about the Old World, we're knee-deep in an Older One

Form:	Mercenary group of underground warriors and surveyors
Ideology:	Get the job done
Look and Feel:	Tough and gritty fighters and explorers, who have seen extraordinary sights and combated unbelievable terrors
Purpose:	Explore the underways and underground ruins of Furthest; protect and support efforts to build the sewers
Leader:	Bruthe Olavsdattir , a forceful Tarshite warrior, initiate of both Vinga and Asella. Vingan warriorwoman 15w2, Initiate of Asella 15w, Initiate of Jono Baltarsson 18w, Dynamic 5w, Inspiring 5w
Membership:	Around 40 full-time warriors, scouts and miners
Headquarters:	The Union operates out of a nondescript tallhouse on the Eastside, on the corner of the Street of the Twelve Ancestors and Fish Street.
Other Contacts:	The Union is financed and run by the Royal Surveyor.
Abilities:	<i>Physical:</i> Dig, Feel Way in Dark; <i>Mental:</i> Remember Route, Underground Savvy
Personality:	Fearless, Self-Reliant, Black Humour
Relationships:	to Union
Magic:	Hero cult of Jono Baltarsson
Living Standard:	Wealthy

Jono Baltarsson

The founder of the Union, an ex-miner who became fascinated by the underways of Furthest. Some call him an explorer, others a treasure-hunter, but no one questions his extraordinary ability to find safe routes through the underways, fight off whatever he encountered along the way and emerge into the sunlight with a sack full of finds and treasures.

Entry Requirements:	Join Union
Abilities:	<i>Physical:</i> Fight Underground; <i>Mental:</i> Tales of Jono Baltarsson
Affinity:	Underway Explorer (Open Blocked Passage, Find Way, Shallow Breathing, Predict Subsidence)
Secret:	Heroform Jono Baltarsson (Know Underway Routes 20w2, Fight Underground 20w2)



As befits a city in a constant state of re-invention, there is building work everywhere and crude wooden cranes and scaffolding (and even cruder gangs of labourers) are a common sight. In the wealthier quarters, much of the new construction is in marble, where conspicuous consumption is the order of the day. It is widely said of the people of Furthest that they would rather 'shine for a day than eat for a week.' Even within the poorer quarters, there are clear efforts at gentrification, where wattle-and-daub or plank and log houses are re-daubed and whitewashed to look vaguely like marble. Old-style townhouses and longhouses, though, are beginning to be replaced by so-called 'tallhouses' – three, four, rarely even five-storey insulae built of whitewashed brick. As the building work continues, many poorer people are being forcibly resettled in hastily- and privately-built tallhouses, where they are introduced to the dubious delights of rent. However, for those who can't or won't pay or for whom there are still not yet houses, there are the tumbledowns and shanties of Furthest-Outside-The-Walls ('Even Further') and also the practice of squatting in the city's parks, only to be moved on at the next festival or parade.

The seven main squares really are squares, exact Earth-cultic areas, including one dedicated to HonEel, in which each cobblestone is engraved with a representation of maize. HonEel's Great Square is dominated by a large, verdigris-covered copper statue of a smiling man. That this statue has magic within it is undoubted, although few agree as to what or who it represents. Some even suggest that there is some link to Pyjeemsab, and that HonEel brought his spirit back over the dark river to watch over his city.

Close by the square is Berest's Point, a hill sacred to Berest the Wallsman, original architect of the city and now

its *wyter*. The hill is marked with a deceptively simple shrine, actually little more than the entry to a substantial underground temple in which the King leads the annual Wallsday rites to keep Furthest strong and secure. It is no surprise that the last three major disasters which befell the city – the Great Fire of 1593, the Great Plague of 1604 or the Great Blight of 1610 (in which the city was tormented for a whole season by flocks of unruly and incontinent gulls and pigeons) – took place in years in which the rituals were either disrupted by hostile heroquesters (1593, 1604) or else the King was unable to carry them out (1610).

It is rightly said that no street is without its temple. These range from the small wooden shrines to Issaries and Orstan the Carpenter to the impressive new temple of Doburdun, which is close to completion. Many temples have a functional role. The temple of Selven Hara, for example, sited right by the Barbarians' Gate, operates as much as a large inn as a church and the Temple of Uleria...has its own purpose, too, as a licensed ritual brothel. The Temple of Oslira, close by the river, is a grand structure with three domes of aquamarine.

Furthermore, most government buildings other than those directly linked with the Crown are actually part of the relevant temple. The House of Ernalda also contains granaries, while the Hall of Etyries is a large covered market and also the headquarters of the local Inspector of Weights and Measures.



One of the most unusual and distinctive temples in Furthest, made especially visible by its prominent location on Burli's Hill, is the Temple of Lunar Resonance. The large moonstone dish on the top of the temple picks up the Glowline energy from the Temple of the Reaching Moon to power the moonglobes which light the city walls and the streets around the central Royal District. On Rufelza's High Holy Day, people flock from all round Tarsh to the hills overlooking Furthest for the turning on of the Furthest Illuminations, when their glow is at its greatest, and the city seems converted into a gleaming red firmament.

Berest the Wallsman, Wyter of Furthest

Physical Manifestation:

A marble statue, kept within Berest's Point

Communication Manifestation:

Cut stone within the city briefly shudders

Wyter Abilities:

Awareness 10w4 (Vigilant for Attackers, Spot Grazers)

Defence 10w4 (Repair Walls, Hold Gates)

Blessings 10w4 (Spotless Walls, Gleaming Spires, Clean Streets)

Festivals:

Wallsday (Earth/Harmony/Sea; when people congregate in the squares to sing and hear tales of the city and support the king in the annual rites)

AxIs (Wild/Harmony/Darkness; when every crossroads in the city is decorated with birch wreaths, lanterns and warn braziers, and inhabitants of the four blocks around meet to settle disputes and make merry)

However, when the Glowline has one of its rare 'blue-outs' and the moonglobes fail, this tends to create unease, even panic, and has been known to trigger riots and looting. Another prominent site, which fills an entire city block, is the University of the Provinces, founded by Moirades. This walled collection of temples, libraries and scriptoria technically operates under its own Charter, and has a student and staff body drawn across the Provinces and even from the Heartlands.

It is important to remember that the King is officially not personally the master of the city. That role goes to his underling, Bolin Bullroarer, the King's Tonsrieve. The King is also the Uncrowned King of the Firstblood Tribe, though, with the Vassal of the Wyvern acting as his proxy in this role. Thus, Furthest is full of palaces. The King has his Royal Palace and also the Great Hall of the Firstblood, which is a symbolic location, maintained, guarded and staffed but never occupied. Instead, the Vassal of the Wyvern resides and works from the Wyvern Hall, alongside the Hall of Dominion, the Tonsrieve's seat. Added to this are the palaces kept in Furthest for each of the tribal chiefs and the palace for the Imperial Ambassador, the local representative of the Provincial Overseer.

The King and the Firstblood tribe have also poured huge resources into prestige projects both to enhance their authority and also entertain and divert the Furthest mob. The central avenue from the Barbarian's Gate is being widened in preparation for the triumphal parade when Sartar and Orlanth are finally beaten. The Great Theatre to be known as the Moirasseum is also near construction, with a whole week of gladiatorial spectacle promised for its opening.

Bread and circuses are, after all, a key aspect of the governance of Furthest. The Corn Dole and the Teelo Norri poorhouses are, for example, supplemented by the Royal Kitchen. On each full moon day, this provides a sack of grain, a bag of potatoes and a jug of beer to everyone attending the Grand Affirmation, a mix of trooping-the-colour in Victory Great Square and acclamation of the king. To cater for the baser appetites, the Ring of Valour holds both gladiatorial combats and also ritualised bullfights against wing-clipped skybulls.

Thunder Breaking!

The consecration of the Great Temple of Doburdun the Thunderer, intended as a symbol of imperial triumph over Orlanth, is likely to prove problematic. There are fears that it might well spark riots and plots among those still heedful of Orlanth, and the imperial and Tarshite authorities themselves are divided over how to mark the event. The King is being advised to take a triumphalist stance, with a festival, military parade and pageantry. The local lunar hierarchy, by contrast, appear to want to avoid confrontation. What about the Orlanthi?

In a combined gesture of support for the King as well as a reminder that they too had become rich and powerful, five of the most powerful nobles of the Arimites also imported Dara Happan architects to design and build the Temple of Gamara. This hosts many contests involving horses. Its courtyard is a large dirt yard, two hundred meters in diameter, that is used as a training ground most days, a horse market on Clayday and hosts



- A Reservoir
- B Black Ram Barracks
- C Temple of Garzeen
- D Moirasseum
- E Temple of Uleria
- F University of the Provinces
- G Grand Theatre
- H Wyvern Hall
- I Temple of the 7 Mothers

- J Phargentes' Arch
- K Hall of Dominion
- L Temple of Lunar Resonance
- M Temple to Duburdun
- N Temple to Yelm Glorious
- O Bath Houses
- P House of Emalda
- Q Temple to Etyries
- R Temple of Lokarnos

- S Temple of HonEel
- T Royal Palace
- U Port Authority
- V Temple of Harst
- W Temple of Oslira Bounteous

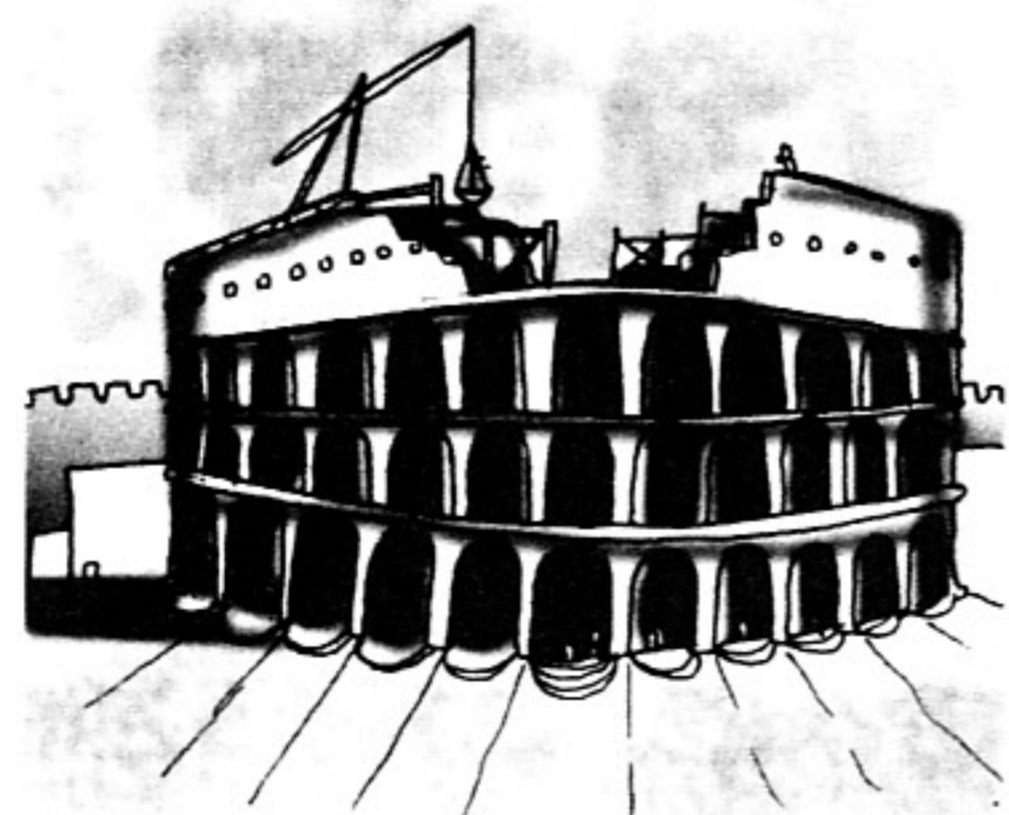
Map drawn by Simon Bray, based broadly on originals by Greg Stafford

the contests on Wildday. It is in the form of a circle – with no walls – formed by intricately carved pillars built in a grassy square. There is a large central pillar carved into the horse-goddess' likeness and within

the temple there are shrines to other horse and horseman gods: Hyalor Horsebreaker, Elmal Horselord and Redalda the Horse Mother.

the annual Furthest Spree. This is a challenging high-speed dash through the city streets in which many horses and their riders are wounded or even killed each year, all for the title of Redalda's Chosen. Fortunes and gambled and won here, with the shrine to Hyalor the traditional haunt

The contests themselves include races, obstacle courses, mounted duels and matches of *charadash*, a Grazer game in which players try to hook a banner on a curved stick and carry it across the field to be placed within a quiver mounted on a pole. Many of the contests are won by the last man in his saddle as even the races allow striking your fellow riders with whip and fist while many horses are trained to bite and kick neighbours. Races can be sprints from one end of the courtyard to the other, a number of laps around the courtyard, or even



What's happened to the Stickpickers?

There is little call for freelance firewood gatherers in Furthest, so the lowest of the low find themselves becoming licensed nightsoil collectors, who work after night in their distinctive orange cloaks. Spare a thought for the poor unfortunate shitpickers.



of the professional gamblers.

The people of Furthest are, indeed, notorious for their gambling, so much so that this has become something for which other Tarshites mock them. A common joke with many variations has Brandig of Furthest hearing a knock at his door (or maybe feels someone getting into bed next to him). 'Who's there?' he asks. 'Boltor, your brother', comes the reply (or Brandige, your wife). 'Bet it's not.' Then there is the time he bets that he will die in tomorrow's

Peridros the Prince

One of the Dramatic Re-Enactors is the young Peridros, whose noble bearing and uncanny resemblance to Pharandros has been widely noted. Despite his name, he comes from a humble family of coopers. A quick way to court royal disfavour is to use Peridros' unofficial title or recall that, over a century ago, King Marofdul locked his Lunar treaty wife in a brass cabinet in the Hydra Hills. She was eventually freed, wooed, wed and bedded by Hassidor, a cooper from Furthest. Peridros appears to have no political aspirations, but his continued popularity with the city's mob and cultural elite alike make him both dangerous and untouchable from Pharandros' perspective.

battle. Brandig always, always loses his stupid bets, and other Tarshites will often work the phrase 'bet it's not' into the conversations to mock the people of Furthest. But they don't mind, they are too busy gambling. For those looking for less visceral entertainment than that provided by the Temple of Gamara, for example, the Grand Theatre of the Furthest Dramatic Re-Enactors has a year-round programme of events, from high epic to low farce. Even here, though, gambling is rife, from the length of the applause to the size of the audience. (Although Brandig once reportedly gambled that Mikhil, the tragic hero of *The Lay of Mikhil's Doom*, would live happily ever after.)

Sometimes, though, diversion must give way to enforcement. Furthest is a heavily militarised city, with a garrison and royal forces inside the city, as well as the encampment of the Field of Swords. Law-enforcement within the city is handled by a regiment of royal troops under Royal Shieldman Saperides, cousin of the king, based at the Black Ram Barracks. After all, despite Drofats' typically positive portrayal, this is not a city without its dark side. It has its own underworld, Orlanthi rebels, Exile sympathisers, conspirators and chaos cultists, and for all the open wealth, a growing number of dispossessed and disgruntled citizens, who have lost the traditions and security of their family longhouse for the anonymity of the tallhouse and the charity of the King.

Herobands of Tarsh

Martin Laurie

Two regulars of the Furthest Dart Wars...

The Takers

Leader: Killer Orgovon. A disciple of Humakt and his herocult which is profoundly focused on Death as its main aspect. Orgovon lives to kill and is merciless to his foes. Only the safety and survival of his band and the herocult of Ruganath himself stops him from launching into an uncontrolled and unending killing spree.

Notes: Humakti warband who follow the herocult of Ruganath the Taker of Life, a popular warleader during the civil war period. Numbering around sixty warriors at any one time, the Takers are hired for bodyguard work, punitive efforts against overly efficient bandits and increasingly for the less subtle Dart Competitions becomingly all too popular among the Tarsh nobility.

Champions

Leader: Voidak the Destroyer, a Tusk rider who became the first gladiator to be freed from his slavery by good king Moirades. Voidak was a relentless destroyer of foes on the bloody sands of the Furthest arena, using his strength and animal cunning to overcome more skilled foes. Once freed he showed his intelligence by asking the king for the right to purchase the freedom of all arena champions once they survived a hand of defences for a fixed price, the same as it cost Moirades to buy his freedom from his old owners. The king gave little thought to this boon and granted it to his current favourite freely, making it a royal decree. Voidak then began to build up a group of ex-gladiators who were loyal to him for freeing him and happy to be given work that suited their skills and rewarded them so well. There was no shortage of customers for the Champions and as their numbers grew, so to did the size of the jobs they undertook.

Urban Tarsh

Tuk Horse- Wise

Wesley Quadros

Tuk Horse-Wise

Keywords: Char-Un Warrior 2w2, Priest and Devotee of Gamara 11w2

Significant Abilities: Ride 3w3, Close Combat 17w (Scimitar, Horsewhip), Cruel 2w, Breed Horse 14w2, Train Horse 16w2, Wealth 8w2, Horse Magic 12w2

Flaws: No left arm 1w2, Quick Temper 16

Armour & Weapons: Horsewhip ^1, Scimitar ^3

Tuk's Lackeys

Keyword: Grazer Warrior 17

Significant Abilities: Ride 12w, Scimitar & Shield Combat 5w, Mounted Archery 8w, Combat Magic 17

Armour & Weapons: Scimitar ^3, Leather tunic, helm and shield ^3, Horse bow ^3

Tuk Horse-Wise is the most successful horse breeder and trainer in Furthest. He is also the ranking – of the three – priest of Gamara in Tarsh. Tuk is a loud man, with a quick laugh and a quicker temper. His jokes are cruel and his pleasures best left unsaid. Some say that his heart died when his arm was taken in battle, the better informed know that he was born that way in the cold northern lands of the Char-Un; for Tuk was a champion of those restless people.

Tuk came to Tarsh seventeen years ago with a warband in the Emperor's service, sent to aid the King of Tarsh against the Grazers who were wearing their warpaint and raiding the borders. At the battle of Condor's Rest, a Grazer axe took off Tuk's arm and neither his shaman nor the army's healers could mend the damage. When his people returned to the north, Tuk remained in Furthest, where he dedicated his life to the goddess Gamara.

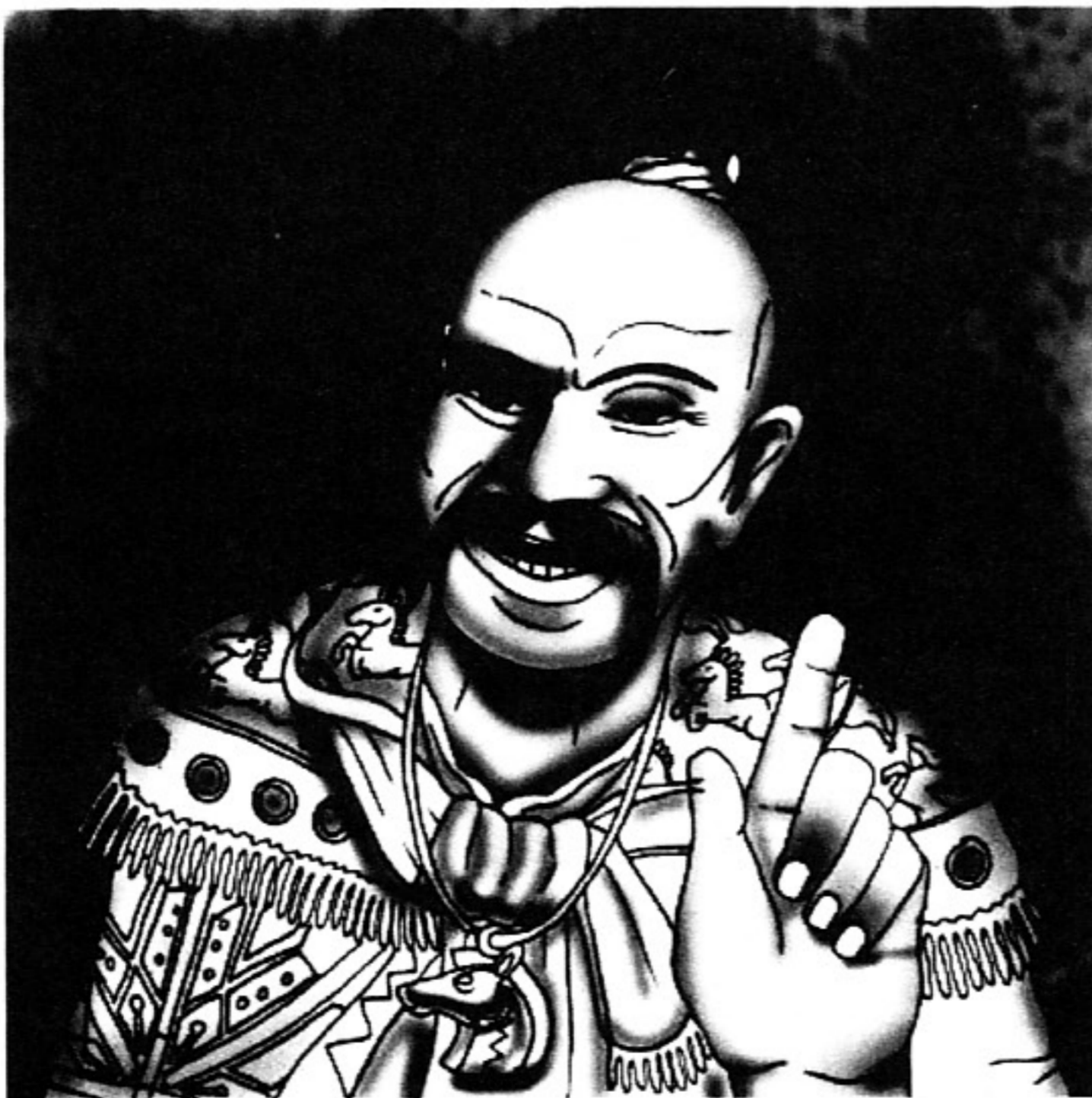
Tuk has prospered from his devotion. With the skills learned in the harsh northlands and the blessings of his goddess, his horses are the fastest and most vicious racers in the Kingdom; it is a badly held secret that every one of Tuk's horses is trained to bite any horse they do not know. Tuk likes to play the part of the nomad barbarian, though his horse-hide trousers have been replaced with silk and his sheep-skin jerkin with the softest cotton. Tuk usually wears a heavy cloak, draped over his left shoulder hiding his missing arm; many do not even notice the lack.

Tuk maintains a fine household from his racing proceeds. He has three wives, seven concubines and twelve children of various ages. His apartments are located within the compound of Gamara's Temple and his herd of twenty-four horses are kept nearby, each distinctly marked with Tuk's sigil. He has the best horses in Furthest, some say in all of Tarsh. But his prices are the highest in Furthest, some say in all of Tarsh. Many of his servants and guards are Grazers – they have now taken Gamara as their goddess and left their spirits in the hills where they belong – and Tuk himself rides off into the Grazelands at least once a season.

Plot Hooks

Grazeland Sojourn: The heroes are approached by a man (a servant of the King if they are royalists, an Exile if they are rebels) who asks them to find out where Tuk goes and who he sees in the Grazelands. Could it be that, as rumoured, Tuk breeds his horses with demons? Perhaps Tuk asks/hires the heroes to accompany him on his seasonal journey into the Grazelands? Or maybe Tuk is late returning from the Grazelands. Gamara's High Holy Day approaches and the temple staff are worried. He must be found!

Heavenly Ride: Tuk decides to re-enact the heroquest of Gamara's Ride. For the quest to work he needs the heroes to play parts in his ritual and to accompany him on the quest. This quest relates how Gamara rode across the world, first avoiding the Wild Dogs, then trampling the Bearded Goats, she leapt over the River, narrowly resisted the primal advances of Lodril and then encountered Yelm, who tamed her.



A Day at the Executions

Mark Galeotti

**“The Land
will Eat for
the Land to
Feed”**



A Tarshite Bloodpot, of Goldedge manufacture from the moulding of the base. The same kind of pot is used in all Dark Earth sacrifices and it used to catch a ladleful from first gouts of blood from each victim. In HonEel rites, this is then poured into the sangeducts at the end to seal the ceremony. In Babeester Gor rites, this is then used to drench new initiates. In Maran sacrifices, the pot is then slammed top-down onto the ground, strong enough to crack it, and the blood seeps down into the waiting earth.

A jolly day out for everyone. Almost everyone. By the time we had reached the Earth Gate, it was already near Yelmrise, the sky beginning to purple on the horizon, the night air beginning to be thawed by the first promise of a hot, bright day. Around us were others intent on the same purpose, from every walk and rank. The gates were open specially early this morning, and the guards in their heavy capes waved us all through, the younger and cheekier stealing a sweetmeat or sixberry from the maidens' baskets as we passed. By the time we finally reached First Field, the purple was turning violet, and we cursed the revels last night that had so delayed our rise. (Though Wyredd predictably enough said that it only showed that we should have stayed at the wineshop all night and not tried to get any sleep!)

We finally managed to find a place behind some thanes and their inevitable entourage of slaves. These unfortunates, pigboys¹ by their look and smell, had obviously been worked hard. The thanes and their families sat on finely carved stools (six-legged ones for the traditionalists, three-legged for the more fashion-conscious), eating sixberry tarts from silver platters and drinking wine from gilded horns. Judging by the way they were quaffing their wine and the volume of their chatter, at home they were more used to drinking thin beer like the rest of us, but this was Furthest, and appearances were all. Our fare was rather poorer, but Traytha laid out her prized applecloth

¹ Balazarings. It is an item of faith with all polite Tarshites that Balazarings are fonder of their pigs than their mothers. Impolite Tarshites claim to see no distinction between the two. Balazarings are a popular source of work slaves in Tarsh. Flathead Furth, the stock comic Balazaring slave character in the Furthest Dramatic Re-Enactors' repertoire, is known for his catch-phrase, on spying a beautiful woman, 'prettier 'n any pig I ever did see.'

blanket and we piled up our respective offerings of food and drink. We had scarcely started toasting the Dark Earth when a clangour of bells from the earth temple by the field cut across the hum of the crowd. A second of silence, and then the first gleam of Yelm's glory cut across the horizon. We all cheered lustily, the women shaking their tintina,² as the light washed across the field, picking out the executioners' copper axe heads.

Six of them stood motionless as statues on the far side of the field. Although I could not see the detail from here, I knew from other visits that they would be painted white and red, the colours of execution.

The first six criminals were dragged into view. As ritual demands, they were sprinkled with water, marched under a burning branch and spun round in a wind-rune on their way. Judging by their shambling, uncomplaining gait, they had also been fed softbark to keep them quiet and compliant.³ The priestess of Sorana Tor stepped from the temple and approached. We all joined in the chants of 'Land-Mother, Land-Mother', until she had reached the worn stone plinth by the field. Again, we were silenced by the chime of copper bells.

The priestess spoke. We should not have been able to hear her, but somehow her quiet voice filled the air. 'The Land will Take for the Land to Give.' (A murmur of agreement swept through the crowd.) 'The Land will Eat for the Land to Feed.'

The imperial priestess joined her beside the plinth, arms folded in a gesture of deference. Even so, a few tintina registered their protests – many had still not accepted this addition to the ritual.

² A small copper bell tied to the end of a stick, used by women to scare away ghosts, scold feckless men and welcome the Dark Earth goddesses.

³ Softbark, the crumbly mould that grows on dark alders, is a mild natural sedative, much used in Tarsh by healers and exasperated parents.



'You have taken from the land and from its people. You have been judged, but you have been blessed. Having taken, you now may give.'⁴

Almost at one a few voices took up the chant: 'Give them to the Fields!'

Soon we were all chanting at the top of our voices, 'Give them to the Fields!'

'Give them to the Fields!'

The six prisoners were marched past the priestess of Sorana Tor, as her fingers picked out mystic combinations on her rosary of teeth, each being draped with a sash of unbleached linen to symbolise their marriage to the Land Goddess.⁵

⁴ Prospective sacrificial victims are drawn from those found to have committed one of the so-called 'Red Crimes' such as kinslaying, secret murder, incest and despoiling fields.

⁵ Women are not Given to the Fields. However, in times of hardship, it is not unknown for women to be ritually dressed in men's clothes, festooned with the symbols of

'Give them to the Fields!'

Each was forced to kneel on a rune-carved stone block before one of the axe-maidens.⁶

'Give them to the Fields!'

Six copper axe-blades swung into the air as the Babeester Gori began their keening, eerily audible even over the roar of the crowd.

'Give them to the Fields!'

Hitherto silent, the Gor Chime, largest of the copper bells of the

manhood (a leather belt, a knife, a phallic pendant and a blue and red cordwork headband) and symbolically become men for the purposes of the rite.

⁶ That Babeester Gor axe maidens have retained their traditional role as the executions of Tarsh is not surprising. By allowing them to continue to wield their axes in defence of earth temples, as executions and in the pursuit of rapists and defilers, their bloodlust is sated and they are assimilated into the new order, rather than being driven into the arms of the Exiles.

Manse of Teeth, finally spoke. Its chime hung in the air for a silent moment between breaths. Six axe blades fell.

'Give them to the Fields!'

We screamed ourselves hoarse. Traytha was still frantically shaking her tintina, not even noticing that the bell had fallen off and lost itself amongst our feet.

'Give them to the Fields!'

Blood flowed through the sangueducts, rich and lush, a trickle becoming a gush as more criminals were dragged to the stones and Babeester Gor axes rose and fell.⁷ Six became twelve

⁷ The executioners decapitate the victims, then teams of prepubescent maidens already destined for the Dark Earth cults, wearing red tunics and black masks, lower the headless bodies, neck down, onto wooden troughs leading into the sangueducts, for their blood to continue flowing. This size execution is relatively rare, usually only six or twelve are killed, and thus there may also have been other, burlier

became eighteen. The copper bloodpot, which takes a small ladle-full from each Giver's first bleed, would no doubt be filling up by now. The blood coursed through the unseasoned wooden channels taking it to all corners of the field, nourishing and enriching the waiting and hungry earth. For a while, thanes, freemen, freedmen, thralls and slaves were all as one as we felt Sorana Tor taking the blood to refresh the life of the dark earth. A warm rich glow suffused the earth, making it look as if the whole field was awash with blood, invisible energies rippled through the air above the field.

'Give them to the Fields!'

Suddenly, a change of tone from the crowd closest to the front. Peering across, I saw that one of the prisoners, clearly having somehow managed to avoid taking the softbark, had wrenched himself from the burly women holding him and was running back from the field as quickly as he could with both arms bound. He must have been lucky or powerful, for he dodged one of the axe maidens, then one of the soldiers who had been maintaining a discreet watch on the crowd. He was making for the squat temple to the Land Mothers. Behind him raced two more axe maidens, screeching and keening, and a dusty shimmer at his feet suggested other earth magics were trying to stop him. We shrieked and yelled encouragement to the pursuers, sounding more like the crowd at the Temple of Gamara⁸ than spectators at a holy rite. One of the viragos was almost upon him, her axe raised, but as we had already started to cheer with triumph, it was as if the very air around her began to twist and tug. She squared her shoulders and smashed through this magic with a stroke of her axe, which now seemed strangely larger and darker. But this had been enough

assistants to (wo)manhandle so many bodies.

⁸ Temple to the Horse God – and the Furthest horse-racing stadium.

to allow the prisoner one last dash, and he collapsed on the front step of the Manse.

At once our bloodlust disappeared like the shadow when Yelm breaks through the clouds. Little Mosser whined with disappointment: 'aren't they going to kill him?' I absently cuffed the back of his head and helped myself to another handful of sixberries. If the Land Mothers had allowed him to reach sanctuary,⁹ then who were we to question them? Either way, we knew that, respected, revived and refreshed, the fields around Furthest would be kind to us again this coming year.

The Usual Suspects

A scenario cameo for a single session, especially useful if one of the group is away for this session (make that character the victim).

Perhaps one of the characters has genuinely committed one of the Red Crimes? Maybe he has made powerful enemies in Furthest? Or maybe he just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time? Suddenly, a clutch of shouting, screaming, shrieking women in the street accuse one of the heroes of having committed a terrible crime – the murder of Hengis the baker.

Before he can really react, burly soldiers from the 1st Furthest Shieldwall Regiment have appeared, wearing the green and white sashes showing that they are Keeping the

⁹ If a captive manages to reach the temple, then he is deemed to have been pardoned by the Land Mothers. However, by next Yelmrise, he will have been cursed by them. If he ever is within earshot of the copper temple bells of the city where he was convicted, the land itself will turn against him. He will suffer a constant, debilitating weakness (an impediment at 10w). Local earth cultists will also realise that the individual is in some way cursed.

King's Peace. They seize him and frogmarch him through a jeering crowd to the Shrieve's Hall. (Of course, the heroes could resist – but remember that Furthest is a policed, militarised city, and resisting arrest, never mind killing soldiers, is regarded as a Bad Thing.) There is a brief, chaotic hearing and before the dust settles, the character has been sentenced to be Given to the Fields.

"Give him to the fields!"

These executions take place every season, on Freeze Day or Death Week. Two successive mornings of executions are held on the Babeester Gor High Holy Day, Freeze Day of Death Week in the Earth Season and the day after, which is the holy day of Duria Twice-Thrice-Wedded, patron deity of Furthest. Just think if this is the afternoon of Babeester Gor's High Holy Day, and the characters had just been to see that morning's executions...

What can they do? This could be a prelude to some machiavellian offer, as the Shrive or a royal agent tells the heroes that the charges could be quashed, if only they carry out some simple task... Otherwise they will have to

Bribe the Shrive to release him: It might be difficult to get to speak to him after the court session is over (bribe, intimidate, etc the Shrive's officers, resistance 20). You can decide if he is a corrupt sort or not (resistance 10w--5w2), but homework might reveal particular tastes, which might make this, easier (such as a love of fine goldwork or an eye for a beautiful woman). Failure might land the remaining heroes in the cells too!

Bribe the guards to release him: An individual guard or jailer may be amenable to being bribed, but the heroes must bribe a large number to free their friend. Furthermore, their fear of the Babeester Gori will also push up the price. The heroes must test their Wealth, modified by appropriate skills, against a resistance of 10w2.

Pull strings to arrange a pardon: Do they have this sort of pull? Have they just saved Saperides' life? This would take serious influence (resistance 20w against an

appropriate relationship, for example), but might also be a good Narrator's hook to force the players to take on some mission or owe a major favour.

If the victim has been framed, solve the crime before next dawn: Hengis was actually killed by a soldier, Rulf Rulfsson. The baker quietly supplemented his income with a line in 'maiden buns' laced with maiden's caution, a powerful contraceptive herb. When Rulfsson's sister, Agada, became pregnant despite consuming large numbers of these expensive buns, Rulf decided to teach him a lesson.

As is usual on execution mornings, Hengis opened early for the festival crowd and then closed for the rest of the morning to catch up on his sleep. Rulf 'visited' him just before he closed, pretending to be a customer and closed the shutter on the shop. He planned just to knock the baker around a little and demand a refund, but when Hengis tried to fight back, the soldier's instincts took over, and he left his knife planted in the baker's belly. He retained enough presence of mind to check that he was not seen as he slipped out, but knew that an unsolved murder could lead soon enough to resolution by magical means. To cover himself, he needed a scapegoat. He rushed to see Agada and, as ever, his sister came up with an answer. He would be patrolling the quarter later that afternoon, she would give him that victim. This was a good day, after all, as the Shrive would be looking to bring up the execution tally. Later, she made a point of gathering her more excitable friends and offering to buy them lunch from Hengis', alluding to some appreciative client. Besides, she adds, heard him throwing out some stranger this morning, and she always wants to keep up with the gossip. Finding the shutters closed, she eventually agrees to go in and 'wake the old ox up'. Her screams bring her friends, she whips up their hysteria, says it must have been that man she saw earlier. Out in the street, she picks some stranger at random and points him out, just in time for the arrival of her brother's patrol... Quite how the heroes can solve this crime is up to them, but there are a number of possible approaches and clues. A search of the baker's could turn up a hidden cache of maiden's caution (magical methods could throw up extreme anger and anguish that morning, or perhaps a vision of a

large man in a cape killing Hengis); asking the right questions in the neighbourhood could reveal his side-line and the fact that the local ladies of the night were amongst his best customers. Finding and talking to any of the women in Agada's 'posse' might lead to the heroes learning of her key role, the fact that she is pregnant and, if they were especially lucky, persistent, probing or generous, the fact that her brother was leading the patrol which arrested them.

If the heroes are having too easy or too hard a time of it, Drenna the market-trader could pass on some gossip as either a help ('that Agada, I never thought she'd be that bothered if someone knifed Hengis given what's happened to her') or a red herring ('they say that Hengis kept some fancy women over in Further-Still'). Or maybe the scrawny little urchin Pug will offer to tell them what he saw for a few silvers. It might be that he saw Rulf leave after killing Hengis. He won't recognise him, but he saw that the man ditched the knife in a nearby cess-pit: a enjoyable search later, they will have found a soldier's knife, with the wyvern-and-shield of the 1st Furthest Shieldwall on the pommel. Or maybe as soon as he gets the silver, he'll blurt out 'I didn't see nuffing' and run like hell.

What if the victim has been framed by an enemy? Perhaps Rulf killed Hengis and Agada identified the hero at someone's behest. In this case, the story will play out much as before, but instead of the maiden bun plot hook, they are political agents. Beyond simply tracking them down and trying to cajole, beg, bribe or beat the truth out of them, clues could involve gossip of Rulf's unexpectedly rapid promotions or of Agada's unusually heavy purse.

The victim himself is not necessarily helpless: he's a hero, surely he can escape? Possible, but hardly easily. He will be shackled with enchanted copper chains and manacles (Strong 20w2) in a cell beneath the Shrieve's Hall. The cell itself is enchanted to

inhibit the intercession of other deities (resistance 5w2 against theist magic and spirit access), which also has some effect on Sorcery (resistance 20w) – although captives will be stripped of talismans or anything else seeming magical or valuable. There are also a large number of jailers (Strong 5w, Cruel Mockery 20, Greedy 20) and soldiers (Tarshite Warrior 17, Only Obeying Orders 18).

Dramatis Personae

Hengis the Baker, the victim

Dead 5w4

Rulf Rulfsson, the murderer

Tarshite soldier 5w, Hot tempered 20, Devoted to sister 5w

Agada Rulfsdattir, the framer

Common prostitute 20, Popular 5w, Manipulative 10w

Drenna, the gossip

Market trader 18, Keen eye 3w, Gossip 10w

Pug, the aspiring informant

Urchin 14, Whine & Wheedle 17

If all else fails, then the victim could try to avoid being drugged (softbark has a Might of 5w) and try to make a dash for the Manse of Teeth during the ceremony. He will be held by two minders with Strong 20 each. If breaking free, he must make an extended contest to reach the

temple, with -6 to his mobility skills, against a resistance of 5w for the distance. Other pursuers will, in effect, add to the AP of the distance. His friends may try to assist him by subtle magics (although the power of Sorana Tor will be on the fields, providing a resistance of 20w to all such attempts) or even by direct action. Overtly assisting the fugitive will be a crime, but happening to trip in front of the pursuers or the like might be an option. If he does make it to the temple, then the victim will receive the curse and will probably be looking to move on from Furthest rather quickly – but maybe that's what you had in mind?

Urban Tarsh

Copper Town

Simon Bray

In the Darkness, when death and chaos stalked the world the greatest sin was kin strife. Togloth the Silver Lord, stole the Copper Herd of Undrun from his brothers the Blue Skin Giants, and made a great feast of them to honour his brave thanes. But as the bloated warriors lay asleep within the hills, surrounded by the copper hides, bones and bells of that most magical herd, the vengeful wives of the Blue Skin Giants sneaked into the camp and attacked the celebrants. The blood and bones of the slain sunk into the earth, and did not stand up again, and a thing of Chaos slithered from the darkness to guard the ancient treasures and it was seven-headed, one head for each hundred kin slain that day.

*A myth of
Copper Town*

The old hill fort of Copper Town sits besides the banks of the Quintus River. The town is wealthy beyond its size, accumulated from the rich copper mines that dot the Hydra Hills. From behind the stone and wood stockade, there is the constant sound of hammering and bargaining in the air during the day. At night, the ale halls resonate to the bawdy songs of the smiths and miners. Gustbran the Smith, Asrelia Goddess of Hidden Wealth and Asella, Patron of the Mines and her son Torkal the Miner are favoured here above all gods for the gifts that they provide and the wealth that they bring.

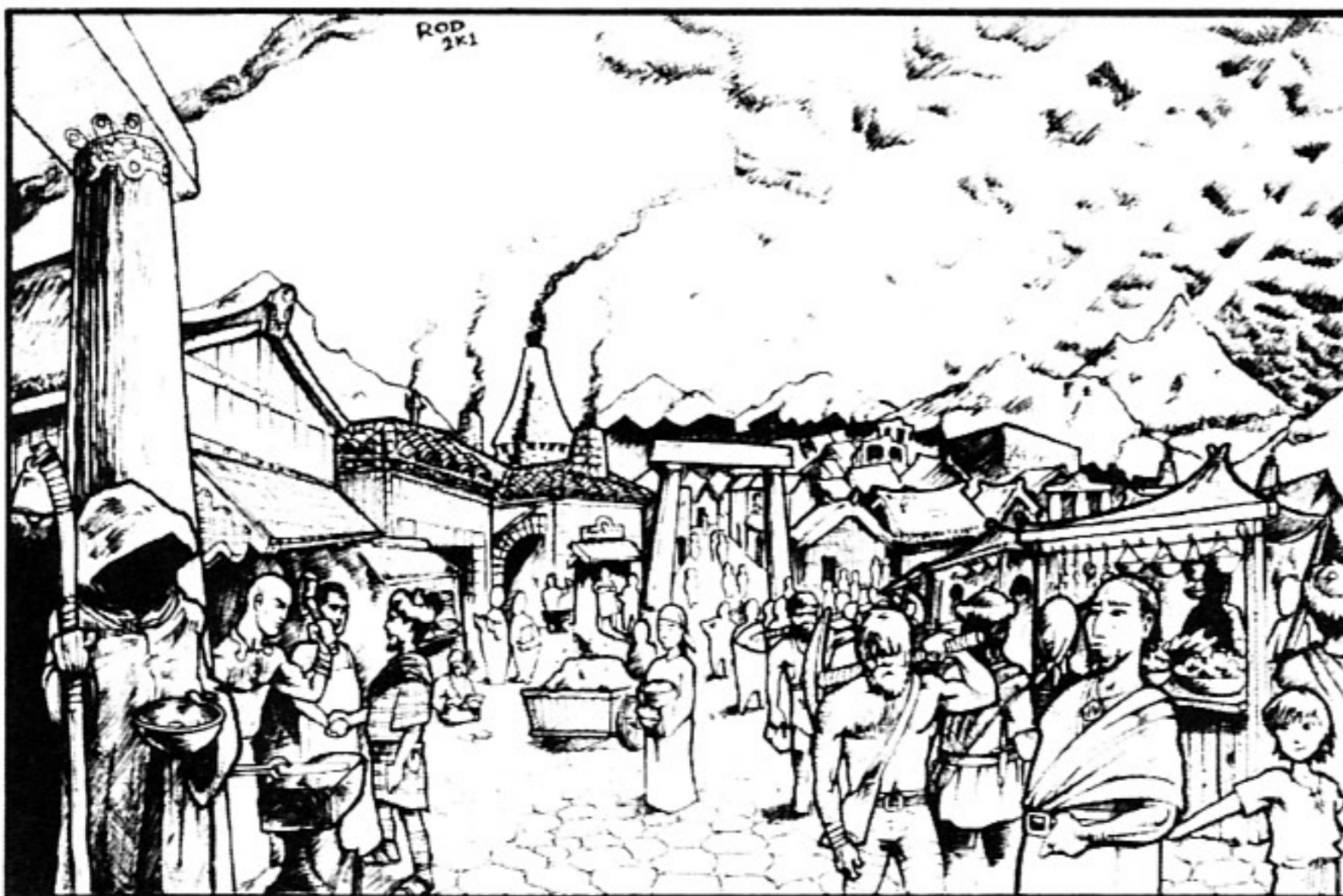
Copper has been mined here for over two hundred years, with transient villages forming and reforming as mines open and are exhausted. Copper Town itself was just one of them, slightly larger and more important by virtue of its role as fief of the Barastaros, one of the richer clans of the Tremarki. All this was to change when Tarsh joined the empire. With the new opportunities for trade with copper-hungry Holay and Vanch, the mines experienced a sudden boom. With wealth came not only a tide of hopeful prospectors and workers but also the attention of powerful interests. The Barastorosi, intoxicated with this new-found wealth, overplayed their hand disastrously, demanding tribal leadership. The great houses of the Tremarki struck back with lawsuits, raids and assassinations. The Barastorosi were

on the verge of destruction when the King intervened. The remnants of the Barastorosi were allowed not to take over the Tremarki but to secede, in return for generous annual tributes for the next 49 years. They were granted deserted lands to the west, but it was painfully evident that they were too few and now too weak to be an effective tribe. Thus, the King extended them protection in the form of royal troops for those same 49 years, maintained from the profits of the mines, while Alakoringite settlers from Holay and Aggar were brought in to populate their tribal tula. Those 49 years are now over, and relations with the Tremarki are good, but this is still a tribe dominated by royal appointees and lunar settlers, the Barastorosi in little more than name.

The old stone houses of the town cling to the to the hill, forming a complex maze of interconnecting streets that wind their way to the great Smith Market. Around this cobbled square the forges of Gustbran blaze, but are shadowed by the copper crowned temples of the town's patron deities. Within the market place, profiteering food merchants bargain their wares, arriving with great mule trains burdened with provisions and leaving with panniers filled with copper, turquoise and silver.

Copper Town is a true frontier town, its strange ways separate it from the Barastarosi. Within its walls, there is greed and lawlessness. Only the poorest scrape a living from the soil, others importing food as required. With the coming of HonEel, the men have abandoned Orlanth and now sacrifice to the Earth and Forge. Tribal warriors have become mine guards or traded swords for picks or hammers. Women polish stones or have become crafters, making jewellery and belt buckles instead of weaving cloth. Even the scribes and law speakers have turned their skills to accountancy and map making.

Imperial culture has made its mark and the walled villas of wealthy Heartland merchants stand out against the ancient buildings of the Tarshites. Soldiers guard the valuable copper along the bandit-infested trade route to Furthest, and those who do not make their wealth from the mines, the market or the smiths can find comfort within the Teelo Norri Poor House. The King is attempting to bring order to the narrow streets



And is trying to encourage temperance in the hope of increasing productivity during the hard winter weeks, but the locals only pay lip service to their efforts.

The Town

Copper Town tops a steep sided hill, with a hardy stone and wood palisade. From the six sturdy stone drum towers, the city militia watches vigilantly over the populace, the river and the surrounding lands. Anyone wishing to enter the city must do so via a great cobbled ramp that leads to the city gates. This steep incline is a constant bustle of activity; here can be found slave gangs headed for the mines, food and ore merchants with their mule trains or stout fellows seeking their fortunes in the mines. It is rare for anyone to be refused entry, but at the first sign of trouble the militia descend from the gate towers to intercede or lock the gates as needs dictate. The gates themselves are made of oak, decorated with hammered copper sheets, into which have been moulded a silver armoured warrior guiding a herd of copper cattle into a great cauldron.

Guard: Soldier 19, Initiate of Starkval 15, Scimitar & Shield 20, Bow 17, Call Alarm 19, Shut Gates Quickly 17, Spot Trouble 16.

The Smith Market. This great square is surrounded by the

workshops and forges of the town's many redsmiths. It is here that all Copper Town life can be encountered. Merchants haggle with smiths while slaves heft metal into wagons and food into storehouses. Scribes sit in the streets preparing agreements, maps and claims, watching as the wealthy Etyries merchants step out from their villas to set market rates in accordance to the Goddess's dictates. On every corner are fraudsters offering maps showing the location of the fabled Torkal's Deepest. Richly-jewelled Asrelian priestesses rummage amongst the copper bins seeking secrets and treasures. Above this clamour rings the deafening clang of hammer against anvil.

Redsmith: Tarshite Smith 5w, Initiate of Gustbran, Work Hard 3w, Rippling Muscles 16, Haggle 20.

Merchant: Tarshite Merchant 20, Initiate of Issaries, Lokamos or Etyries 20, Haggle 7w, Spot Bargain 20, Spot Sucker 19.

Scribe: Tarshite Scribe 1w, Initiate of Lhankor Mhy or Irripl Ontor 17, Draft Agreement 19, Draw Map From Description 18.

Fraudster: Tarshite Conman 4w, Spot Easy Mark 19, Forge Map 17, Haggle 20, Pick Pockets 5w, Run 19, Hide in Crowds 19.

Slave: Foreign Slave 17, Obey Orders 17, Work Hard 1w, Menial Tasks 5w.

The Temple of Gustbran. This

temple sits like a squat mountain of metal and stone. Its steeply-sloping sides are decorated with hammered copper sheets. From the temple's roof rises a perpetual column of black smoke, and from within resonates the monotonous hammering of the sacred anvil. A metal statue of Gustbran straddles the doorway, holding aloft a great hammer. This is the largest Gustbran temple in all Dragon Pass. Devotees and pilgrims travel from all across the region to give worship to the Smith god. Everyone seeks the skills of the temple smiths, who specialise in smelting copper, but have skill with iron and silver too. Wax loss is the most common method used to form copper or silver artefacts. Iron requires forging through a lengthy process that requires charcoal, bellows and strong magic. Copper is hammered into Bells or Hides for transportation.

The Temple of Asrella. This is a large brown stone building of very simple design. There is no external decoration on its cube shaped form, no statues or symbols. However, the quick-witted will realise that the copper doors of the temple are really iron, plated in copper. Within, the temple, is luxuriant in the extreme. Here is accumulated the secret wealth of the earth, hidden from public view. Many come here to sacrifice in the hope that the goddess will lead them to their fortunes. Situated within the public chambers of the temple is a shrine to Ernalda All-Mother, which is attended to daily by the women of the town. The sacred hides of the Copper Herd of Undrun are held by the cult. On Asrella's holy day they are brought from the temple, stretched across a great loom mounted atop an ox cart and then paraded around the town as part of the festivities.

The Temple of Asella and Torkal. A square building, open on all sides, supported by crude stone columns. Two green copper domes form the roof, under which stand statues of Asella Protectress of Miners and her son, Torkal the Miner. Upon a great framework of lacquered beams hang the Nine Bells of the Copper Herd. These massive instruments are played every evening by a godi, and their strange hollow tones signal the end of the day's work. Despite the value of these artefacts, the populace of Copper Town know that the gods protect them. Beneath the statue's feet a rough-hewn door leads to the sanctum

Asella and Torkal

Asella is the granddaughter of Asrella, who fell in love with Gustbran and defied her grandmother by showing Gustbran how to find the treasures of the earth. With this knowledge and Asella's protection, Gustbran forged the three gifts and completed the Earth Queen's Tasks. He wedded Asella and they had a son, called Torkal. When the Darkness came, Gustbran and Asella taught their secrets to Torkal. Asella showed Torkal how to tear open the earth and not harm it; he then dug deep into the earth to Asrella's Hall to bring back hope. On his journey, he was harried by Maran Gor and her destructive servants. Asella guarded the entrance to the tunnel, even when Gustbran was called away to make weapons. At the Dawn, Torkal returned to the surface world, bringing with him treasures to make the world prosperous and beautiful once again.

Entry Requirements: Miners may worship Torkal; their mothers and wives Asella.

Physical Skills: (Torkal) Mining, Crawl Quickly, Tireless, Squeeze Through Gap.

Mental Skills: (Torkal) Find Godbone, Find Mineral (Asella) Assess Value of Metals and Gems (Both) Mythology of Asella and Torkal.

Affinities

☞ Mining (Torkal) Support Roof, See in Darkness, Guide Pickaxe, Unblock Way

☞ Protection (Asella) Bless Mineshaft, Open Shaft Ritual, Protect Miner, Appease Earth

Secret: **The Miner's Blessing**, the hero gains the ability to use the affinity of their opposite deity, for example, a Torkal devotee can learn Asella's affinity, at the same skill as their base affinity.

where Asella's devotees make sacrifices to protect the town's livelihood. Beneath this sanctum is Torkal's sacred shaft into which sacrifices are thrown. This is the only temple to Asella and Torkal, however statues and small shrines are situated within the entrance of every local mineshaft.

The Eastern Alehouse. Locals and regulars call this 'Spit and Dirt', a name it well deserves. Once a chieftain's longhouse, it still retains much of its barbaric character. The ale is strong, the food terrible, the accommodation flea-infested and the company decidedly surly. It is a favourite haunt of miners, smiths, labourers and warriors. No civilised person would cross its doorway. During the winter, when mining becomes too difficult, the place crawls with dirt-faced and impoverished vagabonds, on the look out for easy money and free drinks. The Ale House is actually owned by the temple of Asella and Torkal, and never turns out a worshipper down on his luck. Storvarin Welsgoat the rough and ready barman and bouncer, was once a miner himself.

Storvarin: Tarshite Landlord 10w, Initiate of Torkal and Minlister 5w, Cook Pork & Beans Badly 20, Pick Axe Handle 5w, Throw out Drunkard 10w, Shout over Crowd 2w, Dodge Blow 5w, Tell Tall Miner's Tales 1w, Generous to Impoverished Miners 15w.

Drunken Miners: Miner 19, Roaring Drunk 5w, Whisper Loudly 20, Tell Tall Tales 5w, Take Offence Easily 20, Beg For Free Drink 19, Insult Women 15, Brawling 18.

Drunken Smiths: Tarshite Smith 15, Hammered 2w, Show Off Muscles 18, Rippling Muscles 16, Boast of Sexual Prowess 19, Easily Offended 17, Brawling 2w.

Drunken Soldiers: Soldiers 17, Totally Plastered 5w, Sing War Songs 20, Boast Loudly 1w, Mock Others' Fighting Skills 20, Start Brawl Over Nothing 17, Brawling 5w.

The Western Alehouse. Traders and merchants needed somewhere to stay, so the Barastorosi built a second alehouse. The locals call this 'Three Staves', named in honour of the three Danganam brothers, merchants who founded it. Within can be found clean rooms, good food, imported ales and wines and

good conversation. Old agreements mean a King's Tax is imposed on all goods sold within here. This nearly doubles the prices compared to similar inns. The present manager is Podius Flayd, a cheerful and welcoming Etyries merchant, who unbeknown to his clientele, is in fact an ogre. He does not hunt within the town, but instead captures victims when he goes on 'pilgrimages to Furthest.' He then butchers and salts them and keeps them in the cellar.

Podius Flayd: Tarshite Merchant 17, Initiate of Etyries 17, Cheerful 20, Welcoming 5w, Charming Company 19, Handsome 19, Gripping Conversationalist 20, Excellent Host 5w. **The REAL Podius:** Aggari Ogre 5w, Initiate of Cacodaemon 3w, Incredibly Strong 10w, Strangle Silently 20, Disguise 1w2, Sneak Around 20, Hide in Cover 5w, Hide Corpse 6w, Sword 15w, Bite 20.

Trader: Lunar Merchant 20, Good Trading Advice 18, Whisper 20, Boast Loudly 1w, Haggle 10w.

Trader's Bodyguards: Tarshite Warrior 20, Axe and Shield 5w, Rippling Muscles 19, Big 19.



The Barastorosi Hall. This large but plain hall is the seat of both the Barastorosi Armsman, Arvic the Halt, and also Korevades, the Copper Town tonsrrieve. In part this reflects the tribe's hand-to-mouth origins, in part the economic importance of the town. After all, while Arvic is a relatively weak figure, the politically well-connected Korevades is a man on the rise within the royal administration. Arvic clearly resents the situation but is unable or

unwilling to make an issue of it, spending most of his time in his country mansion instead.

The Teelo Norri Poor House. The King's treasury funded this well-constructed building, but it now relies upon the charity of Copper Town's wealthier occupants for its upkeep and so has become dishevelled and run down in recent years. Anybody requiring shelter, food or spiritual sustenance is welcome within its peeling white washed walls. The poor house also serves as an orphanage, taking in kinless children whose parents have died working in the mines. The orphans often turn to petty theft and pickpocketing to compensate for their meagre daily rations of potato soup and onion bread.

Orphan: Look Cute 20, Look Innocent 20, Pick Pockets 5w, Run Like Hell 1w.

The Kalvilor Villa. This substantial and beautiful town house, sits behind a tall and well-guarded wall. Herotus Kalvilor and his plentiful family hail from Imther, where he made his fortune as advisor to the royal treasury. His support of the local Etyries cult, combined with his attitudes to taxation, resulted in an early retirement. The Kalvilor own Togloth's Cabin, the only functioning silver mine in the region, along with several copper mines. Herotus does not oversee his mines himself, instead his eldest son, Ferodar holds this responsibility, although he prefers the orgies of Furthest to his father's mines and has entrusted his younger brother Falcor to cover for him.

Herotus: Imther Merchant 20w, Noble 15w, Devotee of Etyries 2w2, Accountancy 5w2, Politics 20w, Fast Talk 1w2, Haggle 3w2, Berate Sons 20, Delegate 20, Gourmet 15w.

Ferodar: Imther Dilettante 15w, Drunkard 20, Gatecrash Party 10w, Snob 20, Insult Inferiors 5w.

Falcor: Imther Noble 5w, Etyries Initiate 20, Manage Mines 10w, Care about Miners 5w.

The Tempesta Villa. A large whitewashed house, with a hammered copper roof. The wall surrounding the villa obscures the view, sheltering a small exotic garden and creating an alcove of calm in the Copper Town bustle. The Tempesta are a well-liked 'trading family,' who often give money to local charities and sponsor several annual festivals. However the Tempesta do not make their money from mining, they are part of a Furthest organised crime syndicate. Not only do they control the majority of the bandit gangs plaguing the copper trade routes, they also own 'Handil's Fyrd' the most successful and prosperous company of caravan guards in all Furthest.

Tempesta 'Family' Member: Furthest Criminal 5w, Big 17, Tough 17, Intimidate 20, Act Friendly 20, Close Combat (Dagger or Sword) 5w, Contact Bandits 1w, Blackmail Official 3w.

The Gorodian Villa. Unlike the other villas, no walls or fences obscure the view of the Gorodian family's wealth. Taminar Gorodian, was once a miner, but his skill at politics and his support of the Asella and Torkal cult allowed his family to prosper and eventually own several mines. Taminar sees himself as a man of the people, and most of the people agree. He fears that the lapse of the '49'er Agreement' and the retraction of the King's troops from Copper Town will leave it vulnerable to bandit raids. For the last year, he has ridden to Furthest to beg his case for the support to be extended.

Taminar Gorodian: Tarshite Noble 10w, Ex-Miner 20, Initiate of Asella & Torkal 19, Politics 20w, Manage Mine 20w, Care about Miners 17w, Passionate Speaker 10w, Likeable 19.

The Royal Hall of Law, Tribute & Protection. A sturdy courtyard house of Alakoring design serves as the barracks of the King's guards. As the majority of the Hundred based here hail from Furthest, it is unsurprising that the original building has become 'lunarised', in both luxuries and defences. Through clever design the building can be sealed off to defend against attackers, for these reasons the hall is known locally as the 'Fort Seven Knocks'. Also situated within the building is an office of the Imperial Ordo Explorator, who are mapping the Hydra Hills as part of the Gref Surveys. Local scouts can earn a

small fortune supporting the ordo. Buserias Far-Counter is a servant of the Royal Treasury, an accountant and revenue officer whose imaginative implementation of Royal taxes have lead to him being well protected and hated. His offices are within Fort Seven Knocks and Lod Lodson his personal guard always accompanies him.

Captain Rolovus: Tarsh Officer 10w, Devotee of Yanafal Tarnils 7w, Lead Men 12w, Coordinate Defences 16w, Bark Orders 20, Write Reports 10, Scimitar & Shield 2w2.

King's Guards: Tarsh Soldier 20, Initiate of Rigsdal 15, March 20, Patrol Streets 19, Spot Trouble 18, Bellow 16, Spear & Shield 20.

Ordo Explorer: Tarsh Scout 20, Initiate of Odayla 18, Find Route 20, Map Area 17.

Buserias Far-Counter: Tarsh Scholar 20w, Buserian Devotee 18w, Creative Accounting 2w2, Politics 20, Collect Taxes 19w, Intimidate 7w, Sneer 20, Cackle Mockingly 20.

Lod Lodson: Tarsh Warrior 20, Large 19, Tough 20, Rippling Muscles 5w, Intimidate 10w, Smash Down Doors 7w, Pick Up Foe By Throat 20, Axe & Shield 19w, Brawling 20.

The Mines

The copper mines are deep shafts dug into the Hydra Hills; the copper is mined bottom up. Thirteen mines are currently in use; the most productive is Asrelia's Bosom, although it is the smaller Copper Crown mine where the most magical copper artefacts have been found. The only functioning silver mine is Togloth's Cabin. The Lunars bought the rights to the mine from the Kalvilors ten years ago and have set up a large camp of slave workers around it. The mine has not been very productive.

Each mine has its own slave camp. The slaves are well treated, with good access to food, drink and even women. However, they face terrible dangers in the mines. Many worship Asella and Torkal for the protection they provide, others Asrelia, hoping that her secrets will help them find more copper and earn greater rewards. Camps are well guarded, as are the caravans between the mines and Copper Town itself.

The Hydra Hills

The Hydra Hills are a dangerous environment, roamed by bandits and chaos monsters. Amongst their dark woods and rocky crags dwell several groups of humans. The Cardenuci are Alakoring Orlanthi,

who fled to the hills when HonEel came to power. They have developed a transient lifestyle, living by hunting and herding small flocks of mountain sheep. They venerate Odayla and Varanorlanth. They are a fearful and insular people, who avoid contact with outsiders. More insular and yet more regularly met by Tarshites are the Deliveranti. These strange folk live as charcoal burners and woodsmen in the deepest woods of the Hydra Hills. They are as ugly, short and brutish as their lives. Once a season the Deliveranti come to the edge of the forest to trade charcoal for metal and beads. Only their shamans are allowed to speak to outsiders, although they are so inbred that often little sense can be made of their gibbering. Unknown to the Tarshites, the Deliveranti worship the Hungry Ghosts, the lost souls of those devoured by the Hydra. Cannibalism is a major component of their religious ceremonies, many a woodsman, miner or hunter has fallen foul of their midnight raids.

One of the major features of this region is the Hydra itself, a monster that has dwelt in this region since the Great Darkness is the region's top predator, devouring anything within its reach. Fortunately, the monster is so huge that its approach is obvious. Both the Cardenuci and the Deliveranti leave sacrifices to placate the monster. There have also been several field trips by the Lunar College of Magic to observe the monster's behaviour; rumours abound that the Empire seeks to control the Hydra and use it as a weapon of war against the Sartari.

The Greater Hydra

Weapons & Armour: Bite 10w4 ^ 6, Swallow Whole 20w3, Scaly Hide ^ 8

Significant Abilities: Lumbering 10w, Large 5w4, Strong 10w4, Tough 10w3, Knock Down Trees 10w3, Deafening Hiss 20w

Innate Chaos Features: Drool Acid 10w2, Regenerate 20w2

Unlike Lesser Hydras, the Greater Hydra does not have poisonous fangs. This has not proven too much of a drawback for it.

STORM TRIBE

The Cults of Sartar

The gods are awake. Special deities are needed for special times. **Storm Tribe** details the gods and goddesses that take the forefront in the Hero Wars. Here are complete write-ups for eleven important deities whose exceptional worshippers gain extraordinary powers. Each write-up includes myths, holy days, magic, and subcults. These are the **Cults of Sartar**:

Chalana Arroy, Goddess of Healing

Elmal, Warrior God of the Sun

Eurmal, Trickster and Fool

Heler, God of Rain and Loyalty

Humakt, God of War and Death

Yinkin, God of Alynxes, Hunting, and Sensuality

Issaries, God of Communication and Trade

Lhankor Mhy, God of Knowledge

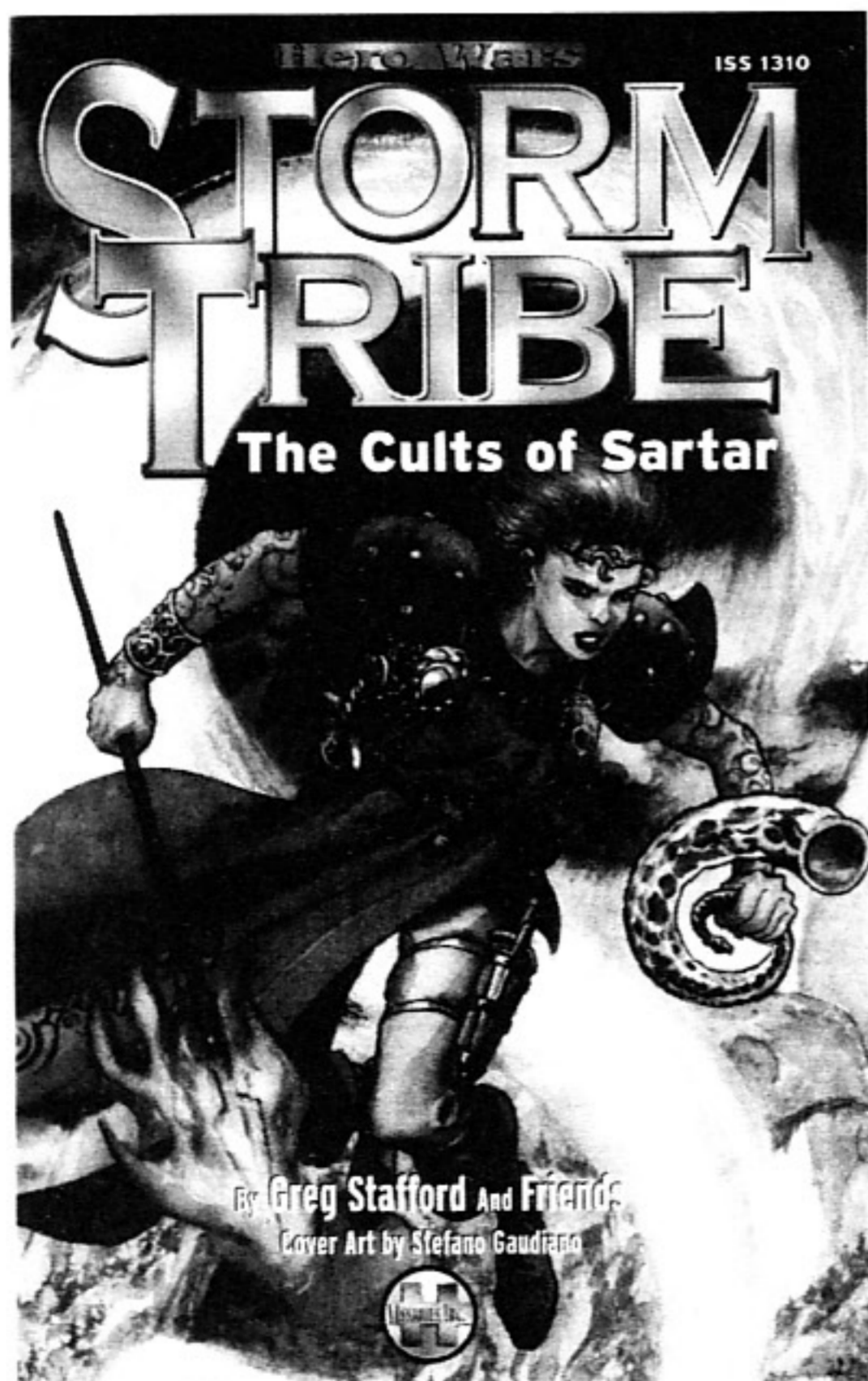
Odayla, God of Hunting

Urox, Berserk Chaos-Killer

Vinga, Goddess of Protection and War

Storm Tribe also details eighteen minor gods of the pantheon, including **Gustbran**, the Smith; **Rigsdal**, Watchman and Pole Star; **Donandar**, High God of Entertainers; **Valind**, God of Winter; **Babeester Gor**, Avenging Earth Goddess; **Maran Gor**, Goddess of Fighting and Earthquakes; and many more. Great heroes, unusual entities, excerpts from the Jonstown Compendium, immortal myths, and dozens of illustrations animate the text.

Storm Tribe is a companion book to **Thunder Rebels**, which describes the Heortling religion of which these gods are a part.



For more information
about Glorantha go to:

www.HeroWars.com

Urban
Tarsh

Jaxarte in Furthest

Michael O'Brien



In 1620, Jaxarte Whyded travelled from Pavis to Mirin's Cross and ultimately Glamour, to present a petition to the Provincial Overseer on behalf of his uncle, Sor Eel the governor of Prax. His journey took him through Tarsh both ways, and on his return stayed for several days in Furthest while awaiting the departure of a convoy that would take him safely through the rebellious province of Sartar. Here Jaxarte was put up at the villa of the Armsman Jorator, a native Tarshite who had done well in the army under his uncle. Rather than return to bucolic squalor in the backblocks, Jorator retired to the city using the fortune he amassed to present a fair imitation of a Lunar gentleman.

As a noble brought up among the civilised wonders of Lunar Heartlands, Jaxarte saw beyond the veneer of urban sophistication Furthest was desperately trying to present, and was not particularly impressed with his host, the provincial capital or its inhabitants...

[As always, annotations are by his biographer, the sage Floriat Fedora]



Illusion/earth 1620 - Furthest

...If the plug-cudding¹ wasn't enough, I was convinced I was dealing with just an overdressed barbarian lout when – mid conversation – he sneezed, blew his nose copiously into his sleeve, and then carried on as if nothing had happened. Tired, travel worn and dusty both from the road and the furious construction that seems to be going on all over the city, I motioned towards Jorator's fine marble bathhouse, gleaming and newly built in the Good Shore style ('aha', thought I with eager anticipation, 'a *saponarium* and maybe even a *natatory*').² 'Ah, well we don't find need to use that', he said almost apologetically, 'Cost a bleedin' fortune as it is, so I never got round to having it plumbed. The wife hasn't complained just yet – like me, she's happy enough to take a bath every Sacred Time, whether we need it or not.' The look of disappointment on my face must have been obvious because he said he'd get the kitchen slaves to boil up the pot and send some hot water to my quarters.

Like everything else new in this city, while outwardly impressive, it was clear by looking around that the villa had been shoddily constructed using cheap materials. What looked like good Oronin marble was often just dressed stone, or even cleverly painted woodwork. Most of his furniture was flash rubbish, imitations in coarse woods of the antique pieces you'd see in fine houses back home. The streets were no better; step one street back from the brand new boulevards of the new city and I swear (but for the cooler climate, and vast number of unfettered pigs) I could have been back in Pavis.

¹ Chewing tobacco, a habit as yet to take off in the Heartlands

² In contrast to the sequence of hot, tepid and cool plunge pools in the traditional Lunar bathhouse, the *natatory* is a tank in which the water is magically agitated; in pools where the attendant is particularly adroit one could even practice swimming strokes against a current. With the introduction of soap (and later, soap-makers) from Teshnos, the Good Shore *saponarium* was beginning to replace the old-fashioned means of removing dirt: olive oil, a strigil, a hot room, a burly body slave, and several hours

If anything showed up Furthest's pretensions to grandeur, it was the lack of a great arena (I discount the tiny, so-called 'Ring of Valour' which is decidedly provincial affair and serves mainly scare up talent for scouts from the great gladiatorial schools of Heartlands). With characteristic humility, the King has grandiose plans for the *Moirasseum*, a huge stadium that is to be inaugurated on the victory over Orlanth and Sartar. Jorator told me the *Moirasseum* was apparently two hundred thousand Imperials over budget and already year behind schedule.³ A vast area has been pegged out for its construction;⁴ in the mean time the natives entertain themselves with weekly public executions in the fields outside the city gates, dull affairs

and cloudy wine I'd had to put up with on the way here, the description in my guide almost made me drool when I read it in my bunk on the river barge several days back.⁵ As it was approaching the noon hour, I looked around for a suitable eating establishment and found one by the riverside docks, the row of bleached white carapaces above the awning advertising what was on offer within.

Nothing else had impressed me so far in Furthest, so I wonder why I thought megamarron would. For roughly six-times the cost of a normal meal I was served a salty, vaguely fish-tasting glutinous lump inside a shell the size of a large helmet. While it was neither as big nor as bleached as the shells outside, from the nicks and chips all over it, not to mention a lewd image carved by some previous diner, it was pretty clear

that this shell had been served up, time and time again. So much for the much-vaunted 'fresh produce' from the river!⁶

⁵ Jaxarte's reference was probably *The Guide to Tarsh*, published by Lonely Lozenge Scrolls the year before. It features an epicurean section by the famed gastronome Malhawi Habatat, who had visited the region some time in the Sixth Wane. One wonders why Jaxarte fared so poorly travelling down-river: surely even someone of his junior rank should have received better treatment while on official business?

⁶ Despite the hefty tariff, it's unlikely there was much (if any) megamarron in Jaxarte's dinner at all. While the gigantic crayfish were never part of the native Tarshite diet – they were revered as sacred beasts of the river – the invading Lunars had no such religious scruples and found them utterly delicious. Once the local river gods were killed, harnessed or cowed by the Red Moon, there was nothing



Though the fabled crustacean was nothing to speak of, when I returned to Jorator's mansion later in the afternoon I was fortunate enough to see one of the creatures live. We were taking a turn around the gardens. My host was immensely proud of his *heptacunx* and wanted to show it off to me. (Though I'm no landscape artist, I didn't have the heart to tell him the crescent edge was glaringly askew, and that the moon-quinces were clearly suffering out of the argent light of their native Silver Shadow).

As he stood there admiring it, the amazing animal scuttled into view. It closely resembled the river lobsters my brothers and I used to fish for in the lake at home, but was the size of a large hound. 'Ah, Pookie!' Jorator cried, and it slowly crawled towards us, waving mandibles and a huge, menacing looking claw. I must have recoiled in panic, but Jorator simply laughed and tickled the creature under its massive head. It gave off a curious, high-pitched squeak, and blew frothy bubbles from its mouthparts.⁷

to protect the megamarron, and they were hunted to virtual extinction in a few short years. The yabbie (a small crustacean that rarely grows larger than a man's hand) is the usual substitute, and though plentiful in the waters around Furthest, lack the megamarron's distinct succulent flavour. Juvenile megamarron are also sometimes used, which only contributes to the species' decline.

⁷ Consulting Everseer, it seems that "Pookie" was a particularly large specimen, but by no means out of the ordinary before megamarron numbers were devastated in the late 1500s. Living for hundreds of years,



which I dare say would not even rouse a flicker of interest in Doblin, Glamour or Good Shore. The only spark of originality or wit I could see was using *women* as the axemen, but these were all hulking brutesses and not at all pretty on the eye.

While in Furthest, I was most eager to sample its famous local delicacy, the giant crayfish known here as the *megamarron*. After the hard bread, rancid cheese

³ Wags have pointed out that this state of affairs paralleled exactly any progress the army was having overcoming the Orlanthi resistance in Sartar...

⁴ At the king's retreat from public life, the *Moirasseum* was still largely incomplete, and the rest of the project was quietly put on the back burner. Only the base of the colossal statue of the king had been started, leaving a pair of gigantic feet

Megamarron

Ilocusta gigans (giant freshwater crayfish)

Ages: Green, Golden, Historical (rare)

Distribution: Oslira River (Tarsh)

Habitat: River valleys

Weapons & Armor: Chitinous exoskeleton 12 ^ 4, Large claw ^ 3

Distinct Abilities: Look threatening 15, Vice-like hold 10w

Tactics: the large claw is primarily used for mating display; the megamarron's usual response to danger is to face a threat and wave the claw menacingly. A conditioned reflex to grasp and never let go means that anything foolish enough to get in the way of the claw can only escape by prising it open or hacking the claw off.

The megamarron is a large freshwater lobster, native to the river valleys of Tarsh. Although they live for hundreds of years and the biggest specimens grow to the size of a small pony, they are now extremely rare; since the Lunar pacification of Tarsh numbers have dwindled alarmingly. Now all but extinct in the Oslir itself, marron hunters now must go far up its tributaries and streams seeking out remaining specimens to meet the insatiable Lunar appetite for this delicacy. Returning to the water only to spawn, adult megamarron spend much of the day in a moist burrow, coming out to scavenge along the river bank at dawn and dusk. Once considered sacred beasts by the local river cults, the native folk used to leave carrion out as offerings. Despite their terrifying appearance they are relatively harmless, and the easiest way to catch one is to leave rancid meat outside a likely hole.

'Pookie was our old regimental mascot,' Jorator explained, and I noticed that like the shell in the restaurant, the creature's carapace was liberally etched with runes, symbols, the dates of famous battles, the names of old comrades and other graffiti. 'When the regiment got transferred to Prax all the lads was worried the poor bugger would fry in his shell out there in the desert. So I offered to look after him 'til they got posted back. Seems Fazzur is happy to leave your uncle to rot, so who knows when Pookie and the boys will see each other again.' We

continued our walk, Pookie creeping behind us like a hideous, yet faithful hound.

It was later that night, after several jars of indifferent wine and a seemingly endless succession of war stories (where I learned much of interest about uncle, little of which I'll be able to repeat in polite company) that Jorator had his brainwave. 'You can take Pookie back with you to see the lads! By Arim's Beard I'd love to see the looks on their faces!'

To Jorator it was all simple: I was going Pavis, and Pookie could come with me. 'A sheep's head every day or so will keep him happy - he'll give you a playful nip if he's still hungry.' I resolved to keep Pookie well nourished on the long trip back to Pavis...



after maturity these giant crayfish lived most of their life out of the water scavenging on the riverbank. Though fearsome in appearance, they were in reality placid creatures whose thick body armour meant they had few if any natural predators once they reached a certain size.

Disorder/dark (ie, about two weeks later) - Sartar

I don't know what's going to be worse - telling Uncle his petition failed, or letting Jorator know Pookie never made it back to the reunion with his old comrades.

Pookie's unfortunate demise came about as follows: we were two days out from Boldhome when a local chief and his warband arrived to escort us through a particularly dangerous stretch of road. Despite the blue paint, knotted beards and silver arm-rings the convoy commander told me not worry; 'thoroughly Lunarised' were his words to describe the group. I'm not one to criticise our missionaries, but it seems their message wasn't penetrating too far into the tattooed hides of these natives.

Despite a friendly greeting, the cordial mood changed the instant the chief took one look at Pookie, sitting on my wagon, and munching happy on a fresh sheep's head. His face turning purple with rage, he furiously began spouting poetry in his barbarous tongue. I know not what he said, but an instant later the poor creature was blasted by bolt of lightning!⁸

The ozone in the air settled as our commander placated the affronted Sartarites, assuring them that despite appearances to the contrary, Pookie was no foul chaos beast. Suddenly, everyone stopped and sniffed the air as the lightning's bitter tang was replaced by a most wonderful odour: seared megamarron flesh. Somehow, I don't think it would assuage Jorator's temper if he knew that we all found his regimental mascot to be utterly delicious...

⁸ His words were presumably, '*Foul slime, curse of existence begone!*', the ritual phrase used by a wind lord when encountering chaos.

Urban
Tarsh

Talfort: golden gateway

Mark Galeotti

"I remember me first Muster, back in, oh, way back when. Times were 'ard, lad. Had nobbut one, two slaves, and me pa told us go to the Tall Fort for a season earn some coin. First time I came over Snake Ridge and saw Mother Oslir, damn near swallowed me plug, I can tell you. Never seen nought so blue, so big, so strong. Never seen so many people as when we got to city, neither. Remember Koltos saying 'ole world must be there. Course, things're different these days seems nary a lad from these parts not spent at least one Muster down at the Tall Fort."

Once, Talfort was a warrior's town. Just north of the Deathline, it was first the site of the Tall Fort, a watchtower to warn of dragon incursions. After Arim had founded Tarsh, it became a bastion against the north, an armed camp in the shadow of the Fort. Plundered and burnt by a Sylilan army in 1458, it was rebuilt stronger than ever within ten years. Those days are gone, though, washed away by history, imperial rule and, above all, the wealth pouring into the city thanks to its role as Tarsh's main river port, from whence the great grain barges set off down the Oslir into the empire. The warriors are now warehouse watchmen, the north a market rather than a menace and the Tall Fort, which was ruined by the Great Shake of 1583 has never been rebuilt.



The tribal capital of the Norokoffi, Talfort has largely outgrown its old and increasingly uncared-for walls as new warehouses, jetties and boatyards sprout along the eastern bank of the Oslir. Imperial engineers were hired to throw up new earthworks and palisades around 'New Talfort', but it looks set to burst even these new bounds. 'Old Talfort', around the ruins of the Fort, is now the administrative, religious and monied part of the city. The new-built Temple of Bounteous Oslira, paid for by the mercantile houses out of their profits from shipping 'Tarsh Gold' (wheatgrain) and 'HonEel's Bounty' (maize), is the most opulent structure in the city. Symbolically, it is connected by a bridge to the neighbouring Hall of Etyries Boatmaster. This is built around three large internal courtyards. In the first, Shrewd Dealers' Yard, merchants from both Tarsh and the north, factors and brokers buy and sell grain and other goods. In the second, River Tamers' Court, freight and passage is arranged. The third, Fine Fellows' Corner, is used by those seeking warehousemen, bargees or other employees. Nearby is the Talfort Mint. Each tribe in Tarsh mints its own silver and copper coins. While all are meant to observe royal standards, the value of coins of different tribes vary as tribal fortunes wax and wane and when rumours spread that precious metals are being adulterated. Norokoffi coins remain the most highly prized.

The city has a population of around 3,500 – the exact number varies immensely, not least with the seasonal influx of unskilled labourers to load up the Great Grain Fleet at the end of Earth season. These 'bargemaulers' form a great tented shanty town outside the main city walls. They tend to be younger sons sent out to earn a little coin for their families back home, perhaps for a sister's dowry, perhaps to buy some new livestock or another slave for the farm. The Talforters themselves look down on them, but they work hard for their meagre pay. While they play and drink and sing in the evenings, they cause few real problems.

The Great Grain Fleet

Need some money? Looking to lie low for a few weeks? Then sign up as a bargemauler, me lad – there's work for all. Hard work, but if you can measure up, then there's some extra silver to be had from eager barge-captains hoping to steal a march on their rivals and leave in the First Wave. (an ability test of Strength, Carry Heavy Loads or the like: fumble means an injury, failure means the hero earns enough to survive, no more, a success means that there is enough for a few drinks and wagers, a critical earns 1 wealth) More to the point, the sprawling Muster, the gathering of bargemaulers from Norokoffi, Penthoi, Angardos and Tremarki villages is an excellent opportunity to gather and pass on gossip, rabbleroise, brawl, gamble, tell stories and generally mingle with the masses.

Bargee Superstitions

The bargees live a life at the mercy of the spirits of the Oslir and also of the many lands through which they pass. They have therefore adopted a complex series of superstitions and rituals to placate them. These are just a few of them:

- ⚡ On boarding a barge, always spit or pass water over the side (gifting your own water to the river). If you don't, expect the bargees to ignore you (because until you have, you will not be counted as having boarded).
- ⚡ While on the river, never use the words 'bank' or 'shore' (which would remind Oslira of her confinement). If you do, slam your head or hand against the hull (to show that you also are confined).
- ⚡ Not only should a barge never be blue (because that is the colour of Oslira's own), but no one on the barge should wear blue.
- ⚡ Trolls on a barge bring bad luck, so always address them as 'slave'.
- ⚡ A handful of rice thrown into the river will calm the waters (reminding Oslira of her gentle daughter Evernia, the Rice Goddess).

The Talfort clan of the Norokoffi itself is very much in a minority, accounting for little more than a thousand inhabitants. However, by dominating the trade of the city it also dominates the tribe, with seven of the thirteen places on Armsman Engkori the Blue's tribal ring. Probably the most dynamic and entrepreneurial people of Tarsh, the Talforti are not shy about protecting their interests. Their strong support of the king (stability and order have been good for business) has meant that there has been little friction with central government, though, and every shrieve appointed to the city has been Talforti as is the tonsrrieve, Horngren.

However, tensions are rising. Holay is beginning to impose taxes on the grain trade. Add a sudden increase in banditry down the Oslir and the complete disappearance of some ships and some see Holay

mounting a covert attack on Tarsh and Talfort. Many barges now travel in fleets and convoys and carry guards, but the merchants want action from Furthest. Where are marines to defend us? Where is our retaliation? So far, Furthest has not responded, and the discontent among the merchant elite grows.

The Talfort Stickpickers

Like any Tarshite city, Talfort has its own regiment – which old-timers still call the fyrd – and an imperial military House of Hosts. This acts as a local headquarters and liaison office and recruiting station. It also contains a shrine to Apiricon Tawin, Imperial hero cult of riverine military logistics – as well as a religious site, this is also the office of the team who coordinate military transport up and down the Oslir. The defence of Talfort is in the hands of a Royal Shieldman, Dwirindos Sword-and-Sword. The city supports one regiment of the

Provincial Army of Tarsh, the Talfort Foot, but this unit, notionally of 1000 troops, is in practice largely made up of the private militias of watchmen of the main magnates of the city. Probably only 300 of these reservists could be raised quickly, the rest guarding ships along the Oslir or 'grainhusks' – existing only on the books. The core comprises two Hundreds of full-time soldiers. Known more-or-less affectionately as the 'Talfort Stickpickers' after the wooden staves they carry during the Grain Fleet Muster, they guard the city's walls, police the streets and drill the militias. However, as problems with banditry down the Oslir increase, there is pressure for the 'Stickpickers' to provide armed protection for the Grain Fleet. One Half-Hundred of river marines is expected to be formed soon. In the meantime, a number of mercenary units of wildly varying reputations find service guarding the barges, from the small but fearsome force of Black Swordsmen, Carmanian Humakti, to Raskolos' Rascals, a rag-tag gang of former bandits and deserters who make up for with cunning what they lack in respectability.

Oslira's Wrath

Mark Galeotti & Martin Hawley

The superstitious bargees are now talking of a haunted barge on the river, some whisper that this is the Blue Barge of Oslira herself, as she seeks the lives of those who have stolen and abused her powers. The river itself is increasingly hostile, unseasonable floods lapping at the jetties, water-borne debris almost eating at the hulls of boats, and worse the gnarled crocodile servants of Varnaga have been sighted this far upriver for the first time ever. An adventure cameo for play in Talfort is available on **The Unspoken Word** website, @ <http://www.celtic-webs.com/theunspokenword>

The Land of Tarsh

The Red Dog Mansione

Drawn and Written by Simon Bray

A small shrine dedicated to Etyries Goddess of Travel and Povolla, a local Daemon who protects travellers from danger.

The majority of Tarsh's crossroads have a statue placed upon them; in this case, it is Etyries the lunar goddess of travel, who points the way to Furthest.

Craftsmen have taken advantage of the commerce Tarsh's good roads bring, selling their services and wares to passing merchants. In this case, Dorvian a Lokamos wainwright from Dara Happa has set up shop.

The Twisted Vines tavern. This building was the original Minlinster inn that served this road, however it cannot compete with the mansione and so serves only locals and market goers. To support itself and economically the tavern has expanded to brew beers that are then sold to the mansione and in Furthest.

The Cursus Publicus is an imperial communication system. Through a chain of horse-riding messengers information can be relayed surprisingly quickly. Originally, the service was only for provincial military use. Now any imperial citizen can use it to carry messages across the empire.

These markers are situated every two key-miles. They not only provide information about direction and distance, but also carry Imperial and Royal Notices

Troops and merchants from the Lunar Heartlands use the roads extensively. The roads are very straight, climbing sharply up hills. Imperial soldiers prefer a hard march up a hill rather than a long march around one.

The Red Dog Mansione functions as a hostel for weary travellers. Such mansiones are constructed every fourteen Key-Miles along major roads. Within the Empire, these buildings are controlled by the Etyries cult on behalf of the state. Within Tarsh, the King controls the mansiones, levying his own taxes on those using the facilities. The standard of accommodation typically exceeds that found in privately operated inns.

The presence of the Empire's touches of civilisation has caused many prosperous native Tarshites to build their homes near to these crossroad communities. Local landlord Holter Carlsson owns this home. In co-operation with the Etyries cult, he supports a fortnightly market.

Caltus Dargo, a retired veteran of the Sartar conflict, runs the Red Dog Mansione. Locals and patrons have come to know him as the Quartermaster, as he runs his hostel like a military operation. Originally from Mirin's Cross, he is a true Sairdic, as is attested by the huge mastiffs that he breeds, and from which the mansione derives its name. Caltus hates Yinkini and will not allow them onto his property, setting the dogs onto any who approach. Despite his formal nature, occasionally explosive temper and strange attitudes, the Quartermaster runs a very popular establishment: the food is excellent, the wine good and the building immaculately maintained. The mansione and environs are gradually developing into a small village, as more people flock to the delights of civilisation. Market days bring great wealth to the little community, cottars with their bundles of wool and barrows of cabbages rub shoulders with the slaves of the mighty latifundia looking for luxuries for their masters amongst the stalls of the Etyries and Issaries priests that are lured to the market. Imperial soldiers make camp upon the common, bringing more wealth as they use up their silver coin, but warily for many have felt the Quartermaster's wrath when they have become disorderly. Generally, the roads are safe to travel, but when bandits do strike, Caltus and Holter Carlsson are quick to seek warriors to hunt them down, paying good wages to any who will help.

The Land of Tarsh

Once, the god Larnste, the God of Change, rested his travelling bag while on a journey. In that place grew a living stone with its own spirit. Ever since 1592 when a heroquesting sage contacted the god of change in the Otherworld, every third year the Jonstown Lhankor Mhy temple has sent its most promising junior sage to the Travelling Stone in Tarsh on the edge of the Stinking Forest. It seems clear that they expect one day that something specific will be there waiting for the sage, but so far whatever it is has not appeared.



The Travelling Stone

Ian Thomson

Recounted by Junior Sage Albric Finostan of Jonstown, to Senior Scribe Thamdrang Swiftquill.

We stopped in Alda Chur only over night, departing early with the first convoy through the Hollow. It was the third time I had passed the chaos valley, and once again I chanced to see an example of its evil blight. The guards had to stop and hack apart a tree that had grown by the roadside and appeared to be sprouting wailing human heads instead of fruit. In the end they had to burn what was left.

After a restless sleep in the festering little town of Too Far, we nervously took to the road. It was almost midday before we could be sure we were alone. Nonetheless we waited until we were close to a swathe of woodland, then took to the trees as fast as we were able. We reached the meeting tree before dark, and I was relieved to find our local guide waiting at a campfire. I was even more relieved when he didn't suggest setting off into the Stinking Forest until morning.

Next followed one of the oddest journeys I have ever undertaken. Our guide was constantly stopping to perform little dances and chant under his breath in a language I have never heard. I almost felt that he was simply making it up on the moment, so garbled were his ravings. And we never seemed to head in a single direction, constantly taking side paths and backtracks. I would have thought our guide utterly mad if you had not warned me to expect such antics.

After such a journey, I was glad when eventually the maps started to make sense and I knew we were near. I was amazed by the sheer variety of stones in that region – twisted rocks, coloured rocks, rocks smote in two,

rocks shattered into a thousand pieces... I became certain that our expedition would never find our goal, and that was before we even started to see the standing stones.

Just how old are those things? It took a while for me to notice that we were walking down the first row. I thought only dragonkin raised stones like that? The rows seemed to run in straight lines, but I lost track of the number of times I suspected we had found ourselves back exactly where we had started from. It is clear that the woods and hills we passed through are still affected by the Changer, for I saw plants there of every possible colour, shape and size. One tree was as tall as the gatehouse here, and equally as wide. One bush had fruit which was bright blue. Every trail we followed disappeared behind us as we went, and every small animal that I saw was scurrying around so quickly that I could hardly follow its movements.

That night I slept restlessly, dreaming of great creaks and groans from the darkness around me. I awoke in the early light to find myself alone, resting in the shadow of the biggest standing stone of all, twice as tall as the gatehouse and then more, carved all about with a spiralling groove from base to peak. Standing stone is hardly the right description, for somehow it seemed to ripple and twist, as if with barely contained eagerness to move and change. At last I realised what my guide had known all along – my goal had never been obtainable by ordinary means, and I had stepped into the other world.

This great stone was on a bare hilltop, whereas I had fallen asleep in a wooded dale, and though the morning mist shrouded most details, what I could see of the lands around seemed similar to those we had crossed the day before. After I performed the ceremony of invocation, and touched the stone as you told me to, I made the sketches I have shown you. I even tried to take the measurements you asked for, but they were never the same. Even the distances between the central stone and the smaller ones that formed the ring about it were reliable only in their irregularity. My mind was buzzing with the inconstancy of it all.

After a time I realised that I was no longer alone. The feeling that I was being watched made itself manifest in an old man clad in nothing more than a loincloth and a beard that back here would have marked him as grand master of the libraries. He seemed to want something from me and capered expectantly, although his ravings made no sense that I could fathom.

The Travelling Stone is surrounded by strange spirits known as Larnstings, Spirits of Movement. These seek to possess any they meet, with a typical might of 10w and the abilities of Movement and Change 10w. As well as speed, this will generally bring fickleness, imagination and even mild physical changes. Larnstings cannot be integrated except by heroquests and will generally leave their possessee when they leave the region of the Stone, or last for a day at most. The wildlife of the forest, and some local hunters have been affected by generations-long exposure and have a magical Speed 12 ability. The Stone is also the home of the Great Spirit, known as the Son of Change. Heroquesters have been known to be able to contact and briefly secure its services, and the tales talk of whole armies loping along at the speed of a fast horse thanks to its powers.

I knew the tale of the guardian, but when I asked the old man the questions, he only talked in riddles that made my head spin. Once I had made all the observations that I could, I began to wonder how I could leave, and remembered you saying that this would happen by itself when the moment was right. When next I turned to address the old man he had vanished, but perched on top of the stone was an eagle that eyed me intently, with its head tilted to one side.

Merely as an experiment I began to ask this bird the questions, and it flew down and began to walk about me in uneven circles, nodding and squawking its

agreement or disagreement until the ritual was complete. At first I felt nothing, but then noticed a spring in my step and a lightness in my body. I wanted to move, dance, spin, run – anything. I couldn't help myself. Before I knew it I was racing down the hillside in great leaps and bounds like a stag, and I was unable to resist shouting with the joy of it.

I could not tell when I came back into this world, but suddenly I burst into the camp and surprised the hunters terribly, although our guide seemed unconcerned and greeted me with such friendship that one would have thought that we

were kin. The magic of movement was no longer with me, and I still feel empty without it, perhaps as one of the fliers would if he could no longer take to the skies. Our trip back carried no great surprises or events, and did nothing to assuage my melancholy.

This Fireday of Harmony week in Sea Season of 1617 by the Solara Tempora calendar, I swear by the Lord of all Knowledge, patron of this library, that what I have just stated is a true account of my pilgrimage to the Travelling Stone.

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The Exiles

The Tarsh Exiles

Ian Cooper

We are the Exiles

We are the Exiles, last free people of Tarsh, an Alakoring people, Arim's children. Listen to the drums as they beat out the rhythm of our past. Listen for they tell of when Pyjeemsab, tenth in the line of Arim, was upon the throne. Listen for they tell how the blind Pyjeemsab, was fooled by Hon-Eel and her acts of heresy; listen for they tell how doomed Pyjeemsab marries the deceiver. The drums beat death for Pyjeemsab, who does not return from the marriage bed. The drums beat out anger as the whore claims the throne. The drums call for revenge, as Ukeena Black shows us the truth. The whore has murdered our king. The drums beat out the Tars Gor, the call to war, and the south rises against the kingslayer. The drums beat out our dance of joy as we drive her kind from the south. The drums cry out, but the northern tribes are deaf to their thunder and, amidst the Dancing Sisters, sunder Arim's people. The drums thunder out our lament as we chose this, our exile.

With inspiration and material from: King of Sartar and Dragon Pass by Greg Stafford, Tarsh War by Chris Gidlow with Dan Barker and Nick Brooke, Mitchuinn Moonwater by Martin Laurie and Wesley Quadros



The drums beat out a new rhythm, the rhythm of the Longaxe, a rhythm filled with hope. Listen as they tell of Palashee, orphan, mead-drinker and dragonfriend, war-leader, liberator, and King. The drums beat out the Tars Gor as Palashee marches against Philigos who usurped the throne with mother's magic. The drums thunder as twin earthquakes destroy the Imperial host. The drums sound caution as the evil Philigos

escapes the place of slaughter. The earth swallows the Reaching Moon. The drums fall low and tell of Tarsh at peace under Palashee's reign.

Listen as Tars Gor sounds again. The drums sound alarm as the sons of Philigos return and armies meet. The drums exalt, we have possession of the place of slaughter. Young Philigos dies in the mud. The women take his scalp. The ravens feed. The drums cry out as Phargentes kills good King Palashee at Axefield, that ground will always be red. As long as the drums beat out the rhythm, we will not forget Palashee the liberator.

The drums beat out the coronation of Hendrakos, Palashee's heir. But Phargentes holds the Pauper's stool and the three-pointed crown. The sound of the drums grows weak, like a king crowned without our sacred items. The drums thunder briefly as Hendrakos challenges his right to kingship. Hendrakos's drum falls silent.

Now the drums are in discord. They sound out different rhythms. The first rhythm speaks of an heir to Hendrakos, of a new king, one who will restore Yarandros's kingdom. The second rhythm is melancholy, it no longer sounds of Tarsh. The rhythm speaks that we cannot crown kings of Tarsh. The rhythm speaks of new rights, of new ways to rule. This is the rhythm of the Alda-Churi who gave up exile for a new life beyond Snakepipe Hollow. Their drums sound out a new rhythm, and then fall silent. The Alda-Churi drums sound no more.

Only our rhythm continues. The drum beats high and low; it is searching, searching for an heir to Hendrakos. Different drums speak of different heirs. Other drums weave in the Tars Gor, the beat of the one armed evil king. But the drummers are deaf to its sound hearing only the sound of the search. One by one, they fall silent, as our cities fall to Phargentes. The rhythm is triumphant, an heir is found, and Phargentes falls. The rhythm is exultant; the priestesses begin the rights of Sorana Tor. Weep, for the rhythm tells of Moirades, who kills the priestesses and the heir at Grizzly Peak, before the right can be completed. Now a lone drum sounds, the drum of Wintertop, the drum of this our last hold.

The drums beat out new prophecies. They speak of a new Palashee, of a Liberator, of the one who will free us. They speak of the birth of new twins, who will aid him in freeing the heirs of Varstapoor. They speak of a new incarnation of Sorana Tor, who will marry the liberator and restore Tarsh.

The drums are the inspiration of Maran Gor in exile. As the priestess reads the thunder of the earth, so we read the thunder of the drums. Learn the rhythm of the drums, which beat from village to watchtower to fort, carrying news of the past and the present.

Our men have joined the Finovan's raiders.¹ They know the ways of the bearded axe, the spear, the mace, the shield, and the seax. Our women turn from sweet Ernalda to Maran Gor,² and know the ways of the seed and calf no more. The hills of our home do not take well to the plough and we live by herding and tribute. We do not use what is gained in sweat when it might be better paid for in blood. We raid the Pony Breeders, looting their slave villages and stealing their horses. We take tribute from all caravans that would pass safely through the shadow of Kero Fin and treasure from those that would not. Many a caravan has bought back the very goods we took from them at Irist Hold and wished that they had paid us tribute. We plunder the old country, where Arim's people have grown soft. We do not live there but the Bush Range is ours; the Imperial settlers must pay tribute to farm there - they are not Exiles. We raid the tribes of Sartar who are leaderless and lost. We have earned the bounty from the heads of the ducks and sent our war bands to Heortland and Esrolia, where people's breath is weak. We take thralls from all those who live under the

shadow of Kero Fin. Some we put to work ourselves, but most we sell. Wintertop has a market where we sell our slaves.³ The sound of our war drums beats out doom across Sorana Tor's lands.

The village is our home; there we live in our longhouses, behind the safety of palisade and ditch, with the hidden drum towers watching over us. There we listen to the news the drums bring of those who are raiding, or in the shielings with the herds. The Thunder Brothers' council guides the village, chosen from the leaders of the village's families. They are thirteen in number: Dar and Orendana who lead; Harst, who distributes our wealth and Kev who understands the cost; Voriof who guards the herds and Uralda who blesses them; Orstan and Pela who make; Durev and Orane who speak for the families; Starkval and Maran Devor who defend and Ormalaya who hunts. The Thunder Brothers' council decide how we will use the village land, how will manage the herds, and which family will live where in the village longhouses. The fields and herds belong to the village, but those who husband the village's resources well will gain surplus for their family. The council must also settle local disputes, organise the village fyrd and collect the taxes that support the clan chief.

The councils of the clan's villages meet at the doomsmeet to elect the clan chief. The clan chief settles disputes between the villages at the doomsmeet, but all know that fighting between



villages of the same clan is Kinstrife. The chief is Finovan, who leads our warband in raids. He is first to speak to those outside our clan. He carries our voice to the tribe. We can replace a bad chief at the doomsmeet.

As Alakoring showed us, our clans belong to a tribe. A king, appointed by the chiefs rules and a council of thirteen guides him.

The King's Ring meets in Wintertop. The King's ring is: Marshal, who guides in war, Dishthane who holds the key to the treasury, Hallman who serves the king's estates, the tribal kings, and the priestesses. Once they guided the High King, but we have crowned no king since Hendrakos. The Marshal has no armies to command, the treasury is all but empty, and the King's estates in the Bush Range are wild and thick with foreigners. Now the tribal kings speak with the loudest voice.

Our Holy Queen, sacred priestess of the Earthshaker inspires us. She is a holy figure, whose devotion is such that she moves her corpulent body only with the greatest effort; an oak cart drawn by six oxen carries her.

¹ Among the Exiles Finovan not Destor is the default subcult of Orlanth Adventurous.

² Among the Exiles, almost as many women worship Maran (about 35%) as worship Ernalda (about 50%)

³ Although most exiles are not open about it, most of the slaves sold in Wintertop go via Slavewall to Tarsh and the huge latifundia there.

Words whisper on the wind that the King's men seek to crown a new king, and that the priestesses seek to incarnate Sorana Tor.

In recent years, many have joined us in our exile. Many are Heortlings from the former kingdom of Sartar, driven into exile by the Red Moon. Respect them for their ancestors stood with ours at the battle of Grizzly Peak. We call them the Newcomers. We teach them that only a just kingdom of Tarsh can protect them from the Moon. Lost sons and daughters of Exile, from the Alda-Churi tribes return to us too. They speak of civil war and an evil prince, Harvar Ironfist. We teach them that only by crowning a just King of Tarsh, will we ever be free. We call them the Lost and Found. These new exiles' customs are not the same as ours. Their men do not wear the topknot and the braids and shave the back of their heads; their women do not aspire to be fat as a mark of beauty, nor do they always cover their hair. They do not love to wear striped clothing. However, they revere Orlanth and Ernalda, and we have accepted them amongst our villages and families, for they are in exile too.

Lands of the Exiles

Kero Fin is the sacred mountain, the mother or Orlanth. She towers above us, rising seven miles high, a needle that rises into the sky. The snow never leaves her summit, and so many call her Wintertop. It is to Kero Fin that we all fly on One Day. It is at Kero Fin that Elmal remained steadfast in the Darkness; it was the last safe place, and it never fell. So we too remain steadfast in this, our time of darkness, and will never fall.

Exile Character Creation

Cultural Keywords

Exile Male

Physical Abilities: Close Combat ([Weapon] & Shield Fighting), *Fyrd* Combat, Ranged Combat ([Ranged Weapon]) Farming, Running

Personality: Fierce

Mental Abilities: Dragon Pass Geography, Alakoring Custom*, Alakoring Myths*, Know Local Area, Drumspeech**

Relationship: To Village; To Clan; Worship Strom Pantheon.

Magic: All men initiate or devote themselves to a specific god. See *Thunder Rebels* page 155.

Exile Female

Physical Abilities: Close Combat ([Weapon] & Shield Fighting), Housework, Spinning, and Weaving.

Mental Abilities: Dragon Pass Geography, Alakoring Custom*, Alakoring Myths*, Know Local Area, Drumspeech**

Personality: Cruel

Relationship: To Village; To Clan; Worship Storm Pantheon.

Magic: All women initiate or devote themselves to a specific god. See *Thunder Rebels* page 155 and *Storm Tribe* for Maran.

* Can be used as Heortling Custom or Myths with a -3 penalty.

** Understanding or communicating by drums should generally not require a roll on the part of an Exile hero.

[Weapon] is one of axe and shield, spear and shield, or mace and shield.

[Ranged weapon] is one of throwing axe, javelin, or bow.

Occupational Keywords

The keywords from *Thunder Rebels* are appropriate for the Exiles. Relationships to family will generally instead be to the village. As in Tarsh, weaponthanes are known as huscarls among the Exiles.

Basic Occupations

The warrior keyword is not restricted by gender among the exiles, though warrior women must worship an appropriate goddess, such as Maran. Of the Four Providers, Hunters and Herdsman are the most common. There are few Farmers; most are closer to Gardeners in social status and role, though thralls do much of the work in the fields and no fishermen. There are a larger number of warriors than among the Heortlings, as the Exiles have a subsistence agriculture that is supplemented with raiding. In addition to the weapons listed in the cultural keyword, warriors may also learn the Great-axe, or seax and shield. The Great or Bearded Axe is used two-handed and is a Rank 5 weapon. The seax is a single-edged chopping sword.

Advanced Occupations

The Thunder Brothers' council guides the villages. Councilmen are not thanes, apart from the village headman and woman, but they form the upper social layer in the village, and it is from among their number that the thanes are drawn. The villagers elect these posts. Anyone elected to the post gains a one-time +5 increase to wealth.

Village Council Member

Entry Requirements: Be a solid citizen of the village (a useful ability at 5W or more) and be elected by others (relationship to village at 1W or more).

Relationships: to Thunder Brother's Council; to Village and Clan.

Personality: Harsh

Magic: Any.

Wergild: Councilman 40 cows, Headsman as Thane.

Living Standard: Common

Equipment: Longhouse in the village with thralls to help run it; fine clothes, village regalla.

At Kero Fin's feet lies the temple of Maran Gor, who makes our land and enemies tremble. A constant storm rages around Kero Fin, blowing from this world and the other. Umbroli winds blow across our hills. Clouds cloak Kero Fin bringing continual rain to our lands. The turf roofs of the longhouses keep out the worst of the rain but nothing is ever dry. Thunder crashes, lightning strikes and the land trembles below. Once a year the Yinkini come to Kero Fin to honour their mother. On this day, we welcome them to our villages, for the number of these comfort loving folk it can attract blesses a village. The women especially look forward to these visits.

The Dragonspine is a ridge that runs from the Skyreach Mountains to Kero Fin and then across the Bush Range. It is along this ridge amidst the Tamlane hills, around the base of the sacred mother, that we make our homes. There are two other peaks besides Kero Fin, Lion Mt., and Axe Mt. Wintertop lies between the two peaks. Wise men say that the Dragon Empire built Wintertop's places for their leaders to pleasure themselves. Whatever the truth of this, even the humblest dwellings of Wintertop include the walls and rooms of ancient palaces. Wintertop is our fortress, surrounded by high cliffs on three sides and with a mountain at its back; supplied by a mountain lake whose surface glistens like a mirror and whose depths have never run dry. Only the Snake Paths allow a climber to reach the cliff top. It is a hard climb that staggers a man, though here by Kero Fin the air even at these heights does not grow thin. At the top, a climber must pass through the Snake Gates in the strong walls that abut the cliff tops. On the west side, the cliff walls are terraced. Once the Dragon Empire built great palaces here on two or three terrace levels. From below, these palaces seemed to float in the air. Now the rich of Wintertop have built their houses amongst the ruins of the hanging

palaces; the finest of these new buildings is the Hall of the King's council.

In the north of the Tamlane hills lies Iristhold. At this fort, caravans who have paid us tribute may rest on their journey. Iristhold has grown busy, and the Iristaros women are fat and beautiful.

To the east, the hills gave way to the Spinosaurus Flats. Here there are herds of Earthshakers, the Thunderbeats, Maran's children, large as a longhouse and dangerous to anger. The thunder of their passage shakes the ground. Maran's priestesses know the secrets to control her children, to protect the villages, or use in war. We make our most sacred drums from the skin of Maran's children, our drumsticks from their bones. The Imperials sometimes hunt Maran's children; they do so without respect or understanding.

East of the Flats is the Upland Marsh. Delecti lives here surrounded by his foul perversions. Only the strong winds of Orlanth blow the stench of rotting corpses away from our homes. Do not venture into the Marsh without Humakt to protect to you.

To the west lie the lands of the Pony Breeders. They have been both allies and enemies. When Arim came to Dragon Pass, they raided and enslaved many of our people. When we raided the northerners, they were our allies. Yarandros made them enemies



when he raided them for the Goldhorses. Nothing has changed since then. We raid them for their fine horses, and their riches of their slave villages, and they raid our villages. We have raided Esrolia and Lunar Tarsh with them at our side. We raid their slave villages along the Oslir valley, and by the Smoking Ruins, where the bodies of trolls slain in the Tax Slaughter still smoke. Their horse clans do not stay in

one place but wander throughout the Grazelands. When we raid them, we must ride, for their pursuers quickly overtake raiders on foot. Listen to the drums for they warn of their raids on the villages, then we must gather behind the palisade wall of the village protected by the fyrd. To fight them our warriors learn the feat of Yarandros's Golden Cuts to hamstring their horses.

There is a dragonewt nest between the Pony Breeders and us. The nest is a strange, alien place, where we do not venture. No one can understand them, and when they tried, they brought ruin to the land. Their hunting bands roam the area. Their magic roads pass through our lands. Avoid dragonewts.

To the northwest lies the Shakevale, a sacred valley where some say Arim once dwelt when he carved our kingdom from a land of ghosts and shadows, and where the power of the Shaker temple, that lies at its southern edge, makes the ground tremble.

Once the Bush Range was the royal estate then Moirades ravaged it. Now it is wild. The land here turns to forest, and the dense undergrowth makes travel difficult. The ruins of villages and towns litter the area. The Falling Ruins lie at the heart of the Bush Rage, a town brought to rubble by the power of the Earthshaker.

Many say that the ghosts of the dead, who wander the Bush Range at night calling for vengeance upon Moirades, without which they can never rest. In recent years, foreigners have come to the Bush range. They seek to re-claim the land. They are not Tarshite. The land is not theirs; they may not live there without paying us tribute. The Marantaros seek to reclaim the land for the Exiles, though the Iristaros say that they seek too much for themselves.

Snakepipe hollow lies to the Northeast. It is a sacred place where the power of the Earthshaker swallowed the armies of Chaos, but within the hollow, the Predark lives.

Tribes of the Exiles

The **Marantaros** live in the lands around the Shaker temple. Maran Gor is strong with the women of these tribes. Their king, Stoner, is old and weak. His daughter Alchfled, a priestess of Erantha leads the tribe in war. The women of the tribe are fierce warriors who take their enemies scalps in battle. Philigos's scalp still hangs in the Kings Hall at Maransdun. The smallest of the tribes they are divided between the Old, the supporters of Stoner, who seek only to preserve their lands in Exile, and the young, the supporters of Alchfled, who seek Tarsh scalps.

The **Iristaros** are called the 'fat tribe', both because of the beauty of their women grown prosperous on the trade that passes through Iristhold, and because of their numbers. They take tribute from the foreigners

in the Bush Range. The men seek to expand their grazing into the Bush range, but their women preach that they should be grateful for the bounty the goddess has already given them. As they grow into the Bush range, so the Marantaros grow weaker. Tarkil leads the Iristaros clan. Some accuse him of being friendly to the Empire, and say, that is why his tribe has grown fat. Others say they have grown too fat, and raid them for their cattle.

The **Hendarli** are the tribe with noble blood. Illaro the Blacktooth was of the Hendarli, but renounced his leadership when he became King of Tarsh. Once all the Bush Range was theirs and they were famous for making cold beer from winter-grown hops. Now they raise cattle and sheep in the hills around Wintertop. Most of those who live in Wintertop are of the Hendarli, and the other tribes tell that they remain aloof in its mountain fastness. The Hendarli also have the finest horses and the most thralls, won from raids on the Pony Breeders. Orios is their king, it is said that the blood of Illaro runs in his veins and that he aspires to be crowned as Hendrakos's heir. Orios encourages the Hendarli warriors to follow Yarandros's path to the other side to obtain the Goldeneye horses.

Mithchuinn Moonhater was an Orlanthei chieftain from Dara-Ni who fled the Empire to Tarsh. He swore to bring the Empire down, and made his followers swear the same oath. He founded the **Mitchuinni**, who now dwell south of the Iristaros on the edge

of the Spinosaurus flats. Enemies of the Empire flock to the Mithchuinn. Their clan warband, the Moonhater, fight ferociously against the Empire, sparing neither man, nor woman, nor child. Mithchuinn teaches his descendants powerful magic to use against the Empire. Tovtarim, the flame-headed king, leads the Moonhater on raids against the Empire in Tarsh and Sartar.



Factions of the Exiles

The Old School

Hon-Eel quested to prove that Ernalda was *She Who Waits* one of the Seven Mothers to the Kordros island temple of Ernalda. The Old School knows this to be a trick, a misunderstanding of the mysteries of the Earth, and a lie. They oppose the spread of Hon-Eel and maize calling it a misunderstanding of the sacrificial right of Sorana Tor. They speak of the time of the restoration of Ernalda's statue to the First Pedestal, when the six-toed troublemakers were driven out. Now they say they once again need to drive out the six-toes from Tarsh, and restore Ernalda to her rightful place.

The Moonhater

Properly the Moonhater are the warband of the Mithchuinn tribe. However, their war against the Empire inspires many of the Exiles

Population of the Exiles

Tribes	Total	New-comers	Lost & Found	Iristhold	Wintertop
Marantaros	3,000		200		50
Iristaros	13,000	300	300	800	400
Hendarli	10,000	500	400		2,300
Mithchuinn	6,000	800	500	100	200
Others	2,000	300	400	50	400
The Exiles	34,000	1,900	1,800	950	3,350

Most Exile settlements are villages of 100-200 people divided among longhouses holding a single extended family

who hold the Lunars responsible for the division of Tarsh, the death of their kings, the ruin of the and Bush Range. The last free people to worship Orlanth, they are the beacon in the darkness to the people's of the pass. This faction is responsible for the raids against the Lunar supply caravans, Imperial holdings and collaborators in Tarsh, and the settlers of the Bush Range.

The Earthshakers

The priestesses of Maran Gor lead this faction from the Shaker Temple. They look to the old ways. A king should be crowned with the rites of Sorana Tor, not marriage to the Feathered Horse Queen. An heir must be found for the tribes of Wintertop and unite Tarsh. Maran trembles, grows angry and must be appeased. Her children, the Thunderbeasts must be protected from those who would hunt them.

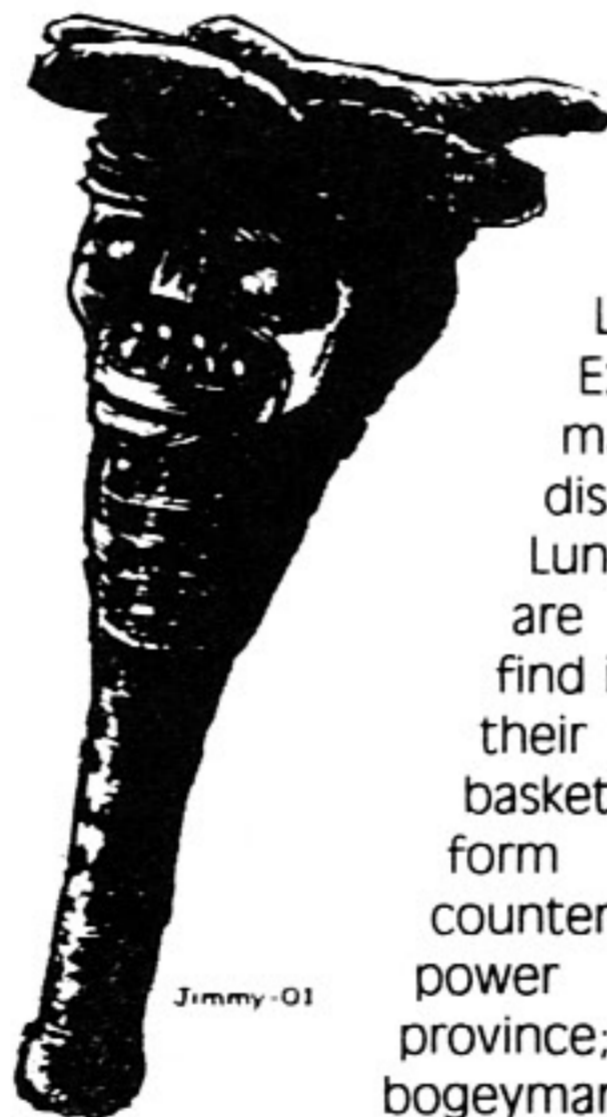
The Sons of Wintertop

The Sons of Wintertop know that the Exiles dreams of a united Tarsh died with Hendrakos. The exiles cannot crown a new King. As the Alda-Churi accepted this and began anew life, so must the tribes of the Kerofini confederation. The future lies in a new nation of Wintertop, not an old nation of Tarsh. The constant quarrelling with the Empire and Tarsh will lead only to destruction; it is a time for a new beginning, a time for peace.

Notes for playing the Exiles

The Exiles worship the savage and dark side of the religion of Orlanth and Ernalda. The sacrifice of humans, cannibalism, raiding,

scalping your enemies, taking trophies from parts of their bodies and the taking of thralls are all accepted parts of Exile culture. Once a civilised Orlanthi people, like their kin in Tarsh, the Exiles have descended to barbarism and savagery. Travellers among the Exiles who may note at first the similarities to other Orlanthi cultures will soon begin to find they are journeying into the Heart of Darkness. The drums that will mark and signify strangers' journey into the hills around Wintertop are only the first sign of this. Entering a hall decorated with the heads of the Exiles' enemies, the warriors scalps on their spears, their necklaces of ears – and, for the women, worse – will soon disturb more civilised visitors. It may not be wise to enquire too closely, what is in the stew that the thrall maiden serves you at the feast.



As the last part of northern Dragon Pass not to fall under the Lunar yoke, the Exiles territory is a magnet for those disaffected with Lunar rule. The Lunars are aware of this, but find it easier to keep all their rotten eggs in one basket. The Exiles also form a convenient counterweight to the power of the Tarshite province; they are the bogeyman with which the Lunars can scare the Tarshite populace into obedience - support us, or the Exiles may raid your lands and commit unspeakable acts. Both the Lunars and the Tarshites maintain a network of spies and assassins in Wintertop and Iristhold to keep an eye on rebels and any call for a Rising of Tarsh. The free city of Wintertop is a place of plots, intrigue, and assassins.

Episode seeds

■ A herd of dinosaurs is overrunning your clan's tula, and

the warriors keep getting badly injured trying to drive them off. The women suggest another way; enlist the help of a priestess of Maran. The easiest place to find one is among the Exiles - what price will she demand for her help?

■ An important rebel leader is in hiding among the Exiles. The rebellion needs to get him out. The Lunars agents know he is in the area, but have not tracked him down. You need to get him out, before they find him, and bring him out. In a further complication, he may have embraced the savage ways of the Exiles.

■ A caravan passing through the Bush Range seeks guards. The caravan master does not want to pay tribute and is looking for guards.

■ A settler village in the Bush Range is tired of the constant demand for tribute, and the taking off villagers as slaves by Exile raiders. They are looking for mercenaries to drive off the Exiles. They promise gold, but do they have any?

■ In the coming Hero Wars, the Exiles could be a useful ally. The rebellion wants you to contact the leaders of the tribes, gift them, and win their promise of support, with a promise of a payment if necessary.

■ The Hendarli know a Heroquest to obtain Goldeneye horses, but will they teach it to you?

■ A caravan carrying a magical treasure was lost to Exile raiders, now the owner of that treasure wants it back, and he wants the heroes' help in finding it.

■ The Exiles captured some of your kinfolk and forced them into slavery. Can you rescue them, before the Exiles sell them on?

Maran

Goddess of Fighting and Earthquakes

Greg Stafford & Roderick Robertson

Based on original material by Greg Stafford and Sandy Peterson. Some sections by Jeff Kyer

Maker of earthquakes,
Maran Gor,
Drinker of blood,
dreadful goddess,
Earth's defender,
fierce ax-wielder,
Speaks from her temple
with terror and tremors.

Maran is goddess of the Active Earth, recognised by most people for her most prominent manifestation, the earthquake. She is worshipped now by those who seek the carnage that is her most precious gift. Her followers are a grim people with a crude but fulfilling religion, one suited only for the harshest lifestyle.

Mythology of Maran

In the beginning of time when all was still peaceful, the goddess Asrelia gave birth to three daughters. One was insubstantial and provided the energy for the other two, who were named Esrola and Maran. All of them were generous and kind and had many friends. They were widely courted by many gods, but Maran took no permanent husband, just a lover now and then when it amused her. She delighted in making and changing things, and was uncaring of the harm that her actions might cause those who lived upon the earth. Throughout time and legends, these sisters have maintained a close relationship. However, subsequent actions and conflicts shaped each of the goddesses even as Maran shaped the earth. Thus, Esrola became the much loved and fertile goddess who was fought over by many, while Maran became a figure of fear and awe. Ernalda, always behind the veil, ruled all.

In the Green Age, Maran helped make the world. She raised mountains and hills, opened crevices and valleys, and split the earth with volcanoes and earthquakes. Most of the Green Family preferred to stay

together in permanent company, but Maran went far and wide to shape the elements about her. She created the primal wilds.

Upon the Spike was made the Plant Rune, and it was multiplied and displayed all over the Spike by those who played with it. There was so much growth that it spread out, washing the earth like a wave of new creation. Lush green forests and marshes covered everything. Then came the Animal Rune, and this time Maran herself played with the form. She was among the first deities to touch it, and she created the maranings, her Shaker Beasts. She made the dordarings, the aladarings, and the gatorgarings, each of which made a different type of earthquake when they lumbered by. Maran's greatest pleasure, perhaps the only time she laughed without control, was when all three types circled her without stopping. She was so happy with them that she did not seem to need her family. She was found more often in the wilderness than among the Earth Family, and her children filled much of the world.

With the coming of the Gods War, however, Maran's simple and perfect existence ended. The Emperor sent his servants to get rid of the dordarings, which he said were pests in his garden. The entire species was destroyed by fire. Maran made the thundering serevings then, that ate great chunks off all the solar beings they could find afterwards, until Vestkarthen and Jagrekriand destroyed most of them as well. She killed as many of the invaders with her bare fists as she could. Then, without her dance, Maran stopped laughing.

This is the official full cult write-up intended for *Storm Tribe* but cut for reasons of space. The full Maran will appear in a future *Issaries* book, with additional information and subcults not given here. In the mean time, we are delighted to have been given the chance of bringing this to the Gloranthan community. © *Issaries* Inc, 2001

Maranings and Other Quakebeasts

Maran's Five Shaker Beasts were her beloved children: the dordarings, serevings, aladarings, voraladarings, and gatorgarings. All are now extinct, although they can still be encountered in the Green Age, Stagnant Age, Umath's Age, Storm Tribe Age, and Vingkotling Age. They are called quakebeasts, a "category" of animals recorded in the stories of the Earth Family. The term is more specific than the Dara Happan word *gazzam* (see *Anaxial's Roster*, pg. 145): creatures that do not shake the ground when they walk are not quakebeasts. In Orlanthe stories, these creatures are often called thunderbeasts, because they make sounds like thunder.

Quakebeasts share the characteristics of being huge and making big noises. Some are vegetarian, others are carnivorous, and one is actually aerophagic (air eating). Some have scales, others have fur, and a few have skin like rocks or other minerals. A very few are intelligent. Many come from the God World, but some come from the Spirit World or the Dragon World, some were created in the Inner World, and one type comes from the Sorcery World.

Maran's **Control [Quakebeast]** feat works without penalty on the creatures that she made. It works on other quakebeasts with a penalty: -5 for those created in the Inner World, -10 for those from the God World but not of Maran, and -20 penalty for those that come from the Spirit World, the Sorcery World, or the dragons.

The aladarings were nearly all destroyed by the elves. The Aldryami hated these great eaters, and for a while the forests grew greater and wider without them. Maran reshaped the few survivors to be the even larger voraladarings that ate trees like a horse eats grass. The Aldryami enlisted help, and Seravus the Enchanter and his hsunchen followers killed most of the new quakebeasts. Maran frowned. She called herself Maran Devor when she took up her first weapons. She went along with Finovan on the Plundering of Aron to avenge herself, and in the fight against the Face Guards she smashed the head of Seravus' son with her club.

The gatorgarings were exterminated when Valind and the Uz joined forces. Valind and his followers froze the great beasts, and the Uz then moved in and devoured the frozen creatures. At the loss of the last of her children Maran wept tears of blood, and when she was done weeping she was changed. After washing herself in the black blood of revenge she called herself Erantha Gor. She armed herself with new weapons and hunted down Valind's followers, chopping up many of the ice demons so that they could not return to the cold north. She then went after the Uz, even beheading several

of their gods in contests and duels. At last they relented and agreed to pay her worship.

Maran returned to Dragon Pass and built a great temple fortress. She entered the temple, and afterwards left it only when she was needed. From that day on the title 'Gor' was added to her name even when she called herself Maran. When Kuravark threatened the Vingkotlings, she burst from the earth to engulf and destroy Chaos. When Babeester Gor was helpless, she defended the Earth. When Nontraya came for Eralda, Maran slew her sister rather than allow her to be dishonoured again. In the end, however, Maran could not remain alive once the earth became completely dead and still; when Tekakos came for her she did not resist, and followed him under the earth to Hell.

In the Underworld, Eralda was waiting in the place that Maran had sent her to. The sisters were reunited, and in their reunion was the strength of creation. Eralda once more empowered Maran, and together they restored life to the dying earth.

When Time began, Maran was worshipped by many at her Shaker Temple, for that fortress protected them even after her death. She was remembered

elsewhere, and received sacrifices from many other people.

Manifestations

Maran is the Active Earth. Her best known manifestations are earthquakes, since they are common in Kethaela and Kerofinela. No year goes by without several being felt, although few are powerful enough to do much damage. Nonetheless, large and widespread shocks devastate some regions every few decades. However, she is present in any natural movement of the earth.

Icons & Images

Maran is depicted as a fierce woman, and stylised faces are often carved into the ends of sacred war clubs. One of the two Door Guards of all Eralda temples is always a statue, image, or rune of Maran (the other is a statue, image, or rune of Babeester Gor).

Otherworld Home & Life After Death

Maran's Shifting Palace is deep within the Earth Realm. It constantly rumbles and quakes, for it is made of living gatings (see below) that move to change the size or shape of the house as she desires. From the Palace, worshippers may enter the Green Age, Stagnant Age, Umath's Age, Storm Tribe Age, Vingkotling Age, Chaos Age, or the Underworld.

Maran worshippers are not burned at all, but urred whole. When their corpse urns are buried the earth opens to receive them, then closes again at the conclusion of the rites.

Nature of the Cult

Maran is the power of strength, violence, and movement that

Nature of the Cult

Maran is the power of strength, violence, and movement that resides in the earth. Her worshippers are women who manifest violence and combat. She is the Active Earth, and although most people view her as a destroyer, she is always a creator. She knows that sometimes to create something new you must destroy the old. She performs this deed for Ernalda, who often does not have the heart to destroy her worshippers or the body of her sister Esrola even when it is necessary.

Attitudes & Relationships

Maran is normally worshipped in conjunction with Ernalda, her sister, and is sometimes considered an aspect of the Great Goddess. She has rivalries with most male combat-oriented gods, but is friendly with most of the Warrior Women, especially her niece Babeester Gor.

Maran is the enemy of Chaos or anything else that would harm the Earth Family. She dislikes hsunchen because of their ancient loyalty to Seravus the Enchanter. She hates the Aldryami and Valindings for killing her children, but spared the Uz because they agreed to give her worship.

Maran has few worshippers. Outsiders view them as dangerous (men) or strange (women), even more so than the worshippers of most of the other unusual deities of the Storm Tribe Pantheon.

Mode of Worship & Sacrifices

Maran receives collateral worship at every Earth ceremony. Her own rites tend to be solemn, with long bass chants intoned for the day, punctuated by many drums and other percussion sounds. During

the rites, a drumming sound emerges from deep within the earth.

Worshippers of Maran regularly sacrifice blood and life to the Hungry Earth. She is more often propitiated than worshipped, with most Heortling clans making only token offerings. Ritual implements such as knives and bowls (pottery and metal both) are offered up during the ceremonies. At the holy day rituals she receives boars, and on some special occasions requires dogs.

Holy Days

Each week on Clay Day, worshippers gather to honor the Goddess with prayer and sacrifice.

Maran's special holy days are held on the Clay Day of Disorder Week in each season. Each holy day commemorates a different deed and aspect with special rituals that occupy all worshippers for the entire day. As is normal among the Heortlings, priestesses and their servants usually begin preparing several days in advance. On their subcult's special holy day, worshippers often make a pilgrimage to the Shaker Temple. These great gatherings are the source of much of Maran's might.

Earthmaker Day (Gatara Day)

Clay Day, Disorder Week, Sea Season
On Earthmaker Day, beer and blood are offered in the memory of Maran's quakebeasts and her long lost "big lover," whose face is remembered but whose name is lost in a drunken haze. Stories of the Green Age revive memories that contrast with the vengeance demanded the rest of the year. Clans or temples that have been lucky enough to capture a quakebeast may release it to Maran and earn great favour with her in the forthcoming year. On such occasions, her joyful laughter can be heard through the earth for miles around.

Blasted Earth Day (Sorgoth Day)

Clay Day, Disorder Week, Fire Season
Fire Season is the time of war and raiding. The wrongs that ended the Green Age are remembered, especially the destruction of the dordarings by the Emperor. Sorgoth Kor raises herself once again from the broken altar, and the cult uses her blessings against those who have wronged them or the earth in the past year. The human sacrifices required by her most powerful curse keep most Heortlings far away from her ceremonies.

Death Mace Day (Devor Day)

Clay Day, Disorder Week, Earth Season
Earth Season begins the time of sorrow for the Goddess and all of the Earth. Worshippers of Maran Devor gather, and many challenge male warriors to ritual combat, the results of which are often used as divination. Devor's followers are often joined by Erantha Gor's, who lay down their axes and take up maces, becoming initiates and devotees of Maran Devor for the day (even if they know Erantha's secret). True to the 'First Vengeance of Maran,' worshippers often raid hsunchen and Aldryami foes.

Shutting the Door Day

Wild Day, Fertility Week, Earth Season
Maran shares this holy day with Ernalda, so all Heortlings worship her at this time. Unless a clan has active worshippers, however, the sacrifices are primarily propitiatory in nature. For all Heortlings, however, the day ends with a low rumble felt by everyone as the gateway closes behind the living for the rest of the year. Maran's rites on this day show contempt for Ernalda's husbands, for her death shows that they have failed to protect her. On this day, Maran's worshippers are the centre of the whole community's attention, and one of them will lead the public rites, even if she is only an initiate.

Bloody Axe Day (Erantha Day)

Clay Day, Disorder Week, Darkness Season
Darkness Season sees the death of the last of Maran's children. Worshippers of Erantha Gor gather and wash themselves in the black blood of revenge. Erantha's followers are often joined by Maran Devor's, who lay down their maces and take up axes, becoming initiates and devotees of Maran Devor for

the day (even if they know Devor's secret).

Uz taken in raids during the previous weeks are challenged to ritual combat. As long as the Uz surrenders and agrees to serve as a slave to Maran, it is spared. This rare submission of Darkness to the Earth is celebrated with sacrifices of dogs and boars. If no Uz are taken, men sometimes play the parts of Erantha's enemies, and their blood is a sweet beer for the victors.

☐ ☐ Gor Day

Clay Day, Death Week, Darkness Season

Maran's High Holy Day commemorates the taking of the name Gor. None save her worshippers approach the Shaker Temple lest they find themselves participating in her ceremonies as victims or enemies. Drums and bloodletting accompany several days of ritual that lead up to the final transformation of the goddess. Aldryami and other enemies are ceremonially slaughtered and consumed. At the culmination of the rites the Shaker slays her enemies, and her worshippers wallow in the blood.

☐ Earthshaker Day (Maran Day)

Clay Day, Disorder Week, Storm Season

During Storm Season, the Earth sleeps. Even Maran is quiescent, but her power can still be called up when needed to defend the earth. Her powers over the Shaking Earth are cherished, and during the bloodstained rites she receives blood sacrifices from everyone, even the temple thralls. The Shaker Temple is thronged with initiates, devotees, and priestesses from across Dragon Pass and beyond. At the height of the ceremony, the impact of Maran's fist makes buildings shake and objects shatter for thirty miles.

Organisation

Maran has few worshippers except at the Shaker Temple. Some clans have a few, but most have one or two if any at all, generally Erantha Gor worshippers who serve as guards for other Earth temples. Somewhat paradoxically, Maran's worshippers are most often found in Peace Clans, where they form the guard for the chieftain and are part of the

fyrd. This is because the War Clans have many more gods who provide war magic.

Holy Places and Temples

Maran exercised her powers at several well-known sites that are now holy places. The whole of Ginijji (Snake-pipe Hollow) and Dwarf Run was dropped from its height by her efforts. Dereveen Cut, Derangor Valley, and the Falling Hills, in Tarsh, are all places where she destroyed foreign armies. Dereveen Woods is where she cut her first club, and worshippers often go there to cut their own.

Shaker Temple is the one real temple to Mara and supports all of her subcults. It is located amidst hills at the base of Kero Fin. For more than a mile around the temple the ground often shakes, sometimes gently and sometimes violently. Several hundred initiates, devotees, and priestesses live at this temple. Smaller temples dedicated to individual subcults are occasionally found throughout Heortling lands and in Esrolia.

Temple Organisation & Ranks

The great Shaker Priestess rules the cult. Her word is law, for she is the Goddess incarnate, but she is advised by a council of Earth priestesses. She is so ponderous that when she departs from the grounds she is hauled about by teams of oxen. She is waited upon by forty-seven male and female virgins, all of whom eat only raw human flesh. The ground shakes whenever she speaks, and if she stamps her foot she can make huge quakes. Priestesses serve her, and initiates serve them. All Maran initiates receive their transformation here, and they obey the temple hierarchy over all other authority, whether tribal or even clan.

Membership Requirements

Maran accepts any Heortling brave enough to embrace the dire secrets of her cult. While most worshippers are female, some are men. However, male initiates are required to sacrifice their masculinity to Maran and become eunuchs. Depending on the subcult, women too may be forced to eschew marriage, sex, or even fertility itself. Initiation is possible only at the Shaker Temple, never through the services of a local priestess. There, worshippers are taught the mysteries of the cult and sent back to remind their kin of Maran's power.

Initiate

A candidate must pass a series of tests by the local Ernalda priestess to prove herself. She is then sent alone to the Shaker's Temple, perhaps never to return. Those who return rejoin their society and family and attend all the usual worship. On cult holy days, they go alone or with other cultists into the wilds, since no actual priestess is usually present.

Initiates have all normal requirements and restrictions, and receive all the usual benefits. They must swear to obey their high priestess on pain of death. They may not directly till the soil or herd beasts for their livelihood, and must eat raw meat, fish, or fowl as their breakfast daily. Initiates of most subcults may not enter into any form of marriage except the "eighth form," which is no marriage at all, having no legal status. This is sometimes called the "harmast form" or "niskis form," implying carnal pleasure without legal or even personal entanglements.

Magic Keyword

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (Axe Fighting, Mace Fighting), Endurance.

Mental Ability: Mythology of Maran.

Virtues: Active, Relentless.

Affinities: **Earth Making**, **Quakebeast**.

Devotee

Devotees of Maran have all of the standard requirements. Female devotees need not be celibate, but they may not marry, and must divorce any current husband when they take their vows. Any son born to a devotee becomes a thrall of the temple, but retains the right to become an initiate of Maran when he reaches adulthood.

Affinities and Feats:

Earth Making (Divert Stream, Move Rocks, Open Trench, Raise Earth, Solidify Dust)

Quakebeast (Rockskin, Control [Quakebeast], Great Strength, Ponderous Step)

Priestess

Candidates must be women who have proved themselves as devotees. They must fulfil normal priestly functions and have normal priestly benefits. They must remain celibate, trading the joys of love for the service of the goddess.

A priestess rules each temple of Maran, but most do not have more than one. The high priestess at the Shaker Temple is served by a chief priestess for each subcult, each of which often has one or more priestesses to serve them.

Subcults of Maran

Erantha Gor, the Axe

Erantha Gor is the form that Maran took the second time she went to war. She washed herself in the blood of her foes, drank the magic ale, and took to hand an axe.

This is the fiercer of her Maran's two war aspects. Erantha Gor's followers guard the temples of the Earth, and in times of war may form entire warbands. They must never marry after becoming initiates; men may

not worship this subcult even as initiates. In Heortling society, followers of Erantha Gor must do duty with the *fyrd*.

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (Axe and Shield Fighting, Two-handed Axe Fighting), Ranged Combat (Thrown Axe).

Virtues: Brave.

Affinities:

Axe Combat (Axe Trance Berserk, Kill Man, Slash Foe, Terrifying Appearance, Unbreakable Shield)

Earth Making Feats: Break Ice, Cut Stone.

Secret: Axe Dance (As she dances, the devotee becomes one with her axe. She adds the rating of the secret to her Close Combat ability and to any ability that she uses to resist magic. While in the dance, she is berserk and cannot use any magic other than her **Axe Combat** affinity. Should she lose contact with the earth, lose her axe, or stop moving, the dance ends immediately.)

The Three Warriors

Sometimes small images of the three warrior earth goddesses are found together. The simplest of these is a rock or stick painted with red on one third of its circumference, black on the next, and blue on the last. At other times, three sticks or stones (or other simple images) are set up, identical except for their colours. When identifiable images are used, outsiders can more easily recognise the goddesses as Erantha Gor (red), Babeester Gor (black), and Maran Devor (blue).

Gatara Tor, the Mother

Gatara Tor is the mother of the earth daimones known as gatings. Gatings are not a specific "race" of daimones, but a class that contains hundreds of individually named entities, each with their own powers and personality. Each can perform a task by itself, and in a group they can raise hills, shake down towns, or create vast chasms.

Gatara Tor worshippers can summon any gating and set it a task, but they must use their Gating Lore ability to know

which gating to summon for a particular task. The few initiates of this subcult know that the gatings are the souls of dead worshippers and of Maran's Five Ancient Quakebeasts. The devotees know many unique entities, lesser gods of the Earth Realm who were saved by Maran.

Mental Abilities: Gating Lore.

Affinities:

Mother of Gatings (Dismiss Gating, Summon [Gating] ritual).

Quakebeast Feats: Call [Quakebeast].

Secret: Become Gating ritual (The devotee may transfigure their physical body by reshaping it into the form taken by their soul. No worshipper knows the form they will take until they perform the ritual the first time. This form may be of any type of quakebeast, although those not from the God World are rare. Blessed worshippers discover that their soul is that of one of the Five Ancient Quakebeasts, and only the greatest of heroes are born with a unique gating soul.)

Maran Devor, the Mace

Maran Devor is the Mace Goddess. The first time that Maran took up weapons she put on this face, and in her battles destroyed forests, slew great beasts, and smashed giants.

Maran Devor has the fewest requirements of any subcult of Maran. Initiates are treated as normal members of Heortling society, with no restrictions against marriage or sex. It is also the only subcult that allows men to become devotees.

Physical Abilities: Close Combat (Mace and Shield Fighting, Two-handed Mace Fighting), Ranged Combat (Thrown Mace).

Virtues: Brave, Hate Aldryami.

Affinities:

Mace Combat (Crush Foe, Kill Aldryami, Mace Trance Berserk, Terrifying Appearance, Unbreakable Shield)

Earth Making Feats: Augment Stone Weapon, Shatter Tree.

Secret: Mace Dance (As she dances, the devotee becomes one with her mace. She adds the rating of the secret to her Close Combat ability and to any ability that she uses to

resist magic. While in the dance, she is berserk and cannot use any magic other than her **Mace Combat** affinity. Should she lose contact with the earth, lose her mace, or stop moving, the dance ends immediately.)

☐☐ **Maran Gor, the Earthshaker**

Maran Gor is the One Who Makes the Earthquakes. This subcult is unique in that magicians must work together to create their greatest effects, for otherwise their quakes are weak and localised. The cult does not often use its great power because it takes time to gather enough devotees and accumulate sufficient magical force to empower their rituals.

Affinities:

☐ **Earth Shaker** (Collapse Building, Create Fissure, Earth Tremor, Knock Down Foe, Shake Down Chaos)

☐ **Earth Making Feats:** Cause Landslide, Stop Eruption.

Secret: **Shake Earth ritual** (This ritual allows two or more devotees to combine their Earth Shaker feats to create a greater effect. Initiates may not support the ritual with magical power. The devotees add their secrets' ability ratings together to determine the area [in acres] that is affected by the ritual without increased resistance. All devotees must use the same feat.)

☐☐ **Sorgoth Kor, the Bloody Earth**

Sorgoth Kor is the Taker of Earth Gift. When the Fire Tribe came to seize the bounty of the fields, they abused the women and tore down the temples. When the blood of the women flowed on the earth, Maran raised herself up from her broken altar. She named herself Sorgoth Kor as she raised her fist, and each man she struck was cursed with impotence. She then struck down the Fire Horse, and with its blood laid waste to the fields so that they became as infertile as the men.

Sorgoth's worshippers remove the blessings of the Earth from those who threaten the Earth Tribe. Her feats are curses, and

her worshippers gather to bestow them on those they hate. Blood is always required to perform her magic, but she does not care whether it is the blood of the worshipper, the victim, or an innocent bystander, and so most Heortlings fear and despise her even more than they do other subcults. Her greatest curse is the Blast Earth ritual, which requires the summoning of Ana Gor to perform a human sacrifice. Few clans will support a devotee who performs this ritual unless the clan worships Maran as a primary deity.

Physical Skills: Prepare Sacrifice.

Virtues: Hate [Enemy], Vengeful.

Affinities:

☐ **Earth Curse rituals** (Cause Disease, Kill Animal, Make Man Impotent, Return Curse to Sender, Thwart Healing, Wither Plant)

Secret: **Blast Earth ritual** (If the devotee is victorious, this ritual destroys the plant-bearing capacity of a specific area of earth [use the Magic Distance chart from the Advanced Magic chapter of *Hero Wars*, reading the number as acres rather than distance]. Any attempt to bless that ground or restore its fertility must overcome the target number of the curse.)

Divine Retribution

Maran's worshippers are subject to the normal pantheon agents of reprisal. In addition, worshippers who fail in their duties to the earth may be attacked by a *talosl* (see *Thunder Rebels*, p. 201), which will attempt to swallow the reprobate and deliver them to the nearest Maran holy place for punishment. Worshippers who till the earth or herd or tend animals are attacked by Ernalda's special agent of reprisal, the *driman* (see *Thunder Rebels*, p. 205).

Maran also sends curses against those who violate their vows. The first curse is called Hote, which means "Wound." This curse afflicts worshippers who fail to attend a holy day ceremony, and makes it difficult for the worshipper to use or benefit from healing magic. Any

magical healing ability cast by or on the worshipper faces a resistance of +10. Initiates are cursed until the next holy day, devotees more than a year, until the high holy day. Worshippers who skip several holy day ceremonies may be cursed for life.

The second curse is called Ueh Ziv, which means "Blood Debt." Maran sends this curse against priestesses who offend their goddess by breaking their vow of celibacy. This curse causes the earth itself to become a deadly foe of the priestess. Whenever the priestess' skin or hair touches bare earth she instantly loses 1 point from any magical ability gained from an earth goddess. This continues each minute that she remains in contact with the earth. The only way to end the curse short of dying is for the priestess to sacrifice her lover to Maran Gor using Ana Gor's rites.



De Garavum Temple of the Great Shaker

Greg Stafford

**From the Great Mountain
Report, by 'Ellodum the Scout'
(written c. 225 ST)**

Mikorlant said he could take us to the Secret Kingdom. He said it lay inside De Garavum, Temple of the Great Shaker. It is near to the Great Mountain and is a place of great fear and terror. It is in a place called the Valley of Trembling, and it is so fearful that the earth itself trembles like a man facing a king. Indeed this was so, for as we travelled nearby every two or three days we felt the earth move under our feet. It was alarming enough to cause all of us to be jumpy both day and night. Our guide laughed at us and said that was just Mara, his goddess, breathing.

Urvari was more afraid of the Great Mountain, and it must be the greatest thing in the world. Mikorlant grew livid at that, for Urvari forgot he knew our tongue. He said, "Don't insult the Great One!" He pointed up the Great Mountain, whom he called Kara; and said that it used to be ten times as large, but it offended his goddess and they got into a fight. Kara tried to stand and Mara tried to move, and Mara won mightily. All the empty area around us, "from Arrow to Conquest" he said, pointing from a distant mountain in the south to a distant mountain in the north. He said his goddess showed mercy to make her that size, for she could have turned her to dust.

After that, we went up even higher towards the mountain chain called the Backbone. Mikorlant said it was the backbone of Eerethva, and he made eating motions with his hands. He said that she broke the valley we were ascending with one stamp of her foot. He pointed to a gigantic column of stone and said it was Mara's Stick. When we got to the top of one, which he called Slippery Ridge, we looked down into the Gornan Valley, and towards the distant temple.

Gornan is their earthquake god. Urvari said he needed a place to live and so his mother shook the ground and made this valley. He was so happy that he keeps a part of the valley moving all the time. Mara was so delighted that she lived there herself, and her

tribe built themselves dwellings to live in nearby. Urvari pointed to several large landmarks and said they showed where Mara's peoples lived. "Over there, the Dordarings, where the smoke issues. There, where the three spikes stand was the holy idol for the Serevings. The Aladarings were down there, along the whole valley, and dug that river to bathe in. the others, the Voraladarings and Gatorgarings were not in sight of us." Then he pointed to a long shadow to the left side of the valley, along a cliff. "That is where she resides now."

It looked like rocks at first, but lights burned from its face as we camped one last time before we reached it. The next day we traversed a farmland, and then onward towards the temple. Giants built it. The stones were as big as those at Daroken, but these were irregular, even L- and Z-shaped. A single huge façade stretched before us, with several levels of doors and terraces made for those huge stones. Many people moved among them, and we could see that the doors were much larger than people, and even the windows for many of the buildings were too high for people to even look into from the streets, or out of if the inside floors were the same height. I asked Mikorlant and he confirmed my thoughts. "It was made by other people, who were not puny like us."

At that moment I heard a low rumble and my feet shook. Urvari screamed and fell to the ground. The rumble roared and we were all thrown upon the ground, I upon my backside so I sat, bouncing around on the ground and looking straight ahead at the temple. The Shaker was certainly there, for I saw a great ripple pass down from the far right to the far left along the mountainside. I was frozen with terror at the sight of the entire cliffside rising right upon into the air and dropping again. A series of landslides began, crashing with even more noise and raising distant clouds of dust. Crash, crash and crash even closer they came and I stared in awe expecting to witness the demise of this entire prehistoric edifice. But when the shock wave struck it, the whole temple leapt up like a man whose team just kicked over the goals, and then sat again, exactly into the place where it had been before. A second rippled, and another so that three times the stones lifted and fell into place, each perfectly.

Everyone had fallen, even the horses. Mikorlant and his companions rose laughing. They repeated some phrase over and over, and at least he

translated it to me. "She is here! She is here!" they said, laughing. When they saw Urvari had wet himself they absolutely howled, pointing and holding their sides. He mumbled to me, out of earshot, "She's a pisser then, she is." And he refused to go any further at all. "I'm not going into that hole with a tremor like that possible," he said.

He proved wise. He had been so fearful before and the interior of the temple was even worse. Here is what I can tell you of it.

Public business is done outside the front of the great main central doors. People come and go to bring food, sacrifices and other goods to the temple. There is an outer chamber, then another, and another, which has a great wagon in it. This vehicle is dragged by underground people around the lands to bless them. It is massive, enough to carry several oxen. Beyond that is a chamber and then, a chamber which is huge. At its farther side stand three great stones, which the goddess worshipped here once inhabited. They are called Mara, Gorra and Sorana. To the first, they sacrifice bulls, to the second dogs and to the third, human beings.

The Shaker Temple, 1610 ST

Simon Bray

Skulking within the foothills of Mount Kero Fin squats the Shake Temple, the greatest holy place of Maran Gor, Goddess of Earthquakes and War, Mother of Gatings, the axe and mace wielding bellow of curses.

The temple sits upon the edge of a great natural basin called the Shake Lands. The hills around the temple are barren and rocky, earthquakes and tremors are daily occurrences. Few plants grow in the blasted region, apart from Maran's Talons, a blood red briar with great hooked flesh-ripping thorns, with greedy roots that suck the sustenance from the soil, and drink the blood of animals and men as if sending it as sacrifice to their barren goddess. Few animals roam the land, apart from ravens, jackals and other carrion eaters; the only herds encountered are the gelded black bulls of the temple itself

that are so fierce that they eat carrion not hay.¹ At certain times of the year, great herds of Quakebeast, descend from the Brontosaur Ridge to give thanks to their mother. Through this bleak and harsh landscape cuts the Wintertop-Bagnet road. This is a dangerous route: the road near to the temple is lined with great boulders carved with images of Maran and during violent quakes these tumble into the road, crushing the unwary traveller, only to right themselves again during the night.²

The temple complex appears squat and ugly from the road, a rough track leads for two miles through a landscape of cracked and ugly boulders to the towering walls that form the temple perimeter. Along the track are many skull-topped cursing wards, which warn any who approach that doom is all that is offered within the temple walls. At any time, the ground may rumble and hungry fissures open up to swallow even initiates of the goddess. The great cyclopean stones of the temple rise in monstrous tiers above the surrounding lands. The stones are cut by huge doorways and arches, which dwarf the devotees. Around the perimeter, the stones form a great shieldwall, where the servants of Erantha Gor and Maran Devor guard stoically day and night. The wall guardians are aided in their vigils by a number of daemons, which dwell within the great stones upon which they stand. These otherworldly creatures rise up to attack enemies or use their earthy magic to aid the warriors. The most famous of these daemons is Gorgorlot the Earth Vomiter, who can project boulders from as small as a man's head to as large as a wagon. Impossibly huge gates of carved stone guard the temple, painted with a colossal bloody image of Maran, wielding a great mace and axe and stomping upon her enemies, renewed with the blood of sacrificial victims



Jimmy-01

each holy day. 'The Opener of Earth' is a huge Quakebeast, which uses its mighty strength to pull the temple gates open. It is tended by fanatical initiates, who bolster the creature's strength with their own blood. Pilgrims stop at the gates to bring forth sacrifices, food and goods. Those seeking the blessings or curses of the Dark Earth must do so through the gate guards. Those who have heeded the calling of the Maran must state their desires in a display of screaming, bloodletting and fury. Those that suitably impress the goddess are allowed to pass within.

Within the walls is a great square courtyard of smashed and broken stone, grotesque and fearful statues of the Dark Goddesses line its edge, looming like giants. The centre of the yard is split by a great chasm that groans and cracks, constantly threatening to split the temple in two and reminding all within that they live only for the mercy of Maran. The shade of King Varstapoor guards the courtyard, when the cultists call upon Maran to send forth earthquakes he appears howling at the side of Vestenbora, his sister's statue.³

The initiates of the temple and those who seek to join the temple live and sleep in the yard, exposed to the elements. Between prayers and sacrifices to the Dark Earths, the initiates practice battle and drumming or tend the temple oxen. It was here that beloved Palashee was raised and his great sarcophagus dominates the eastern corner of the yard. Pilgrims seeking wisdom in war and conquest over Lunars come here to make sacrifices and touch the sacred long-axe. Those who seek the devotional path prepare themselves for the deeper mysteries through contemplation, self-injury and tests of endurance. Above them, amongst the lofty steps and tiers, the priesthood watch for likely candidates to join their ranks. Behind the stone doors of their cells can be heard the moans of captives, taken in war by temple allies,

destined for the altar of Sorana Tor or the cooking pot of the Earth Shaker and her coven.

Beyond the courtyard lies a great chamber; like all the sacred chambers, the goddess herself wrenched this open. At the chamber's heart stand three great statues of Babeester Gor, Erantha Gor and Maran Devor. The room is covered in red, black and blue tiles and to approach the statues to make sacrifices, initiates must dance in a strange intricate pattern following the tiles, and a misstep surely spells agony or death. Only the perimeter of the room is easily traversed, but is warded by earth daemons, and the ghosts of long-dead cultists.

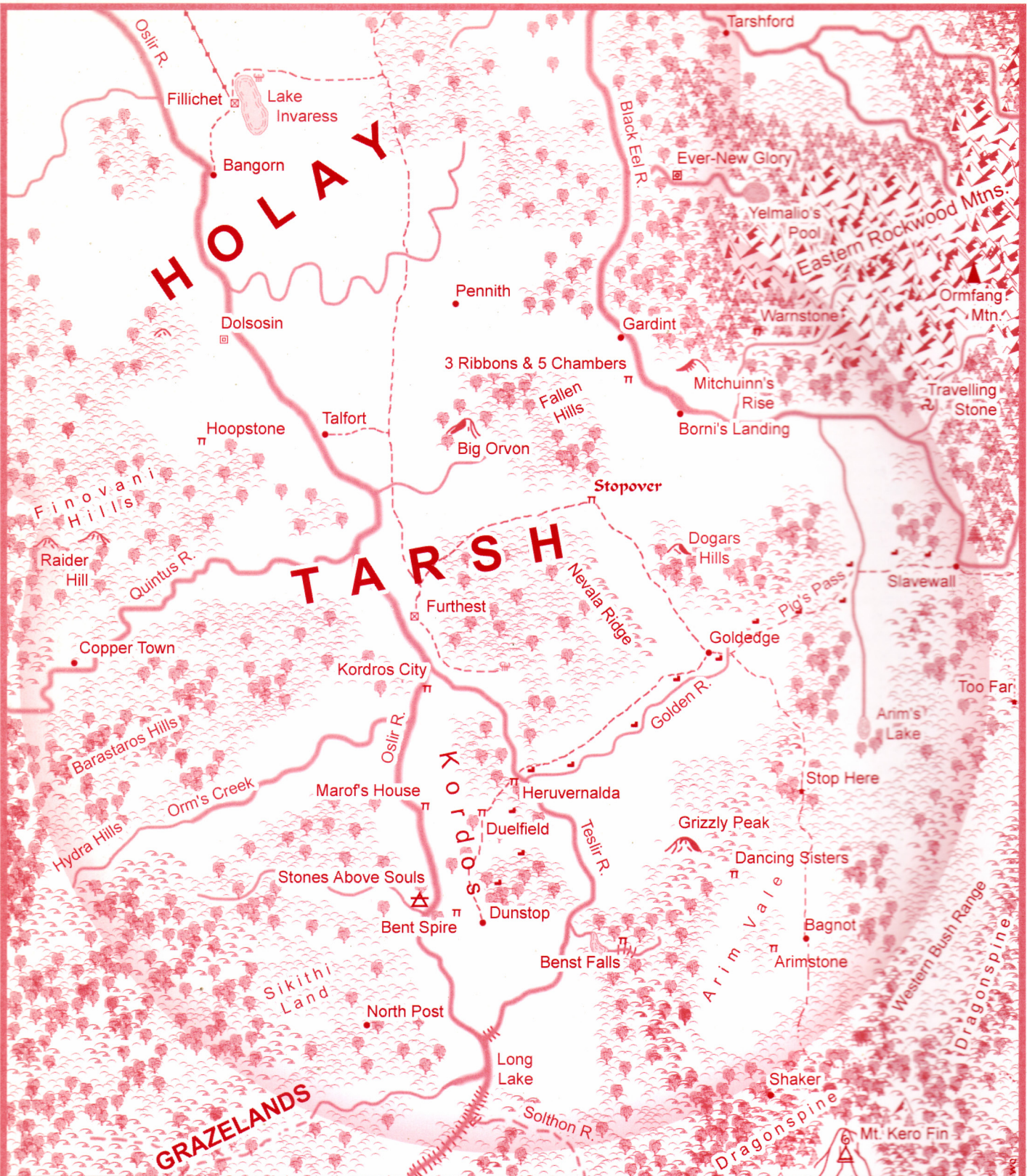
The great temple is a huge cube cut impossibly within the bowels of the earth. Columns or arches do not support its roof, and the great cracks in its ceiling and floor drizzle down dust and earth upon the congregation. Carved niches line the wall, filled with images of the Goddess in her many forms, and beneath them lie the coffins and tombs of former priestesses and manifestations of the Earth Shaker. A huge statue of Maran, her huge fists raised in anger, dominates the centre of the temple. The statue stands on its right foot, its left foot raised high in the air. Beneath the foot stands an ornate and gory altar. The entire population of the temple gathers here on holy days, along with pilgrims from all across Kerofinela to sing their horrid dirges and perform sacrifices of such magnitude that the floor of the temple is ankle deep in blood at their end.

Beneath the temple lie the inner sanctums of the Earth Shaker herself. Within these catacombs the High Priestess of Maran Gor rules as a formidable tyrant, served by her cannibalistic acolytes. Deadly magic, formidable warriors and terrifying earth daemons roam the dark halls. Only the 'Wagon' room is accessible to initiates, here stands the mighty copper-clad tribute wagon, which once a year is loaded with the ponderous bulk of the Earth Shaker, and led amongst the Kerofini by an army of cultists in an expression of power and religious tribute-seeking. Few refuse to give to the goddess and those who do find themselves paying the bloodiest tribute, with their own lives and those of their kin.

¹ The herds of the Shaker Temple do not survive on carrion alone, but are fed ritual offering of flesh, burnt barley and blood as part of the temple ceremonies.

² The Cults of Etyries and Issaries have magic that permits safe travel along this stretch of road, although even they are wary of travelling this route on Maran's Hollest Days.

³ He howls for days until his reliquary is quenched in blood and his ardour is satiated.



This is a reprint of Tarsh in Flames, published as Unspoken Word 1 in 2001, which sold out within 3 months. Beyond the black and white cover, the contents are identical to the original.