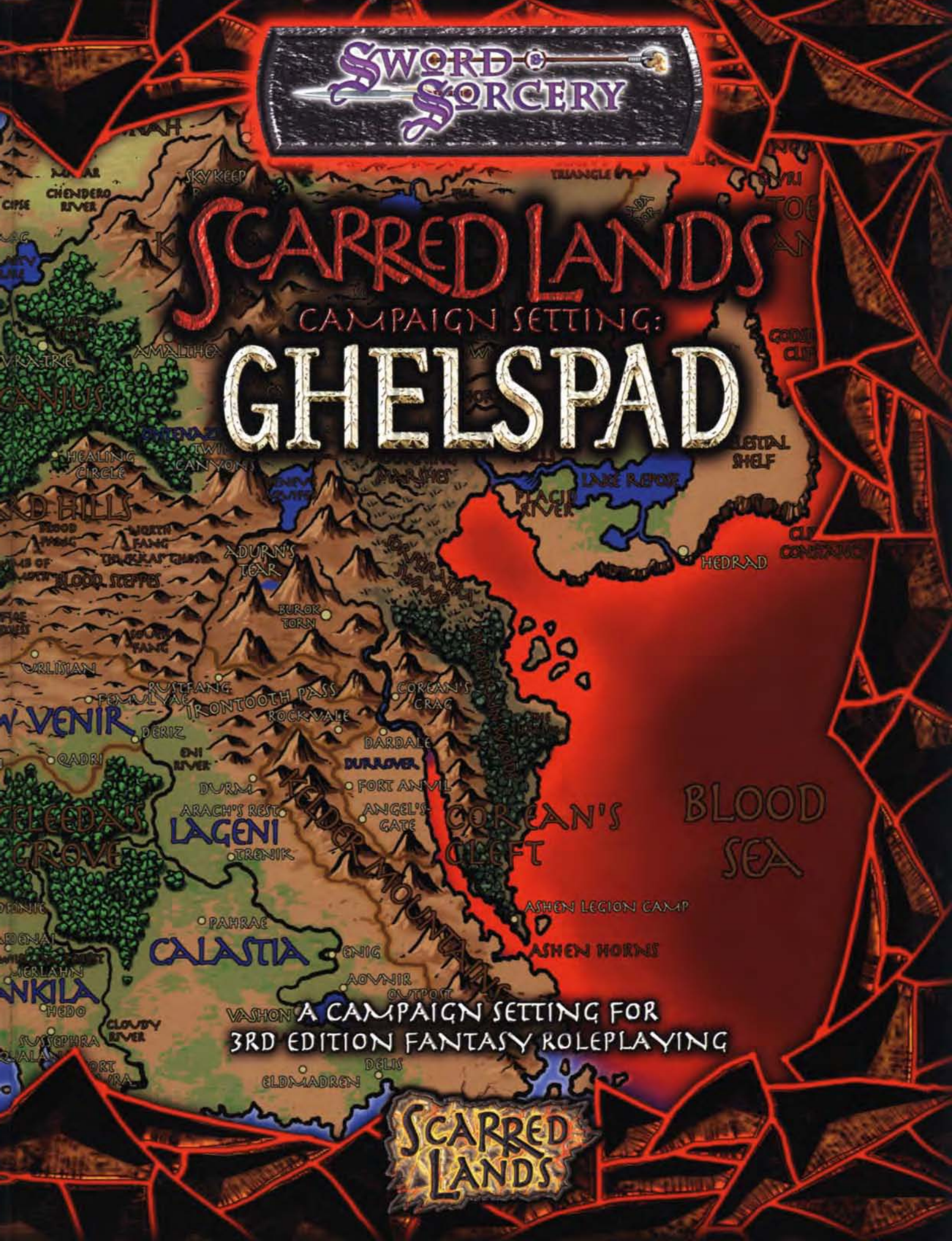




# SCARRED LANDS

CAMPAIGN SETTING:

# GHELSPAD



A CAMPAIGN SETTING FOR  
3RD EDITION FANTASY ROLEPLAYING





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# Introduction

No single continent has influenced the history of the Scarred Lands more than Ghelspad. A land of empires and ancient magic, it was the scene of some of the bloodiest and most ferocious battles of the Divine War. Here, Kadum the Mountainshaker was chained and vanquished. Here, too, was Mormo the Serpentmother dismembered and scattered across the land. As well, beneath the region now called the Mourning Marshes, the corpse of the diseased Chern was interred.

Yet Ghelspad was more than a playground for titans and a battlefield for gods. The ancient Empire of Lede spread its influence across the continent and in its wake spawned countless new nations. The evil charduni also carved out a great state, called the Land of Chains, and today the evil of King Virduk threatens to bring all under Calastia's iron heel.

This volume reveals the untold story of Ghelspad, from the great titanic epochs to the Divine War, the Druid War, and the Blood Monsoon. It also tells the story of those lost empires and how they influenced the continent of today. The mysterious nations of Ghelspad are revealed in all their glory, complete with histories, cultures, and peoples.

*Scarred Lands Campaign Setting: Ghelspad* is probably the most ambitious book that we have yet done, depicting a massive continent and its history in painstaking detail. The toil of over a dozen hard working authors; as well as what little sanity the developer retained after overseeing such volumes as *The Wise and the Wicked*, *The Divine and the Defeated*, and *Burok Torn: City Under Siege*; and the talent of several skilled artists was poured into this volume, entailing months of effort, gallons of coffee, and many sleepless and stress-filled nights. We hope that it has all come together to make Ghelspad a real, living place, ready made for your campaign.

So it is with great pleasure that we present *Scarred Lands Campaign Setting: Ghelspad*. Read, enjoy, learn, and exploit it to your heart's content. Make this land yours, since it was designed with you and your players in mind.

And now, if you all don't mind, I'm going to get some sleep . . . .

Sincerely,

Anthony Pryor, Developer  
Sword and Sorcery Studio



# Chapter One: History of Ghelespod

*My lord — what follows is the manuscript taken from the body of the messenger from Lokil. It would appear that he was a servant to one of the loremasters in that city. Needless to say, its contents are . . . unusual in the extreme, and the thought of a servant of the titans among the loremasters of the Great Library is disturbing. I pray to Janil that this missive and manuscript find their way to you quickly, though I know that the trip to Lave is hardly an easy one. I await your orders.*

*Your servant, Lhaveth*



## The Titanic Epochs

The Cycle is broken.

Long has the Cycle turned, the titans its manifestation upon the face of Scarn. Yet now, as we enter the Epoch of Denev, the Traitor has handed her power over to the upstart gods, whose own power lies not in the Cycle, but in otherworldly planes and fickle mortal faith.

For each of the titans, there has been an Epoch, or so we believe. Mayhap there have been more than one — perhaps the Cycle has turned countless times, with each titan fulfilling its destiny in that Cycle. All that concerns us now, however, is the Cycle we know of and how it was disrupted.

It is unknown how long each of these Epochs lasted. Perhaps time is irrelevant in considering them — it is fallacious to state that they were years, centuries, millennia long. Rather, suffice it to say that the Epochs lasted as long as they lasted, as the life of an animal is measured not in years but in its own cycle of existence.

Many of our novices make the mistake of believing that these Epochs somehow heralded the birth of the Great titans. This is patently ridiculous. The Epochs are times when one titan simply held sway over the Cycle, its nature infusing our world. The titans have simply always been, without beginning or end, though our knowledge of them has not always been complete.

### The Epoch of Kadum

In the Time Before, all the world was covered by water. Though some believe that there is as yet an undiscovered titan whose demesnes were the dark watery abysses, I believe that the deep oceans have always been a force unto themselves. Then, came the titan Kadum.

In his power, he gouged great trenches in the floor of the ocean and raised vast continents above the reach of the waves. Out of stone he crafted all the land of Scarn, carving its face from the bare and elemental rock. At his touch, mountains were raised, and in his footsteps water ran to form lakes.

Yet as is ever the way with the primal forces that are the titans, another came to see what his brother had crafted and sought to improve it. Thus ended the Epoch of Kadum.

### The Epoch of Gormoth

Upon the pristine glory of Kadum's creation, Gormoth created plants and animals, which soon grew prolific and populated the face of Scarn. Gormoth then crafted his greatest triumph, the viren, a race of intelligent servitors that worshipped and adored the Lifegiver.

It is known that during this time, the slarecians appeared and crept beneath the earth, ignored by the titans, who were far too busy attempting to recreate Gormoth's feat. Servitor races were crafted and crea-

tures spawned, but none were the equal of the viren. Finally, in a fit of envy and pique, Mormo poisoned Gormoth and the titans stole his secrets, leaving the Lifegiver to writhe and twist.

Thus ended the Epoch of Gormoth.

### The Epoch of Golthain

As the titans turned away from Gormoth to crafting their own myriad beings, one of them made a discovery. Golthain discovered that some of these beings were more than mere playthings, but rather had feelings, sensations, and thoughts nearly equal to those of a titan. Indeed, in some cases, they had more, for many of the titans were unable to understand impulses beyond themselves; our Lords are primal and elemental, as the storm and the earthquake, which have no thought for others.

Golthain, however, discovered within himself a desire to nurture those races, to discover what those races might do and feel if allowed to prosper. In secret, Golthain often gathered up those races cast aside by his brethren and gifted them with sanctuary and safety enough to allow them to begin prospering on their own.

In time, though, Golthain came foolishly to favor the mortal races over his own brethren and sought to defy the Great Creators. He was punished for his affront by the other titans, who deprived him of his senses and nearly destroyed his own children.

Thus ended the Epoch of Golthain.

### The Epoch of Golthagga

With the end of Golthain's Epoch, change came upon the races. Much of this change was wrought upon the Great Forge of Golthagga. Rather than fashion creatures and beings from raw dross, as did his titan brethren, Golthagga preferred to take what existed already and change it, forging it into a creature stronger than it already was. So did many of the strange variety of creatures come to exist in Scarn.

More importantly from the standpoint of mortals was the discovery of smithing and forging by the intelligent races. It is said that the dwarves, who served Golthagga in his forges, watched the Great Forger closely, stealing some of his secrets for their own use. Though the secrets of Greater Craft — the forging of the bodies of creatures — remained beyond them, they did steal the mysteries of the Lesser Craft, that of metalworking.

In time, the secrets spread beyond the dwarven peoples to humans and other races, who learned to craft implements of war and prosperity both, including the plows that allowed them to break even strong earth to make it prosperous for them. Eventually, however, this new found prosperity lured plagues of locusts and other insects, while disease spread through the civilizations of mortals.

Thus ended the Epoch of Golthagga.



## The Epoch of Chern

With the coming of The Plague of Centuries, so began the Epoch of Chern. It is said that the diseases brought by the contagion-swarms of the mighty Chern swept the land many times over. Only the very strongest survived and even they were horribly scarred and mutilated by the ravages of disease and hunger, for the insects consumed the crops and food plants of the lands.

We do not know for how long this lasted, save that it was perhaps only because of Chern's own druids that humanity survived at all. The powers of the druids in this age granted them great power over disease and illness, as well as over the swarms of insects. Still, there was death because of these things, but all was not lost. Small pockets of surviving mortals learned to cultivate plants that the insects would not touch and survived the ravages of illness, though they bore the marks of those plagues upon their faces and bodies. As this age came to a close, the verdant moon Boria was stripped of vegetation and life. Chern's brother Gaurak turned his attention to the whole of Scarn.

Thus ended the Epoch of Chern.

## The Epoch of Gaurak

Where the Epoch of Chern greatly decimated the ancient world, we believe that the arrival of Gaurak destroyed it utterly. Perhaps some few were spared, possibly by retreating beneath the earth where Gaurak could only send minions and servitors such as the vengaurak, mutated by the Glutton from some of Chern's own consuming insects.

This epoch left the surface of the planet barren and dry. Great dust storms brewed, for there was no plant life to hold the soil to the ground, and massive sheets of sandy soil rose to trap the sun's heat. Waters poured over the ground from rains, for there were no plants to soak up that water, which ran in rivulets and formed marshy earth. Then, one day, as the heat beat down upon the muddy earth, the keening of the winds stopped. The only sound that filled the air was the dry rasp of serpent scales, as thousands of serpents left their subterranean homes and heralded the coming of Mormo.

Thus ended the Epoch of Gaurak.

## The Epoch of Mormo

The barrenness of Scarn was an affront to Mormo, who, like Denev, is a Mother titaness. So she licked the ground with her forked tongue and it was dry. She sprayed the muck from the ground into the air and created cooling mists. She cut her flesh and bled upon the earth, which was quickened with coiling, serpentine vines and creeping life. Gaurak returned and tried to consume the new life of Scarn, yet Mormo was wise and had crafted the new life to be beautiful but poisonous.

Humans and other races returned to the surface, led by the Mother of Serpent's druid-hags, displacing the asaathi empires here with the far more adaptable humanoids in the service of the Hag Queen. The world was humid, but it was a life-giving heat and moisture. Soon, the races learned what plants and animals were safe to eat and how to overcome some of the toxicity of those that were not.

In time, however, the cooler mists rose and exchanged place with the powerful, hot winds that were the remnants of the Epoch of Gaurak in the skies far above. These clouds roiled and raged, striking lightning among them, and into the new chaos came Lethene.

Thus ended the Epoch of Mormo.

## The Epoch of Lethene

Though Scarn was covered with clouds and mists during the two previous Epochs, sunlight was always barely piercing the gloom. Not so during the Epoch of Lethene. Dark, pitch black clouds formed above, and Mormo's swamps and moors were flooded with rain. The air turned cold and bitter, and those races that would survive learned to seek shelter high above the recurring floods. Occasionally, the clouds would part and the sunlight would break through, but then the swirling storms would gather again and drown out the light.

After an untold time of this activity, the world simply turned colder. The waters froze and the winds howled. Though the storms of Lethene broke apart, still winds blew and the world was made icy.

Thus ended the Epoch of Lethene.

## The Epoch of Gulaben

The Epoch of Gulaben was a great ice age that settled upon the lands of Scarn. Ice covered the reaches of the north. The ground was frozen solid even in those places that had never seen snow. Many creatures retreated once more into the deeps of the earth, seeking the warmth that lay at the earth's core. It is said that great civilizations and empires beneath the ground were created and thrived during this time.

For many years, nothing but the hardiest of creatures dwelled on the icy surface. Yet into the snowy white expanses came the tall and well favored pale warriors and sorceresses who became known as the folk of Albadia. They saw the icy white expanses not as a place of death, but rather as a place to test their own strength.

As happens all too often, though, civilization was never content to leave well enough alone. In their continual exploration of their new subterranean homes, the races delved ever deeper into the very rock of the planet. Their foolishness disturbed the Father At the Core, the titan Thulkas.

Thus ended the Epoch of Gulaben.



## The Epoch of Thulkas

In his anger, Thulkas rose from his cradle of magma, bringing with him creatures of flame and heat. With gouts of lava, he destroyed those civilizations that dared to near his sacred demesnes, and mortals were forced to flee to the surface.

The ground cracked with the force of Thulkas' anger and gouts of heat rose, melting off the ice. For years, steam covered the lands, and mortals were trapped between the raging powers of Gulaben and Thulkas. In the end, however, the ice melted and life returned to the earth, only to be consumed by fire and molten rock.

With time, the anger of Thulkas cooled and mortals looked about them. They found that the communal skills they had learned during the mighty ice age served them well during this new, warmer period, and their civilizations grew. The Epoch of Thulkas saw the rise of the mighty El'Thamian Empire, which stretched the length and breadth of the continent of Ghelspad. This Empire was guided by its promancer-druids and the Adepts of the Inferno, all of whom knew that their power lay in Thulkas' own fiery nature.

As is the way of such things, though, a mighty civilization drew the attention of those who consider such an accomplishment to be a challenge. In this case, it was the titan Hrinruuk, who wondered how strong this civilization was and how long it might be before it was reduced to predation and barbarism once more.

The Lord of the Hunt unleashed hordes of predatory monsters and barbarians, including those from Albadia, against the El'Thamian Empire. Time and again, the forces of the Empire fought back the attackers, though always with losses. Hrinruuk merely crafted more servitors to continue the attacks. The outposts of the Empire slowly fell and descended into savagery in an attempt to survive. The Empire steadily shrank until its capitol was destroyed by a mighty horde of Albadian barbarians and their sorceresses.

Thus ended the Epoch of Thulkas.

## The Epoch of Hrinruuk

Savagery descended upon all of Scarn as Hrinruuk took a greater interest in his experiment. Having shattered the mightiest empire, he seemed bent upon preventing the formation of civilization ever again. He instilled murderous bloodlust in some beasts and crafted yet others as cold-blooded, efficient hunters. Even the dwarves, whose vast mountain citadels had often spared them the worst ravages of epochs past, did not go untouched.

The secrets of civilization were often kept alive by reclusive cults of craftsmen, who closely guarded their secrets and prevented their loss in this time of barbarism. Many were the folk who joined the efforts of Hrinruuk, including the tribes of Albadia, the orcs

of the Ledean Plains, and the horsemen of the eastern steppes.

As seems to be the way with mortal races, in time they found a way to combat this active warfare upon civilization itself. Perhaps they turned out to be more innovative than Hrinruuk could have anticipated. Perhaps even those mortals who aided Hrinruuk grew weary of the constant predation. Or, likeliest of all, perhaps the Lord of the Hunt grew tired of his game and turned his attention elsewhere. In any event, mortals began to concentrate on mastering the thing that allowed them to fight effectively for their survival — the powers of arcane magic.

Thus ended the Epoch of Hrinruuk.

## The Epoch of Mesos

The Epoch of the Six-Armed One was marked with an increase in learning in the arcane arts. Nearly all races found a renewed focus in the arcane arts that allowed them to achieve heretofore unseen power in the world. Though the arcane arts had certainly existed in the past, they rested mainly in the hands of the sorcerers, who received their blessings from the titanic blood in their veins and used their power to the glory of the titans. Now, however, sorcerers turned their attention toward aiding their peoples — or seizing as much power as they could hold.

This shift in the attitudes of sorcerers was not the true hallmark of the Epoch of Mesos, however. Rather, it was the rise of wizardly magic. Until now, rare had been those who actively studied the powers of arcane energy without the inborn ability to wield it. Those who did were often looked upon as would-be usurpers of the rights of sorcerers, consorters with slarecians, or something equally dire.

At the end of the Epoch of Hrinruuk, though, the demand for magical might was great, for it was the thing that allowed civilizations to survive and prosper. Many races discovered that there had seemingly always been a hidden magical tradition among their peoples and began to nurture it. From the rune wizards of the dwarves and Ukrudan Enclaves, to the necromancers of the Termanan dwarves, to the genie-binders of the southern coast, these wizards studied the arts arcane, mastering secrets with an ease that even sorcerers could never hope to emulate. And so it was that many great empires rose, riding the might of their arcane spellcasters.

Perhaps the greatest irony of this Epoch was that arcane magic allowed mortal kind to discover the gods. When mortal magic reached the level of power that allowed spellcasters to plumb the depths of the planes, they discovered a body of entities willing to answer questions and render assistance. More interestingly yet, these entities, the children of the titans, did not require great sacrifices or souls. They asked for only one thing: the worship that the titans spurned.

In time, the secrets of clerical magic spread throughout the lands, and it was no longer wizards

who spoke with the words of the gods. The presence of powerful healing magics — yet another boon of the gods — assisted civilizations even further. In return, entire civilizations accepted gods as their patrons, from the worship of Chardun among the dwarves of Termana (eventually causing them to change their name to the charduni, an affront to the titanic power that crafted these treacherous worms) to the founding of the city of Hedrad.

Eventually, the power of the gods became such that they gained the ability actually to manifest upon the face of Scarn, spreading their other-planar taint with every step they took. Even so, the titans were content to leave the gods be, to allow them their place so long as they did not trifle in the affairs of their betters.

The gods even proved to be beneficial, for they were very aware of the nature of mortal kind. It was they, for instance, who originally identified the threat of the slarecians and their strange powers, allowing the titans to remove them from the face of creation, though the gods take great credit for that act of wisdom.

Ultimately, though, the gods proved themselves to be treacherous creatures and turned on the titans. Greedy for the power that foolish mortals granted them through worship, and heedless of the Cycle's sanctity, they turned as one on the titans. The first to fall victim to their savagery was Lord Mesos.

Thus ended the Epoch of Mesos.

## The Epoch of Betrayal

One by one, the titans fell before the gods, whose greatest strength was their unity. The titans never genuinely worked together, save in the rarest of instances — our Lords are beings of elemental power and existence. It is as foolish to expect them to work together as to expect an earthquake and a thunderstorm to ally. Certainly, they may unleash their fury in the same locale (as was the case with the slarecians, we feel), but even then, true cooperation was simply not in the titans' nature.

Not so the gods. Like ravenous hounds, they banded together into packs, too cowardly to face their betters alone. Only one titan survived this time of horrors — she who birthed many of the treacherous gods and aided them in their patricide. Denev claimed this epoch only temporarily, long enough for her own nature to supplant that of Mesos in the cycle, causing druids to learn to use the plants and animals that are her dominion.

Yet the gods, who are ever treacherous, turned even on her — no less than she deserves, truthfully. Now the Cycle is broken. No titan holds dominion over the Cycle, so that it must grind to a halt and drown us all in stagnation.

Unless we can do something about it.

Vartorian —

This manuscript holds an interesting revelation, if you have eyes to see it. Notice how in each "epoch" it is implied that the druids of the time wielded different powers from those they wield now?

It has often been wondered why the druids of all titans wield powers of plant and animal, even those who serve such beings as Mesos and Thulkas. The reason is here! Druids gain their powers not from individual titans, but from the cycle in which they dwell. Though I have no doubt that the cults of various druidic orders did have secrets gained directly from the nature of their patron titan, as a whole they wielded similar powers. Thus, during the Epoch of Thulkas, they may have wielded powers of flame, earth, and metal, while the Epoch of Mormo saw venomous snake-mastering druids.

This may also account for the reason why we find in the records of druids before the Divine War that many druids are noted for wielding powers that are, quite frankly, arcane. Perhaps the "sorcerers" that we know of now were actually once the druids of the Epoch of Mesos?

If so, this raises a dire question why is it that they yet exist?

—Jermail, Chief Librarian and Historian

## Conclusion

Know this: we are doomed if the Cycle is not reenacted. The so-called divine races believe that the nature of the land is shattered and sundered because of the Titanswar. This is patently not so.

Rather, think on this — our Lords were the very manifestation of the land. They did not destroy or change wantonly any more than a storm or draught does so. The changes they wrought were the changes that were natural for our world, save that, for some reason, the Cycle manifested the agents of that change as the great titans.

For so long as our Lords remain sundered and scattered, the lands will never heal. The Cycle will remain unmoving and still, and our world will eventually stagnate and die. This must be avoided at all costs. The titans must rise again, even just one of them, that they might claim the Cycle from the gods, who do not even know that they possess this sovereignty; all they see is their ridiculous worshippers and the thousand, thousand little short-sighted prayers that reach their near-deaf ears daily.

Every age has its misunderstood crusaders, my friends. We are painted as monsters and villains, even though we are our age's greatest heroes.

Until They Rise Once More.

## The Calendars of Ghelspad

Throughout its history, Ghelspad has used a number of calendars. Not until the rise of the Ledean Empire did it have a single unified calendar — and even then, many dynasties during that Empire insisted on “resetting” the calendar to make Year One of the Old Calendar mark the rise of their dynasty. Thankfully, most Ledean sages and scholars refused to track such changes, so they existed really only on government records from that time and were often changed after the rise of a new dynasty, or even the ascension of a more history minded Emperor. Some of these calendars include:

**Calendar of Axes:** The calendar of the Dwarven Imperium utilized the phrase “Axeyear” in its dating system, as in “Axeyear 147.” Axeyear One marks the date of the Great Council overseen by Goran of the Axes. The last year of the Dwarven Calendar was Axeyear 1189, which saw the destruction of the Great Citadel of the Imperium. Axeyear One was approximately -9261 OC.

**Serpentreckoning:** The calendar of the Asaatthi Empire, Year One Serpentreckoning marked the founding of the First City in the Swamps of Kan Thet. Exactly when the Asaatthi Empire fell is unknown, but the last year recorded on this calendar was 2730 Serpentreckoning, from a set of bronze tablets found in some asaathii ruins on the edge of the Swamps of Kan Thet. Year One Serpentreckoning was approximately -5610 OC.

**The Calendar of Vera-Tre:** The elves of Vera-Tre maintain their own calendar, which traces back to the founding of their kingdom in the Ganjus Forest. The years are measured in “rings,” one hundred of which make up a “cycle,” each of which is named after one of the treant patrons of the elven nation. This cycle broke down during the Divine War, though it was “reset” in 1 AV with the Cycle of Khourostannar, a treant who led the defense of Denev against the forces of Mormo. The current year is 50 Ylriannkathlis, named for the mentor-treant of the current Verdant Seat. It is unknown by sages when this reckoning system began, and it is even whispered that such lore may have been lost to the elves during the Divine War.

**Imperial Calendar:** The calendar of the Empire of Flame, Year One IC marks the founding of the Empire. This calendar ended in 837 IC, with the destruction of the Imperial House by slarecians. Year One IC was approximately -1116 OC.

**The Old Calendar:** Also called the Ledean Calendar, Year One marks the rise of the Three Generals of Aurimar to power. This calendar ended in 3529 OC, which marked the end of the Divine War. All time has been recorded using the New Calendar since then.

**The New Calendar:** The years of the New Calendar are noted as “AV,” or “After Victory.” Year One of the New Calendar marks the Remaking of the World by the gods. The New Calendar is the current calendar; the current year is 150 AV. It is divided into 16 months, each honoring two aspects of the eight divinities.

The four months of spring are as follows:

Corot – The month of strength, particularly that returning to the land after winter

Tanot – The month for hunting

Enkilot – The month of storms

Belot – The month of death, particularly those newborn that fail to endure

The four months of summer are as follows:

Chardot – The month of war

Madrot – The month of the radiant sun

Hedrot – The month of wealth

Vangalot – The month of disasters

The four months of autumn are as follows:

Charder – The month of servitude

Madrer – The month of harvest

Enker – The month of travel

Corer – The month of crafting

The four months of winter are as follows:

Taner – The month of good fortune

Belsamer – The month of darkness

Hedrer – The month of protection

Vanger – The month of pestilence

There are eight days to the normal week: Corday, Madraday, Taniday, Hedraday, Wildday, Charday, Belsaday and Vanday. The last week of each month holds the extra day of Denday, sometimes called Landsday, to honor Denev. Two weeks of eight days and one week of nine days comprise the 25 days of each month.

## Holidays

The gods allow four days to honor the land and the seasons. The first of these, the Carnival of Flowers is held on the second Wildday of Tanot, and features feasts, hunts, music and dance honoring Tanil the Huntress. The second holiday, summer solstice, is called the Festival of the Sun, and falls on the second Vanday of Madrot. During this festival, the faithful give thanks to Madriel and ask that she bless them with a bountiful harvest.

The Feast of Wheat marks the autumnal equinox, and takes place on the second Belsaday of Madrer. Once more, the goddess Madriel is honored, as is Enkili, who is thought to control the winter weather. On this day, the dead are also honored with prayers and ceremonies dedicated to Belsameth.

The shortest day of the year, called Grim Day, is observed on the second Vanday of Belsamer. On this day, the faithful perform acts of penance and atonement, in solemn ritual intended to cleanse their souls in the coming year.

Other holidays include Divinities’ Day, celebrated on the first Corday of Chardot, in which Corean and Chardun are invoked as gods of war. Festivities include great mock battles, feasts and dramatic recreations of the events of the Divine War.



## The Moons

Scarn has two moons, but only one is granted a name. The orb called Belsameth's moon passes through a full cycle every 25 days, and it is said that Manawe, goddess of the seas, commands the ocean tides to rise and fall in honor of her half-sister.

The second moon is called the Nameless Orb or the Gray Moon when it is called anything. Corean decreed that the moon should not be named or mentioned, and across Ghelspad it is considered a symbol of death and ill omen. Its cycle is four months plus one day. Every six and one-quarter years the two moons are full on the same night, widely considered to be a time of catastrophic events, horror and disaster. On such nights, the commoners of Ghelspad pray behind locked doors, and even the brave and wise feel a deep sense of unease and fear.

## Ancient Empires

There have been eons of empires upon the continent of Ghelspad. Seek out the oldest recorded civilization, and you will find that they considered themselves the inheritors of some other civilized legacy. Of course, with each successive incarnation, civilizations have grown — empires were greater than mere kingdoms, which were mightier than the collections of tribes that preceded them.

To the best of our knowledge, many ancient civilizations have left their mark on our land, even if merely as inspiration for one of the mighty empires that followed. The history of these ancient empires is fairly nebulous; we are uncertain when they existed in relation to one another.

### The Dragon Kingdoms

We do know that at some point in the past, Ghelspad was home to mighty dragon-lords. Not to be confused with the titanic constructs known as wrack dragons, the True Dragons are beasts of elemental power now vanished from the face of Ghelspad. Divided into tribes according to the color of their nigh-impenetrable hides, the dragons ruled the lands of Ghelspad, dividing the continent into fiefdoms that warred with one another. These dragons used the tribal humans and other beings beneath them as both food and war fodder.

It is thought that these kingdoms eventually fell when the greatest dragonslayers rose from among the humanoid armies of the dragon-lords and slew their rulers, then led their neighbors in rebellion. The remains of this empire are few and far between, for the dragon-lords did not build cities; indeed, we have records of this time only in texts plundered from the Asaatthi Empire, which was known to construct the hearts of its lairs in the old subterranean citadels of those mighty drakes. According to these same writings, the dragonslayers may well have been aided by titanspawn or even, as claim the asaaththi, by the titans themselves.

### The Dwarven Imperium

At one time, a mighty empire that we now refer to as the Dwarven Imperium spread across the mighti-

est mountain ranges of Ghelspad, ruled from within impenetrable citadels deep in the core of the earth. Though these mighty places began as nearly isolated citadels tucked away from the attention of the titans, the military might of these fortresses was eventually brought together by a dual-axe wielding dwarven hero known as Goran. It is unknown whether this is the same Goran who is now the god of the dwarves. Some say that the hero was deified by Corean; others believe that hero and god simply share a common name.

The military might of the Dwarven Imperium was formidable, so much so that many tribes sought its protection. Within a time after its formation, the Dwarven Imperium found itself acting as the guardian of a number of smaller city-states and kingdoms that swore fealty to the dwarves in return for the Imperium's protection. According to some dwarven scholars, the tradition of the dwarven defender, an elite brotherhood of immovable warriors dedicated to defending dwarven holdings, evolved during this time, with each such client-state boasting a full legion of dwarven warriors led by the dwarven defenders.

It is said that this empire attracted the ire of the Father of Monsters, Kadum, who grew wroth to see his rampaging creations slain out of hand by the dwarven defenders. According to some legends, Kadum created the umber hulks and other subterranean creatures to hunt out the dwarves and cause the Imperium's fall; according to others, the Mountainshaker simply rearranged and shifted the mountains that housed the dwarven citadels, crushing them entirely, which might explain the lack of ruins from an empire supposedly created by the dwarven folk, known for the fastness of their architecture.

### The Ancients

Some sages theorize that this civilization was the first and thus far the mightiest of any human civilization. Of all the ancient empires, this is the only civilization whose whereabouts we know of — the Empire of the Ancients spread across what is now the Plains of Lede.

Some think that this civilization revered the Sire of Sorcery, Mesos, for its people seemed to wield mighty magics beyond the ken of even the magical races of their time (it is thought that the folk of this empire are responsible for the reputation that humans have garnered as dangerous wielders of magic). The Ancients mastered the disciplines of tattoo magic to the point where they created a vast web of magical power that tied their very spirits together with the magical markings that every citizen received at birth.

In time, this mastery further evolved into the "tattooing" of inanimate objects, tying items into this web of power, granting them enchanted properties only possible today through the sacrifice of personal power in the laborious enchantment of items. One such feature was a series of pillars inscribed with runic sigils that crisscrossed the Ancients' domain, giving them the ability to grant flight to specially created vehicles and to erect massive fields of protective force around their nation, fields supposedly strong enough to prevent even the titans from entering their domain (though this may simply have been because of the influence of Mesos).

Eventually, however, this might was their downfall, for something described only as a "darkness" seeped its way into the web of power and leeches off the very life essence of the folk of the Empire of the Ancients, killing all who were tied into it. This "darkness" slew first those who had invested more of their essence into the web of power, ensuring that the druids and sorcerers of the Ancients were the earliest to die. In time, though, the few remaining survivors of the empire fled their homes, excising the binding tattoos from their bodies, but keeping their knowledge of tattoo lore. It is said that perhaps these folk became the tribesmen of Albadia, who to this day maintain taboos against settling down in civilizations.

## The Asaatthi Empire

The most ancient empire that can be verifiably identified from its architecture and records is the Asaatthi Empire, called the Empire of the Scaled Mother by its inhabitants. Dedicated in its entirety to Mormo, the Asaatthi Empire was a great slaving nation. Situated primarily across the southern swamps of Ghelspad, it maintained a number of client-states of asaatthi across the face of the continent, notably in the area now known as the Ukruadan Desert, as well as the icy vastness of the northern Kelder Mountains.

It is significant that the asaatthi do not favor these locales. They by far prefer a warm, wet climate, which tells the astute scholar that either these client-states were kept comfortable through various magics (as rumors say that the asaatthi clanholds in the Ukruadan today are kept), or these places were of a much different climate than they are now.

The ruins of these places are very dangerous, for they are often considered nearly holy by the asaatthi,

who patrol them religiously, ferociously fighting off any and all that approach them. Ultimately, what precisely led to the fall of the Asaatthi Empire remains unknown, unless perhaps it was the coming of human beings, which might explain the rabid hatred the serpent-men have of humans.

## The Virgin Woods of Denev

Exactly when the great nation of Vera-Tre came into existence is unknown, save perhaps to the lorekeepers of the elves. What is known is that in nearly every era after that of the asaatthi, mention of the elves of the Ganjus has been present — mostly as a fey nation intent on keeping others out of its verdant lands.

Very few empires in history managed to ally with Vera-Tre. The Empire of Flame drew Vera-Tre's ire for a disastrous exercise of flame magics by a traveling envoy, resulting in a vast conflagration that destroyed several elven villages. The corpse of the envoy was returned to the Emperor riddled with arrows, delivered by a giant eagle. The Slarecian Empire raided the Ganjus just as often as any other locale, though the elves of Denev were far more capable than most of defending themselves.

During the height of the Ledean Empire, several emperors attempted to annex the Ganjus, a ploy that met with dismal failure as the very trees of the forest rose up against the interlopers. In time, Emperor Varilthis declared the forest as the "Ledean Protectorate of Vera-Tre," which essentially was the bureaucratic admission of the elves' independence. This was met, as usual, with silence from Vera-Tre.

Throughout history, the elves of the Ganjus have kept to themselves, a tact that was reversed only recently with the Convention of Vera-Tre in AV 56, just in time to garner allies for the Druid War. Indeed, some note this sudden reversal with suspicion, wondering if the elves of the Ganjus did not somehow have foreknowledge of the Khirdetan aggression and so took action to ensure that they had allies in place to aid them.

## The Empire of Flame

The true name of this empire is a mystery, save perhaps to those sages who serve the titans, keeping their lore alive in the aftermath of the Divine War. What is known is that at some point in the past, after the fall of the Asaatthi Empire, a great empire of humans rose in the place that is now called the Sweltering Plains. An empire apparently given to fire-worship (possibly a cult of Thulkas), the Empire of Flame expanded its borders rapidly, thanks to the might of its fire-wielding sorcerers.

To this day, a number of ruins in the Sweltering Plains can be traced back to this empire's heyday. The lore located within these ruins is usually found on large brass tablets, in the Tongue of Thulkas. Many of the mighty pyromantic spells circulating in Ghelspad

today can trace their origins to this empire's spellcasters.

## The Slarecian Empire

The mighty Slarecian Empire and its fall is a major milestone in the history of Ghelspad and of the Divine Races as a whole. Though the exact date of this empire's rule is lost to scholars today, we do know that the days of its full glory were perhaps a millennium before the beginning of the Ledean Calendar (now called the Old Calendar).

The tale of this empire's fall — the first empire to spread the length and breadth of Ghelspad — has been related elsewhere. Of particular note to the historian is that the first real mention of the gods acting on Scarn relates to the fall of this empire. Somehow, the slarecians managed to raise the ire of both gods and titans, who acted in concert for the first and last time in history to bring about the destruction of this mighty nation that held entire races within its thrall with mighty powers unknown to god or titan.

These creatures ruled from their vast subterranean fortresses, holding sway in many settlements through their agents, who had been taught to wield the foul powers used by the slarecians. Those areas not under their direct control were often raided for goods and slaves; indeed, many races learned that it was best simply to pay tribute to the Ancient Ones beneath the earth than to fight and die agonizing deaths inflicted with but a thought by these beings.

Because they dwelt primarily away from the notice of the titans, the slarecians' power grew unchecked, at least until their depredations began to weaken the hold of the gods upon Scarn. It was then that the gods led the attacks, though some claimed that they were ordered to war by Mesos, who saw the powers that the slarecians wielded as a threat to the very fabric of reality.

Sadly, the gods underestimated the might of the slarecians, who used powers of the mind to attack the gods' very psyches. Hadarus, the son of Belsameth, was slain in battle, and Drendari was captured and the secrets of shadow magic wrested from her. The slarecians found those who would master the arcane arts without being born to the gift (a great sin in the time of the titans) and taught them these secrets, though at the last they were betrayed by these penumbral lords.

In the end, the gods turned first to their mortal followers for assistance against the slarecians, and then, finally, to their titanic forebears. The tide was turned when the Shaker of Mountains, the titan Kadum, joined the fray, destroying the outer defenses of major slarecian holdings.

For the first time in history, the titans seemed to acknowledge the existence of something outside of themselves, going so far as to cooperate with the gods (though never one another) to see the slarecians destroyed. Rumor tells that the slarecians were locked

into a great fortress somewhere that prevented them from meddling further in the affairs of Scarn.

## The Empire of Lede

With the destruction of the Slarecian Empire, folk all over Scarn learned to dwell again without the constant shadow of the Ancient Ones over their heads. In the northwestern Plains of Lede, the city Aurimar was the first not only to recover from this time of predation, but to begin to prosper again.

Founded by a trio of the mightiest generals who served the gods during the destruction of the Slarecian Empire, Aurimar soon expanded its hold to cover the myriad settlements of the Plains of Lede. Rather than take a course of violence, however, Aurimar's generals promised to defend those settlements from the various creatures that yet roamed the areas, predators that ranged from titanspawn to the remnants of the Slarecian Empire's defenses.

### The Plains of Lede

The astute scholar will note that the Plains of Lede are not located in the northwestern part of Ghelspad. This is because the modern day Plains of Lede have not always borne that name.

The original Plains of Lede are what is now called the Perforated Plains. It is here that the Ledean Empire began, spreading to encompass the majority of Ghelspad, with the exception of a few places, among them the plains known as the Orcmarches, where dwelt countless tribes of orcs and proud. In time, the Empire claimed even these places as its own, though the power of the civilized empire was never really felt there.

The plains that saw the birth of the Empire eventually became known as the Plains of the Wheel because of the spoke-like network of paved roads that radiated outward from the capitol city Aurimar. The Orcmarches were pacified by the legions of the empire and came to be called the Plains of Lede as a means of indicating that the Empire claimed them.

In a short time, the Ledean Empire expanded its borders into other nation-states, sometimes assimilating them through the same promise of stability, while at other times forcing them to accept Ledean rule through military means. Despite the sometimes draconian nature of the Ledean expansion, this truly was a time of advancement and culture among mortal races.

### Aurimar

The heart of the Empire, Aurimar was the name of both the primary province of the Empire of Lede and its vast capitol city. Aurimar was a mighty city ruled by the Emperor of Lede, a position held by one of many noble families descended from the Three



Generals. The citizens of Aurimar enjoyed the finest of civilization and prosperity, their safety ensured by both the Coventacle of the Ancients and the Legions of Lede. From Aurimar, well paved roads spread outward like spokes from an axle, leading to all corners of the Empire.

## The Provinces

The provinces of the Ledean Empire spread nearly the length and breadth of Ghelspad: from the Gharria Province in the sea west of Ghelspad, to the Japhinian Province in the eastern sea; from Aurimar itself in the northwest to the ever-rebellious Calas Province in the southeast.

### Amalthean Province

Originally a Denevan druidic theocracy, the Amalthean Province's leadership fought the Ledean incursions until the Coventacle of Ancients sent an envoy to them, offering them the Seat of Denev in that deliberative body. The Druid-King of Amalthea became a religious figure in the Empire as well as a political one, and the Ledean Empire gained an important foothold that allowed it access to the eastern portions of Ghelspad. In time, Amalthea became a major trading nexus, acting as the main point for trade between eastern and western Ghelspad.

### Calas Province

The battles to "pacify" the Calas Province were monumental, for its folk (much like their Calastian descendants) were feisty and strong-hearted, with little patience for any rule but their own. Indeed, rather than allowing the native ruler of this area to retain his power as a vassal, as was done with most provinces, the Emperor of Lede was forced to depose the king utterly and place one of his own family upon the throne.

### Caminian Province

One of the last provinces to join the Empire, the Caminian Province was based around the city of Epis, where now sits the city of Hedrad. The Caminian Province covered what is now called the Celestial Shelf and was known as something of a strange land, for the cults of the gods were strong in this area, despite the measures taken by the Coventacle of Ancients.

### Dara Province

The Dara Province, found in the fertile west of Ghelspad, was known as the home of the mightiest of the War Colleges, as well as for its vast farmlands that served as the Empire's breadbasket. The Dara Province was known for the quality of its warriors, owing greatly to the fact that those legionnaires who survived to retirement were granted tracts of land in this province, ensuring that the finest warriors were on hand at the War Colleges to pass on their knowledge and experience. Entire schools were founded by these mighty warriors, schools that still survive in some form to this day.



### Gharia Province

The chain of islands along the western shore of Ghelspad originally was a small tribal nation called the Trident Isles, ruled by a tribal council made up of the priests of the sea-goddess Manawe. Unfortunately, the religious overtures made by the Coventacle of Ancients were politely rebuffed, which roused the ire of Emperor Ghariann, a fanatical titan-worshipper. He declared the open reverence of the gods illegal within the Empire and then went to war against the Trident Isles.

The superior tactics and arms of the Empire saw the slaughter of the tribes of the Isles, whose leaders and priests were sacrificed on the altars of the Coventacle. Thus ended the Trident Isles. Some of the Ledean settlers, though, found comfort in the beauty-loving and simple faith of Manawe and carried it to other places, notably the city of Rahail in the Calas Province, which eventually became Rahoch, the seat of Manawe's faith. This gathering of islands was named the Gharia Province, in honor of the emperor responsible for "taming" them.

### Japhinian Province

Located on a series of islands off Ghelspad's eastern coast, the Japhinian Province began as Caphi, a nation of scholars that eventually fell to internal corruption. A cult of Mormo worship rose among the islanders, led by sea witches who demanded the sacrifice of children. For years they sacrificed their own young, until the demands of the Hag Queen's servants grew too great for the populace to meet, whereupon they began raiding the continental Caminian and Vascan Provinces for fodder for their altars. In time, the Emperor was forced to pacify these islands, giving the citizenry the chance it needed to overthrow the power of the Mormo cult.

In time, they became the Jari City-States, though this civilization was quickly destroyed by an army of Mormo's servitors in vengeance for their betrayal of the cult. The Emperor Branikuul quickly claimed the ruins of these islands, using the chain as a penal colony, sending the undesirables of his empire there, including sorcerers and half-orcs.

### Vascan Province

Known for its fine vineyards and breweries, as well as the abundance of hunting lands, the Vascan Province became the preferred province for those wealthy enough to vacation there. The entertainments offered here were of a somewhat higher moral caliber than those offered in the Zathiskite Province; indeed, the Silver-string bardic tradition, known for its epic ballads and moral tales, began here.

### Veridan Province

Known as perhaps one of the wildest and most untamed provinces in Lede, despite the fact that it bordered on Aurimar, the Veridan Province provided the fine woods and furs that set the standards of luxury within the empire. Encompassing the Broadreach Forest; the Twelve Dales to the north of that forest; and the rolling Pryan Hills, the hillside home of many halflings to the east of the Broadreach,

Veridan also had the reputation as the most friendly nation to non-humans, with elves and halflings both claiming citizenship in the empire here.

### Venirian Province

Another major source of lumber in the empire, the Venirian Province included a massive forest in its southern reaches, which it shared with the Calas Province. The Venirian Province was known for its brotherhood of swordsmen, the Dancers of Steel, who, in the later years of the empire, were recruited to serve as the Legion of Steel, the Emperor's elite bodyguard. It is said that the Dancers of Steel equaled even the Sword Exemplars in skill with the sword.

### Zathiskite Province

Built on the ruins of the Empire of Flame, this province was known for its twin capitol of Elz and Quelsk. Elz was a pleasure city, devoted to serving the basest desires of men, and as a result the entire province soon took on a reputation of decadence unmatched even in Aurimar proper. More than this, however, it was also known for the Zathiskite Adepts, wielders of powerful fire magics that were a legacy of the Empire of Flame. It was also here that the secrets of binding the genie-kind first came to use, and its practitioners, the Brotherhood of the Lamp, soon eclipsed the Adepts, who were eventually absorbed into the Coventacle of the Ancients as part of the Seat of Thulkas.

### The Great Wilds

The Great Wilds, found in the southwestern portion of Ghelspad, were probably among the wildest and most dangerous places in the time of the Ledean Empire. Not even the Legions dared to enter this frontier, as it was a treacherous land of swamps, deserts, and badlands, hemmed in by the vigilance of the Zathiskite and Dara Provinces.

## The Dynasties of Lede

In all, twelve dynasties ruled the Empire of Lede, each helping to shape the direction and future of the empire. The dynasties were founded by various noble families, with new dynasties created when one family managed a successful coup against the imperial family. Occasionally, dynasties changed when the ruling family failed to produce a viable heir and the first daughter of that family was married into another family.

**The Triumn Dynasty:** Begun with the rule of the Three Generals in Aurimar, the Triumn Dynasty truly began with the marriage of Emperor Khoriv, a son of one of the generals, to Ylia, the daughter of another. These were arguably the glory years of the empire, with the Dara and Veridan Provinces being incorporated into the Empire. (1 OC - 312 OC)

**The Vhaerith Dynasty:** A dynasty founded by the Vhaerith family, known for its service to Mesos and the number of sorcerers in its ranks, the Vhaerith dynasty saw the creation of the Coventacle of Ancients, the outlawing of god-worship, and the annexation of the Amalthean and Venirian Provinces. (312 OC - 507 OC)

**The Morian Dynasty:** Founded when the Princes of the Venirian Province rebelled and assassinated the entirety of the Vhaerith family, the Morian Dynasty came to power because they were closely related to the Vhaerith and were the first to take action against the rebels in the Venirian Province. They allied with the sultan of Shai al Hazari, who joined his lands with the Ledean Empire, forming the Zathiskite Province and allowing the empire's troops to squelch the uprising in the Venirian Province. The admission of the Zathiskite Sam'Marith family into Ledean nobility proved to be the Morians' undoing, for as soon as the Venirian Province was pacified, the Zathiskite nobility used their command over genies and fire magics to overthrow the Morian dynasty. (507 OC - 527 OC)

**The Sam'Marith Dynasty:** This dynasty is perhaps the first that might be truly called decadent, with the Emperor technically maintaining Aurimar as the capitol of Lede, despite his continued dwelling in Elz. The imperial family exercised its new power to destroy its hated ancestral enemies, the noble family of the Southern Kingdoms. The Legion's march on these kingdoms and overthrow of the royal family created the Calas Province. (527 OC - 732 OC)

**The First Takhuul Dynasty:** The most powerful family in Aurimar, aided by the Coventacle of Ancients, overthrew the Zathiskite Emperor, seizing power and founding a new dynasty with promises of further expansion of the empire unmotivated by excess or petty personal feuds. The Gharian and Vascan Provinces are founded during this time, thanks to the Takhuuls' draconian expansionistic fervor. (732 OC - 820 OC)

**The Albriannin Dynasty:** Though the Albriannin family of the Veridan managed to gain power for a short time, their clumsy management of imperial resources led to famine and plague in areas of the empire. In short order, they were deposed by revolt from within the empire, and the Takhuuls were placed back upon the throne. (820 OC - 847 OC)

**The Second Takhuul Dynasty:** The second dynasty of the Takhuul clan saw the creation of the Caminian Province. In time, however, the family fell to decadence, notably the abuse of julka weed and lotus extracts, as well as more exotic magical indulgences (including the sexual violation of bound angelic beings, according to the histories that remain of the time). The Empire eventually came under attack by seemingly innumerable barbarian hordes from the Great Wilds, Albadia, and the Orcmarches, spurred on by divine powers sickened at the imperial excesses. The Empire of Lede came dangerously close to falling, though it was saved by the tactical genius of the Ombael generals, who overthrew the Takhuul Emperors who refused to see the gravity of the situation. (847 OC - 1176 OC)

**The Ombael Dynasty:** The Ombael Emperors founded an empire based on military excellence. They spent the first century of their rule reversing the damage that Takhuul excesses had inflicted upon the empire.

Two branches of the family gradually developed, one a line of half-orcs renowned for their combat prowess and patronage of the Legion of Ash, the other a line of sorcerers with ties to the Seats of Mormo and Mesos in the Coventacle of Ancients. (1176 OC - 1580 OC)

**The Mangarith-Khuul Dynasty:** The Ombaels were overthrown by a family that could trace its lineage back to the Takhuuls. Supported by a strong druidic faction within the Coventacle, the Mangarith-Khuul outlawed the practice of sorcery and stripped those of orcish blood of their citizenship, making them second-class citizens at best, non-entities as worst. The Coventacle nearly tore itself apart due to infighting during this time, as sorcerers tried to defend themselves against the druids. The Japhinian Province was claimed during this dynasty and turned into a penal colony for sorcerers and those of orcish blood. (1580 OC - 2130 OC)

**The Argent Dynasty:** The Argent family, forced into hiding because of the preponderance of sorcerous talent in their blood, rose up and overthrew the Mangarith-Khuul dynasty. Its reign is short, however, because of its tyrannical and decadent ways, taxing the provinces heavily in order to fund its excesses. Rebellion grew in the latter half of the dynasty, with the Calas, Gharia, and Zathiskite Provinces erupting in open revolt, pulling away from the empire proper. (2130 OC - 2275 OC)

**The Thael Dynasty:** Open rebellion sees the destruction of the Argent Dynasty at the hands of the remnants of the Coventacle of Ancients (now referred to as the Cult of Ancients). Throughout this dynasty, provinces break off from the Empire, despite the attempts of the Thael family to reign in the shattering of Lede. By the last decade of the Thael Dynasty, the only place still to hold allegiance to the Emperor of Lede is Aurimar itself, which quickly comes under attack from Albadian barbarians, destroying the Thael dynasty and the bureaucracy of Thael. (2275 OC - 2430 OC)

**The Sorcerer-King Dynasty:** Technically, this dynasty is not even part of the Ledean Empire. Rather, this time saw the coming of a cabal of renegade male sorcerers from Albadia, who promptly rose to power as the Sorcerer-Kings of Aurimar, founding the Empire of the Wheel. Because scholars consider them the last line of rulers in Aurimar, they are accounted as the final dynasty, despite the fact that the Ledean Empire proper fell with the end of the Thael Dynasty. (2433 OC - 3526 OC)

## Ledean Governance

A number of institutions governed the Empire of Lede, from the House of Nobles, a gathering of noble patriarchs, to the Speakers of the Sword, an advisory council made up of retired military leaders.

Provinces were ruled in many different ways that varied depending on the province and the era in which it is examined. Most provinces maintained a single ruler, though some kept a council of rulers or even a



senate of educated citizenry to provide rulership. Ultimately, though, power was held in the hands of the Imperial House and its patriarch, the Emperor of Lede.

## The Legions of Lede and the War Colleges

The armies of the Empire of Lede were mighty. So great were its numbers that those legions outside of Aurimar were simply given designations based on their home province and a number: for instance, the Gharia Fifth Legion was the mighty naval elite of the Empire, while the Vascan Second Legion was absolutely unrivalled in their mastery of the bow.

The Legions of Aurimar kept their original designations and were known by their distinctive uniforms, which were illegal to be worn by any save members of those legions. These legions included such worthies as the Legion of Ash, known for their fanatical, near suicidal fervor and the preponderance of orcish members; the Legion of White Fire, the magician-warriors of the empire; the Legion of Chains, the imperial slavers; and the Legion of Steel, the lithe swordsmen who served the Emperor as bodyguards, known for their dance-like fighting style.

A tradition begun by the retired Three Generals of Aurimar, the war colleges were the acknowledged fast track to service in the Legions. Those who sought entry into the Legions of Lede showed up at the doors of the War Colleges with the onset of spring, anxious to participate in the “culling games” — trails of strength, speed, and intelligence that separated those with true military potential from those who would simply serve in the rank and file. Simple participation in the games made a citizen part of the Legions, so that even those who did not achieve the positions they thought they deserved were still forced to serve in the military.

After the culling games, the rank and file marched off to the infantry training camps around the continent. Those who won the games were accepted into the various War Colleges, which were less academic institutions and more brotherhoods of warriors who shared a similar style of battle. Indeed, the members of these War Colleges considered themselves members for life and usually maintained rivalries against the other War Colleges that often resulted in duels.

Each War College had a distinctive war- insignia, usually a masterwork preferred weapon decorated in a distinctive fashion, from the dual short swords of the Nine Stings Academy to the war fans of the Iron Wind Brotherhood. Five of the old War Colleges survive today (see the Darakeene entry for details).

## The Fall of the Empire

The fall of the Lede Empire came about not as a result of anything outside of the Empire, but rather due to internal corruption and degradation. It might be fairly said that the true end began with the Argent Dynasty, which initiated the rapid downward spiral that brought an empire built up over the course of two millennia to its knees in but three centuries.

The Argent Dynasty failed to pay attention to the concerns of its outlying provinces, granting more and more autonomy to those agents of the Empire who ruled in the Imperial Name. In time, those agents saw their links to the Empire as nothing more than useless bureaucracy and strove to break away.

By the time the ruling elite paid the nascent rebellions any true heed, the damage was done — the people of the provinces were stirred up with anti-Imperial sentiment and the end was quick in coming. The records of our faith indicate that many of the divine churches worked to help stir up such sentiment, lending their divinely granted powers to the struggles. In what some have suggested was a presaging of the Divine War, cleric battled druid, while blackguards, paladins, and Exemplars battled legionnaires.

Ultimately, the provinces pulled away from the rulership of the Plains of the Wheel, and in time, only Aurimar remained of the once-great Lede Empire, though it had made an indelible mark on the history and culture of all Ghelspad.

## The Post-Lede Empire Nations

With the fall of Lede, many of the provinces created their own governments and nations. Many historians seem to neglect the memory of these nations, leading some to conclude, erroneously, that the Lede Empire fell before the assault of the charduni. This is not the case; rather, the old Lede provinces formed nations of their own.

### Beyond the Kelders

The lands in eastern Ghelspad quickly formed alliances against Lede aggression. These lands were among the last to be included in the empire and were the first to draw away from the rulership of Aurimar.

The Japhinian Province returned to self-rulership quickly under a dynasty of rulers made up of the sorcerers and orc-kin who had been outlawed there centuries before, establishing the Japhinian Dynasty, the only ruling class ever to hold power in the newly founded Kingdom of Bregis.

Ephis, the capital of the Caminian Province, broke away from the rest of the cities of the peninsula, forming its own city-state that eventually became, through the influence of the Exemplars who founded temples there, the city-state of Hedrad. The rest of the area became the short-lived Hornswythe Kingdom.

On the other side of the Hornswythe River, civil unrest saw a rapid cycling through of governments in the plains that once held the Vascan Province. In short time, however, the so-called Golden Kingdoms established a unified front: the Nation of Vesh. Amalthea, too, broke away from Lede, aided by the Golden Kingdoms.

### The Southern Kingdoms

The former Venirian, Calas, and Zathiskite Provinces splintered under the weight of infighting nobility whose only unified purpose was to throw off the yoke of Lede power.

The faiths of Hedrada and Chardun aided Calas in its struggle. By the time the Ledean Empire was well and truly dead, the nobles of this area had divided the former province into a number of areas, from the nation of Calastia, still held by old provincial governors of Calas; to the nation of Lageni, a stronghold for Chardunite worship; to Ankila of the Hammer, held by the faithful of Hedrada.

The Empire of Venir formed where the Vernirian Province as well as part of the Veridite Province once stood. The young Imperial force of Venir very quickly attracted those legionnaires who were driven out of other areas for fear of the Ledean influence and proved to be the main force that kept Venir intact.

Finally, the remains of the Zathiskite Province split into two warring empires. One of them, Zathiske, broke away during the fall of the Ledean Empire, casting out its genie-binding nobility. Zathiske took Quelsk as its capitol and forswore the decadence for which the Zathiskite Province was known. This new empire managed to hold on to the lands east of the Lake of Winds, as well as a branch that extended north of what is now the Mounds of Man into the Gascar mountain range, encompassing Lokil, the City of Scholars, and Sumara, the City of Silver.

The Empire of Elz, the Jewel of the South, was ruled by the magical nobility of old Zathiske, known for their elemental spells and binding of the djinn. Elz extended through what is now the Sweltering Plains and into a good portion of the Devil's March. The most powerful of its wizards claimed the seat of Emperor, appointing the others as regional ruling satraps. Where Zathiske purged itself of decadence, Elz embraced and reveled in its.

## The Empire of the Wheel

Old Aurimar lay fallow for many years, barely managing to defend itself from those who would lay claim to the treasures within its walls and proclaim themselves as the heirs of Lede's legacy. Barbarians from Albadia were a constant problem, until the coming of the Sorcerer-Kings.

A cabal of male sorcerers, renegades from the barbarian nation of Albadia, arrived on a winter's day, all bearing the markings of the outcast. They sought sanctuary within Aurimar, which hesitantly provided it. The sorcerers dwelt among the people of Aurimar for several months, until the next siege by a warlord from the newly unified Darakeene. The sorcerers proved their might to the poor warlord, destroying him and the majority of his army with summoned creatures and great gouts of fire and ice. Soon thereafter, the Sorcerer-Kings negotiated a peace accord with the King of Darakeene that lasted until Darakeene once again broke into warring tribal lands.

The sorcerers were accorded high ranks and asked to govern the city. They accepted, albeit hesitantly. In time, the Sorcerer-Kings of Aurimar became the established rulers of the city, with any child showing any

potential for wielding sorcery immediately adopted into one of the sorcerer clans, which often maintained bitter rivalries over the most promising children.

Eschewing the worship of gods or titans as activities befitting those without their own power, the Sorcerer-Kings instead dealt with extraplanar beings to which their own powers allowed them access, beings that granted great protections for the city and taught the Sorcerer-Kings to call upon their extraplanar servants in return for service.

Despite this, however, a small cabal of the Sorcerer-Kings learned to strike similar deals with the very titans. Though such pacts were considered anathema, this small underground cult existed nonetheless, which led to Aurimar's downfall.

## The Coming of the Charduni

Many years after the fall of Lede, an army marched out of the Goblin Lands, the peninsula on the western coast of Ghelspad beyond the Ukrudan Desert. Made up of strange dark-skinned dwarves that, as was later discovered, hailed from a far land called Termana, the army advanced quickly on Darakeene, utterly claiming it.

Then, using the troops gained in that chaotic land, they marched upon the rest of Ghelspad. The battles were fierce, with most lands falling before the onslaught of the charduni. When it was realized that these dwarves were the favored servants of the Tyrant Chardun, there was panic. The southern nations fell quickly, with Calastia and Lageni — already chardunite nations — accepting the rulership of the charduni in return for maintaining effective autonomy.

Elz also sued for peace, accepting charduni governance. The Empire of Venir was slowly chipped away, until a small sliver south of the halfling hills and north of the Forests of Calastia remained. Ankila of the Hammer was beset on two sides, one by charduni coming through Elz and the other by Calastian forces; though the Exemplars and champions of Hedrada fought valiantly, they were outmatched by chardun's forces.

Some folk were never overcome by the Charduni, however. The dwarves of Burok Torn fought determinedly, aided by their own god, and defeated the charduni at the gates of their own city. Refugees from other areas fled to the dwarves when they heard of the ability of Burok Torn to defend itself, but the dwarven lands had no room for war-weary humans and others. The dwarves did, though, help the refugees settle in the plains across the Kelders. Aided by the faithful of Madriel, who arrived to lend aid to those suffering from the ravages of war, the dwarves protected the passes that led into the new human lands from the charduni, allowing the new lands of Durrover to survive and grow despite the war in other places.

Indeed, the Charduni Empire never passed the Kelders, for the two primary means of passing them besides Burok Torn were occupied by titanic powers too powerful for even Chardun's influence to mitigate. In the Canyon of Souls, the presence of a circle

of Gulaben's druidesses prevented the charduni from passing; the troops sent against the wind-witches were never seen again, though their screams supposedly still echo through the caverns.

The presence of Denev herself prevented the passage of the charduni into either the Ganjus or the passes near Amalthea. The very forests and mountains came to life against the slaver-dwarves, and not even Chardun dared to raise his hand against the Earth Mother.

Ultimately, though, the charduni ruled the majority of Ghelspad: from the now united nation of Darakeene, across the Gascars and into the Southern Kingdoms, the dwarven servants of Chardun governed. Even the mighty Sorcerer-Kings of Aurimar were forced to pay tribute to the charduni, despite the fact that their siege of Aurimar was never completed.

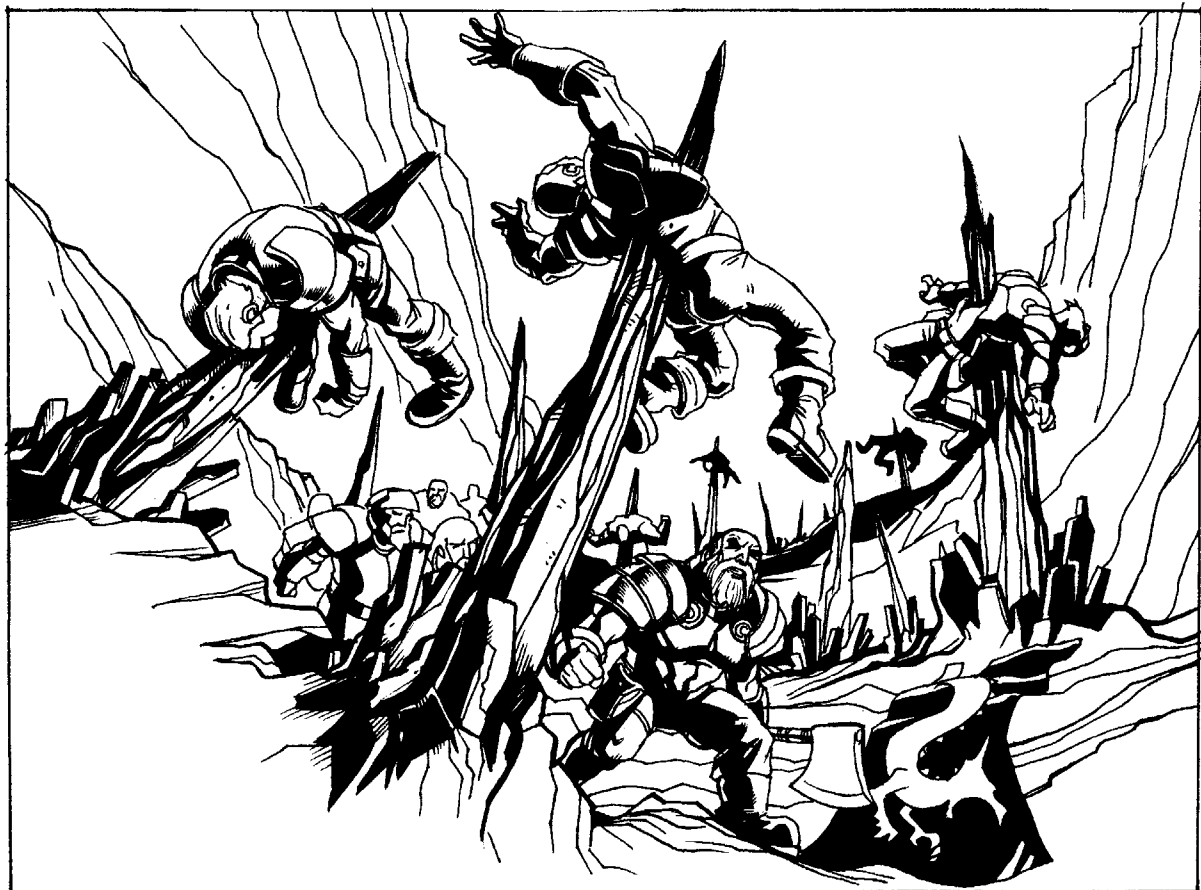
### Life Under the Charduni

For many years, the charduni dominated the majority of Ghelspad, despite the fact that they were not quite part of everyday life. The arrival of an envoy from Dunahnae-Vhaer ("The Land of Chains," as the former Goblin Lands were now called) to one of the places under the dominion of the black dwarves was cause for great consternation. Normally, the envoy came to collect the annual tribute of slaves and goods for the charduni rulers and Great Temples of Chardun in Dunahnae-Vhaer, though at other times it was to express the displeasure of Chardun and his favored, which often resulted in the enslaving or slaughter of the entire populace so unfortunate.

Needless to say, the servants of the titans chafed under this dominion, forming underground resistances to the worship of Chardun and, in fact, all of the gods. This era marks what was possibly the first time in history that servants of the titans joined forces, putting aside their eons-long enmities to work together, seeing the divine races as a greater threat.

Not just titanic servitors worked against the charduni and their rule, however. The faithful of the other gods worked likewise. Corean, Madriel, and Tanil all sent their favored champions to try and liberate and defend those places where such action was feasible. The Exemplars of Hedrad traveled incognito among the peasants, who had been stripped of all weapons and armor by the tyrannical charduni regime. These masters of unarmed combat developed and taught forms of fighting to those willing to learn in preparation for the day when they might rise up against their masters.

Enkili's and Vangal's faithful chafed against the rigid order imposed by the charduni, finding ways — often violent and bloody — to fight back. Perhaps only Belsameth's servants did not chafe under this overtly controlling evil empire. Indeed, it might be argued that they benefited in some measure, for it was during this time that Belsameth's clerics and assassins took over the Cult of Ancients in a display of orderly planning that could have come about only as a result of association with Chardun's faithful. As soon as Belsameth's grip on the Cult was cemented, the Cult became the favored assassins of the charduni.





## The Titanswar

It is unknown for how long this might have lasted, for though they were beset by many enemies, the charduni provided what Calastia and the Hegemony of Virduk provides to this day: stability in a chaotic land. Certainly, that stability may come with some evils, but to a family that has known starvation until the coming of tyrants, evils are easily perceived as necessary. The Empire of the Charduni might have lasted for millennia, save for one event.

The Divine War.

*Greetings, my fellows . . .*

*I know that many of you have waited for quite a long time for word from me on this subject. I have ventured far and wide, speaking with each of you, collecting your memories of the Titanswar and recording them for posterity.*

*Ours is a sacred directive, my friends — we Incarnates are the very Memories of Denev, and we must never forget the horrors that have wounded Her. Only by knowing the contagion that caused an illness may the illness be healed. What follows is the best overview I am able to construct; of necessity, this must be brief, though I am working on a longer manuscript that shall include the entirety of each of your memories.*

*A quick point of reference to you all: I have avoided placing references to years in these descriptions. Time was waylaid by the coming of the Divine War. Some years lasted longer than others; some seasons were skipped entirely. The journeys of sun and moon were both stopped in various instances throughout the Divine War, and time was unmade.*

*This is also perhaps why time defeating magics such as chronomancy and many forms of divination cannot access that particular flow of time — it is snarled and frayed like a flaw in a tapestry and best left untouched.*

*I remain,  
Your Ally,  
Oakthorne*

### First Blood

There are those who believe that the first casualty of the Divine War was Mesos himself. Yet I know that this is not the case. I know this, for I was a priest of the first one to fall.

Once, there was Urkanthus of the Four Arms, the son of Denev and Thulkas. In each of his hands he bore a sample of the purest elements — a burning white flame, a sphere of blue-green water, a stone of absolute perfection, and a whirlwind of mighty elemental power. Urkanthus held the place in the Pantheon of the Great Gods that is now arbitrarily (and sloppily) assigned to Our Mother. Urkanthus was also a god of balance and neutrality.

When the gods first gathered to discuss the powers and plan the deaths of the titans, only Urkanthus spoke out in opposition. His was the knowledge of utter balance, and he could see that the stagnation wrought upon the world with the destruction of the titans may well cause the downfall of Scarn.

The more fervently the other gods came to favor patricide, the more passionate Urkanthus became in his arguments against it. In his wisdom, Hedrada called for a short rest in their discussion so that tempers might cool.

Yet that was the last convocation of the gods the Great Balancer ever attended. Vangal brought his anger to Chardun and Belsameth, who agreed with him. The gods must destroy the titans, and the existence of one of their own who might betray them could not be permitted. So, they planned to murder Urkanthus.

I was not privy to the divine battle that slew my god, though the dying screams of The Four Armed One echo in my nightmares still. Urkanthus died, bound by Chardun, poisoned by Belsameth, and savaged by Vangal. The other gods learned of his fate too late, and it is one of the many points of hatred between Madriel and Belsameth to this day.

Denev wept to see her son slain so, perhaps explaining one of the reasons why Denev took so long to side with the gods, despite her hatred for her titan siblings. She gave the Pure Fire unto Corean, that he might preserve it in his forge. She gave the Flawless Stone unto Hedrada, that he might forever guard its perfect symmetry. She gave the True Whirlwind to Enkili, that she might hide it among her storm clouds. The whereabouts of the Globe of Water are unknown, though some postulate that it may be held by Manawe of the Seas. Or, Denev may yet retain it, waiting for a true heir to the elemental waters.

The gods of evil were wroth at this turn of events, for they were denied any of Urkanthus' legacy. So hateful were they that, during the Remaking, Chardun expunged all writings of our god, Belsameth destroyed all memories, and Vangal destroyed all of his temples. To this day, he is remembered only among the Incarnates — and the gods themselves.

My friends —

Have any of you ever heard of this deity? I do not doubt the words of our esteemed colleague Tellerus, but I have never heard of this Forgotten God. Who has?

I know old Tellerus has a reputation as being somewhat . . . fanciful, but I felt that it was important to include his contribution in case it was indeed real.

— Oakthorne

## Destruction of Mesos

Some tales tell the story of Mesos' destruction as though only the gods were present — Emili Derigesh in particular is guilty of this. One cannot blame him, however, for he was not there. Yet I was, and I can tell this tale.

Armies with magical power were gathered for the attack upon Mesos. There were many, certainly: from the charduni war necromancers and Calastian battle-mages in service to Chardun, to the Argent Mages of Corean and the Valmatian Guild of Madriel. This last gathering hailed from the city of Valmatia in the Pyran Hills, a city dedicated to Madriel. My master and I hailed from this city.

In this incarnation, I had originally been a simple road, dwelling in the wet public parks of Valmatia. I was changed when my master Cleriun found me and made me into his familiar. I do not know precisely what changes this wrought upon my incarnate-soul, though it may well be the reason why to this day I wield sorcerous powers in addition to my druidic gifts.

My master was among those called to service to help develop a weapon for use against Mesos. Though many in the guild expressed trepidation at the idea of killing the Sire of Sorcery, my master was not among them. He felt that those who argued that the slaying of Mesos might destroy all arcane magic were foolish; he believed that Mesos was an incarnation of magic, not the other way around. Indeed, it was his fervent belief that the destruction of Mesos might free up more magic into the world, and I must admit that seeing the number of sorcerers born in this era, he may well have been right.

Cleriun was among those who developed the *manaspear*, its form in homage to Madriel. We rapidly sent scrolls of the spell to our allies in this endeavor, that they might aid us in the assault meant to help our gods by limiting the power of Mesos when they attacked him.

My last memories in this form are of the battlefield. We were summoned by the power of our gods just as they attacked Mesos, and my master shrieked the command to hurl the *manaspears*. Hundreds of the spears struck the titan, dispersing some of his arcane power into the ether. The look upon his face I shall never forget, for it made me understand that even the titans could know mortality. A sobering thought, indeed.

Mere seconds after the *manaspears* hit, we died under a mere sweep of the Sire of Sorcery's hand, immolated by the purest magical fire that burned brighter the more magic we possessed. My master was among the first to die, though some of the apprentices were spared, having expended much of their magic for the day already. My innately magical nature as his familiar slew me as well.

## The Dragons

I spent the Titanswar as a dryad in the Broadreach Forest, one of the counselors of Erumbranthian-Kalthorr, the Verdant Emperor — a green dragon that ruled some of the deepest recesses of that mighty wood.

During the opening battles of the war, my liege received many emissaries from both divine and titanic forces. Often, he called upon his vassal wyrms to come unto him for great meetings, which I attended with him.

One truth became clear to me from both the audiences and councils — none of the wyrms of Ghelspad did anything as a unified front.

For every red drake that served as a beast of war for Thulkas, there was one that reveled in Vangal's violence. For every wyrm that sought to use the divine forces to seek revenge by claiming that an enemy was a servant of the titans, there was another that strode with gorgons because his ancient nemesis flew beside paladins.

The dragons were — and even still are — above such distinctions as "titan" or "divine." According to the ancient memories of the dragon sages, one of whom dwelt at the Verdant Emperor's court, the dragons were crafted by neither titan nor god, but were rather creatures born of the same primal essences as the titans and gods.

Unfortunately, this attempt at neutrality and individual factionalism failed them, causing both sides to perceive them as enemies. Dragons were powerful creatures, aye, but so were the forces of titans and gods, who decided that if the dragons would not turn their power in favor of one side, they should not be allowed to turn it in favor of the other. So, rather than risk the ancient wyrms suddenly arriving on the battlefield in the favor of their enemies, both sides sought out and slew the dragons.

Around the middle of the war, my own Verdant Emperor fled east to the lands far across the oceans where the dragon-sages claim that wyrms are revered as gods. Many others fled to the south, to hide in the wilds of Termana.

I hope to one day re-encounter my old liege, for I never had the opportunity to thank him for his kindnesses. Though a cruel being to outsiders, the Verdant Emperor was concerned for his vassals and ever vigilant in their protection. Though the ravages of the Divine War transformed me into one of the Sundered Women, dryads forever mourning the loss of their trees and angry at all living beings, my liege sent one of his kin, a dragonman with the blood of Erumbranthian-Kalthorr, to ease my suffering. I died beneath his sword, gratefully.

I fear that had he not done so, I should yet be stuck in that stagnant, ever-wounded form to this day. Therefore, I hope to thank him ere I depart this incarnation.

## The Fallacy of Titanspawn

I am taking advantage of our brother Oakthorne's mission to communicate a pet peeve of mine. Rest assured, I shall relate it to my existence as a creature during the Divine War, but in doing so I hope to correct those who know better from using the meaningless distinction between "divine races" and "titanspawn."

The earliest part of my life in the Goblin Lands was spent learning the art of war and evading the newly arrived charduni. My tribe was the Savage Fist, known for the taking of the right hands of our enemies, which our women sewed into fists that hung from our belts. We were proud hobgoblins, having enslaved a tribe of goblins and taken over two other tribes of hobgoblins, slaying their warriors and old people and taking their women and children for our own.

We worshipped the titans, as did all goblinkind, but this was not to be the case forever. As the days of the titans closed (though none of us could know that), the charduni attacked our tribe. The battle was fierce but brief, for the charduni — the favored of Chardun — practiced brilliant and incredibly organized war-tactics that our forces simply could not match. We surrendered, to our shame, and expected to be executed or enslaved.

To our surprise, neither occurred.

Rather, the charduni executed our shamans and seers, claiming that the old ways were dead. We were free to go as we pleased, though we must give up our young males to the care of their temples to Chardun, whose blessings had allowed the black dwarves of Dunahnae to destroy us in battle. We agreed and departed, still confused.

Our young returned to us in a few short years, filled with fervor for Chardun. Some of them even wielded powerful magics granted by the Great Slaver, giving our tribe access to healing that we had been denied since

the execution of our shamans. The others were highly trained warriors, capable of teaching our tribe to use the very tactics that defeated us. They agreed to rejoin and rejuvenate the tribe on only one condition — that we swear allegiance to Chardun and the Charduni Empire. We did so, joyously.

We were not the only humanoids who did so, I should add. Vangal and Belsameth also attracted their own tribes of goblinfolk, while the other gods gained the allegiance of other creatures normally considered to be servants of the titans.

By the same measure, some humans never served the gods. The humans of Khirdet, in particular, served Mormo unflinchingly, and yet do so to this day. Many half-breeds also follow titans, from the half-elves of Denev to the half-orcs who learned to revere Hrinruuk in the orc tribes that raised them.

Allow those who follow the gods to fool themselves with their comfortable classifications; these are the same beings that are amazed, time and again, when the servants of the titans do not wear horror on their faces, but rather look just like them. We know that there is, in reality, no such thing as "titanspawn" or "divine races" — not truly. There are gorgons who have turned to the worship of Chardun and belsamaugs who revere the mighty Chern.

### Titanspawn

So, what precisely is a titanspawn, then, if not a creature created by the titans?

By that definition, semantically speaking, there are very few creatures that are not titanspawn. Nearly every race of creatures currently inhabiting the Scarred Lands was created by one of the titans.

Rather, titanspawn is simply a derogatory term that came into vogue during the Divine War as a means of separating those who worshipped the titans from those who followed the gods. It is a slur, plain and simple, and one that is viewed with displeasure by those who yet worship the titans, including those who revere Denev. Indeed, there is a warning in the Vigils against using that term around the elves of Vera-Tre, whose culture is based around the worship of the Earth Mother: they react *very* poorly to such ill-chosen words.

In those few instances in which the term "titanspawn" is used in a set of rules, simply assume that it is a religious category. Individuals such as the Mithril Knights have powers that affect those who worship the titans rather than the gods, in a similar fashion to how spells such as *glyph of warding* can be based on religion.

## The Binding of the Djinn

My tale comes from the dying days of the Empire of Elz, before the formation of the Sweltering Plains.

I was a slave in Elz — a woman of the Sultan Aruhmeth's harem, in fact. Would that I could claim to have been some kind of great beauty or favorite, but the fact was, I counted as simply one of a score, given to the Sultan as a child by my parents in lieu of nearly a decade of missed taxes.

Perhaps nowhere was the binding of the djinn and the sealing of their cities so felt as in Elz. I have memories of Ehrumm, one of the great fiery djinn, who was bound to act as harem-guardian for one hundred and one years.

I remember waking one morning, early in the predawn light. I found him outside in the gardens allotted to the harem, looking to the south, where there seemed to be a strange burning glow, as of fire far upon the horizon. He smiled to see me — a sad smile, I thought.

"You are up early, little one," he said. "Perhaps you can sense that something is amiss in the balance of the world now." He turned to me then and bade me to remember, not with the memory of my mind, but my soul. I had no idea then what he meant. He turned again, gazing to the south.

"They have laid siege to the City of Brass, little one. They have laid siege to the Four Citadels of the Djinn. The gods commanded that our princes side with them in this conflict, invoking the name of our Great Mother. Our princes had long ago sworn oaths of neutrality in the War, swearing that should either side try to force an allegiance with us, it is that side which would find us as enemies.

"The titans never approached us, for such is their nature. Yet the gods have demanded that we aid them, and we refused. They have laid siege to us, using spells to bind us to their whim.

"The siege is at an end. Ere nightfall, I shall be taken from this place, the sultan's compulsions that bind me here shattered. We shall be entrapped within our City of Brass. Render my thanks unto the sultan for his kindnesses these years; there have been far worse masters." I went inside then to think on what he had told me.

I did not know the ramifications of that conversation until later. I did not know how strongly the Empire of Elz depended upon the might of the bound djinn, some of whom had served since before the Ledean Empire's Zathiskite Province, in the days of the Empire of Flame. The might of Elz was compromised.

The ruling class fell to infighting and civil war in an attempt simultaneously to take advantage of the sudden weaknesses of their enemies and to shore up their own defenses. The battles were bloody. I remember when the assassins came for the sultan; he was in the harem when it happened — only some got

away. I, in my loyalty to the sultan, tried to stop the assassin long enough to allow the sultan to escape. I failed and was killed on his knife.

We know that this state of civil war lasted until the creation of the Sweltering Plains, which ravaged what little remained of Elz, destroying its cities and creating ruins that stood side-by-side with the ruins of the old Empire of Flame. Now, only Shelzar and a few desiccated ruins in the Sweltering Plains bear testimony to the might that was the Empire of Elz.

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## The World Remade

*Archmage Chancellor Alia:*

*I am flattered that you are interested in my view on the history of Ghelspad since the Divine War. Though our mutual correspondent Yugman has often related the history of our land, his views can tend to be somewhat skewed, if I may be forgiven for using such a loaded phrase.*

*What follows is my own view of the defining events in our history since the Divine War. I pray that you find them suitable for inclusion in your historical work in progress.*

*Blessings of the Maker,*

*Ever yours,*

*Emili Derigesh*

## The Great Remaking

With the defeat of the last of the titans, the world quieted. Battles taking place at that very moment grew silent, howling storms stilled, and all was quiet in the world.

Corean reached out and plucked sparks from his Divine Forge, setting the stars, which were extinguished in the fury of battle, alight once more. Madriel gestured and the sun began to move through the skies again; her sister Belsameth did likewise with the moon, which began to wax and wane anew, eclipsing the Forbidden Orb.

Enkili smiled and turned on his boot, and the winds began to flow in their proper courses. Hedrada touched his Hammer of Law to the Hourglass of the All, setting the Sands of Time in motion again. Chardun seized the cold of winter and the heat of summer, flinging them back on course, binding the seasons with chains, while Vangal rekindled the fires of the earth.

And Tanil, gentle Tanil, helped her mother Denev, who was sorely wounded from battle, to lay down within the earth, promising that she would



look after the plants and animals, ensuring that the cycles were returned to their proper courses and the earth healed.

The gods appeared to all the nations of the Scarred Lands and decreed that the old world was no more. They decreed that the years should be reckoned by the New Calendar, for even the very seasons had changed in accordance to their will.

So it was, and so it has been since.

## The Rise of the Godly Nations

With the remaking of the world, there could be no denying the power of the gods. Many rulers loyal to the titans were overthrown in this time by the people who saw the power of the gods and knew where their rightful loyalties should lie. No more was titan worship a noble relic of the past, a remnant of the Ledean Empire, and the worship of gods a strange, cultic activity. Now, those who worshipped titans were forced into hiding, and the gods took their place as the rightful rulers of the Scarred Lands.

Entire nations slowly reformed in the Divine War's wake, often led by the clergy of one or more gods. The witches of Albadia led their people in the worship of Belsameth and Vangal; Tanil's devoted — both clerics and rangers — formed strong political alliances of mutual respect and defense in Vesh; Chardun's servitors grew strong in Calastia.

## The Gleam of Mithril

It was in the freshly born days of the new world that the Order of Mithril tracked the mighty tread of the Mithril Golem through the ruined lands of Ghelspad's northeast. As they followed the gargantuan footprints of the Wonder of Corean, they encountered small villages and settlements barely surviving in these hard lands. Pinched between raiders from the Plains of Ledean and monsters newly emerged from the polluted Blood Sea, these settlements were on the verge of destruction; in truth, many of them might have been destroyed utterly were it not for the efforts of the paladins and clerics of the Order of Mithril.

Then, in the morning light early one Corday, the massive gleaming form of the Mithril Golem was spotted. The faithful of Corean gathered on that spot and sang the praises of the Maker, consecrating the ground to the Champion and beginning work on a mighty temple in praise of him.

In time, it was realized that the folk of this area were in great danger and in desperate need of protection. The temple, built around the Golem, quickly became the center for a fortified settlement, dubbed Mithril in the Golem's honor. People flocked to the protection offered by the gleam of the Mithril Golem. In one fell swoop, we had seized a chunk of treacherous territory out of the control of the foul abominations of the titans and made it safe for the people of the gods.

To this day, we continue this endeavor, slowly spreading our shield of protection over the lands

around Mithril. We will some day make all of these lands safe for goodly folk and drive out all the ill-begotten beasts.

So we have sworn.

## The Warriors' Union

In this time, far to the west, a single warlord rose to power among the warring peoples of Darakeene. Though many warlords of Darakeene — armed with the might and skills of the Ledean Colleges of War — have tried to seize power in these lands, this warlord was not a grasping, greedy fool like the others.

Rather, his purpose was both nobler and more practical. He did not wish to seize all of the lands for himself; instead, he intended only to unite the disparate peoples of Darakeene. His campaign involved equal parts military maneuvering and political gestures.

Gradually, Darakeene was united — no more were they the Nine Nations of Darakeene. The warlord responsible for the new United Provinces of Darakeene ordered his old name, which signified a ruler of a single nation, to be expunged. He took the name Selarch the First upon his ascension to the imperial throne of the United Provinces.

Though Darakeene has seen tumult since its union (notably, the breaking away of the island kingdom of Karria), it has remained a strong force for peace and prosperity, offering both its warriors and the plenty of its fields to the Scarred Lands.

## Calastia Looks Outward

The rise of the Hegemony began even before the Divine War drew to a close. In the dying days of the Great Conflict, the Empire of Elz lost its mighty djinn forces, leaving it vulnerable to Calastia's aggression. With relative ease, the armies of Calastia marched on Elz, moving north of the Great Forest of Calastia and taking advantage of Zathiske's resultant weakness and civil war. Elz was made a client-state ruled only in name by the Satrap, squeezing Ankila of the Hammer between Calastia and Zathiske.

Yet Elz was only the first to fall.

After the treachery of Virduk in the Druid War, the rise of the Hegemony truly began. Lageni's entrance into the Hegemony of Calastia began as an alliance, but the nation's ruler, Duke Aold, eventually was forced to acknowledge the dominion of Virduk. Mad Emperor Urlis of Venir handed his nation over to Virduk on a silver platter. Ankila of the Hammer, pinched between Zathiske and Calastia, soon fell, and part of Zathiske was split away to form a new province, the Heteronomy of Virduk.

Despite his great age, however, Virduk has not stopped his expansion. Even now, his eye turns toward Burok Torn and Durrover, nations of free and good folk. Unfortunately, there are few troops to send to these beleaguered people — a fact which may well prove to be their doom.

## Legacy of the Charduni

After the fall of the charduni in the opening years of the Divine War, the seat of their empire on Ghelspad lay dormant. Eventually, emissaries arrived in foreign courts, announcing the ascendance of Aarixthic, Lord High Priest and First Minister of Chardun, as ruler of Dunahnae. Soon, rumors of the Bone Wall of Dunahnae became commonplace.

What the future holds for this nation of Chardunites is unknown, where slavery and torture are practiced with aplomb. It certainly holds a number of the old charduni, who have proven their expansionistic tendencies before; perhaps this is why Dunahnae is so careful to remain isolated. Something foul, however, stirs in this peninsula, have no doubt. Let us pray that we are strong enough to overcome it when it rears its head.

## The Rise of City States

Perhaps one of the most obvious changes in the civilizations of the Scarred Lands is the preponderance of city-states. This should come as no surprise, given the nature of the Divine War and its aftermath.

Finding settlements that managed to weather the worst of the Divine War relatively intact is very common, despite the damage inflicted on their neighbors and surroundings. Many of these settlements are made up of the strongest and most durable inhabitants — the survivors of destruction, who were forced

to flee to other places in the wake of the Titanswar. Many of these places were the last stand of the survivors of an area, made up of a bedraggled but fiercely dedicated few that managed to live and prosper.

Some of these places, such as Lokil, were the remnants of other cities that barely managed to survive destruction. Others, such as dark Hollowfaust, were founded on the ruins of older cities, using the stone and other building materials (or, in some instances, the relatively intact structures) present as a foundation for a new city. Yet others, such as our own shining Mithril, were founded in places where cities had never stood.

All of these city-states share one characteristic, however — they are bastions against the horrors that were created in the passing of the titans. Nations are rare and few in these Scarred Lands; such places abide only because of extreme measures, whether the tyranny of Virduk's military, the strength of Dunahnae's Wall of Bones, the might of Albadia's or Darakeene's warriors, or the dedication of Vesh's vigilants.

In many instances, our citystates are slowly expanding their reach and sphere of protection, allowing folk to settle a little further away with each generation. Perhaps the day will come when these areas of defense extend to meet one another and there are no longer any threats to the well being of godly folk, and we have nations to defend our homes once more.



## The Druid War

The Druid War proved to us more than ever that the titans' minions were not vanquished and gone—they were now more a threat than ever. A handful of generations had passed since the destruction of the titans and this time had not dulled the hatred of their spawn.

In fact, the reverse might even be true, for during the Divine War, those creatures that served the titans usually did so out of some kind of devotion, fear, or sheer domination. Now, however, they were driven by something far more difficult to overcome—hatred and a desire for vengeance.

The violence of the Druid War found its genesis with the people of Khirdet, a twisted and depraved folk that yet worship Mormo, led by a druidic theocracy that includes the Cannibals of Khet. Raising legions of titanspawn from the blasted lands around Khirdet, the Cannibals marched on Vera-Tre, home of the elves.

To this day, we do not entirely know their reasons for doing so. Perhaps it was out of some age-old rivalry between their cult and the elves. Perhaps it was because of some kind of hatred between the rulers of those nations. Whatever the reason, we do not know the precisely why, though many learned during the war that part of the conflict (if not its entirety) was due to a desire for vengeance, for the Cannibals taught that Denev was a traitor to the titans and they sought to punish her first followers.

Mayhap they even sought to destroy her somehow, though how they might accomplish such a task without divine aid is too horrible to contemplate.

What certainly is known about the Divine War is that it signaled the beginning of Virduk's perfidy, for upon seizing the throne from his father, Virduk suddenly withdrew his troops back to Calastia in an attempt to solidify his own power, leaving one front of the war undefended. The titanspawn armies of Khirdet—particularly the Venomous Brotherhood and the Company of the Fallen Fang—thus fell upon Amalthea, left vulnerable in Virduk's withdrawal. Glorious Amalthea, once a place of learning, art, and beauty, was razed, its monuments thrown down and its libraries put to the torch; those who did not flee into the mountains were slain.

The other members of Vera-Tre's alliance stood fast, from the barbarian forces of Albadia to the Vigilant troops of Vesh. Human and elven blood was spilled in defense of the unspoiled Ganjus, and the armies of Khirdet were routed.

The events of that war left us feeling violated and disillusioned, for this was the first time that we were forced to understand that evil did not necessarily speak praise of the titans—even those who worshipped the gods might turn against us. Though it was a loss for Amalthea and Khirdet, and a military victory for the alliance, Virduk's treachery was a stunning blow to our notions of unity under the gods.

## The Blood Monsoon

Corean preserve us from the wrath of the Blood Sea.

Since the tainting of the Sunrise Waters into the Blood Sea, many storms have blown in from its crimson depths, usually carrying reddish-colored water. Yet in 112 AV, a horrible monsoon rose up and swept inland, drowning entire settlements and sweeping up the coast past the Kelders. Even the cities of this mighty mountain range were not spared the fury of the Blood Monsoon—part of the Bridged City slid off its lofty perch, and the halls of the dwarven city of Bela-Kay were filled with raging crimson waters, drowning and washing away its inhabitants.

These raging waters caused the Hornswythe River to reverse in its flow, flooding the center of the Kelder Steppes and forming the Blood Basin, a stinking pool of Kadum-tainted water in the middle of these steppes. Many of the tribes that dwelt in the former lowlands here were caught and killed by the raging walls of water that swept up the Hornswythe. To this day, it is said that ghostly horse warriors can sometimes be seen riding the surface of the Blood Basin's waves at dusk and dawn.

This reversal of water flow was not unique to the Hornswythe: the influx of water flooded the Sorporatra Swamp and Mourning Marshes, filling the local water table with the stagnant waters of these meres and sending waves of polluted, crimson water up the local river systems. The plant life and crops during these years were horribly tainted, causing sickness and deformity of mind and body in areas that were forced to consume the taint.

Murderous hordes of titanspawn rose from the deeps of the Blood Sea, led by the twisted pisceans. Coastal towns struggling to survive the storm itself were razed by the gilled fiends, the bodies of their citizenry thrown into the seas to feed those creatures unable to leave the crimson waves.

Virduk, firmly in the middle of seizing control over those lands around him, was forced to withdraw his aggressions from Ankila and Burok Torn for a while in order to fortify his coasts.

The storm raged for a full twelve years, culminating in the destruction of Sky Keep in 126 AV. Rumor suggests that as soon as the last tower of that keep crumbled to the slopes of the Kelders, the Blood Monsoon blew itself out, almost as though part of its purpose for being created was to destroy this lofty castle. Though the attacks upon coastal towns by oceanic horrors continued nearly unabated for another six years or so, the Blood Monsoon was over, and once more the people of Ghelspad were forced to try and rebuild their lives and civilizations in the wake of disaster.

## A State of Affairs in Ghelspad

by Guernicus Asuras, of House Asuras

**Dearest Uncle:**

Here is the report I promised you. Our great-cousin Guernicus seems to be a keen gatherer of information, capable of insinuating himself into the rumor mills of nearly any settlement in which he finds himself. Though he claims to be primarily interested in recording these things in the hopes of training as a loremaster in Lokil, I would suggest that it might be relatively simple to make him see that there are more profitable uses for his talents. I will happily remind him of his obligations to the family, should you wish it.

Fondly,  
Neso II

*My Grand-nephew:*

Though your intentions are undoubtedly for the best, beware showing such a lack of discretion and foresight in the future. There are simpler ways of ensuring that our goals are met than resorting to simple guilt, coercion, or other, less binding methods. Deep down, all of our family wishes to see us prosper, my boy, and Guernicus is, ultimately, an Asuras. Fortunately, I have an ally or two within the Great Library of Lokil.

As I write this, a letter is being sent to Guernicus to inform him regretfully that his application to join the loremasters has been rejected. Please make sure that there are sympathetic family members on hand when he receives this sad news. They should also be in a position to offer him the opportunity to exercise his skills; if they manage to suggest subtly that he might do so to spite the loremasters and demonstrate the extent of his skills, making them regret their rejection, I should be most pleased.

By My Own Hand,  
Telos

What follows is a simple collection of some of the more interesting current events that I have noted in my travels throughout Ghelspad. Though I cannot promise to have discovered all there is to know about these events, I did manage to find everything that was commonly available on them, as well as some information that a few folk tried to keep hidden.

Of what use this news may be to our House, I leave to my superiors in the House to decide. I merely report and record the happenings.

### The Rumbblings of Barbarians

There may very well be civil war in our time in the nation of Albadia. Long have its tribes been known for their rabid hatred of civilization as a whole. Well, in the years since the Divine War, cities have been built within the border of Albadia — not by outsiders, mind you, but by some Albadians them-

selves, settling down from the nomadic life of their forebears.

Apparently, many of the tribes look upon this development with ill-amusement by many of the tribes. There are rumbblings that the current king of Albadia is out of favor with the savages that roam the High Snows, and a new contender for the throne of Albadia may very well have been chosen in one of the great tribal councils held occasionally — a council, I might add, to which the High King was not invited.

The treatises on Albadia that I have read seem to indicate that those tattooed witch-savages who council their leaders tend to be behind this kind of perfidy. I think it would undoubtedly benefit our House to extend the hand of friendship to the High King. In a time of war, supplies and resources can run thin. 'Ware the scrutiny of the Belsameth-worshipping witches, however.



## War in the South

Calastia's advances upon the dwarven nation of Burok Torn have advanced apace, only now recovering in intensity from the lull caused by the onset of the Blood Monsoon. Yet this war is a fierce one, with the Black Dragoons and Calastian battle-mages on hand, fought by the dwarven defenders and rune-wizards. The wars here are bloody and intense.

Of particular interest, however, is the shadowy collection of individuals I noticed exiting the tent of the assault's commanders. Though I could not make out the precise facial or other physical details of this gathering — who, I might add, were treated with the deference granted ambassadors by the soldiery of the area — they had the walk and bearing, as well as the thin forms, of elves.

What elves could possibly have to say to this assault is completely beyond me, unless those ridiculous rumors that one hears of some kind of ancient enmity between dwarves and elves are based in some kind of fact.

## Rumors of War

I have heard of stirrings of resentment among the people of Zathiske. They seem to resent greatly the perceived desecration of their once great city of Sumara by the Hollowfaust necromancers. I am sure that this resentment is in no small part owing to the fabulous wealth of Sumara that the necromancers have taken as their own.

Rumors also circulate of a Zathiskan rebel movement determined to overthrow Calastian rule. Actually, numerous acts of sabotage and terrorism aimed at Calastian holdings in Zathiske have occurred, but whether these are the actions of isolated dissidents or a more organized rebel movement is uncertain.

The situation in Zathiske is nearing a head and violence is assured. Without fear of contradiction, I can safely say that should Zathiske gain its independence from Calastia, war with Hollowfaust is all but certain.

## The Serpent Amphora

I arrived in the village of Trela, in northern New Venir along the border to the Blood Steppes, perhaps a week after the Carnival of Flowers. Quite a story was to be had there.

Apparently, during the Carnival a person stumbled into town, nearly dead from wounds. From

the reports of some, this person was a junior member of the Vigils and bore some kind of burden.

Those who were able to catch a look at the burden described it as some kind of urn or amphora crafted of lead, burned with serpentine marks and sealed with the wreath and scepter of Chardun. The bearer of the amphora was supposedly aided by a collection of adventurers in the area. The precise details of the exact source of aid are unknown, to be honest — in truth, I am unsure if the bearer made it out of Trela alive, for he was attacked that night by what the villagers described as serpent-men who numbered spellcasters among them. By my best guess, these were undoubtedly asaatthi.

I spoke with Radraan, the local cleric of Belsameth. The man was deep in his cups, apparently trying to drown out the memory of some kind of vision that he suffered. A vision of Chardun, I might add. The adventurers disappeared that night, by all accounts bearing this Serpent Amphora.

Curious going-on, I must admit.

## Pirates on the Blood Sea

Though reavers and pirates have always sailed the red waves of the Blood Sea, something strange seems to have stirred them of late. In my travels along the eastern coast of Ghelspad, as well as in the south of Calastia, I have heard tales of pirates who wear the symbol of a clawed hand clutching a dagger whose blade is jagged like a bolt of lightning.

These pirates seem better organized than pirates normally are, striking targets with what some are calling military precision. They are invariably accompanied by sea witches, and their leaders are always armed with jagged blades, usually poisoned with some kind of deep-sea venom. These ships are also often allied with various twisted creatures of the Blood Sea, who aid in the taking of other ships.

What this means is anyone's guess. Perhaps a particularly strong and charismatic leader has risen among the pirates of the Blood Sea, eliminating or absorbing the competition. Normally, though, folk become aware of such individuals, for they keep their positions by spreading their reputations, making a name associated with fear for themselves. Not even the rumor of such a person has come across, though I may very well have missed it simply because I did not have access to the proper rumor-mongers.

If naught else, I would advise our House to use overland routes when trading in this area of the continent.

## The Languages of Ghelspad

### Human Languages

**Albadian:** A language with a long and mostly obscure history, it is spoken throughout northern Ghelspad and shares many characteristics with Elven.

**Calastian:** Present day Calastian originated among a group of colonies along the southeast corner of Ghelspad that spread quickly northwest. Blending with various cultures and ethnic groups along the way, there is little trace of this original group, except in small influences further north in Vesh.

Though Calastian has become dominant in southeastern Ghelspad, there are a large number of dialects, particularly in Calastia and Lageni.

**Darakeene:** With influences from Dunahn and dwarvish, Darakeene is a hodgepodge language that is spoken widely across the continent.

**Dunahn:** Dunahn is another language with strong ties to Elven. In this case, it is related to a tongue once known as Vaeratha. Unrelated in any obvious way to standard Elven, Vaeratha was abandoned as a tongue long before the Divine War, only spoken by half-elves and humans with close dealings with them. Today, it is spoken almost entirely in Dunahnae.

**Ledeane:** This is Ghelspad's "common" tongue. As a dead language, it is easy to learn and a convenient language for trade and statecraft. In the centuries leading up to the Divine War, the regional variations and "common Ledean" became more distinctive, evolving into a number of individual languages. No nation uses Ledean as an official language, but most Ghelspadians have at least a basic understanding.

Many regional languages, long suppressed by Lede, have come back into usage following the Divine War, but Ledean remains the language of diplomacy, scholarship, religion, and trade. Those who know it will have a good chance of making themselves understood throughout the continent.

Most languages are normally written in Ledean script, though there are many local alphabets.

**Ontenazu:** This language is descended from ancient Ledean and has gained many features that make it unique to the Ontenazu area. It is spoken only in isolated areas, however, and is probably dying out.

**Shelzari:** Widely spoken throughout southern Ghelspad, Shelzari shares many features with traditional Zathisk, but due to the Shelzari's more open culture, it is adaptable and includes many foreign words and concepts. After Ledean, it is the language of choice among merchants and sailors, and a pidgin version of Shelzari is spoken in distant Termana.

**Ukrudan:** The language of the Ukrudan tribes has gone through a great deal of change. Though currently isolated, at the time of the Divine War the Ukrudans were part of the extensive Empire of Elz, which covered large portions of southwestern Ghelspad. Earlier trade and other civilizations had also caused some transfer of culture and language.

**Veshian:** Veshian is a cluster of related languages common to eastern Ghelspad. It is apparently descended from the original Ledean, but has changed sufficiently to be considered a separate language.

**Zathisk:** Once spoken as far north as present day Hollowfaust, Zathisk's influence is fading. Currently, a large number of inhabitants of the Calastian Hegemony still speak Zathisk, though the numbers are dropping rapidly. In a few generations, the language will likely be a dead one, if the Calastians have their way.

### Nonhuman Languages

**Aquan:** Not much is known about the languages of the sea-dwelling races, but this common tongue is spoken by most intelligent aquatic species. Even the pisceans, who hate all other underwater races, have limited knowledge of it, for it enables them to send intelligible demands for surrender and tribute.

**Dwarven:** The language of dwarves has held a long running influence on western Ghelspad languages. Just about every city, holding, and family in less populated areas speaks a distinct dialect. Burok Torn forms one mostly uniform dialect, and the dwarves of Vesh speak another somewhat more diversified dialect. Traditional dwarves, such as those who dwell in Burok Torn, use an ancient runic script, while those associated with humans utilize Ledean.

**Elven:** Elven is actually divided into three largely unrelated languages: High (spoken by the forsaken elves and the elves of Uria, but otherwise quite rare in Ghelspad), Middle (spoken by wood elves), and Dark (or, derogatorily, “low”) Elven.

Middle Elven is closely related to Albadian, enough so that Middle Elven can be considered a dialect of Albadian, and vice versa.

High Elven is rare on Ghelspad, being the native tongue of the Termanan forsaken elves. A dialect of High Elven is spoken by the Ubuntu tribesmen of the Desert of Onn.

Each of these languages is written in Ahna, or Elven script. Middle Elven is frequently written in Ledean, particularly that used by half-elves.

**Halflings:** The halflings once spoke two languages. One was a dialect of Middle Elven called Eriikimi, and the other was a dialect of Zathisk known as Santasha. Both are now extinct except in old texts, and halflings have adopted the languages of those who dominate them.

**Kraken:** The language of the kraken is unpronounceable by human throats and mouths. It can, though, be approximated. In structure, most words are short and have a complex series of tonal and sound modifiers. The kraken alphabet is arcane and complex, normally observed carved on stone or coral tablets in kraken settlements.

**Orafaun:** The antelope-like priests of Erias, who inhabit the mysterious Drifting Isle, speak a soft and gentle sounding language that few humans have ever mastered. Many elven scholars have attained some fluency, but only after decades of practice. The language also includes many non-verbal elements, such as facial expression, body attitude, and possibly even magical or mental emanation from the orafaun, features that are difficult, if not impossible, for non-orafauns to duplicate.

**Piscean:** The Piscean tongue is likewise difficult for humans to pronounce, but boasts a relatively simple grammar and structure.

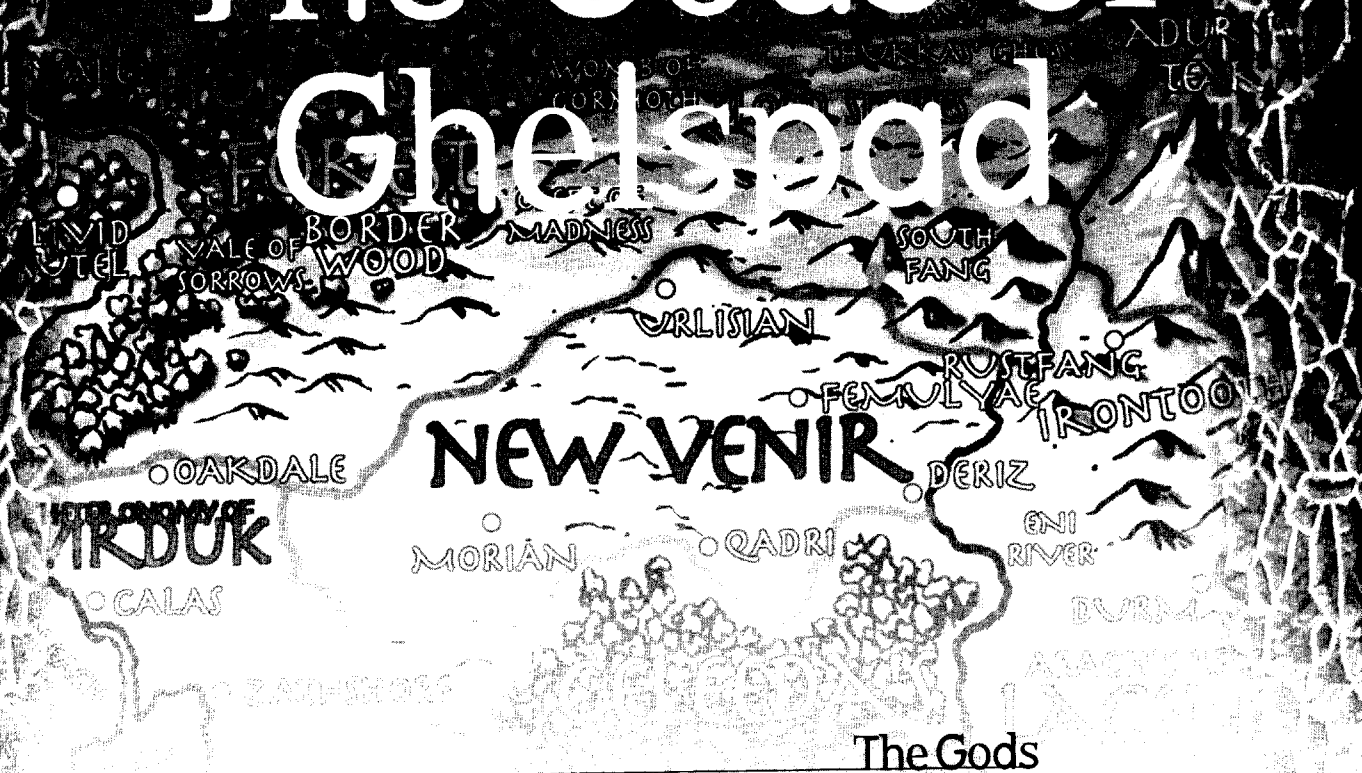
**Titan Speech:** The original languages spoken among the titanspawn were an attempt to communicate meaningfully with their creators. After a great deal of experimentation, the titans eventually developed a basic series of languages. Mesos and Mormo were instrumental in this process.

These languages were gradually adopted by all the titans for communication with each other and their followers. Over millennia, these languages became characteristic of each titan. Unlike other languages, the titans demanded that their followers use these basic languages and retain typical usage of them, as the titans had no wish to keep up with any changes brought about by their creations.

Titan Speech, also known as the Dark Speech or “Common Titan,” is still spoken in many parts of Ghelspad. Spawn of each titan spoke a slightly different variation on the Dark Speech, but all are basically the same. The language of the slitheren is a dialect of Dark Speech that shifts pronunciation considerably to accommodate their squeaks and chitters.

**Vangal’s Tongue:** The origins of this language are somewhat uncertain. What is known is that as early as 2000 OC this language was common among the companions of visiting Exemplars from Termana and is thought to have originated there. Over the centuries, it became a language of monks and peasants, near both Hedrad and Rahoch. Some of these peasant groups eventually developed into tribes of horsemen in the central areas of Ghelspad and formed the foundation of the present day Horsemen of Vangal.

# Chapter Two: The Gods of Ghelspad



## The Gods

The gods of the Scarred Lands are not distant beings to be doubted by the skeptic and impossible to prove to the faithless. A century and a half ago, they fought a great war that ended the fickle and dangerous reign of the titans and wrought havoc upon the face of the world. Aged humans yet live whose fathers raised them on tales of the Divine War, while there are elves, dwarves, and a few venerable halflings who were there in person. The blessings of the gods are everywhere, and the cursed abominations of their enemies still walk the lands of Scarn. Only a fool denies the existence of either, and even a child can tell him he is wrong.

Table 2-1: Gods, demigods, and titans of the Scarred Lands

God	Alignment	Domains	Typical Worshipers
Corean, the Avenger	Lawful good	Fire, Good, Law, Protection, War	Paladins, smiths, dwarves, monks, the city of Mithril
Madriel, the Redeemer	Neutral good	Air, Good, Healing, Plant, Sun	Healers, the sick, farmers, couples being wed, many citizens of Durrover
Tanil, the Huntress	Chaotic good	Animal, Chaos, Luck, Plant, Travel, Trickery	Rangers, hunters, many Veshians, vigils, elves
Hedrada, the Lawgiver	Lawful neutral	Judgment*, Knowledge, Law, Protection	Merchants, judges and lawyers, monks, scholars, the city of Hedrad
Denev, the Earth Mother	Neutral	None	Druids, farmers, barbarian tribes, sylvan races, elementals
Enkili, the Trickster	Chaotic neutral	Air, Chaos, Luck, Travel, Trickery	Gamblers, rogues, sailors, criminals, anarchists, many people of Fangsfall
Chardun, the Slaver	Lawful evil	Domination*, Evil, Law, Strength, War	Soldiers, mercenaries, generals, tyrants, monks, charduni dwarves, the nobility of Calastia and Dunahnae
Belsameth, the Slayer	Neutral evil	Death, Evil, Magic, Trickery	Evil arcane spellcasters, assassins, lycanthropes, many Albadian women and citizens of New Venir
Vangal, the Reaver	Chaotic evil	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength, War	Half-orcs, brigands, madmen, warlords, Horsemen of Vangal

Note: Technically Denev is a titan, but the Divine Races accord her respect as though she were one of the gods. Denev does not have clerics, her special followers instead being druids or adepts.

Demigod	Alignment	Domains	Typical Worshipers
Drendari, Mistress of Shadows	Chaotic neutral	Chaos, Entrancement*, Shadow*	Thieves, rogues, shadow-walkers
Erias, the Lord of Dreams	Chaotic good	Chaos, Dream*, Good, Magic	Dreamers, the hopeful, lotus eaters of Shelzar, orafauna
Goran, the Dwarven God	Lawful good	Earth, Good, Law, Strength	Dwarves, especially dwarves of Burok Torn
Hwyrdd, the Rogue	Neutral	Luck, Protection, Trickery	Halflings, especially in the Heteronomy of Virduk
Idra, the Courtesan	Chaotic neutral	Chaos, Entrancement*, Secrets*	Courtesans of Idra, prostitutes, lovers, Shelzari
Manawe, Mother of the Oceans	Chaotic neutral	Chaos, Entrancement*, Travel, Water	Fishermen, dock workers, sailors
Nalthalos, Lord of the Dark Elves	Lawful evil	Constructs*, Evil, Law	Dark elves, especially those of Dier Drendal
Nemorga, the Gatekeeper	Neutral	Death, Gateways*, Knowledge, Travel	Those who mourn for the dead, citizens of Hollowfaust
Sethris, the Spider Queen	Neutral evil	Death, Evil, Vengeance*	Those seeking revenge, spider-eye goblins, narleths, arachnids
Syhana, the Cloudmaiden	Neutral good	Air, Fey*, Good, Rainbow*	Farmers, rural people, desert tribes, fey

Note: Domains marked with an asterisk (\*) are new domains found in *The Divine and the Defeated*. Demigods are served by clerics in most cases, though some less civilized races serve as adepts. Demigods also have access to their alignment domains, as noted in *The Divine and Defeated*, and these domains are listed in the descriptions above.

Titans	Typical Worshippers
Chern, the Scourge	Spirits of the plague, locust demons, touch corrupters, Diseased ratmen (slitheren), skullworms, vermin
Gaurak, the Glutton	Fatlings, gauntlings, vengaurak, carrion hounds, arch lurkers, Brown Gorger ratmen (slitheren), orcs, ogres, mad druids
Golthagga, the Shaper	Trolls, flailing dreadnaughts, blade beasts, mad smiths, Forge Crawler ratmen (slitheren)
Golthain, the Faceless	Deryth, bat devils, shadowravens, druids, Unseeing ratmen (slitheren)
Gormoth, the Writhing Lord	Possibly the Abandoned (viren), ettins, sundered mages, druids, Stricken ratmen (slitheren)
Gulaben, Lady of the Winds	Cloudsting, stormchild, wind rider, slime reavers, aerial monsters, mad druids
Hrinruuk, the Hunter	Gnolls, blood reapers, night-touched hounds, mad rangers, Hrinruuk's hound, Ukrukan stalkers, taurons, chuul, umber hulks, Stalker ratmen (slitheren)
Kadum, the Mountainshaker	Blood Sea creatures, some giants, tainted merfolk, Foamer ratmen (slitheren), pisceans, minotaurs, hydra
Lethene, Dame of Storms	Druids, storm spirits, stormkin, stormchildren, Stormchaser ratmen (slitheren)
Mesos, Sire of Sorcery	Arcane devourers, sorcerers, djinn, arcane symbiotes, gallows eyes, pilfer sprites, howling abominations, sundered mages, vertigen, Blackpelt ratmen (slitheren)
Mormo, Mother of Serpents	Druids, asaathi, gorgons, medusae, nagas, Red Witch ratmen (slitheren), lizard folk, troglodytes, hags
Thulkas, Father of Fire	Goblinoids, bugbears, sutak, thulkans, forge wights, hell hounds, Daywalker ratmen (slitheren)

Note: titans are served by druids of chaotic neutral, neutral evil, or neutral alignment. They may also be served by adepts.

In regard to abilities that affect titanspawn, the creatures listed above are considered titanspawn. Optionally, game masters may allow anti-titanspawn abilities to only affect these creatures if they actually worship the titans or practice no specific faith. In rare cases when the creature worships the gods, however, it should not be considered titanspawn, and abilities that affect titanspawn will not work.



## Serving the Gods

In a world where titans slumber and the gods often walk among mortals, it would be foolish not to pay one's respects. Nevertheless, most mortals who pray to the gods or titans hope to invoke some sort of aid or to divert their wrath. Each of the gods takes special interest in certain activities and domains of influence, and a mortal who prays to the gods faithfully usually gains some aid. A smith who invokes the name of Corean might discover that divine insight guides his hammer upon the anvil, while an assassin calling upon Belsameth might feel her blade hasten toward the unprotected back of a priest of Madriel. Similarly, a smith who ignores Corean might find his works flawed, while an assassin who shirks Belsameth may become the target of more faithful worshippers of the Slayer goddess. The common people of the Scarred Lands know that the gods are part of their everyday lives in innumerable small ways and are their saviors against the depredations of the capricious titans. Servants of the titans cannot invoke such blessings, for only the direct, sometimes unwanted attention of a titan can bring them weal or woe.

Meanwhile, around their campfires in desolate lands, whispering in the tunnels of dark pits and preaching in blasphemous cults on the fringes of civilization, the spawn of the titans promise revenge, speak of the return of the titans and war against their errant children. Their faith in the old ways remains strong – and their hatred for the divine races even stronger.

While nearly every being on Scarn pays obeisance to at least one of the gods or titans, there are those who act as the special servants of the divine and receive powerful benefits for doing so. Clerics, adepts, druids, paladins, and rangers wield magical power stemming from their relationships with the gods or titans. Each holds a god or titan above all others, preaches the merits of his patron, and seeks to emulate his patron's glory.

Druids draw their power from the elemental nature of the earth around them. In the Scarred Lands, this strength is embodied in the titans, and thus each druid generally follows the path of one of the mighty titans. As such, most civilized folk question their motives, especially given that, of all the titans, only Denev stood by the side of the mortal races during the Divine War. Many embittered people distrust even Denev's primal nature, but the efforts of the Earth Mother's druids to heal the scarred world of Scarn are endless, and the gods themselves praise her aid during the Divine War. The servants of Denev epitomize the ideals of the balance of nature, and thus stand as an example that others may embrace or shun.

Druids of other titans diverge greatly from the path of the Earth Mother. Denev's siblings reveled in their own power and each saw nature through a different lens. Their selfishness is often reflected in the worship of their servants, from the treachery of

the druids of Mormo the Serpent Queen of Witches to the predatory instincts of the druids of Hrinruuk the Hunter. Their whimsically destructive natures reflect themselves in the mad appetites of druids of Gaurak the Glutton and the untamed fury of druids of Lethene the Dame of Storms. Most of the druid servants of the other titans are chaotic neutral or neutral evil, though a few hew closer to nature and are neutral with particular respect for their patron's ways. Distrusted by the divine races, these nature priests find homes among the titanspawn forged by their patrons and share in their desire for revenge upon the gods and their children.

The special relationship between gods and their worshippers is different from the primal homage of druids. Clerics serve the gods as arms of their faith, focusing the energy of the gods and their believers into miracles on Scarn. As the gods depend upon their followers for their power, so the clerics draw upon the supernatural might of their patrons. Though they retain their free will, they strive to be the instruments of their gods' wills and in doing so inherit power beyond the ken of the common person. Many are honored as holy figures in their own right, renowned for the miracles the gods channel through them. Others are feared as fierce reflections of their gods' wrath, unholy destruction made incarnate or righteous fury punishing the wicked. Clerics augment the worldly might of a god as a glass lens magnifies the intensity of the sun.

## Other Magic in the Scarred Lands

Rangers and paladins are warriors with the special ability to perform magic of their own. Rangers honor the forces of nature, and the spells they gain are identical to druid spells. Most good rangers honor the goddess Tanil, but their spells still come from their connections to the Earth Mother. Less benevolent rangers often follow one of the titans, though some serve one of the gods and retain their links to nature's primal power; after all, the gods sprang from the titans. Paladins strive to embody the ideals of Corean, and the spells they gain are divine magic of the clerical type. Some paladins also serve another deity, particularly Madriel or Hedrada, but the majority hold Corean most dear to the heart and draw upon his holy power.

Sorcerers, bards, and wizards do not draw their power from the titans or gods. Their spells are crafted to command the raw force of magic that flows through the universe. Scholars call this manipulation of mystic energy arcane magic. For bards and sorcerers, this ability comes naturally, and they find the words of power roll from the tongue easily. Wizards must coax their talents through intensive study and hard work. Fortunately, the tomes of knowledge they build through the years, combined with their experimental approach, often leave them with a greater understanding of magic than their sorcerer brethren.

Many members of the divine races distrust those who wield arcane magic, as it is associated with the titan Mesos because the Sire of Sorcery gifted the first sorcerers with their command of magic. Such skeptics point to the unnatural heat accompanying arcane spells and warn that use of arcane magic threatens to return Mesos to power. Some leaders, especially many priests, put this fear to political use against sorcerers and wizards they oppose. Others such as the necromancers of Glivid-Autel and the Battle-Mages of Calastia enjoy the additional ability to frighten their foes. Certain magic aficionados note that the goddess Miridum, daughter of Hedrada, was a wizard before the titan Hrinruuk slew her, and they claim that her efforts during the Divine War prove that arcane magic is not inherently corrupt. They argue that while Mesos may have been the first to discover sorcery, there is no evidence that he created the magical energies that it employs.

However one might regard arcane magic itself, it is beyond argument that Mesos has affected the nature of arcane magic on Scarn. Even the use of arcane spells has changed, as they generate unnatural heat surrounding their caster (see *Relics and Rituals*, pg. 26). Scholars of the Phylacteric Vault claim that this is the work of titanspawn known as arcane devourers (see *Creature Collection II*, pg. 7) gathering magical energy with which to restore their disrupted lord. Some of the loremasters of Lokil insist that the arcane devourers are not capable of such a feat and that it is the disruption of Mesos and his dispersal into the universe causing arcane energies to radiate heat. In either case, priests of the gods often point to this effect as proof that arcane magic is impure.

Unfortunately, the Sire of Sorcery's legacy of magical catastrophe exceeds merely affecting the nature of arcane spells. As the essence of Mesos flows through the boundaries of the astral and ethereal plane and through the world of Scarn, it disrupts the delicate processes whereby magical items are created and sometimes even distorts existing magic. Physical objects imbued with magic may be affected whether the source was divine or arcane in nature. Affected magic items may develop quirks or even operate in unintended ways. Scholars of magic call this Mesos' Curse, and note that it most often strikes during item creation, though it occasionally strikes existing items — even some whose manufacture predates the Divine War.

## The Gods

Eight gods and one titan are worshipped throughout the Scarred Lands. Their devotees include the species thought of as the divine races: humans, elves, dwarves, and halflings. Other creatures revering the gods exist, however, and some members of the divine races continue to worship the fallen titans. Each of the gods commands various aspects of the world and the human condition, and people hoping for aid pray

to whichever god rules their desired blessing. Many people hold one god higher in esteem than any other, but only the foolish ignore completely the other gods. Priests and holy warriors serve one god to the exclusion of all others, but even they must tread carefully lest they invoke divine anger. Of course, if their patron opposes another god, then most faithful divine servants will stand against that god as well.

The gods are listed hereafter with a short description and their domains of influence, holy symbols, and specific invocation benefits from prayer. Domains marked with an asterisk (\*) are detailed in *The Divine and the Defeated*.

### Invocation Benefits

A god's worshippers can call upon the power of their deity when in need by taking one or more full rounds to chant, meditate, pray, or otherwise contact the god's spiritual essence. In order to invoke a god, the character must do nothing else during the entire round. Each round spent so invoking the deity grants the character a benefit, typically a +1 bonus to a specific die roll. Multiple bonuses may be created by invocation for several rounds, but in most cases this benefit is limited to a maximum of +3. Details on each god's invocation benefits are listed in the god's description. Liberal GMs may allow other blessings beyond those listed providing they match the concerns and powers of the deity invoked.

How long the invocation bonus endures before it is lost depends upon the situation and the GM's discretion. In almost every case, the task, feat, or endeavor for which the worshipper desires the god's aid must be specified and undertaken immediately. Worshippers who invoke their god too often will find she develops a deaf ear to their nagging pleas. A paladin praying for strength from Corean before a terrible battle might find his hand guided by the Shining One, while a paladin who prays for might in battle every day will likely discover that Corean thinks he spends too much time contemplating bloodletting.

### Corean

(CORE-ay-ahn), the Avenger, the Champion; god of Chivalry, Craftwork, Strength, Protection, and Wisdom

Of all the gods, none has provided for his mortal servants so much as Corean, the great protector, the great crusader, leader of the gods during the Divine War. Mighty Corean has the strength of his father Kadum and the wisdom of his mother Denev, yet transcends his titan parents. Corean's armed and

armored aspect denotes his chosen role: champion. His armor symbolizes his ties to the metal-veined earth. His sword, forged from scraps of Golthagga's anvil and quenched in the merciless titan's blood, symbolizes Corean the champion, the paragon of the chivalric warrior. Corean demands uncompromising virtue from his faithful, but rewards them amply with his protection and a privileged place in his heaven after death.

**Alignment:** Lawful good

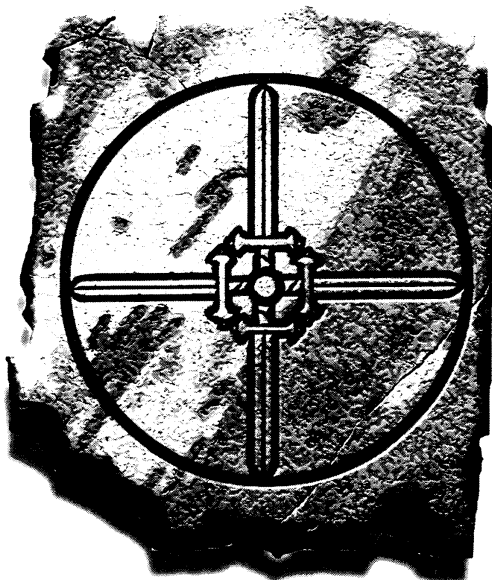
**Domains:** Fire, Good, Law, Protection, War

**Holy Symbol:** Four longswords pointing outward, one at each compass point

**Favored Weapon:** Longsword

**Invocation Benefits:** Followers of Corean invoke his aid whenever they engage in acts sacred to the god. Blacksmiths, armorers, jewelers, and weaponsmiths call upon him to guide their hammers in the crafting of magnificent works of metallurgy. Warriors defending their homes and families from evil call upon him to help overcome their foes. Stablehands call upon him to bless the animals in their care. Travelers trying to start campfires sometimes call for his aid as well. Authorities attempting to minister justice to the wicked also often call upon his wisdom.

Each round that a worshipper invokes Corean, she may add +1 to any of the following die rolls: Craft or Profession rolls involving blacksmithing, forging, or the creation of weapons; Wilderness Lore rolls used to start campfires or light torches; Knowledge or Profession rolls related to smithing, war, or fire. Those in battle may also invoke Corean, and for each round spent invoking the Champion, +1 may be added to their next attack roll. The maximum benefit derived from invoking Corean is +3 in all cases.



## Madriel

(MA-dree-el), the Redeemer, the First Angel of Mercy; goddess of the Sun, Light, Sky, Redemption, Healing, and Agriculture

Madriel, merciful and beautiful, cures the ill, illuminates their homes, and quickens life in the fields with her warming sun. The Divine War chronicles Madriel's aspect as the Redeemer: an armored angel, wings of peacock feathers, a spear formed of pure-white sunlight. Madriel and her faithful relentlessly struggle against suffering and the depravities of her twin sister, the nightmare goddess Belsameth, and her minions. The commoners of the Scarred Lands know Madriel as the most merciful and compassionate of the gods. Her temples are popular across the Scarred Lands, particularly among those infertile fields blasted by titan magic over a century ago.

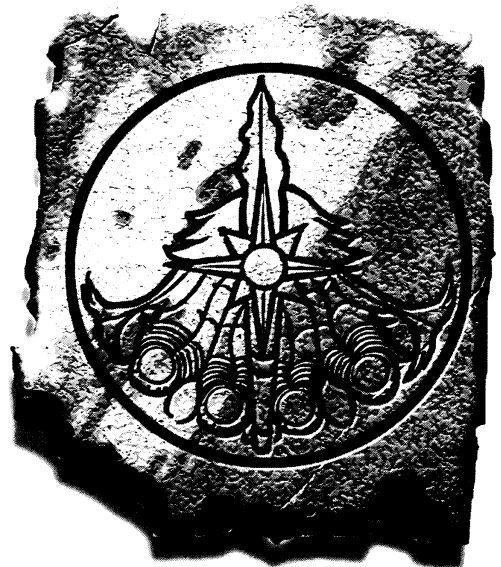
**Alignment:** Neutral good

**Domains:** Air, Good, Healing, Plant, Sun

**Holy Symbol:** Spear with a tassel of peacock feathers

**Favored Weapon:** Spear

**Invocation Benefits:** The devout of Madriel who spend a full round invoking the Redeemer's name gain a +1 bonus to saves against negative energy attacks, as well as the ability to heal one extra point of damage per healing spell and a +1 bonus to all Heal skill checks. Worshipers can pray for three consecutive rounds for a maximum benefit of +3.



## Tanil

(TAH-nil), the Huntress; goddess of Travel, Hunting, Forestry, Music, Archery, Freedom, and Good Fortune

Free-spirited but ultimately compassionate, Tanil is seldom worshipped in the cities of the Scarred

Lands. Like their chosen goddess, Tanil's faithful spend their days on the highways and in the wilds. Her followers include noble souls such as many Vigilants of Vesh, most bards, some merchants, and even some rogues. Elves, who lost their own god, and some titanspawn creatures seeking redemption such as dryads and unicorns, also venerate Tanil.

Daughter of Denev and Hrinruuk, Tanil ultimately got the better of her father. Tanil's deeds in the Divine War highlight her ability to track down titans and their spawn, which sought to hide from righteous judgment, and her stealth and archery. Her avatar appears in the lands as a lithe archer wearing flexible bronze armor. Her bronze-shafted, silver-tipped arrows eagerly seek out Belsameth's werebeasts, which Tanil considers an insult to nature and a cruel treatment of animals.

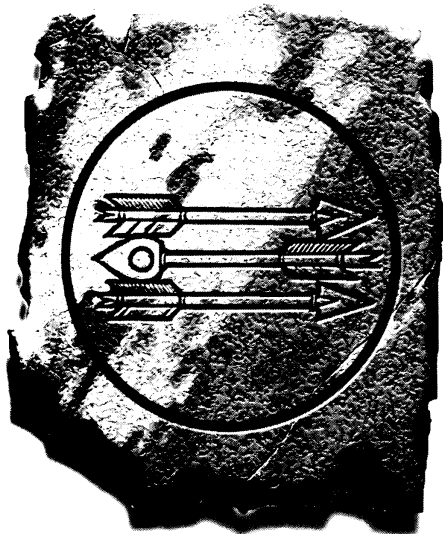
**Alignment:** Chaotic good

**Domains:** Animal, Chaos, Luck, Plant, Travel, Trickery

**Holy Symbol:** Three bronze arrows lying parallel

**Favored Weapon:** Longbow

**Invocation Benefits:** For every round that a character spends invoking Tanil, she gains either a +1 attack bonus with ranged weapons, a +1 bonus to any roll involving music, or a +1 bonus to Wilderness Lore skill checks. The maximum invocation benefit gained in this manner is +3.



## Hedrada

(*heh-DRAH-dah*), the Lawgiver, the Judge; god of Law, Justice, Wealth, Order, Cities, and Knowledge

Son of Golthain and Denev, Hedrada receives credit as the first of the gods to realize that the titans had to be stopped if the world were to be preserved. Thus, Hedrada is revered as the preserver of civilization, and his faithful often assume civic offices, forming the backbone of society. Merchants, dwarves, sages, and some arcanists also worship Hedrada, honoring

his wealth and knowledge aspects. Those individuals choosing the path of an Exemplar dedicate themselves to Hedrada that he might inspire in them the discipline and knowledge to perfect their chosen skill. (See Exemplars, pg. 71 of the **Creature Collection**).

Hedrada's chosen avatar, a powerful man, wears a somber judicial or scholarly robe and gold crown and wields a massive two-headed hammer.

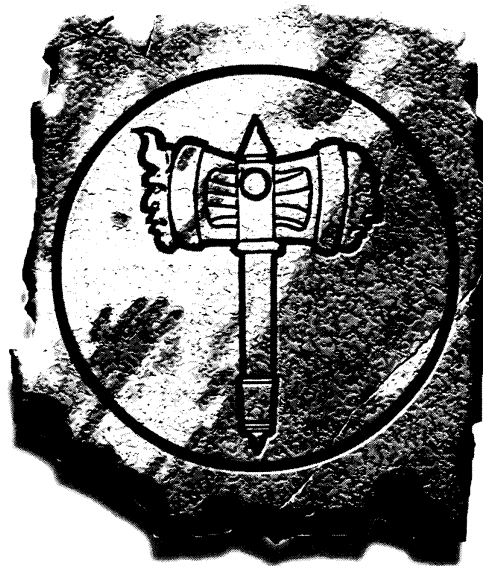
**Alignment:** Lawful neutral

**Domains:** Judgment\*, Knowledge, Law, Protection

**Holy Symbol:** Stylized two-headed hammer

**Favored Weapon:** Warhammer

**Invocation Benefits:** The devout of Hedrada who spend a full round invoking the Lawgiver gain a +1 bonus to any rolls made to determine the truth (such as Sense Motive) or to resist outside emotional manipulation (such as most Will saves). This bonus is increased by +1 for each additional full round of invocation, up to a maximum bonus of +3.



## Denev

(*den-EV*), the Earth Mother; titaness of Earth, Nature, the Seasons, Cycles of Life

The only surviving titan, Denev remains a divinity (of sorts) in the Scarred Lands because of her wisdom, which counseled her to ally with her children against her brother and sister titans. She is rarely depicted in human form, instead taking her shape from the land around her. Tales of the Divine War describe her as a living mountain wielding a great stone sickle and leading her elemental, incarnate, and arborian armies against the titans and their spawn. Yet the long battle left even more wounds on the world's surface, driving her to retreat to its heart in frustration and fatigue. Denev today rarely makes her presence known. She still answers prayers from the cults of druids that venerate her, but she is not a generous or merciful mother — she respects nature at

its bloodiest as well as at its most beautiful. The other gods honor her as the Earth Mother, and many elementals and spirits of the land revere her above all else. Druids say that the beasts of the wild hold her in their savage hearts while the trees and flowers of the earth cling to their mother like hungry children. Denev is also worshipped by tribes throughout the Scarred Lands that retain their connection to the land, while more “sophisticated” societies are often confused and distrustful of her primeval ways and her titanic legacy.

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Domains:** As a titan, Denev cannot grant clerical spells. Her priests are all druids and can cast druidic spells freely.

**Holy Symbol:** Stone sickle with a flowering wooden hilt

**Favored Weapon:**Sickle

**Invocation Benefits (Rites of the Land):** As a titan, Denev does not hear or answer invocations directed to her. She has, though, ordained various minor rites that her worshippers may use to draw her favor. Using these rituals requires that the those performing them be a genuine (if not exclusive) worshipper of Denev. They also require a skill check applicable to the rite (DC 15). These rituals include:

**The Green Prayer:** A prayer used by farmers, orchards growers, and gardeners to ensure success and bounty in their endeavors. Uttered before beginning work, it involves coating the hands in the soil before work and grants a +1 bonus to all Profession rolls applicable to farming and other agricultural pursuits for the rest of the day.

**Woodsman’s Supplication:** This ritual, which involves leaving a small bit of bread for woodland animals in exchange for their help, assists those who work or travel through the forest. Those who use the woodsman’s supplication find that as they venture through the forest, small animals make noise, aiding them in noticing things they might otherwise ordinarily miss. The supplicant gains a +2 bonus to Wilderness Lore or Listen/Spot checks while in the forest.

**Midwife’s Blessing:** By consecrating the space in which she works with spring water and sigils marked in the juices of berries or tree sap, a midwife draws upon the All-Mother’s blessings to aid the healing process. The successful supplicant receives a +1 bonus to all Profession (midwife) or Heal skill checks. The successful supplicant’s patients also gain an additional hit point per day of rest while under the supplicant’s care.

## Enkili

(en-KEE-lee), the Trickster, the Shapeshifter, the Unlucky; god or goddess of Storms, Trickery, Chaos, and Misfortune

Allegedly born of the female titans Lethene and Gulaben, Enkili embodies the pure chaos of a storm infused with a holy presence. Even Enkili’s gender seems fickle, as he has appeared in aspects both male and female. Those who place their faith in Enkili most commonly worship his godly aspect; sailors, however, make offerings to Enkili the goddess that she might spare their ships. Regardless of gender, Enkili’s form changes with each new sculpture or mural that seeks to portray her: sometimes a masked god battling titans with his flail that casts thunder and lightning; sometimes a courtesan tempting the unwary into tragic love affairs. Enkili, the trickster among the gods, sows disorder and disruption wherever she travels. Gamblers and thieves may revere him, but most humble folks make offerings that beg Enkili to travel in a different direction and thus spare them misfortune.

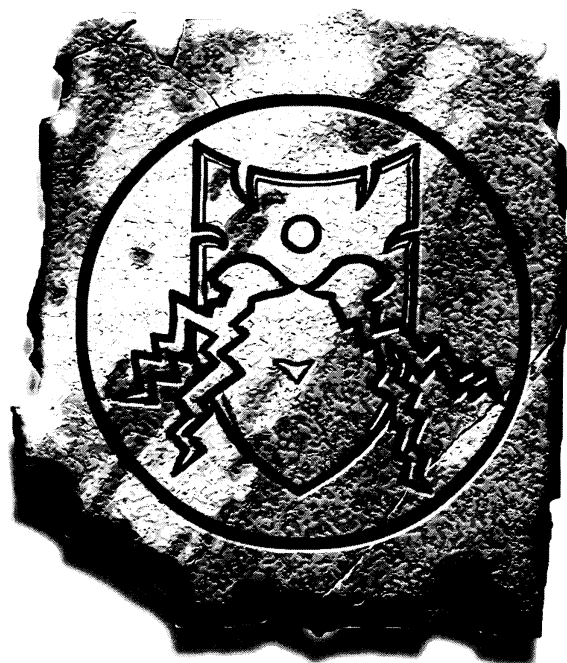
**Alignment:** Chaotic neutral

**Domains:** Air, Chaos, Luck, Travel, Trickery

**Holy Symbol:** Mask decorated with lightning shooting from the eye slits

**Favored Weapon:**Flail

**Invocation Benefits:** For each round that a worshipper invokes Enkili, he receives a +1 bonus to any of the following rolls: skill checks for Balance, Bluff, Disguise, Jump, or Tumble; Reflex saves. The maximum bonus obtained in this fashion is +3, but in keeping with Enkili’s chaotic nature, these bonuses may be applied to any of the skills or the save listed. Alternatively, a worshipper may invoke for three rounds, then apply +1 each to his next Reflex save, Bluff check, and Tumble check.





## Chardun

(char-DOON), the Slaver, the Overlord, the Great General; god of War, Domination, Conquest, Avarice, and Pain

No one doubts the contributions of Chardun in freeing the world from the titans, but many people's love for him ends there. Chardun is the tyrant among the gods. The barbarisms inflicted by Mormo and Gormoth, Chardun's parents, were callous and brutal, but Chardun has mastered a cruelty far more calculated than the primal abuse of his ancestors. His mortal servants emulate their god through their military ambitions and domination of the weak. Despotic generals, iron-handed monarchs, disciplined mercenaries, and slave-dealing merchants venerate the Overlord. Those who exhort obedience rather than earn it and those enslave their countrymen, lovers, and enemies alike are the fiends dearest to Chardun's black heart.

Chardun's aspect, the conquering hero, appears dressed in white regalia, his sandal-laced feet splattered with blood and dusted with powdered bone. He wields a golden, mace-like scepter stained crimson with the fresh blood of the meek.

**Alignment:** Lawful evil

**Domains:** Domination\*, Evil, Law, Strength, War

**Holy Symbol:** Blood-soaked golden scepter crowned with a thorny laurel wreath

**Favored Weapon:** Warscepter or mace

**Invocation Benefits:** Each full round that a worshipper of Chardun spends invoking his god, he receives a +1 bonus to any of the following rolls: skill checks for Concentration, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive; checks for any skill that involves military tactics or strategy; any attack roll; any roll to inflict damage using a spell. The maximum bonus obtained in this fashion is +3, and the entire bonus must be applied to only one of the rolls listed above.



## Belsameth

(BEL-sa-meth), the Slayer, the Assassin; goddess of Darkness, Death, Nightmares, Deception, Witchcraft, and Madness

The daughter of Mormo and Mesos, Belsameth is her twin sister's antithesis. While Madriel the Redeemer's sun warms the land, Belsameth's cold moon brings death to the weak of body, madness to the weak of mind, and despair to the weak of spirit. Belsameth alternately incarnates herself either as a beguiling beauty with alabaster skin, raven hair and the body of a temptress; or as a hideous hag with vulture wings, scaled skin, and red, baleful eyes. From her basalt throne on the dark side of the near moon, she commands her mortal servants to spread death and madness throughout the already tortured Scarred Lands. Evil sorcerers and witches, harpies, goblins, and werewolves and other lycanthropes enjoy her favor. Some groups, such as the Cult of Ancients, who terrorize king and commoner alike with the threat of an assassin's knife, adopt the Slayer's jet-black dagger as their symbol.

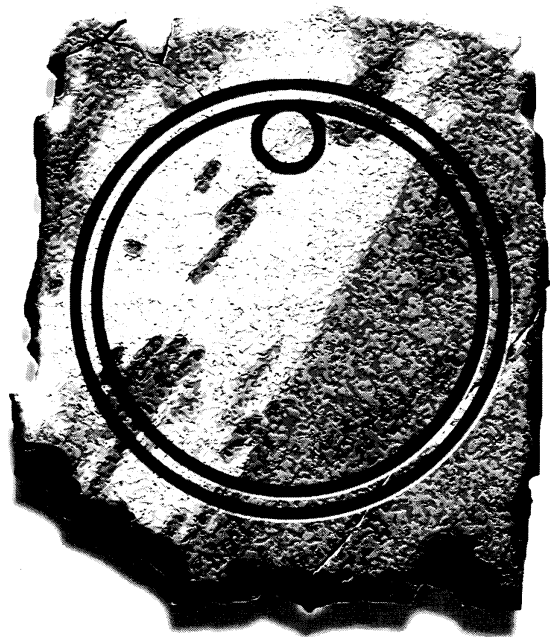
**Alignment:** Neutral evil

**Domains:** Death, Evil, Magic, Trickery

**Holy Symbol:** Thin silver circle on a black field (signifying the lunar eclipse)

**Favored Weapon:** Dagger

**Invocation Benefits:** Worshipers of Belsameth who spend a full round invoking the Slayer's name gain a +1 bonus to saves and attacks vs. followers of the good-aligned gods. Belsameth's worshippers invoke this ability when facing priests of Madriel and Tanil (hated for slaying werewolves). A worshipper can pray for three consecutive rounds for a maximum bonus of +3. Worshipers gain the +3 bonus after only one round if the invocation occurs during a full moon or lunar eclipse.



## Vangal

(VAN-gahl), the Reaver, the Ravager; god of Destruction, Pestilence, Famine, Bloodshed, Thunder, and Disaster

Born of some unholy union among Chern, Thulkas, and Lethene, Vangal — the eldest of the gods — is destruction itself given form, especially the destructiveness of war. Generally, he is depicted as a huge charioteer wearing filth-covered armor, blood matting his beard and dreadlocks, and wielding two massive axes encrusted with the blood of the titans he overcame. He is death in an instant as the god of volcanoes and disasters, and he is slow, wasting decline as the god of disease and famine. Few mortals are demented enough to follow Vangal, though some pay him fearful tribute. An apocalyptic cult dedicated to him, the Horsemen of Vangal are despised as doomsayers and bearers of death and disease. Any society that values life drives the Horsemen from its borders — not an easy task, as the Horsemen are fanatical and barbarous warriors.

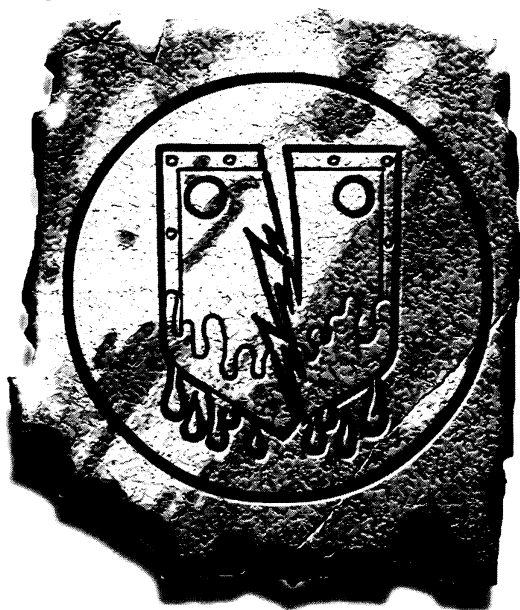
**Alignment:** Chaotic evil

**Domains:** Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength, War

**Holy Symbol:** Cloven shield dripping blood

**Favored Weapon:** Battleaxe

**Invocation Benefits:** Worshipers of Vangal who invoke his name for one or more consecutive rounds gain a bonus to strike normally invulnerable targets, such as those with damage reduction, incorporeal foes, and the like. Each round spent praying in this manner grants the user's weapon the equivalent of a +1 enchantment bonus for the purpose of determining what it can hit, up to a maximum of +3. This bonus does not apply to attack rolls or damage, does not stack with other enchantments or bonuses, and only lasts for a single round. If the worshiper is wielding two weapons, both may be so enchanted, so long as they are axes of some sort.



## The Titans

The fallen parents of the gods are not truly dead. They rest uneasy in their graves, which seem all too shallow to contain their mighty forms forever. Many among the races that followed the gods in their rebellion against their titanic forebears fear the return of the titans, though many more refuse to acknowledge that it could happen. Thinking of the titans as dead and gone is more comforting than considering the possibility that they could wreak havoc once again.

The spawn of the titans still plague the Scarred Lands, and even some members of the divine races serve the titans, though such individuals are often madmen or power hungry cultists. Some tribal societies still honor the titans, and the druids of Scarn each follow one of the titans. Those druids that do not honor Denev continue to wage guerilla war against the civilizations that serve the murderous gods. They whisper of the turning of the Epochs and speak of a time when the treacherous Denev and her cohorts will fall and the titans return to power. The druids who worship titans other than Denev are chaotic neutral, neutral, or neutral evil.

## Chern

(CHURN), the Scourge, the Last Great Sickness and Suffering

Though he was defeated on Termana, this terrible titan lies entombed beneath the Mourning Marshes of eastern Ghelspad. It is said that the nation of Vesh stands upon the ruins of the cradle of humanity, once called the Flourishing Flats. Between two great rivers that ran from the Kelder Mountains to what is now the Blood Sea, the gods gave birth to humanity upon the blessed and fertile plains. Now the territory is blighted and contaminated by its proximity to the festering corpse of Chern.

Chern's most devastating legacy, however, was the curse of disease he unleashed upon Termana during his defeat, a curse that haunts that continent to this day and has made the forsaken elves barren and twisted. For the inhabitants of Ghelspad, the terrors of Termana lie mostly distant and forgotten, and it is the vermin bred by the titan that threaten their existence. Those druids that serve Chern seek to spread the plagues Chern created and the vermin that spawn them. They are constantly in conflict with the fanatical Order of the Morning Sky, which seeks to eradicate all of Chern's deadly creations.

**Symbol:** Braided rope with bone figurines

## Gaurak

(GAH-rock), the Glutton, the Voracious One

Hunger incarnate, the hideously obese and always ravenous Gaurak is rumored to have devoured all the life from the once verdant moor. Upon his defeat, the gods extracted each of Gaurak's 100 teeth before entombing him deep within the earth. His

discarded teeth are said to have taken the form of mountains, colossal obelisks, and stone forests, tainting the land near them.

Gaurak created servitors whose purposes included breeding and bloating themselves as food for the titan and hunting and gathering other foodstuffs to sate their master's hunger. Such creatures, which include Garabrud and the Obsidian Hound, were created as predators or harvesters, supplying meals to the Glutton. Gaurak's titanspawn are particularly hated by druids as they overhunt and overharvest natural areas, stripping them of all life. The predominant leaders among cults dedicated to the Voracious One are the fatlings, but some mad druids honor him as the ultimate predator, and seek to emulate his position at the top of the food chain.

**Symbol:** A fang

### Golthagga

**(gall-THAH-ga), of the Forge, the Shaper**

This misshapen brute cared nothing for the living. Snatching mortals his brethren had created, Golthagga shattered their still living bodies upon his forge and reshaped them into servitor races that amused or intrigued him. Corean slew the Shaper at Golthagga's own forge and dispersed the titan's remains throughout creation.

Golthagga created many aberrations from the normal beasts and races crafted by other titans. These tortured beings, driven mad by their own suffering, take their comfort in visiting pain on living things. Insane smiths and other twisted craftsmen seek to emulate Golthagga's talent for shaping the world around him, while those few druids who follow him are enamored of fire and the elements of the earth — after all, most creatures of nature fear fire.

**Symbol:** A forge or anvil

### Golthain

**(GALL-thane), the Faceless**

Golthain is remembered by most titanspawn as the weakling titan who betrayed his fellow titans in return for a promise of a merciful death at the hands of the gods. Golthain was singular among the titans in that he displayed a vague compassion for the life he and his kind created. For this "defect," his fellow titans mocked him and stripped him of his senses so that he could neither enjoy what was created nor detect how badly the other titans treated those creations. Ultimately, some druids say that Golthain found peace at the end of the Divine War by returning to the raw natural energy of Scarn through Denev's beneficence.

Golthain created very few races himself, but often influenced the development of other races. He did create some servitor creatures to compensate for his lost senses, and some giant races revere him as their creator. Some druids worship him because they

feel he is closer to the earth than even Denev the Earth Mother.

**Symbol:** A blank-faced mask

### Gormoth

**(GORE-moth), the Writhing Lord**

This titan spent centuries in lonely agony after his sister-wife Mormo had poisoned him. Upon his recovery, Gormoth vented his spite and hatred upon the world. Where his siblings often destroyed and created on a grand scale, Gormoth made playthings of individuals, many of whom attended him to ease the spasms that would periodically wrack his great frame. Split from skull to crotch by Vangal and Chardun, each half placed on opposite sides of a great chasm, Gormoth now suffers excruciating torment, the flailing halves forever struggling to reunite.

Druids and loyal followers of Gormoth usually hate Mormo and her creations as deeply as they do those of Vangal and Chardun.

**Symbol:** A two-headed flail

### Gulaben

**(goo-LAH-bin), Lady of the Winds, Mistress of Madness**

Gulaben rarely made her presence known to the mortal world, and indeed some suggest she was merely an incarnation of Lethene. Certain scriptures attribute the creation of all manner of aerial monstrosities and inimical spirits to the Lady of Winds. Other forbidden texts tell of the unimaginable delights, wonders, and pleasures the Mistress of Madness could deliver to those who obtained her attention.

Outside of the gods, no one is sure where precisely the gods entrapped Gulaben, but there still exist mad worshippers who desire nothing more than her touch and would do anything to obtain it.

**Symbol:** A swirling cloud set with a blue eye

### Hrinruuk

**(he-RIN-rook), the Hunter**

A vile foe during the Divine War, the Hunter stalked and slew Hedrada's daughter Miridum, the goddess of lore and wizardry. Indeed, this cunning titan might have slain Hedrada himself but for the intervention of Tanil and Corean, who slew the Hunter and gifted Hedrada with the titan's still living head.

For his own amusement, Hrinruuk created many of the most lethal monstrosities ever to walk Scarn. Discontent with the ease of hunting normal creatures, Hrinruuk created titanspawn that would provide him some degree of challenge. With the titan's death, these feral and cunning creatures would savage our world unchecked but for the efforts of Tanil and her greatest heroes.

**Symbol:** A broken bow

**Kadum**

**(KAH-doom), the Mountainshaker, the Bleeding One, Father of Monsters**

This great beast uprooted mountains when enraged, but strength alone could not save him. While the mythic Mithril Golem, created by Corean, grasped the beast's tail, Belsameth cut his heart from his chest, Chardun chained him to a rock, and Vangal hurled his writhing, trapped body into the deepest ocean chasm. To this day, the Blood Sea runs red with the Bleeding One's ichor, and races of tainted merfolk and other fell sea monsters arise from that pollution.

While human followers of Kadum are fairly rare, he remains honored among giants and twisted creatures of the sea. At the top of a wave-swept empire of pisceans and brine-crusting evil, the kraken Queen Ran rules the kingdom formed by Kadum's bloody spore. Whether the pain wracked titan truly cares about his tentacled queen remains unknown.

**Symbol:** A bloody heart

**Lethene**

**(lay-THEEN), Dame of Storms, the Untamed One**

Many lesser gods fell before the fury of Lethene during the Divine War, but in the end, the gods tamed her. Scripture does not say how, just that it was done. Lethene created spirit creatures that still trouble the Divine Races, but their atrocities pale against the furious storms Lethene once unleashed upon mortals for her own amusement.

**Symbol:** A whirlwind or whirlpool

**Mesos**

**(MAY-zohz), Sire of Sorcery, the Disrupted**

The gods felled the titan Mesos first, and according to many it was because they felt he was the greatest threat. It is said that Mesos could steal the very power from the gods themselves and that they knew he must be destroyed before this could happen. When Mesos' form was sundered, the explosion flung his essence to the farthest reaches of existence. While Mesos is reputedly no more, his legacy continues with some of the most deadly and enigmatic of the titanspawn races. From the strange creatures known as arcane devourers to his supposed creation of sorcerers, Mesos' progeny pulse with mystic power.

**Symbol:** Six arms clasping each other to make two triangles overlapped that form a six-pointed star

**Mormo**

**(MORE-moh), Mother of Serpents, Queen of Witches**

This gruesome crone, the patron of all witches and hags, created serpentine races such as the asaathi, medusae, and gorgons. Her spilled blood has seeped into and transformed the Hornsaw Forest into a homeland for mutant terrors. Rumors suggest that her followers seek to recover the various pieces of the Serpent Mother strewn across the Scarred Lands, hoping to assemble these grisly trophies so that Mormo may be reborn.

Perhaps the most prolific of all titans, creating hags and gorgons and dozens of other races, Mormo neglected many of them, losing interest as soon as they were fashioned. Second only to Mesos, Mormo created spawn who often wield sorcerous or druidic power. Indeed, many druids who venerate Mormo pose as worshippers of Denev to infiltrate foreign lands and spread their heresies better.

**Symbol:** A serpent

**Thulkas**

**(thool-KAHS), Father of Fire, the Iron God**

The impregnable Thulkas was unmovable, for he was said to be an extension of the earth. That he burned with the heat of 1,000 suns only increased the threat Thulkas posed. Mighty Corean could not budge this beast, so the Avenger bent him, pressing the Iron God upon Golthagga's forge and hammering him into the form of an arrow. Tanil then drew back her great bow, taken from Hrinruuk's hand, and fired that arrow into the sun itself. Thulkas dwells there still, stuck and unable to escape its fiery grasp.

Legends say that Thulkas created spawn more by accident than design. The interplay of forces would create new spawn when natural phenomena interacted with his fiery body. Most of the creatures spawned in this manner have affinities for earth and fire and enjoy great resiliency, especially when in contact with these elemental forces. In addition, many goblin races, influenced by Thulkas, bear his mark.

**Symbol:** A red sun with a black eye in its center

# Chapter Three: Nations of Ghelspad



In the wake of war, nations rise. As the shattered realms of Ghelspad struggle to recover from the Divine War, other forces are at work, striving to both create and destroy. Some of these lands are new, forged in the chaos of conflict. Others evolved from older states and provinces that trace their history back to before the great war. This chapter examines each realm in detail, from its currencies and faiths to its geography and inhabitants.

Cities are described in varying levels of detail – some are accompanied by full-sized maps, others are not mapped but have their major features listed. Others are listed as brief overviews. Significant characters such as rulers and nobles, are listed with short single-line statistics. Other important or interesting facts are presented in the form of sidebars.



## Albadia

**Name:** The United People and Tribes of Albadia  
**Population:** 500,000 (Human 83%, Half-orc 10%, Dwarf 4%, Elf 2%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Albadia is ruled by a High King who is chosen from among the greatest warriors of all the tribes. Though the cities and other settlements of Albadia recognize the sovereignty of the High King, the nomadic tribes maintain relations that range from absolute loyalty to the merest lip service to his rule.

**Ruler:** High King Thalos Who Has Frozen the Sun and Sails the Ice (*human male Bbn16/Ftr4, N*)

**Capital:** Thurfas (40,000)

**Major Cities:** Sifin (12,000), Yorek (9,000), Horat (8,000)

**Language:** Albadian. In the civilized areas, there is a push for the citizenry to learn the Ledean tongue in order to facilitate further dealings with the rest of Ghelspad.

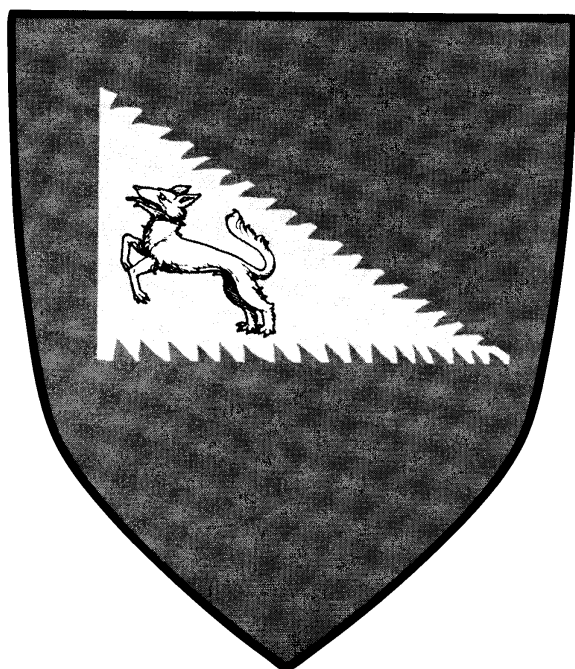
**Religion:** All of the gods are honored in Albadia (many women secretly worship Belsameth).

**Currency:** Albadia has no native coinage, a fact that King Thurfas intends to change. Albadians utilize the currencies of most of the nations of Ghelspad, based on their weight and content, at least in the settlements. Among the tribes, only furs and other trade goods are considered of worth, though many tribesmen who frequent the settlements have learned the value of these coins. Most settlements will still take furs in trade.

**Resources:** Lumber, furs, crescent elk hides, amber, jet.

**Allies:** Amalthea, Vera-Tre

**Enemies:** Khirdet



### Ages of the High Kings

Albadia's historians and lorekeepers measure the passage of years by ages, one for each of the High Kings that have ruled Albadia. An age is measured from the ascension of a High King until the end of his reign. Those years in which there is no High King are often referred to as Ages of Frost, a reference to an Albadian belief that blizzards and storms are harsher and more frequent when there is no High King, whose spirit and courage is believed to tame even the very lands of Albadia, making it safe and prosperous for his people. Most such spans of time are unremarkable and are referred to as merely the Fifth Age of Frost. The First Age of Frost is a euphemism for a time far in the prehistory of Albadia, before the First High King Albadios. The years, in the common Ghelspad calendar, of the Ages of the High Kings mentioned below are as follows:

*The First Age of Frost:* sometime during the Epoch of Lethene

Age of the Bear King: 2398 OC - 2433 OC

Age of the Witchblood King: 3462 OC - 3513 OC

Titanswar Began: 3466 OC

Age of the Crow King: 3513 OC - 3526 OC

Age of the Savior King: 3526 OC - 7 AV

Age of the Darklight King: 7 AV - 29 AV

The Ninth Age of Frost: 29 AV - 50 AV

Age of the Druid King: 50 AV - 88 AV

Age of the Hammer King: 88 AV - 107 AV

The Tenth Age of Frost: 107 AV - 133 AV

*The Current Age:* 133 AV - Present

### History

For nearly as long as recorded history, there have been nomadic tribes in the cold lands of Albadia. According to the oldest tales of Mount Helliath, the people of Albadia stepped from the cradle of human genesis into the fierce northlands and began their struggle to survive. The titans looked upon them with favor and granted them gifts for their endurance and tenacity. From Denev they received the strength of the land, from Lethene the swiftness and bite of the north wind, from Mormo the gift of witchery to their women. Most Albadians today recognize this tale as metaphorical, for it is ill-omened to claim any links to the slain titans.

Like that of so many nations, the early history of Albadia is uncertain, lost as it is in the mists of time and the chaos of the Divine War. It is said that Albadia's real history began with the Age of the Bear

King, when High King Gjorann united the savage northern tribes against the Empire of the Wheel.

Gjorann's deeds still echo in the tales of the Albadians. When the ice hag Yngalla Who Rides the Winds began to harass Gjorann's northern allies, he ventured forth and slew her single-handedly. Gjorann carried out many other brave deeds, and in the end, facing old age, he wandered out into a blizzard, giving himself to the care of the land he loved so much. His body was never found, and many tribes believe that he lives on, watching over his people and seeing to their safety.

The Age of the Witchblood King was named for High King Yngolf, whose mother was one of the Helliann. With the support of the Witchmount, Yngolf declared all-out war on the Empire of the Wheel. For the first time, the Helliann went into battle with the tribes, assaulting the sorcerer-lords of the empire in what came to be called the First Sorcerers' War.

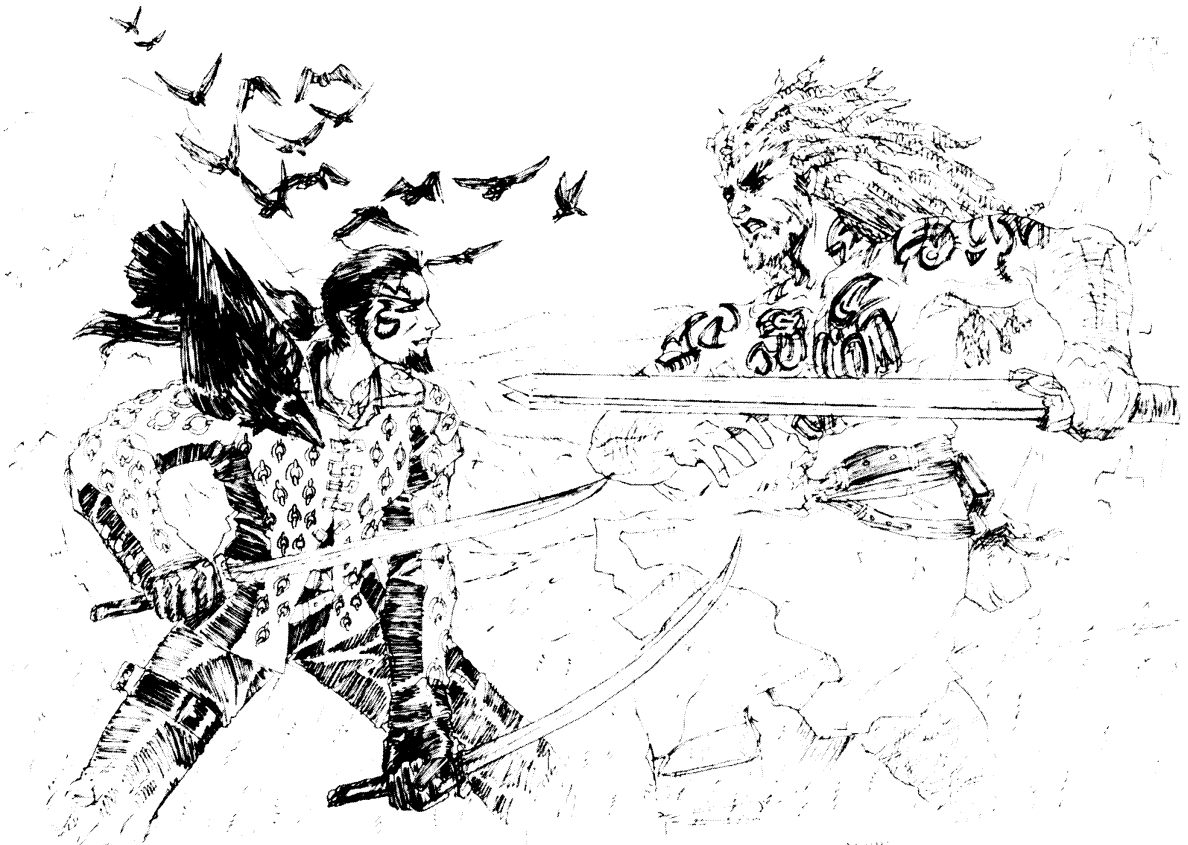
When the titan Mesos was slain, however, arcane magic was changed disastrously, ending the war and sending the Albadians back to their homeland, where they maintained neutrality in the Divine War, defending themselves against titanspawn and divine races alike. High King Yngolf himself perished in a Great Duel, slain by his rival Arnan of the Black Wings, who would be known to history as the Crow King.

The Crow King rejected the worship of Denev and embraced instead Lethene and Mormo. His rule proved disastrous, and during his regime the battle known as the Slaughter of Arnan took place, in which many tribes were slain by divine forces led by the Herald of Vangal. Soon, titanspawn swarmed unchecked across the land, and King Arnan turned a blind eye to their predations.

At last a hero arose, one Liangulf, whose own tribe had been slaughtered by the spawn of Lethene and Mormo. Organizing the tribes in rebellion against Arnan, Liangulf finally challenged the Crow King to the Great Duel and emerged victorious, despite Arnan's use of sorcery.

Proclaimed the Savior King, Liangulf restored worship of the Earth Mother and welcomed refugees from the Empire of the Wheel into the tribes when their realm was destroyed by Gaurak. Finally, despite enormous pressure, Liangulf refused to side with the gods, choosing instead to remain faithful to Denev and take no direct part in the fighting. Tragically, seven years after the end of the Divine War, Liangulf was slain by Mormo-serving Helliann, who were themselves in turn destroyed by Madriel-worshipping Helliann.

Manjolf of the Two Blades, the Darklight King, served briefly before being poisoned by a seductress-assassin sent by the Cannibals of Khet. He was succeeded by the druid-barbarian Lothynn Elffriend, who saw his nation through the changes wrought by



the Convention of Vera-Tre and the troubles of the Druid War before passing the throne to his son Orjulf.

Known as the Hammer King and the Maker of Walls, Orjulf founded a great new city to celebrate his ascension, naming it for his son Thurfas and constructing a vast and luxurious palace. The palace was ill-omened, for it was found empty one day, its inhabitants horribly slain, including Orjulf and his family. Only four people were found alive: prisoners in the dungeons and all hopelessly mad.

Thousands fled Thurfas in the wake of these fearful events, and refugees swelled southern towns to near bursting. This period, known as the Tenth Age of Frost, was a time of chaos with no High King in which tribes raided the overburdened cities, and the underpopulated Thurfas was besieged by the Frostwolf tribe.

When Thurfas fell, Thalos, the leader of the Frostwolves, was proclaimed High King. Refusing to put aside his city-bred wife for a Helliann one, Thalos angered the forces of the Witchmount and further scandalized the tribes by moving into the cursed palace of Orjulf.

Today, the tribes continue to be troubled by Thalos' overly civilized ways. A Great Council held in 136 AV resulted in a champion emerging to challenge Thalos to the Great Duel, but the High King prevailed and the challenger was slain.

This did not end Thalos' troubles, for rumor has it that another Great Council has been called and a new champion chosen. King Thalos' contacts with the outside world, particularly Vera-Tre and Amalthea, have met with approval in the cities — but further stoked the fires of resentment among the tribes. Thalos' daughter Sirida (*human female Rog6/Ari4, N*) has proved an able diplomat and travels to foreign lands in the company of her bodyguard and cousin, the sorceress Freyhela (*human female Sor8, CN*).

## Geography

Albadia is a cold land of pine trees and vast stretches of frozen tundra. Nestled between the Titanshome and Stormtooth Mountains, Albadia's people have learned to survive this hard land's rigors. The southern part of Albadia is slightly warmer, protected by the pine forests and peaks of the Stormtooth Mountains.

Past the Amber Wood and Valthas Wood, however, Albadia becomes a place of seeming frozen desolation. Though a number of hardy shallow-rooted plants do grow in the bitter cold, the earth itself is frozen nearly year round, save for the few top inches of soil that is warmed daily.

**Amber Wood:** A massive coniferous forest, the Amber Wood gets its name from the large pieces of amber that can be found within it. The Amber Wood is also home to a small settlement of wood elves that traces its founding to the time when Albadia and

Vera-Tre were more closely tied than they are now. As the Amber Wood is one of the main borders between the titanspawn-infested Titanshome Mountains and the rest of Albadia, the elves who dwell here are well equipped to deal with threats to their lives and homes.

**Arnjulf River:** The Arnjulf is, in many ways, a wall between Albadia and the rest of Ghelspad. On the banks of the Arnjulf opposite Albadia lurk the Perforated Plains, a wasteland that is home to fell creatures of every kind. Most of Albadia's major cities are located along the Arnjulf, a testament to that river's rich resources. For defensive reasons, no bridges span the Arnjulf; instead, small but well fortified and defended ferry stations have been established at each of its cities.

**The High Snows:** When most folk think of Albadia, it is the High Snows that they imagine: long stretches of barrenness, slushy mud interrupted by patches of half-frozen tundra grasses, and the thunder of crescent elk herds. Bombarded by blizzards that blow in off the Stiffened Sea, the High Snows are where the nomadic tribes are most at home. These frozen wastelands also harbor a number of fell beasts, creatures that often strike in the dead of night or during raging snowstorms.

**The South Lands:** Though often referred to as the civilized south by the tribes of the north, the southern lands are hardly worthy of that description, especially by the standards of places such as Calastia. The cities of southern Albadia are well fortified, thanks to decades of attack by titanspawn from across the Arnjulf as well as marauding tribes from the north. The cities here maintain defensive forces that patrol the lands surrounding them. Within this defended area small farming communities have sprung up, usually encircling a fort of some kind meant for the defense of the farmers.

**Stormtooth Mountains:** Where the Titanshome Mountains are seen as a place of unrevealed terrors and a nest for monsters, the Stormtooth Mountains are part of the Albadian cultural identity. Perhaps this is because the Stormtooth Mountains protect much of Albadia from fierce sea squalls that blow in off the Stiffened Sea, acting as protection and defense, or because the mountains are seen as bastions of strength to be admired and emulated by the tough Albadians. "Children of the Stormtooth" is an euphemism often used to describe the Albadian people in their bardic tradition. The mountains themselves are rich in deposits of copper close to the surface, causing lightning to dance among the peaks even during the tamest of squalls.

**Valthas Wood:** The Valthas Wood is a source of much of Albadia's prosperity. It provides lumber, furs, and many other goods, despite its reputation as a haunted place sacred to Belsameth. The fact that the wood is located so close to the Witchmount

without incident between the two may support this supposition.

**Witchmount:** It might be that the Albadians consider the Stormtooth Mountains to be the symbol of their people because that is where the Witchmount is found. The Witchmount is the home of the Helliann Sisterhood, the order of female spellcasters who act as the guardians of Albadia and her cultural identity, history, and traditions. From their mountaintop sanctuary, the Helliann witches continue to guide the tribes and people of Albadia as they have done for centuries — regardless of the wishes of King Thurfas.

## Flora and Fauna

Quite a variety of flora and fauna can be found in Albadia. From the nearly temperate civilized lands of the south to the bleak white fastness of the High Snows, the creatures of Albadia have learned to survive extreme blizzards and temperature shifts.

In the southern lands, shrubs and small stands of trees dot the landscape, providing ample shelter to the region's animals. The southern lands are home to a number of small animals, such as hares, voles, weasels, plains rats, and the like. Game birds are found in abundance as well, from small white-grey Albadian pheasants to flocks of massive geese. Deer were also once very abundant in this area, though hunting throughout the years has somewhat thinned down the size of the herds. Hunting has done little to reduce the abundance of boars in the area, however, perhaps because of the danger of pursuing these massive beasts. Some larger creatures do pose threats, from titanspawn to simple dire beasts, but most of these remain away from the civilized areas and are only a threat to travelers.

The woodlands of Albadia — the Amber Wood and Valthas Wood — are coniferous forests made up of tall evergreen trees. Herds of deer run riot along the southern edges of these forests, while their stockier reindeer cousins can be found along the northern fringes and the interiors. The animals of these forests include a panoply of small herbivores, predators, and other more dangerous beasts such as large forest cats, wolverines, and wild boar. There are other, more dangerous threats as well — the Amber Wood houses unpredictable fey and other forest creatures, while Valthas Wood gives shelter to various lycanthropes, spider-eye goblins, and even a tribe of Belsameth-worshipping centaurs.

Rugged lichens and hardy plants grow among the lightning-kissed peaks of the Stormtooth Mountains, providing provender for the various mountain goats, rats, pika, and smaller creatures that live among the crags. Large mountain cats also dwell here, though they are hardly the most dangerous creatures to prowl these mounts. Dire beasts can be found as well, along with many varieties of creatures that relish the electric nature of the air here, from thunder kites and shockbats to the behir. Tribes of ettins and storm

giants are also said to occupy the mountains, though these monsters are assuredly kept in check by the Helliann Sisterhood.

The High Snows are a vast, uncharted tundra, resounding with the rumble of herds of reindeer and crescent elk. Solitary moose are also found in this region and represent a hazard to travelers during rutting season. Scraggly shrubs and cold-stunted trees dot the frozen plains, surrounded by the yellow-white growths of tundra grass, a strong fiber used for many things by the tribes, from ropes and clothing to the *angol* stew that simmers at every campfire. Wolves and ice creatures are a problem for the people here, as are tribes of ogres and hobgoblins. Spectral undead such as mistwalkers, specters, and wraiths are known to ride the wailing winds of the High Snows.

## People

The folk of Albadia are known throughout Ghelspad for their striking appearance. They are a tall, broad-shouldered folk, with even the women sometimes reaching six feet in height. Blue, grey, hazel, and green eyes predominate, as do blonde and red hair.

Albadian tribesmen tend to wear full, thick beards, and both sexes grow their hair long, usually keeping it out of the way in braids. The typical tribesman's dress is furs and leathers — the men wear breeches of stout leather and a *fyrol*, a length of sewn furs wrapped around the shoulders that drapes to the elbows. A set of leather fur-lined gloves or bracers and a pair of tall, fur-lined boots complete the typical garb of a male tribesman.

The women of the tribes tend to wear a type of skirt called a *garjold*, a garment made up of several layers of leather skirts, split so as to facilitate easy movement. Wearing one of these skirts would leave the entirety of one hip and leg uncovered, so they are layered in order to provide warmth as well as mobility. A few of the women wear vests made of stout leather, but most go entirely without tops, using their fur cloaks for warmth. Every woman of the tribes wears a thick, knee-length fur cloak. Indeed, it is a status symbol among the tribes to decorate the clasps and edges of the cloak with fine worked leather, silver wire, and chunks of amber and jet.

Both men and women of the tribes wear jewelry, usually pieces of amber or jet strung on leather cords and worn around the neck. Rings of precious metal are often worn through the ears, though the berserkers of a tribe are known for their other piercings — rings through the septum of the nose, the lip, or the brow. Women often wear small headpieces with tiny polished bits of amber woven into small silver cages dangling on their foreheads.

Tattoos are a prevalent part of the Albadian cultural identity. After a youngster's First Blood, elders ritually tattoo the newly recognized adult with the mark of their clan. Tattoos are also used in



*A berserker of the Frost Wolf tribe, a Helliann sorceress, an amber-worker of Horat, a dwarf of the Skoalkor tribe, a cleric of Madriel, and an elven druid of the Twilight Circle.*

Albadian society to recognize otherrites and occasions, such as the survival of a war against another clan, the performance of a great feat or deed, giving birth to a child, or learning a trade or skill of great use to the tribe such as magic or might of arms.

In the cities, those men who affect a more civilized demeanor have taken to clean shaven faces and close shorn hair, but this is considered foppish even among most city dwellers. On the other hand, a full tribesman's beard is seen as very rural, so the men in the cities often wear moustaches, goatees and the like. Though some urban Albadians do indeed still bear family tattoos, these are usually considered private and are kept hidden beneath clothing.

The modesty that other civilizations are known for has only recently begun to touch Albadia. While the tribes have no such inhibitions, it has recently become considered very low-class for men or women to bare their naked torsos. Woven wool clothing is the norm in the cities. Urban men wear fuller breeches than the tribesmen do, though they tend to wear the same kind of boots. Women wear long, thickly woven skirts with either ankle-high shoes or boots. Long sleeved shirts are usually worn by both sexes. Working class men generally wear leather vests that are

derived from the vests that tribeswomen sometimes wear, though their design has been altered to include loops and pockets for work tools and coinage. Women tend to wear a leather apron fitted with pouches and loops for much the same purpose.

## Culture

Perhaps the single most important distinction among Albadians is the difference between tribesmen and city-dwellers. How the Albadian lives, eats, marries, relates to others, worships, and dies are all dependant on this one fact — indeed, these distinctions create enough difference between Albadians that they might as well be two different races entirely.

The tribes are a warrior culture — even hunting crescent elk, moose, and reindeer is considered a battle, for each hunter stalks his own prey, with no assistance from others. Many times, hunters are grievously injured during hunting expeditions. Many signs indicate a warrior's prowess, from the tattoo he receives at his First Blood ceremony to the feathers of the lightning hawk worn by the greatest of Albadian warriors. The warriors are the defenders of and providers for the tribes. Many of them are blessed by the berserker frenzy, considered a blessing of the horor spirit to his favored children.



Though the tribes are indeed a warrior culture, they are hardly a patriarchal society. Quite the opposite, in fact: Albadians trace their lineage through the mother. Though warriors are the defenders of the tribe, the elders of the tribe are made up of the oldest women, for the men rarely live to the age that the women do. This council is usually led by the eldest of the Helliann in the tribe; if there is no Helliann, then it is led by the most experienced woman who wields sorcerous or divine powers. The tribes are divided into clans, and the eldest woman of each clan sits on the tribal council, which holds the true power and oversees the appointment of the tribe's king, who serves to defend the tribe.

City life, on the other hand, is relatively recognizable to those of other lands. There are, however, a few vital differences. The weather that plagues the tribes is just as likely to strike here, despite the cover granted from being further inland. The average city dweller carries with him a fighting knife, or sometimes larger armaments such as a short sword or hand axe if they can afford such and know how to use them.

The cities of Albadia are relatively new, especially when compared to many other cities in Ghelspad. As a result, the cities themselves are fairly large and clean, with plenty of space for their folk, unlike many older cities. Despite this, every city maintains a very active and strong military force to defend its walls in case titanspawn or barbarian hordes decide to loot the place of its wealth.

Albadian cities are known for their sturdy timber and stone buildings. The roofs on these buildings are sharply pitched to allow snow to slide off; the eaves of most buildings also jut far from the walls, providing slight shelter to those walking near the building. The wood of these buildings is often carved with knotwork depictions of totemic animals, clan symbols, holy signs, and warding marks against the creatures of the tundra.

Existing as a step between nomadic tribal life and dwelling in the large, gated cities of the south are the waymoots and villages. Waymoots are permanent tribal structures established by one tribe as a sanctuary for any of the tribes, as well as places in which to trade goods without traveling to the south cities. Waymoots are known for their rough log and sod longhouses surrounded by steep earthen embankments, built during the summer months. These embankments freeze hard during the rest of the year, providing strong defenses against the dangers of the High Snows. Many waymoots end up with a lasting populace that eventually grows larger than the tribe that holds it, as individuals or entire clans within tribes elect to settle down in the waymoot rather than continue the nomadic life.

The dwellings used by the tribes tend to be elaborate hide constructions, often standing as tall as nine feet in height. Each family has one or more such tents and a central fire pit. The tents are usually constructed close to one another, both to provide

shelter from fierce weather as well as closeness in case of danger. These dwellings are often connected to one another by hide-covered walkways, forming narrow tunnels of a man's height between the tents in a camp, allowing a camp's inhabitants to travel between tents without ever leaving shelter. It usually takes an entire day to break and make camp, though most camps are built and then inhabited for weeks at a time before moving on.

Albadia also has a number of small villages, located almost exclusively in the south and generally within a day's walk of a city. These villages provide the majority of the food grains and other husbandry necessary for day-to-day life in civilized Albadia. Some of these villages are not under the protection of cities or their guards, however; invariably, these places have strong guardians of some kind, be they adventuring bands, mercenary units, powerful spellcasters, or other potent individuals.

One such place is the village of Calhiann, found east of the Ugfrann waymoot, at the border of Valthas Wood. Calhiann's defender is a short, unassuming man with closely shorn reddish hair and a charming demeanor. When his village is threatened, however, this defender, called Aadroma by his village, is capable of bringing considerable power to the protection of Calhiann — Aadroma is a werebear, able to shift into the form of a gigantic grizzly bear with fierce fangs and rending talons. Few threats — even those from the dangerous Valthas Wood — are capable of overcoming Aadroma (*human/werebear male F16, LG*).

Albadia boasts a number of popular entertainments, the foremost of which is dog fighting. The famous Albadian battle dog is well respected for both its fighting prowess and protective nature in both cities and tribes. Yet such sports of savagery are not the only pastimes available in the far north. Albadia has a long bardic tradition, known for its warrior-poets who are able to chant and sing their brethren into greater feats of berserking by invoking the tales of their ancestors and the heroes of the past. The Albadian people love music and song of every kind and are quick to dance and join in such festive activities.

The diet of the tribes consists mainly of meats, plus *angol*, a slightly sour stew made from the yellow-white tundra grass roots. This basic meal is supplemented with tundra tubers in the winter and sweet berries in the summer. In the cities, most meals consist of foods made from light grains taken from the farms that lie within a day's ride from the cities, as well as meat from domesticated and game animals. The cities also thrive on honey-based foods, which are often traded to the tribes.

Transportation on the High Snows is a matter of slow, steady travel, usually by foot or reindeer-pulled sledges. Among the more civilized areas of Albadia, horses and carriages are the norm, though wheeled conveyances often

feature wide, nailed wheels that provide traction and width against patches of mud and ice.

## Crime and Punishment

Crime is rarely a problem among the tribes. All members of a tribe know one another, and any violations against tribesmates are settled in one of two fashions — by duel or by the adjudication of the council of elders. Some crimes and their related punishments among the tribes include:

**Theft (of any scale):** Indentured service to the wronged party for one year per gold piece value of the item(s) stolen.

**Murder (out of clan):** Forced to pay a fine to the victim's tribe or family.

**Kinslaying (murder in-clan):** Cast out from the tribe after being marked with the *Mark of the Kinslayer* (see *Relics & Rituals*, pg. 200).

**Consorting with Titanspawn:** Perpetrator is subject to the blood-eagle, a punishment in which the victim has his ribs pulled apart and his lungs removed and set on his back, "mounting" them like the wings of an eagle. This is a punishment of extreme dishonor and has been used against traitors to the tribe as well. Legend has it that Arnan of the Black Wings was so treated after his death.

In the cities, crime is more commonplace. Each city's government (whether a council of merchants or a noble tribe) employs a body of city guards that acts to apprehend criminals. Standard crimes and their punishments include:

**Simple Theft (20 gp or under):** Banishment from the city.

**Theft (21 gp or higher):** Removal of the right hand, or indentured servitude for one year per gold piece value of the item(s) stolen, at the discretion of the wronged party.

**Destruction of Property:** Fined an amount of money equal to twice that destroyed or damaged; the wronged party is recompensed for the loss and the remainder goes to the city government.

**Murder:** Death by disembowelment.

## Religion

In Albadia, many of the gods are revered. Of note are Madriel and Belsameth, two of the triad of patrons for the Helliann Sisterhood. Many among the tribes worship the battle lust and carnage that is Vangal's domain, or propitiate the Snow Queen Fraelhia. The cities usually hold a temple to Hedrada, who is seen as the god of civilization. Tanil is also respected among Albadians, tribesfolk and city dwellers alike, though members of her radical female sect the Handmaidens of the Huntress are justly feared.

Despite the presence of the gods and their servants, however, it might certainly be argued that Denev is worshipped most in Albadia. The third patron of the Helliann and highly revered by the tribes, Denev's

blessings are sought after by everyone in Albadia, from the tribesman who asks for blessings on his hunt to the farmer who seeks prosperous crops to mothers in both tribes and cities who pray for healthy children and easy childbirth. Indeed, even the holy days of the Scarred Lands — often co-opted by the teachings of the gods — are still celebrated in the old ways, with wild, passionate revels during those festivals of fertility and a thorough respect toward the earth in all cases.

Albadia is unique in that clerics and druids are not the only leaders who tend to the spiritual needs of their flocks. Sorceresses, too, are expected to help lead their people, guiding them with wisdom and using their power for the good of the tribes. A tribesman will not strike down a sorceress unless she proves to be a danger to his tribe or his life. In times past, these sorceresses were considered to be the favored of Mormo, but with the events of the Divine War, most sorceresses consider themselves the blessed of Belsameth, who inherited her mother's title as Queen of Witches. For this reason, many women — sorceress or not — revere the Slayer in her aspect as Queen of Feminine Mysteries, as the Goddess of the Moon that is the flow of life-blood within them.

It should be noted that this acceptance of those who wield sorcerous powers does not, however, extend to men. Most men know better than to demonstrate such powers should they manifest. At best, such men are looked upon with suspicion and warned against the use of their powers. In other instances, they are outcast or slain.

## Armed Forces

Albadia does not, as a nation, have a standing army. Each city is responsible for fielding a militia that it might contribute in a time of war, though this group is largely used to police the individual cities. This group also constitutes Albadia's only mounted force, for horses have not been used among the tribes since the time of the Tuscar clan. In times past, Albadia's High King has had the ability to call upon the warriors of the tribes, though some whisper that the tribes might not answer such a summons from High King Thalos.

In time of war, be it against titanspawn, another tribe, or another army, the barbarians of the High Snows are led by the sorceresses and Helliann among them. Though the warriors of the tribes are indeed bold, their prowess pales against the feats of might displayed by those blessed with the berserk rage. Those who would lead their tribesmen in battle as warlords must always be able to bring on this berserk rage in themselves.

In combat, the tribesmen use little in the way of tactics or organization. Each man is expected to seek out the most powerful foe he can find and slay him with honor and fierceness and then move on to the next enemy, cutting a swath through the enemy forces until he is cut down or no enemy remains. In

wars against other tribes, sorceresses never use their magics to strike down the opponent, rather using their powers only to defend and strengthen their own tribesmen — in this fashion, they allow the Albadian tribal taboo against striking a sorceress to extend even to the battlefield. Against titanspawn or outlander armies, however, the sorceresses have no such compunctions, usually seeking out enemy spellcasters and battling them with slaying spells.

## Cities

### Thurfas

Thurfas is easily the largest of the four Albadian cities. Originally designed by Hedradan engineers in the service of the Hammer King Orjulf Maker of Walls, its original construction shows the pristine symmetry and attention to order that marks Hedradan construction.

The walls of the central keep extend out into the city proper, dividing it into six wards, each pierced by gates that lead to the other wards. As time has passed, the city has overflowed these relatively small wards, spilling into the areas beyond the gates. It has proven unwise to build outside of the walls along the northern section of the city, however, so most of the growth has occurred to the south, along the Great Road leading to Yorek.

**Road Town:** The spillover of Thurfas that has extended along the Great Road. Mainly the poor live here, though rumor places a burgeoning market of poisons and narcotics here.

**Thurfas Gate:** The main gates patrolled night and day, closed at night. Those bringing trade goods into the city are charged a tax of 2 sp per wagon or horse-load.

**Wayside Fire Inn:** Thurfas' largest and most comfortable inn, frequented mainly by locals. The Wayside Fire is run by Narianna (*human female com9, CG*).

**The Northern Gold:** Thurfas' most extravagant and elegant inn, usually frequented by visiting wealthy merchants and nobility.

**Palace of the Wolf:** Once called the Palace of the Hammer, this is where High King Thalos and his court take their residence. Visitors rarely gain the opportunity actually to speak with the king, unless they are a member of the Frost Wolf tribe — all others are instead directed to audiences with the Queen.

**Temple of the Snowy Hammer:** The temple to Hedrada in Thurfas, it is capably led by the Exhorter Yrbronthis (*human male Clr12, LN*), who has worked to ingratiate himself into the good favors of King Thalos that he might pick up the reins of justice in the city, allowing his temple to try and judge crimes as the temples of Hedrada do in several other Albadian cities. The temple also maintains a small shrine to Chardun.

**Shrine of the Northern Sun:** This shrine dedicated mainly to Madriel also houses shrines to Corean and Tanil.

**Ward of the Wolf:** This section of town is for the exclusive use of the Frost Wolf tribe — the only businesses and homes here are owned by members of that tribe.

**Frost Wolf Hall:** The massive lodge-hall of the Frost Wolf tribe, this is the residence of Mogresh (*human male Bbn15, CG*) and his wife Shelhia (*human female Bbn5/Clr8, CG*). Most tribal councils are held here, though the council of women have been made to feel less and less comfortable here. Rumor has that the Reverend Mother Mianathlee has been talking to them, despite her not being part of the tribe.

**Frost Wolf Shrine:** This shrine, maintained by the Frost Wolf tribe, is dedicated to Tanil, Vangal, and Enkili in his/her manifestation as Bringer of Storms. A small shrine to Fraelhia is also here. Rumor suggests that there is also a shrine to Belsameth hidden away from the eyes of men among the women's quarters somewhere in the Ward of the Wolf.

**Spring Bower:** Perhaps the largest temple to Idra on Ghelspad, the Spring Bower is reputed to have perhaps some kind of connection to the Courtesans of Idra, many of whom are noted to be of Albadian stock. High Priestess Idraia (*human female Brd3/Clr12, N*; see **Secrets & Societies**) maintains ties with Idraian priestesses throughout the continent.

### Other Cities

**Sifin:** Sifin is unique in Albadia, in that it is not ruled by a single king. Rather, it is ruled by the King's Council, a group of merchants that owes its fealty to High King Thalos. The merchants of Sifin run the largest network of caravans in Albadia, traveling between the various waymoots and villages, bringing important supplies and goods to these places and trading for the various handicrafts and goods that are desired by those outside of Albadia. It is from Sifin that these good depart Albadia headed for outland markets, both by massively guarded caravans and by ship.

**Yorek:** Known to Albadians as the City of Academies, Yorek is ruled by King Tomanan (*human male Rog9/Wiz4, LN*), the first king in Albadian history to not also rule over a tribe. With the increase in High King Thalos' interest in maintaining a strong movement toward civilization, King Tomanan — who has ties with the Scaled — has demonstrated that he is loyal to Albadia's High King, which is certainly more than most of the tribes grant Thalos. Yorek is also home to the Yorek Academy of Adventurers, a well known place in Albadia where, for a small amount of money, the average citizen can increase his knowledge of the rest of the world. Though never publicly admitted, it is also common

knowledge that the Academy is also a training ground for the criminal guild known as the Scaled.

The Academy of Adventurers is not the only Academy here, however — the Courtesan Academy of Yorek is also present, training courtesans from as far away as Shelzar and Calastia. Rumor has that these Courtesans carry on the ways of a much older tradition, with possible links to the Courtesans of Idra. It is known that Headmistress Taiasha (*half-elf female Rog3/Clr4*) has ties to Idraia, the Idran High Priestess of Thurfas. Yorek is guarded by the Tooth of the Bear, a mercenary company made up of various tribal outcasts (including several male sorcerers) and led by a man cast out of his tribe for hunting down and killing a huror with a bow.

**Horat:** Ruled by King Mharnev (*human male Bbn10, CG*) and defended by the Dusk Stone Guardians of the Dusk Stones tribe, Horat is perhaps the youngest of the cities of Albadia. King Mharnev owes his allegiance to High King Thalos, though in recent years he has been torn between his vows to Thalos and his respect for the man's ability to build a nation, and the voices of his tribe's Helliann, who suggest that Thalos may have betrayed the tribes to the decadence of the cities while warning Mharnev against the same.

## Ankila

**Name:** The Calastian Dominion of Ankila

**Population:** 500,000 (Human 79%, Halfling 19%, Half-orc 1%, Other 1%)

**Government:** The High Minister reports directly to King Virduk and maintains control through military dictatorship.

**Ruler:** High Calastian Minister for the Determination of the People of Ankila, Arnas Riven (*human male Ari9, LE*)

**Capital:** Sussephra (20,000)

**Major Cities:** Ardenai (12,000), Merlahn (8,000), Port Segoura (4,500), Hedo (3,500), Hedronie (2,300), Aqualana (1,900)

**Language:** Calastian, Shelzari

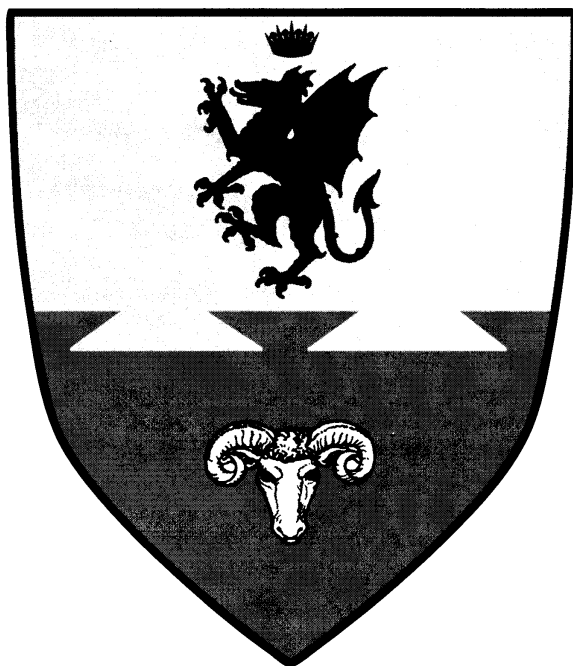
**Religion:** Hedrada

**Currency:** Ankila has been forced to adopt Calastian currency, though many Ankilan coins remain in circulation: gold prosper (1gp), silver taurus (1sp), copper hammer (1cp).

**Resources:** White clay, pottery, lumber, fish.

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony.

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



## History

This land was one of the first to find peace after the collapse of the Ledean Empire and one of the last to fall before the Charduni Empire — largely due to the efforts of the hero who took his land's name as his own. What his name might have been before, only Hedrada knows, for the man prayed endlessly to the Lawgiver, asking that the god give his people a sign by which to stand together and prosper, and Hedrada told him to be that sign himself. Seizing the great hammer that appeared before him and naming him-

self Ankila, the chosen of Hedrada united his people against early assaults by various petty states from the collapsing Calas Province and was ultimately proclaimed king. Every threat to the realm found him standing at the forefront, battling enemies on the field or negotiating wisely for the people of the state.

The Kingdom of Ankila rose from the ashes of empires to stand strong and proud, such that it gathered the attention of yet another empire as the charduni spread across Ghelspad. In the end, the man who called himself Ankila fell in battle against the charduni, but only after causing such terrible damage that the dark dwarves were forced to uncharacteristic leniency when his son Ankila II surrendered. Stretched thin at their eastern frontier and craftily set against their supposed brethren in neighboring Calastia, the charduni left Ankila II on the throne and merely exacted an annual tribute. They even agreed to allow the nation's military to stand against Calastia, as Ankila II claimed that his kingdom would make an excellent buffer should war erupt. The king took care to make sure his people did not arouse the charduni's ire and yet remained strong and healthy. For every temple to Chardun that the people were made to build, he built a temple to Hedrada, and Hedrada was pleased.

Ankila II passed the Hammer on to his son and retired to an advisory position in his old age. He died the winter before the Divine War erupted, and his son was left to hold the kingdom on his own. Ankila III marched with the armies of Hedrada and is said to have even once fought on the same battlefield as the Lawgiver. Ankila IV inherited the throne when his father's body was brought from the fields of battle against the Madmen of Gulaben. The young king is reported to have seized the Hammer of his forefathers with grim determination and joined the divine armies himself. Gulaben was the last of the titans to fall, however, and Ankila IV's efforts were soon turned toward cleansing his kingdom of the remnants of titanspawn that haunted it. The fourth Ankila ruled for many years, even outliving his own son Ankila V who perished at the hands of a Zathiskan assassin. Perhaps the last great act of Ankila IV was attending the Convention of Vera-Tre in 56 AV.

Ankila VI took the throne in 64 AV and his reign lasted until he perished in 84 AV during the early stages of the Druid War. His son, Ankila VII, pursued the war, but returned home when Virduk of Calastia launched the First Calastian Advance. Virduk's armies forced passage over the border, but Ankila's forces fought them every step of the way. In 95 AV, however, disaster struck.

Ankila had always maintained a close relationship with his younger brother, Marsul and when word came from Ardenai that Marsul was sick and possibly dying, the king felt compelled to secretly journey north, leaving his capitol Sussephra in the hands of his loyal commander Duke Dahnvek Ferousa. The

Calastians chose that moment to launch a major assault on Sussephra, fighting their way to the city walls after a ferocious five-day-long struggle.

Alerted to the danger, Ankila prepared to bid farewell to his beloved brother, only to receive the devastating news that the city had fallen, not to Calastian arms, but to treachery. Duke Dahnvek, for reasons known only to himself (though most suspect it was the lure of Calastian gold), chose to open the city gates and surrender Ankila's capitol to the enemy.

When asked why he had committed this heinous act of treason, the duke is said to have replied, "Would you have preferred a capitol in ruins, inhabited only by corpses? Nothing and no one can resist the might of Calastia – far better to join the Hegemony voluntarily and in good health than to be annexed and become a lifeless shell of our former greatness."

Though the loss of Sussephra was a devastating blow, Ankila and his armies fought on, and by 102 AV, the nation was divided between the occupied south and the rebellious north. Many southern Ankilan nobles, seeking better deals for themselves, had changed allegiance to Calastia and were competing for the coveted position of provincial governor. The traitorous Duke Dahnvek was, of course, a leading candidate, but King Virduk did not trust him fully, preferring to put a Calastian in the position. Speculation was ended when Dahnvek was assassinated, reportedly by a fanatical priest of Hedrada. The members of the Order of the White Cities furiously denied the tale, saying that assassination was anathema to their strictly lawful faith.

Ankila's woes continued, for on the Second Belsaday of Hedrar in the following year, the noble King Ankila VII passed away peacefully. Though rumors of assassination and secret conspiracies by the Cult of Ancients circulated, as is normal with such deaths, the fact was that the king had simply died of heart failure after 67 years of war and conflict. The onset of winter prevented Virduk from exploiting the chaos that followed the king's death, and by new year's day of 104, the king's nephew, Jahn Aubercours, had accepted the regency. He refused the crown, however, saying that he would only become king if he could be crowned in the grand temple of Hedrada at Sussephra in a free and independent Ankila.

The struggle continued until 113 AV, when the Blood Monsoon lashed eastern Ghelspad, and drove the crimson waters of the Blood Sea westward, to lap at the shores of Ankila. With the bloody waters came an onslaught of aquatic titanspawn, who waded ashore, raiding coastal communities and fighting with Calastian occupation troops.

By 115 AV, the Calastians had had enough. Hard-pressed at home and along his eastern frontier, Virduk withdrew his armies from Ankila, leaving the nation in the hands of Calastian sycophants and Ankilan turn-



coats. Regent Jahn immediately led his forces south to liberate the land, and by 122 AV, his armies stood at the gates of Sussephra. The city fell without a struggle, and the regent's armies entered in triumph.

But the regent's work was not done, and he refused to take the crown until the nation was entirely free. Sweeping south, he battled pockets of resistance from Calastian loyalists and sympathizers, then fought his way down the coast, driving the titanspawn back into the sea. Some of the invaders had actually built water-filled fortresses well inland, connected to the sea by magical portals and tunnels, and these fell only after dogged resistance.

With the Calastians supposedly vanquished and the titanspawn driven back into the sea, Jahn Abercours finally accepted the crown and the title of Ankila VIII in the spring of 126 AV. The nation was free again.

It did not last. The following spring, Calastian troops once more crossed the frontier at the same time that a Zathiskan army seized territory in the north. Caught between two foes and weakened by a decade of continuous fighting, Ankila threw his army against the Calastians, desperately hoping for a miracle. On the shores of Bleached Bay, on the first Corday of Belot, the armies faced each other, knowing that the fate of the nation was in the balance.

The battle lasted four days, and for a time it seemed that the Ankilans would withstand Virduk's onslaught. Once more, however, the nation fell to treachery, and this time from an even more unexpected source. Ankila's wife, Queen Nikhea, had her agents poison the army's food and water supply, then vanished. Distracted and demoralized, with half of their army incapacitated, the Ankilans fled, and on the following day Ankila was captured and the land belonged to King Virduk. To this day, no one knows what happened to Nikhea, and some tales claim that she still lives, granted eternal beauty and influence by whatever power inspired her treachery.

On the second Charday of Chardoth, Ankila VIII was hanged for high treason in the grand court of Sussephra. His cousin, an inexperienced and vapid libertine, was placed on the throne and awarded the title Ankila IX (*human male Ari9, CN*), a hollow and pathetic echo of the nation's former greatness. By 131 AV, the last resistance to the occupation had collapsed with the fall of Ardenai, and the puppet Ankila had signed the Calastian charter, finalizing the realm's utter submission to King Virduk.

Since that day, Ankila has grown more passive and accepting of Calastian domination. The people turn a blind eye to Virduk's atrocities, and most now consider themselves to be good Calastian citizens. The spark of rebellion and independence is slowly dying, and many believe that it will never again be lit.

The real power in the province is Virduk's distant cousin, Arnas Riven, who serves under the cumbersome title of High Calastian Minister for the Determination of the People of Ankila. The Calastians remain confident and

arrogant, allowing Ankila IX to remain as a puppet ruler, although the symbol of Ankila's kings, the Hammer of Ankila, somehow disappeared before Virduk could claim it. Minister Riven set about crushing the spirit of rebellion from the Ankilan people without raising their anger, and after two decades of occupation it would appear he has largely succeeded. Ankila is considered the safest of all the Hegemony's districts and one of the most productive. Only the continued failure to find the Hammer of Ankila bothers the minister.

## Geography

Ankila is a pleasant land, with a large forest in its northern region that does not share the monstrosities of Geleeda's Grove, wide flat plains of rich farmland, and beautiful beaches on the Blossoming Sea:

**Hope River:** This river begins in northern Zathiske, and is important to the economy of the entire nation, flowing as it does past nearly all of the land's major cities. In the past, the river also served as a means of communication, with messages sent downstream in sealed bottles. Many military and merchant vessels travel on the river, and a large percentage of Ankila's population dwells along its banks.

**Cloudy River:** Forming the border between Ankila and Calastia, the Cloudy River is shallow, and navigable only by flatbottomed boats and barges. Legend holds that the titans crafted some of their servitor races from the white sand at the bottom and along the shores of this river, and despite its relatively shallow depth, it can be as wide as 300 yards in places. Historically, the river formed part of Ankila's defenses against its militaristic neighbor and therefore has no bridges, but in the wake of the Calastian conquest, two new bridges are currently under construction.

**Whistling Wood:** The largest forest in Ankila, the Whistling Wood was once part of the vast region known as Geleeda's Grove. Today it is separate, and relatively safe, though titanspawn are rumored to lurk in its depths. The forest's name comes from the holes left in trees by a unique species of annelid known as the trunk worm. These thick-bodied creatures burrow into trees to consume their sap, leaving large holes behind. When the wind blows, the trees whistle and pipe in a wild cacophony of sound.

**Bleached Bay:** A calm and easily navigable stretch of water, the bay is named for the white cliffs that surround it, and for its chalky white beaches, known as the Bleached Shore. The region is best known as the site of an epic battle between Ankila and Calastia, in which the invaders won due to the treachery of the Ankilan queen, and for the struggles with the titanspawn during the Blood Monsoon. Today, the bay is traversed mostly by merchant vessels and ships of the Calastian navy.

## Flora and Fauna

From the northern oak woods to the southern sea, Ankila is a land where things are mostly as humankind

thinks they should be. Waving fields of grain and tall stalks of corn greet the passing traveler; domestic animals, including dogs, cats, cattle, pigs, chickens, and horses, seemingly outnumber the creatures of the wild; and even the laziest halfling could grow bored. On occasion, strange beasts emerge from the forest known as Geleeda's Grove or, more rarely, from the Whistling Wood, and sturdy Ankilan warriors are forced to put them down. Of late, Minister Riven seems determined to introduce more wildlife, especially wild deer and foxes that the nobles can hunt. The farmers mutter about the trouble this causes but keep their heads down as the baying hounds and thundering horses run past.

## People

Ankilans share the same physique as their neighbors in Calastia and the old Empire of Elz. They possess dark-toned skin, dark hair, and hazel or green eyes, excepting families descended from immigrants. The people of Ankila are not known for sharing the impetuous nature stereotypically assigned to their neighbors. Hedrada remains the prevailing religion in the kingdom, and his teachings show themselves in seemingly infinite ways ranging from sensible, if strict, laws to an abundance of common sense. Legal treatises are second in quality only to those of Hedrad, and some would contest that the Ankilan people have faced far more difficult circumstances than the cloistered city of the Celestial Shelf. Ankilans are renowned for their truthfulness, to the point that others may grow suspicious when an Ankilan remains silent.

## Culture

Once a defiant and martial people, the Ankilans have today lost much of their old spirit, replaced by a compliant acceptance of Calastian rule. Many Calastians have taken up residence here, preferring the safety and security of the occupied nation to the chaos in other parts of the Hegemony. Slowly but surely, Ankila is becoming yet another passive province under Virduk's iron heel.

The people of Ankila celebrate all of the holidays of Hedrada, especially those of Highwalls (first day of Hedrer) and Plentyfest (first of Hedrot). High Minister Riven has declared that Calastian holidays are to be celebrated as well, but Ankilans show a remarkable lack of enthusiasm for such occasions, and the High Minister does not push the issue.

Stories in Ankila are usually fables, each with a moral lesson to be learned. A clever bard will make sure that each of his tales is as much an education as a diversion. Accounts of the epic adventures of Ankila I and III are also popular, though Calastian authorities discourage such tales as looking toward a past that is best forgotten.

The kings of Ankila have always struggled to provide an education to their people, even sponsoring public schools as much as the royal budget would allow. Unfortunately, Calastian dignitaries do not see much value in educated Ankilans, so the gap between the old and the young grows daily.

Although Ankila's population is primarily human, halflings have long found Ankila to be a pleasant home. Indeed, many halfling communities here predate the exodus from the Haggard Hills. As in most of the Hegemony, the halflings are an oppressed minority, fit only for menial employment. The humans of Ankila have begun to adopt Calastia's arrogant racist attitudes, and turn a blind eye toward Virduk's excesses, pointing to the peace and prosperity that has visited the realm since the conquest.

## Crime and Punishment

Ankila practices law according to the holy scriptures of Hedrada applied practically to life. As such, a law exists for nearly everything that has ever occurred to the holy order of Hedrada, complete with footnotes and precedents. Only a few of the more common penalties are noted below:

**Petty Theft (Under 8 gp):** Anything worth less than a mule is considered petty theft. Petty thieves must work off three times the value of the attempted theft for the victim and return the goods as well.

**Grand Theft (8 gp or higher):** Breaking the bones of a foot or hand, plus the penalty for petty theft.

**Arson:** Death by being burned at the stake.

**Murder:** Execution. The executioners literally employ a blessed greathammer and strike the bound prisoner in the head until he is dead.

**Treason:** Previously this was treated like murder, but nowadays treason is a matter dealt with by the Calastian authorities.

## Religion

Hedrada has been the official god of the Kingdom of Ankila even during the years it has been under enemy occupation. Every king except Ankila IX has born the Hammer of Ankila as a symbol of authority, and even now some say that the Hammer simply waits the fall of Calastia. If anything, Calastian dominance has increased religious devotion in Ankila. Ankilans pray daily that justice comes to their conquerors. Every Ankilan attends temple on Hedraday, every single week, and faithfully celebrates the religious holidays of Hedrada or faces the crushing peer pressure of their fellow citizens. Madriel is also popular in the land's rural regions, where farmers and peasants appeal to her for safety and plenty. King Virduk has decreed that every city have a temple to Chardun, but most of the Great General's worshippers are Calastian colonists.

Hedradan priests in Ankila are organized into a group known as the Order of the White Cities. Originally charged with maintaining justice and order throughout the land, today the order has lost much of its authority, both due to Calastian encroachment and to the increasing corruption among the priesthood. In the north, where some spark of rebellion still smolders, the order has some indepen-

dence and helps manage the settlements in the old ways. Elsewhere, however, the priests of Hedrada have been persuaded to aid the oppressors and are not much better than Calastian puppets.

## Armed Forces

Calastian troops are the only standing army allowed in Ankila, for fear of rebellion. As the years have passed, the High Minister's worries have faded away as the Ankilans have proved nearly ideal subjects. Nevertheless, while he encourages a strong militia to fight potential crime or titanspawn invasions, Riven continues to reserve most military power for Calastians only. The nation's army is Ankilan in name only, and is organized along Calastian lines with Calastian officers. Most Ankilan youths serve willingly in the military, and there have been few, if any, disruptions in Calastian rule since the conquest. Given reports in Vashon, it would seem that even Virduk and Anteus are gradually becoming convinced that Ankila is nothing but a land of weaklings.

## Cities

### Sussephra

This beautiful city has long been the envy of its neighbors. Carefully planned streets, well constructed stone houses, and shining white clay-tiled roofs cascade along the terraced neighborhoods down toward the shimmering white beaches and the pale blue water of the bay.

**Main Gates:** Kept closed at night, by order of the High Minister, but usually only lightly guarded by Calastian troops.

**Grand Temple of Hedrada:** This great structure, built in an ancient and imposing style, is where the kings of Ankila are traditionally crowned. The Calastians have left the place alone, happy to allow their subjects free worship so long as they are compliant with Virduk's rule.

**Ankila's Palace:** More like a tremendous villa, this beautiful home houses Ankila IX, his family, and the 100 members of his Royal Guard, a unit of political appointees and part-time soldiers who enjoy parades and mock combat, but otherwise must be reminded not to hold their swords by the sharp end.

**The Governor's Quarters:** Larger and far grander than the king's own palace, this extensive estate has been appropriated by High Minister Riven and his cronies.

**King's Barracks:** Like the king's palace, the barracks of the capital have also become home to Calastian troops.

**The Mallet:** This tavern was the hangout of Ankila IX during youthful days when he was considered a bit of a troublemaker. Unknown to the Calastian authorities, it has become the center of a cell of resistance bent upon finally restoring Ankila to its rightful rulers.

## Other Cities

**Aqualana:** Built on a hill to avoid seasonal flooding, Aqualana is a coastal fishing and shipping community, and its inhabitants prefer the worship of Madriel to Hedrada. Quiet and economically unimportant, Aqualana has not been occupied by the Calastians, and is generally left in peace.

**Ardenai:** A potent symbol of Ankilan defiance, this fortress-city was the last to fall to the Calastian invaders. The Order of the White Cities remains relatively powerful here, and manages to administer the city in the old ways, though its citizens have increasingly come to accept Calastian dominance.

**Hedo:** This settlement is ruled by Duchess Anya Ferousa (*human female Ari12, LN*), a descendant of the infamous traitor Duke Dahnvek Ferousa, who handed Sussephra over to King Virduk. Hedo is a small but wealthy city, home to many rich Ankilan and Calastians, and is home to a large number of nobles from both nations. Many luxurious villas and mansions have been constructed here, and King Ankila IX generally prefers his estate outside the city to his official residence in Sussephra.

**Hedronie:** This northernmost Ankilan city served as an important base for resistance forces during the first Calastian incursion, but fell to Zathiskan forces during the second. Calastian forces reasserted their control when the Zathiskans left, but today the city is only lightly garrisoned and harbors some of the last remnants of Ankilan independence. The Order of the White Cities continues to administer the place, and from time to time openly defies Calastian law. So far, Virduk has seen fit not to notice, and the city remains relatively free.

**Merlahn:** A major garrison city during the first Calastian invasion, Merlahn today continues to be a large military center, home to many Calastian troops. In fact, the descendants of the original invasion force continue to dwell here, and have created a settlement whose character differs greatly from traditional Ankilan culture. Most who visit Merlahn say that it resembles a Calastian city more than Ankilan, and though Hedrada worship remains the official religion, the worship of Chardun is popular here as well.

**Port Segoura:** The priests of Hedrada have little power in this city, which is totally under Calastian domination. Many trade goods bound for the Gelspadian interior pass through this port, and official tariffs provide King Virduk with a rich source of income. Extremely corrupt, Segoura is full of thieves, swindlers, dishonest merchants and confidence tricksters, and though there is an official Calastian governor, the city is actually run by its merchant guilds. These guilds resemble organized crime families more than trading houses, and hold the city in an unshakeable grip. Virduk has acknowledged the guilds' influence, and often deals with them directly, bypassing his own governor.

## Calastia

**Name:** Kingdom of Calastia and Seat of the Calastian Hegemony

**Population:** 1,500,000 (Human 86%, Halfling 11%, Other 3%)

**Government:** Absolute monarchy

**Ruler:** King Virduk (*human male Ari8/Ftr10, LE*; see *The Wise & the Wicked*, pg. 109)

**Capital:** Vashon (75,000)

**Major Cities:** Delis (11,000), Eldmadren (10,000), Pahrae (9,000)

**Language:** Calastian

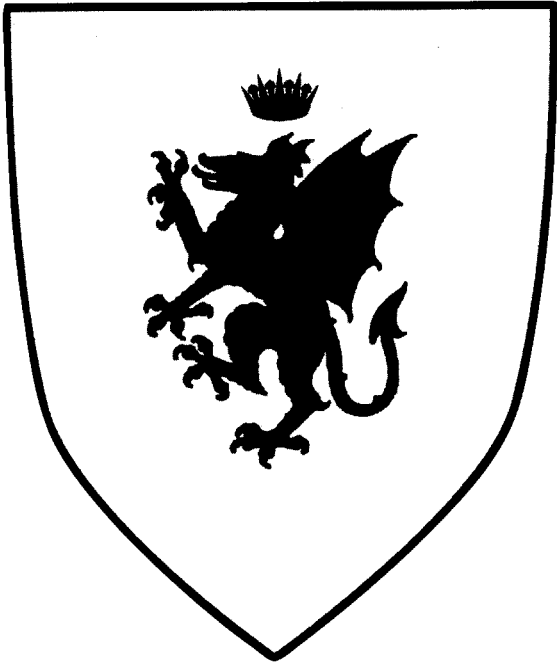
**Religion:** All nine of the major gods are worshipped, with the nobility and military worshipping Chardun.

**Currency:** Calastian currency is spread across the Hegemony: platinum calas (1 pp), gold dominion (1 gp), silver regent (1 sp), copper drake (1 cp).

**Resources:** Wheat, cattle, fish, lumber, arms and armor.

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



### History

Long before the Divine War, the rebellious Calas Province proved a source of nearly endless trouble for the Ledean Empire. Despite the Empire's defeat of the Scarlet Dragon dynasty, which once ruled Calas, resistance continued such that the Emperor was ultimately forced to assign one of his own relatives to govern the Province. More than one dynasty turned its legions to the task of completely subduing the region, particularly the Vhaerith and Morian dynasties, each without success. When the

empire of Lede fell, Calas was the first Province to turn to self-rule, shattering into numerous petty kingdoms, each possessed of the same independent spirit they had shown for centuries. The governor of Calas declared himself King, and Calastia was formed from the remnants of the Calas Province's center.

The new kings of Calastia declared their allegiance to the god Chardun and set about ruling their kingdom according to his vision. When the Charduni Empire swept across Ghelspad, the Calastia's King Vashith spoke to them as equals under the scepter of Chardun, and the charduni advance stopped short of his realm. Vashith was forced to apply pressure to his neighbors, including Ankila, so that they would submit to charduni rule, and he acquiesced in order to avoid possible conflict with the mighty Charduni Empire. The line of Calastia has shown itself to be long lived indeed, and Vashith persevered through the entirety of the Divine War. Although King Vashith supported the gods against the titans, particularly Chardun, he was careful to avoid placing himself in dire situations that might have ended his life. His armies moved against the titanspawn according to his directions, but never did the king present himself to his foes.

Shortly after the Divine War, Vashith passed away and left his throne to his son Delisuk. King Delisuk moved the capital south, renaming it Delis in his own honor. Although Delisuk accomplished little in the way of expanding Calastia, he is credited with rebuilding the Calastian navy. Delisuk passed away in 36 AV, leaving the kingdom to young Pahrail. King Pahrail began Calastia's ongoing campaign of expansion, seizing the southeastern lands of Lavash and expanding control of the northern forest beyond the Eni River all the way to the northern border of the woods. Pahrail launched an invasion into Ankila in 54 AV, but was slain at the Battle of Dragonshield by Ankila V one month before the Ankilan heir was slain by a Zathiskan assassin. Pahrail's son Korlos assumed the throne amidst a storm of mourning.

King Korlos did little to expand the Calastian kingdom, attending the Convention of Vera-Tre but remaining mostly silent during its proceedings. In 74 AV, Korlos' wife bore his child, Prince Virduk. On that day, a red star shone forth in the heavens, and Korlos sought the words of an oracle in order to learn his son's future. The old crone's words seemed to suggest that Virduk would lead his father's kingdom to greatness, and Korlos set about making sure the boy was ready for his task. Young Virduk was mistreated in innumerable ways in preparation for his assumption of the throne, while Korlos unsuccessfully probed the weaknesses of one neighboring kingdom after another.

Luckily for Prince Virduk, his father at least paved the way, building a strong kingdom and setting talented spies to determine his enemies' weaknesses. Nevertheless, when Virduk killed his own father in

90 AV, he was deeply disappointed in Korlos' accomplishments. Virduk's first act was to recall the troops he felt had been wastefully sent to aid in the Druid War, and he met the cheering Calastian crowds with a proud announcement that the troops were already invading their soft and incompetent neighbors. Within 20 years' time, the young king had matured into a cruel and crafty ruler and built his kingdom into a strong and expanding empire.

In 112 AV, the Blood Monsoon swept across eastern Ghelspad and interrupted Calastia's advances. Virduk's plans were halted, and indeed set back many years, as he was forced to turn his troops to ensuring the very survival of his nation. Finally, by 126 AV the Blood Monsoon seemed to be at an end, and Virduk renewed his assaults, especially turning the troops of Lageni against Ankila, Irontooth Pass, Burok Torn, and Durrover for their simple crime of surviving his campaign 14 years prior. In the years since the end of the Blood Monsoon, King Virduk has solidified and expanded his command of eastern Ghelspad to a level never known by any eastern nation. In a sense, he has created a reflection of the ancient empires, only one determined to roll eastwards rather than to the west.

## Geography

Most of Calastia proper is open plains, varying from dry grasslands to lush farmlands. The eastern border of the home province stops at the Eni River and Lake Vashon, although in the south it extends across the Lavash region all the way to the archipelago that divides the Blood Sea and the Blossoming Sea. To the west, the Calastian homeland stops at the western arm of the Eni River, and to the north it includes Geleeda's Grove.

**Lake Vashon:** This beautiful lake gathers the waters of the Kelders and the plains around the lake. On the western bank, the lake is joined by the city of Vashon, while the eastern shore is home to the Lageni city of Aovnir. Nobles of both cities hold aquatic festivals wherein their wide, flat barges gather for floating parties.

**Geleeda's Grove:** This forest long was split between the Calas and Venirian Provinces of the Ledean Empire. King Pahrail seized it entirely for Calastia, and King Virduk gifted the forest to his wife Geleeda. In contrast to the divine races that dominate the lands all around it, the forest seems to harbor various titanspawn ranging from spider-eye goblins to sinister hags.

## Flora and Fauna

Calastia is a very large kingdom. Its lands vary from the forests of Geleeda's Grove to the bountiful ocean landscape of the Blossoming Sea. Living things vary accordingly, with the southern realms relatively domesticated, full of such mundane creatures as horses, cows, sheep, and goats. A few predators and errant titanspawn sometimes plague these regions, but they

are summarily dealt with by the authorities. The northern portions of the nation, particularly those near Geleeda's Grove, have been growing more dangerous of late, but few have displayed the courage to suggest it might be because of some evil in the queen's forest. Goblins, giant serpents, and blight wolves have been sighted in the north, and stories have continued to circulate of hags and gorgons in the woods themselves. Those spreading such tales are usually silenced, either with threats or arrest by agents of the Calastian monarch.

## People

Calastians share the epic qualities of the Empire of Elz, the Empire of Zathiske, and the Calas Province. Their skin is dusky, their hair dark and their eyes usually green or brown. Contrary to the popular image of a tyrant's subjects, most Calastians are quite happy and content, proud of their nation and quite enamored of their monarchs. Certainly, Virduk's treatment of his enemies is harsh, they say, but those who have done nothing wrong have nothing to fear, and those who condemn the king's authoritarian rule are hypocrites or weaklings. Geleeda is especially beloved across the nation, both for her beauty and her supposedly generous and patriotic character. Of course, those who suggest that she slept her way to the throne, or — worse — is some kind of semi-human interloper sent by the titanspawn to corrupt the nation, are quickly and usually brutally silenced.

Racism is the rule in Calastia, though often it is of a subtle kind. Though there is much outright hatred of non-humans, particularly elves, many Calastians affect a more patronizing attitude, believing it to be their duty to take other wayward divine races under Calastia's wing to guide and educate them in their "proper" roles. Of course, these roles usually involve serving humans in some fashion, but intellectual Calastians have convinced themselves that non-humans are not fit for better, and are actually *happier* when reduced to mindless servitude. Elves are considered to be unlettered savages, or the sad remnants of a once-great race whose time has passed, and dwarves are thought to be stubborn and ignorant money-grubbers, if industrious and useful when kept in their place.

Halflings are a substantial minority throughout the Hegemony and are generally kept in a state of eternal poverty and servitude. So desperate are the halflings' circumstances that they are almost pathetically grateful for the few kindnesses that Queen Geleeda chooses to show as proof of her mercy and generosity. Some halflings see this propaganda for what it is and have formed an underground movement seeking to free their people from Calastian tyranny. At worst, Calastians consider halflings to be a nuisance and do not care if they live or die. At best, halflings are considered useful servants, capable of being molded into obedient and trusted companions through a combination of kindness and loving discipline.



## Culture

King Virduk's rule has helped to foster an air of superiority and arrogance in even the poorest of Calastians. The notion of Calastian preeminence in all things, and its "sacred" role as successor to the ancient empires such as Lede, has been carefully ingrained into all citizens from birth. Virduk's conquests and his ruthless exploitation of all subject lands has enabled him to provide well for his people, granting basic education, food and shelter to the poor, and support for the families of those soldiers slain in his many wars. That he does not tolerate dissent, and that those who raise their voices in protest simply disappear does not matter to the average Calastian. Troublemakers, says a popular Calastian proverb, dig their own graves.

The ancient virtues of stoic tolerance for hardship, austere fashions and respect for military qualities are all reflected in Calastian aesthetics. Buildings are simple but elegant, and the mansions of the wealthy often sport stylized variations on King Virduk's black dragon blazon. Clothing is utilitarian, though nobles and wealthy merchants will sometimes enhance simple garments with a single elaborate feature, such as embroidery, brooches, or family heraldry. Songs are usually of a rousing martial nature, extolling the glories of Calastian military victories, mourning defeats and looking back at the deeds of ancient heroes.

Calastian games are extremely competitive. Physical games encourage the epitome of athletic talent, while mental games are the ruthless battlegrounds of courtly nobles. Calastia celebrates all of the holidays of Chardun, plus the birthdays of Virduk and Geleeda. On such days, the monarchs give their *subjects* gifts, usually in the form of coins or small treasures, another act that increases the people's love for their "benevolent" rulers.

## Crime and Punishment

Outsiders see Calastian law as harsh and unforgiving. The truth is that Calastian punishments are tempered by the desire of King Virduk to seem fair and impartial. Every law must pass the judgment of the King and a council he specifically asks to oversee such matters.

**Petty Theft (30 gp or under):** Hard labor for one month. Repeat offenses bring harsher penalties, including maiming and scarring.

**Grand Theft (31 gp or higher):** Military service for one year per 10 gp of value. Habitual criminals are imprisoned or sentenced to hard labor for long periods, or have limbs removed.

**Assault:** Imprisonment, fine, and maiming to match injuries to the victim.

**Murder:** Death by beheading.

**Treason:** Death by torture.

## Religion

King Virduk allows the open worship of each of the primary gods who took part in the Divine War. Temples to Corean, Tanil, Madriel, Hedrada, Enkili, Vangal, and Belsameth are found in every city. Nevertheless, the temples of Chardun are held in the highest regard by the king and his advisors. The primary holidays are those of the priests of Chardun and the King and Queen's birthdays. Every citizen is expected to attend temple on every Charday, although many also attend a different temple than that of Chardun. Important religious holidays are further enhanced by the small gifts that Virduk and Geleeda give their citizens, and by great public feasts held at the crown's expense.

## Armed Forces

Military service in Calastia is not universally compulsory, but it is highly encouraged among young males. In fact, a common punishment for grand theft or assault is forced military service. King Virduk and his advisors figure that those who cannot be a productive part of society are better off dying for their country. The poor and unproductive are often press-ganged into the military – rounded up and advised to "voluntarily" enlist. Those who refuse tend to disappear, or find themselves working on roads or mines in far corners of the Hegemony.

The Calastian military is a well-oiled machine. Though supplemented by large numbers of ill-trained levies (criminals and the unproductive), the nation's core units are among the finest on the continent. Calastia specializes in infantry tactics, with cavalry reserved for a scouting or shock role. Elite horsemen from Lageni, especially Duke Traviak's Black Dragons, are often called in to assist the Calastian army.

In keeping with ancient tradition, Calastian soldiers are organized into legions, each numbering about 5,000, under the command of a Legate. Each legion is a self-contained army, containing both light and heavy infantry, scout cavalry, siege equipment and logistical elements. These units are often supplemented by large numbers of irregular levies, which are assigned to whatever legion needs them. A levy's life is a hard one, with minimal rations, poor equipment and sadistic commanders. Most often, levies are expected to simply absorb casualties, enabling their attached legion to advance unhindered.

Legions are expected to be self-sufficient, and remain in the field for months at a time. All have large supply trains, but they are also trained in foraging techniques that usually involve raiding local settlements. In the best of cases, legions offer Calastian scrip in exchange for supplies that they plunder, but the victim of such "foraging missions" must journey to Vashon in order to exchange scrip for hard currency, a trip that most peasants are unable to make.

Calastia maintains a sizeable navy, but are not known as especially innovative naval commanders. Though the fleet is based in the port city of Delis, the best sailors in the navy come from the city of Rahoch. There are, however, a limited number of Rahochans, and truly skilled mariners have proven hard to find, forcing King Virduk to hire mercenaries to crew his ships.

## Cities

### Vashon

Vashon is one of the mightiest cities in Ghelspad. Supported by the plentiful provisions of Calastia's plains, the deep waters of Lake Vashon, and the faithful protection of the king's troops, the city has prospered like few others.

**Main Gates:** On the southwest side of the city, these mighty gates have never been tested, and yet engineers everywhere already envy their incredible construction.

**Virduk's Palace:** This fabulous hilltop structure combines the decadence of Calastian nobility with the harsh utilitarianism of the Chardun-worshipping military.

**Geleeda's Palace:** Built since the King's marriage to his young queen, this lakeside structure seems less secure and far more luxurious, though magically knowledgeable observers say that this is an illusion.

**Anteas' Tower:** This forbidding structure stands taller than any other building in Vashon. Its battlements lie far above the view of most citizens, and many whisper that on occasion Anteas does not stand alone upon their heights.

### Other Cities

**Delis:** Named for a previous king of Calastia, this port city is not favored by merchants, but is renowned as the center of the Calastian navy.

**Eldmadren:** Once the capital of the southeastern kingdom of Lavash, this city is now home to the innumerable cousins of King Virduk, whom he has entrusted to maintain control over the area.

**Pahrae:** This city owes its name to another previous king of Calastia. During his reign, it served as the center of the Calastian military structure, and even today its walls are home to the Calastian Military Academy, where many of the nation's greatest military leaders are forged.

## Darakeene

**Name:** United Provinces of Darakeene

**Population:** 1,500,000 (76% Human, 12% Halfling, 6% Elf, 4% Half-orc, 2% Dwarf)

**Government:** Nine once-separate provinces have united under one king and have since grown largely indistinct from one another; all now submit to the rule of a single emperor.

**Ruler:** His Most Regal Majesty, Emperor Klum the Impartial (*human male Ari8/Ftr3, N*)

**Capital:** Meliad (100,000)

**Major Cities:** Llangwyr (25,000), Cantontown (24,000), Ard Macha (22,000), Trum (18,000), Fermmag (16,000), Catlaigh (16,000), Magh Trego (12,000), Weyside (6,000)

**Languages:** Darakeene, Ledean

**Religion:** None official, but all "officially respected."

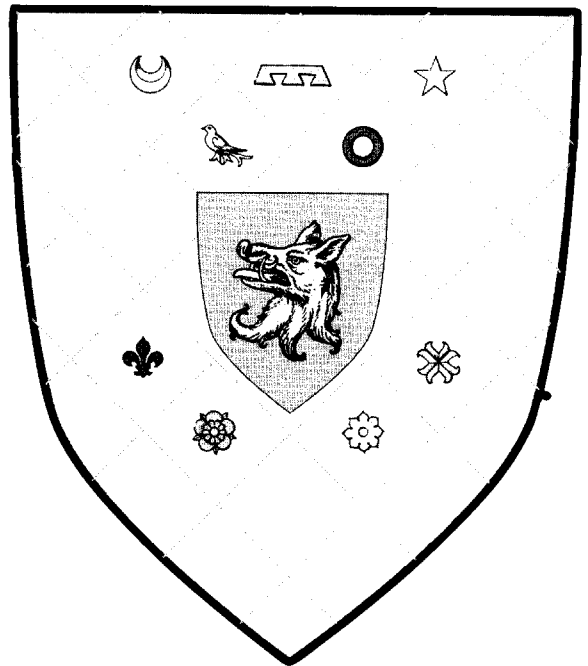
**Currency:** Gold stater (1 gp), gold half-stater (5 sp), silver argen (1 sp), bronze half-argen (5 cp), bronze verica (1 cp)

**Resources:** Grain, strong alcohol, sheep, cattle, wool, leather, ships, silver, bronze, copper, tin

**Major Imports:** Glass and glassware, textiles, fruit, wine, precious stones, gold, decorative woods

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** None



## History

Darakeene is a nation of both constancy and great change. More than 1,000 years ago, the great warrior Ardan ma Uisliu united the barbaric Keltai tribes into a single nation. The borders of each tribe's lands were set, and they became the nine provinces forming the United Provinces of Darakeene, with

Uisliu as its first king. For many years the nation prospered, but growing complacency and old tribal factionalism eventually prevailed. In 2413 OC, the monarchy was dissolved and the nation of Darakeene officially disbanded as a sovereign state. All that changed with the Divine War.

The provinces fared well during the Divine War and escaped relatively unscathed. Fearing the fate of other nations and peoples, though, the provinces drew together to present a united front, securing their borders against invasion. Numerous attempts were made both by monstrous and divine races to breach Darakeene's frontiers, but to no avail. In 8 AV, the provinces formed an official coalition under the control of a unified military council consisting of the highest ranking military officer from each province.

The greatest hero of modern Darakeene is Selrach the Great. In 39 AV, at the age of 31, he became a member of the council representing Dara province. His skill at governance and tactics — not to mention his personal magnetism — made him an ideal leader for the council, and by 44 AV the council itself was dissolved, ceding ultimate control over the provincial coalition to Selrach. He led a campaign both of words and arms to forge the nine provinces into a single, unified nation. One by one, each province's leaders agreed. In 53 AV, the United Provinces of Darakeene was officially declared a sovereign nation once again.

Darakeene has enjoyed a rather peaceful history compared to most other nations. The land has a long druidic tradition, and its Denev-worshipping druids joined the fight against the evil druids during the infamous Druid War. The most tumultuous period of modern Darakeene history was the years known as the Succession Wars.

In 84 AV, Selrach the Great died. Selrach had no children of his own and had named his nephew Klum as his heir shortly before his death. As Klum could not ascend the throne until age 16, his uncle Burdot served as ruler in his stead. During Burdot's regency, dozens of factions laid claim to the throne, leading to six years of warfare and numerous attempts on Klum's life. Somehow the boy lived to see his 16th birthday and was duly crowned. Many rebellious nobles swore allegiance to their new ruler, and soon the Succession Wars were over.

In 119 AV, thousands of vengaurak spilled from the Spires of Gaurak and laid siege to Darakeene's northern provinces. They were eventually defeated, but at great cost. Both of Klum's sons were killed in the fighting, leaving the emperor childless. Still very much in love with his dead wife Davilla, who had died only three years earlier, Klum refused to take another bride in an effort to sire a new heir. The mutiny of a large portion of Darakeene's fleet in 125 AV when the nation of Karria was founded severely weakened Klum's navy, and his nation's sea power has yet to recover fully.

Currently, separatist sentiment flourishes in Darakeene's southern provinces. Emperor Klum has quietly been moving troops to the neighborhood of the Fouled Forest and seems ready to annex it as part of Darakeene. He hopes to use its timber to help make Darakeene the premiere naval power and ship-building nation on Ghelspad. Klum has proven to be a strong and able leader, but at age 72 his health is failing. Being childless, there are fears of another succession war should he not soon name an heir able to ascend the throne immediately on his death. Many would-be kings have long memories and pass their grudges on to their children like a treasured family heirloom. Many fear that a new Succession War will lead to the breakup of Darakeene.

## Geography

The majority of Darakeene consists of rolling fields and moorlands. Elsewhere, a wide range of geographic features are represented: mountains and hills to the east, rivers and marshlands of the west, forests and woodlands in the south.

**Aethylwald:** The woodlands of southern Darakeene once formed the vast and unbroken Grianan Wood. Centuries of harvesting the wood for construction and ship building have greatly reduced these forests. Soon after the Divine War, a group of elves left homeless by the war were allowed to settle there and take the woods as their own. Their capital Aethylwald, for which the woods are named, has been seen by few outsiders as the elves keep mostly to themselves.

**Waring Wood:** North of Aethylwald lies Waring Wood, said to be inhabited by all manner of strange and magical beasts, fairy folk, and mystical herbs that may be found nowhere else. On the northern fringe of the wood lies Wallingham Abbey, a well-known Hedradan monastery.

## Flora and Fauna

Darakeene fairly teems with wildlife. All manner of beasts walk this land — elk, bear, wolves, bullocks, rabbits, deer, and a hundred more. Unfortunately, Darakeene is also home to its fair share of titanspawn creatures. Foul goblins, orcs, ogres, and the like may be found virtually anywhere, and the eastern regions swarm with vangaurak from the Spires of Gaurak — just to name a few. Darakeene also has a substantial number of fairy folk and the fey races including brewer gnomes, nixies, pixies, dryads, and nymphs. Tribes of hill giants are known to plague the nation's northern provinces.

Darakeene has all the normal plants and animals one would expect. Oak, maple, larch, yew, and chestnut trees grow in abundance along with a hundred more mundane varieties. A number of rare herbs and plants grow in Darakeene as well, which are of great use to spellcasters, herbalists, and healers.



*A Meliad city guardsman, a Keltai tribesman, a peasant farmer and a noble couple.*

## People

Through many years of immigration, invasion, and intermarriage, the people of Darakeene are highly varied in appearance. They generally have pale skin, but eye and hair color varies widely. It is the current vogue among Darakeene men to wear their hair short and to keep short, well trimmed beards. Both men and women tend to wear a lot of jewelry and equally elaborate and decorated clothing.

A few isolated pockets of native Keltai “barbarians” have stuck to the old ways and live a life very like that of their ancestors. They are not throwbacks, nor are they ignorant of the modern world; they simply choose to live their traditional life on their own terms. The Keltai have either blonde or red hair exclusively, and Keltai men are always mustached but never bearded. Keltai men often decorate their bodies — faces included — with swirling blue tattoos of intricate and complex design.

The Darakeene are generally a pleasant lot, quick witted and clever. They try to stay abreast of trends in fashion and culture in Ghelspad, but are somewhat isolated and often a little behind the times. The nation keeps carefully neutral in political matters, but every person is more than willing to share his more than definite opinion on all matters, including other nations.

There is no prohibition against owing or carrying weapons in Darakeene, and indeed every

household is required to keep a sword, spear, bow, or crossbow in good shape and working order should the people ever need to help fend off an invasion. Every citizen is required to spend half of the third Madraday of each month practicing with his weapon. Most nobles carry a longsword or rapier on their belts at all times.

## Culture

Most Darakeene youth either work the same land as their parents or are apprenticed to a trade. Apprenticeship can occur as early as age seven, and any youth not bound to a master by age 14 never will be. The apprentice lives and works in the master’s home and shop in exchange for room and board and learning the trade. Those lucky enough to serve a generous master may even receive an allowance, though most are expected to make money by selling their practice pieces. The life of an apprentice is a tough one, and the youth have little time for recreation, save for once a year at the harvest festival.

The harvest festival is held in late Madrer when the last harvest is brought in. While most Darakeene citizens celebrate the religious holidays of their respective gods, Harvest Day is the only holiday shared by all Darakeene. Traditionally, the apprentices use this day to blow off steam. They gather in two massive teams, often hundreds to a side, to enjoy the game colloquially known as “king’s head.” Two goals are set, normally a mile or more apart. Popular choices

include city halls, temples, and city gates. The teams then jump into a massive scrum and begin fighting for a pig's bladder filled with grain, the eponymous king's head. It is not uncommon for the scrum to last all day and nary a goal scored, and great fun is had by all.

When not involved in a massive pileup in the town square, apprentices tend to enjoy what little time they can find to themselves when the work is done, appreciating a drink at the local public house and sharing a game of Buanbach or Fidchell — popular and ancient board games — with a few mates. Most inns, taverns, and public houses employ musicians and bards to provide entertainment in the evenings. The Darakeene prefer traditional music, though they seem equally happy with Gentraige — lively, boisterous, and happy tunes — or Goltraige — sad and lamenting tunes. The Darakeene see the harp as the queen of instruments, but other popular choices include flutes, whistles, drums, and the uniquely Darakeene bagpipe, an instrument that looks rather like a smartly dressed octopus and sounds rather like someone throttling a cat.

Darakeene cuisine has little diversity. Even the nobility prefer a traditional diet of ordinary and hearty food such as boiled potatoes, cabbage, beef, bread, and the like. The Darakeene produce a unique, fiery whiskey that is known throughout the continent. A relatively simple drink in theory, there are more than 200 unique blends and flavors from various regions and distillers.

The common folk find little need or time for learning their letters and so literacy is a privilege reserved for the wealthy and scholarly. Consequently, Darakeene employs a large number of criers and heralds to keep the populace abreast of important news and information.

Marriage in Darakeene is for life, though both men and women whose spouses die are permitted to remarry. The Darakeene have an odd tradition known as the Ban Urnadna, or “contract wife.” When a marriage has not produced children, the husband may hire a second wife for a period of a year and a day in hopes of siring a child. Any children born of the union are considered to be the married couple's; the Ban Urnadna has no rights to the child. The custom has fallen greatly out of practice in the past centuries, though it is far from extinct.

Most Darakeene are buried after death. The wealthy are interred in stone vaults or catacombs, while the peasantry are consigned to simple graves. Those who die penniless are relegated to unmarked mass graves. Soldiers and others who died in military service to the nation are buried in proper, marked graves. Particularly notable leaders and heroes are buried in traditional mounds heaped with wealth and the weapons of their enemies.

Darakeene is a land blessed in many ways — protected from the predations of both monsters and other nations by its geography. Possessed of a pleasant

climate, its verdant lands produce an abundance of food, and it is welcoming to peoples from all races and nations. It is home to both the famed Ledean war colleges, which turn out the most skilled soldiers in all of Ghelspad; the renowned Phylacteric Vault, training ground for many of Ghelspad's most skilled and powerful mages; as well as both of Ghelspad's most preeminent mercenary groups, the Legion of Ash and the Crimson Legion. Darakeene is indeed a land unique and unsurpassed in all of Ghelspad.

## Crime and Punishment

Outside of the major cities of Darakeene, there are no permanent courts of law. Instead, the state employs a number of traveling magistrates who travel the length and breadth of Darakeene hearing cases and passing judgment. The word of the magistrate is final. Unless new evidence is brought forth or another party confesses to a crime, there is no appeal. All parties involved in the case must be present to offer their arguments in person. Failure to appear may result in a summary judgment against them.

The Keltai clans have their own laws and rarely if ever appeal to the Darakeene magistrates to intervene. Lesser crimes are punished by a term of service to the injured party. For greater crimes such as murder, rape, or killing another clan's cattle, the guilty party is condemned to die, burned at the stake. The ancient wickerman ceremony was used until recently, but its association with the cannibals of Khet has discouraged its use by the Keltai.

Each crime has two sentences listed. The one before the slash represents typical Darakeene punishments while after the slash is listed the traditional Keltai punishments.

**Petty Theft (41 gp or under):** 1 to 12 months in jail / 1 week service per gp value stolen

**Grand Theft (42 gp or higher):** 1 to 5 years in prison / 1 month service per gp value stolen

**Arson:** Imprisonment for 3 to 5 years / 1 month to 3 years' service to the victim

**Desecration of a Sacred Site:** 1 to 3 years in prison / Death

**Murder:** Death

**Rape:** 1 to 5 years in prison depending on the victim's social station

**Treason:** Imprisonment (until pardoned by the emperor) or death

## Religion

Darakeene has no official state religion, though the worship of Madriel is the most common among the general populace. The notable exception is in the province of Wexland. Lord Gasslander of Wexland (*human male Ari6/Rgr8, CN*) has declared a new state religion. All temples in Wexland are now devoted to the worship of a nameless god known simply as That Which Abides. None can fully explain this odd turn



of events, though many think Lord Wexland has been driven mad from grief over his wife's recent death. Priests of other gods have objected strongly to Gasslander's actions, though some – particularly the servants of Madriel – have tried to minister to the distraught monarch and find the source of his madness. Resentment toward Gasslander is growing, especially in the neighboring province of Trumland.

Druidism was the faith of the Keltai, and many druids still live and worship here. The Keltai tribes remain devoutly druidic, and the faith is almost as common in rural communities, where the peasants look to Denev for the bounty of the land. Despite the fact that the druids of Darakeene universally worship Denev and that they aided in fighting on the side of good during the Druid War, these mysterious priests are viewed with mistrust and no small amount of fear by many of Darakeene's citizens, a situation that is in no way mitigated by the fact that the druids of Fenmorgh inadvertently created a wickerman during the last solstice celebration, compelling Emperor Klum to ban the practice.

## Armed Forces

Darakeene has abandoned the old legion system in favor of their own new military structure. Though the king is ostensibly the commander of the army, the duty really lies in the hands of Imperial General Robert de Tah (*human male Ftr16, LG*). Below him are dozens of generals, colonels, and other officers. De Tah keeps a tight reign on his men and insists on constant training. Some observers fear that de Tah has his eye on the throne and is relying on the support of the army to see him through, but most dismiss this as idle speculation.

The smallest division of troops in the Darakeene army is the unit, consisting of 99 troops and 1 wizard or sorcerer. Ten units form a division of 1,000, and 10 divisions form a company of 10,000. There are currently six companies of infantry, three companies of archers, and one company of cavalry. Companies are rarely fielded as a whole. Instead, smaller divisions and units of each type are used where they are needed at any one time. During times of war, the government can also raise an irregular force of Keltai fighters for sneak attacks or body-mass charges, both tactics at which the Keltai excel.

The Darakeene Navy was once the pride of the nation, but two and a half decades after the Great Mutiny (as it is commonly called) Emperor Klum is reluctant to let the fleet out of his sight, and its sailors' skills have declined as a result. The navy still maintains several magnificent sailed and oared vessels, but they are rarely allowed out of port for more than a few days at a time.

## The War Colleges

Named for the ancient empire that once ruled much of Ghelspad, the Ledean War Colleges carry on

the old traditions and train some of the finest warriors on the continent. Though they all theoretically serve the crown, the war colleges are nevertheless highly competitive, and rivalries between them often verge on open conflict.

All the colleges save one are located near the capitol of Meliad. Due to the extensive grounds required for drilling, barracks and armories, the colleges are all based outside the city proper.

Each college is known for its distinctive weapons and tactics, and each has its own colors and heraldry, worn by graduates no matter where they serve – whether in the Darakeene military, or among the many mercenary bands of Ghelspad.

**Clayborn:** Widely considered the toughest and most demanding of the colleges, Clayborn's colors are blue and white. Severe punishments are meted out for the smallest of infractions, but the college's masters believe that this helps make their warriors more resilient and resistant to hardship. Graduates are expected to shave their heads, but are sometimes allowed to retain a scallock. Clayborn warriors are known for their love of finery, wearing fancifully-engraved armor, bearing masterwork weapons, and dressing in fanciful fur-trimmed cloaks. Never mistake this love of luxury for weakness, however – a Clayborn warrior is one of the most resourceful fighters on the continent. This school specializes in combined arms, with its warriors favoring sword and longbow. Members of this school worship lawful gods – Corean, Hedrada and Chardun.

**Hammerdale:** Attended primarily by disciples of Hedrada, Hammerdale's uniforms are brown, and its graduates often paint their faces in shades of ochre to signify their allegiance. As might be expected from the college's name and patron god, its favored weapon is the warhammer, though all other weapons are taught as well. Hammerdale fighters are also known for their distinctive armor and weapons, made from a tough bluish metal called azurite, that is said to rival elven steel in lightness and durability. The technique of making this metal is not known, and the Hammerdale smiths keep it a closely-guarded secret.

**Plague:** The Plague College is feared and distrusted throughout the continent, though its scouts, spies and assassins are often in great demand. Household colors are green and black, and while those who attend the college are allowed to worship as they choose, Belsameth is their most favored deity. Trained in the art of stealth, treachery, and silent killing, Plague graduates often serve alone or in small groups, working behind the scenes to disrupt enemy forces or kill commanders. The dagger is the college's favored weapon, but the crossbow, shuriken and similar arms are also taught. Graduates are commonly known as "serpents," and it is said that they often use specially-crafted magic daggers that return to the bearer's hand when thrown.



**Glamerhill:** The last of the great academies located near Meliad has what is probably the best reputation. Glamerhill students are schooled in the arts of strategy, tactics, and warfare, but also receive instruction in the arcane arts, specifically those involving illusion. An illusionist/fighter from this school is a deadly opponent, and is also very imposing physically, as the school favors taller students. The school's color is crimson, and its signature weapon is the spiked chain. As with other schools, numerous weapons are taught in addition to this one, as the spiked chain is impractical in large scale battles.

**Wake:** The Wake College (named for the wake left behind a seagoing vessel) is based in Cantontown, and trains a majority of Darakeene's sailors. Once basic training is complete, students are sent to coastal settlements where they learn the secrets of naval combat, and are trained with the college's signature weapon, the saber. The house's colors are blue and green, the colors of the sea. Since the defection of the Darakeene fleet in 125 AV, discipline at this school has increased, and students are constantly reminded of their duty to the emperor.

**Minor Colleges:** Many other colleges exist in Darakeene, ranging in size from a few students to several hundred. A few have attained almost as great a reputation as the five major colleges, but none have ever exceeded it. Among the best known of these minor colleges is the Sisterhood of the Scythe, a

college whose student body is entirely female, and who follow the path of Denev the Earth Mother. Their classrooms are in forests and groves throughout the realm, and they are rarely seen in Darakeene's cities.

## Cities

### Meliad

**1. North Ward:** Mostly large estates and ancient homes, though there are homes of the noble and wealthy throughout the city.

**2. The Guildmarket:** Most craftsmen and tradesmen in Darakeene belong to guilds, which set prices and ensure the quality of guild members' products. Only guildsmen may sell products in this marketplace.

**3. Northgate Reach:** As the city has grown, it has expanded beyond its walls. Northgate Reach is an area filled with businesses that cater to travelers such as inns, taverns, carters, horse merchants, and stables.

**4. The Wayfarer's Repose:** The largest inn outside the walls of the city proper, it serves the needs of caravans and travelers who arrive at Meliad after the gates are closed for the night. It is also popular with rogues and adventurers, as it officially lies outside of the city and so is exempt from many city laws and ordinances.

**5. Temple Ward:** Temples and shrines to every deity and demigod may be found in this neighborhood of winding streets and alleys.

**6. Winterset Keep:** The traditional home of the monarch in Meliad. The keep is actually a connected series of fortified buildings surrounded by a high stone wall interrupted only by stout iron gates. Guard duty at the keep is considered a plum assignment for city guardsmen, and so only the cream of the crop are encountered here.

**7. Law Courts:** All manner of governmental activity is conducted here. This imposing structure of black stone does little to instill a sense of hope in any who are forced to come here to have their cases heard. The city prison sits across the street and is connected by an enclosed stone bridge three stories above the road below. Anyone convicted of a crime is taken directly to the prison.

**8. Artisan's Ward:** All manner of artists and craftsmen may be found here. Blacksmiths, cordwainers, coopers, glassblowers, joiners, guilders, and more make and sell their wares in these twisted streets and alleys. The ward is bounded by Shorditch Street to the north, Bridge Street to the east, the harbor on the south, and the city wall on the west.

**9. The Dockyards:** The shores of the city proper are too steeply sloped and marshy to be of any use as a permanent dockyard. Instead, the firmer land on the eastern side of the river came to be used as the city's docks. This also helps to isolate the unsavory elements common to such places away from the city proper.

**10. Inner Harbor:** Before the docks were moved to the eastern shore of the river, the inner harbor was the main port for ship traffic. A large number of warehouses remain in the surrounding streets, but now the small dock facilities here serve only as berths for the pleasure vessels of the city's wealthy.

**11. The Bulwark:** This massive gray-stone keep is the oldest structure in the city. It straddles the island from shore to shore and presents an imposing barrier against attack from the south. The Bulwark is also the headquarters of the city guard.

**12. Hightemple:** Hightemple is not a temple at all but rather the home of the Meliad Ledean War College. This sprawling complex of high-walled structures hides the activities within from prying eyes.

**13. The Backs:** A rat's nest of nameless dead-end streets and back alleys. The backs are proof that any thought of keeping away unsavory elements by locating the docks on the opposite side of the river failed miserably. Even rogues fear to walk these streets at night alone. The backs are home to more thieves, rogues, mercenaries, and cutthroats than any other single place in all of Darakeene. It is a hotbed of illegal activity of all sorts, including prostitution, gambling, drugs, theft, murder, and smuggling.

**14. Southgate Reach:** Similar to Northgate Reach, this area serves mainly to address the needs of traders

and persons caught outside the walls after the gates close. Southgate Reach is the older of the two areas and contains more established businesses and a less rowdy crowd, despite being so close to the dockyards.

## Other Cities

**Llangwyr (Capital of East Mohrland Province):** Second in size only to Meliad, Llangwyr is a bustling metropolis. Positioned at the northernmost navigable point on the Border River, it is a major point of trade both for merchants coming to and traveling from inland destinations. The citizens of Llangwyr are perhaps the most worldly among the Darakeene, even more so than Meliad itself.

**Cantontown (Capital of Karan Province):** Cantontown serves as the seat of the Wake College, where most of Darakeene's sailors are trained. It is also home to an extensive arms industry, serving the colleges and the Darakeene military. More armorers, weaponsmiths, bowyers, and fletchers work in Cantontown than anywhere else in Darakeene. The people are typically Darakeene, cheerful and outgoing, and despite the fact that most of them owe their living in one way or another to the war college, most dismiss it as a nuisance (though few do so convincingly).

**Ard Macha (Capital of Airgh Province):** Airgh is the least prosperous province in Darakeene. Its forests are long since gone and much of the western portion of the province is taken up with bogs and saltmarshes, precluding their use as farmland. As Darakeene's other provinces and cities have flourished, the population of Ard Macha has steadily declined. Nearly one-fifth of the city's dwellings are uninhabited and most are available to purchase for a song. Were it not for the favorable tax rates to attract shipping, the city's population would probably be half what it is now.

**Fernmag (Capital of Fenmorgh Province):** Like Airgh, Fenmorgh's western reaches are boggy and unfit for farming, but it is a far larger province and so has much more arable land. Thus, where Ard Macha is seeing its population decline, Fernmag's is on the rise. Fenmorgh produces a number unique strains of grain and is the only place where Darakeene whiskey is made, making Fernmag the nexus of whiskey shipping in Ghelspad. As the rest of Ghelspad discovers the joys of fine Darakeene whiskey, the city's future seems brighter by the day.

**Catlaigh (Capital of Northfalia Province):** In truth, Catlaigh's proximity to the Devouring Reef would normally exclude it from being a major shipping port, but as it is the nearest port to the Phylacteric Vault, its existence is essential. Mages from all over Ghelspad pass through Catlaigh when traveling to or from the Vault, and there is a constant flow of items both magical and mundane into and out of the vault. Given the arcane nature of many of the items shipped through the port, the people of Catlaigh are abnormally cautious of wizards and sorcerers, though they are never so stupid as to be openly rude to a practitioner of the arcane arts.

## The Drifting Isle

**Magh Trego (Capital of Provark Province):** The majority of Provark's wealth derives from the fishing trade. The waters beyond Magh Trego are rich and always yield a good harvest, with many varieties of fish. Here, too is located the once-prestigious Darakeene Naval Academy, an institution that fell into considerable disfavor in 125 AV when a large portion of the nation's fleet rebelled and sailed to conquer Karria. Much of Darakeene's fleet is based in Magh Trego and nearby ports, and students from Wake College are sent here for training, but the realm's naval adventurism has declined since the fleet's defection, and is now limited primarily to chasing pirates and occasionally patrolling the coastline.

**Weyside (Capital of Wexland Province):** Weyside is the least populous of Darakeene's major cities. Most merchant vessels from the north stop at one of the more northern cities, and ships from the south stop at Meliad or travel up the river. Coupled with the generally sour reception to the idea of adopting a new official state religion, the people of Weyside are the least outgoing and welcoming of all the people of Darakeene.

**Trum (Capital of Trumland Province):** Relatively peaceful despite its location in the south of the nation, Trum has recently grown somewhat restive and militaristic, as an undeclared cold war between it and Wexland develops, driven by anger at the Duke of Wexland's rejection of the gods and his adoption of the new god called That Which Abides. Many believe that the real power in Trumland is not its current ruler, Lord Markol, but the Baron of Redstone, who is rumored to be a powerful blood mage, and a secret titan-worshipper. The Baron has made no secret of the fact that he wishes to one day rule the province, and most believe that his eventual goal is to seize the throne from Emperor Klum.

**Phylacteric Vault:** This sprawling collection of buildings is actually a small city in itself and, although it is officially under Darakeene control, the Vault maintains a high level of independence. The greatest known repository of arcane knowledge on Ghelspad after the Library of Lokil, the Phylacteric Vault was originally an academy of alchemists, but it has grown to encompass documents and artifacts from all areas of magic. Those who wish to do research here must actually enroll and participate in classes and aid in the library's administration, and so far only peaceful uses of magic are taught or encouraged. The Vault's leaders, including Chancellor Nerith Alia (*human female Wiz 17 [Div], LN; see The Wise & the Wicked*, pg. 5), have begun investigating oneiromancy and chronomancy, the magic of dreams and time respectively, leading some to suspect that they are in contact with the orafauna of the Drifting Isle. Whether this is true remains uncertain — it is known, at least, that students of the Vault travel to all corners of Ghelspad and beyond in search of knowledge.

**Name:** The Drifting Isle

**Population:** 40,000 (Human 70%, Orafaun 20%, Half-elf 5%, Other 5%)

**Government:** Island-wide council of elders

**Ruler:** None, but the Orafauna Golden Cloud (*orafau male Clr15, CG*) and Fish Feather (*orafau female Clr18, CG*), the dream scholar Mikri (*human male Wiz15, CG*), and the wise woman Ollengray (*human female Clr18, CG*) all hold great political sway.

**Capital:** The Solemnac Vale

**Languages:** Ledean, Darakeene, Orafaun

**Religion:** Erias

**Currency:** Island pearl (5-10 gp), gold compass (1 gp), silver skate (1 sp), copper fish (1 cp)

**Resources:** Pearls, trained birds and island cats, artwork, fish

**Allies:** Darakeene, Karria, Uria

**Enemies:** None



### History

The first historical mention of the Drifting Isle is recorded in the traveler's account *Odil's Journey Home*. A fierce storm strands Odil, a hero of the Divine War, and his crew on an island populated by magical creatures known as orafauna who allow the travelers to sleep peacefully, free of nightmares for the first time in many months. Odil eventually leaves, but half his crew remains behind, wishing to spend the rest of their lives at peace, tending the kindly creatures, living off the bountiful fish, and exploring their dreams. Some bawdy tavern tales claim that the small population of satyrs on the island is the result of unnatural unions between the orafauna and Odil's crew, but such stories are generally discounted.

*Odil's Journey Home* places the Drifting Isle some 100 miles south of Fangsfall, but records from Darakeene explorers made shortly after the Divine War place the island west of Uria. A map supposedly drawn by Urian Harrier scouts puts the island hundreds of miles due north of Karia. For the first 50 years after the Divine War, the island seemed to have no fixed location and was therefore known as the Drifting Isle. Yet the island has properties even stranger than its indefinite location.

The island's older inhabitants say that before the Fane of Erias was completed five decades ago, the realm of dream and the realm of waking reality were deeply intertwined on and around the island. Dream creatures — talking animals and birds, chimera-like monsters, and transmuted island villagers — could suddenly appear out of nowhere and disappear just as unexpectedly. Paths around the island would change their routes and lead to places that one might never find again; inhabitants would wake up in strange places. Given such mysterious occurrences, the old timers say, it is no surprise that the island itself would change its location.

About 70 years ago, work began on the Fane of Erias. Attracted by visionary dreams, hundreds of people migrated to the island to help in its construction. Among these people were many great sculptors, architects, and artists. Led by their dreams, they created one of the most beautiful temples on Ghelspad, molding not only marble, abalone, pearl, and gold, but also the stuff of dreams into an ethereally beautiful structure. The Fane has stood for 50 years now and has become a destination for both the faithful of Erias and for those seeking the answers to riddles posed by their dreams.

## Geography

The Drifting Isle is a temperate region of sylvan hills, squat mountains, light woods, vertical sea cliffs, and white sandy beaches. Two large reefs provide shelter to the island's major bays.

The weather on the Drifting Isle is typically foggy in the morning, with the fog burning off before mid-day and often returning around sunset. Storms are common in winter and the early spring, but they never reach monsoon proportions.

Travelers need to be aware of stranger weather conditions. Dream reality can sometimes infringe on the everyday waking reality of the island in an effect called by the learned a *dream incursion*. During this time, those in the waking world may see visions from the land of dreams, hear the answers to nagging questions, or see visions from other times and places. Fortunately, dream incursions rarely last more than an hour or so and do not seem to leave many marks on the physical world. Another unusual type of weather on the island is an effect called the sleeping fog. When this occurs, a thick fog blankets the island and puts all its human inhabitants to sleep. A sleeping fog can last for days.

**Bay of Dreams:** The main port of call for those coming to the island. Most merchants do their business in one of the villages along the sandy beach that surrounds it.

**Emerald Reef:** A reef of green coral and algae-covered stone. Home to merfolk and dolphins.

**Happenstance Beach:** A long stretch of sandy beach. When walking along it, people often find small odds and ends that have recently appeared in their dreams.



A priest of Erias, a pearl diver from a coastal village, a bird trainer and a pair of orafauna.



**Mist Woods:** Frequented by orafauna, it is said that those who dream in these woods often see the future or learn long lost secrets.

**Night Woods:** One of the more dangerous places on the island. Frequented by angry dream beings, fey, and lycanthropes, these woods are avoided by most sensible islanders.

**The Solemnaic Vale:** The religious center of the realm, the Solemnaic Vale is a mist-shrouded valley near the center of the island. The Fane of Erias is located at the edge of a lake near the north end of the valley. The Silver Cord River begins in springs high in the vale's northern hills and runs through it to the village of Talltell at Green Dolphin Bay.

**Standing Stones of Kuthag-Ma:** A gateway to other planes, if the correct times are known. On the first moonless night following the autumnal equinox, a gateway to the dark side of the moon opens here, though most would not journey to Belsameth's realms save in extreme need or as the result of suicidal madness.

## Flora and Fauna

The Drifting Isle is located in one of the most biologically rich regions of the Blossoming Sea. The island's inhabitants have an easy livelihood catching fish. Also, the many oysters along the coast make pearl diving the most popular road to quick riches, though the divers must brave the dangers of sharks and 15-foot diameter man-trapping clams.

Amaranth, wheat, spelt, and barley are all grown on the island. There are many wild herbs, and plum and cherry trees are common. The island is home to a strange assortment of wildlife, including memory tortoises (some of whom are known to be over 500 years old), island lynxes (which are sometimes trained from when they are kittens to be sold as guard cats), giant boars, and a huge variety of birds. Quite a few supernatural creatures inhabit the island — creatures from the dreamlands such as dream folk, dreamwracks, and dream wraiths are especially common, but also found are a variety of fey and a number of lycanthropes. The latter are particularly frightening to the island inhabitants, because the werecreatures of the Drifting Isle have been gifted by Erias' mother Belsameth to be immune to nightmares and so often evade the island folks' standard mechanism for rooting out murderers.

The best known inhabitants of the island are, of course, the orafauna, quadrupedal priests of the god Erias. In general, these creatures are benign protectors of the realm and live in harmony with its other inhabitants. They are fully capable of defending the Drifting Isle against all foes, however, and will not hesitate to fight should they be called upon to do so.

## People

The People of the Drifting Isle are possessed of a mixed ethnic heritage, made up of pilgrims, sailors, and other visitors who have come to the island over the years. They are an easy going and peaceful lot, content with the beauty of their island and their

closeness with the god of dreams and his priestly creatures. Most live in small villages, scattered across the island. The Drifting Isle has nothing that could be described as a true city.

## Culture

The Drifting Isle's culture is based on its abundance. Relatively untouched by the devastation of the Divine War, the isle boasts fertile croplands and is invariably surrounded by rich schools of fish. A typical villager can live for a week on what he catches in a day, leaving much time for dreaming and creativity. Many islanders also dive for pearls in hopes of gaining great wealth, while others become animal trainers or immerse themselves in oneironmancy and religion. Others turn to the crafts. A large number of skilled artisans remain on the island — the builders of Erias' Fane and their descendants.

Dreaming is extremely important to the inhabitants of the island. People are forever discussing their dreams with one another, recording them, basing every day activities on what a dream might foretell, or creating crafts and art inspired by them. Some such crafts unique to the Drifting Isle are illuminated transcripts of particularly beautiful, important, or powerful dreams; fantastic mandala carpets; dream catchers; and carved abalone jewelry, inlaid wooden furniture, and small objects such as mirrors, sculptures, and necklaces inspired by Erias' dreams.

## Crime and Punishment

Crime is difficult to get away with on the Drifting Isle. Unless a criminal is protected by magic, his guilt is certain to be uncovered by the orafauna. Depending on the severity of the crime, the perpetrator may suffer from sleeplessness, nightmares, or madness until action is taken to set to things right. While the orafauna only punish crimes taking place on the island itself, their punishment can be enacted anywhere that is touched by the astral plane. Actual punishment varies depending on the circumstances of the crime, but some typical results are listed below.

**Theft:** Sleeplessness and guilty dreams. The victim and others in his community will often dream of the offender haughtily displaying the stolen item to them.

**Murder:** The guilty party is visited by nightmares in which the victim rises from the dead, seeking vengeance. Killers suffer fatigue, unease, and illness that grows worse and worse until they make amends for their misdeeds.

In cases where the orafauna are unable to enforce civil behavior, a village council will be summoned. Priests of Erias and village elders will then meet to obtain the facts of the case and pronounce punishment, which usually consists of restitution being paid in the case of theft, and restitution plus permanent exile in the case of more serious crimes.

## Religion

The Drifting Isle is home to the Fane of Erias, a great temple made of gold- and silver-veined marble and filled with exquisite statuary, fantastic mandala carpets, and intricate murals depicting dream visions. The fane is attended by the orafauna, a race of antelope-like creatures who are the priests of Erias. More than two dozen herds of orafauna are on the island — the actual number varies depending on the number of patriarchs that come into maturity in any generation. The orafauna care for the island's inhabitants, providing magical healing, guidance through dream prophecies, and justice by visiting guilty dreams upon wrongdoers. Although islanders often go to the fane for guidance, regularly scheduled ceremonies are not held there. In general, though the religion of Erias contains many common symbols, mantras, texts, and practices, worship is deeply personal and individual.

Though almost all islanders worship Erias primarily, they pay homage to other gods as well — particularly Madriel and Manawe. These two goddesses are popular among those merchants from Karria or Darakeene that visit the island.

Belsameth is also honored as the mother of Erias, and as the goddess of nightmares and madness. She is given a single holy day, the day of Autumn's End, when the harvest has been completed and winter is about to begin. On the night of this holy day, it is said that peoples' dreams prophesize their deaths, that werecreatures return to their true forms, and that a passage opens up at the standing stones of Kuthag-Ma. This passage leads through the Gates of the Forlorn (the gateway taken by suicides to the land of the dead) to the dark side of the moon.

## Armed Forces

The Drifting Isle has no official military force, although its inhabitants are prepared to act as an ad hoc militia if need be. The island's true defense lies in the orafauna, who offer a potent magical resistance against any attacker. In addition to the orafauna, Erias considers the island part of the dreamlands and would probably defend it as such. This means that an attacking army would likely face a large number of dream wracks and dream wraiths, in addition to an army of angry orafauna. No member of an invading mortal army would dare sleep on the island without potent magical protection. Finally, it is likely that Erias himself would deem it appropriate to head off a serious invading force — he could simply move the island, or he might intervene more directly. That these facts are known to those that advise the rulers of the countries around the Drifting Isle has so far served as an effective deterrent to invasion.

## Dunahnae

**Name:** Imperial Dunahnae, Eternal Bastion of His Lord Chardun

**Population:** 1,000,000 (Human 54%, Half-orc 26%, Dwarf 10%, Elf 5%, Other 5%)

**Government:** A feudal theocracy; the clergy owns all the land, which is overseen by hereditary lords.

**Ruler:** His Lord High Priest and First Minister of Chardun, Aarixthic (*human male Clr19, LE*)

**Capital:** Dun (120,000)

**Major Cities:** Ertik (40,000), Kanandun (26,000), Bones (12,000)

**Language:** Dunahn

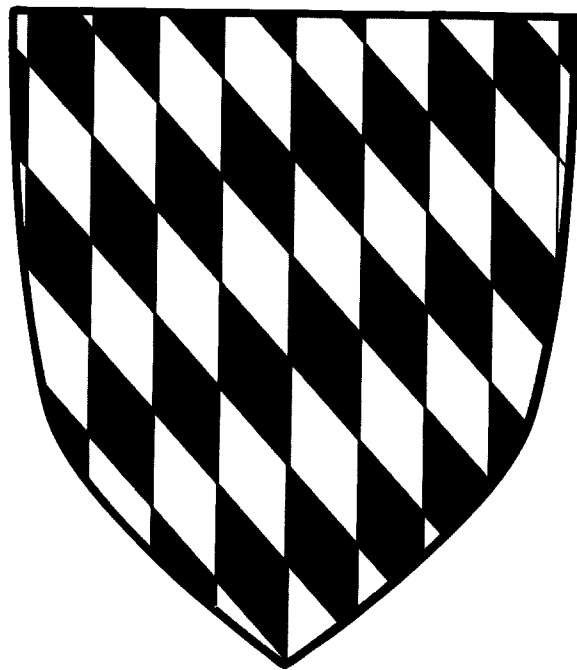
**Religion:** Chardun

**Currency:** Gold crown (10 gp), silver scepter (5 sp), copper link (1 cp)

**Resources:** Slaves, oil, gold, iron

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** None



## History

It is said that during the Titanswar, the rocky and broken land that Dunahnae now occupies was a favorite refuge of Thulkas, the Lord of Fire. As the titan rested, contemplating the war against his unruly offspring, goblins sprang from him like blood bubbling from a wound. While the truth of this legend is unproven, the land of Dunahnae was certainly at one time filled with swarms of goblins. During the war, these swarms spilled over into nearby regions, including the area now occupied by the Ukrudan Desert and the Devil's March. They attacked titanspawn and divine with an unbiased fury and in unimaginable

numbers. This devastation forced large armies of the divine races to travel into the region simply to diminish the numbers of these vermin. Little progress was made until Thulkas finally succumbed to Tanil and Corean.

As the war drew to a close, Chardun's newly created herald led a large army of human and half-orc mercenaries into the region. These professional and battle-hardened soldiers quickly destroyed the largest of the goblin warrens. Soon, other followers of the Overlord migrated to the region, which had acquired the status of a promised land among Chardun's faithful.

Over the next 50 years, Chardun's priesthood established itself as the dominant force in the region. They founded the nation of Dunahnae near the base of the peninsula in 52 AV. By enslaving the surviving goblins, the new nation was able to expand quickly into the rest of the peninsula, eradicating or absorbing goblins as it progressed. This nation's relative peace, material wealth, and isolation have since combined to make Dunahnae a strong but unknown force on Ghelspad.

Beginning in 65 AV, Dunahnae slaves began to gather bones from various battlegrounds in the Ukrudan Desert, the Festering Fields, and the Devil's March for use in the construction of the Wall of Bones. The construction of this wall continues to the present day. Even among the slaves who work daily on the wall, its purpose is unknown. Rumors and guesses abound, however: the Wall of Bones will be animated in the event of war; the wall will serve as material to summon an army of the dead; and the wall is a component of a massive ritual that will give Chardun control over all the divine races and thus dominion over all of Ghelspad. Only the highest of Chardun's servants know the true purpose, if any, of the Wall of Bones.

Currently, First Minister Aarixthic has sought to contact King Virduk of Calastia in order to establish ties of trade and friendship. He has determined that Dunahnae and the forces of Chardun have finally recovered enough from the Divine War to expand and take their rightful place as rulers of Ghelspad. Some speculate that it is only a matter of time before the First Minister has his alliance with Virduk and the armies of the Overlord begin their long march eastward.

## Geography

The two words that best describe the Dunahnae landscape are "barren" and "isolated." The Dunahnae peninsula is bounded in the east by the Ukrudan Desert beyond the fearsome Wall of Bones. In the south, the oily and poisonous waters of the Inferno prevent significant ocean travel and commerce with Fangsfall. The rest of the peninsula is surrounded by the Blossoming Sea, but its high coasts and lack of harbors prevent most travel. The most significant

port in the country is the city of Ertik, where the Splintered River empties into the Blossoming Sea.

The country itself contains mostly rocky badlands overlooking equally barren valleys. The hills and canyons are riddled with caves, which at one time housed the legions of goblins that infested the region. Currently, the majority of caves, having been reinforced and garrisoned, serve as boltholes, slave quarters, and army barracks.

These hills also hold the majority of Dunahnae's profitable gold and iron mines. Thousands of slaves scour the badlands under the supervision of their cleric overlords, searching for new veins or working active mines. The endurance needed to survive in this region means that only half-orc, dwarven, or goblin slaves work these hills. The rare human found in the mines of Dunahnae has been sentenced to death by Chardun's clerics.

**The Valley of Serpents:** The southwestern part of Dunahnae contains a large, fertile valley known as the Valley of Serpents. Surprisingly, this name does not have any association with Mormo, instead it originates in the primary crop of Dunahnae, serpentweed. From the northern hills, the valley below seems filled with millions of large green and brown vipers, writhing as they try to disentangle themselves. Indeed, one can even hear the sibilant hissing of an unimaginable number of snakes below. The twisting snakes are actually windblown serpentweed vines stretching across the valley floor; the sound comes from the ruffling and rubbing of the vines. Large numbers of Dunahnae's human slaves work in these fields under the vigilant eyes of their soldier taskmasters. These slaves produce the majority of food used to maintain the nation's slaves.

**The Burning Swamp:** On southern coast of Dunahnae, along the Inferno Gulf, lies a large and deadly mire known as the Burning Swamp. The greasy, oily waters of the Inferno Gulf flow over this lowland, leaving a black smear over the stagnant pools of water. The normal swamp gases are enhanced by the highly flammable oil, making this entire bog an incredibly lethal firetrap. Nevertheless, Dunahnae sends in its slaves, which more often than not die a fiery death, in order to refine oil from the swamp's waters. In addition to the hazardous environment, this mire is said to be full of dangerous aberrations and monstrosities. The few slaves that manage to survive in this swamp for more than a few months speak of charfiends and other creatures attacking even large and well-armed slave patrols.

## Flora and Fauna

The badland area of Dunahnae contains very few plants or natural animals. Cave lichens, scraggly pines, and mosses form the majority of the local flora. The only indigenous animals worth noting are predatory birds, rodents, and rogue goblin tribes.



*A human overseer, a goblin miner, charduni necromancer and charthess (mounted), and a human slave.*

A noted staple crop of Dunahnae is serpentweed, a long, mottled vine that grows in light bundles. Serpentweed produces an edible squash-like brown vegetable. Because the serpentweed is very bitter and poisonous in large quantities, it is usually only eaten by slaves or low-ranking soldiers.

The Burning Swamp has very little living plant life. Most plants cannot survive the poisonous waters, and those that do eventually succumb to the constant fires. The entire region is an eerie wasteland, filled with burned, warped, and decimated tree husks. The swamp is full of unnatural and dangerous monsters such as acid shamblers, charfiends, and even hydras.

## People

Dunahnaens are often considered bitter and fatalistic, the dreams and ambitions of youth being crushed out of them by their oppressive and rigid society. Free Dunahnaens tend to be well cultured and aristocratic. For the most part, however, this is simply a veneer over a core of raw ambition and cruelty. Dunahnaens see little reason not to dominate others, climbing over the broken bodies of friends and enemies alike to achieve their goals.

Dunahnaen men tend to be ruggedly handsome, although their faces are so often twisted in avarice that it is difficult to determine their true features.

Women tend to be darkly beautiful, if haughty. Their position in the society is much lower than that of men, however, and so they are rarely seen outside of their homes. Human slaves come from a variety of different racial stocks, taken as they are from the various lands of Ghelspad. Most indigenous slaves are olive-skinned and stocky. They are a grim, practical, and inarticulate people; most pessimistically realize that they will never escape slavery and restrain themselves accordingly.

Half-orcs of Dunahnae, like most of their race, are broad shouldered and stocky with greenish-gray skin and dark hair. Half-orcs possess a middling place in society. While some of them are counted among Dunahnae's slaves, the majority of half-orcs possess positions in the army, from lowly recruits to well-respected scepterlords. It is rumored that particularly ambitious half-orcs can rise to great prominence in Chardun's dark priesthood. Because of this, Dunahnae is seen by some as a haven for half-orcs, and many migrate here to achieve the respect that would be impossible elsewhere.

Dwarves in Dunahnae are mostly charduni, although there are a few communities of Scarn dwarves as well. Dwarves tend to be clannish and xenophobic, and this tendency is enhanced by the leaden atmosphere of suspicion in Dunahnae. Charduni are most

often found in the army or priesthood of Chardun. Many of them also hold important positions in the School of Bones, Dunahnae's academy of necromancy. Most Scarn dwarves present in Dunahnae are slaves, descendents of slaves captured in and since the Divine War. These dwarves are abused, even by the standards of slaves. They occupy a position below even that of Dunahnae's goblins.

The vast majority of goblins in Dunahnae are slaves, working in the treacherous gold and iron mines of the northern badlands. Goblins are seen as slightly above animals; they are feral creatures that actually benefit from enslavement. The wild bands of goblins that continue to roam the hills and infrequently raid minor Dunahnaen settlements do not relieve this image. Dunahnaen goblins, however, are usually more clever and devious than they let on. They are often able to organize themselves into meaningful communities and establish a bearable existence even under the omnipresent eyes of their taskmasters.

## Culture

Dunahnaen society is renowned for both its extreme rigidity and its indifference to social justice. The people are sharply divided into four hereditary castes: priesthood, charth, military, and slaves. Social mobility is quite common among the lower castes.

Chardun's priesthood holds the dominant position in Dunahnaen society. The priesthood is largely hereditary, although extremely cunning, ambitious, and competent individuals of lower classes are able to become priests. Occasionally, even the rare slave can rise to prominence in this way. Because the church technically owns and distributes all wealth in Dunahnae, high ranking priests lead very rich and privileged lifestyles. Lower priests, however, face a very spartan existence, and they are constantly reminded of the proverb, "Chardun rewards only those who prove themselves through trial and hardship." Life is therefore a constant struggle to attain power and prestige in order to wend one's way into a position in which the priest can exert influence over others and thereby prove himself worthy to Chardun.

The priesthood is large and bureaucratic, and individual bureaucrats wield almost unlimited power over those below them. Dunahnae has no merchant class, so the priesthood is also responsible for all trade, goods distribution, and production. The aspects of government needed to run the country are broken into several discrete bureaus, to which every priest belongs. The bureaus struggle constantly to obtain resources and power, and the First Minister encourages this competition to prevent significant threats to his own position.

The hereditary nobles of Dunahnae are known as charths and charthesses. This caste is really just an elite and specialized subset of the military caste. Usually charths are loyal and competent soldiers

chosen by the priesthood to serve as the rulers of districts. Once in place, the charth and his descendents hold the position through personal power, political wrangling, and the will of the priesthood. A charth must constantly engender loyalty among his soldiers and ensure his own loyalty to the correct factions currently in power in the bureaucracy. Clearly, this is a difficult task, and only those families that hold close to Chardun's ideals can maintain the position for long.

Below the charths are the common soldiers of Dunahnae. They are organized into strictly regimented fighting forces, based on units of six. There are six soldiers in one link, six links in one length, six lengths in one chain, six chains in one shackle, six shackles in one domant, and six domants in one scepter. The leader of any section is referred to as the unit he commands plus "lord," from linklord to scepterlord. Soldiers can expect a harsh and dangerous life, but they are better off than slaves in that they may own some property, aspire to charthdom, and dominate slaves. When not directly involved in war, soldiers either direct and maintain slaves or serve the priesthood or charths directly.

The lowest position in Dunahnaen society is occupied by the slaves. Nearly 90% of the population is enslaved, and this number is maintained through harsh enforcement of Chardun's law, raids against nearby countries, and slave trade. Slaves are unable to own property, although they may be given resources to wear, wield, or eat depending on the requirements and prestige of their owners. Technically, all slaves are owned by the priesthood or the charths, although taskmaster soldiers exercise a large degree of control over slaves in the field. Slaves maintain the entire economy of Dunahnae. They are responsible for farming, mining, construction, and most other activities. Especially skilled slaves are valued and may even achieve a level of existence similar to that of a low ranking soldier.

Dunahnaen literature is very limited and serves almost exclusively to worship and honor Chardun. Reading is allowed among the military, the charths, and the priesthood, although literature among the lower ranks is strictly limited to the holy writings of Chardun. Priests serve as the nation's scholars and authors, and they carefully prevent ideas of the outside world from penetrating to "corrupt" the populace.

Entertainment for its own sake is a foreign concept among the Dunahnaens. Common forms of entertainment always have the dual purpose of strengthening Dunahnae's might or individual ambition. Among the soldiers, war games and marching chants are quite common and further serve as preparatory exercises. Charths often hold elaborate parties where fine wine, elegant music, and political wrangling are common. Only charths and priests are allowed to possess alcoholic beverages. Priests entertain themselves either through pursuing individual



scholarly interests or through political maneuvering. There is a saying in Dunahnae, "Ambition is entertainment."

The one item that Dunahnaen culture is renowned for is its architecture. Using the labor of thousands of slaves, carefully planned buildings, and judicious priestly magic, the priesthood of Chardun has been able to achieve truly wondrous feats of construction. Dunahnaen buildings are huge and very imposing, often ornate with religious iconography unique to Chardun's dark theology. They seem to dwarf the viewer, impressing him with their own grandeur, while at the same time betraying his own insignificance. Even these achievements ring hollow, however, for Dunahnaen buildings are built for outward appearance and not for any sort of comfort.

## Crime and Punishment

Laws are supposedly handed down by Chardun himself to the First Minister to enforce as he sees fit. Therefore, in addition to any crime's normal penalty, the priesthood has the option of holding the citizen additionally guilty for heresy, for violating Chardun's will. The Bureau of Enforcement uses deduction, magic, and entrapment to find and punish criminals, and as expected, its agents are very thorough.

Because crimes are often ill defined and arbitrarily enforced, it is more important to identify typical punishments than specific crimes. Wealthy citizens are usually able to reduce the severity of all but the gravest crimes through bribery and extortion.

**Fines:** Minor crime, such as the death of another's slave.

**Enslavement:** Loss of caste status and enslavement. Crimes such as theft, murder of a soldier, arson, heresy, and so forth.

**Death:** For major crimes against important people such as minor priests or charths. This is usually followed by being raised as a skeleton or zombie.

**Eternal Enslavement:** Death followed by being raised as a free-willed undead, only to be enslaved and forced to serve Chardun's priesthood. This is reserved for only the worst crimes, such as the murder of a powerful priest, treason, high heresy, and so forth.

## Religion

Dunahnae's hereditary priestly caste serves an essential role in the day-to-day affairs of the country. The dark religion dominates the society. All citizens, including slaves, must attend three daily prayer sessions to the Overlord. Furthermore, the only forms of literature, sculpture, and music allowed in the country are that which glorifies Chardun. Chardunite holidays such as Moroth and Gorth are times of great celebration and revelry. Worshippers of other



A charth field commander (top), slave irregular, Chardun-slain and half-orc soldier.

### The Scepters of Dunahnae

There are currently twelve scepters that Dunahnae can field as part of a war effort. Each of these scepters has a traditional duty and standing in society. A few of the more prominent scepters include:

*The Golden Scepter:* The first scepter, originally composed of soldiers surviving the Divine War. Currently, this scepter garrisons the city of Dun.

*The Adamant Scepter:* The only scepter with any significant naval power, this army guards Ertik and patrols the Blossoming Sea to the north.

*The Flaming Scepter:* Among the unluckiest of scepters, this group is charged with guarding slave forays into the Burning Swamp and preventing monsters from escaping into the rest of the country.

*The Leaden Scepter:* Responsible for maintaining the mining operations of the northern badlands.

*The Bone Scepter:* This scepter patrols the length of the Wall of Bones and the western Ukrudan Desert.

gods are regularly disparaged, and the priesthood has been known to bring charges of heresy upon them when they think they can get away with it.

## Armed Forces

Dunahnae's military caste is currently composed of about twelve scepters (almost 21,000 soldiers each) scattered about the country. These soldiers can be called to service rather quickly and serve as the elite backbone of the country's might. In addition, Dunahnae is capable of fielding huge slave armies. Finally, the powerful necromancers and priests of the School of Bones can raise large armies of undead warriors using secret Chardunite rituals.

## Cities

### Dun

The capital of Dun is among the most amazing works of architecture in all of Scarn. The entire metropolis is contained within one enormous temple dedicated to Chardun, the Overlord. The city is situated upon a lone hill along the Splintered River in eastern Dunahnae. The temple city of Dun is the seat of the priesthood's power and the domain of First Minister Aarixthic

**Western Gate:** Huge steel-and-adamantine blend gates, etched with a scene of Chardun destroying Gormoth.

**Eternal Cathedral of Chardun:** Spiritual center of Chardun's worship.

**High Court of Charths:** A place for visiting charths to engage in politics and deal with the First Minister's court.

**Walls of Truth:** The temple walls rise ten stories above the surrounding slave villages, and they are sculpted with scenes of Chardun's prowess during the Titanswar.

**Tower of Ambition:** Occupied primarily by visiting charths and their retainers.

**Tower of Avarice:** The high priests of Chardun occupy this tower.

**Tower of Might:** This tower forms the First Minister's personal quarters.

**Tower of Necromancy:** Reserved for necromancers stationed in Dun and visiting scholars from the School of Bones.

**Tower of Pain:** This tower is occupied by lesser priests of Chardun.

**Tower of Domination:** This tower is reserved entirely for soldiers' barracks.

**Imperial Library:** The greatest library in all Dunahnae; access is restricted to the priesthood and special guests.

**Slave Villages:** The thousands of slaves needed to maintain Dun take shelter in sprawling huts outside the temple walls.

## Other Cities

**Ertik:** Ertik is the only city in Dunahnae with a large and accessible harbor. Therefore, this metropolis dominates Dunahnae's limited though lucrative trade with its neighbors. Through this port, the nation exports iron, gold, and even slaves, and imports mainly food. Ertik is a very violent, and for Dunahnae, even lawless city. The community is composed predominantly of warriors and slave caste sailors. This is the city foreigners are most likely to visit, giving them a somewhat skewed idea of the rest of the country.

**Kanandun:** Located southwest of Dun along the border of the Burning Swamp, Kanandun serves as the base for slave forays into the deadly mire. Politically and physically, this city is one of the most dangerous places in all of Dunahnae. Slaves stationed here to extract oil and tar from the swamp usually die within a few months from the constant explosions and monster attacks. Charthess Vala Brokentower (*human female Rog3/Sor12, LE*) has faced several recent attempts on her life, making her suspicious of outsiders. She is currently trying to determine the true purpose of the recent arrival of Slythis from Dun.

**Bones:** Situated near the Wall of Bones due east of Dun, Bones serves as the site of Dunahnae's only school of necromancy, the School of Bones. The necromancers here are responsible for building and maintaining the Wall. Any army wishing to pass beyond the Wall must first pass through Bones, as these necromancers hold the secret of opening the Wall.

## Durrover

**Name:** Durrover-between-the-Mountains

**Population:** 350,000 (Human 65%, Dwarf 15%, Elf 12%, Half-elf 7%, Half-orc 1%)

**Government:** Hereditary monarchy

**Ruler:** King of the Lowlands and Lord High King of the Mountains Jeddrad III (*human male Ari8/Rgr3, NG*)

**Capital:** Durrover (10,000)

**Major Cities:** Dardale (3,000), Angelsgate (1,800), Rockvale (1,500), Corean's Crag (900), Fort Anvil (400)

**Language:** Veshian, Dwarven, Calastian

**Religion:** Madriel

**Currency:** Gold angel (1 gp), silver peak (1 sp), copper cleft (1 cp)

**Resources:** Wool, furs, peat, iron, silver

**Allies:** Burok Torn, Hedrad, Mithril, and Vesh

**Enemies:** Calastian Hegemony



### History

After the fall of the Ledean Empire, the charduni invaded Ghelspad and swept across the continent from west to east. Their advance was ultimately stopped at the Kelder Mountains, and this respite gave the fledgling kingdom of Durrover time to develop. Indeed, the very men who helped defend its borders shaped the political arena of Durrover. Before the charduni expansion, the lands now forming Durrover were divided into a number of feuding districts each ruled over by a patriarchal thain. On the plains of Durrover, the thain Dradu gradually defeated his rivals and declared himself King of Durrover; however, his efforts to penetrate the hills

and vales of the Kelders were rebuffed. When the Charduni Empire assaulted the Kelders, the highland men joined the dwarves of Burok Torn in turning back the warriors of the Land of Chains. The rugged mountain leader Jedar gained widespread fame and respect during the conflicts, and ultimately his marriage to another thain's daughter left him the reigning ruler of the mountains of Durrover.

The Divine War brought a sudden end to the threat of the Charduni Empire, but it did not bring peace. The war against the titans breached the protected lands of Durrover as no other conflict ever had. Hrinruuk the Hunter strove against Corean, Tanil, and Hedrada, and the world was changed forever. Corean's great stroke, which cleaved the head from Hrinruuk, opened a great chasm into which the waters of land and sea flowed like a flood. The Dardale River turned from its course, leaving Durrover, capital of the lowland kingdom, standing upon a dry riverbed. Though the gods left Hrinruuk for dead, he rose from the chasm and blindly wreaked havoc upon the land as he sought his assailants and his own head. His blood tainted the earth, and the creatures it touched turned upon the lowlands like wolves among the sheep.

King Jedar led troops to aid the lowlands against the titanspawn, and they fought bravely against the Hunter's terrible legacy. Unfortunately, old rivalries between thains and families led to fighting among the lowlanders and highlanders, and ancient feuds spilled yet more blood upon the land. Jedar was struck down by a lowlander's arrow even as he fought against raiding titanspawn, and vengeful highlanders slipped into the city of Durrover and killed King Dradu. Jedar's son Eddar marched upon the city of Durrover and conquered it in a short time. Feuds continued to flare and claimed almost as many lives as did the titanspawn. It was then that a wise priest of Madriel introduced young Eddar to Dradu's daughter Rada, and within a year the goddess consecrated the marriage of the loving couple.

Political wrangling afforded a number of compromises, not the least of which was Eddar's assumption of both kingdoms' crowns. Pridelful thains demanded that the crown of his father be that of the Lord High King of the Mountains, while that of his bride's father was merely the King of the Lowlands. Meanwhile, the lowland capital Durrover became the capital of the combined kingdom. Fortunately, the goddess smiled upon the couple, and they soon bore a son who heralded the end of the feuding. Named for both of his grandfathers, young Jeddrad I became a symbol of peace and unity, and throughout his life he sought the wisdom of Madriel's priesthood to ensure his kingdom's future. When Jeddrad I died in 89 AV, he believed he had left his son Durred a legacy of safety and strength. Even the saber rattling of neighboring Lageni seemed nothing more than an idle threat.

The very next year, Calastia invaded Irontooth Pass, and troops moved into western Durrover as well. Conflict continued until 112 AV, and Durred II assumed the throne

when his father fell against Calastians at the first battle of Fort Anvil. As Calastian troops mounted their second major offensive against the Irontooth forts, the Blood Monsoon struck. Within short order, the Calastian companies returned home, recalled to deal with more pressing matters. Durred II spent the remainder of his days trying to defend his country against the devastation of the Blood Monsoon, which tore through Corean's Cleft and ravaged Durrover as it did the rest of eastern Ghelspad. He was a ragged shade of a man when death claimed him in 125 AV, and his son Jeddrad II assumed his duties with little joy. When the Monsoon came to an end in 126 AV, the people of Durrover rejoiced—but soon the Calastian Hegemony resumed its attempts to invade. This time they brought the Steel-Fisted Duke Traviak and his campaign of terror.

Since 126 AV, the fortunes of Durrover have shifted with the winds of battle. Calastian troops control Irontooth Pass, and Lageni raiders rape and pillage with abandon. Fort Anvil would have fallen to its siege long ago were it not for secret tunnels dating back to the resistance against the Charduni Empire. The capital city has fallen and been regained more than once, and its citizens have become masters of weathering the storm. The highlanders have taken to holding up in the Kelders, while the king's troops must fight against superior odds in a daily battle to protect their people. Casualties are staggering, including the fall of Jeddrad II in 142 AV. Jeddrad III has ruled the kingdom since age 14, and eight years of guerrilla warfare have hardened the young king such that the priests of Madriel despair that little mercy remains in his heart. He has even rejected a number of marriage proposals, citing inability to ensure the safety of a potential bride in the face of Calastian advances.

## Geography

Durover is a land of extremes. Rocky flat lands give way rapidly to rugged hills and steep mountains. Where the land is flat, bogs and moors compete for space with hard-soil plots of farmland. Hillsides vary from rich grassy knolls to bare faced rock, while mountain vales capture topsoil washed down from jagged gullies in the Kelders. The curving path of the dry riverbed where the Dardale once flowed turns across the plains and arches past the capital city. The river's shortened route now leads into Corean's Cleft, and this has turned the river town of Dardale into the closest thing Durrover has to a port. In southern Durrover, an arm of the Kelders suddenly gives way to the cliff face of the Cleft, and the survival of the flat-topped peak called Corean's Crag is seen as nothing short of a miracle. The mount holds an ancient chapterhouse of the Order of Gold, and the paladins desperately strive to hold off the never ending tide of Calastian soldiers and to offer haven to refugees and priests of Madriel alike.

## Flora and Fauna

The plains of Durrover are dotted with bogs and moors that contain a variety of shallow wetlands

plants and wild animals including vipers, boars, and jackrabbits. Drier soil hosts hardy grasses, particularly crabgrass, which feeds the herds of sheep that graze the Durrovian hillsides. In the vales of the Kelders, the mountaineers breed sturdy goats for their milk, meat, and pelts. Farmland in Durrover is very rocky, and the hard soil is difficult to work. Farmers favor potatoes, oats, and barley, with small orchards supplying apples and pears used for jams, dried fruit, and cider brewing. Hard-shelled walnut and oak trees are common on the Durrovian slopes of the Kelders.

Durover is relatively free of titanspawn compared to many nations. While the Kelder Mountains and Corean's Cleft do hold some threats to the nation, the real dangers faced by its people are those posed by Calastian and Lageni troops. Nevertheless, the blood of Hrinruuk and Kadum continues to taint creatures along the coast, and slitheren raids from the Mourning Marshes are increasing in frequency. Madriel seems to feel a bond to the people of Durrover, and a number of her servants reward its citizens' devotion to the goddess.

## People

The people of Durrover are spread throughout the rocky lowlands and rugged highlands of their country, forming tight communities with little room for outsiders. Durrovians tend to be middling in height, stocky, and leather toned of skin. Males are usually bearded with dark brown eyes and hair, while females tend toward lighter brown hair with brown or green eyes. They have a reputation as a hardy, surly folk, even more so than the dwarves of Burok Torn. The strong family units, led by patriarchal thains, have long torn the country into feuding groups divided by allegiances of blood even Jeddrad I could not remove. The thains have united in the face of invasion, however, and it is exceedingly rare for the feuds of old to surface while Calastians or Lageni are about. If anything, the ancient rivalries have turned into a bloody competition to see who can most harm the enemy.

Durovian men spend most of their time herding flocks, hunting, and fighting against the Hegemony. The nation's women primarily farm the small fields, care for the children, and in general dominate the homesteads except for the large thain's ale-halls where boisterous drinking and contests of stupidity often lead to midnight raids upon the Calastian forces. Soldiers of Lageni have taken to raping Durrovian women during campaign, but many of them have been surprised to find that their intended victims are dangerous when pressed, perhaps even more so than their husbands. Indeed, the Widows' Legion, led by the ranger Jorna, is composed of naught but bereaved women stripped of their families by Calastian troops. Vigilants from Semanye's Vigil report that the Widow's Legion is quite possibly the most dangerous resistance force left standing against Calastian might.

## Culture

Durrover has a sizable minority of dwarves, whose lifestyle closely mirrors that of Burok Torn. Humans in Durrover are largely divided in tight-knight families dominated by the eldest male, called a thain. Generations of feuds leave society divided along bloodlines; however, the battle against Calastia has dampened any real enthusiasm for the continuing internecine warfare. Young people in Durrover remain in the large family households until the age of marriage, when they join the family estate of whichever parent they decide is best for their future. Usually, this is the son's family, though wealthy thains may push their daughters to bring their husbands to live at home.

## Crime and Punishment

Crimes in Durrover are usually judged and punished by the local thain. Family honor is preeminent in importance, and his own blood will usually correct a disgraceful family member long before anyone else has the opportunity. Crimes against other families are usually punished in kind by the King or his magistrates in order to keep the ancient feuds from erupting again, albeit the magistrates usually let the offended family administer the appropriate punishment.

**Petty Theft (48 gp or under):** Indenture to the victim for a period of one month per gold piece value.

**Grand Theft (49 gp or higher):** Imprisonment, and generally one is disowned by his family.

**Sex Out of Wedlock:** Forced marriage, if either family files a complaint.

**Arson:** If no one is hurt, arson is treated the same as theft. If someone is hurt, then it is treated as a similar assault.

**Assault:** Caning by the victim's family; number of blows assigned by a magistrate.

**Murder:** Execution. Magistrates allow the execution to be carried out by the victim's family. Family of the murderer must pay the victim's family a fine.

**Treason:** Summary execution. Durrover is at war and traitors are not tolerated. If evidence suggests that useful knowledge might be obtained, enthusiastic Durrovians may just beat it out of the traitor.

## Religion

Early in Durrover's history, Tanil was widely worshipped. Years of warfare against the oppression of the charduni, followed by decades of Chern's plagues, soon led to a predominance of Madriel worship. The valley town of Angelsgate even contains a temple especially built to greet the morning sun as it rises to meet the mouth of the vale. In the south of Durrover, the Order of Gold established a chapterhouse of paladins. Barely missed by the blow that created Corean's Cleft, the holy order considers its presence a miracle and continues to support the Durrover resistance against Lageni and Calastia.

## Armed Forces

Durrover's military is in shambles, particularly among its ranks of officers. An expert observer might note the lack of leadership and assume that the war against Calastia is a lost cause. He would not likely be wrong, but the war is nowhere near over. Desperation, combined with a strong independent spirit and a hardy nature, has turned a large portion of the population into resistance fighters, at least part of the time. Lageni strategists estimate that fully 20% of the population possesses some skill at arms and the will to use it. Durrover professional soldiers are hard, bitter, and tired men, beleaguered and hungry for supplies or hope.

## Cities

### Durrover

The war torn capital of Durrover is the city bearing the same name. More than once Calastian war engines have breached the walls and encircled King Jeddard's castle. Each time they have ultimately been unable to maintain the siege long-term, but each attempt has been more successful than the last.

**City Gates:** An ongoing effort to repair the gates destroyed by siege continues, though it has been interrupted a number of times.

**King's Palace:** The palace of the King of the Lowlands is the chief office of Durrover's government. During a few of the worst sieges, King Jeddard III has relocated to the mountain fort of the Lord High King, which has long been maintained as a rugged summer home for the royal family.

### Other Cities

**Dardale:** This town lies upon the stretch of the Dardale River that still flows through its original bed. It is the closest thing Durrover has to a port.

**Angelsgate:** This southwestern Durrover valley town boasts a fairly large population and is home to the largest temple to Madriel in Durrover. The Temple of the Sun's Vale is renowned for its eastern facing windows' perfect view of the sun as it rises and fills the mouth of the valley.

**Corean's Crag:** This fortified village rests atop a mountain peak nearly missed by the blow that created Corean's Cleft. Its paladin chapterhouse is a branch of the Order of Gold and supports Madriel and her efforts to save the victims of the war.

**Fort Anvil:** This battered fortress predates the beginning of the Divine War, and its continued resistance to a perpetual Calastian siege is owing to tunnels dating to the days of the Charduni Empire's attempts to annex the Irontooth Pass.

**Rockvale:** This northwestern Durrover valley town is also fairly large. Its primary claim to fame is that the mountain fortress of the Lord High King lies on the slopes guarding its entrance.



## Fangsfall Peninsula

**Name:** Fangsfall Peninsula

**Population:** 100,000 (Human 75%, Halfling 5%, Wood elf 2%, Forsaken elf 1%, Half-elf 2%, Half-orc 5%, Charduni 1%, Mountain dwarf 3%, Goblinoids 1%, Other 5%)

**Government:** Military dictatorship

**Ruler:** Lord Killian Vrail (*human male Ari7/ Ftr7, LN*)

**Capital:** Fangsfall (45,000)

**Major Cities:** Fang Quarry (at least 1,000 goblinoids)

**Language:** Shelzari (Dunahn, Calastian, Ukrudan, Veshian also commonly spoken in enclaves)

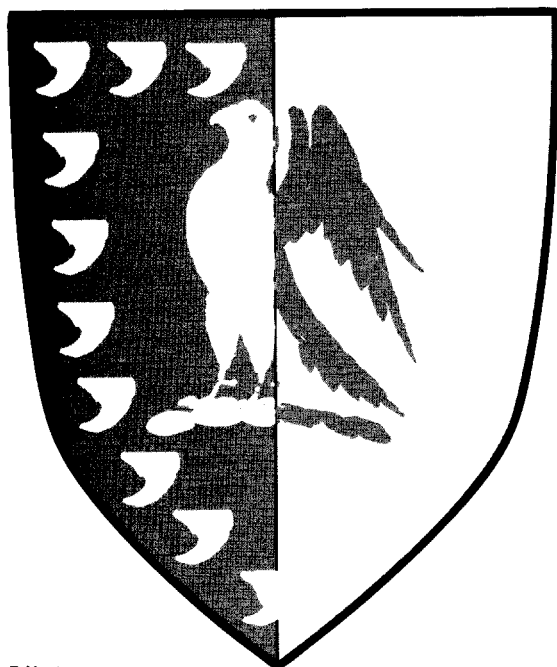
**Religion:** Officially, Corean is the city-state's religion, but in reality Enkili remains the most widely worshiped.

**Currency:** Platinum rahoch (1 pp), gold madrum (1 gp), silver belum (1 sp), copper enkilum (1 cp)

**Resources:** Fish, fish oil, rare swamp plants, copper, tin, zinc, grapes, wine

**Allies:** Mithril, although in reality Mithril is so far away it does not matter.

**Enemies:** Calastia, because of the Rahoch connection; Dunahnae.



### History

Before the Divine War, Fangsfall's history was of little importance to anyone. Cut off from the bulk of human society by the asaathhi of the Swamps of Kan Thet and the sutak of the then smaller Ukrudan Desert, the peninsula was isolated and not considered suitable for colonization. Explorers from Lede established a beachhead named Southlede at the tip of the peninsula during the Empire's reign, but it was

later abandoned. The Emperor of Elz established a new colony upon the ruins of Southlede only to turn it over to the Charduni Empire as a bargaining chip in their peace negotiations. Charduni slavers force-marched the population north of the town to establish a new settlement called Lambport at the natural harbor where the city lies today.

As the charduni spread north and east deep into Ghelspad, displaced worshipers of Enkili found that the nearly forgotten colony was but loosely held by the evil dwarves of the Land of Chains. Before the Divine War, the growing town became a haven of relative (if chaotic) safety from titanspawn and slaver alike.

When the Divine War began, the town was once again cut off from civilization. The garrison of charduni warriors who governed Lambport stood against numerous attacks by asaathhi, goblinoids, and sutak, but suffered terrible casualties. When the war ended, their hold on the city remained tenuous at best. Within a human generation, rebels cast down the last charduni governor and sought a new name for the small city to replace the insulting one given them by their conquerors.

During the Divine War, Tanil, Denev, and Corean captured Gaurak and plucked his hundred monstrous teeth from his maw before entombing him. The titanic fangs crashed down, some as large as mountains, and indeed one of the titan's jagged incisors smashed into the ground near the tiny city. Long deprived of proper building material, the people of Lambport took to quarrying the fine, hard stone of the titan's tooth in order to build their houses and their city wall. Having cast out the charduni governor, they dubbed their city Fangsfall in honor of the gods' defeat of Gaurak and the potent physical reminder thereof.

Although the Calastian siege of the city began before the Blood Monsoon, the fall of Rahoch did not occur until 126 AV. Lord Killian Vrail was the youngest member of the family who ruled the free city of Rahoch, and the siege took a terrible toll upon his family. Ultimately, young Killian was the only member of the family left, and he knew that King Virduk would not rest until he was a puppet of the growing Calastian Hegemony. Lord Vrail gathered together his household troops and contacted the regiment of Mithril knights who remained in his city. Together they fought their way to freedom, seizing a number of vessels on the docks and breaking the Calastian blockade. Unable to sail north, they turned east only to be driven from Shelzar by storm.

Ultimately, they landed in Fangsfall after weeks upon the sea. A few unfortunate incidents with criminals and thugs bent upon harassing Vrail's men led the Lord to assert his might. The combined force of his soldiers and the Mithril knights outmatched the city's organized military might, and within short order Vrail had seized Fangsfall in the name of Corean. The resident nobility swore allegiance to Lord Vrail, and Fangsfall entered a new period of order and growth.

## Geography

The Fangsfall Peninsula would be a fairly hospitable place for human beings were it not for its relative isolation from the rest of civilization and its uncomfortable closeness to the homes of a number of antagonistic races. The turbulent waters of Liar's Sound are home to desperate pirates and sea terrors. The Swamps of Kan Thet host the remnants of the fallen Asaatthi Empire and its poisonous ruins. Devil's March and the Ukrudan Desert are the playgrounds of barbarous goblinoids and sutak. Even their closest civilized neighbor, Dunahnae, is known for its isolationist and cruel politics.

**Fang Quarry:** About a day's ride north of the city, where the land rises up in a series of rugged hills, a wide shallow crater scars the earth. Sticking up out of the crater is the jagged profile of a gigantic chunk of rock believed to be one of the teeth of Gaurak. The Fang of Gaurak has decades of mineshafts and quarries carved into it, leaving deep black cavities in its sides. Ten years ago, the hobgoblin warlord Ukrath led his horde to the Fang, and they have held its tunnels against all attempts to dislodge them to date. Wary citizens, including Cestarian the Wise, say that Ukrath and his goblinoids are responsible for waking some of the more terrible things that lie within the titan's tooth and that he is not above trading with the city's seedier elements. Greedy criminals in Fangsfall have even been caught selling titans' blood supposedly tapped from the roots of Gaurak's fang. Fangsfall scouts also report that a few slitheren have been spotted in the area.

**Bronze Hills:** These rugged hills supposedly served as the primary source of copper, tin, and zinc for the fallen Asaatthi Empire in ancient days. In recent years, dwarven expeditions have reopened a number of the age-old mines. Cestarian claims that a bronze tablet written in the asaatthi tongue warns that the southern tip of the hills was the tomb of a slarecian dragon, though today that area is buried beneath the Fang Quarry.

**Blossom Harbor:** The city of Fangsfall owes its current location to the charduni engineer who realized that this sheltered harbor would protect the docks from the swirling currents of Liar's Sound.

**Darkwood Grove:** This small forest lies northeast of the city and remarkably is one of the largest remaining collections of Denev's sacred darkwood trees remaining in Ghelspad. It is the only grove left standing on the peninsula, as the druids that call it home have violently protected it against Fangsfall's timber hungry citizens. Some say a hallowed circle of mystic stones lies hidden at its center.

## Flora and Fauna

The Fangsfall Peninsula is relatively bereft of large trees, given its swamplands, flat plains, and decades of deforestation. Thick grasses, scrub brush, and low, scraggly trees form the bulk of its flora.

The nearby Swamps of Kan Thet host a number of lovely flowers, especially certain exotic lotus plants, and the citizens of Fangsfall often pay brave or foolish collectors for healthy specimens to beautify their homes.

Numerous creatures lurk in the wild wetlands and make life difficult for the divine races of the peninsula. Asaatthi raids are all too common. A number of packs of slitheren compete with the asaatthi, apparently led by brown gorger priests of Gaurak attracted to the Fang.

The peninsula is relatively free of large predators, given centuries of their destruction at the hands of humans, dwarves, asaatthi, and goblinoids combined with the natural barrier created by the swamps and desert. Small reptiles, particularly those of poisonous nature, are very common. Small mammals abound, ranging from dexterous mongooses to diseased ship rats gone wild. Occasionally, terrible beasts arise from the depths of Gaurak's Fang, the mud of Kan Thet, or the salty waters of the Blossoming Sea, but Vrail's soldiers or the Mithril knights are usually quick to put them down.

Perhaps the worst danger to citizens of the peninsula is other sentient races. Asaatthi, goblinoids, slitheren, and others skirmish with the divine races for dominance. The all-too-near presence of the asaatthi lost city and Gaurak's Fang only serve to exacerbate the desperation of the conflict.

## People

The predominantly human population of Fangsfall derives in great part from racial stock from Dunahnae and Gaspar to the north as well as the eastern regions of the previous Empire of Elz. As such, they are almost universally dark haired, although skin tones range from pale to dark-toned and eyes from deep brown to flashing green depending upon ancestry. A number of ethnic enclaves exist, however, including the dashing warriors of Rahoch; the tall, fair legionnaires of Darakeene; and the stoic Mithril knights.

The people of Fangsfall largely depend upon the sea for survival, though farming is not so difficult given the humid atmosphere. Mode of dress varies from the flashy outfits common to Shelzar, to the utilitarian wear found in the Gaspar region. Most citizens of the city proper bear at least a knife or dagger for self-protection and feasting purposes, and heavier arms are beyond the means of most citizens and greatly discouraged by the conservative elements within Lord Vrail's government. Outside the city walls, a somewhat more frontier spirit thrives, with spears and shortbows serving as common weapons against raiders.

While the government of Fangsfall bears clear marks of the patriarchal society of Calastia, the general population is fairly egalitarian. The strong worship of Enkili encourages equality among not only the two sexes, but among those who would straddle the line between them. The paladins of Corean do not take sides in issues of sexism, though males do dominate their ranks as well.

## Culture

Fangsfall is a realm of refugees. Even in ancient times, those who fled the northern or eastern regions in search of a new life were its primary inhabitants.

Now the peninsula beckons the oppressed citizens of Dunahnae and Calastia alike. While the peninsula is no paradise, it seems more promising than the lands from which its newest citizens come. Perhaps the parable that “the grass is always greener on another grave” is true indeed.

Despite the efforts of Lord Vrail and the Mithril knights, Fangsfall continues to hold deadly pit fights. All that the Lord’s efforts have achieved is to drive the conflicts underground, with the events entirely run by crime bosses known as “goreguards,” who sponsor illegal betting pools among the audiences.

Popular legal sports include the time-honored practice of snake fighting, in which serpents contest against each other or trained mongooses, and various knife throwing contests based upon accuracy and distance. Wrestling is also popular among Fangsfall citizens young and old, although the most talented pugilists often end up “retiring” to the illegal pit fighting circuits. Gambling is a favored past time of citizens, too, as they continue to honor Enkili above other gods despite over two decades of Lord Vrail declaring Corean the city’s primary god.

Many of the cultural enclaves in Fangsfall celebrate their own holidays. The only special official holiday is the first day of Enkilot, which is a Corday, as the anniversary of Lord Vrail and his flotilla reaching Fangsfall in early 127 AV. Other popular holidays are celebrated in Fangsfall just as they are all across Ghelspad.

The city of Fangsfall is built in large part from stones cut from the Fang Quarry. Because the city is too low along the water table for proper sewers, wastes flow into wide canals that rise and fall with the tides. Since the quarry’s fall to goblinoids, many citizens have returned to the practice of building from driftwood. Indeed, outside the city’s strong stone walls, a number of small shantytowns exist, filled to the brim with desperate refugees living in ramshackle huts composed of driftwood, rope, and rotting bolts of cloth. Lord Vrail’s guards sweep through the shantytowns at least once a month in search of the thugs and scum who commonly decide to hide there.

## Crime and Punishment

The law in Fangsfall is administered by an official city guard employed and authorized by Lord Vrail. In some cases, members will include various Mithril knights, but most guards are warriors empowered to keep the peace. Despite troublemakers’ claims to the contrary, Vrail wants nothing more from his guards than law and order in Fangsfall.

**Petty Theft (30 gp or under):** Flogging and imprisonment of 1 day per gp or fraction thereof. This flogging is painful but never results in real damage.

**Grand Theft (31 gp or higher):** Flogging and banishment. The amount of the theft determines the severity of the flogging, but usually it is of the painful, not damaging variety.

**Attempted Murder:** Severe flogging and banishment. This is a flogging that results in real damage and often scarring.

**Evading Banishment:** Death by beheading.

**Arson:** Death by immolation (burning at the stake).

**Murder:** Death by beheading.

**Treason:** Death by beheading.

## Religion

Due to the company of Mithril knights that accompanied Lord Vrail, Corean has been the official god of Fangsfall since 127 AV. Despite the Avenger’s official recognition, the worship of Enkili remains preeminent. Generations of harboring Enkili priests escaping charduni rule, combined with a frontier mentality, has led to a strong empathy toward the Trickster.

## Armed Forces

The Fangsfall Peninsula is home to a large number of relatively independent communities, each sponsoring its own militia. Ultimately, however, most of them swear allegiance to Lord Vrail in hopes of keeping his protective troops nearby. Vrail maintains a strong city guard in the city of Fangsfall, whose primary duty is keeping the peace. In the wild lands of the peninsula, however, his influence is felt in the form of his soldiers. These brutal warriors are taught to kill the Lord’s foes and inspire hope among the outlying settlements that owe him allegiance. They patrol particularly in search of asaatthi raiders, goblinoids, renegades, and bandits.

## Cities

### Fangsfall

The city of Fangsfall is the heart of civilization on the peninsula. Outlying communities for scores of miles in every direction depend upon it for supplies of manufactured goods and as their primary link to trade routes with other regions.

**City Gates:** On the northern side of the city, these double gates are kept closed at night.

**Skulls Tavern:** A tavern renowned only because it is just inside the city gates and therefore known to more travelers than perhaps any other inn in the city.

**Vrail’s Keep:** Located on a central hill, this raised fortress is home to Lord Vrail and his most elite troops.

**Chapterhouse of Corean:** This solid but tiny fortress temple is home to the company of Mithril knights who accompanied Lord Vrail during his flight from Rahoch.

**Temple of Enkili:** Despite Lord Vrail’s public declaration that Corean is the official god of Fangsfall, this temple remains the largest and most prosperous in the city.

## The Gleaming Valley

**Name:** The Gleaming Land of Corean

**Population:** 30,000 (Hollow Knights 93%, Dwarf 3%, Elf 1%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%, Human 1%)

**Government:** Constitutional Meritocracy; a hierarchy of ranked knights, from common to king, governs.

**Ruler:** The King (*hollow knight, Ftr20, LN*)

**Capital:** The Golden City (20,000)

**Major Cities:** The Citadel (5,000)

**Languages:** Ledean, Veshian

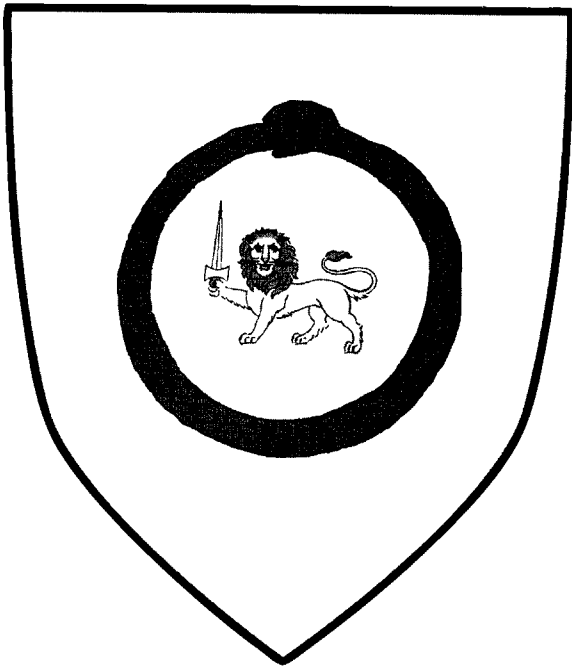
**Religion:** Corean, Hedrada

**Currency:** Gold sovereign (100 gp), gold tier (20 gp), gold valiant (1 gp), silver anvil (1 sp), copper bit (1 cp)

**Resources:** Arms and armor, semi-precious metals

**Allies:** Vesh, Mithril

**Enemies:** None



### History

The close of the Divine War came slowly for the Gleaming Valley. With the Hornsaw nearby, pitched fighting continued for many months between local militias and remnants from Mormo's army. This fighting degenerated until lawlessness and ignobility flourished at the expense of all else. By the time the Hollow Knights arrived in 17 AV, the region's population was as barren as the region itself. The Knights' arrival brought much needed stability, but there would be little further development for quite some time.

Though masters of warfare, the Hollow Knights were emphatically lacking in the area of statecraft. Several abortive attempts were made to establish a

government in 22 AV and again five years later, but both collapsed as bureaucratic strain brought the nascent hierarchy tumbling down. Neither were the drives to increase the civilian population any more successful. It truly seemed dubious whether the Knights would ever realize their dream for a homeland.

That all changed when the druids of Khet launched their offensive in 86 AV. Already galvanized by the gorgon siege of Hollowfaust and the rapid expansion of Glivid-Autel, the Hollow Knights mobilized their formidable resources when the northern cantons of the Gascars were attacked by Khet's allies from the Hornsaw. Though they were unable to save Amalthea, their peerless deeds shielded the Gascari from the brunt of the war, earning them that people's reverence. In return, the Gascari gave the Hollow Knights the tools of nationhood.

In 91 AV, the Council of Tiers was established and the King was anointed as the supreme executive power. Based upon the cantons' administrative model, the new hierarchy allowed for a balance between the strict chain of command familiar to the Knights and the flexibility of deliberation needed for good government. Old fortresses were abandoned, and work began on the Golden City, the Citadel, Arbor Door, and Bastion. Working tirelessly with the blessings of Corean and Hedrada, the Knights managed to remake the region in the span of only 20 years, a period that became known as the Restoration. The final projects in the Golden City were completed in 113 AV. Just as the Blood Monsoon was destroying nations in the east, the new nation of the Gleaming Valley was born.

Considering the short span of time since its foundation, the Gleaming Valley has made remarkable headway. Not only are non-Knights now a significant and growing part of the population, but the Valley can count many of its neighbors as allies and friends. It is no longer simply a holy place where the obsolete warriors of the Champion dwell, but a living, breathing nation filled with hope, conviction, and the promise of a gleaming future.

### Geography

Nestled within the bosom of the Gascars, the Gleaming Valley has a mild climate and the landscape to match.

**The Summer Vale:** Blessed with mild rains and warmed by southerly winds, the Summer Vale is the breadbasket of the Gleaming Valley. Rich with prosperous farms and idyllic homesteads, this is a place for rest and quiet contemplation. Here spring and summer reign in an endless courtship of seasons — the sun always shining, the moon always comforting, the air scented with honey, the fields ripe with crops.

**The Winter Vale:** Austere and cold by the standards of its northern sister, the Winter Vale nonetheless has a stoic beauty all its own. Its chalk white hills and vast basalt flows have no bounty of life

but hold within them rich veins of iron, iridium, silver, and other precious metals. Settled by craftsmen of every type, this region supplies the entire nation with its mineral wealth.

**Mount Aesser:** Overlooking the Citadel, the aquamarine slopes of Aesser are crowned with cherry trees. In winter the blue rock shines like a commandment from the sky, while in summer the blossoming trees transform Aesser into a living shower of light from on high.

**Mount Elas:** The holiest site of the valley, the slopes of Elas were long ago consecrated by a powerful true ritual. Upon it did Corean pronounce his decision to destroy the titans' rule, and upon it did Chardun end his alliance with the other gods following the end of the War. Elas is a place for beginnings and endings, a place where oaths are made and where they can be broken in honorable accord. Though so rich in gold that its slopes glow in the moonlight, Mount Elas' natural treasures remain protected by magic, decree, and tradition.

**Mount Glianorum:** An ancient peak of granite and marble, the Shining Mountain is a worthy home to the Golden City that rests within the dormant caldera upon its summit.

## Flora and Fauna

As with the lay of its land, the Gleaming Valley's wildlife is tame, especially compared to its neighbors in the Hornsaw. Most of the nation's wildlife resides in the more temperate Summer Vale, though a small number venture into or live permanently within the colder reaches of the Winter Vale. Small game of all types and a plentitude of grazing species populate the hillside.

Of some fame are the ghost rams of Aesser, so named for their ghost white or ashen gray coats. Descended from both Amalthean and Albadian stock, these are hardy animals that are difficult (though extremely rewarding) to tame. In addition to their place in popular folklore, ghost rams occupy a key position in the region's food chains, and as such their population acts as a useful gauge for the health of the surrounding countryside. The silver gray ghost rams of Aesser are the most famous breed, though they can be found in abundance in the northern cantons as well as a few of the southern ones.

## People

To most outsiders, the Gleaming Valley is a place of monotony, especially in terms of its people. Though this view is not without reason (the Knights do all look the same), it is far from the truth. Even before the Restoration, but most certainly following it, the Knights became enraptured by the question of purpose, specifically *the purpose of life*. With the Divine War long over, these made-for-battle warriors began to question their own existence. It was, and remains, a very personal dilemma of philosophy. As

the Valley's non-Knight population swelled, mortals began asking themselves the same question as well. It is in the attempts to answer this conundrum that the variegated tapestry of the Valley's people displays its many hues. Not surprisingly, the many contrasting (and at times conflicting) views of life work to shape the nature of politics within the Valley, with various factions competing for influence on the Council of Tiers.

## Culture

The Gleaming Valley is a stark counterpoint to its nearest neighbor, Hollowfaust. The City of Necromancers started out as a purely scholarly affair that became militant out of necessity. Juxtaposed against this is the nation of the Hollow Knights, whose enterprise began with nothing but the greatest of warriors and is now thirsty for the joys of civilian culture. All things considered, the favored of Corean have accomplished no small progress.

## Crime and Punishment

In a nation with two lawful patron gods, it is not surprising that delinquency is uncommon. Yet crime remains a reality even in the Valley, and its citizens have arrayed many resources to deal with it. The whole question of criminality is a matter of considerable philosophical debate, and the nation's legal system has undergone extensive revision five times since the Restoration. In general, crime is viewed as a flaw in character and environment, which combine to produce tragic results. As such, the Gleaming Valley's justice system focuses on redemption rather than retribution. Also, because guilt carries so much social stigma, suspects are assumed innocent until proven otherwise. The Tier of Scales is the agency formally in charge of jurisprudence. It includes a small number of dedicated ranks that act as police officers and an elite cadre of clerics specially trained in divination magic.

**Minor Breach of Character (any act that leads to the inconvenience or temporary harm of another or betrays the principles of trust and duty):** Restitution to the injured party, and community service for no less than 7 but no more than 14 days.

**Major Breach of Character (any act that leads to the permanent harm of another that does not result in death or loss of livelihood):** Restitution to the injured party including a permanent debt of duty, and community service for no less than a month but no more than a year.

**Destruction of Life (includes murder and injury that destroys another's way of life):** Oath of atonement wherein the perpetrator must seek to aid all those like the person(s) he injured, and wherein he may not use arms against another sentient being except to protect himself or his companions. This oath is enforced by divine magic.

## Religion

As a holy state, the Gleaming Valley gives religion the highest priority. This is not to say its citizens are zealots — quite the opposite. There are few overt signs of worship, and the Valley's citizens believe communion to be an introspective and very private affair. The nation literally radiates faith, however, and this faith colors everything these people do, from their daily chores to acts of war.

Corean and Hedrada are the chief deities of worship; there is no question about that. Yet *what* each of these gods means is somewhat different in the Gleaming Valley. Most believe the “pure” incarnation of each god too great a thing to behold. In their quest for perfection, this inherent imperfection of faith is anathema. As a result, those of the Gleaming Valley fragment the different aspects of each god in the hopes that they can more perfectly emulate and worship them. It is this idea on which the Tiers are based.

Corean is referred to alternatively as the Sword, the Shield or the Forge. As the Sword, the holiest of weapons, Corean embodies the very essence of divinity and the gods' triumph over archaic forces. The sword resembles a shaft of light, and its radiant gleam is proof of its heavenly heritage. The sword is also a weapon of temperance and balance, able to perform both offensive and defensive maneuvers. As the Shield, Corean is the great defender. The shield protects its bearer by taking all damage into itself; therefore, it also represents self-sacrifice and compassion. The Shield is also a symbol for Madriel, though in such cases it is referred to as the Aegis. Corean as the Forge is the greatest of craftsmen, the holy father of mechanical arts. The forge is a place of diligence and hard work, and industry as an ideal is its greatest strength. The Tiers that rule the valley are named for each aspect of the gods- the Tiers of the Sword, Shield, Forge, Hammer, Lash and Scales.

Hedrada is referred to alternatively as the Hammer or the Lash (or, more recently, the Scale). The hammer is the most potent of weapons, yielding all else for raw power. Hedrada in his fury is the Hammer: merciless, righteous, and pure of deed. Conviction and loyalty are the hammer's greatest strengths. Even more extreme is the lash, a weapon of deceptive fragility that can disarm or fell the mightiest of opponents. It is also a symbol of power, and as such it embodies governance (along with the Sword) and politics. Hedrada as the Lash is the consummate statesman, the lord of civilization and all its many possibilities.

The remaining gods are likewise broken up into component aspects. It is these aspects on which the “minor” tiers are based.

## Armed Forces

The crack forces of the Valley are aligned into *ranks*, their basic tactical unit. Each rank consists of

500 soldiers and 50 support staff. Multiple tiers make up each rank, though a few dedicated ranks exist wherein only knights of one or two tiers are found. Such ranks never operate in isolation, drawing support from a greater diversity of forces.

Command of the military ultimately falls to the King and the Council of Tiers, but day-to-day operations are handled by a hallowed congregation of the most worthy warriors. Known as the Paragons, these citizens draw from those among the military who have exemplified best the ideals of the valley. The Council of Paragons, then, is the Council of Tiers' equivalent in military matters. It represents a rather significant break from the old methods of chain-of-command: decision making by the Paragons is by consensus, not decree.

## Cities

### The Golden City

If ever there was a rebuttal to the mocking claim that “hollow warriors have no place playing at the art of living,” then the Golden City would be the greatest of them all. Conceived and built at the height of the Restoration, it stands not only as a symbol of divine authority, but also as a testament to a people coming of age. Resting within the ancient caldera of Mount Glianorum, the city's rooftops shine so brightly that travelers have likened it to a “star visiting the earth, no less radiant than the heavens.”

**1. Grand Commons:** A half-kilometer-wide square, the Commons' remarkable floor is a mosaic depicting Scarn as it was before the Divine War. Fountains and waterways mark its great rivers, and well placed trees highlight the land's once endless forests.

**2. The Academy:** A place for applied learning, the academy is a school for soldiers and craftsmen.

**3. The Lyceum:** Comprising the oldest of the city's buildings, the Lyceum is the Valley's greatest center of learning.

**4. The Concordat:** This three-domed edifice of gold veined marble houses the Council of Tiers.

**5. The Basilica:** Overlooking the Grand Commons is the white marble headquarters of the city's municipal offices.

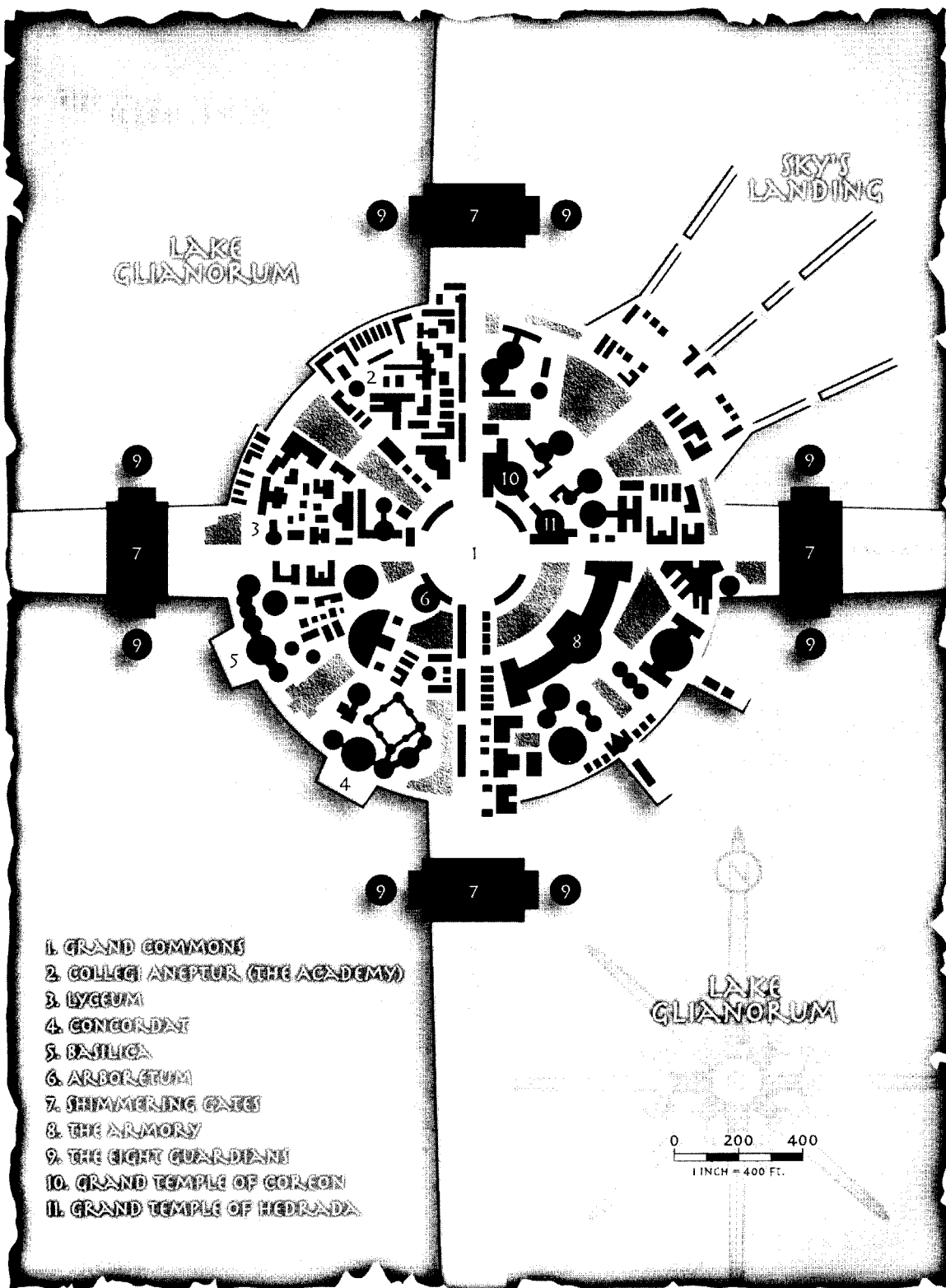
**6. The Arboretum:** Trees from all over Ghelspad, some of which are entirely extinct in the wild, can be found in this lush and pleasantly green area.

**7. Shimmering Gates:** Four colossal gates guard the four causeways leading to the city.

**8. The Armory:** The centerpiece of the Shield Quarter and the largest building in the city, the Armory stores the majority of the nation's magical and mundane tools of war.

**9. The Eight Guardians:** Four pairs of marble statues flank each of the Shimmering gates. Each pair is dedicated to one of the four great tiers, and they are always matched male to female.





10. Grand Temple of Corean: A beautiful, multistory edifice of wrought iron and the famous colored steels, the Grand Temple is arguably the busiest non-governmental building. Within its vaults and vast rooms are housed the most sacred and rare religious texts of the Valley.

11. Grand Temple of Hedrada: Along with the Grand Temple of Corean, the Grand Temple of Hedrada is the tallest structure in the city. In stark contrast to the radiant hues of Corean's temple, Hedrada's shrine is built of hewn stone.

## Other Cities

**The Citadel:** Even as Amalthea was laid waste, the masons of the Valley began work on the Citadel. Wanting to honor Amalthea's loss, they reworked months of planning and created a "three-part shield" design to mirror Amalthea's own; when viewed from above, the Citadel looks like a kite shield divided into three portions. The Citadel was always meant to be the major military center of the Gleaming Valley, freeing the Golden City to be the "ideal capital." It houses seven of the Valley's most elite ranks, with as many visiting ranks of no meager caliber.

The Citadel is also one of the largest centers of industry within the Gleaming Valley. Its smithies are among the best anywhere in Ghelspad, and the famous ores of the area have done much to complement this. Only Forge and the Golden City itself have more craftsmen than the Citadel, and only Forge can claim that its craftsmen are better.

## Heteronomy of Virduk

**Name:** Heteronomy of Virduk

**Population:** 750,000 (Halfling 52%, Human 32%, Half-orc 14%, Dwarf 2%)

**Government:** The Satrap, who is the highest-ranking military officer assigned to defend the region, has ultimate regional authority and reports directly to King Virduk of Calastia.

**Ruler:** Lord Satrap Tomvolie Kres (*human male* Ftr6/Ari6, LE)

**Capital:** Calas (21,000)

**Major Cities:** Three Moons (4,000), Zathshore (2,000), Oakdale (500)

**Languages:** Calastian, Shelzari

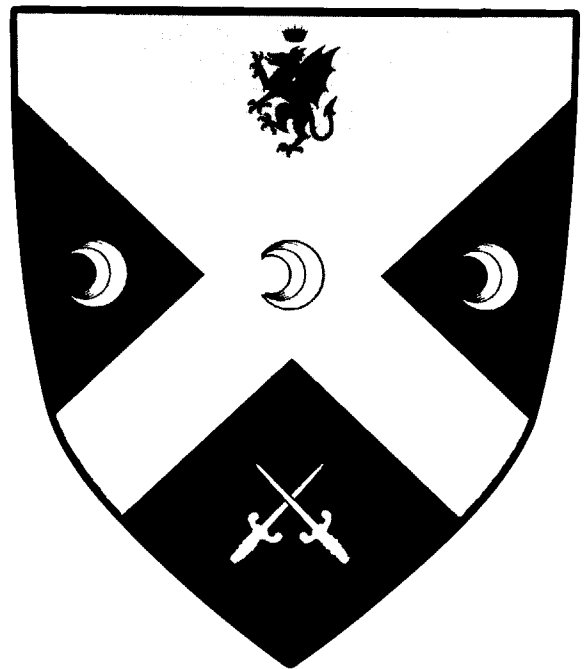
**Religion:** Hwyrdd, Enkili, Chardun

**Currency:** The Heteronomy uses Calastian currency, although recently a number of silver coins have been minted with Queen Geleeda's likeness, and the Satrap encourages minting of the more commonly used copper coins that bear Hwyrdd's acorn on one side and the Calastian dragon on the other: Silver queen (1 sp), copper dracorn (1 cp).

**Resources:** Wheat, dairy products, wine, beer, dried fish, meat, produce, leather goods, woodcrafts

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



## History

More than once before the Divine War, this district fell under the control of Zathiske. For centuries, however, all of Zathiske was part of the Ledean Empire in the form of the Zathiskite Province. For most of the area's history, it was a relatively peaceful land, easily held by Zathiske or its conqueror. Halflings were no more common here than any other race,

except for the dominant humans. Indeed, most of the Heteronomy's population owes its roots to a region far north of the Heteronomy.

For ages, halflings have spread across the world like any of the other divine races; however, one of their greatest homelands was the Pryan Hills, east of the ancient Broadreach Forest. During the Divine War, these foothills of the Kelder Mountains were turned into a battleground for the gods and titans on a number of occasions. Gaurak tore across the range numerous times before his fall, and it is said that the gods defeated Mesos among the mighty hillocks. The halflings who lived in the Pryan Hills were forced to endure terrible times, and as the war turned bloodier than ever, ultimately they fled, traveling south and settling along the shores of Lake Zath and the Broadreach River. The potent spells unleashed by Mesos before his destruction continue to taint the hills, and it is unclear whether this dangerous magic or the rivulets torn by Gaurak's teeth caused them to be renamed the Haggard Hills. Whatever the truth, these hills have entered the legends of many halflings as their lost homeland.

Halflings prospered along the Broadreach River and the banks of Lake Zath and soon were the most numerous of races found in the region. Their dogged determination combined with a love of the comforts of life led them to turn the rolling plains into a cornucopia of pleasant farm villages. Village priests called the land Hwyrdd's Promise, and indeed even the trees seemed to whisper that the god and his mother Denev had blessed the halflings. For years, however, raiding parties would spill from the Hornsaw Forest or turn south from the Haggard Hills through the Blood Steppes. Halfling warriors took up stone and arrow against their foes and prevailed time and time again. By 75 AV, the halfling reeve Orisk Featherwood had effectively gained the trust and support of villages across the region. Priests of Hwyrdd met and asked that the people confirm him as King of Hwyrdd's Promise. His heroic status led to his acceptance not only by the halflings, but also by those human villages that lay to the north between Hwyrdd's Promise and the Hornsaw Forest.

During the Druid War, the Featherwood family proved the wisdom of those who chose them as leaders, as the king and his sons led numerous bands of archers and slingers that held back the Hornsaw titanspawn at great cost. Human militia from the northern regions of Hwyrdd's Promise held the front line while halfling missile weapons demolished their foes. King Orisk settled divisive claims of favoritism by placing the human ranger Lady Swanil in command of the northern troops initially, and the entire kingdom's military eventually. Halfling historians continue to claim that this benevolent move was the beginning of the downfall of the Promise.

In 90 AV, King Virduk recalled his troops from the Druid War and began invading his neighbors,

beginning with the Irontooth Pass. Over the course of the next 22 years, Calastian troops conquered all of its neighbors, and refugees poured into Hwyrdd's Promise, particularly dwarves displaced by the growing hatred and racism they faced within the Hegemony, especially in Lageni. Tensions flared as newcomers unsettled the comfortable lifestyle of Hwyrdd's Promise. An aging General Swanil fortified the eastern border against Calastian troops and prepared to resist Virduk's armies as Calastia made its first advances into the Promise.

The sudden onset of the Blood Monsoon ended Calastian advances for nearly 14 years, and it was not until 126 AV that the banners of the Black Dragon were once again seen at the eastern front. Swanil had long since fallen prey to an exotic serpent slipped into her tent by traitors in league with Mormo's titanspawn of the Hornsaw. For years the people of Hwyrdd's Promise had convinced themselves that the money they poured into the eastern fortresses would keep them safe.

General Kres attacked the eastern line, waited for heavy reinforcements, and then besieged them with light troops. Held captive in their own fortresses, the halfling troops were deprived of their natural advantages, and the general led his main army to victory over the Promise's relatively unprotected citizens. General Kres was named Satrap of the region and has kept it quietly under the control of King Virduk. Unfortunately, floods of destitute refugees, years of devastation by the Blood Monsoon, and the unfortunate loss of so much of their adult male population led to a terrible decline in the newly designated Heteronomy of Virduk. Young halflings grew up in a land of poverty not known since the end of the Divine War, with crime and gangs steadily gaining strength among the desperate population. A number of gangs have even found patriotism and turned against Calastian troops, whom they blame for the current state of affairs. The most famous of these rebels is the Blackfoot gang leader Orzu.

Initiatives on the part of Queen Geleeda and the Satrap have kept the population relatively happy. As peace has settled over the land, even though it is a forced peace, trade and plenty have slowly returned to those craftsmen and merchants who support Calastia. Arms and weapons are supplied to militia who stand against invasions from the Hornsaw Forest, and most citizens could not care less whether their defenders bear the yellow acorn of Hwyrdd or the Black Dragon of Calastia.

## Geography

Most of the Heteronomy is open plains dotted with the villages and farmland of its halfling citizens.

**Lake Zath:** This large freshwater lake teems with fish and provides water for numerous prosperous halfling villages along its northeastern banks. It is said that the wrecks of ancient battles between the

Empire of Zathiske and the Empire of Elz litter the floor of the lake. The Broadreach River flows into the lake from the north and continues from the lake into the Blossoming Sea in the south.

**Broadreach River:** This mighty river owes its name to the northern forest that once bore the same name. While the tainted forests have lost their identities, the river has steadfastly continued on its road to the sea. In ancient days, this river and the broad lake that it feeds served as the natural border between the empires of Elz and Zathiske.

## Flora and Fauna

Wheat, corn, pumpkins, fish, and cattle are the mainstays of the Heteronomy's flora and fauna. Unfortunately, the citizens of this Calastian district have their lives invaded all too often by terrible creatures that pour forth from the Hornsaw Forest or come down from the southern reaches of the Blood Steppes. Calastian and local troops are quick to repel such advances when possible. In recent years, particularly dangerous orc warbands have crossed the river from the west to raid the Heteronomy. Angry citizens have called for an end to this, and Virduk has answered by dispatching more troops to the area, although skeptics suggest his troops have come for some darker purpose.

## People

The Heteronomy's population consists mostly of halflings, but this majority has been slipping in recent years due to Calastian policies and the travails of war. At one time, halflings boasted at least three-quarters of the total population; however, dwarven refugees from the First Calastian Advance, combined with severe casualties against the Calastian troops, reduced that number. Larger units of human troops permanently stationed in the northern district of the region have further shifted that number.

Worse yet, newer Calastian military policies seem determined to have the Heteronomy serve as home to the half-orc companies they have been forming in apparent preparation for further expansion. Though halfling officials have complained endlessly about this, the Satrap's office asserts that such units are "necessary for the proper defense of the Heteronomy against determined invaders, particularly those orc raiders that terrorize the western borders and the Hornsaw titanspawn that invade the northern areas." Certainly, half-orc units are limited to newly built forts in those locales, but not everyone believes the Satrap's claims.

## Culture

Halflings engage in numerous games, many involving a level of dexterity most humans cannot hope to match. Simple contests include stone throwing at distant targets, with perhaps the favorite being "no-hit," in which each participant tries to get the closest to a prize without striking it or their competitors'

rocks. The winner gains the prize, while the loser is expected to provide the next prize. Needless to say, only those who are confident in their abilities join in this high stakes game, and most beginners settle for simple target practice contests.

Calastian holidays are forced upon the populace, and of course they celebrate the four predominant holidays (Carnival of Flowers, Festival of the Sun, Feast of Wheat, and Grim Day), but halflings have two favored holidays of their own. The 25th of Enkilot and the 25th of Enker mark times when Denev and Enkili are both honored as the parents of Hwyrdd. The former festival is known as Hardrain, when all crops should already be planted and indoor parties celebrate the end of the planting season. The latter festival is called Kintime, when halflings visit their relatives and celebrate the year's successful harvest.

Half-orcs and dwarves form sizable minorities in the Heteronomy. Most halflings despise the half-orcs, whom they see as officially sanctioned invaders, and consider the dwarves unwanted competition due to their significant skill at crafts and often ridiculous willingness to undercut halfling craftsmen in price. Many halflings also blame humans for the fall of Hwyrdd's Promise, whether feeling that Swanil's strategy did not work or seeing Calastia as the evil empire others paint it to be. Magnificent campaigns of exaggerated charity and beneficence on the part of Queen Geleeda have turned many halflings into loyalists toward the Hegemony, but rebels such as Orzu continue to contest King Virduk's rule.

## Crime and Punishment

Law in the Heteronomy is administered at the hands of the military and the Satrap. As such, petty crimes tend to be ignored, while greater crimes are punished by execution at the hand of the military. This had led to many young halflings pursuing a life of lesser crime, which inevitably turns darker when they join one of the gangs that terrorize certain districts of the Heteronomy. The Satrap is disturbed by the fact that a growing number of gangs turn to attacks against his troops and hopes that finding and killing the renegade Orzu will end this trend.

## Religion

All faiths are practiced in the Heteronomy, but Enkili's chaotic nature seems to suit the halflings' nature. Lately, worship of the Jester has been growing in popularity, rivaling that of the halfling god Hwyrdd. This pleases King Virduk just fine, for although the followers of the Trickster are a constant source of trouble and mischief, they are rarely if ever organized enough to present anything like a threat. Enkili's halfling priests serve as religious leaders, jesters, and master pranksters, and in many ways the will of the people is sapped through such chaotic and unfocused behavior. The faithful of the other gods, especially Taniil, Corean, and Hwyrdd, have tried to unite the people against the seemingly benevolent Calastians,

but with the notable exception of Orzu, progress has been slow. The officially sanctioned Chardunite priesthood has a great interest in maintaining the status quo and tolerates Enkili's worship since it helps keep the land under Calastia's heel.

## Armed Forces

The majority of the Heteronomy's "military" is composed of halfling and human militias, often armed with weapons provided by the Calastian Hegemony. Dwarven communities are small and tightly knit, often providing for their own security but not extending any offer of military service towards the district as a whole. Armed companies of Calastian troops are stationed permanently in the Heteronomy, and indeed their numbers seem to be increasing of late. Particularly of concern are the relatively newly formed half-orc companies that are already renowned for their uncontrolled ferocity.

## Cities

### Calas

This town owes its name to an ancient fort built here that bore the name of the Ledean Province in which it lay. In modern times, its name is all too ironic, given that the district and city have fallen to Calastia's dominance.

**Spryantu Hills:** These wide, low hills remind halfling settlers of their lost homeland and currently are the neighborhoods most desired by wealthy halflings in the city. Their gentle slopes are home to those nobles descended from the Featherwood family and to the greatest temple of Hwyrdd found in Ghelspad.

**Satrap's Manse:** This sprawling fortified mansion serves as living quarters for Satrap Tomvolie Kres.

**Tuskag:** The city of Calas has a number of ghettos, but this one is known for its half-orc population, which actually predates the new military policies.

**Blackhill:** Another of the Calas ghettos, this one is renowned as the original home of the halfling rebel Orzu.

### Other Cities

**Three Moons:** Humans who survived a terrible battle wherein Madriel, Belsameth, and their lost brother stood against the titans founded this town. Today it thrives on the banks of the Broadreach River, although at least half of its current population is half-orcs stationed here for unknown purposes.

**Oakdale:** This northern village has stood against titanspawn invasions for generations since the Divine War. The current high priestess of Hwyrdd calls it home, although she spends much of her time visiting the entirety of her people.

**Zathshore:** This community lies on the shore of Lake Zath and is largely halfling in composition.

## Karria

**Name:** Sovereign Nation of Karria on Tarrak

**Population:** 750,000 (Human 95%, Elf 3%, Halfling 1%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Hereditary monarchy, with an advisory Council of Lords presided over by the monarch.

**Ruler:** Her Majesty Queen Tagani, Ruler of the Western Sea (*human female Rog10/Ftr5, CG*)

**Capital:** Doison (30,000)

**Major Cities:** Ublek (20,000), Stormhold (1,000)

**Languages:** Ledean, Darakeene

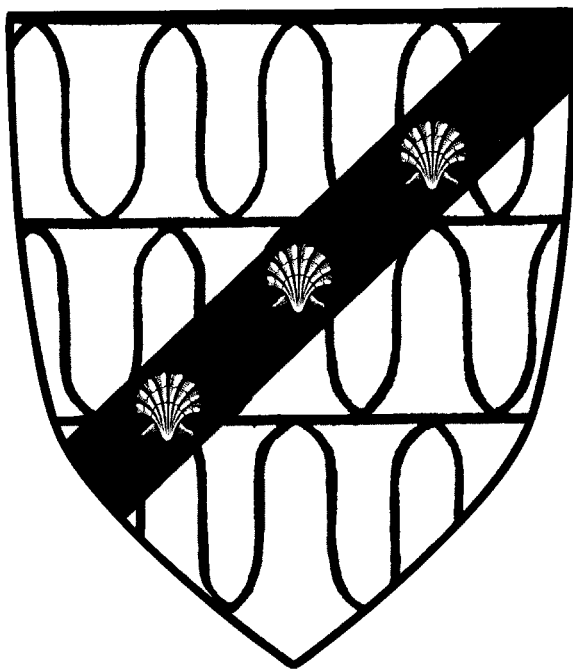
**Religion:** Madriel foremost, with worship of Corean, Enkili, Tanil, Manawe, Denev, and Erias also common.

**Currency:** Platinum crown (20 gp), gold compass (1gp), silver skate (1 sp), copper fish (1cp)

**Resources:** Ships, iron, gold, textiles, fish products, dried spiced meat, wine

**Allies:** Uria, the Drifting Isle, Dunahnae, Darakeene, the Bat devil pirates of Tarrak

**Enemies:** None currently



## History

Until 125 AV, Karria was wild, inhabited only by bat devil pirates in the north and a humanoid race called storm goblins. These goblins survived the Divine War by hiding on the island, abandoning their creator Lethene, and claiming Enkili as their patron. Following the war, the Tarrakan storm goblin tribes grew in strength, and after a century of fighting with the island's bat devils and the titanspawn, became the area's dominant power. Some tribes expanded, taking up raiding and kidnapping women and children from the coastal cities of Darakeene. At

first, the Darakeene government ignored the storm goblin nuisance. The small towns that were attacked could organize their own defense, Emperor Klum reasoned, while the fleets of the Darakeene navy were better put to use earning profit for the imperial coffers.

Countess Tagani of the Tagani-Solarus house in the coastal province of Provark found the emperor's cold-heartedness despicable and thought it outrageous that her own province, home to the Darakeene fleet and the finest navy on Ghelspad should have its hands tied when faced with invasion and abduction. Nevertheless, she might have been unable to act had she not fallen in love with the famous explorer Barcelus (*human female Chr6/SWt7, CN*), high priestess of Enkili and sea witch of renown. A noble countess and a free-spirited adventurer, the two made an unlikely couple, but in the end their alliance proved fortuitous.

With Barcelus' counsel Tagani realized that she would come to grief if she simply ignored the emperor and acted against the goblins on her own. Together, the two hatched a plan to obtain sufficient military power and actually *conquer* Tarrak, putting themselves beyond the emperor's reach.

The time was ripe. Most of the navy's ships were docked in the ports of the Provark coast, preparing to aid a coalition of merchant princes in Shelzar. Frustrated by the emperor's inactivity and eager to act against the goblins, many commanders of the navy rallied to Tagani when she called upon them to aid her. Others were persuaded by bribes from Tagani's sizeable treasury.

Together with a flotilla of some of Darakeene's finest warships and a number of reliable mercenaries, Tagani and Barcelus departed their land, never to return. The battle for Tarrak was brief, and the storm goblin pirates were quickly slaughtered. While Tagani's military commanders prepared to root out the remainder of the storm goblins, Barcelus returned from a raid and surprised Tagani by announcing that she had successfully negotiated the surrender of the remaining tribes. In the spirit of Madriel's mercy, Tagani accepted their surrender.

After the initial conquest, Tagani renamed the island Karria. She awarded baronies to many of the admirals and quickly began the process of establishing trading posts, colonies, and the production of ships. The number of inhabitants grew as Tagani offered incentives to settlement. Darakeene's Emperor was furious, but was eventually persuaded by his advisors to leave the new nation in peace, and within two years a treaty was negotiated granting Karria independence in exchange for a pact of mutual defense.

For the past decade, Karria's politics have been erratic. Barcelus often undertakes sweeping and inconsistent diplomatic policies on her own whim, consulting with Tagani only after the fact. Whether

Tagani tolerates this because she remains deeply in love with the free-spirited adventurer, or because the actions that Barcelus undertakes are never evil and always seem to win the upstart island kingdom more allies, is known only to Queen Tagani herself.

Surprisingly, the storm goblins have remained loyal and are proving valuable citizens of the new kingdom. After numerous recent skirmishes with a group of bat devil pirates on Karria's northern island, Barcelus negotiated a treaty of privateerism with them, once more without Tagani's knowledge. The bat devils continue their piratical activities, but as sanctioned privateers and working against the foes of Karria and Darakeene. In the 25 years since its founding, Karria's navy has grown and become the foremost naval power on the western seas.

## Geography

A large portion of Karria is covered in thick, temperate rainforest heated from the many hot springs that dot the island, fed by the still-hot furnaces of the isle's twin volcanoes, Rok and Forag. Those areas not covered in forest consist of rolling hillsides, and this is the part of Karria that comprises its famous wine region.

**Tarrak:** A small, rocky, volcanic island to the north east of Karria. It has high cliffs for coasts, and despite several raids by the Karrian marines, it remains in control of the bat devils and titanspawn. Recently, the bat devils have begun working with the Karrians, attacking shipping from Calastia, Dunahnae, and elsewhere, and sharing the proceeds with Queen Tagani.

**Rok:** One of the two great volcanoes of Karria. Its slopes are wild and rugged, and it has not been well explored.

**Forag:** The larger of the two great volcanoes of Karria. Largely unexplored, it remains home to numerous titanspawn.

**Forest Mouth:** Founded only a decade ago, this town acts as a river trading post for the wine growers in the hills of the region, as well as a way station for hunters, loggers, and adventurers planning to travel upriver.

**Starlight River:** Originating at the steaming lake near the base of Forag, this river has few fords, requiring bridges to cross at most locations. It is wide and deep enough to accommodate barges and flat-bottom boats up to the base of the Firewater Falls.

**Karrian Hills:** These hills are home to most of Karria's farms and vineyards. The region is well patrolled, and titanspawn have not been seen here in years.

## Flora and Fauna

A variety of grapes, fruits, and berries grows on Karria, making it an excellent wine country. The forests contain fruit trees, redwood, spruce, and oak. Mundane animals on Karria include boars, flying





*A Karrian merchant captain, a sailor, sea witch and vintner.*

squirrels, and a large variety of apes. The waters around the island teem with life, including a large number of gargantuan fish that are a primary resource of the island. The island is home to a number of titanspawn that have never been eradicated due to the dense forest near the island's center.

## People

Most of the inhabitants of Karria are of Darakeene stock, though of the fairer complexion common on the coast. They are tall and sturdy, with pale skin, blonde hair, and blue, turquoise, or green eyes. Karria has been accepting immigrants from the south, however, and southern blood has been mixing with the native Darakeene. The younger generation of native Karrians is often deeply tanned, with thick deep golden or black hair, and green, amber, copper, or brown eyes.

The other major "civilized" inhabitants of Karria include the bat devil pirates of the northern isle of Tarrak and the surviving storm goblin tribes.

## Culture

Karrian society is built around its navy and maritime traditions, as well as its royal house of Tagani-Solarus. Worship of Madriel is its main religious force, and the two major economic centers are the urban coastal port cities and the rural manor houses of the Karrian Hills.

A manor house ranges in size from a one-family cottage with its surrounding garden to a multi-dwelling estate made up of acres of vineyards, orchards, and farmland on which dwell the ruling family and its retainers. All families owning manor houses are given equal treatment under the law, regardless of their size and wealth.

The center of culture for a city dwelling Karrian is the street market fair, which takes place rain or shine and covers a large region of a city's blocks and piers. City dwelling Karrians tend to think of the sea as the place from which everything — wealth, danger, adventure, opportunity. While this attitude irritates their country brethren, it has traveled inland as well, and more than one farmer has lost a daughter or son to the promise of adventure on the sea.

## Crime and Punishment

Because of the circumstances of its founding, a major focus of Karrian government is to protect its citizens from murder, kidnapping, and piracy. The government is heavily influenced by Madriel's tenets of mercy, however, which has created a sizable population of indentured servants that serve in manor houses or work for the government. Recently, some nobles have been selling these criminal/slaves to foreign governments, a practice that Queen Tagani dislikes but has not yet forbidden.

**Theft:** Fine equal to twice the amount taken, or indentured servitude.

**Murder:** Indentured servitude for life if the criminal is truly sorry and asks for mercy. Otherwise, perpetrators are beheaded.

**Piracy:** As per murder, though indentured servitude often consists of induction as an oarsman on a galley.

**Treason:** The criminal is stripped of all wealth and exiled. The punishment often extends to family and friends as well. The punishment is the same as that for murder, if the treason would have involved direct killing.

## Religion

Madriel is the patron goddess of the island, called by the inhabitants the Lady of Mercy and the Protector of Children. Temples to her are found in all the major cities, and the Order of the Morning Sky maintains a chapter house in Doison. Also in Doison is an amazing temple garden called the Garden of Stars. Country folk make daily prayers and offerings to Madriel so that their children will be healthy and their harvests bountiful, but also so that they themselves can follow Madriel's example and show mercy to others.

While much more dedicated to the gods of good than Darakeene, religious life on Karria still inherits much of the openness found in its mother nation. Enkili is worshipped by sailors for luck and so that storms might be avoided. A few clerics of Erias have moved from the Drifting Isle, and all who travel the sea pay homage to Manawe before any serious voyage. In short, the people of Karria are a practical folk when it comes to the gods.

## Armed Forces

Despite being only 20 years old, the Karrian navy has already won renown as one of the finest in western Ghelspad. Its elite core consists of marines, sailors, military strategists, sea witches, and naval architects who deserted from the Darakeene navy to join the new nation. The Darakeene navy has gone into something of a decline since the departure of its personnel, and now Karria's forces are generally considered superior.

These elite sailors are supplemented by recruits and colonists from throughout Ghelspad who are

trained and armed in the traditional Darakeene manner. Karrian warships are famous for being large, fast, heavily armed, and magically augmented. Their crews often contain sea witches and battle-mages. Because Queen Tagani frequently puts her navy to use, Karrian marines are usually battle hardened veterans. While the Karrian navy patrols the waters near the island, the bat devils of the north have become a de facto expeditionary force, taking battle to Karria's enemies and sailing well beyond Karria's territorial waters.

## Cities

### Doison

The bustling capital of Karria is located along the northern shore of the Bay of Peace. It is noted for its extensive docks, which cover the north shore and extend more than half a mile into the bay.

**Palace:** The fortress/palace of Doison is made of dark granite and is noted for its stained glass dome depicting Madriel embracing the sun as though it were a child.

**Garden of Stars:** Within this beautiful temple of Madriel are over a thousand hanging braziers, each containing a burning flame. Seen after sunset, it is as if the night sky was brought down to Scarn.

**Sea Wall:** Completed five years ago, this stout stone wall boasts six towers and is manned by Karrian marines.

**Central Market:** The economic heart of the city.

**Dock City:** Three square miles of docks, wharves, and piers.

### Other Cities

**Stormhold:** A castle and settlement built by Queen Tagani's lover Barcelus. Houses a small temple to Erias and acts as a seaward lookout.

**Ublek:** The second largest settlement on the island, Ublek has become infamous as a haven for pirates, smugglers, and similar ne'er-do-wells.

**Sturm:** The storm goblins surrendered this town, and it is administered by a human Karrian governor. Many goblins still live here, maintaining peace with the human minority.

## Lageni

**Name:** Archduchy of Lageni

**Population:** 1,000,000 (Human 92%, Halfling 7%, Other 1%)

**Government:** This hereditary monarchy pays homage to King Virduk.

**Ruler:** Duke Traviak the Steel-fisted (*human male Ari5/Rgr5/Blk10*; see *The Wise & the Wicked*, pg. 102)

**Capital:** Durm (37,000)

**Major Cities:** Trenik (10,000), Aovnir (3,000), Enig (2,000), Outpost Elra (1,300), Rustfang (700), Arach's Rest (80)

**Language:** Calastian

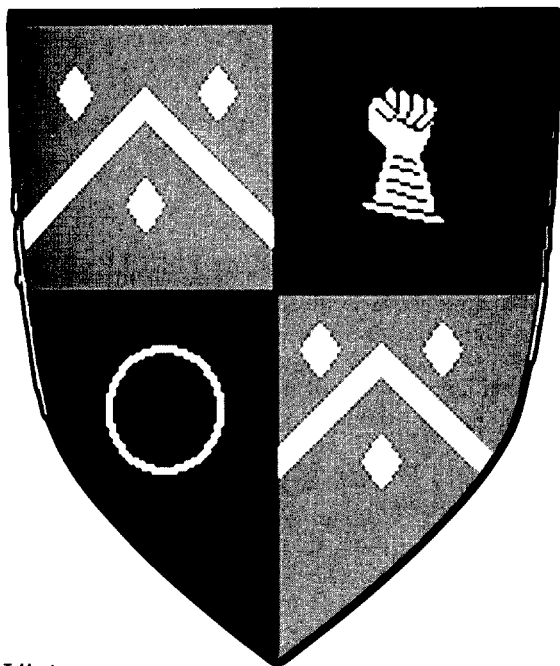
**Religion:** Chardun

**Currency:** Calastian coins are as numerous in Lageni as those minted in the Archduchy: gold scepter (1 gp), silver ring (1 sp), copper fist (1 cp).

**Resources:** Iron, horses, cattle, wheat, leather goods, arms and armor

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



### History

Lageni's history begins a few thousand years before the Divine War, when the realm was a petty kingdom falling prey to the neighboring Kingdom of Calas, an event that would repeat itself in later millennia. The rising power of Calas was put to a stop during the sixth century of the Ledean Empire, when the kingdom's own legionnaires were forced to kill the royal family and put their own governor on the throne. The Scarlet Dragon of Calas gave way to the imperial crest of the Golden Wheel. For long centuries afterward, the various petty kingdoms conquered

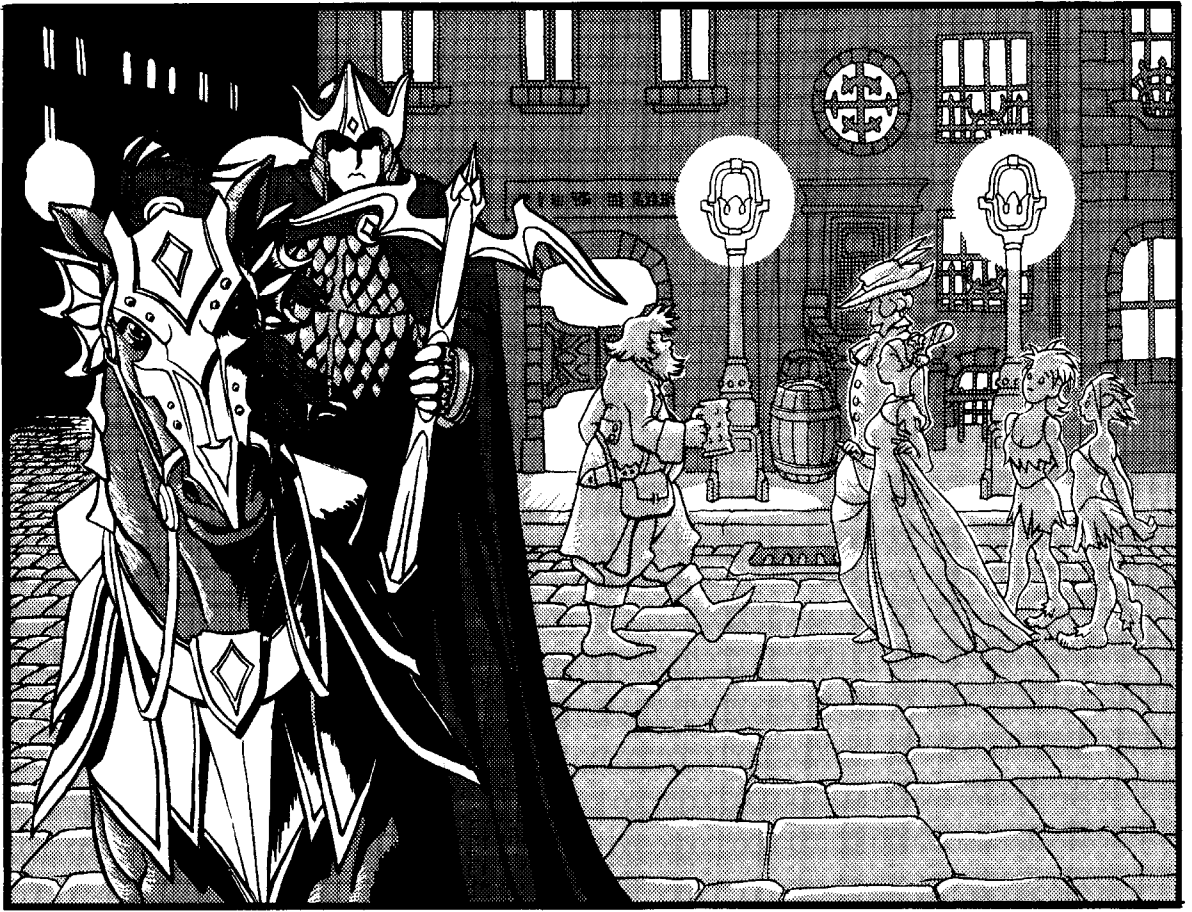
first by Calas and then by the Empire of Lede rose up in rebellion time and time again. It would be over 2,000 years before they began to break free from the Empire as it slid into decadence.

When the Empire fell to the charduni, Calas Province came apart at the seams, with each kingdom vying for independence. Duke Lagiak seized all of the lands to the east of the mighty Eni River, while the Governor of Vashon seized those lands that lay south of the river. North of the Eni River, the Venirian Province quickly rose to power as the new Empire of Venir, while west of the river priests of Hedrada forged the lands of Ankila of the Hammer. Lagiak forced allegiance from the other dukes of the province's eastern reaches and dubbed himself the Archduke of Lageni (literally, "the land above Eni," although surely he appreciated the resemblance to his own name).

The Archduke negotiated with the charduni and managed to retain relative freedom, as did the king of Calastia. Open worship of Chardun by both nations eased the dark dwarves' suspicions and paved the way to allied status. As Lagiak aged, however, he became fascinated with death and opened his borders to priests of Belsameth. At the time, Scarn's two moons stood equal in the sky, and Belsameth's priestesses naturally also brought with them the gray-faced servants of her brother, a lesser god who has since been forgotten. Only the outbreak of the Divine War would show just how deadly a mistake that invitation proved to be.

The brother of Belsameth and Madriel grew envious of his sisters, and when the gods turned against the titans he sought to betray them in order that he might extinguish their light forever. Ancient forbidden tomes call the traitor god Orathel the Silver, although Corean's priests have stricken his name from all canonical holy records. Whatever else he may have done, legend claims the treacherous brother tricked Gaurak into swallowing his sister's moon. Certainly the once verdant moon turned lifeless and gray like that of Belsameth's brother. Though Madriel begged for mercy, even the Lawgiver and the Avenger could not ignore the open treachery of their brother. They hunted the renegade god, and when they caught him, they gave his body to Belsameth, who mutilated it in terrible vengeance and cast his moon behind the shadow of hers. In Lageni, the gray-faced priests of Orathel turned against their sisters and were slain to the last man, reputedly crying out that the land would henceforth be cursed as the land of kinslayers.

Certainly the curse seems to have held true, as Lagiak ultimately fell prey to assassins in the employ of his son Treniar, who subsequently made Belsameth the official religion of Lageni. Two decades later, the Cult of Ancients removed Archduke Treniar at the behest of his son Aovad, who was slain in his middle age to allow the young duke Aold to ascend to the



*A member of Duke Traviak's elite Black Dragoons, a peasant, a Lageni noble couple and their halfling servants on the streets of Durm.*

throne. While not a particularly progressive ruler, Aold seemed to be a master at keeping the Cult of Ancients and their Belsameth allies happy and might have died naturally were it not for the machinations of Calastian politics. In 90 AV, King Virduk offered Aold peace if the archduke allowed passage of Calastian troops across Lageni and into the Irontooth Pass. Aold acquiesced, and that same year Virduk's troops withdrew from the Druid War to launch a surprise assault upon Burok Torn and the pass.

With his armies still scattered in the Druid War, and his realm all but occupied by Calastia, Aold reluctantly acknowledge the truth of the matter: Lageni belonged to King Virduk. To assuage Calastian fears and to formalize his obeisance, Aold sent his 11-year old younger son Traviak to Calastia's court. Although Traviak's life was one of decadence, it was also one of fear that the walls of his golden cage might part at any time to reveal terrible death. Six years later, an unknown agent assassinated his older brother Ragni, and although a wormtongue blade suggested the involvement of the Cult of Ancients, the truth has never been proven. Aold asked that his son be allowed to return home to assume the mantel of heir apparent, and Virduk, deeming that Aold was loyal, sent young Traviak back to Lageni.

Having become a follower of Chardun during his stay in Calastia, Traviak learned order and discipline and brought those values to his plans for future rule of the archduchy. For eight years following his return, he acted as the dutiful son and helped rebuild the archduchy's battered military. Then, as carefully as he had begun, the 25-year-old Traviak led a coup against his own father in 137 AV. While his father's fate remains uncertain, the future of Lageni became clear. The young duke declared Chardun the official religion and set about destroying generations of ingrained servitude to Belsameth. Within three years, he had largely pacified Lageni, proven his military value to King Virduk, and begun his masterful campaign to strengthen the Calastian Hegemony. For the last decade, Archduke Traviak the Steel-fisted has set his mind to turning Lageni into a well oiled machine honed to a deadly edge. His renewed assaults upon Burok Torn and Durrover are the delight of Calastian strategists everywhere. It remains to be seen whether his attempts at Durrovian conquest result in new territory for Lageni or merely boost the Hegemony's power.

## Geography

The Archduchy of Lageni is a long stretch of land lying between the Eni River and the Kelder Mountains, encompassing the Irontooth Pass in the north and extending to Outpost Elra in the southeast. Its fertile plains are divided between great fields of golden wheat and grazing land for herds of cattle and horses. The archduchy's economy perhaps suffers from its landlocked status, but it makes up for any loss by exporting finely crafted leather and steel goods and taking prisoners of war as slaves. It is no accident that much of the nation's industry is tied to the production of food and arms for the military. Lageni claims all of its bordering foothills in the Kelders and much of the mountains as well, though titanspawn make the interior of the ranges difficult to penetrate safely.

**Eni River:** The mighty Eni River is the longest flowing body of water in Ghelspad, reaching from the heights of Adurn's Tear and Lake Vashon to the delta of the Blossoming Sea. The northern arm of the river divides New Venir from Lageni and keeps the vermin of the Blood Steppes from the southern regions of the Kelders. The southeastern arm of the Eni defines most of the border between Calastia and Lageni, while the southern route combines the flow of the two tributaries, emerging from Geleeda's Grove to form the border between Ankila and Calastia.

## Flora and Fauna

The fertile plains of Lageni are a patchwork of fields of wheat and grazing lands for the archduchy's horses and cattle. The Eni River spawns numerous trout and salmon, while its vast floodplain is the choicest farmland in the realm. Long pacified by humanity, the landlocked nation is troubled only by the strange creatures that emerge from Geleeda's Grove and the Kelder Mountains. The citizens of Lageni are haunted more by the dark rule of Chardun and his unholy servants than the spawn of the titans. Some call Calastia the embodiment of Chardun's rule, while others say that Dunahnae is his holy land — certain branches of the god's church feel that Lageni combines the best of both.

## People

The people of Lageni combine the dashing charisma of Calastia with the surly hardiness of the Kelders. Skin color ranges from dark-toned to a shade of olive-leather, with hair ranging from black to light brown; eye colors include green and brown. The nobility has long maintained an arrogant air of superiority, which shows in their extravagant clothes, while the common folk tend to dress as plainly as possible, perhaps to avoid attracting the notice of their lieges. Young peasant women wear loose and concealing outfits, while men dress according to their profession. A narrow middle class strives to make a living from the needs of the poor while buying their way into convenient marriages with nobility, espe-

cially with destitute noble families desperate to save their futures. The Steel-fisted Duke retains an incredible 10% of the population in some military capacity or other, and the otherwise thriving economy is sometimes taxed by the demands of the archduchy's troops.

Citizens of Lageni believe they are superior to other cultures, even those with a political edge. Bards in the archduchy paint Calastians as effete fops; the dwarves of Burok Torn as sniveling, fat worms; the women of Durrover as unfettered sluts; and the Veshians as spartan homosexuals. Indeed, common insults in Lageni revolve around comparing one's rivals to one of the aforementioned four groups in an unfavorable light. Racism and classism abound, yet the church of Chardun teaches that there is one path to a greater life — service and excellence. It is widely known that Duke Traviak's highest commander, Field Marshall Brizac, began his career as nothing but a brave drummer boy in the infantry. The nobility often dismisses this attitude as mere propaganda on the part of the Steel-fisted Duke, but there is little doubt that the military holds Traviak's ear on most issues.

## Culture

Every Charday is held holy, with public church ceremonies mandatory to all but military personnel on tour of duty. The 6th of Chardot is celebrated as a special holiday, marking the day that Traviak became Archduke of Lageni. Despite the outlawing of large temples to Belsameth, the Festival of Wheat still thrives in Lageni, with special prayers begging forgiveness from the dead.

Lageni food tends to consist mostly of hard breads and cheese. Beef often supplements the diet, although usually only once a cow has become old and useless. Beer is far and away the most common alcoholic drink among the poor, with the nobility having to import their favored wines. Durm's vineyards produce a fine merlot, but they can scarcely keep up with the Duke's guests, much less the burgeoning city.

Lageni breeds large plow-bearing horses that also happen to provide a fine stock of heavy war horses. Horse or cattle drawn carriages and carts are widely used by merchant caravans.

The poor are left uneducated, unable to read, and stifled under a blanket of propaganda. Nobility is taught to read and write both Calastian and Ledean. Wealthy merchants purchase equivalent educations. Lageni literature focuses primarily upon history and military campaigns, although it is clear that this is owing to the Duke's preferences.

Lageni culture brazenly treats its female population as second-class citizens, to a degree unmatched even in Calastia. Rumors suggest that the Duke arranged for the death of his first wife because she was too independent minded. Inheritance of wealth and

position passes through the father, in order of wives if more than one exists.

The Lageni attitude toward women just may control the archduchy's future. Traviak has five legitimate children from his first wife, all of whom are daughters. Brave tongues whisper that Lady Valasa's death was not natural, and her father continues to rail against the Archduke from his estate in southern Calastia. The populace would accept none of Traviak's 27 illegitimate children, and his second wife Sussea has not born him a living child to date. Fearing that he may never receive a male heir, Traviak and his Chamberlain Labynt (*human male Ftr5/Ari5, LE*) are already plotting devilishly clever marriage arrangements to ensure the archduchy's future.

## Crime and Punishment

In Lageni, crime is punished brutally, if unevenly. Those who hold the interest or favor of the Duke or his cronies may escape with no punishment at all, while those who earn his disfavor likely face death or worse. Punishment is so inconsistent that no specific codes or guidelines exist for any crime. An individual is as likely to be executed as given a stern talking-to and released, regardless of the crime. Needless to say, bribery and corruption are rampant.

A common penalty in lieu of death is temporary or permanent slavery (depending on the severity of the crime) to one of the nobles or merchants that curries favor with the Archduke. Durrovian slaves are becoming an all too common sight in Lageni.

## Religion

Although Chardun's favored had ruled the country's religious arena before the Divine War, Belsameth's assassins and priests gained preeminence a mere 20 years after the war. The Cult of Ancients maintained one of its secret bases in the breakaway piece of the Calas Province and eradicated any competition to its goddess. When he assumed control of Lageni, Duke Traviak declared Chardun the official religion of the archduchy once again. He tapped into generations of fear of the assassins and the fact that his own brother had apparently fallen victim to the Cult of Ancients in order to suppress the Slayer's cult mercilessly. His most elite soldiers, the unholy Black Dragoons, seized the main temple of Belsameth in Durm and re-dedicated it to the Great Conqueror. Some wonder if Lageni's lack of a male heir to the throne is the twisted vengeance of Belsameth. Ironically, the systematic destruction of Belsameth's followers has revived the faded remnants of her brother's cult. Calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Nameless Orb, these ashen faced madmen worship the distant lesser moon and support the Duke's campaign against Belsameth's cult.

## Armed Forces

Lageni's military represents a staggering 10% of the nation's populace, primarily young adult males taught to believe that the armed forces are the key to the archduchy's survival as well as to its upper class. Formal training in the military is mandatory for all males of age 16 or older, although it is encouraged years before then. While the trainers of Lageni cannot match the tactical talent of Darakeene's war colleges, they instill a more dangerous and hateful mindset than the mercenaries of the war colleges could ever create.

## Cities

### Durm

The growing capital of Lageni is home to the centers of the archduchy's military commands and two generations of noble bureaucracy.

**Castle Durm:** Duke Traviak's castle, originally built by his great grandfather Treniar. The walls of Castle Durm lurk darkly over the reign of terror waged by the Steel-fisted Duke.

**Dragoon's Lair:** This spacious complex was the primary temple to the goddess Belsameth until the coup against King Aold. It was re-consecrated to Chardun, and the Black Dragoons turned the building into their prime training ground.

### Other Cities

**Trenik:** The original capital of Archduke Lagiak lies on the banks of the Eni River, at the northern end of its largest northern bend.

**Aovnir:** This settlement lies across the greater lake of Vashon from the capital of Calastia. Lageni spies reputedly watch Vashon with sinfully expensive glass lenses.

**Enig:** This ancient town rests upon the rocky hill that bends the Eni River sharply around its southern perch.

**Outpost Elra:** This southeastern settlement stands upon the line that runs east and west from Lake Vashon. It hosts a group of Calastian battle-mages sponsored by Duke Traviak. Suspicious of the arcane masters, he keeps them at a safe distance while they remain within his borders.

**Rustfang:** The first dwarven fortress to fall during the battle to the First Calastian Advance. Lageni troops have occupied it ever since, even bringing their families and servants to live there. The fort was renamed as a direct insult to the Irontooth Pass.

**Arach's Rest:** These mysterious mounds are dug into the foothills of the Kelders. They hold the resting places of the wight lord Arrach and his minions, and apparently reflect his ancient home in the Mounds of Man.



## New Venir

**Name:** New Venir of the Calastian Hegemony  
**Population:** 800,000 (Human 68%, Halfling 23%, Half-orc 5%, Elf 2%, Dwarf 2%)

**Government:** A military ruler reports to King Virduk, so Prince Urlis is merely a figurehead.

**Ruler:** His Resplendent Majesty, Prince Urlis (human male Ari6, CE)

**Capital:** Femulyae (30,000)

**Major Cities:** Deriz (15,000), Urlisian (10,000), Morian (5,000), Qadri (2,500)

**Languages:** Shelzari, Zathiskan

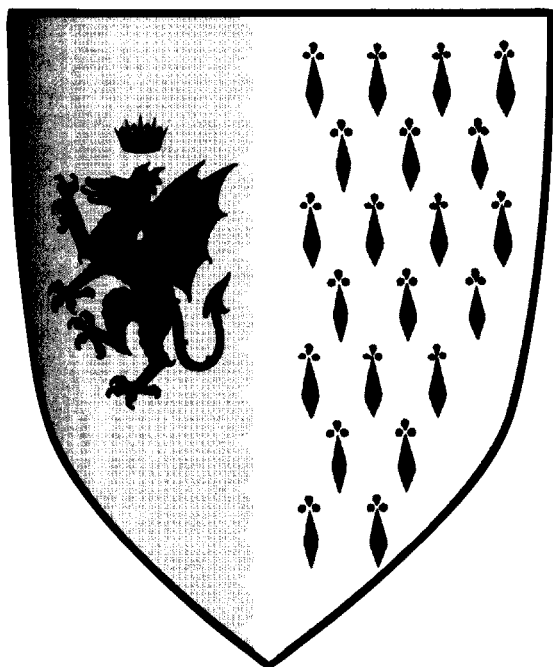
**Religion:** Belsameth

**Currency:** Venirans use both Calastian and native currency. Indeed, part of Prince Urlis' deal with Virduk seems to include his face upon all new Venirian coins: gold urlis (1 gp), silver legion (1 sp), copper blade (1 cp).

**Resources:** Wheat, steel, vice

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



### History

During the reign of the Ledeian Empire, this ancient country was behind the ascension of two different dynasties. Indeed, the Venirian warriors known as the Dancers of Steel became the Legion of Steel in service to the Ledeian emperor. When the Empire of Lede fell, Venir was quick to rise from the ashes, even seizing territory from the lands that once belonged to its fellow provinces in the south. Unfortunately for the Venirian people, the Charduni Empire's dark arm reached across the continent of Ghelspad, and long costly wars shrank the Empire of Venir from its previous glory to the territory south of

the halfling held Pryan Hills and north of the Calastian Forest. Venir never fell to the charduni, however, for its Emperor Qadriam was a devoted follower of Madriel and led his kingdom proudly into the Divine War against the titans. Although the great kingdom lost even more territory to the devastation of the Divine War, it stood tall and was also one of the first kingdoms to recover from the war.

Qadriam's son Derizian inherited Venir's throne shortly after the Divine War and set about returning his empire to its former glory. Although the reasons are still unclear, Derizian slowly descended into madness — informed sources suspect that some foul magic reduced the proud emperor to a babbling fool, but nothing has ever been proven. As the Emperor Derizian went mad, so did his kingdom fall into deep-seated corruption. House Asuras in particular imported great quantities of drugs and vice into the struggling empire. When the aged emperor finally died, the people practically rejoiced.

They spoke too soon. Prince Urlis assumed the throne with great fanfare, but soon sold out his own people. In the face of King Virduk's ruthless expansion, Emperor Urlis made a devil's deal with the Calastian monarch. In return for "sparing the populace," Urlis delivered Venir over to Calastia and let his nation become the New Venir of the Calastian Hegemony.

Even during the chaotic years of the Blood Monsoon, Urlis did not consider turning upon his Calastian "friends," content to indulge in a life of personal luxury. Not only has the prince left his people helpless before the armies of the Black Dragon, but he has also invited the blackest of markets into his realm. The capital Femulyae is a pit of vice and crime second only to Shelzar, and indeed it is often called "Little Shelzar." Bored in his decadence, however, Urlis has not stopped there. He renamed the city Aridilis after himself, calling it Urlisian, and he currently is transforming it into a hazy, smoke-drenched vision of his personal pleasures.

### Geography

New Venir is bordered on the north by the Blood Steppes, on the south by Geleeda's Grove, on the east by the Eni River, and on the west by one of those imaginary lines only Calastian generals could devise. The eastern regions are more lush and fertile, while the northern regions slowly give way to the rolling hills that ultimately become the Blood Steppes.

### Flora and Fauna

New Venir has much in common with the plains of the Heteronomy of Virduk and the hills of the Blood Steppes. Hardy grasses grow tall and strong where they are not cut short by grazing cattle or patchwork farmland. The same wandering creatures from the Hornsaw Forest that make the Blood Steppes so dangerous occasionally flow into northern New

Venir. On the southern front, strange beasts sometimes emerge from Geleeda's Grove to wreak havoc, and yet when Venirian heroes attempt to gain revenge, Calastian troops warn them that doing so will be seen as poaching King Virduk's gift to the Queen.

## People

The people of Venir share the same racial characteristics as others of their area, including dark toned skin, dark hair, and green or hazel eyes. Particularly in the northern and eastern reaches one notices signs of mixed blood of Kelderite or Veshian extraction. The ugly marks of orcish features are far too common on the northern frontier, and they are not always the result of rape — some humans have been known voluntarily to take on orcs as companions or even, rarely, as marriage partners.

## Culture

Venirans officially celebrate holidays important to Belsameth. They also officially celebrate the 8th of Belsamer as the birthday of Prince Urlis. Unofficially, Venirans celebrate every holiday known to Ghelspad, from the holy days of Corean to the raucous festivals of Enkili.

Venirian food is renowned for its spices and flavor. Talented cooks command exorbitant rates, and a single meal can easily consist of a dozen courses.

Marriage was once a holy bond in Venir, but the examples of two corrupt rulers have turned it into little more than a sham. Most Venirans marry, if only to ensure the inheritance of their children, but few stay remotely faithful. Lovers' feuds often end in tragedy, and illegitimate children abound.

The ruling human class of Venir sees minority non-humans as exotic and strange. Rare is the noble who has not indulged in an elven lover, and true fetishists turn to dwarves or halflings to satisfy their oddest cravings. Ironically, this unofficial stance toward other races has made Venir a fairly easy place for them to live, and those who steer clear of the filthy practices of large cities can often live quite comfortably in small isolated towns.

## Crime and Punishment

The law in Venir is a joke. Lords and ladies commonly gain the services of the convicted for their personal pleasure, and many lesser crimes are punished with harsh terms of slavery. Most public death sentences are only half true, as victims often serve as slaves even in death. The corrupt nobility of Prince Urlis is very careful to keep such punishments quiet, however, even going so far as to perfume their dead servants. Slavery itself is, of course, legal in Venir.

**Petty Theft (50 gp or under):** Imprisonment for 1 day per sp of value. Often nobles will offer criminals a chance for early freedom in return for certain services.

**Grand Theft (51 gp or higher):** Imprisonment for 1 year per gp of value. Nobles sometimes offer such victims a chance to be servants instead.

**Arson:** Death by drowning. Victim is sometimes animated to serve a noble.

**Murder:** Death by beheading. On strange occasions, the victim is replaced by some pitiful soul and the victim is inducted into the Cult of Ancients.

**Treason:** Turned over to Calastian authorities.

## Religion

The priesthood of Venir has long been dominated by women. In ancient days, witches of Mormo and Gulaben held orgiastic rites in numerous temples. As the gods took precedence, the worship of Madriel became common, especially during the reign of Emperor Qadriam. The mad Emperor Derizian declared Belsameth the official religion of the empire, and it is well known that Prince Urlis is a devotee of Idra, despite the standing pronouncement of Belsameth's dominance. Despite Derizian's pronouncement, the worship of Belsameth did not truly dominate the empire until 137 AV, when Duke Traviak dedicated the Archduchy of Lageni to Chardun. Traviak and his loyalists quickly moved against all known temples of Belsameth, and the goddess' faithful spilled across the Eni River into Venir in droves. The massive influx of Belsameth's priestesses turned Derizian's mad declaration into fact. The Cult of Ancients and the priestesses of the Slayer operate in strength in Venir, and many of them continue to scheme against Traviak, hoping to avenge the slight against their faith.

## Armed Forces

Military units in New Venir fall into a number of categories. Perhaps the most common are the resident legions of Calastian troops, armed against potential revolt and charged with defense of the region. The second most populous category is the vast personal armies of individual nobles. Prince Urlis employs no less than a legion's worth of soldiers, and many of his noble subjects aspire to his military power. Finally, the Legion of Steel remains loyal to the empire despite two generations of fallen emperors. Descended from the ancient Dancers of Steel mystic warrior brotherhood, the Legion is sworn to defend the emperors of Venir from their enemies. Unfortunately, the Legion does not respect Prince Urlis and feels that it failed Derizian. Nonetheless, it plots for the ascension of a new emperor, one who is not muddled by the hazy drugs of current Venirian society and whom they hope can free Venir from Calastian rule.

## Cities

### Femulyae

The capital of New Venir was once a strong, proud city. Now it is a pit of despair ruled by the corrupt blend of Prince Urlis' favored and the sinister vice lords.

**Main Gates:** Unlike most cities, these gates cannot be closed. They have never been repaired since Urlis' deal with Virduk, and their ever-open status hints at the soul of the nation.

**Urlis Palace:** A constant bluish haze lies over the Prince's palace, a sure sign of the drugged state of its inhabitants. Urlis divides his time between the royal palace and his new villa in Urlisian.

**Black Moon Temple:** The highest temple of Belsameth in the land, this veritable fortress is a hotbed of intrigue and deadly plots.

### Other Cities

**Deriz:** Prince Urlis is not the first ruler of Venir to name a city after himself. This city was renamed during the reign of his father.

**Urlisian:** This city was formerly known as Aridilis, but Prince Urlis has renamed it after himself and seeks to reform the city in his vice-ridden image.

**Qadri:** The Emperor Qadriam built this city around a great temple of Madriel. In recent years, the city has been in serious decline, as the priestesses of Belsameth seek to drive the temple of Madriel out of existence.

**Morian:** The town of Vhaerith was built around the villa of one of the dynasties of the Ledean Empire. When the Vhaerith dynasty fell to the Morian dynasty, the town's name was changed in yet one more sign of human vanity.

## Ontenazu

**Name:** The Canyonlands of Ontenazu

**Population:** 120,000 (Human 51%, Dwarf 28%, Halfling 15%, Elf 4%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%)

**Government:** Each city has a board of elders who automatically assume an advisory seat when they are either old enough or recognized for their leadership abilities.

**Ruler:** Canyonmaster First Rank Frem Artone (*human male Rgr11, N*)

**Capital:** East Ontenazu (35,000)

**Major Cities:** West Ontenazu (20,000)

**Languages:** Officially Ledean, but Veshian and Albadian are also commonly spoken. A few still speak traditional Ontenazu, but the language is fast dying out.

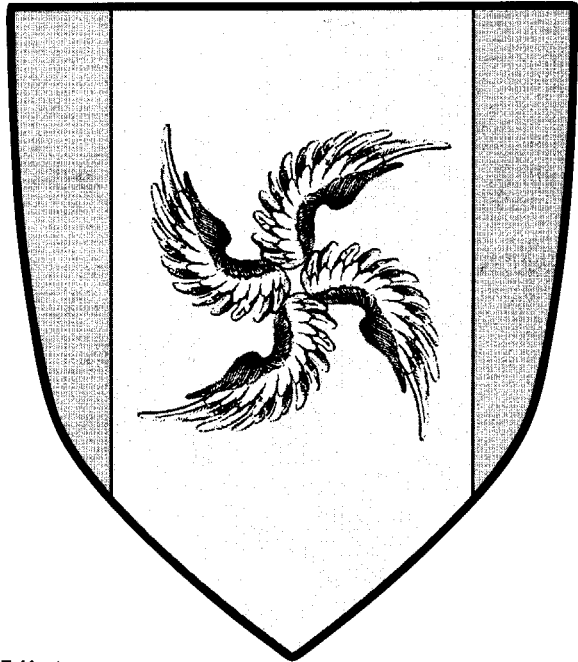
**Religion:** Enkili, Denev

**Currency:** Moneychangers are common in Ontenazu, and almost any currency will be accepted.

**Resources:** None. A few small mines produce diamonds and other gemstones, but conditions make mining hazardous.

**Allies:** Albadia, Calastian Hegemony, Vesh

**Enemies:** None



## History

The deadly winds in the Canyon of Souls have never made it a popular travel route, but since Calastian occupation has effectively sealed off the Irontooth Pass, the Canyon of Souls has suddenly become the preferred highway for east-west interaction of all sorts. This development has left marked and permanent effects on the culture of Ontenazu and promises to change the canyon peoples even more in generations to come.

The most obvious change is in the cities. Before Virduk's ambition eliminated the much safer and better traveled routes, East Ontenazu was little more than a sort of wild trading post. It was a large and diverse settlement, especially by post-war standards, but in truth it had very few really permanent residents. Rather, East Ontenazu resembled more of a giant, year-round marketplace, where ambitious young merchants and those desperately in debt tried to eke out a little profit while waiting to hire a canyon guide for the high-risk but much faster route to the rest of the continent. By getting across the Kelders ahead of their competitors, they could sometimes increase their profit margins significantly — assuming their entire caravans were not lost or destroyed by some slightly inaccurate prediction of the canyon's awesome winds.

The rest of Ontenazu was entirely rural, consisting mostly of small spiritual communities — the largest of which was occasionally referred to as “West Ontenazu” — that saw the awesome power of the canyon's winds as a focus for meditation and as an inspiration for self-improvement and devotion to Denev. The native Ontenazans were very welcoming to outsiders, but only those outsiders honestly and diligently seeking personal perfection. Material possessions and contact with outside “distractions” were highly discouraged, and even the city of East Ontenazu (made up almost entirely of foreign merchants and their retinues) was avoided by native people. Many saw it as a defilement of the canyon and of the people's ancient name (Ontenazu means “wind-walking” in the old tongue), and only the very rebellious ventured into the city to guide the caravans for a fee.

Virduk's failed attempt to take the canyon, however, seemed to unite the traditional residents with the city dwellers in defense against the common enemy. A kind of wary respect grew between the two peoples, and the melding of old traditions and new economy that resulted from their struggles has created the oddly peaceful atmosphere of the outwardly chaotic Ontenazu marketplace. More and more permanent homes, as well as a few monasteries, have appeared in East Ontenazu, and West Ontenazu has also grown as the wandering natives decide to settle together for protection in case the recent peace treaty with Calastia proves impermanent.

More than ever, Ontenazu is a popular place for the spiritually minded to settle, especially since enlightenment apparently no longer comes at the cost of material comfort. In addition, canyon navigation is becoming a highly marketable skill, and many adventurous youths from all over Ghelspad are vying for apprenticeships at wind-walker guilds. Those who survive the training and a decade or two of contracted employment can expect to retire early and in comfort.

The merchant attitude in Ontenazu has changed as well. It seems that the atmosphere even in East

Ontenazu is no longer conducive to rampant greed. Merchants who settle there, or even those who simply pass through regularly, seem to develop a sense of ethics usually absent in large market towns. Surprisingly enough, the merchants' morality does not appear to interfere with business in any way, and if anything, Ontenazu merchants seem luckier than most. Older natives claim this is due to the natural power of the canyon, which is reasserting itself after a long Titanswar-induced dormancy. Others believe it to be nothing more than a natural, if naïve, camaraderie born from such a relatively small group of people so spectacularly defeating a powerful enemy. Once the euphoria wears off, the cynics claim, the merchants' natural greed will return. Only time will tell, but there really does seem to be something special about the Canyon of Souls.

Virduk's recent peace overtures have been greeted warily but ultimately taken at face value. As a profoundly peaceful people, the Ontenazans hope to avoid further conflict and pray that they themselves can act as a buffer against the inevitable bloodshed and sorrow that would result if Vesh and Calastia ever faced each other directly on the field of battle. Not many Ontenazans really believe that the current peace will last, however.

## Geography

Ontenazu consists of little more than a huge dangerous canyon with a city at each end and a precarious trail between them. The land is arid and largely barren at the top of the canyon, and the bottom — well, no one has ever returned from the bottom of the canyon, so what dwells there, none can say. Throughout the traversable canyon network, the floor is at least 800 feet down, and some scholars claim that it is up to two miles deep in places. Jagged and sharp outcroppings and a few shelves jut out from the steep walls here and there, and some of these support small amounts of tenacious vegetation. Farther down, the canyon is swathed in shadow, sometimes all day long. Signs of civilization dot the canyon walls here and there — a few mines (diamonds and other gemstones), vaults for Ontenazan merchant bankers, and even a few hermitages. For the most part, however, the canyons are bare, barren, and unexplored.

Ontenazu is a harsh environment, but a starkly majestic one. The track along the top of the canyon — little more than a shelf between towering mountains and sheer drop to the canyon floor, barely wide enough for a wagon in places — is currently the safest and quickest way through the Kelders, frightening as that may sound. According to legend, Enkili crafted the Canyon of Souls and painstakingly created all of the traps and pitfalls within it as a gift for Denev and apparently for no reason (Enkili is known for such behavior). Denev told Enkili he was mad, but she has

nevertheless taken great care not to alter Enkili's careful design in all the centuries since.

Though the canyon is really a series of smaller canyons, crisscrossing haphazardly among the Kelders, most people find it easiest to think of them all as one great Canyon of Souls. This attitude is due primarily to the ferocious winds that tear through the Ontenazu pass. Sometimes strong enough to push an entire loaded caravan — wagons, beasts, guides, and all — over the edge into the abyss, or enough to lift a grown human from the ground and hurl him over a league through the air before smashing his body against the cliffs, the Ontenazu winds make clear to one and all who (or what) truly rules the Canyon of Souls.

Purportedly, the place where the Canyon of Souls received its moniker, the narrow plateau known as Moaning Cliff, overlooks one of the deepest canyons in the whole system. Almost 50 feet across at its widest, the plateau is both a welcome relief and a dreaded place. It is a relief from banging one's head, hugging walls, and walking on ledges no more than six inches wide; however, it is also the place where the wind patterns are least predictable. The Ontenazans who travel the canyons regularly believe that many spirits of unfortunate travelers inhabit the cliff; undead sightings are greater here than anywhere else in the canyons, and the wind takes on the tone of a mournful wail.

All life in the canyon conforms to the wind's rules or dies (and sometimes both, when the wind is feeling capricious). Included in these unbreakable rules are all the parts of the canyon network where people simply cannot go. So many are these impassable deathtraps, that instead of many canyons, the Canyon of Souls ends up looking like a single traversable route, with a handful of safe side canyons along the way. All the rest is forbidden to the sane.

Normally, traversing the Canyon of Souls takes approximately 10 days. During the months of Vangalot or Belsamer, it can take up to a month, while treks during Enker can be completed in as little as five days and require very few stops along the way. Complications on the journey can extend this time, sometimes by up to a week, due to the dangerous winds.

A wind-walker guide is required for all but the most experienced or foolhardy travelers. Wind-walkers charge 50 gp for each week they expect to spend on the trail, paid in advance. Complications and extra travel time are included in this price, however, and guides are very scrupulous about staying with a party until the journey is complete. A gratuity of at least 10% (and up to 50% by some wealthy patrons) at the end of the journey, as well as treating the guide to a civilized dinner at an inn or tavern, is traditional and may lead to future discounts if the guide likes his customers. These extras are not required, but are greatly appreciated. Some guides work exclusively for particular merchants or contractors and will charge

up to double for outside deals, if they are willing to make them at all.

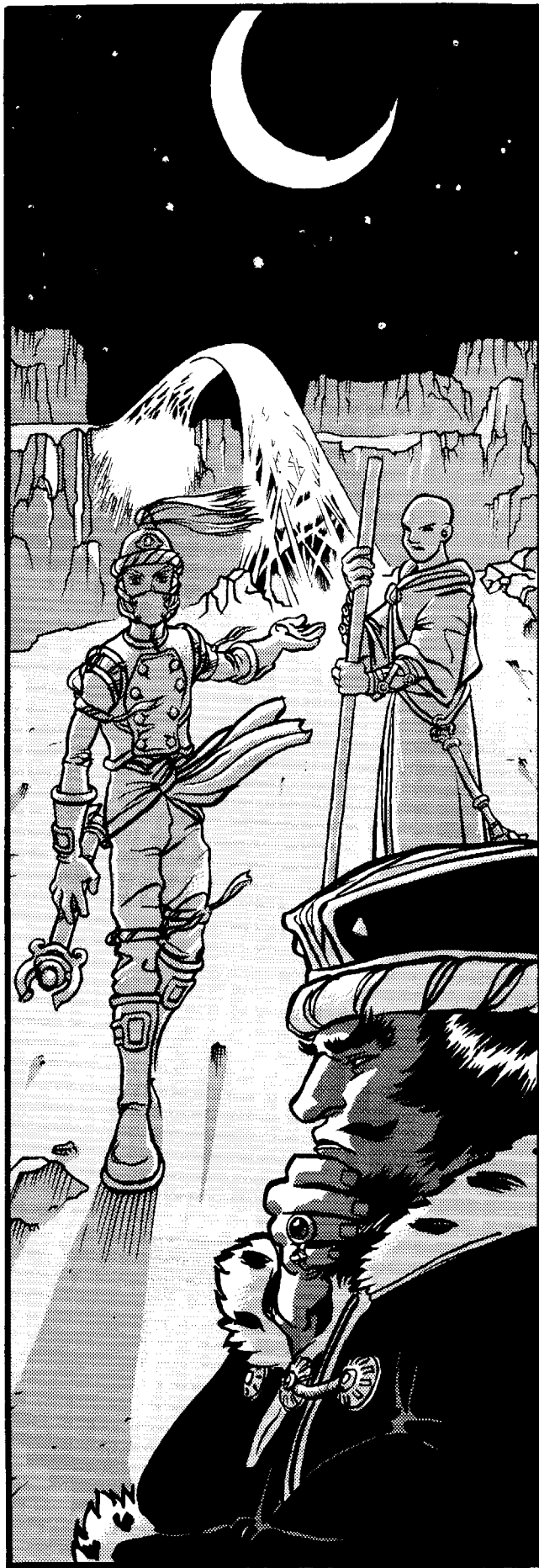
**Featherweb Bridge:** The epitome of hell to those afraid of heights, the Featherweb Bridge is the most dangerous (and dramatic) of several bridges in the Canyon of Souls. It is the only such bridge not sheltered from the winds in a side canyon, and as such requires an elaborate and magical design to keep it from being torn to pieces. Supple and much stronger than it looks, the bridge has existed for as long as the canyon folk can remember, and no one today knows who first built it. It must be closed for inspection and repair twice a year, to replace old or frayed ropes and renew its enchantments.

The winds that savage the bridge and its occupants are deadly as ever, but are more predictable than in many other areas of the Canyon, and the specialized guides at Featherweb Camp on the southern end of the bridge are especially knowledgeable regarding the winds' patterns and proclivities. They carefully oversee the maintenance of the bridge itself and guide travelers across as needed.

Goods, wagons, animals, and those paralyzed with terror are ferried across in huge baskets, drawn by a system of magically-enchanted pulleys. Cargo and passengers can be drawn along the entire length of the bridge in less than three minutes, but many find it a sickening ride and most are dizzy and nauseous by the time they arrive at the far end. Accidents are rare, but not unknown. Everything in the baskets is carefully lashed down, but ropes can sometimes break or slip loose, and a handful of catastrophic failures in which entire caravans were spilled into the abyss have convinced most travelers to cross the gap on foot.

As hard as it may be to believe, crossing the bridge on foot is actually safer than a basket-traverse. With a guide, the entire bridge can be traversed in about 10 minutes. Despite the fearsome winds and the dizzying height, accidents are rare, as the guides keep close watch on their charges, and safety straps prevent deadly falls. As with the basket traverses, there are tales of occasional disasters, but there have been no fatalities in recent memory. Only the foolhardy few who attempt the bridge on their own are really in danger, but somehow that does not make the damnable thing look any safer.

**The Twin Canyons:** One of the many dangerous legs of the trek through the Canyon of Souls is the region known as the Twin Canyons. As the name suggests, two of the side canyons in this area are almost identical in size, shape, and appearance. Both have quite narrow mouths leading off to the north from the main trail, and both wind sharply to the right and out of sight less than 50 yards in. The entire region, though not a great deal windier than surrounding areas, is filled with a monstrous roar of rushing air, making verbal communication nearly impossible for about a mile of the journey's main trail.



Wind-walker guides usually provide earplugs for this leg of the trip, making the noise little more than a nuisance, but the roaring winds have little to do with the region's true peril. Though only one of the two canyons is dangerous, and neither poses a threat to the main trail in any way, travelers foolish enough to venture through the area without experienced guides go missing in this region every year and are usually never found.

The trap lies in the fact that the Twin Canyons are located in the center of a long and especially treacherous and waterless part of the journey. The eastern canyon, probably due to some ancient joke of Enkili's, happens to contain the only safe shelter and reliable water source for most of a day's journey in either direction. In addition, the wind-walker guilds maintain a supply point here for the caravans, stocked with grain for beasts, dried rations for humanoid, and usually a few healing potions (the cost of providing this service is added to a guide's fees if they are used).

The western canyon, on the other hand, is a death trap. No one knows what is in it, because no one who has ventured beyond the first bend in the trail has ever come out. Rumors suggest monsters, portals to other dimensions, an ancient paradise so wondrous that none can bear to leave, and even less likely scenarios. Most educated people, however, think that the western canyon is simply home to one of the wind's more lethal pitfalls and that this wind trap is what causes the constant roar echoing through the region. Occasionally, the roar of wind becomes a little louder when one enters the deadly western canyon, but most of the time the echoes are such that there is no real difference in sound between the two trails.

To make matters more confusing, blinding dust storms are common in the area, making it very easy to miss one or the other canyon on the journey, so that parties often do not know which canyon they are entering. In addition, the regular dust storms make it impossible to tell for certain which trail is more commonly traveled. Even when there is no storm, the evidence of passage has usually been recently erased.

## Flora and Fauna

In the Canyon itself, the sheltered areas such as Featherweb Camp and the eastern portion of the Twin Canyons support wild plant life and sometimes even gardens or small herds of sheep and goats, but the main trails have no natural life to them. Moreover, all but the most

*A certified wind-walker guide, typical Ontenazan merchant, and an Ontenazan monk.*



intelligent and civilized of sentient races find the canyon too dangerous to be livable. For this reason, besides merchant caravans and other traveling parties, living things are rarely seen in most of Ontenazu. Even small rodents are rare and remarkable sights, and birds are markedly absent, since the vicious winds would tear their delicate wings apart.

Not much grows in the Canyon of Souls. There is some scrub and stunted vegetation, twisted, wind-gnarled conifers being the most prevalent. As well, to most travelers' dismay, a certain type of bramble seems able to grow at least moderately well within the walls of the canyons. This often leads to cut faces, hands, and legs, not to mention torn clothing and sacks.

The Canyon, as befits its namesake, is also occasionally plagued by undead. Unfortunately for those who encounter these abominations, they are usually incorporeal and able to flit about as if there were no disturbances in the weather.

## People

The people of Ontenazu are closely related to the people of Amalthea and have many cultural and racial similarities. Like the Amaltheans, native Ontenazans are tall and dark-skinned, with thick, straight black hair and powerful frames and features. Unlike the Amaltheans, however, cultural diversity is a relatively new phenomenon, so the "native" look is much more common in Ontenazu (about 30% of the human population).

Ontenazans are very open about other races and cultures and are fairly accepting of just about anyone's traditions. The only real taboos in Ontenazan culture involve excess. Addiction, greed, and fanaticism especially are strange and pathetic to the average Ontenazan, as well as any practices that harm other people, since the Ontenazans see the good of the community and the good of the individual as being practically synonymous—what harms another, harms the self. Because of this, peace is very important to them, as well as education.

## Culture

Ontenazan culture is very peaceful and spiritual. Healthy living is important, and even in these times of growth, prosperity, and economic diversity, a certain free-spirited asceticism is common. Ontenazans do almost everything with a kind of easygoing moderation. Though the opportunities are certainly available, amassing great wealth is very rare and generally not even considered. Ontenazans do not really understand what purpose great wealth could possibly serve and tend to retire very young rather than continue working when faced with economic good fortune.

They are far from lazy, though, and spend their later years pursuing spiritual ends or volunteering in various capacities. For this reason, Ontenazu is one of the most nearly classless cultures on Ghelspad. There

is no aristocracy, and an almost complete lack of poverty due to the amount of time Ontenazans are willing to spend helping their fellow citizens without any kind of monetary compensation.

Beyond these common values, Ontenazan culture can really only be defined by how little native culture the region truly has. Though once a part of the great nation of Amalthea, these people were drifting from their ancient traditions long before the Divine War, and the influx of new cultures has helped to homogenize them even more. They seem to take great pride and pleasure in exploring and practicing the traditions of others, and only in dress and style do they show any kind of cultural unity, due largely to the strong canyon winds. Long hair and dangling or billowing clothing and accessories are considered not only silly but also dangerous. Clothing is simple and tends to be largely form fitting. Hair is considered quite long if it reaches past the chin.

In addition, true spirituality and self-improvement are far more important to the Ontenazans than ritual, so even those who live in the country and have very little exposure to other cultures put very little stock in ritual and tradition. A few old Ontenazan songs and stories are still popular, but one of the most key elements of traditional Ontenazan culture is its flexibility and constant quest for improvement. It is perhaps in this way that the Ontenazans are least like their Amalthean relatives. The past provides interesting lessons, but life exists only in the present for Ontenazu. Some scholars have dared to suggest that the Ontenazans are more truly Amalthean than the modern Amaltheans because of this, but both Amaltheans and Ontenazans laugh at this theory, albeit for very different reasons.

One interesting invention of the Ontenazans is the wind gong. Wind chimes would jingle so often in Ontenazu as to be extremely annoying instead of pretty, but the Ontenazans solve this problem by making their wind chimes huge and heavy. One huge wind gong exists in each of the major cities, with the larger one in East Ontenazu. In other lands, these heavy bronze gongs might ring once or twice in a decade, but positioned as they are at each end of the Canyon of Souls, the gongs typically ring five to ten times a week. Dedicated to Enkili, the deep ringing sounds they make are said to be signs of his favor.

## Crime and Punishment

Crime is very rare in Ontenazu, since most of the people who live here see no point in committing it. Even Scaled operations in Ontenazu tend to be benevolent and tame, as most entertainment practices and substances are legal here, giving even the Scaled very little to hide. For some reason, even though they can operate with near impunity, Scaled operations in Ontenazu are small and only modestly profitable, no matter who is put in charge.

Theft is rare, since few people are poor and even fewer are greedy. Violent crime is rare because most people are too much at peace with themselves to lose their tempers. Because of this, there are very few strict rules about crime and punishment — they simply are not needed. Outsiders who commit crimes are typically handed over to their home governments, and repeat offenders are not allowed within Ontenazu's borders, if necessary on pain of death (rarely actually enacted, but consisting of dropping the criminal into the canyon). The only clear laws in Ontenazu are first, never to harm or needlessly offend fellow citizens (including children and visitors), and second, to keep every agreement one signs. When these laws are broken, the instances are rare enough that the city's council can preside over each hearing individually on Hedraday mornings. Punishments vary widely, depending on circumstance. Law enforcement, when necessary, is performed by volunteers from the community.

## Religion

Religion is a very personal and private part of life for the Ontenazans. Wilddays are usually spent at home with friends and family (ironically making Hedraday nights a time of parties and a certain degree of abandon, probably much to Enkili's delight). Dendays are communal feast days and generally involve large outdoor neighborhood potlucks and dances. When it is cold, the feasts are held in the council hall. Shrines and temples are visited whenever a person feels the need, rather than on specific days, and every day is spent in pursuit of personal growth.

Most religions are tolerated in Ontenazu, and some even have large Ontenazan congregations, but fanatic devotion is frowned upon, and Ontenazans who regularly attend foreign religious services refuse to give up their free-spirited connections with Denev and Enkili. Despite worshipping the unpredictable and sometimes dangerous Enkili (who in many ways embodies the capricious winds that scourge the region), Ontenazans show their god's gentler and less violent side. Other very popular gods in Ontenazu are Tanil and Idra.

## Armed Forces

Oddly enough, Ontenazu does not really maintain an army. They beat the Calastians with the canyon itself, rather than with force. West Ontenazu is constructed quite close to the canyon's mouth and evacuation routes are well known even by small children. Should Virduk or his successors break the alliance at any point, the Ontenazans, warned by great bells rung from high lookout points in the mountains (largely attended by retired wind-walker volunteers who enjoy the solitude), will immediately retreat to designated and well stocked safe-camps in the canyon, and the monks, druids, and wind-walkers

will go about the task of tricking Calastia's armies into killing themselves.

So far, the Hegemony is reluctant to repeat its fiasco in the canyons, and the wind-walkers have proven incorruptible when Virduk sought canyon guides of his own. Without guides, the canyon cannot be crossed by an army, and the people can easily retreat back to East Ontenazu while the wind-walkers keep their small eclectic militia eternally supplied. The Canyon of Souls is perhaps the most easily defensible spot in Ghelspad.

If Vesh attacked, it might be a different story, since East Ontenazu is not particularly defensible nor prepared to evacuate, but Vesh has so far proven itself to be an ally in heart as well as name, and the Ontenazans are not worried about it.

**East Ontenazu:** A surprisingly lively and cosmopolitan town, East Ontenazu boasts a population of native Ontenazans, Veshians, dwarves, halflings and even a surprising number of elves. Merchants from many lands visit this town, and the market quarter is always packed with eager buyers and sellers. East Ontenazu is also known for its spectacular view of the Canyon of Souls, one of few places where this magnificent formation can be seen without danger from the high winds. First Canyonmaster Frem Artone maintains his home here, near to the ancient guild hall of the Ontenazan wind-walkers.

**West Ontenazu:** The western settlement grew from a temporary encampment into a good-sized town. A small circle of Denevan druids maintains a grove here, safe from the howling wind, and there is a permanent stone guild house for the wind-walker guides, but otherwise West Ontenazu is made up of wooden structures, with a few tents, lean-tos and other temporary shelters. The entire place has a frontier-town feel, and serves as a waypoint for caravans, a place for wind-walkers to rest and resupply, and a home for semi-nomadic locals who need shelter during months of harsh weather. Elves from Vera-Tre are seen here on a regular basis, and several famous incarnates spend part of the year in their own temporary shelters. The incarnate Andelais (*half-elf male Dru4/Inc5, N*; see *The Wise and the Wicked*, pg. 11) has spent some time in the settlement, but no one knows if or when he will appear again.

## Uria History

**Name:** Havens of Uria

**Population:** 70,000 (Elf 95%, Half-elf 3%, Human 1%, Forsaken elf 1%)

**Government:** Hereditary monarchy, with a council of lords, and a 1,000-year old constitution that the monarch is bound to enforce.

**Ruler:** King Arwin (*elf male Ftr10/AKn6, LG*)

**Capital:** Bilaagwyndel (10,000)

**Major Cities:** Qwillcomb (5,000), Awborowen (3,000)

**Language:** Middle Elven

**Religion:** Corean, Madriel

**Currency:** Diamond star (500 gp), platinum skywheel (100 gp), gold horizon (10 gp), Karrian gold compass (1gp), silver star (5 sp), silver skate (1sp), copper fish (1cp)

**Resources:** Platinum, gold, mithril, adamantine, iron, magic items, masterwork swords and bows, trained animals, berry wine

**Allies:** Drifting Isle, Karria

**Enemies:** Dunahnae

During the Divine War, the wood elves of the Ganjus demonstrated themselves to be highly effective guerrilla fighters, striking at the titans' forces quickly, then fading back into their forests before the titanspaw had time to mount a counter attack. Their skill at this form of warfare was one reason that they avoided the tragic fate of their forsaken brethren on Termana. Yet some divine forces did suffer when their wood elf allies vanished, leaving them to bear the brunt of an attack. One group of wood elves began to believe that this was ignoble, that it was less important to "live to fight on another day" than to fight with honor and to let it be known that their allies could be certain of elven arms and elven magic in any time of crisis no matter how dangerous. This group formed the Order of the Silver Heart, and time and again they were instrumental in saving groups of Corean's knights when all other hope seemed lost.

The elves of the Order of the Silver Heart eventually decided that Corean should be their patron deity, though they still loved Denev and still held many of her values dear — especially a desire to care for and protect the natural world. Denev granted them leave and her blessing, but made them swear to protect her bounty from evil. To this day, the Urian elves honor that oath through the protection of their homeland and through the aid that they send to the wood elves of the Ganjus.

Corean saw the great honor of the Silver Heart elves and rewarded them with magic weapons, armor, and gigantic birds — the great harriers — for mounts. After the Divine War, the elves migrated to Uria, where Corean showed them rich veins of iron, gold, mithril, and adamantine, and taught them secrets of metalsmithing that had hitherto been known only to dwarves.

Since the Divine war, Uria has remained aloof. It loaned aid to Vera-Tre during the Druid War, during which its harrier knights distinguished themselves, but it has otherwise had little to do with the outside world. About a decade ago, this stance began to change, as Uria sent harrier-mounted envoys and scouts across the continent, even venturing as far south as Termana. Its envoys have made a special effort to establish ties with Mithril, Vera-Tre, and its neighbor Karria.

## Geography

The dense primeval forest of Uria's interior is protected by a ring of gigantic mountains, some over three miles high, surrounding the island like fortress walls, with no harbors or safe landings save the port city of Bilaagwyndel. Each morning, the mountain peaks are wreathed in clouds, obscuring the battlements of the Urian noble palaces and aeries where the great harriers are bred and raised. The great city of Awborowen can be seen on the slopes of Aw, the tallest of Uria's mountains.



The forests are composed of gargantuan redwood trees, some of which are thousands of years old and first sprang up during the era of the titans. Some of these redwoods house Urian dwellings.

**Aw:** The tallest of the five great mountains of Uria, Aw stands over 16,000 feet high and is home to some of the best known harrier aeries, as well as the fortress-city of Awborowen.

**Fanirhaum, the Great Forest:** This great forest occupies the interior of the island. The forest is dotted with Urian dwellings located in and around the great redwoods, ranger meeting halls, and temples to Corean.

## Flora and Fauna

Below the tree line, Uria is a place of wild forests, ranging from pine and fir at higher elevations to the island's unique giant redwoods in the lowlands. Undergrowth includes blackberry, salal, silverweed, trillium, and a tree called the wildsprawler that grows horizontally, seeking well lit glades and clearings. Edible plants include mushrooms and berries. In some places, the Urians have planted fruit trees, and it is not uncommon to find apple, pear, or persimmon trees growing wild.

The rain forests and mountains are inhabited by many gigantic mammals— dire bears, tigers, boars,

weasels, bats, apes, and wolves are all common. These dire animals feed off the abundance of emperor stag and dire elk. Sylvan creatures such as satyr and dryad are encountered here, as well as many fey beings, but they are shy and rarely allow themselves to be seen.

Numerous oceanic mammals dwell in the waters surrounding Uria. Sea lions of both the common and dire variety are found here, and several tribes of merfolk live here, aiding the Urians in defending their isle. Occasionally, sea hags make their home in the cliffs and caves of Uria's shoreline, but these creatures are mercilessly exterminated if found by the elves.

## People and Culture

Although the culture of Urian elves has diverged from its wood elf roots, it retains many of the values of wood elves. The elves of Uria love beauty and have created laws demanding respect toward the natural world and all life, but they also highly value sacrifice, truth, loyalty, and honor. Urian elves decorate most everything — weapons, cloths, houses, tools — and their hair is often elaborately braided. They have not kept up the ritual use of tattoos, however, and usually only the older generation of elves wears them.



*A high priest of Corean, a harrier knight, a jeweler from the city of Bilaagwyndel and a mountain elf miner.*

## Crime and Punishment

The lord of a household has legal authority over the region that he rules. The lord, or his warden, hears criminal complaints; the lord then investigates as he sees fit. In the case of a complaint in which both complainant and accused are known, the lord will commonly commission divine magic to discover guilt or innocence and then enact the punishment prescribed by law. If the criminal is at large, the lord will usually elect a group of wardens to find the criminal.

**Theft:** Pay twice the amount stolen, through indentured servitude to the lord if necessary.

**Arson/Poaching/Illegal Logging:** An appropriate fine, followed by exile.

**Murder:** Magical enslavement to the lord for life, or death by beheading or poison as the lord sees fit.

**Treason:** The lord has complete discretion in prosecuting treason — typical punishments include exile, magical enslavement to the lord for life, and death. Punishments can be enacted on the friends and family of the accused as well.

## Religion

Corean is honored foremost among the gods. The four orders of Corean are present, but have taken on a distinctively Urian tone. The Order of Iron is popular in mining villages and with the smiths and crafts people who live in the cities of Uria. Priests of the Order of Iron aid in finding and extracting metals from the island's mountains. The Order of Mithril is most popular among harrier knights, rangers, and soldiers. It is focused on protecting the island from despoilment — both from thoughtless mining and logging and from titanspawn and invasion. Unlike other chapters of the Order of Mithril, the order in Uria does not encourage its followers to visit the city of Mithril, though it does on occasion send harrier knights as envoys to that city.

The Order of Silver maintains several fortress temples on the island's great mountains. One area of interest to the order is a mythical continent to the west of Ghelspad that was supposedly untouched by the ravages of the Divine War and that remains unchanged by the outside world since its creation. The Order of Silver is also steeped in the lore of Chardun, for they foresee Dunahnae as a great threat to the nations of western Ghelspad. The Order of Gold has numerous temples scattered throughout the great forest, often built into the trees like other Urian dwellings. The Order of Gold heals all Urian elves without charge and is the second most popular order for harrier knights. Many animal trainers are also clerics of the Order of Gold.

Besides Corean, several other gods are worshipped, and all are at least acknowledged for their role in the Divine War. Madriel is popular, and her temple, the Altar of Stars, stands high on the eastern face of Myrwan. The Urian elves also pay homage to their old patron Denev in gratitude for her generosity. Tanil is also highly respected, as is the demigoddess Manawe. There is little worship of evil gods on the island, but even the Urians must admit that they are powerful and unavoidable forces in the world.

In the last decade, a cult has grown around the great harriers themselves, believing them to be the reincarnation of ancient island spirits. Called the Harrier Cult, this religion is spreading quickly among the Urian nobility. They believe that by honoring the harriers foremost, the island will be best protected in the coming days, which their leaders foresee as an especially dark time. The cultists also honor the gods, but the new faith is nonetheless considered a minor heresy by the priests of Corean, who frequently preach against it. Still, clerics of the Harrier Cult have appeared, casting spells from the Animal and Good domains. Some claim that the cult and its belief in island animal spirits is a manifestation of the savage cult of the beast lords.

## Armed Forces

The military of Uria is small, but well equipped and well trained. It is most famous for its aerial cavalry — the harrier knights. Altogether, the island nation of Uria can boast nearly 50 great harriers with riders and another 20-30 unmounted birds that aid the riders. Supplementing this aerial cavalry is a formidable magical contingent that includes clerics of Corean and a good number of elven sorcerers. The Urian navy is made up of about a 60 well built but unarmed longboats and is formidable only because its soldiers are excellent archers and because its ships are well supported with aerial cavalry and magic.

## Cities

**Bilaagwyndel:** The largest city of Uria and the political capital. This port city is where the few non-Urian elf inhabitants of the island can be found. The King's Manor and Chamber of Lords are also located here. City industries include metalsmithing, wine making, and fishing.

## Other Cities

**Awborowen:** The second largest city of Uria, this fortress town is known for its mining and smelting of metals, its numerous excellent swordsmiths, and its temple to Corean atop which many great harriers can be found perching.

## Vesh

**Name:** United People of Vesh

**Population:** 2,000,000 (Human 77%, Dwarf 10%, Elf 6%, Halfling 5%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%)

**Government:** One individual has total authority, both over civil matters and over the military. This Home Commander is popularly elected every five years from a selection of retired military field officers.

**Ruler:** Home Commander Kelemis Durn (*human male Rgr6/Ftr6/Vig5, NG*)

**Capital:** Lave (30,000)

**Major Cities:** Rika (22,000), Moor (14,000), Ezel (12,000)

**Language:** Veshian

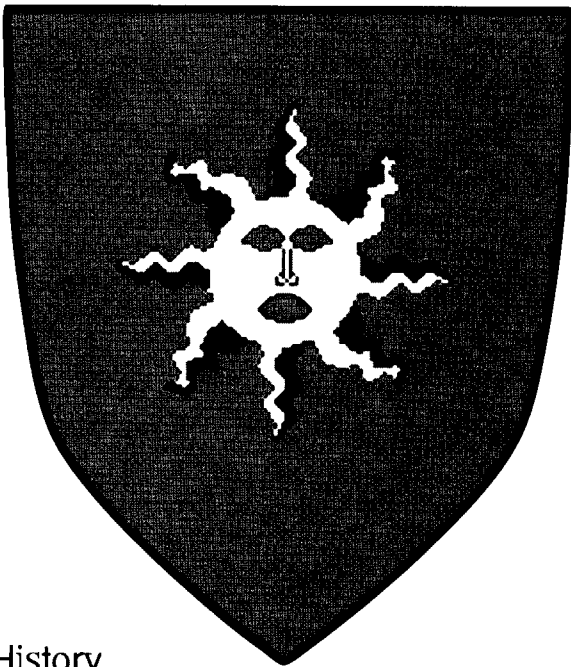
**Religion:** Madriel, Tanil

**Currency:** Gold shila (2 gp), silver gema (2 sp), copper dozi (4 cp)

**Resources:** Wheat, beef, pork, wine, beer, textiles, leather, iron implements

**Allies:** Amalthea, Bridged City, Burok Torn, Durrover, Gleaming Valley, Hedrad, Mansk, Mithril, Mullis Town, Ontenazu, Vera-Tre

**Enemies:** Calastian Hegemony and Khirdet



## History

To many, Vesh is a shining beacon of hope and freedom against the violence of the titanspawn and the tyranny of Calastia. To others (specifically, the titanspawn and the Calastians), the land is a troublesome nuisance.

The realm's history is as tumultuous as that of Ghelspad itself. When the fractured Empire of Lede was forced to abandon its Vasch Province in 2499 OC, a strange meteor storm illuminated Scarn's night sky, an event that many claimed heralded the empire's destruction.

In the wake of the Ledean withdrawal, numerous governments came and went in the region, leading to the common name for the period, the Era of 100 Republics. Eventually, in 2815 OC, King Ardunis of Arcernoth announced himself to be first among equals and the de facto leader of what he called the Golden Kingdoms of Vasch. Despite grumbling, the new arrangement seemed to work, and the region entered a time of unprecedented prosperity.

With the rise of the Charduni Empire, the militaries of the disparate Golden Kingdoms began to cooperate, holding the evil dwarves at bay. Eventually, around 3320 OC, the leaders of the united military formed the United Vesh Movement. The merchant princes and southern kingdoms who had been hard pressed by the charduni backed the idea, but the northern provinces, jealous of their independence and led by the Kingdom of Bregis, opposed it.

The situation came close to open warfare on several occasions, but the diplomacy and economic power of the merchants and their allied kingdoms eventually won over the dissenters, and in 3327 OC Bregis' king finally relented, signing the Veshian Accord and forming the new nation.

In 3338 OC, faced with incursions by orcs and other titanspawn, the Marquis of Beltan formed an elite unit of scouts, rangers, and wilderness fighters, naming it the Beltanian Vigil, the first of the bands that are today famous all across Ghelspad. The experiment proved so successful that over the next decade numerous other vigils were formed using the Beltanian model.

The Divine War truly tested the nation's mettle. In the conflict's wake, the Veshians faltered — but with the aid of the Vigils and the newly formed Order of the Morning Sky, they did not fail, instead rebuilding and growing stronger. In 25 AV, clerics of Tanil and Madriel, under the leadership of merchant prince turned Madrielist cleric Caldor Bregis, engaged in a campaign known as the Great Blessing, moving from town to town, cleansing and sanctifying fields, rooting out titanspawn, and helping reestablish Veshian authority. Merchants also aided in the process, giving away free or extremely inexpensive seed and livestock and aiding peasants and local lords with loans or gifts.

By 56 AV, Vesh had fully joined in the community of Ghelspad's nations, forging an alliance with numerous other realms at the Convention of Vera-Tre. The Vigils and other Veshian military forces fought in the Druid War and helped minimize the damage caused by King Virduk's duplicitous withdrawal.

Recent history continues to bolster Vesh's leadership of the good-aligned nations. Adurn, the last of the line of Bregis nobles, perished at the hands of the Calastians in the Battle of Twisted Timbers, and his spirit was consigned to the Great Swan (see Adurn's Tear entry). The Blood Monsoon sorely tested the



region, but as always, Veshian forces were instrumental in rebuilding after the disaster.

Around 100 AV, the slitheren, who had up until then been little more than a nuisance, began to make their presence known in the Mourning Marshes, actually raiding into southern Vesh. Defeated in the disastrous Battle of Two Rivers, the Veshians fought defensively through the years of the Blood Monsoon, then met the slitheren again in the battles of Moor and Treestand. Inconclusive, these fights proved to the Veshians that the slitheren truly represented a growing threat.

Today, the nation continues to stand defiantly against the threat of Calastia, the slitheren of the Mourning Marshes, and the menace of resurgent titanspawn. No one can say what the future holds, but it is certain that Vesh will play an important role in the Scarred Lands.

## Geography

Vesh is well defended, both by its people and by its geography, which protects its fertile heartland from invasion as effectively as any army.

To the west, the Kelder Mountains form an effective barrier and create a drier, cooler climate. The eastern side of Aethis, near the Blood Basin, is more fertile and known for excellent game, leather, and wool. The steppes are more fertile among the rolling hills, but the Blood Basin often spawns trouble.

The heartland of Vesh consists of mild hills, plains, and rainfall. It has long been farmed and lacks the wildernesses (and the attendant threat of titanspawn) found elsewhere.

The Veshian provinces are named for the old Golden Kingdoms—Bregis, Aethis, Odveni and Dalane in the north, Arcernoth, Liaris, Behjur, Garasso and Pellen in the south.

## Flora and Fauna

Vesh has several major climatic zones. To the west, the Kelder Mountains are home to animal and plant species that thrive at high altitudes. These include mountain goats, sheep, and numerous species of small mammals and birds. Plants are hardy—scrub grasses and small, tough evergreens.

The mountain regions, particularly in upper Aethis, are home to the rare Tarasse tiger. Once common throughout the northern Kelder Mountains and Steppes, these tigers are relatively small with brown markings. Driven to the brink of extinction by titanspawn and Ledeans hunters, their numbers have begun to increase. Across much of the steppes, wolverines and cougars have taken their place as top predators. Dire wolverines are not unheard of and sometimes plague hunters or travelers.

The interior is cool and lightly wooded, kept largely free of titanspawn by the Vigils and other Veshian armed forces. In the south, the climate is

warmer and the land more fertile, but titanspawn and taint from the Blood Sea are more common.

Monstrous threats are common, particularly along the edges of Vesh. In the south, most of the threats come from the Mourning Marshes. Morgaunts, slitheren, and blood-tainted animals of many types are active along the southern border and the mouth of the Hornswythe.

## People

As a rule, the people of Vesh are garrulous and outgoing. They smile, speak pleasantly, welcome visitors, and talk incessantly, though many outsiders complain that they take forever to get to the point. Veshians may not be direct, but they are hospitable and form strong friendships. They value art, music, and learning as key elements of civilization. Those without artistic or scholarly skills are often looked down on, though Veshian tact and hospitality often disguise such attitudes.

Veshians have the olive complexions and dark hair common throughout eastern Ghelspad. They consider themselves the cultural center of Ghelspad, strongly influenced by ancient Lede. Fluency in ancient Ledeans is considered especially admirable, as is knowledge of that vanished culture.

In the south, the old style dress is common, featuring a simple tunic, tights, and Ledeans sandals. A cape or robe is sometimes worn in colder weather. Women wear long shifts and various simple dresses with elaborate wraps. In Garasso and along the Hornswythe, doublets and high boots have become the standard, with dagged sleeve dresses and vests or skirts and bodices for ladies. In the colder regions of Aethis and Dalane, finely worked furs and leather are the norm for both men and women.

Ethnically, the Aethis have some ties to the Albadians. Their skin is a bit lighter, and their hair is usually brown, though blonde children are sometimes born in the mountains. Veshians of Beltan and Bregis are a few tones darker, are almost entirely black haired, and often have green eyes— their similarity to Calastians has been unfavorably remarked upon. The Beltan tend to be phlegmatic about the matter, while Bregisi react to such comments with fist shakes or scuffles.

Dwarves are most often found in southern Aethis and Dalane. In Dalane, they actually outnumber humans. Though humans rule the province, Dalane is dominated by dwarven interests, but the dwarves themselves have adopted many human cultural traits and are in many ways indistinguishable from their taller countrymen. Ethnically, Veshian dwarves from the south have black hair and fine features, with a coppery skin that darkens with age. Northern Veshian dwarves have less contact with humans. They have lighter hair, usually auburn, with pale, thick features. Both groups have exclusively brown eyes.

Elves are found throughout Vesh, but perhaps least so in the southern provinces. They generally keep to themselves, in private communities, but take great pains to cooperate with neighboring humans during festivals and in times of trouble. Halflings and half-elves tend to be urban and congregate in the capital cities, fairly well assimilated into Vesh culture.

## Culture

Veshian culture places great importance on music and performance. Musical instruments common in Vesh include the oud (similar to a lute), the tammorra (much like a large tambourine), the cittern (a fretted lute-like instrument on which the strings can be plucked along the neck), the zampogna (a large bagpipe, particularly common in western Vesh), and the spinetta (a small keyboard harpsichord with a pentagonal outline quite common in Arcernoth).

Art is likewise well developed. In Garasso, mosaics are common, an artform inherited from the Ledean and influenced by the exemplars to the point that it has a definite Termanan look, with more use of bright colors, geometric patterns, and stylized portrayals of humans and mythological creatures.

Arcernoth art tends toward more realistic styles, combining media and experimenting with new paints

and techniques. Artistic movements rise and fall regularly, often leading to bitter rivalries and debates.

Southern Aethis produces a variety of fine meats, popular elsewhere in Vesh. Northwestern Vesh favors highly spiced and flavored meats and sauces. Southwestern Vesh focuses more on vegetables, often roasted and doused liberally with oil and spices. Among Coreanist monks, there is also a monastic tradition of brewing, steamed or infused vegetables, and breadmaking. Southeastern Vesh focuses almost entirely on pastas and couscous with a variety of sauces, as well as various pan or deep fried dough products. Bregis and Beltan tend to be much like the northwest, with specially aged meat, but also make a variety of pastas. The river provinces frequently use cured fish in pasta or with vegetable dishes and favor roasting.

There are a number of traditions common throughout Vesh. Most inns offer salt surcharge. Village blacksmiths often have the ground beside their anvil blessed with a *minor symbol of Corean*, in honor of the patron of their craft. It is considered bad luck to travel east when the sun is setting, as evil is said to draw forth from the east while Madriel's home descends. Custom demands that all travelers be given hospitality, though this may simply mean giving directions to the nearest inn.



A Liarisian innkeeper, a Pellenese bard, a nobleman from Lave, a ranger from Aethis and a Odveni farmer.

Holidays are accompanied by a great deal of music and ceremony, especially in the south and revealing a closer tie to ancient Denev worship in the north. Each of the four major holidays is also accompanied by a variety of contests. These contests often mask long running feuds between neighboring cities or provinces. Many larger cities were once several distinct settlements, and allegiance to a neighborhood still causes strife. The Carnival of Flowers is perhaps the most benign, with cooking contests, wagon and foot races, and dancing.

The Festival of the Sun is a bit quieter, with only a few communities practicing contests. Those that do have contests, such as the bull dance performed at the border of Liaris and Pellen, often display violent overtones. The Feast of Wheat is much like the Carnival of Flowers, but usually with a lot more drinking. Fights over sports often break out. Grim Day is quieter, with morality plays and music more common than the other elements of celebration.

## Crime and Punishment

The Veshian legal code is based on the concept of the "reasonable man," which is to say that conduct should be governed by what a normal, reasonable individual would do or not do in a given circumstance. Unlike the Hedradans, to whom the law is absolute and unbreakable, the Veshians feel that strict adherence to the rules can lead to injustice and unfairness, so punishment is often tempered by consideration of circumstances and intent.

If the accused can prove that an action was performed under duress or under the control of another (through magical or other means), he may be declared innocent. Evidence from priests, spellcasters, or arcane investigators is often required, which can prove both expensive and time-consuming.

Imprisonment is not as common in Vesh as elsewhere — fines or indentured servitude are more popular, and servitude is levied when a fine cannot be met. Sometimes the criminal must serve the offended party, sometimes the government. Treatment depends on the nature of the crime. Incurable criminals who cannot be relied upon to serve out their indenture or those who commit especially brutal crimes can be imprisoned.

**Theft, Fraud, or Damage:** This is usually punished by a fine generally equal to ten times the value of the item stolen or damage inflicted. Determining this value is part of the court proceedings. A tenth of the fine goes to the court, while the remainder is given to the victim. If the accused is proven innocent, the accuser must pay the amount missing to the court.

**Banditry:** The fine is higher — 20 times the value of the lost items — if assault on a person was involved. Particularly savage cases of banditry are punished by imprisonment.

**Recklessness:** Fines are doubled if the court deems that the crime was committed with undue recklessness and consideration. Someone who sets fire to a home and counts on others putting it out in time usually has a charge of recklessness added. Recklessness is also charged for crimes due to negligence.

**Death:** Crimes resulting in death range widely, depending on intent. Killing in self-defense is considered a crime, since it robs another of his life, but is usually lightly punished, with a fine of 10-20 gp. Starting a duel that ends in the other party's death yields a 50 gp fine, and non-lethal duels are usually ignored. Outright murder can be punished by heavy fines, imprisonment, or indentured servitude to the victim's family.

**Treason:** Treason against Vesh is considered a serious crime and can be punished by long imprisonment or death.

## Religion

Veshians are as passionate about religion as they are about everything else. They observe all major holidays, and their revels are particularly enjoyable, celebrated with lavish ceremonies, feasting, games, sports, and song. Solemn occasions are accompanied by soulful tunes and more dour ceremony.

Religion is a pervasive element of daily life. Anyone can attempt to join the clergy, seeking to guide and help others. Madriel and Tanil are well supported religions, though Hedrada, Enkili, and Corean are also present. Coreanist and Hedradan monks maintain several facilities in Vesh, producing fine spirits, foodstuffs, and illuminated manuscripts. The evil gods, however, are subtly and not so subtly discouraged.

## Armed Forces

The military of Vesh consists of 5,000 cavalry, 3,000 combat clerics, 1,000 combat wizards, 8,000 bowmen, and 33,000 infantry. Most of these units are attached to specific areas, particularly infantry. It is possible to muster an additional 50,000 to 150,000 militia with great effort.

Typical weapons for infantry are a corenna sabre and leather armor. Archers typically have a longbow and leather armor, with a short sword for melee. Cavalry are generally Behjuran, with a striotti sabre and leather armor.

Veshians are not particularly inventive or daring in battle, but their troops have good training, loyalty, and morale. Cavalry and pikemen are used to good effect, with infantry ready to draw their short swords for open melee. The phalanx is still trained, but it has proven less than useful in the sort of open, chaotic conditions Veshians often find themselves encountering. Leaders have a long history to draw from, though few have been involved in an actual pitched battle. The Veshian military has, in the past generation, mainly been used to meet titanspawn raids.

The best known of the Veshian units are, of course, the Vigils — elite rangers dedicated to the security of Vesh's borders and to frustrating the schemes of the titanspawn and other foes. Divided into 11 separate units, each responsible for a different sector of Vesh's frontiers, Vigilants also act as the nation's agents abroad, traveling the length and breadth of the continent, seeking information on Vesh's enemies and frustrating their schemes. The most famous of the Vigils is the Arcernoth Delta Vigil, which carries out most operations against the slitheren. Most infamous is the disbanded Dark Motak Vigil, whose commander is said to have betrayed his Vigilants to the titanspawn.

## Cities

### Lave

Lave is an ancient city situated on one of the southernmost bends of the Hornswythe River in the Arcernoth Delta. Once the capital of Camini Province as Lavius, later the capital of the Kingdom of Arcernoth, Lave is now the capital of Vesh. Featuring a variety of styles in marble and granite, it is regarded not so much a beautiful as a functional city. It has long been a difficult city to defend, a problem that continues to the current day with slitheren incursions from the Mourning Marshes. River and overland trade keep the city prosperous.

**Main Gates:** Kept closed at night or when the watch alerts regarding invasion.

**Grand Square:** At the center was once an oratorium that is now a large open space for nobility and other well placed individuals to discuss affairs of the day.

**Hall of Command:** Once a palace of the king, this ornate building now houses many of the high offices of Vesh. Vigilants working out of Lave keep offices in this building.

**Noon's Hospice:** A round building that was once a theatre. Now it serves as a hospice manned by clerics of Madriel for healing those in need.

### Other Cities

**Rika:** Rika's extensive farmlands support a thriving dairy, produce, and leather-working industry, and along the city's teeming streets dwell some of the finest blacksmiths in Vesh.

**Moor:** Site of a critical battle against the slitheren, Moor remains a strong military city and also an important trade center for southern Vesh.

**Ezel:** This prosperous city is known for its textile industry, creating cloth that is exported throughout Ghelspad.

## Zathiske

**Name:** The Unified Lands of Ancient Zathiske  
**Population:** 1,000,000 (Half-orc 43%, Human 39%, Halfling 17%, Other 1%)

**Government:** The Satrap, who is the highest ranking military officer assigned to defend the region, has ultimate regional authority and reports directly to King Virduk of Calastia.

**Ruler:** Lord Satrap Virduk Olem (*human male Ari15, LN*)

**Capital:** Quelsk (50,000)

**Major Cities:** Pahjam (50,000), Zamon (30,000), Ghalor (21,000)

**Languages:** Calastian, Shelzari, Ledean, Zathiskan

**Religion:** Enkili, Chardun

**Currency:** Platinum reunit (10 gp), gold revi (5 gp), gold paru (1 gp), gold half-paru (5 sp), silver dim (1 sp); brass, copper, or bronze phanii (1 cp)

**Resources:** Weapons, brass, copper, bronze, animal hide, decorative and exotic wood, cotton, linen, paper, papyrus, spice, exotic spell components

**Allies:** Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn, Durrover, Darakeene, Hollowfaust.



## History

Zathiske suffered greatly during the Divine War. Fully half of the nation's population was killed. Coupled with the terrible years of famine that followed, Zathiske found itself ill equipped to deal with those neighboring nations that cast a greedy eye on its fruitful lands. For nearly 70 years, Zathiske lost significant territories as other nations took advantage of the nation's weakened state. Much of the

territory that now forms the Festering Fields, the Heteronomy of Virduk, and western Ankila were all once part of Zathiske.

What few military resources Zathiske could muster were devoted to fending off seemingly endless invasions of monstrous humanoids from the northeast. Many more thousands of Zathiskans were lost before the titanspawn were finally defeated.

Ravaged by the Divine War and years of titanspawn attacks, Zathiske opened its borders to all who wished to settle there, offering grants of land and 10 years free of taxation as an incentive. The often ostracized half-orcs were made to feel especially welcome in an effort to supply a large body of able-bodied warriors to defend the nation against predation from other lands and titanspawn attacks.

A second wave of humanoid invasions began in 75 AV. Though the Zathiskan army was now much larger than before, the humanoids were also better prepared and the battle was fierce. Again, many thousands were lost, mostly humans. For the first time, half-orcs were now the most numerous race in Zathiske.

The growing power of Calastia troubled Zathiske's rulers, and in 127, at reports of a Calastian invasion of neighboring Ankila, Zathiskan troops moved across the border, forming a buffer zone in northern Ankila. This act, intended to safeguard Zathiske's frontiers, actually hastened the fall of Ankila, forcing its king to divide his forces. Upon Ankilan defeat, King

Virduk demanded that the Zathiskans withdraw from northern Ankila and, unprepared for war, Zathiske complied. The realm's leaders knew, however, that it was only a matter of time before they would be forced to confront Virduk's legions.

In 130 AV, Calastia launched its first tentative attacks against Zathiske, feeling out the nation's willingness for war and ability to defend itself. By 133 AV, King Virduk seemed satisfied with what he found and launched an all-out campaign to take Zathiske. Though the Zathiskans fought well, they were no match for the sheer overwhelming numbers of the Calastian forces. Weakened and nearly starved after another season of droughts, Zathiske surrendered to Virduk and became a Calastian protectorate. In 136 AV, King Virduk disbanded the standing Zathiskan army, replacing it with a resident force of Calastian soldiers, many of whom were recruited from the native population and the disbanded Zathiskan force to fill the ranks.

Of late there have been a number of revolts against Calastian rule. Each is quickly and efficiently put down, but it is evident that the people are chafing under Calastian dominance. Should they ever rise together, Zathiske would surely slip from Virduk's grasp. In an effort to placate the citizenry, Satrap Olem — with the consent of Calastia and Virduk, of course — allows each city to set its own rates of taxation and levies. Ghalor cut its docking rates dramatically and saw an immediate rise in ship traffic.



*A Pahjamite noblewoman and her retinue, including her lady-in-waiting, bodyguard, handmaiden, personal aide, and bearer-boy.*

Many thousands of merchants, tradesmen, and workers flock to the Ghalor, making it the fastest growing city in Ghelspad.

## Geography

There is little geographical uniqueness to Zathiske. It is bordered to the west by the Gold River (so named because of the golden coating of fine dust blown from the Sweltering Plains that covers it), to the east by Ankila, to the north by the Heteronomy of Virduk, and to the south by the Blossoming Sea. Apart from mile after endless mile of plains and fields, the only real feature of great note is the range of hills that cuts diagonally through the nation from northeast to southwest.

**The Bloodspur Hills:** The Bloodspur Hills are located near the infamous Blood Steppes (hence the name). Many creatures and monsters from the steppes follow the hills and find their way into Zathiske.

## Flora and Fauna

A great number of rare and exotic plants grow in Zathiske, from innocuous spices such as cinnamon and cumin, to rare intoxicants such as lotus, ganjus root, chwast flower, and landra wood. Despite the wide variety of products that Zathiske trades, these herbs and spices provide the greatest portion of its exports.

The countryside is plagued by the same sorts of beasts as are found elsewhere. Titanspawn are relatively few here, save for those that follow the landscape down from the Blood Steppes into the Bloodspur Hills. One curiosity is that Zathiske suffers an inordinate number of poisonous snakes. It is not at all uncommon to see venomous serpents of all sorts wherever one goes, even on the outskirts of major cities. Whether this is some natural phenomenon or has a more sinister genesis, no one knows.

## People

Though Zathiskans are a devout and religious folk, they also tend to be a bright and optimistic people. Even the poorest of the poor seem content to live their lives as they are. When life goes badly, they simply find solace in their faith, gaining strength from friends and family and carrying on.

Most Zathiskan peasants dress in simple clothes cut from a rough canvas-like cloth in shades of brown or gray. The dress of the nobility could not be more different from that of the lower classes. Deep, bright colors; elaborate decorations, including weaving with threads of silver and gold; and rich, delicate silks and satins and gossamer-thin cotton and linen are the norm.

Those Zathiskans descended from native stock are universally brown-skinned and black-haired. The vast majority of men grow beards, or at the least mustaches. In general, Zathiskan men tend to be either very tall and thin or very short and fat. The

most apt term used to describe Zathiskan men is "swarthy."

Among Zathiskan women, there are really two extremes. Peasant women are dark-skinned like the men — a consequence of a life spent working in the often scorching Zathiskan sun; however, noblewomen are normally pale-skinned. Indeed, the paler the skin, the more beautiful. Needless to say, northern women are considered especially attractive in Zathiske. There is also an odd custom among noblewomen to wear little in the way of clothing. It is not an uncommon sight to see a noblewoman walking the streets in naught but a virtually transparent loincloth, protected from the sun by umbrella wielding servants and from the common people by sword wielding guards.

Ancient Zathiske was a land steeped in magic. More small magical items such as scrolls, potions, rings, amulets, and wands were produced there than anywhere else on Ghelspad. Much of it has been lost or was used or destroyed during the war, of course, but to this day many items pop up from time to time. There are vendors in the markets of Zamon who sell nothing but recovered magical items. Some are fakes, certainly, but many are indeed real.

To this day, Zathiske produces a surprising number of sorcerers per capita. Fully one in ten native Zathiskans has sorcerous blood, though most are never able to realize their potential fully. Even those Zathiskans whose parents were immigrants have an innate feel for magic that seems to stem from the land itself.

## Culture

Zathiske has a long oral tradition of songs, poems, and storytelling. Tales are passed down for centuries from master to apprentice and never once set to paper. Particularly popular are tales with a strong moral lesson and also tales of rogues and tricksters for some reason. The most popular character in Zathiskan literature is Ulen Gushpeel, a lovable rogue who finds himself in all manner of predicaments and always manages to find a way out using only his wits. The scholar Abd al Alain has collected more than 300 separate Gushpeel tales and discovers more with every bard to whom he speaks.

In light of this oral tradition, few Zathiskans — even among the nobility — are fully literate, though most know enough to read a shop sign or public notice, provided of course they have at least one finger free to trace the letters as they go. This does not hold for merchants, academics, and spellcasters, certainly, as the ability to read and write is of paramount importance to these trades.

Zathiskans love art and decoration. Even the poorest peasant has a home decorated with intricate patterns and a riot of rich colors. Despite their religious devotion and distaste for bawdy stories, there is a long tradition of erotic art both in painting and



sculpture. Many works depict acts from the *1001 Shelzari Nights* and are a valuable asset to those whose imagination is not quite sufficient to gain adequate instruction from the text alone. Indeed, most modern copies of the book also include reproductions of many of these Zathiskan images.

Zathiskan architecture is similar in many ways to that of Shelzar, lending credence to the theory that the ancient Elzan style was heavily influenced by the Zathiskan tradition.

Zathiskans enjoy a spicy and diverse diet. They take ingredients from all over Ghelspad and make them their own, creating new dishes or integrating them into existing ones. There are few places in all the Scarred Lands where one can experience so vibrant a culinary culture. Even the peasantry — living in abject poverty — has managed to craft exciting and exquisite dishes from ingredients that the wealthy would discard as rubbish.

The dish for which Zathiske is most well known is curry, though its detractors often refer to it as “slurry.” Curry is actually a blanket term used for a number of different spice blends, and each cook has her own recipe, but the end result is quite similar to biting into a very tasty piece of molten metal.

Zathiskans generally eschew strong drink, including wine and beer, but indulge in all manner of other intoxicants such as julka weed, ganjas root, lotus flowers, hashish, chwast oil, and landra-wood incense.

Zathiskans marry for life, and often beyond. Before the Divine War, it was a common practice for wives to immolate themselves upon their husband’s funeral pyre. In the aftermath of the war, when the population was so greatly reduced, this practice fell from favor, but now that the population has rebounded it is regaining popularity at an alarming rate.

Extended families are the norm in Zathiske. For the first year following the marriage, the couple lives alone. If by the end of the year the couple is without child, the marriage is considered a failure and is dissolved. Otherwise, the family is considered blessed by the gods and the house opened up to the whole family. It is common for several generations of both the husband’s and wife’s families to live with them.

In addition to the Shelzar game Hago, which is just as popular among Zathiske’s wizened elderly population as it is among Shelzar’s, Zathiskans also have a number of games unique to their nation. The most well known is Aleph-Dewar (roughly translated as “Elf and Dwarf”), a chess-like game played with 27 pieces per side on a 9x9-square board. The game requires both quick thinking and patience, and accomplished players can often take hours to make a single move. Needless to say, a match does not attract a lot of spectators.

In an effort to bolster the population of the land following the Divine War, Zathiske encouraged an open-door immigration policy indeed, specifically

making it known that even the oft alienated and disenfranchised half-orcs were welcome within her borders. As such, no more than one in four Zathiskans is of true Zathiskan blood. Zathiske is a nation of immigrants. After the nation fell under Calastian control, however, most elves, half-elves, and dwarves began to feel decidedly unwanted. Save for a handful of adventurers and craftsmen, the land is almost entirely devoid of these peoples now.

Apart from the normal religious holidays devoted to both Enkili and Chardun, holidays that are observed by all Zathiskans regardless of their individual religious beliefs, there are innumerable small observances throughout the year, commemorating all manner of heroes, religious figures, battles, victories, defeats, births, deaths, and more. Not all Zathiskans observe all of these small holidays, but it is a rare day indeed to pass a row of shops and not find at least a quarter of them closed for some holiday or another.

## Crime and Punishment

As a subject-state of Calastia, the Zathiskan judicial system follows the Calastian legal system (see the Calastia entry, above, for details).

## Religion

Though most gods find worshippers in Zathiske, the two most commonly worshipped are Enkili and Chardun. Though there are no hard-and-true limits to the regions in which these two gods hold sway, there tend to be a far larger percentage of Enkili worshippers in Quelsk and other coastal cities, while Chardun’s faithful are most often found in inland cities and communities. Given the animosity between Enkili and Chardun, it is no surprise that this dislike also carries over to their worshippers. Clashes between rival worshippers are commonplace in Zathiske, a situation that the authorities do little to prevent or dissuade.

Unlike the majority of Enkili worshippers in Ghelspad, those followers in Zathiske attend services as part of a large group of family and friends. Enkili has a priesthood, but the task of being the mortal representative of a fickle and capricious deity is a challenging one indeed. The priests serve to maintain Enkili’s shrines, oversee the celebrations of his worshippers, and to carry out mischief of their own on the Jester’s behalf. To mitigate the often raucous worship of Enkili common elsewhere, Enkilite services in Zathiske are usually accompanied by the burning of landra-wood incense, undoubtedly the explanation for the disproportionately high number of personal visions of Enkili that Zathiskan worshippers claim to experience.

In large part, it was the influence of the Calastian conquerors that brought Chardun to such prominence in Zathiske, and Calastians still form the majority of his worshippers there.

Regular religious worship occurs every Charday. Services include long and intricate chants praising Chardun, and oaths of obeisance and loyalty. The flagellants that are more common among other charduni worshippers are thankfully much rarer in Zathiske. Important religious events feature tournaments that display the participants' skill at arms, which are particularly popular among the Calastian military stationed in Zathiske.

Chardun's holiest days occur during Chardot and commemorate his destruction of Mormo and Gormoth. This month-long holiday begins on Divinities Day, the first Corday of Chardot, and ends on the last Vanday of the month. Those worshippers not involved with warfare close up shop for the month and worship with family. The army typically spends this month in intensive campaigns to root out agitators and dissenters and those who speak out against Calastian rule.

## Armed Forces

Zathiske no longer maintains a standing army of its own. Instead, it falls under the aegis of the Calastian Hegemony. Most of the Calastian force is Zathiskan by birth, however. Calastian forces in the region total around 50,000.

Though not part of any standing army, there are a number of secret militias that meet and train in secret in hopes of eventually taking advantage of any slip in Calastian control over Zathiske and rising up to take back their nation. A surprisingly large number of Zathiskans who are part of the Calastian army in Zathiske also belong to one of these militias. If the militias were to rise up as one, they would number nearly 25,000, with some 15,000 or so of those troops abandoning their posts as part of the standing Calastian force to do so. Should this happen, these militias would doubtless form the core of a new Zathiskan army.

## Cities

### Quelsk

The capital of Zathiske, Quelsk sits on a narrow promontory jutting into the Blossoming Sea. Next to Shelzar, it is the most active port in southern Ghelspad and is favored by merchants from the west who offload their cargo there for an overland journey to central Ghelspad. Quelsk is a bustling metropolis, and while nothing like as carefree and debauched as Shelzar, it is still a city brimming with the sights, sounds — and smells — of life being lived to the fullest.

There are five gates into the city: four secondary gates and the main gate. Apart from the main gate, only the easternmost and westernmost secondary gates are large enough to permit vehicle traffic, the other two secondary gates being reserved for foot traffic alone. The gates are guarded at all times and

sealed from dusk till dawn. All mercantile traffic must pass through the main gate, where a tax collector is stationed to exact all appropriate fees both upon entering and leaving the city.

**1. Fruit Market:** The name is a bit of a misnomer, as all manner of perishable foodstuffs may be purchased here including fruit, vegetables, grains, and baked goods, as well as non-edible material such as paper and papyrus.

**2. Wanderer's Way:** The largest inn in the city, neither too disreputable nor too upscale, it is favored by all manner of travelers. A clean place, and reasonably priced.

**3. Enkili Way:** The main street of Quelsk, stretching from the main gate all the way to the Satrap's palace. All manner of shops and restaurants fight for space alongside the elaborate townhouses and estates of the wealthy.

**4. Dhjelabi Bay:** The outgoing tide is extremely strong here, making it a favored dumping spot for waste and turning this once beautiful bay into the city's de facto sewer.

**5. Temple of Chardun:** The smaller of the city's two major temples, it still easily outshines the shrines to other gods scattered about the city. In times of military emergency, this building doubles as a secondary command post for the city's armed forces.

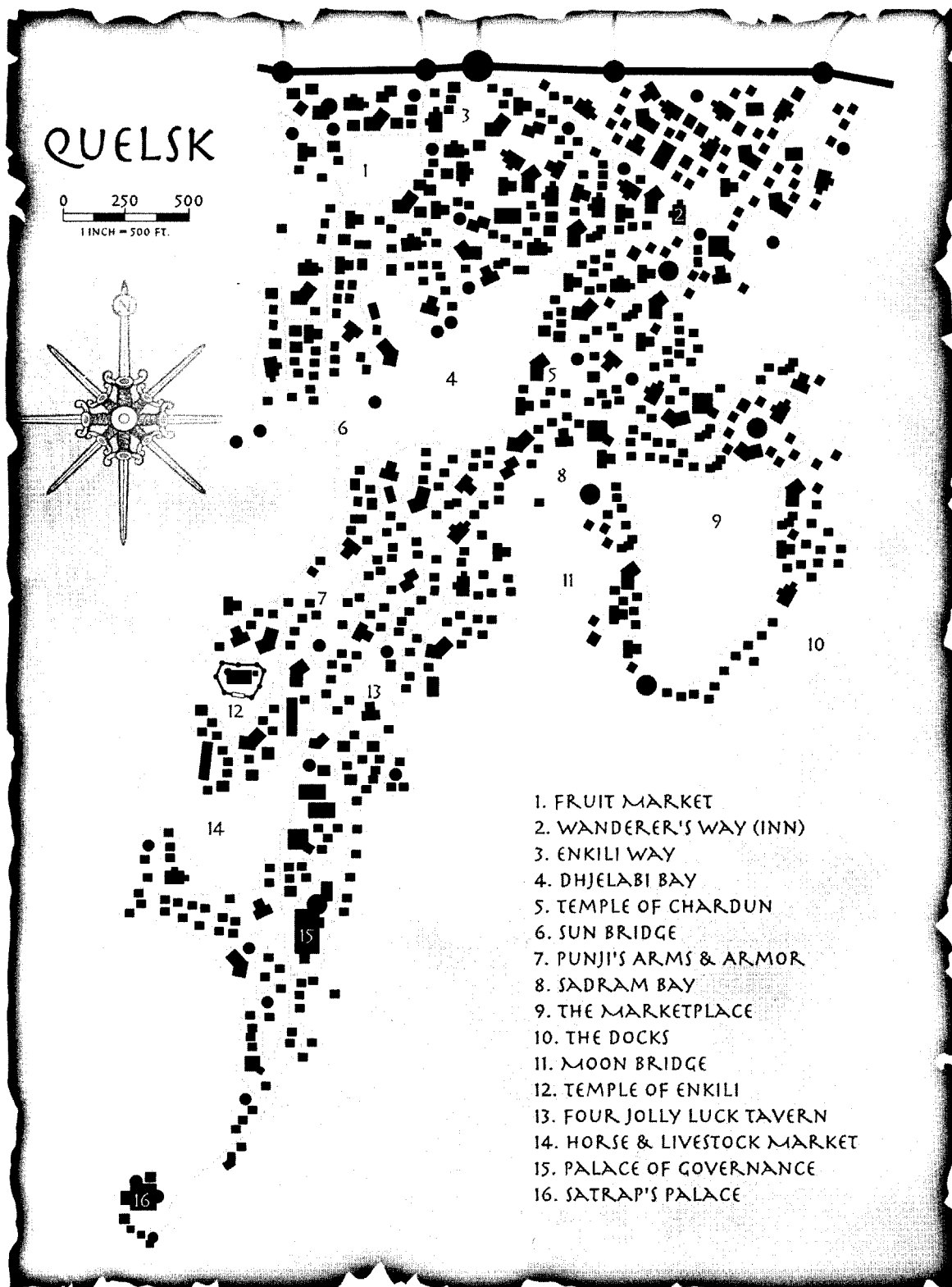
**6. Sun Bridge:** This simple arched bridge is beautifully sheathed in polished brass and is truly a sight to behold when it catches the rays of the rising and setting sun.

**7. Punji's:** Punji produces the finest arms and armor to be had anywhere in Quelsk, or so he would have you believe. His merchandise is actually quite good, boasting the occasional masterwork weapon, but expect to pay between 10% to 25% more than normal price. Unfortunately, he is the only maker of arms and armor in the city who can produce goods in large numbers.

**8. Sadram Bay:** Luckily, Sadram Bay has been spared the ignoble fate of Dhjelabi Bay. Surrounded by fragrant trees and soft grass, it is a popular destination for young lovers.

**9. The Marketplace:** This is the heart of Quelsk's mercantile activity. Virtually all buying and selling of mercantile goods into and out of the city occurs here. Wares may be found from a great many lands, and few things cannot be found somewhere in the noisy throng.

**10. The Docks:** Like most such places in other cities, the Quelsk docks are home to warehouses and merchant offices, as well as rooming houses, tattoo parlors, flophouses, and cheap taverns. Brawls are the norm, and violent death an all too common occurrence. Owing to the large number of foreigners who frequent the area, there is a special dispensation allowing taverns to serve alcohol.



1. FRUIT MARKET
2. WANDERER'S WAY (INN)
3. ENKILI WAY
4. DHJELABI BAY
5. TEMPLE OF CHARDUN
6. SUN BRIDGE
7. PUNJI'S ARMS & ARMOR
8. SADRAM BAY
9. THE MARKETPLACE
10. THE DOCKS
11. MOON BRIDGE
12. TEMPLE OF ENKILI
13. FOUR JOLLY LUCK TAVERN
14. HORSE & LIVESTOCK MARKET
15. PALACE OF GOVERNANCE
16. SATRAP'S PALACE

**11. Moon Bridge:** The twin of the Sun Bridge, save it is covered in polished silver.

**12. Temple of Enkili:** A large but surprisingly plain structure. The normally ebullient decorative impulses of the Zathiskans seem to have been held in check here, opting instead for reverent restraint.

**13. Four Jolly Luck Tavern:** One of the more popular public houses in Quelsk, due in large part to the fact that — outside of the rough alehouses of the docks — it is the only establishment in the city permitted to serve alcohol. A favorite of adventurers in particular.

**14. Horse & Livestock Market:** Visitors to Quelsk are mystified as to why the city would locate its livestock market so far into the town, necessitating buyers and sellers to navigate huge flocks and herds of animals through the already congested streets. Natives reply that the market is where it has always been and that it makes no sense to move it now.

**15. Palace of Governance:** A sprawling complex of buildings housing all governmental offices from high courts to mercantile licensing to fishing permits. It now also serves as the center of Calastian power in the country.

**16. Satrap's Palace:** Traditional home of the Zathiskan ruler, now occupied by Virduk Olem. The walls of the palace are often sullied by anti-Calastian graffiti, which is replaced as quickly as the workmen can clean it off.

### Other Cities

**Pahjam:** In many ways, Pahjam is the true capital of Zathiske. Though not as populous as Quelsk and isolated a great ways inland, it enjoys clement weather, verdant growing lands, and a key position on the roads and trade routes. Virtually all land trade that travels through Zathiske passes through the gates of Pahjam at some point.

King Virduk is considering moving Satrap Olem from Quelsk to Pahjam, centralizing his political forces there, declaring it the official capital, and cementing Zathiske's position simply as a territory of his empire rather than a sovereign nation, albeit an occupied one. Needless to say, there is great opposition to this within Zathiske itself.

**Zamon:** Zamon is the jewel of Zathiske, though a pale jewel for sure when compared to the former greatness of Sumara. The scorching winds of the Sweltering Plains are tempered by the cool waters of the Lake of Winds, and so Zamon is endlessly caressed by warm, moist winds from the west. Consequently, the area around Zamon is amazingly lush and verdant and provides the vast majority of Zathiske's exotic exports such as papyrus, decorative woods, cotton, linen, and spices.

**Ghalor:** Ghalor is nothing like as populous as Quelsk, and many assume that its location just down the coast from the capital would doom this city to failure, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, since Zathiske was taken by Calastia and they greatly enhanced the road network, Ghalor has become a very popular port for ships not wishing to pay the exorbitant fees to offload their wares at Quelsk. Ghalor is growing at an impressive rate as a result, and nowhere in Zathiske is support for Calastia as solid as it is here.

# Chapter Four: City-States of Ghelspad

The decades following the Divine War on Ghelspad were marked by the rise of the city-states. Once home to mighty empires, many regions of Ghelspad have been forced to return to older forms of government, with the city replacing the nation-state as the highest form of authority. Many of these city-states, such as Mithril, Hedrad, Shelzar and Hollowfaust, have gained considerable influence and authority, in some cases rivaling that of larger nations.

This chapter details the continent's major city-states, with information on history, rulers, economies, etc. Such sections as Geography and Flora and Fauna are included where appropriate, but in many cases these are absent, as they do not have a significant influence on the city as it exists today.

## Amalthea

**Name:** Amalthea

**Population:** 8,000 (Human 39%, Elf 35%, Halfling 17%, Half-elf 6%, Half-orc 3%)

**Government:** A council of elders elects an Elder from among their number.

**Ruler:** Elder Ryang (*elf male Dru13, N*)

**Language:** Ledean, Veshian

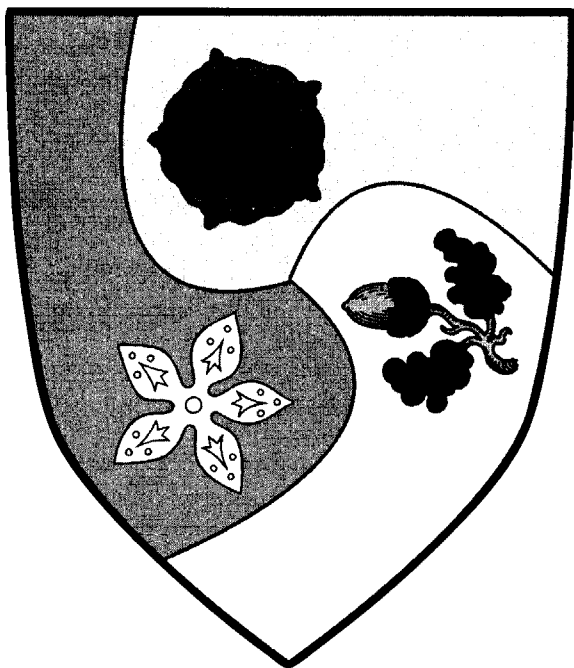
**Religion:** Denev

**Currency:** The single remaining town of Amalthea uses mostly a barter economy in these times, and no new coins are minted. The old Amalthean coins are honored as follows: platinum denevs (10 gp), gold oaks (3 gp), gold sunlights (1 gp), silver moonlights (3 sp), silver rivers (1 sp), silver starlights (5 cp), copper loam pennies (1 cp)

**Resources:** Timber, farm products

**Allies:** Albadia, Vera-Tre and Vesh

**Enemies:** Calastian Hegemony, Khirdet



### History

With perhaps the most tragic history of any land in Ghelspad since the Divine War ended, Amalthea has not seen good fortune in many years. Tradition holds that, long before the Divine War, the city of Amalthea was the capital of a vast empire of peace and wisdom. As the story goes, corruption and stagnation led slowly to the empire's demise. The culture would have died out, were it not for a heroic pair of lovers who inspired the people to rise up against the decadent leaders of the old regime and to create a new government, this time based on worship of Denev instead of Mormo.

By this point the empire had shrunk to little more than the single glorious capital city, and a small

surrounding area extending from just south of what is now the Bleak Savannah in the north to the lake now called Adurn's Tear in the south, and from just inside the Ganjus Forest in the west to well into the Kelders to the east. While a far cry from the huge empire the Amaltheans supposedly once controlled (of which, incidentally, there is little evidence), what was preserved was grand in the extreme, and even the ruins left today of Old Amalthea are one of the more magnificent sights in Ghelspad.

In addition to rescuing the culture from destruction, the young lovers led the cleansing of all the evils that had accumulated in the city over the years. What they could destroy they did, and what they couldn't "gave to Denev," to protect the world from these horrors forever. After this cleansing, the city was more beautiful and prosperous than it had ever been, and became a great hub of culture and artwork for all of Ghelspad in the final decades before the Divine War.

Miraculously, the city of Amalthea survived the Divine War rather well. Like Vera-Tre and the Ganjus nearby, Amalthea was spared the worst of the destruction. When the fighting stopped, it shone like a beacon to thousands of refugees who flocked there for aid. What a shock for the refugees when they entered the shining and untouched city built so securely into the side of Mount Amalthea — only to find it practically deserted.

It took almost a week of searching before a few brave bands of refugees located the remainder of Amalthea's once teeming citizenry. Locked together in the vast halls of the famous University of Arts with only the most basic of dwindling provisions, a few thousand Amaltheans huddled in terror. None could describe accurately what it was that had driven them all into hiding, but dozens of the survivors were irreparably mad for the rest of their lives. No corpses were found anywhere in Amalthea, and nothing dangerous was ever encountered in the city, but the vast population of that once mighty city had disappeared, never to be found.

To everyone's surprise, the Amaltheans decided unanimously to stay in their city and do their best to revive the life and culture it had once enjoyed. They seemed to regard this decision as some kind of sacred duty, but it apparently terrified them, and not one Amalthean could say why they needed to stay.

Almost as if it got lost in the shuffle of the many post-War mysteries, people quickly seemed to forget the enigma of Amalthea, and refugees continued to flock to the city, breathing life into its silent lovely halls, living like kings in the abandoned mansions and courtyards of what was formerly one of the continent's most wealthy cities. Though the population and cultural significance of the city never approached what they had been before the war, Amalthea City seemed to be on its way to eventual recovery, especially with the discovery of the magical



Amalthean ram (apparently a new species since the Divine War — perhaps a gift from Denev) and with all the opportunities that Amalthea had to offer to any refugees willing to worship Denev. Only the University of Arts remained dark and silent.

Then came the Druid War. Though the city walls were strong and the people had enough supplies to withstand a siege almost indefinitely, the ancient fortifications were simply too vast for the decreased population to hold without extensive support from outside armies. When Calastia withdrew its troops from Amalthea's defense, the titanspawn armies broke through. Battles raged through the streets as the Amaltheans were pushed steadily back into the heart of the city. Tens of thousands died as the beleaguered people continued to retreat. Once more, the frightened and decimated populace found themselves huddled together inside the old university, this time fighting for their lives.

Though they were miraculously rescued at the very last moment by the combined forces of Vera-Tre and Vesh, the city had been viciously sacked and destroyed, and fewer than a thousand of its inhabitants had survived the final battle. The age of Amalthea had decisively come to a close, but still the people refused to give up their cultural heritage. Even the newer settlers to the area felt oddly compelled to stay in Amalthea and rebuild. Within a few months, a small village was constructed just outside the walls of the old city, and the survivors relocated with the intention of slowly rebuilding the ruins of Old Amalthea.

One of the first things the Amaltheans did was to seal the University of Arts completely and post all manner of magical guardians and wards around all known entrances. The rest of the rebuilding has been largely abandoned for now, as many of the skills and technologies that created the beautiful architecture of Amalthea — especially the many palaces and mansions of elaborate glass and unknown metals — were lost long before the Divine War. The people now therefore content themselves with building the comfort and strength of their pleasant little mountain town, and researching all things ancient for clues on how to rebuild the shattered city.

When asked about this obsession with the old city, or about the sealing of the old university, Amalthean answers vary from the unlikely ("in honor of those that died") to the vague ("we just have to") to the completely uncomprehending ("I... I don't know"). Though many suspicious people all over Ghelspad assume the Amaltheans are hiding something specific, to all outward appearances the Amaltheans have no real notion of what they are doing or why they don't just rebuild from scratch. Certainly they seem to have no clue as to the significance of the University of Arts.

In spite of its lack of logic, however, everyone who lives in Amalthea longer than a few months

tends to become attached to the place and even defensive of it. Some of the most unlikely sorts have fallen in love with the Amalthean community, and become loyal to it where they have never been loyal to anything before. Some suspect this has something to do with Amalthea's proximity to the Canyon of Souls and the oddly spiritual climate there, while others believe it to be an entirely different phenomenon, related to the defense of whatever lies hidden inside the old university.

As yet, no one has managed to penetrate the magical defenses of the University of Arts. A recent rumor indicates that there may be a series of underground tunnels leading to the city's secrets and containing dangerous riches and artifacts from centuries past, when the city was dedicated to Mormo. These rumors might explain why Khirdet wants to possess Amalthea so badly, but they don't seem to explain the strange urge the Amaltheans feel to protect the old university. Do the tunnels perhaps connect to the university, or does the old structure house some other unrelated Amalthean mystery? So far, no one seems to know.

In any case, the Amaltheans struggle on, defending themselves from Khirdet's regular raids, researching ancient architecture and clinging desperately to a culture that, for all practical purposes, is already dead. Whatever unknown treasure the Amaltheans defend, however, if a place like Khirdet wants it, it's probably best left undisturbed.

## Geography

Amalthea is a small mountain town located near the base of Mount Amalthea, just southeast of the Ruins of Old Amalthea.

Amalthea has plenty of rich forest and farmland and little else of economic value. The one exception to this rule is the milk of the Amalthean sheep. While native Amaltheans hold these creatures in great reverence and would never tax the ewes by profiting from their milk, it cannot be denied that said milk is an invaluable resource to what remains of Amalthean culture. Amaltheans keep as much as possible about these sheep secret, however, so this milk rarely benefits outsiders.

**Mount Amalthea:** An almost solitary peak jutting out to the west from the Kelder Mountains, Mount Amalthea is lush and largely forested. Healthy and fertile, the mountain's relatively gradual slopes make it convenient for settlement and even light farming and herding. Though not among the tallest of the Kelder peaks, Mount Amalthea's relative isolation from the rest of the range makes it look a good deal more impressive than it really is.

## Flora and Fauna

Common natural creatures in this area include several varieties of herd animal, such as deer, elk and wild goats. The inhabitants keep herds of domestic

goats as well. In addition, rodents such as the marmot and smaller ground squirrels thrive all over the mountain, sometimes to the distress of farmers. Common birds include several species of hawk, the great gray owl and multitudes of smaller herbivorous species. The region's natural predators are the black bear, coyote and mountain lion, and the plant life is largely made up of several varieties of fern, berry and pine. All farming takes place on the lower slopes of the mountain or in the foothills, as the upper slopes are too cold year round for most crops.

Because of its health and how long the area has been populated, the forests around Amalthea are remarkably peaceful and safe as Scarred Lands forests go. Apart from the occasional mother bear or poisonous snake, dangerous encounters are rare. A few truly fearsome creatures are native to the area, so travelers are advised not to wander alone, but Mount Amalthea is not typically an environment for wild adventure or captured treasure. Such encounters are confined to the legendary tunnels — if one can find them.

## People

Amalthean humans are not really a race unto themselves anymore, and it becomes harder with each passing year to tell for certain who has Old Amalthean blood and who doesn't. Drawings of Old Amaltheans show them to have been fairly dark-skinned, with thick, straight dark hair and well-defined facial features: high cheekbones, strong jawlines, straight noses. They were typically tall and muscular,

with broad-shouldered men and wide-hipped women. However, only those few Amaltheans who can claim to be of pure, or at least half, Old Amalthean descent really look like Amaltheans. After that the blood seems to thin quickly and get lost in the mix, though it will occasionally crop up again in later generations. Therefore, most Amaltheans today look more like mixtures from wherever their other ancestors called home, with about 3% of the population resembling the Old Amalthean paintings. A slight majority of Amaltheans are human, and another large group is composed of wood elves from the Ganjus. Other races are welcome and generally well accepted, but only if they are willing to worship Denev and adopt Amalthean customs.

## Culture

Amaltheans are enthralled by all that is ancient. While they concentrate their scholarly and archeological efforts on the ruins of Old Amalthea, all ancient cultures and artifacts fascinate them, and the fascination seems to be contagious. The Amaltheans' ability to make ancient history intriguing makes them highly sought after as teachers and tutors among cultures who still pay attention to pre-War history. Outside of Lokil, obviously, only the keepers of the Phylacteric Vault (and, or so he claims, Yugman the Sage) can rival Amaltheans for knowledge of ancient things.

Because of their intense devotion to their homeland, Amaltheans rarely travel abroad. Those who do



An Amalthean farmer, city guardsman, druid of Denev, townsman in festival costume and goatherd.

are most apt to be on a pilgrimage to the Phylacteric Vault in Darakeene, or occasionally to have hopes of getting into the Library of Lokil (so far, none have succeeded). Other adventures generally have something to do with uncovering ancient texts or tools. Of course, a great deal of mystery and adventure lies within Amalthea itself, so why leave home?

In addition to loving ancient history, Amaltheans do their best to live it. Alongside the new standard calendar, Amaltheans keep track of the days and holidays of the old calendar as well, and Denev's Day according to the Old Amalthean calendar is their largest holiday every year. Though in pre-War times Denev's Day was always just after the harvest season, the gods have reordered the days in such a way that the old calendar changes each year in relation to the seasons, and Denev's Day falls approximately two weeks later every year.

Because the ancient harvest traditions are sometimes impossible when the holiday falls outside the harvest season, the Amaltheans have reluctantly decided to honor the spirit of the festival by celebrating whatever season it happens to be at the time. This year will probably see gift-giving and a great deal of singing, as well as hot spiced drinks shared among the community and the decoration of the surrounding forest with dried fruit and nuts for the wild animals to use during the long winter.

In dress, food and entertainment, the Amaltheans try to live as ancient Amaltheans did, but the resources and information simply aren't available for most of these things, and the people's efforts instead translate to a very formal, almost haughty, but otherwise largely ordinary culture. The food is a combination of Veshian and Vera-Tre cooking, but uses a great deal more sage and clove spices than either of these, reflecting a mention in a few old books that describes Amaltheans as loving these spices. Clothing is simple and practical most of the year, but the festival costumes are fantastically elaborate and expensive, based on ancient drawings. The few traditional Old Amalthean songs that have been preserved tend to sound eerie and mournful, and Amalthean composers usually attempt to imitate the sounds of these songs, but both ancient and modern traditional songs from all over Ghelspad are also popular, and bards are highly honored in Amalthea.

Education in Amalthea is remarkable among simple farming communities. Nearly everyone is literate in Ledean, and anyone schooled in Amalthea can read and write in Old Amalthean as well. Most daily business is conducted in Ledean, but all religious ceremonies are held exclusively in the old tongue. Some scholars read and write in Old Ledean and other ancient tongues as well. Human children are required to go to school for at least eight years, starting at age six. Elves are permitted to have their own schools and policies, to reflect their differing rate of maturity, and these schools are much like those in

Vera-Tre. Children of other races are allowed to choose between human and elven schools, but they generally struggle to fit in and don't do as well as other students. A small group made up mostly of halfling parents is trying to change this.

In most other ways, Amalthean culture is an amalgam of the traditions of Vesh and Vera-Tre, with a dash of Albadia or Ontenazu thrown in here or there. When new discoveries about ancient Amalthea are made, these are widely publicized and, if practical, almost universally adopted within the year. Most such discoveries are highly impractical, however, and ancient Amalthean culture remains as dead as it has been since the Titanswar.

## Crime and Punishment

Crime is rare in Amalthea, and criminals are always tried in person by the Elder and the council. Amaltheans do not use lawyers or advocates, since the law is simple enough for everyone to understand. Law enforcement is enacted by the town guards or with enchantment spells, if necessary. Punishments are decided on an individual basis, but typically involve community service of varying amounts. More serious crimes are almost unheard of, and typically punished by banishment. Some fairly standard examples follow:

**Theft or Destruction of Property:** Must repay victim and apologize before the entire assembled town. If funds are unavailable (or in any case over 50 sunlights in value), must work for the victim or the community until council deems the offence repaid. Extreme or repeated offences might lead to banishment but never have.

**Violence Against Fellow Amaltheans or Honored Guests:** First offenses usually lead to public apology and community service, and repeated offenses to banishment, depending on the severity of the case. "Fair fights" are not considered crimes.

**Murder:** Usually banishment, but cases are carefully considered, and have occasionally been limited to community service and public apology. Murder is very rare in Amalthea, however.

**Violence Against Children:** The Amaltheans cherish children, due to their low population and the belief that the next generation will restore the city's glory. Violence of any kind against children results in immediate banishment if the criminal is found guilty by the council. In extreme cases, neighboring communities might be warned of the criminal's presence in the area.

**Treason:** No recorded cases, but to a people as home-devoted as the Amaltheans this might be a capital crime.

## Religion

While in theory all the gods' religions are permitted in Amalthea, in reality those who don't worship Denev don't stay long. It's not that the people are

intolerant, but more because the worship of Denev is so all-pervasive that anyone with other gods is likely to get sick of the place (or convert). In addition to the Denday celebrations and the solemn full-moon prayers, every week holds three holy days for Amalthea. Being in honor of Denev's children, each Corday, Taniday and Hedraday is a day of worship. Corday is for the preparation, training and blessings required to defend their sacred city for the glory of Denev. Taniday is for songs of praise to Denev and for the sacred hunt, wherein Denev speaks to her followers through the omens of the chase and the catch. Hedraday is the day of the family and the home, as well as the day the council holds its meetings and hearings.

The Amaltheans have no qualms about working hard and worshiping on the same day, so most religious activities take place in the evenings after supper. Only the hunt is an all-day event, but it consists of a rotating group of only twenty-seven hunters. Everyone else joins in to sing and feast at the end of the day.

Ritual is extensive and powerful in Amalthea. Every councilor must know by heart the steps of the rituals of the courts. Every adult must know and teach his children the Hedraday family rituals. Every hunter knows the proper formula for the sacred hunt, as well as the interpretations for a long list of symbols and signs that Denev might send during the chase. All the guards learn to teach according to the proper forms, and all the blacksmiths know every word of every blessing they must pound into every blade. Even on the other five days of the week, the people of Amalthea have countless rituals for nearly everything they do, turning every day into a holy day of sorts.

The Amalthean druids train for many years before they are considered sufficiently knowledgeable to minister to the people, and Denev's druids from other lands are sometimes asked to train under Amalthean druids for a few years before their priesthood is truly respected by the people.

Worshippers of Corean, Tanil and Hedrada are seen as a little odd, but respected. Any worship of a god not descended from Denev is a little beyond them, however. After all, why would you trust the evil Titans' children any more than the titans themselves? Since Denev was the only good titan, surely it follows that only Denev's children are pure. Naturally this sort of logic gets fuzzy around the subject of Madriel, but the Amaltheans tend to keep their thoughts to themselves. They do their best to respect worshippers of all deities, and are usually only actually rude to followers of Chardun, Belsameth and Vangal — and the other Titans, of course.

## Armed Forces

Though it goes against their grain, Amaltheans are forced to keep a standing guard in their city at all times. While most adult Amaltheans have enough battle experience to handle at least one weapon with skill, the business of living must continue whenever

there are snatches of peace. Not so for the guards, however, who see to the battle training of the common people, the organization of the town's defense, leadership during wartime, and, most importantly, the everyday guarding of the city to prevent surprise raids. Amalthean guards have usually been trained outside Amalthea, some even in Darakeene, and are all very skilled indeed. Unfortunately, they rarely number over one thousand at a time. The defensive spells and structures around the town and the old university are constantly being improved and upgraded, so as to be easily defensible by as few people as possible for as long as possible.

## The City of Amalthea

The living town of Amalthea is a small and snug place with very few important features, while the old city is still abandoned. However, the key locations are outlined below.

**Main Gates:** Made of enormous local timbers and magically shaped stone, this potent barrier is kept closed at night or when danger is suspected. The guards' barracks are located to each side of the gates.

**Market Center:** A large open area in the center of the town, used for market days, festivals, and for keeping livestock during attacks.

**Council Hall:** A long, low, wooden building where the council holds meetings and hearings. The largest of nine town wells is in the courtyard.

**Druid Hostel:** Though druids normally prefer to live with nature, the constant violence surrounding Amalthea sometimes requires them to reside within the city walls. This plain stone building with its luxuriant garden and fine brewery is one of the only druid buildings in Ghelspad.

**The Old Wall:** Opposite the main gates on the other end of town lies a long stretch of ancient stone wall. This is the intersection between the old city and the new. The heavy stone gate in this wall — once a major gate into Old Amalthea — can only be opened from inside the new city now, by 20 or more strong adults. It is usually closed and barred except on Denev's Day each year, and a small guarded side gate is used to access the old city when necessary. The entire ancient wall around the ruins has been repaired with shaped stone, and is guarded. All other gates have been sealed.

**The Museum:** Though most of Old Amalthea's artwork and architecture was destroyed by titanspawn during the Druid War, the Amaltheans have gathered, labeled and catalogued everything they could of what was left. Those pieces that would not be dangerous if stolen are kept on public display in this vast, ancient, mostly intact hall near the gate to the new town. The museum is kept guarded for its cultural value, but holds nothing magical, and most of the expensive pieces are too large and heavy to be easily stolen.

**The Ruins:** Beyond the museum, all is in ruins. The Amaltheans have swept the streets and piled the

debris as neatly as possible, and all the most grotesque signs of the battle fought here have been cleaned away, but the buildings are indeed ruined. Where plants have grown up in the cracks and corners, Amaltheans maintain careful and beautiful gardens, and even the nests of the small wild creatures that have taken up residence are kept clean in the main streets.

**The University:** It is now hidden by powerful illusions and enchantments, and no Amalthean has ever betrayed its exact location, but its general vicinity can be divined by observing the patrols of the guards. Even those few hopeful treasure-hunters who have slipped past the human guards have never gotten through the magical wards and guardians, which are strengthened regularly. The Amaltheans post no warnings about the deadly nature of the university's defenses, but they do advise strongly that no foreign visitors enter the old city without a tour guide. They take no responsibility for the fate of those who refuse this advice.

## Bridged City

**Name:** Bridged City of the Kelder Mountains

**Population:** 50,000 (Human 66%, Elf 18%, Halfling 12%, Half-elf 3%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Hereditary monarchy

**Ruler:** Queen Gwatra (*human female Exp14, LG*)

**Language:** Veshian

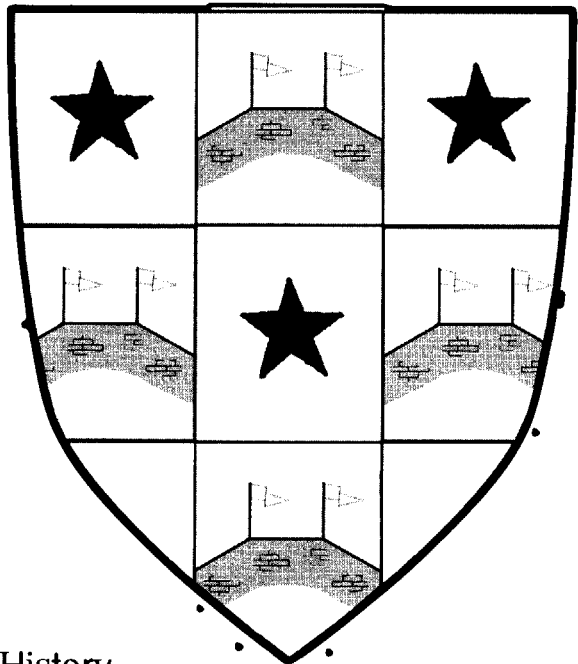
**Religion:** Madriel

**Currency:** Gold bridge (5 gp), gold pillar (1 gp), silver arch (5 sp), silver peak (1 sp), copper penny (1 cp)

**Resources:** Iron, worked metal goods, wool, corn, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes

**Allies:** Mullis Town, Mithril and Vesh

**Enemies:** None



## History

Founded as a refuge for soldiers left homeless by the Divine War, Bridged City is a testament to the willpower and toughness of its inhabitants. Despite plagues, sieges, and attacks by countless enemies, Bridged City continues to flourish in one of the most isolated, dangerous regions of Ghelspad.

Bridged City is perched between five large mountains. Caves and graceful spires built on to the mountains serve as homes, while a complicated system of rotating drawbridges connects the various parts of the city and confounds invaders.

The destruction of a quarter of the city in the great Blood Monsoon of 129 AV has created a continuing crisis for the city. While few lives were lost in the disaster due to evacuations, the loss of bridges and towers has left a gap in the city's defenses. Frequent titanspawn raids have prevented the restoration of the lost city quadrant, while several recent sieges, the last broken only with aid from Mullis Town and Mithril, have threatened the city's existence.

Currently, Bridged City is abuzz with the news of the engagement of Princess Hannatha to King Jaren of Mullis Town. The joy at this announcement has been tempered by rumors that a thief using a *master's brush* attempted to steal Hannatha's engagement ring, a magical gift of unknown properties supposedly critical to repairing the lost quadrant.

## People

The people of Bridged City are a calm, industrious lot. They've seen many battles, and titanspawn raids are a monthly event. Thus, they tend to be brave but not foolhardy, strongly believing that hard work and tenacity can overcome any obstacle.

## Culture

Hard work is not only a value in Bridged City, it's a way of life. With the city's bridges and platforms so carefully designed to fit into a larger system, anyone who wishes to establish a permanent home in Bridged City must first prove himself worthy. The ruling family reviews each applicant for citizenship and, if he demonstrates skills that will be valuable to the city, arranges for a new domicile for his use. Citizenship is not hereditary, making it rather common for those born in Bridged City to leave and seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Visitors can expect warm treatment, as it was outsiders seeking refuge from titanspawn who once unexpectedly bore the cure for a plague that ravaged the city. Tradition holds that all who visit the city for the first time are given a warm bed for the night and two meals on the ruling family's behalf.

## Crime and Punishment

An elite unit of soldiers serves as city guard. Should a major crime be committed, the city closes off its bridges in an attempt to catch the perpetrator. The guard relies on divination magics and investigative legwork to track down criminals and solve crimes. Unlike some societies, Bridged City has no qualms about using *detect thoughts* and similar spells to pursue criminals. All are allowed to carry weapons in Bridged City, though unsheathing a sword or other weapon is a 10 gp fine unless the perpetrator can prove he was provoked or had to defend himself. Punishment is decreed by magistrates, stern judges appointed by the queen herself.

**Theft:** Fine paid to victim equal to four times the value of the item. If the criminal cannot pay, he must work off his debt as a servant of the city at a rate of 1 sp per day.

**Arson:** Any crime that destroys buildings or bridges, and thus threatens Bridged City's defenses, is punishable by death by hanging.

**Murder:** Death by hanging.

## Religion

Madriel is the principal deity of Bridged City, particularly in her aspects as defender and provider. Bridged City

often has to import food, making it critical that the terrace gardens be as bountiful as possible. Furthermore, legend has it that Madriel broke a terrible plague that almost destroyed Bridged City in its first year by sending her servants in the guise of simple travelers seeking refuge from pursuing titanspawn. Madriel's temple occupies a central point in Bridged City, and her weekly services are the most popular.

## Armed Forces

Bridged City's standing army is composed solely of citizens or those who have agreed to serve in return for citizen status. A highly militarized state, Bridged City boasts a standing army of 5,000, including guards assigned to security duty and patrols. The typical soldier wears splint-mail armor, carries a glaive or ranseur, a long sword, and a large wooden shield. Large units of crossbowmen support the infantry, while all spellcasters at the Bridged Academy must drill with the army one week a year and respond to a general call to arms.

## The Bridged City

The area surrounding Bridged City is wild and treacherous. Most traffic to and from the city travels along the Durek River.

Bridged City is organized into three separate quarters, each of which serves a specific purpose in sustaining the city's economy and defenses. The fourth quarter was destroyed during the Blood Monsoon and still has not been repaired.

**Southern Quarter:** Visitors and travelers are often restricted to this area. Its many inns and businesses provide comfortable accommodations and a wide variety of goods for all who come here.

**Terraces:** These grand steps hold the bulk of Bridged City's crops.

**Queen's Palace:** Queen Gwatra, her family, and her court reside here.

**Academy of Magic and Engineering:** Known throughout the region for the skill of its alumni in the arts of magic and engineering, this institute graduates 25 students each year.

**Temple Square:** This area hosts Madriel's beautiful temple of granite and wood, Corean's simple chapel, and a small grove to Denev.

**Temple of the Eternal Flame:** The ever-burning flame created by Madriel and Corean to symbolize their alliance can be found in this elegant marble temple. Here, the members of the Order of the Eternal Flame come on pilgrimage and meet and discuss the state of the continent.

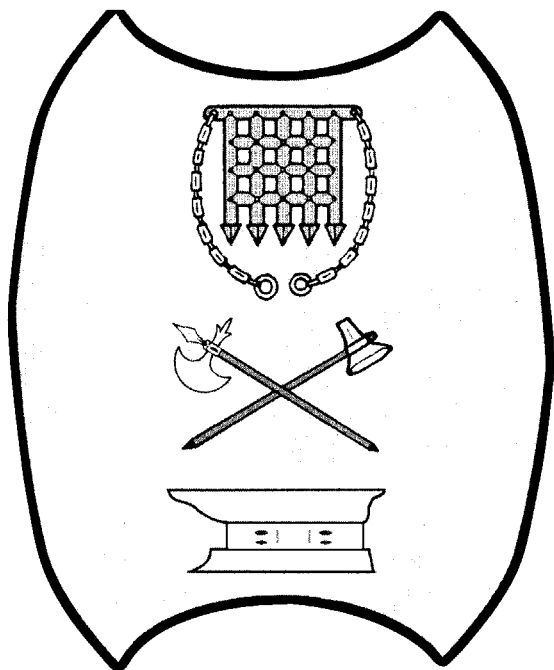
**Entry Gate:** A long, wide, stone staircase winds from the Durek River up to the bridge leading to the southern quarter.

**Durek River:** This broad, shallow river feeds into the Blood Basin and flows through the city. Kadum's tainted blood finds its way here only during the worst of the Hornswythe's reversals.



## Burok Torn

**Name:** The Impregnable Citadel of Burok Torn  
**Population:** 185,000 (Dwarf 99%, Other 1%)  
**Government:** Hereditary monarchy  
**Ruler:** Ruler of the Rock and Worthy of Goran King Thain (*dwarf male Ftr17, LG*)  
**Language:** Dwarvish  
**Religion:** Goran  
**Currency:** Gold worthy (1 gp), silver wanderer (5 sp), silver runal (1 sp), copper forge-penny (1 cp)  
**Resources:** Weapons, iron ore, gold  
**Allies:** Vesh, Durrover, Mithril  
**Enemies:** Calastia, Dier Drendal



### History

*Again, as always, this account is but a portion of the dwarven memory of events that shook our mountain home, abbreviated for the obviously long-winded but slow-reading Yugman the Sage. Consider this even briefer than the treatise I prepared on Burok Torn previously for Yugman, naught but a glimpse into our daily lives. As with all things, I've left intriguing bits (to me, at least!) on the forge-room floor in favor of the "cave-fish-and-potatoes" facts to help the reader understand all the quicker what life is like within the mountain steadfast.*

*Sincerely,*

*Tored Fenex, Chief Historian of Burok Torn*

Burok Torn stands as a symbol of dwarven tenaciousness. Beset on all sides — and from below — the dwarven citadel has withstood the worst the Scarred Lands has thrown at it. Founded in 2106 OC by the Marked King Alathin, whom many say lives still, the mountain peak suffered the depredations of the Charduni in 2910-13 OC, the warring of the gods against their parents, and most recently the surprise

advance by Calastian forces to the main gates in 112 AV.

Constant warfare marred the dwarves' beloved mountain: Kadum's mighty fist shattered the massive peak in 2744 OC, and the magical runic pennants fell under various assaults, robbing the mountain of its arcane protections.

The history of the dwarven kings is laced with sorrow. King Galshain fell in battle with the charduni general Hoyxalmar, the king bravely clutching the screaming charduni general as they plummeted from the high peak. King Dragh died while returning from a diplomatic visit to Vesh in the opening days of the Titanswar. Most recently, King Thune the Wise fell to the Calastians occupying the former dwarven holding of Irontooth Pass in 92 AV.

The current king, Thain, faces new threats from the dwarves' old allies, the dark elves of Dier Drendal. Former friends and trade partners, the dark elves have nurtured an unbounded hatred toward us since the fall of their god, Nalthalos, and to this day struggle against the dwarves, who they believe betrayed them to Chern.

The dwarves' greatest single loss was when Chern descended upon the mountain expansion named Baereth Marn during the Titanswar. Chern's essence filled the half-dug halls, slaying the workers and overseers trapped within. All died fighting to the last. Worse yet, Chern hid within the citadel, which led to the current rift between the dwarves and the dark elves. The Scourge's corruption still lingers within the sealed halls of Baereth Marn.

### People

Dwarves of Burok Torn are short and stocky, weighing roughly the same as a human. Male dwarves maintain elaborate beards, but this is not the rule. Many do not have beards, as they cause problems when working within the Forgeworks. Females do not have beards, although they braid and maintain their long hair for elaborate social events. The majority of the dwarven population dresses simply, wearing hides and furs or elaborate suits of armor more than likely made by an ancestor of that family. Dwarves appear primitive, but their traditions and magic belie this perception. Wealthier dwarves dress in clothing bought from human merchants visiting the mountain steadfast to trade. These dwarves love fine jewelry and ornaments, and females sport jewels to rival a true queen of other lands. They have a separatist attitude after years of warfare at their front door, and as such, tend to distrust strangers until that person proves himself. Afterward, the "stranger" is accepted as a loyal friend, although the dwarves rarely allow him free run of the citadel.

Burok Torn is a realm of ancient magics and proud warriors. Rune masters, the sorcerers and priests of Burok Torn, walk the stone corridors with spells floating about their heads, and armed guards patrol

the deep shafts. The Shield Arms, elite dwarven guards, protect the king and his family and see that his interests are carried out. Visitors are permitted to carry weaponry, but doing so often comes with a warning: Step out of line, and the forces of Burok Torn will react decisively.

## Culture

When most look upon the broken peak of Burok Torn, they see the proud testament of the dwarves rising above the lands. They see stubbornness in the face of an enemy. They see a fighting spirit long since broken in many areas of Ghelspad.

In short, they see very little of Burok Torn.

Within the stone walls of the citadel, dwarves are a social bunch, favoring lavish dinners and celebrations. Meals allow dwarven workers, rune wizards and even the king to come together in peace for a moment to share stories of the day. Sometimes, depending on how long the cooks can keep the food coming, dwarves spend long hours within one of the many dining halls scattered about Burok Torn, discussing matters of great and small importance. (The frequent use of cave fish for all manners of dishes comes up regularly during these discussions.) There are main dining periods: Morningfast, also known as Goran's Offering; Midmeal, or Goran's Contemplation; and Evedine, or Goran's Rest.

To feed the nation, scores of cooks rely on many hundreds of larders situated just off the kitchens. The

efforts of these behind-the-scenes dwarves are remembered once a year as the king and his retainers take to the kitchens to prepare a meal for the cooks themselves. Fortunately for the dwarves, the meals are becoming more edible, as Lady Krysara has stepped in to direct the king on which ingredients are actually appropriate and why black pepper and dwarven ale are not required ingredients in all dishes.

Visitors find one custom odd. Dwarves, with the exception of the king and his family, carry their own utensils with them to every meal. With the number of dwarves the meal halls feed, the thought of providing food alone for the masses is mind-boggling, let alone making sure each dwarf has a knife, fork and spoon. Thus, the tradition began many years ago during the reign of King Galshain Gimrut the Tall that all dwarves supply their own utensils to save wear and tear on the poor major domo who, before the decree, ran himself near death providing for dwarven needs.

Burok Torn interacts with the world through trade, but still distrusts outsiders because of the harm brought upon it by the world. Dwarves have no need to seek out the merchants visiting the citadel. They have no need to buy the fine silks and exotic woods the outsiders peddle. They have no need to listen to the strange tales of gossip the foreign bards bring.

But they do.

The dwarves, despite calls for more restrictive trade with the merchants of Ghelspad, have adopted



the styles and customs of traders coming into the citadel. The merchants of Ontenazu say the easiest way to make a sale in Burok Torn is to wield a silken moneybag and to show it freely.

Despite the dourness the war with Calastia has created in Burok Torn, the dwarven people still enjoy themselves whenever possible, and outsiders invited into the inner core are amazed at the revelries of which the dwarves are capable. Even failing that, visitors are always astonished by the amount of alcohol that the dwarves consume while still able to walk. The Ale King's penchant for brewing his own ale has rubbed off, and many families sell versions of ale with their name attached. Outsiders within the Burning Ring might not detect a difference in taste between a brew by the Korelstoens and one by the Rahnforks, but the dwarven families know and are quite proud of the variations of ale produced.

One popular pastime is the annual dwarf hound races within the deep mines, where dogs are set loose to track mineral deposits untouched throughout the deep levels. The winners are determined after long mining to find the detected ore, and judges are often hard-pressed to weigh every last ounce of ore found within the vein to decide the winning dog. Dwarf hound breeders of Burok Torn take their game very seriously (as do all of the wagerers following the game) and protect their training and breeding pens from spying by other competitors.

Dwarven marriages are for life, although currently a number of widows live within the walls thanks to Calastia's attacks against the gates. Elaborate marriage ceremonies are held within the central core of Burok Torn, with the bride and groom floating within the huge room as friends and relatives watch from various balconies. The bride leaves her father's home after the wedding to live with her new husband in a stronghold connected to his parents' dwelling. The new bride is welcomed into the new family with open arms and attitudes and the often explicit expectation that she provides new children for the clan to raise.

Because of the low birth rates plaguing Burok Torn, many dwarven couples toss bags of coins into the forges to honor Goran and seek his blessing. Dwarven legends say Goran takes these offerings and crafts the soul of a child with which to bless his faithful. The naming of a child is one of the greatest moments for the nation as a whole, given the precious few who are born. When a child is named, a magical imprint of its foot is pressed into the wall of Burok Torn. The magic stays active as long as the child lives. The marking is thought to add to the overall strength of the walls.

In a community where every birth is celebrated, so it is for every death, which depletes the dwarven community of yet another worthy spirit to stand against the adversity of the world.

Burials, with the exception of the royal family, no longer take place within Burok Torn, although ancient burial crypts from years past still lie deep within the bowels of the stone fortress. Instead, the dead are cremated within their forges and their ashes spread into mortar to reinforce failing portions of the citadel. Truly, Burok Torn is built with the ashes of the ancients, as thousands upon thousands of dwarves are interred within. These ancestors are not at all quiet, either, serving as guides and protectors of the city-state they loved. Evil wizards and clerics attempting certain spells are likely to anger the spirits, bringing the dwarven militia and the ghosts of the ancestors to stop the invader.

For the king and his family, a royal crypt lies deep within the fortress, and graves are staked for any new additions when an heir arrives. Thus, the kings of Burok Torn know where they shall lie even before they can walk. Thain, the current king, has plots reserved for him near his slain wife and daughter, Lucella and little Milla, in the crypts, as well as newer crypts for his current wife, Krysara, and their son, Prince Turen.

Dwarves have long memories, made longer by the detailed records maintained since before the Titanswar. Huge libraries with volumes penned by dwarven rune masters fill levels of the mountain. While dwarven viewpoints are sometimes sorely limited, concerning only Burok Torn and its immediate environs for many centuries, the histories are some of the few complete works to survive the Titanswar intact. And while Burok Torn lost contact with the outside world during the war, the dwarves have recently started filling gaps in our knowledge with information gleaned from travelers. This effort has been greatly aided by the return to the fold of the many dwarves who were outside Burok Torn when the Divine War began. These survivors have brought many strange stories to the record-keepers within the mountain, telling tales from far-off lands that the dwarves might otherwise never believe — if the storyteller weren't a dwarf returned home.

## Crime and Punishment

An established military protects Burok Torn, but no police force investigates and uncovers criminal elements. Instead, criminals are usually restrained by dwarves, who may or may not belong to the military, in the vicinity of the deed. Usually this treatment is reserved for erring outsiders who overstep the customs of the dwarves. For truly heinous crimes, the elite branch of the militia, the Shield Arms, joins the hunt for the criminal. Usually the elite guardsmen, aided by the rune masters of the city-state, track and bring the person to justice within two days.

Captives are brought before the highest ruling body of the dwarves short of the king: the Elder Conclave. The conclave oversees justice and fairness

within the halls of Burok Torn, determining rights and wrongs based on those brought before them. The conclave hears minor squabbles that get out of hand, but for the most part the dwarves of Burok Torn judge themselves and their neighbors when something occurs. The conclave is rarely called out for these tasks, although the feuding neighbors can request a hearing.

The twelve-member conclave always presides over matters involving murder, treason and the intentional destruction of a forge within the city-state. Members vote among themselves after hearing the accused's defense, which the person must provide either on his own or allow friends to speak for him. The decision is then handed down and the person condemned to his fate that day or set free. Dwarven justice moves swiftly within the conclave's hall.

Punishments within Burok Torn are based on a dual system, with one set of punishments for outsiders (humans, elves, etc.) and the other for the dwarves of the city-state. Punishments vary depending on the crime, although the worst crimes share a single fate for all races. The punishment before the slash is for Burok Torn dwarves, the second is for outsiders.

Rune marking is a permanent rune tattooed on the criminal's face, and known to all dwarves as a sign of great dishonor. The hanging from the high peaks is actually a misnomer; the biting cold kills an individual before the hanging does.

**Petty Theft (50 gp or under):** Confinement (1 day/10 gp value stolen) / Mine labor (1 day/10 gp value stolen).

**Grand Theft (51 gp or higher):** Confinement (1 month-1 year) / Mine labor (1 month-1 year).

**Intentional Contamination of Forgeworks:** Mine labor (10 to 75 years) / Expulsion from Burok Torn.

**Intentional Destruction of Forgeworks:** Expulsion from Burok Torn, rune marking / Expulsion from Burok Torn, rune marking.

**Murder:** Rune marking and mine labor for 100 to 200 years / Rune marking and mine labor for 100 to 200 years or until death.

**Treason:** Death by hanging from Burok Torn's peak / Death by hanging from Burok Torn's peak.

## Religion

Goran is everywhere in Burok Torn, from the stones the dwarves tread upon to the metals they pour into the forges to craft their blades. Everything done within the walls of the mighty citadel is done in Goran's name, and the god is often wont to pass among his people, spreading blessings upon his faithful.

The rune clerics venerate Goran, running the temples of the city-state where thousands of dwarves may attend. Individual families often have smaller temples in their homes so they can offer thanks to

Goran daily. Most of these smaller shrines are tied to the dwarves' personal forges, allowing the dwarf to continue working as he calls for blessings upon a particular item he has crafted.

Many in Burok Torn offer thanks to Madriel for her healing, and the odd tribute is dumped into a forge in Corean's name. The darker gods such as Belsameth, Chardun and Vangal hold very little place in the hearts or minds of the dwarven people. This does not mean that their worship is outlawed. In the Burning Ring, outsiders may freely worship all gods. Only small shrines are allowed, however, and cults are quickly separated and sent on their way.

All dwarves venerate Goran, either by dropping tribute into a forge or worshipping within the temples. Some aspire to a higher calling, attaining the position of runic priest. These priests are peers with the rune masters.

## Armed Forces

The dwarven army is a hidden one sitting in open view. The only true warriors are the Shield Arms, elite guardsmen protecting King Thain and his family. The number of the Shield Arms is small, but they are a potent force nonetheless. As King Virduk discovered, all dwarves in the mountain are skilled with weapons, whether the waraxes they are famous for or the spells that make them deadly adversaries. If a call to arms is sounded, a standing army of 50,000 dwarven soldiers is ready within a few days. This includes the elite Shield Arms, and dwarven warriors known as the iron and stone guardsmen. The commoners are also likely to rise to the occasion, bringing the nation's military strength to over 100,000, with countless thousands more in reserve. Anyone wanting to take Burok Torn must first fight through every last defender.

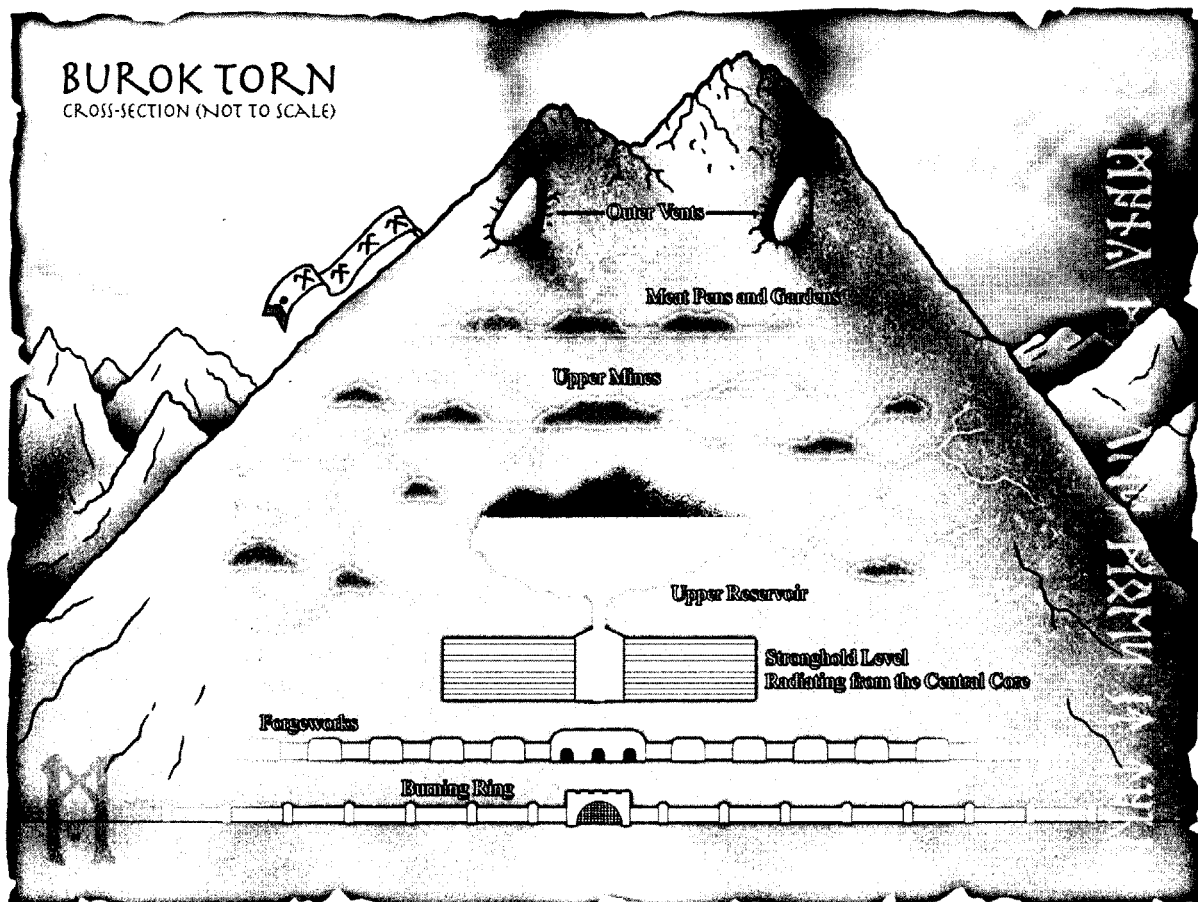
Most dwarven forces are ground troops who charge into battle swinging their axes and hammers. Backing them up are the Shield Arms, elite rune masters and priests. The rune masters and priests provide magical attacks and healing. A spell-user routinely accompanies patrols in case things go sour.

The dwarves are at a disadvantage, fighting two fronts constantly. Calastia presses for the doors of Burok Torn, while the dark elves of Dier Drendal threaten from the stones beneath the dwarves' feet. Cairn hunters, an ugly cross between a dwarf hound and a monitor lizard, patrol the caverns, allowing the dwarves to concentrate on one threat at a time.

## The City of Burok Torn

The city-state of Burok Torn is completely contained within a single peak in the Kelders, although the city proper extends many levels belowground as the dwarves mine for resources. Unfortunately, the lowest depths lead to a deadly danger, Dier Drendal, the moving city of the dark elves.

**Entry Gates:** Four gates sit at the compass points of the mountain home, although three — Galshain's Trial, Alathin's Destiny and Goran's Blessing — are



actually useable. The fourth, officially named Ardell's Jest and known more readily by the Calastian title of Liar's Gate, is actually not a portal, but an elaborately carved ruse to distract invaders from a doorway slightly away from the mountain that rises from the land itself. (This is hardly a secret anymore, given the many times that it has been used in the past.) The gates are sturdy, carved from the rock of the Kelder Mountains, and have time and again repelled invaders, from the gorgons to Calastia's last advance during the Final Kelder Engagement in 112 AV.

**The Burning Ring:** A bustling trade center, the Burning Ring is a last-ditch defensive ring should an invader make it inside the great stone gates. The Burning Ring circles the inner ground-level perimeter of the mountain with numerous hallways and open rooms. No doorways block the Burning Ring along a full circuit of the mountain. Non-dwarves live and trade within the corridors and rooms, and space is at a premium. Many dwarves bring goods from the mountain's heart to trade with foreigners living within. The area gets its name from the defense it provides. If threatened, the dwarves fill the Burning Ring with molten metal to seal themselves within their mountain home.

**The Central Core:** The central core is the heart of the dwarven city-state. A massive cylinder 700 feet high and roughly a mile in diameter, the central core holds the entrances to the dwarven strongholds housed within Burok Torn. A massive waterfall called Aquellet's Cascade falls from the center of the room,

disappearing into the depths through a carved opening in the floor. *Silence* runes make it as quiet as an underground stream. Ancient runes and spells maintained within the chamber allow dwarves to levitate to and from stronghold balconies ringing the walls.

**The Forgeworks:** Massive chambers of steam, magma and smelting iron ore, the Forgeworks are a hellish place to visit for those of us unused to the heat and debris of the true forge. Many thousands of dwarves work within, toiling to keep the nation supplied with everything from daily necessities to our weapons of war. The forges are as massive as aboveground keeps and produce weapons and parts for weapons of war by the cartload. The fires never go out in the Forgeworks, and the dwarves who work there defend the area with their lives. The massive vats of molten metal serve a dual purpose: they can also be dumped through openings to flood the Burning Ring.

**Goran's Fane:** A palatial manor, Goran's Fane is accessed through Aquellet's Cascade within the central core of Burok Torn. While actually located in an idealized version of Burok Torn in Goran's home in Corean's planar realm, Goran's Fane is a vital part of the mountain stronghold. Once actually located within the mountain citadel, the Fane now resides apart from the dwarven people — although King Thain thankfully does not take this separation to heart. Home of the dwarven king and his family, Goran's Fane is also the headquarters of the Shield Arms, a well-trained dwarven militia that protects the king at all costs.

## Dier Drendal

**Name:** Dier Drendal.

**Population:** 300,000 (Elf 99.9%, Gorgon 0.1%)

**Government:** Hereditary monarchy until 1 AV; presently divine rule

**Ruler:** Nalthalos, Demigod of the Dark Elves (*golem-deity*, LE)

**Language:** Dark Elven

**Religion:** Nalthalos

**Currency:** Glittering eye of Nalthalos (1 gp), shining mane of Nalthalos (5 sp), silver claw of Nalthalos (1 sp), clenched fist of Nalthalos (1 cp). For brevity's sake, merchants usually just use the body-part moniker when referring to coinage.

**Resources:** Lead, constructs, granite, fungi. Dier Drendal has no outside trade ties, save perhaps with the gorgons.

**Allies:** The Gorgon Broods

**Enemies:** Burok Torn, Vesh, Durrover

### History

*You have done well, young one. You have mastered all of the challenges placed before you with the tenacity and strength provided to you by your birthright. Now stand before our god, and accept his gift of knowledge, so that you may never forget where your people come from or what they have faced. Empty your mind and accept the gift of Nalthalos.*

—Excerpt from the final Rite of Initiation, delivered to all priests before they become full members of Nalthalos' clergy.

The dark elves had a long and glorious history prior to the tragedies wrought by the Divine War and the loss of their friendship with the dwarves of Burok Torn. They built a city of unparalleled beauty deep in the Kelders, where they crafted powerful magic, created magnificent works of art and penned great plays and poems. This all ended with the Titanswar, when pressure by the gorgons and other creatures of the mountains disrupted trade and forced the dark elves closer to their dwarven allies.

When Chern invaded the dwarves' mountain outpost of Baereth Marn, the drendali, as they called themselves, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the warriors of Burok Torn, only to be abandoned at a critical moment, leaving their god near-slain and their people irrevocably corrupted by the touch of the titan. Soon after this tragedy, the living god Nalthalos, poisoned by Chern but saved in a great lead golem body by his people, decreed that the city be sunk beneath the ground. It remains there to this day, moving from place to place with the aid of the excavator golems.

One hundred and fifty years after the Titanswar found the elves of Dier Drendal living an isolationist existence under the range of the Kelder Mountains. Much that they took for granted was robbed from them during the Titanswar: their god's immortality,

their beautiful city, and their trade and friendship with the stout folk of Burok Torn.

Elves have long lives and even longer memories. The scars left on them by years of war do not heal swiftly. And memories of betrayal and abandonment, no matter how well justified, can never be forgiven. The elves blame the dwarves not only for the loss of their god's power, but also for the loss of their beautiful aboveground city.

Despite these emotional hardships, however, the dark-elven way of life remains almost unchanged. True, their god now resides among them; true, they live underground in a moving city; true, they have declared war on their longtime trade partners. Regardless, everyday life goes on as it has for millennia.

### Flora and Fauna

Living underground is always dangerous, especially in the areas surrounding the Kelders. Rockfalls are a hazard, as are the creatures inhabiting the bedrock. Small burrowing vermin and the occasional foolhardy dwarf are the only creatures found within the vicinity of Dier Drendal, and they are dispatched by the golems quickly and efficiently. Bioluminescent lichen and moss grows in great abundance, fed on the waste products of an entire city. Occasionally the city burrows through an area already claimed by umber hulks, purple worms or oozes. The resultant skirmishes for territory are always brief, bloody, and end in favor of the elves. Up until recently, the gorgon broods were counted among those creatures to be disposed of; however since the signing of the dark elf-gorgon treaty, both high and low gorgons are viewed as allies.

### People

The dark elves of Dier Drendal, despite their obsidian complexions, are indeed elves, and share the same basic body type as their fair-skinned cousins. Most dark elves have piercing blue eyes and black hair, worn short. As they age their hair goes from jet black to stark white. At birth, each elf is tattooed with the mark of his caste.

Typical attire depends on caste. Slaves are left naked; most other elves opt for a simple leather undertunic with skirt. In the lower castes, this is all that is worn, while in the upper echelons of dark-elven society, more elaborate garb is often worn over the undertunic. Elves of the warrior caste can be seen drilling in reworked dwarven armor, taken from the dead as well as from captured dwarves. It is not uncommon to see a high gorgon moving about the city in the company of elves. Occasionally the populace is graced by the presence of the clerical caste; even rarer, the common elf can sometimes see their god moving through the city.

### Culture

The tenets of a rigid caste system keep the castes of Dier Drendal from mixing with one another on a



daily basis, as it has been since the inception of the city. Ultimately, a dark elf's birth determines whether they have been gifted with a bane or a blessing.

Recently — at least to the dark-elven way of thinking — a change has come over the caste system; the first change in over three millennia. When Nalthalos discovered it was impossible for him to travel back to his home in the planes after the Divine War, a major shift in the power of the castes took place. The caste of royalty was supplanted by the clerical caste. This change was commanded by Nalthalos himself, so that his clerics could be close at hand, always ready to service the demigod's needs.

This change, however, only affects the upper two castes. The rest of dark-elven society carries on as it has for centuries, with the people of lower castes paying deference to the ruling caste as well as their god-king, Nalthalos.

Slaves and golems are used by the merchant class for the majority of trade done with the gorgon broods. Slaves are also used to ferry the non-animated farming flats from one location to the next, as the city moves. Because of this constant relocation, dark-elven building architecture is limited to one story. More than that, and there would be disasters every time the city relocated.

Social interaction, as has been mentioned previously, is limited by caste. Only those of the same caste may interact freely with each other. Those of higher caste may choose to interact with members of lower castes, although this is done as infrequently as possible. Those of the lower castes pay deference to all those above them. Marriage or other intimate social interaction between castes is strictly forbidden and, if pursued, is seen as a slight against the wisdom of Nalthalos.

When dark elves do marry, it is for life. Both males and females have equal say over holdings and possessions, although family name and land ownership is passed from father to son. A typical marriage produces only one or two offspring.

Due to their current state, dark elves no longer engage in the practice of burying their dead. Instead, the dead are seen as an invaluable natural resource. When a dark elf dies, his body is used for one of several purposes: fertilizer for crops, fuel for the forges, and even as food. As barbaric as it may seem to outsiders, the elves see it as a way even the dead can continue to contribute to the city.

## Crime and Punishment

There are no judges, *per se*, in Dier Drendal. Crimes are brought before either the King of Dier Drendal or a body of three clerics, who listen to both sides of the argument and decide how best to resolve the conflict. In extreme cases, the crime in question may be brought before Nalthalos himself. This last option, however, is only available to those in the royal or clerical castes. Investigations into crimes are

only performed on those crimes perpetrated by two or more individuals of the same caste. If a crime is committed against a member of a higher caste by a member of a lower caste, then the perpetrator is usually put to death. Crimes against a lower caste by a higher caste do not usually happen, because few acts are considered crimes in these instances.

The dark elves hold their gorgon counterparts to be a part of the royal caste. Any other outsiders are considered hostile and are killed.

**Petty Theft (50 gp or under):** Repayment of four times the amount stolen. Public lashing (number of lashes equals one half the amount stolen).

**Grand Theft (51 gp or higher):** Repayment of four times the amount stolen. Public lashing (number of lashes equals the amount stolen). House arrest for one day/10 gp stolen.

**Unintentionally Revealing Location of Dier Drendal:** Members of lower castes are stoned to death. For higher castes, the penalty is expulsion from the city and loss of citizenship, after the elf's memories are magically removed by Nalthalos. Although this is tantamount to a death sentence, this is the origin of most dark elves who are encountered on the surface. Alternately, the elf may be forced to join the ranks of the untouchables.

**Murder:** Death by dismemberment.

**Treason:** Given to Nalthalos as a sacrifice, to do with as he pleases. No dark elf knows what becomes of these sorry individuals.

## Religion

Living with an evil god, even a crippled one, is an experience that no race would want to experience. Yet the dark elves have been doing just that for the past 150 years. With their god stranded among them, everything that is done throughout the day is done with his blessings.

This can cause some consternation, due mostly to the fact that dark-elven society follows the rigid practices of an absolute monarchy. Before the Divine War, nothing was done without the express permission of the king. This is still true; however, today the king is also a god. This can become extremely annoying for the god and extremely harrowing for the worshipper/bureaucrat.

Now among his people, while rebuilding his city under the earth, Nalthalos chose to only take one temple with him: the one at the center of the keep, called Nalthalos' Spire. It is here that commoners may seek a direct audience with their god, something that no other temple can boast.

Because Nalthalos is present for every moment of every day, and because he is so revered in the eyes of his people, no other godly worship is allowed or even tolerated. Members of his priesthood are born into their caste and, from the time they are old enough to crawl, are taught the tenets of his exacting

worship. The priesthood uses its elevated caste status to rule over the city with the backing of the word of their god.

## Armed Forces

Warriors are often considered the caste within a caste. This is because, when inducted or born into the caste, the elf begins as a *n'gee*, or private. He or she must then work up through the ranks of the elven army. Warriors are the only lower caste allowed almost unlimited access to Dier Drendal. They can travel anywhere in the city except the clerical sector or Nalthalos' temple.

When marching into battle, the warrior caste is augmented by members of both the wizard caste and the clerical caste, as well as numerous lead golems. The front lines of any elven army are always the lead golems. Directly behind the golems are the pikemen, those *n'gee* who have most recently come of fighting age. Almost 20 paces behind the pikemen are the shield elves, those soldiers who eschew weapons in favor of tower shields. Directly behind the shield elves are the elven archers, followed closely by the swordsmen. Once melee combat ensues, it is the job of the shield elves to guard the archers and the backs of the swordsmen. The back ranks of the army contain the healers and spellcasters. If the elves feel that they may be clashing with a particularly powerful foe, the pikemen may be replaced with tattoo adepts, and the swordsmen with artificers. At the very back of the whole army sits the *Ka'che*, or commanding general, with his tactical advising staff.

The Dier Drendal military is aided by creatures known as Nalthalites. Members of a fanatical dark elf cult, the Nalthalites literally fuse golem body parts to themselves in an effort to become more like their diety.

## The City of Dier Drendal

The elven city of Dier Drendal can be said to exist in two places — atop a peak in the Kelder Mountains and below the mountain range. The former city is nothing more than the twisted wreckage of an age long past. The most notable feature of the underground city of the dark elves is the fact that it moves, brick by brick, rebuilding as it goes.

**The Golem Excavators:** The colossal golems that ring the outskirts of the city excavate in the direction that it moves, so that the dark elves can continuously evade detection by dwarven agents. The golems use their scooped hands as shovels to carve a passage into the bedrock. The golems are also the first line of defense against attacks on the city.

**Farmland:** The outermost section of the city, this area contains mostly open ground and huge raised tracts mounted on wheels. Soil is imported from other regions and is used to fill the tracts, which are then planted. When the city moves, the farms move with them, without uprooting the plants.

**Mercantile District:** Past the farmlands are the mercantile shops and labor districts. Merchants and artisans live behind or adjacent to their place of business, and it has become increasingly common in the past six months to see high-gorgon representatives from the broods plying their wares within the city. The shops include smithies, tattoo parlors, apothecary guilds and pleasure dens, with bakeries and antiques dealers also present. Intermingled between shops are many mills, forges, several schools and other raw material refinement facilities.

**Open-Air Training Grounds:** This area of the city houses the training grounds for the dark-elven military. There is always a contingent of dark-elven warriors training with various weapons, ranging from daggers and short swords to halberds and crossbows. The training grounds can be converted in minutes to simulate a variety of underground and mountainous terrain, and allows the military might of Dier Drendal to practice their martial prowess against dummies, each other, and even the occasional captured dwarf.

**The Guilds of the Wizards:** Deep within Dier Drendal, past the realm of the warriors, lie the three guildhalls of the arcane spellcasting caste. The arcane spellcasters divide themselves into three distinct schools. The first school is that of the "conventional" wizards. These wizards seem to be the least respected of the three schools. Only slightly more tolerated than the conventional wizard are the artificers, wizards or sorcerers (although a vast majority are actually clerics) who venerate their golem god by making their bodies in his likeness. The most respected wizards of Dier Drendal appear to be their tattoo mages. These wizards and sorcerers use tattoo ink to become living vessels for the magic that they channel. When combined, these three disparate schools of magic are a force to be reckoned with, easily crushing any lesser magical foe they meet in combat.

**The Clerical Sector:** These structures are the most finely crafted buildings in all of Dier Drendal. The opulence of the clerics demonstrates their recent, by dark-elven standards, inheritance of their position as the ruling class of Dier Drendal. They are the highest-ranking elves in the entire city, forming the ultimate social elite.

**Nalthalos Spire:** The god of the dark elves dwells in a vast, towered structure, the only building in Dier Drendal that is over one story in height. It is said that in times of crisis, this structure can actually animate and become a powerful defender, crushing attackers beneath its mighty feet.

## Gest Ganest

*The Laboratory of Gest Ganest unquestionably contains the most magnificent collection of undiscovered magical objects in all of Scarn. I would never, ever go there under any circumstances.*

— Lyle Littleton, bard

### History

The eccentric and brilliant sorcerer-sage Ganest has not been seen since shortly after the start of the Divine War, but everyone knows at least one tale of his towers, discoveries, magical prowess, or a clever anecdote about something the Old Sage said at a dinner. There are probably as many untrue tales and rumors about this fascinating character as there are real ones. The indisputable testaments to his accomplishments and brilliance are the enduring and magnificent towers that once served as his lab.

The towers are a gleaming temptation for most adventurers. They offer a quick route to fame, power, knowledge and glory. However, the number of seasoned adventuring groups who have entered Ganest's yard, much less the towers themselves, can be counted on both hands.

The history of Ganest's lab is a sketchy one, and far from complete. Most of the information and dates associated with the towers are from oral record, and there are not many documents directly related to the towers. They are seldom mentioned in journals, since so few people were ever invited there. The towers were built sometime between 3432 and 3485 OC. This is a large range, but when one considers that different towers were added to the laboratory over many years, it makes an exact date of construction exceptionally difficult to determine. There is undoubtedly documentation within one of the towers revealing the exact date, but the first and most important paradox about Ganest's laboratories is that, in order to learn something about the lab, one must gain entrance to a certain tower; in order to gain entrance to that tower, one must know something about Ganest's lab, such as passwords and where the keys are located. This is the conundrum for every would-be lab explorer.

Various explorers, kings, adventurers, scholars, inventors, bards and thieves have all attempted to gain access to one tower or another over the years with varying degrees of success. Some did not make it past the yard, while others gained access to the inner ring of towers... and some of them did not return. The few that did return from the inner ring came back with tales of machines and golems of unimaginable material and origin. Another difficulty in gathering information about the towers is that many of these stories are patently false. The laboratory of Gest Ganest is the crown jewel of tales to tell, and wading through which tales are true and which are fiction could be a lifetime of work in itself.

Finally, there is simply a lack of eyewitnesses or acquaintances of Ganest's to ask about the towers. The apprentices and scribes of Ganest were all sworn to secrecy, and many of the more knowledgeable ones willingly submitted to a *geas* in order to protect the secrets of the labs further. Some of Ganest's apprentices who would have firsthand information about the labs were elves and probably are still alive, but they're not speaking up. It's known for certain that Ganest knew Akentaron, the ancient woodwreck dragon. What Akentaron knows about the towers and what he's willing to tell is anyone's guess.

### The Laboratory of Gest Ganest

Gest Ganest's land extends a bit beyond that of his towers. There is a simple wooden fence all the way around his territory about half a mile from the outer ring of towers. Gates are every few hundred yards, with signs in several languages that read:

*The Laboratory and Residence of Gest Ganest. Admittance by invitation only. Trespassers will be removed.*

*Many Thanks,  
Gest Ganest*

**The Scribe Towers:** The outer ring towers are nearly as round as they are tall, and made from white stone. These are the scribe towers, and currently eight of the original twelve remain standing. These towers are the most accessible and have had the most visitors, but naturally have the least interesting contents. The scribe towers were used primarily by the dozens of scribes in Ganest's employ. Ganest regularly requested copies be made of many of his work journals, engineering texts, research journals, and blueprints. Additionally, he would magically transmit his voice to scribes safely within the stone towers far from his work labs, and have them transcribe notes for him while an experiment was underway. Ganest would also regularly borrow every sort of research text throughout Scarn and had copies scribed for himself. It's estimated that nearly every written word on engineering, golem-making, magical research, and anything else of the sort is in Ganest's library... which is not located in the scribe towers. All that is left are rows and rows of desks, chairs, and stacks of works in progress. The scribe towers are not magically linked to the inner circle of laboratory towers.

The towers are only two stories tall, the first level being the work area, with living quarters upstairs. There are two entrances to every scribe tower, and were once flanked by two garden-variety gargoyles controlled by a command word known by the scribes. Only a handful of the gargoyles remain.

**The Towers Constructicus:** About 200 yards from the scribe towers are the Towers Constructicus. These towers served as the nuts-and-bolts construction areas for Ganest and his apprentices. Once research was completed for a project, materials and components were assembled here and the article was

built in these towers. In between the scribe towers and the construction towers lies a dormant searing wind, awaiting intruders to make its blades stir once again.

The towers are much taller than the scribe towers, and are part of the magical network. Access to one of the Towers Constructicus would theoretically grant access to the other towers. Each tower is based on a different extraplanar realm, which is not necessarily reflected by the external appearance. Of the four remaining towers here, one looks to be made of a reddish-brown stone with no visible windows. The next tower is a dull gray color and, while it looks metallic, the material feels like stone. Another is a very open, well-ventilated tower with open archways and several chimneys. The last tower is the shortest, and has no roof, but an enormous block and tackle taking up most of the space where the roof should be.

All of the towers have visible doors, but none of them have keyholes, doorknobs or pull rings. King Virduk once sent some of his greatest heroes to one of the towers, where it was discovered that the door was actually the back of an iron golem. Once the golem was defeated, at great cost, the remaining heroes retreated to the nearby scribe towers to rest. On their return, the golem had been replaced. Virduk sent no more expeditions to Ganest's towers.

The open-arched tower actually has two lead golems built into the building. These are load-bearing golems that can't move their feet, but the only doors into and out of the building are within the reach of both of them. It is important to point out that these are only the defenses that have been discovered to date. There are certainly spells, guardians and other security features within the towers that have never been discovered.

Inside the Towers Constructicus is an engineer's dream. Every sort of machine and device to aid in construction is here. Magical tools capable of cutting metal are known to be here, as well as a pair of gloves that allows one to "sculpt" with molten steel. There are incomplete frames for new golems, siege weapons, and a model of some sort of cart that moves atop two metal bars rather than within ruts. As always, knowing where a specific item is within the towers is impossible. Any search would have to be done manually, as teleportation and any form of clairvoyance has proven ineffective around the towers.

**The Inner Towers:** Finally, only 50 yards farther inside from the ring of the Towers Constructicus lie the personal laboratories and residence of Gest Ganest. There are nine towers still standing in this central part of the complex, each one also fashioned after the mode of a different extraplanar realm. None of these towers have doors save one, which was Ganest's actual home and retreat. Roughly a dozen years ago, a group of adventurers used multiple *stone shape* spells to tunnel into one of the inner towers. Upon gaining entrance to the tower, they quickly

gathered as many maps and as much information as they could find before being forced out by the tower defenses. Half of the party was sent to an extraplanar realm while trying to make their way out of the tower. On their return, the materials they recovered shed little light on any of the mysteries of the towers or Ganest himself, but they did uncover Ganest's arcane methods for "bottling" elementals for future use. They have yet to discern where the materials for said process are located in the towers. They did however find a very basic description of the nine towers in the form of a cleaning list.

Three of the towers are libraries. One of the towers is devoted to experiments with alchemy and potions. One is devoted to the study of golems and constructs. One is an observatory. One tower, visibly guarded by a score of steel beetles, is used for the sole purpose of summoning spirits and elementals. One tower is Ganest's sanctuary and home. The final tower is seemingly magically disconnected from the others, and does not grant access to the others. It serves as a vault and prison for the things hidden within. The stone walls of this tower are four feet thick, followed by three inches of iron. This tower contains priceless artifacts that would make many a king envious. It also contains an imprisoned pit fiend, a group of evil djinni, and countless other wicked entities that Ganest felt had to be locked away. How these things are imprisoned is unknown. It is known that the only door into this tower is sealed by what Ganest dubbed the infinity lock. It does not register as magical, yet no thief or engineer has ever been able to discern how it works, or how it opens.

## Glivid-Autel

**Name:** The Sovereign State of Glivid-Autel

**Population:** 35,000 (Human 99.9%, Half-fiend 0.1%)

**Government:** Magocracy; a council of wizards advises an absolute ruler who is presumably replaced through power struggles.

**Ruler:** Credas, the Necrotic King (*human male Nec9/Crypt Lord10, LE*)

**Language:** Ledean

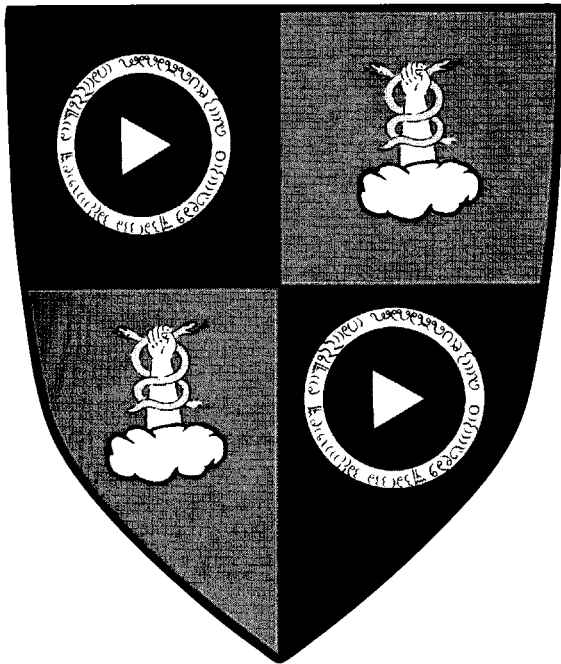
**Religion:** Belsameth, Vangal

**Currency:** Gold spire (5 gp), gold tome (1 gp), silver script (5 sp), silver rune (1 sp), copper bone (1 cp)

**Resources:** None. Glivid-Autel has no external trade.

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** Hollowfaust



### History

High upon their sanctuary hills, the crypt lords, their disciples, and their fodder work towards the forbidden fruit of immortality. In 27 AV, the Society of Immortals and their allies among the Disciples of the Abyss were forced from Hollowfaust and driven into the Hornsaw. Two of the original Seven Pilgrims led the exodus, including Airat, who still rules in the guise of Credas the Necrotic King, and Taason. It took six months and near-crippling casualties before the bedraggled mages arrived at the ancient Ledean ruins of Amanosyan. From there the Society's fortunes changed dramatically.

Work on a new stronghold began almost immediately, and in spite of a few raids by the local titanspawn, preliminary foundations were complete

by the spring of 29 AV. In fact, the raids served only to provide the necromancers with more bodies to ensorcel, and by the end of the same year the Society had reanimated their way back to their pre-exodus strength.

In 30 AV, the Society embarked on an ambitious gambit that would serve as Glivid-Autel's normal mode of conduct for the next century. Lacking sufficient strength or resources to mount an attack of their own against Hollowfaust, they manipulated their Hornsaw neighbors to do it for them. It didn't take long for this stratagem to bear fruit, and later that year the Tomb Worm cabal assaulted the City of Necromancers in misguided, rhetoric-fueled rage and ambition. Even though the gorgons failed utterly, the Society was quick to capitalize on the loss, claiming the cabal's domains as their own.

By 109 AV, the transformation of the Society from minor nuisance to true statehood was complete. Its key fortress at Mesa-Karaday was, and remains, the equal of any in the Scarred Lands. That Glivid-Autel almost casually brushed off the assault by the Blood Crone in 112 AV declared to the entire region who was now in control. After decades of unchallenged supremacy, the titanspawn of the western Hornsaw could no longer take for granted the necromancers and their horde. The rest of Ghelspad has begun to realize the same thing.

### Geography

Rising nearly 1500 feet above sea level, the black basalt pillar of Mesa-Karaday supports the once-ruined city of Amanosyan, now Glivid-Autel. Over a half-mile wide at its base and nearly as wide at its top, it is the perfect defensible location and well isolated enough to suit the secretive Society's needs. A network of natural springs yields fresh water in abundance, and an even older network of caves supplies the necromancers with more sanctums than their wildest dreams could hope for. It took powerful magic just to get the original settlers up the pillar, and only by virtue of specially crafted ladders and stairs can one repeat the feat today.

### Flora and Fauna

The wildlife in the vicinity of Glivid-Autel is much the same as that in the rest of the Hornsaw. However, whereas the rest of the wood's frightful titanspawn are very much alive, chances are the ones you'll meet here are undead. While Glivid-Autel's necromancers are responsible for much of this, the fact is that the region has always been infested by the walking dead.

Within the city, flora and fauna exist more for the necromancers' studies and amusement than anything else. Because of the city's reliance on spring water, animal populations are kept under strict control. Priority is given to feeding the population, but



freshly slaughtered carcasses also make wonderful undead mounts.

## People

Even more so than other people of the region, the denizens of Glivid-Autel are slim and pale. Their sunken eyes and blank expressions speak volumes of their lack of food for mind and body. Macabre but practical, they dress accordingly and disdain all manner of personal adornment.

Public holidays and celebrations are virtually non-existent. Any gathering quickly draws scrutiny by the crypt lords and often ends in many disappearances. Even conversations are dangerous, and the people of Glivid-Autel have learned to keep their remarks pertinent to the topic at hand, and very, very brief. Only at work and at market can any sort of conversation be held, so Glividians are masters of coded small talk as well. They can convey an amazing amount of information with body language and double meanings. This is an important skill, as such fleeting encounters are the only chance a Glividian has to make friends and exchange news.

Note that all this applies to the city's *living* population. Things are quite different after one has died....

## Culture

What culture?

That was the joke anyway for many generations. No one who knew anything about the city — and there were precious few — saw anything resembling civil arts. After all, what use did immortality-seeking wizards on the edge of insanity, their brain-dead minions, or terror-wracked citizens have for merrymaking? However, as Glivid-Autel matured into a nation, its people, even its undead, began to change their minds.

Perhaps one of the defining moments in all this occurred with the discovery by Obsidian Pyre necromancer Lucian Daine (*human male Wiz10/Crypt Lord 5, CE*) of the so-called “transfers,” by which undead creatures could be imbued with some of the qualities that they bore in life. Rudimentary personality, empathy, the very stuff of ego, could now be granted to once-soulless undead. The impact was amazing, as free-willed undead became increasingly commonplace. Without the threat of death looming over their heads, the undead were suddenly able to achieve in their sorry state what they had feared to do in life.



This bizarre twist of fate saw, for the first time since its founding, the cultural life of the city blooming.

## Crime and Punishment

The Society of Immortals has no mercy, but they do have a strong sense of law and order, perhaps an inheritance from their days in Hollowfaust. Those that contravene their edicts are dealt with quickly and harshly. Those that follow the rules can expect fair treatment, at least by the standards of the Society. Glivid-Autel is a den of monsters, but they are orderly, law-abiding monsters.

Recently, the necromancers of Glivid-Autel have begun to learn how to remove and transfer parts of a victim's soul, memories and personality into undead beings. This has resulted in a wealth of new information, more effective undead servants, and even more creative punishment. The punishments remain the same, but now there is also a question of *degrees*. Perpetrators can now suffer "little deaths" and "partial reanimations," leaving the half-person alive to remain in the living pool of Glivid-Autel's population.

**Theft (over 100 gp or any theft from a mage):** Partial personality loss (no more than a year's worth of memories, or one emotion).

**Destruction of Property (over 500 gp or any destruction to a mage's property):** Partial personality loss (up to 10 years' worth of memories, or all emotions).

**Murder:** Death and reanimation.

**Obstruction of a Mage's Study:** Death and reanimation.

**Treason:** Death and reanimation.

## Religion

Belsameth and Vangal are the primary gods of worship. Devotion to Vangal is easy to understand. Whether the necromancers truly believe in his cause or not, his means serves their end. Death and destruction are the first step to "rebirth" and reanimation. Were it not for the constant raiding by their more vocal opponents among the cabals, Glivid-Autel wouldn't have half the undead army it has today. Belsameth is a far more complex issue, and her worship is as many-faced in form and motive as the goddess is herself.

For many of the city's necromancers, death is a touchy subject, and reanimation is actually a virtuous deed: through skill and heroic effort they wrench life from the final sleep and reverse Nemorga's theft. While oft ridiculed as insanity by others, there is something eerily compelling about this argument. But Belsameth is the Slayer — how can one who takes souls be a matron to the crypt lords? Her followers say that it is because her "deaths" need not be final. Torment and death of the will please her just as greatly as "true death." While the Glivadians frown on final death, intermedi-

ate, lingering, even eternal half-deaths are their meat and drink. Little wonder then that this dark goddess receives ample devotion from this city.

## Armed Forces

Only the dead guard the gates of Glivid-Autel, and the dead are all Glivid-Autel needs. Gifted with all manner of benefices, the corpse-born soldiers of the crypt lords have little to fear except for failure. And they have not failed yet.

Numbering several thousand — constant raiding by non-allied titanspawn results in a highly variably head count — the army is organized into detachments called fists. Developed by Lucian Daine, a *fist* in this case is a standardized measure of military strength, and its use allows the Glivadians to determine the power of their forces quickly and correct imbalances in deployment. A single fist consists of three to five semi-autonomous skeletons, under the command of a human or free-willed undead. Five fists make a *claw*, under the command of a human necromancer or military officer, and ten claws form a *talon*. Glivid-Autel currently boasts 30 talons, backed up by human troops and low-level necromancers. Undead monsters such as blood reapers are sometimes incorporated into Glivid-Autel forces, forming potent shock units.

## The City of Glivid-Autel

**1. Civilian Quarter:** Little more than a mass of glorified hovels, this wretched part of the city houses Glivid-Autel's unfortunate living population.

**2. Awakened Quarter:** This apocryphally named district comprises most of the city and is home to the crypt lords' beloved (and not so beloved) undead servitors.

**3. Acropolis:** The true city of Glivid-Autel, the Acropolis is built on a plateau rising five stories above the larger city below, which in turn towers over the surrounding Hornsaw Forest. The Acropolis is home to the crypt lords.

**4. Forum Noctis:** A horrific place of ritual sacrifice and necromantic true rituals, this square and its spiraling pillar of slaughter is built on the very site of the Shade Conjunction.

**5. Arcus Necropolae:** Home of Credas and his court, the vast pyramid has restored to its former Ledean glory, if not its purpose.

**6. Credas' Garden:** Added to the original pyramid, the "garden" holds many of the Necrotic King's favored pets and slaves.

**7. Parthenon Belicana:** These twin temples of Vangal were restored using black iron and lead.

**8. Parthenon Noctis:** Belsameth's temple is a quiet place of black stone. Along with Vangal's shrines it is the only restored building that still serves its Ledean-era function.

**9. Kyriehalla:** A colossal tract where death-races are held, the 'Halla can seat 10,000 people at a time.



**10. Coliseum Exaltatis:** Dedicated to Vangal, this place of constant struggle sees undead clash against each other in a never-ending orgy of destruction. It is built so near the Shade Conjunction that combats can last for days on end, the undead competitors fortified by the ambient negative energy.

**11. Chasmus Semempras:** The home of Lucian Daine, this crystal-domed sanctum burrows downwards into the mesa with only an unassuming ring of stones and a gate-house to mark its existence.

**12. Palace of Souls:** This featureless black pyramidal structure is also known as the Chamber of Phylacteries. Here are stored many of the city's most ancient manuscripts, sacred documents, tablets and artifacts, including many books on necromancy dating to well before the Divine War. Admission is limited to those approved by Credas or his representatives; the penalty for entering the palace without permission is severe.

## Hedrad

**Name:** The Holiest City of Hedrada

**Population:** 75,000 total (Human 91%, Dwarf 5%, Halfling 3%, Other 1%)

**Government:** A theocracy headed by four high priests on a two-year rotation. Each is an expert on a specific field: justice, knowledge, law, and wealth.

**Ruler:** His Lawship, High Priest of Justice Jaram Kalay (*human male Clr20, LN*)

**Language:** Veshian

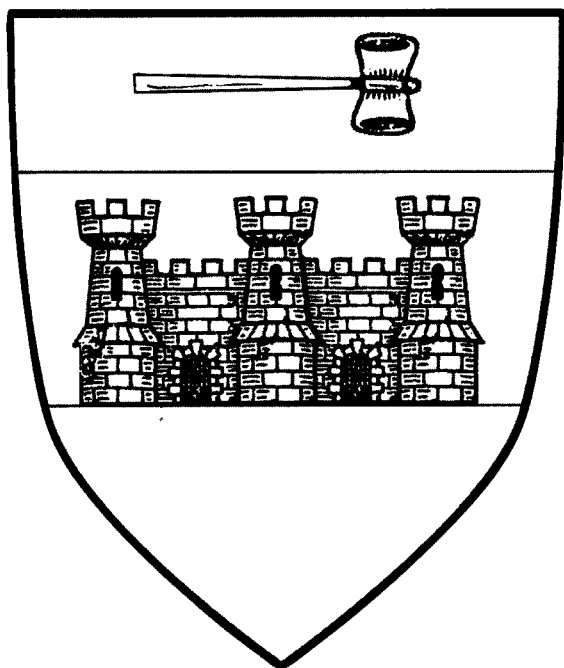
**Religion:** Hedrada

**Currency:** Golden crown (5 gp), golden orb (1 gp), silver throne (5 sp), silver floret (1 sp), copper penny (5 cp), copper pinion (1 cp)

**Resources:** Sculpture, sea and land trade, clerics

**Allies:** Mithril

**Enemies:** None



### History

The city that was to become Hedrad was established 2006 OC. First called Epis, it served as a crucial trading port for eastern Ghelspad. Located in the Camini province, Epis grew in prominence until, by 2150 OC, it had replaced Talinoli as the provincial capital.

From the beginning, the city was dedicated to the impartial application of law. In 2253 OC, the orator Yarensius of Epis proclaimed the virtues of Hedrada on the floor of the Episian senate, and went on to lead a series of reforms aimed at stemming what he called the “flood of chaos” in the rest of the Ledean empire.

In 2350 OC, the province was used as a staging area for the Ledean empire to strike at the rebellious Vaschan province. The presence of imperial troops and the resulting raids by half-orc Japhinian corsairs

created considerable sentiment against the empire and finally, after much bloodshed, the Camini province rebelled against Lede.

A period of chaos and warfare followed, until finally in 2453 OC the Hornswythe Kingdom was finally established in the eastern half of the former province.

Around this time, Epis — now called Ephis — attempted to carve out a new kingdom in the Celestial Shelf, but the effort proved difficult, since the population of the region was small and the terrain difficult. To the north, the Japhinians demanded heavy tribute, stifling trade and leading the Ephians to seek greater trade with Termana. Ephis thus grew as the center of Termanan influence in southeastern Ghelspad.

The arrival of Termanan exemplars further strengthened the status of Hedrada-worship, and in 2801 OC the city was officially renamed Hedrad, and proclaimed the Great Judge’s holy city on Ghelspad. And so it was when the Titanswar erupted and threw the world into tumult.

Hedrad emerged from the chaos relatively intact, and began to rebuild. In 15 AV the ten platinum Rings of Hedrada were made and given to the city’s leaders to assist them in keeping order. For the next few decades, the city grew and prospered, but slowly corruption crept into the ranks of its leaders.

At last, in 98 AV, the Taurosphinx, Herald of Hedrada, appeared in Hedrad to proclaim the decadence of its high priests. One of the chief culprits was said to be Angal Lonin, wife of one of the priests. Feeling that her husband’s rule was too restrictive, she called upon him to show more mercy, and influenced the other wives to persuade their husbands to greater laxity. With the Taurosphinx’s pronouncement, the priests were struck blind, and their wives transformed into spiders and exiled from the city as skeins. Since then, the Taurosphinx regularly appears on holy days to show Hedrada’s renewed favor.

Today, Hedrad continues to be known as a place of unstinting lawfulness and faith. All has not been well, however — in 143 AV, three Rings of Hedrada were taken in a raid by Galdor the Deathless on priests returning from Mithril. The clerics and servants of Hedrada have joined forces with the paladins of Corean to find the missing treasure, but so far they have met with little success.

### People

The people of Hedrad show a mixture of influences. They have the olive complexion of Ledean, but the dusky features and brown hair of the wealthy are euphemistically referred to as “Javinian,” as the ties to Calastia are not mentionable. Other ethnic groups are represented among the poor, particularly burly Durroverians.

The priests typically wear white or saffron linen robes, trimmed with designs reflecting their favored

aspect of Hedrada. Nobility wear intricately brocaded jackets and long skirts for the men, or flowing, concealing gowns for the women, both usually blue and black, or brown and black. Craftsmen are allowed some latitude, wearing tunics or elaborate Veshian-style doublets and high boots, often brown and black with some splashes of color. The poor generally wear simple tunics with capes to keep warm. Hair is kept short, with shaved heads being relatively common. Body hair is seen as unpleasant, and hygiene is quite important.

Hedradans accept elves, half elves, dwarves, halflings, Mithrilites, and Veshians with no particular qualms. Half-orcs, Durroverians, and Shelzari are allowed entrance, but will be watched carefully. Others require special permission that may be quite difficult to procure. It is easier to visit Hedrad's Landing than to enter the actual city.

Hedrad allows followers of all religions to visit, though those of evil or chaotic alignment are kept under observation. This does not mean that followers of good gods are necessarily favored, but rather that the Hedradan priests trust them to behave. Druids and followers of Enkili and the evil gods are not allowed to enter without particular permission. Followers of Madriel and Tanil are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with Hedradan law, and are summarily ejected if they do not. No temples of any god besides Hedrada are allowed.

A license is required to transport or possess weapons or armor within the city. No one is actually

permitted to carry such things, however, without explicit permission from the high lawgivers. Normally, only justicars and templars of Hedrad may bear arms within the city. These rules include any blade of more than three inches in length, causing some difficulties for workmen. The laws concerning the distinction between weapons and tools is quite elaborate and confusing to outsiders.

Many of the people of Hedrad do not believe as strongly in proscription as the laws outline, so it is possible to find various illicit teahouses, bars, and dance halls, particularly in the market district, run by those of less than perfectly lawful alignment.

## Culture

Hedradans are expected to find the position in which they most benefit society. This affects training, if applicable, education, and all aspects of life. It is possible to prove oneself to be capable of better. Someone tasked to be a hard laborer may demonstrate a discerning attitude and quick wit suitable for the bureaucracy of priesthood. Once one has found one's niche, however, it is very difficult to move out, and those who have held a given job for a few years are likely to be stuck with it all their lives.

Hedradan society is considered excessively intolerant by outsiders. Public displays of affection, excessive personal decoration, and acts that arouse "negative" emotions are all punishable offenses. Sex outside of marriage, "unnatural" sex within a marriage, and the practice of homosexuality are not



*A Hedradan merchant, noble, monk, dock worker, justicar and templar.*

tolerated, either, and often result in harsh punishments. The law, as the Hedradans say, is the law, and it is not the role of mere mortals to question it.

Mercy, or bending the law due to excessive pity or other emotions, is considered a sign of weakness, and often downright criminal. Hedradan priests, justicars and other officials are known for their rigid, unyielding devotion to the law and its tenets, and those who visit the city should be well aware of its laws and practices, lest they run afoul of Hedrada's merciless followers.

Sports, generally racing or wrestling, are permitted for the sake of improving health and sharpening the mind and body. Dice and card games, so long as they involve a skill rather than simple chance, are regarded as instructive, and are permissible. Word games and puzzles are common in Hedrad in all social classes. Contests of words or puzzles are one way for poor members of society to demonstrate skills that might qualify the person for a new position in life. Wagering of small sums is usually tolerated, though the law prohibits bets of more than 10 gp.

Marriage is absolute. Adultery is a crime. There is no divorce, but a man or woman may remarry freely if a mate dies. Children born out of wedlock are appropriated by the priests and usually placed in one of the many religious orders. There are no fundamental cultural distinctions between men and women. Though women are often relegated to caretaker roles, there is no particular disapproval of women who work as craftsmen or at other duties.

Dwarves form an important minority in Hedrad society. Though their approach to law and Hedrada often differ in particulars, their lawful nature makes them an accepted and welcome part of Hedrad. Halflings, on the other hand, are viewed as an unwelcome and suspicious lot, most dwelling in the Unseen District.

The funerary rites of citizens of Hedrad are carefully tended, to avoid the creation of undead. The ancient practice was to inter the dead in large catacombs, with unwanted bodies tossed off the cliffs into the sea. Now the Blood Sea poses too much of a threat, and cremation has replaced such practices. Hedrad leaders incinerate the bodies of the highest members of society with great ceremony, while less important individuals are cremated in groups. Commoners have special tombs, blessed and protected from influence. The lowest of the low are still buried in the old catacombs.

## Crime and Punishment

Justice in Hedrad is complex. The Patriarch of Justice and the Patriarch of Law both play a role in matters, each with an attendant bureaucracy. The Law Order of Hedrad creates laws and renders judgment on cases. The Justice Order investigates cases, makes arrests, and incarcerates prisoners. Above both

are the Inquisitors, who are regarded as the highest justicars.

The Givers of Law are responsible for most legislation, with the cooperation of representatives from several other groups. They are also the high court, trying matters of particular importance. Lastly, they decide political matters related to external affairs. There are four Givers of Law, who also head the Law Order of Hedrada. There are about 30 lay justices who render judgments for the majority of cases, often with the aid of members of the Law Order. There are also other Law staff not directly involved in cases.

The four High Justicars are effectively the chiefs of police, responsible for overseeing the security of Hedrad. This mandate is interpreted to extend to the surrounding countryside and shipping lanes near Hedrad. Beneath them are the justicars. Justicars perform a wide range of tasks in executing justice. The most powerful justicars bear a *judgment hammer*, a sacred weapon which is a sign of Hedrada's blessing, and are the only ones permitted to do so in the city. These weapons are also used when carrying out official executions.

Trials are led by a justice. The goal of the justice is to determine the truth of the case at hand. To that end, the justice may allow or appoint advocates, attach a justicar or seeker to the case, or take other measures. Typically, a case will proceed with "reasonable" investigation, and advocates will be appointed. If the case is against the state, the justice will usually be the state's advocate. In cases involving religion or delicate matters, four justices may preside over a hearing and must arrive at a unanimous decision.

Crimes and offenses are ranked by orders of increasing severity. Each order of crimes is punished in a similar fashion, though individual crimes vary somewhat within the strictures of their order. The punishments listed can be applied singly or in combination with each other depending upon the severity of the crime and how Hedradan codes decree the offense should be punished.

The ultimate punishment in Hedrad is the fearsome *judgment of gold*, in which a high-ranking Hedradan priest actually transforms the wrongdoer into a golden statue. Some of the most fearsome and infamous criminals in Hedradan history are kept on display in the Courtyard of the Punished, where anyone can see the fate of those who would defy the Great Judge.

**Order I:** Showing affection in public (words and smiles), ornamentation of a questionable nature (jewelry), playing excessively emotional music or delivering speech likely to incite the negative emotions of others. **Punishment:** Fine ranging from 1-50 gp.

**Order II:** Displaying affection in public (kissing and handholding, hugging), wearing excess makeup, seditious behavior, failing to observe a low holy day, petty theft (under 10 gp), assault. **Punishment:** Fine

ranging from 51-100 gp, restitution, period of public service (usually labor on public works) of 1-30 days.

**Order III:** Lewd behavior (extended kissing and fondling), purporting to carry a *judgment hammer*, falsely claiming to be an officer of the city, duplicitous behavior, mercy without cause, failing to observe a high holy day, breaking a promise, grand theft (11-500 gp), assault, rape. **Punishment:** Fine equal to 10x the value of items stolen (half returned to victim, half taken by the state), period of public service (labor or service in Hedradan military), incarceration (1-10 years), disfigurement (notching an ear or removal of joint of small finger).

**Order IV:** Perversion (public sex, unusual sex in private), carrying a *judgment hammer* without license, impersonating a priest of Hedrada, malicious behavior, breaking a contract, attempted murder, rape with injury, gross theft (501 gp or greater). **Punishment:** Incarceration (10-20 years), period of public service (hard labor), fine (up to 5,000 gp, half given to victim, half to state), disfigurement (facial scarring, removal of ear or finger).

**Order V:** High perversion (public unusual sex, homosexuality), breaking an oath to Hedrada, murder of a priest or official of Hedrada. **Punishment:** Execution by *judgment hammer*.

**Order VI:** Treason, titan worship, flagrant defiance of the laws of Hedrada. **Punishment:** *Judgment of gold*.

## Religion

The faith of Hedrada is the sole religion permitted in Hedrad. Priests of Corean, Tanil, and Enkili may gather and worship, but are prevented from establishing formal followings. Hedrada is worshipped in four aspects, as Law, Justice, Knowledge, and Wealth.

Hedrada in his form as Law is worshipped on a number of holy days. The first holy day of Law is Highwalls, celebrated on the first day of Hedrer. This is a winter celebration of security. Every able-bodied citizen assists the templars, standing watch and engaging in mock battles performed at sunset. Every Hedraday of winter is also a holy day. On these days, all citizens meet at various times to discuss matters of law. At noon, they are required to appear in convocation halls for lectures on the virtues of civic duty. The symbols of Hedrada's Law is a circle representing a city wall, crossed arms, a bull, and a watchman with a lantern.

Hedrada is worshipped as Justice during the Hedradays of spring, with his high holy day on the first day of Enkilot. Known as the Day of Confession, citizens celebrate by discussing their actions over the past year, analyzing their faults and achievements, and dedicating themselves toward progress in the next year. The symbols of Justice are the familiar double hammer, a scythe and sheaf of wheat, a war

horse, and a hairless androgynous figure whose skin is covered in writing.

Hedrada in his form as Wealth is celebrated during the Hedradays of summer, with his high holy day on the first day of Hedrot. This high holy day is known as Plentyfest, celebrating prosperity and economic security. Craftsman and shopkeepers offer a slight discount during the morning, then celebrate with the profits later. Business is particularly heavy during these holy days, and these celebrations are as close as Hedradans are permitted to approaching revelry. Music has a more lyric edge, voices are filled with emotion, and justicars ignore displays of mild impropriety. The symbols of Hedrada as Wealth are coins, a well-fed goat, songbirds, and a fat, laughing merchant.

Hedrada in the form of Knowledge is celebrated on the Hedradays of autumn, with a high holy day on the first day of Enker called Seeking. On Seeking, every citizen must learn at least one new thing before nightfall, and then spend the evening hours talking about what they've learned with others. It is often a time of reflection on the passing year, of past actions and the dead. The symbols of Hedrada as Knowledge are a glowing scroll, a seagull, and a scholar.

The non-Hedrada holy days celebrated elsewhere are not officially recognized, but are quietly observed.

Potential priests are brought into one of the four orders at about three or four years of age. The individual is subjected to a wide variety of tests and evaluations over time. Some become justicars, others bureaucrats, while those who show proper reverence join the priesthood. Rarely, petitioners may pass a series of tests to demonstrate their outstanding grasp of religious doctrine and personal skill in order to join the priesthood.

## Armed Forces

The military of Hedrad consists of 1500 justicars and 2500 templars. Justicars are primarily focused on crime and matters internal to the city. They may also press citizens into service, able to raise some 8000 as warriors.

Templars, soldiers of the temples, are dedicated specifically to protecting the city from external threats. Templars man artillery all around the city, with a contingent of 250 combat clerics and 100 combat wizards. All of the main gates into the city are double gates, allowing the defenders to slow potential invaders. The fortifications feature hinged roofs with recessed spikes, to defend against flying opponents.

Templars also train in pike and sword formations, for battles where the templars are able to establish a forward line. Pikes are useful against larger opponents, so long as the templars hold their lines.

Hedrad templars are unmatched in their training, and a few have been sent as advisors to other cities. They have successfully defended against gangs



of Gaurak trolls, pisceans, a bevy of howling abominations, a variety of devils and daemons, and numerous other foes. There has been relative quiet in the past ten years, which has inhabitants speculating on what the next attack will be.

About 300 templars also serve as customs agents. They double this duty with emergency actions against any sudden titanspawn attack from the sea.

## The City of Hedrad

Hedrad sits high atop the Cliffs of Constancy, overlooking the Blood Sea. With fresh water from Lake Repose, and considerable distance from other settlements, the area is quite secure. The city is surrounded by massive fortifications, most rebuilt after the Divine War.

The city is breathtaking, displaying architectural glories from many periods and styles. There are marble-columned structures, harkening back to the heights of the Ledean Empire. Towering buildings with sweeping vaults and flying buttresses lend a gothic air. A strong Termanan influence is reflected in a number of onion domes, intricately carved spires, and other styles brought over by traders and exemplars. Icons, statues, and other symbols of Hedrada in his four forms are everywhere. Many of the newer temples feature depictions of bulls, or bullheads, in honor of his herald.

There are baths everywhere, many of which also serve food and drink. Ancient Ledean plumbing still functions, with the help of experienced artisans. Baths are composed of numerous private stone chambers, as looking upon another naked body is illegal.

Attempts to organize the city's layout have been only moderately successful. The general design of the city is a center with concentric rings of neighborhoods, each section relegated to a specific purpose. This plan is limited by history, funds to renovate, and to some extent by the land itself.

Hedrad is laid out primarily for foot traffic. The main roads and many of the plazas of the market district allow for horse-drawn carts, but it is rare to see anyone on horseback.

Unpleasant creatures still lurk in the sewers and less regulated corners of Hedrad. Regular forays by clerics, monks, and templars have kept such populations low. Still, the tunnels beneath Hedrad date back at least 1500 years, and the efforts of various beings have extended them over time. The hardest to control are the wide variety of oozes and jellies, which proliferate despite frequent attempts to wipe them out. Occasionally slitheren have been routed out of the tunnels, though it is not altogether clear how they got there.

**1. Two Thousand and Ten Steps:** Commonly called the Seasteps of Hedrad, historians place its construction around 2200 OC when the city was the new capital of the Caminian province. It is a remarkable feat, its basalt steps broad enough for ten men to

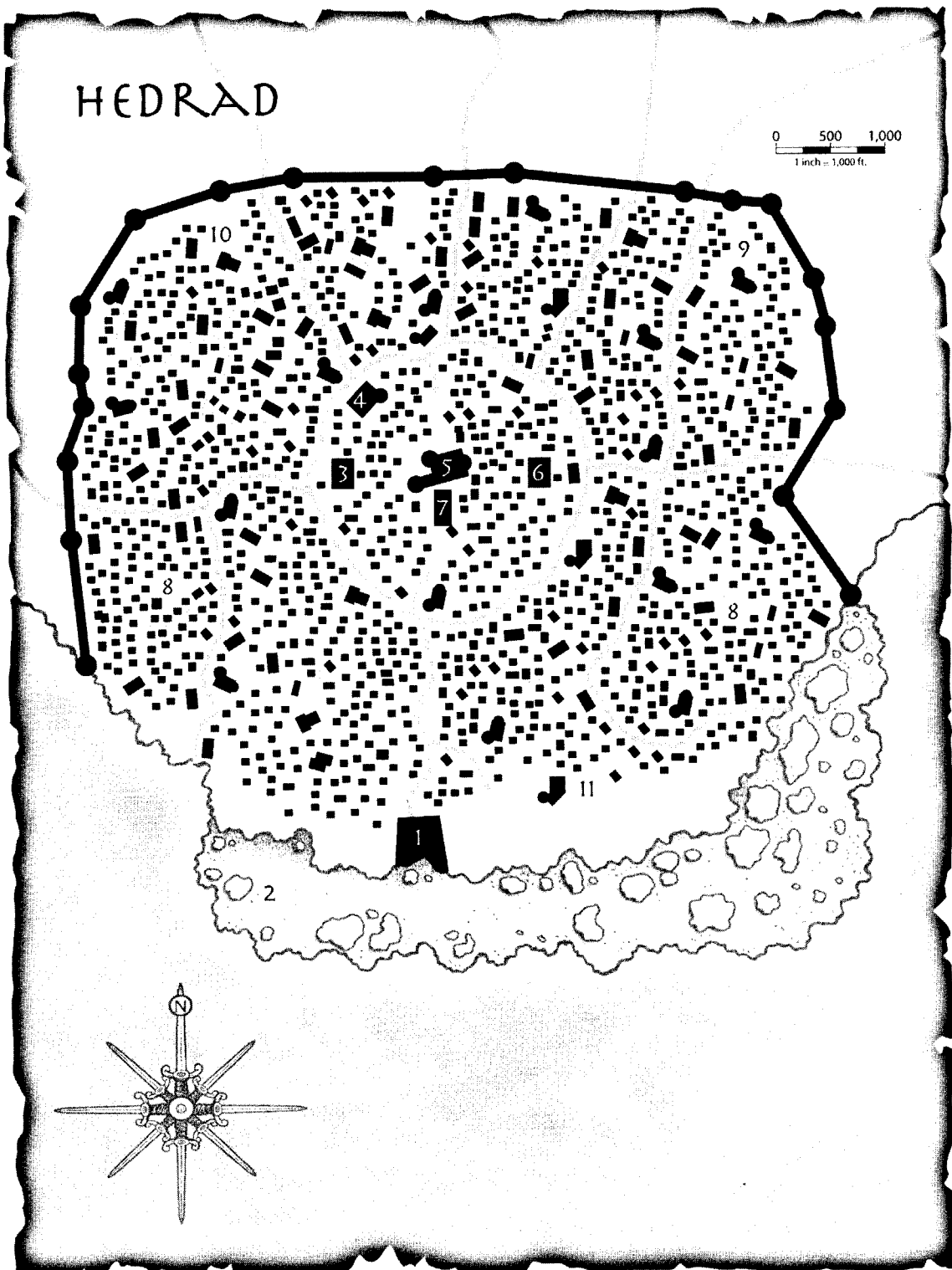
stand side by side, with cart ramps on either side sufficient for two lanes of traffic each way. At the top, flanking the stairs, are open fort walls, allowing defenders to have protected lines of fire on potential invaders. There were once large gates that could cover the stairs, but they have long since been dismantled.

**2. Hedrad Landing:** At the bottom of the steps is the crowded waterfront, with a series of docks, warehouses, and a small poor neighborhood. Many goods bound for the city arrive here. Traffic is heavy, along with its attendant vices, all things that the Hedradan authorities have tried unsuccessfully to stop. Buildings here are low and sturdy, built to withstand foul weather and even ferocious storms such as the Blood Monsoon. When storms strike, inhabitants gather in the strong warehouses that double as forts, while templars remain on guard for pisceans or other titanspawn seeking to take advantage of the weather.

**3. Temple of Light:** Said to resemble the exemplar temples of the Desert of Onn, the Temple of Light is made of gleaming alabaster, with tall spires and domed buildings connected by graceful bridges and supported by elaborate buttresses. The inner walls are covered in colorful frescos depicting Hedrada in each of his forms, though the form of Knowledge receives the most portrayals. The layout is a complex maze of galleries and stairs that open suddenly into balconies and wide, brightly lit spaces. Many of the galleries feature constructs of glass and metal, producing scintillating displays. The Temple of Light is home for the Heaven Exemplars of Ghelspad, featuring a notable library and small school for wizards, particularly those focusing on wizardry. It also houses a number of priests who serve to greet and parlay with visiting exemplars from Termana. The Temple of Light hosts many clerical meetings, and houses visiting True Exemplars.

**4. Temple of Radiant Waters:** This is not so much a building as a garden with living space woven throughout. The construction is set to display the terraced waterfalls, fountains, and lush greenery. It is a somewhat indirect exaltation of Hedrada as God of Wealth and the City, with nature serving the spirit and soul in a conscious, ordered way. This temple serves as the headquarters of those Termanan monks who carry out Hedrada's will in Ghelspad. It houses one of the largest groups of monks in Hedrad, and is a popular meeting place for Hedrada clergy, as a quiet retreat from the bustle of the Temple of Hedrada.

**5. The Temple of Hedrada:** The largest temple in Hedrad, this huge series of slate-roofed, white marble buildings fills the center of Hedrad. There are four outer halls, dedicated to the worship of Hedrada in each of his four guises. Of particular importance is the Quarter of Law, where Givers of Law render judgment, appoint justicars, and decide on doctrine. The Quarter of Justice is where justicars reside, train,



and incarcerate their suspects. The Quarter of Knowledge faces the Library of Hedrad, and serves as the bureaucratic center of Hedrad. Lastly, the Quarter of Wealth serves as the central bank, treasury, paymaster office, supervision of civic works, and oversight of arts and social affairs in the city. Within the four quarters are residences and training halls for the Hedrad priesthood and staff, as well as areas for monastic orders. At the center are higher-level offices. Although perhaps not quite as dramatically

beautiful as some of the other buildings, the clean lines and design of the temple reflect the principles of order and precision.

**6. Library of Hedrad:** This surprisingly dark and somber building is a massive flat-topped edifice of basalt, with small obsidian false windows. This building is widely thought to predate the city itself, but it actually began life as a Ledean fortress. It became a government building, then a treasury, an armory, and finally a library around 2900 OC. Though

## Hollowfaust

the doors are kept open at all hours, entrance requires an official license that costs 100 gp or more and often takes weeks to obtain.

The main room is an impressive affair, the floor two stories below ground level, open to the roof three stories above. Doors open onto the space at various levels, originally to provide cover for archers and mages, and now providing stunning views of the room. Tables cover the floor, with attendants ready to find books for visitors. Private alcoves are available. Only staff have access to the stacks, though high-ranking priests may be permitted.

**7. Courtyard of the Punished:** This courtyard extends from the Justice Quarter of the Temple of Hedrada. It is a public thoroughfare, lined with the bodies transformed to gold of those who were guilty of particularly grievous crimes. The statues exhibit various expressions of fear or panic, though some seem defiant or resigned, almost peaceful.

**8. The Unseen District:** One of the outer districts of Hedrad, this area is the “bad side” of Hedrad. Though the buildings have a curious grace to them, conditions are poor. Heavy laborers, craftsmen, servants, and others fill the area, as well as criminals seeking victims or a place to hide. Hedradan justicars frequently raid these areas to round up suspects. The name comes both from the lack of concern for the poor and from the practice of building high structures along the edges of the district, with no windows facing it. Visitors are also steered clear of the district, “for their protection.”

**9. Holies District:** This area is where most of the priests and their families live. The buildings are typically arranged around a central park, with gates accessing each neighborhood. Local temples or outdoor altars are common, and the region is of great, if somewhat monotonous, tranquility and beauty.

**10. Officers’ District:** Once filled with Ledean legions, this district now houses those of lesser standing, such as low-ranked clergy, merchants, and craftsmen. The templars also reside here. Like the Holies, these neighborhoods are arranged around a central square, but the roads leading through them are not secured. The squares are set with flagstones and most feature a central fountain, unlike the greenery of the Holies.

**11. Market District:** This district surrounds the top of the Two Thousand and Ten Steps, fanning out into large markets, meandering streets lined with stores, warehouses, bars, taverns, hospitals, and many other businesses. The area immediately around the Seastairs is open, facing warehouses and large squares featuring stalls and tents. To the north, the district is a bit more regular, with crisscrossing streets filled with stores and homes. To the east and south, it becomes a tangle of bars and small neighborhoods, eventually merging into the Unseen District. The justicars man guard posts throughout the district.

**Name:** The Free City-State of Hollowfaust

**Population:** 30,000 (Human 80%, Dwarf 10%, Half-orc 4%, Halfling 2%, Other 2%, Half-elf 1%, Elf 1%)

**Government:** Magocracy

**Rulers:** The Sovereign Council of Hollowfaust (Asura, *human male*, *Wiz(Nec)16, LN*; Danar, *human female*, *Wiz(Nec)10/Animator10, LN*; Uthmar Widowson, *human male*, *Brd5/Mourner8, NG*; Baryoi, *human (lich) male*, *Wiz(Nec)11, LG*; Yaeol, *human male*, *Clr15, N*; Numadaya, *human female*, *Wiz(Nec)8/ Speaker8, LN*; Malhadra Demos, *human male*, *Rog3/ Wiz(Nec)17, N*)

**Language:** Ledean, Ukrudan

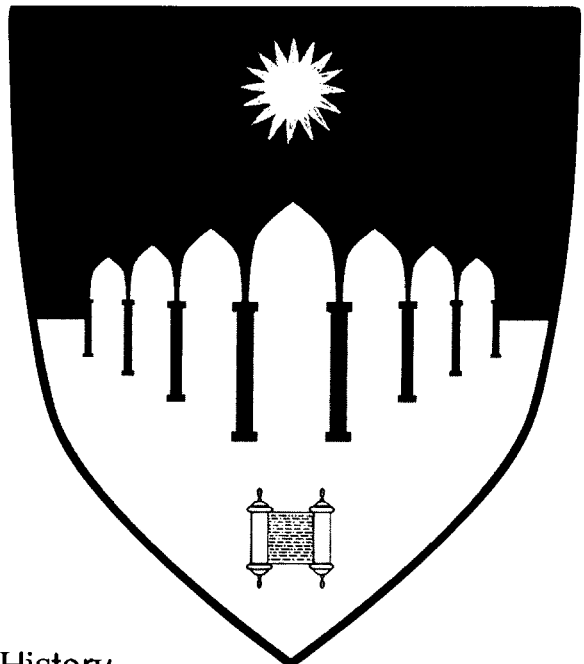
**Religion:** None

**Currency:** Platinum obolus (10 gp), gold pentacle (1 gp), silver guilder (1 sp), copper groat (1 cp)

**Resources:** Foodstuffs and black onyx

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** None



### History

Founded upon the corpse of the once great city of Sumara, the City of Necromancers began humbly as a research expedition. However, the intrepid mages who journeyed there, known as the Seven Pilgrims, were more than mere men and women of magic. They were in all things with few equals, possessed as they were of great will and vision. Even if some were given to the dark spectrum of deeds, they were all unflinching paragons of their respective poles of morality.

It was eight years After Victory when the Pilgrims first arrived on the slopes of Mount Chalesh, and only eight more before it was beset by the titan-spawned sutak of the Ukrudan. The First Siege of 16 AV tested the mages sorely,



nearly handing them defeat. However, near-defeat is not defeat and the Pilgrims rebounded in force. By the time of the Second Siege of 31 AV, Hollowfaust had grown into its own, a true city with a true army. Even when the sutak attacked again in 72 AV with numbers twice those of the First Siege, the defenses of the necromancers held.

Perhaps the only true loss the city was forced to endure was one of its own making. In 27 AV, allegations of corruption and far worse sins were levied behind closed doors against the Society of Immortals and the Disciples of the Abyss. Though no more fascinated with death and the realm of negative energy than their peers, these two groups lacked moral discipline. So it was that, in 27 AV, the other guilds were forced to banish the entire Society and half the Disciples into the hostile Hornsaw Forest, where they founded the renegade city of Glivid-Autel.

The last external attack was launched in 126 AV by the sutak fire-mage Pherakka and nearly breached Hollowfaust's defenses. Only after pitched fighting was this Fourth Siege broken, with the appearance of a bonewrack dragon.

Today a new dragon's shadow falls on Mount Chalesh, but it is foe, not friend. Calastia's advance has come at last upon Hollowfaust's door, and whether that barrier will hold remains to be seen. Of equal threat are the city's enemies of old, as the titanspawn of the Ukrudan and Hornsaw reassemble their forces with as much murderous intent as before. Yet in many ways the greatest menace to Hollowfaust remains the enemy of their own making: The exiles of Glivid-Autel still lurk nearby, and, born as they were from the same seed as Hollowfaust, this nation's antithesis of morality may yet prove its antithesis of power.

## People

Hollowfausters are a proud people of diverse heritage. Many are refugees who come to the city seeking a better life and respite from the ills that plague the rest of the continent. In Hollowfaust they find a strange but fair land, ruled with firm but just hands. Even half-orcs, pariahs nearly everywhere else, can make a home for themselves in the city. The great degree of civic pride that characterizes the city's people is therefore little wonder.

Hollowfausters are pale and slim. This applies even to those not native to the region. Regardless, the people are remarkably healthy, and have access to better health services than anywhere else in Ghelspad. Most people, with the notable exception of the guildsmen, rarely wear black and other dark colors on a regular basis, as it is simply too hot to do so. Necromancers, however, are famous for their habitual wear —

long black cloaks, mufflers and broad-brimmed black hats, worn even on the hottest of days.

## Culture

The *danse macabre* best typifies the denizens of this city. With the constant reminder of mortality so near, one cannot help but look at the face of death and laugh. Levity in the face of the inevitable is the people's greatest weapon against their own fears.

Festivities and entertainment in general is centered around death in some way or another. It is customary for the undead to be dressed up for such occasions, while the living put on masks to more resemble their animated peers. Side-by-side they can frolic thusly, and even though most Hollowfausters retain the better part of their unease around the undead, at least the two groups can coexist after a fashion.

Such light-heartedness vanishes completely, however, when death actually occurs. Dying is viewed as a sacred passage of sorts, and the dead are accorded the highest respect. There is a practical aspect to this as well. With negative energies so abundant in the city, it is not difficult for the departed to return as angry ghosts if the proper care is not taken.

The real power in Hollowfaust lies with the guilds. These organizations of necromancers each investigate a different aspect of mortality and existence. They are the Anatomists, who study the processes of life and death; the Animators, who specialize in magical revivification of the dead; the Chorus of the Banshee, traffickers with ghosts and similar spirits; the Disciples of the Abyss, who experiment with negative planar energy; the Followers of Nemorga, clerics of the death god; the Readers of Cracked Bones, experts in necromantic divination; and the Sowers of Fear, performers who specialize in fear and terror. Of these, the Disciples of the Abyss remain in disfavor, since their founder Taason aided Airat of the Society of Immortals when the Society rebelled and founded the evil city of Glivid-Autel. The Society of Immortals has since been disbanded and its members scattered, but the Disciples have survived, though with greatly reduced numbers.

## Crime and Punishment

Hollowfaust is, if anything, a city of law. The people and rulers of the city take the question of order very seriously. A nation surrounded by enemies and with few friends can ill afford internal strife.

The Blackshield of Hollowfaust executes law and maintains order throughout the city and its ancillary settlements. Known for their efficiency and skill, they are reputed to net even the cleverest of thieves.

Once an arrest has been made, justice is usually swift but fair. Even more so than her northern neighbors, Hollowfaust is a city of jurisprudence. Determination of guilt is the responsibility of professional magistrates. As a testament to the city's

even-handed approach, these magistrates maintain their own cadre of investigators, known as bailiffs, to corroborate or refute independently the testimony of the Blackshield. If guilt is confirmed, sentencing is pronounced according to an incredibly detailed and exhaustive checklist.

Detractors of the system complain of its rigidity and sheer complexity, but mechanical or not, the system is not overly severe by continental standards. The Guilds are quick to point out that an orderless city would see crimes far worse than the harshest of sentences.

The most dreaded Hollowfaustian punishment is that of final forfeiture, in which the criminal's body is given to a necromancer to do with as he pleases, from granting a quick and painless death, to agonizing vivisection or resurrection as an undead slave. The criminal's spirit is free to pass on to whatever reward awaits it, but the physical body now belongs to the necromancer.

**Theft (up to 100 gp):** Twice the value repaid. 1 lash if a repeat offender.

**Theft (over 100 gp):** Twice the value repaid and 5 lashes.

**Vandalism:** Twice the value of the defaced object, 10 lashes.

**Assault:** 50 gp, twice the victim's medical expense, and 3 lashes.

**Assault/impersonation of a guard, clerk or Stygian guardsman:** 100 gp, 10 lashes.

**Assault/Impersonation of a Guildsman:** 1,000 gp, exile.

**Assault/Impersonation of a Guildsman's Retainer or Magistrate:** 500 gp, 10 lashes.

**Disturbance of the Peace:** 10 gp.

**Murder:** Final forfeiture.

**Rape:** 20 lashes, final forfeiture.

**Torture:** 20 lashes, final forfeiture.

**Sedition:** Exile.

## Religion

Hollowfaust is officially a secular state, much to the chagrin of virtually everyone else. In a land so recently torn asunder over the question of religion, the city's apparent non-interest (at least at an official level) in the issue is insulting to many. However, it is not to say Hollowfaust believes in nothing, as some have unfairly purported.

At the individual level, the gods *are* revered. In fact, because Hollowfaust is so tolerant of diversity, *all* of the victors are honored, though shrines dedicated to the gods of good and neutrality are common, and more often frequented by the populace than those of evil. Only Denev, to whom the city's necromancy would be an affront without parallel, has no places of worship. Even the guildsmen teach, that when a person dies, their soul leaves the Scarred Lands to journey forth to the gods.

Nemorga, demigod of death, holds special significance for the people of Hollowfaust, however. He exists outside the normal pantheon of the gods but is vital to them, as he collects and guides dead souls to their ultimate reward. Nemorga's absolute lawful neutrality is an expression of the ultimate law of death which all mortal beings must obey, and in many ways he holds a place even higher than the divine pantheon for the inhabitants of this city of necromancers.

## Khirdet

**Name:** Khirdet

**Population:** 50,000 (Human 99%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Theocratic dictatorship

**Ruler:** Her Most Radiant and Adumbratorial Majesty Sharliss Serpent-Kiss (*medusa female Drd7/Blood Witch 6*)

**Language:** Ledean, Titan Speech

**Religion:** Mormo

**Currency:** None official; the inhabitants use any object of value for trade, but favor coins and gems looted from their victims.

**Resources:** None

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** Albadia, Amalthea and Vera-Tre

## Armed Forces

Like the city, Hollowfaust's military has a living half and an undead half. The former include the Unfailing, sworn defenders of the necromancers; the Stygian Guard, elite mercenaries-turned-professionals; and the volunteers and hired swords who make up the city guard. Disciplined and devoted, they are aided in their duties by the legions of undead who patrol the city both inside and outside. Tirelessly these reanimated guardians ward off attack from the sutak and other marauders who harass Hollowfaust at every opportunity.

## The City of Hollowfaust

**The First Gate:** The entrance to Hollowfaust, the First Gate is always busy and always guarded. It is home to the famous bell of Hollowfaust, whose chime is the signal that grave danger approaches.

**The Weary Pilgrim:** A home away from home, this cozy inn is the perfect spot for those none too keen on the city's "distinctive" atmosphere.

**The Baths:** A restored treasure from the days of Sumara, the Baths offer private or mixed-gender facilities to those who need to wash away the rigors of the day or weeks.

**The Theatre Sepulchral:** Devoted to the "light-hearted" investigation of the arts of fear, this playhouse offers some of the best scream-your-heart-out entertainment on the continent, and is run by none other than the Sowers of Fear.

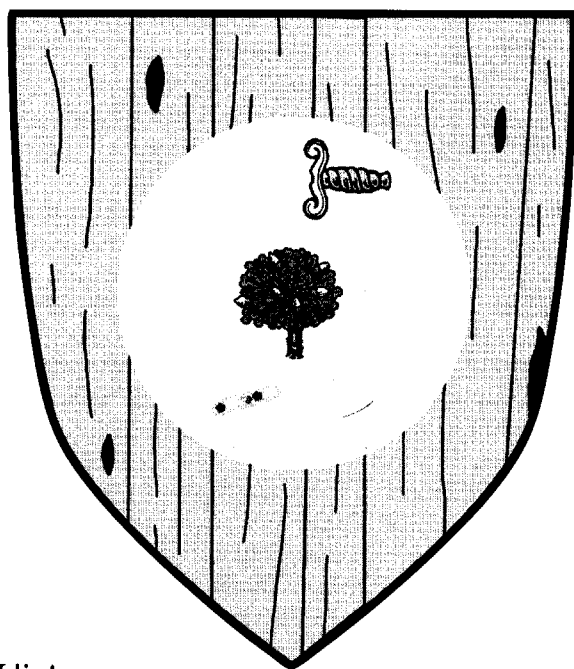
**The Fountain of the Bloody Maidens:** A tragic product of Sumara's death throes, this magical fountain spews not water but blood. The square and surrounding buildings are shunned by many, but now serve as a hallowed place where justice is meted out.

**Drovers' Plaza:** Teeming with activity, this plaza is a center for trade in all manners of goods.

**The Second Gate:** Leading to the Ghost Quarter and usually sealed, this doorway defends the inner wall designed to protect the Civilian Quarter from still-dead Sumara.

**Ghost Quarter:** Populated by free-willed undead and other horrors — many, many horrors, if rumors are to be believed — the Ghost Quarter is generally off limits.

**The Third Gate:** The entrance to the Underfaust, the true city of necromancers, this grand keep bars all but those of the guilds.



## History

Not all druids worship the peaceful Earth Mother Denev. Many, the descendants of the titan-worshipping druids who fought against the divine races, are still loyal to their vanquished masters, and seek to engineer their return. Nowhere is such sentiment stronger than among the cannibal druids of Khirdet, one of the most dangerous nations in Ghelspad.

The druids of this region, worshippers of the Serpent-Queen Mormo, were always of a depraved and violent nature, emulating their patron titan's murderous ways. In the Divine War, the druids of Khirdet were always in the forefront of Mormo's armies, and the first to engage in the atrocities so common during the conflict. Even during the war, the druids tottered on the brink of madness; Mormo's dismemberment at the hands of the gods was all that it took to tumble them over into the abyss. From that day, the druids of Khirdet were sworn enemies of every living thing that did not worship the titans.



Khirdet and the surrounding realm of Khet remained dangerous places in the years following the Titanswar, and surrounding realms lacked the resources to attack and wipe out the druids. As their power grew, the druids began to raid their neighbors, taking captives and dragging them back for horrifying cannibalistic rites in memory of the Serpentmother. By 78 AV, the druids felt the time was right, and they emerged from their fastness in force.

The Druid War proved disastrous for all involved, victors and vanquished alike. Intent on the destruction of the hated and "traitorous" Denev-worshippers of the Ganjus, the druids had to content themselves with the near-destruction of Amalthea. Despite the treachery of King Virduk of Calastia, who murdered his father, seized the dragon crown, and withdrew his armies from the anti-druid alliance, the Khetians were finally defeated, though at a terrible cost.

The druids retreated to Khirdet to lick their wounds, and the alliance had neither the strength nor the heart to pursue them. Today, the situation is much as it has been for decades, with the druids holed up in the wilderness, preying on surrounding lands and presenting a terrible threat to the region, and other nations too preoccupied to stop them. Under their new leader, the druidess Sharliss Serpent-Kiss, the cannibal druids may be preparing more mischief, and another Druid War is not outside the realm of possibility.

## People

It is said that all of the people of Khirdet are mad — driven to insanity by the destruction of their deity, and by the abominations created by their own blood-

soaked culture. If this is true, then the Khirdetans' insanity is truly hereditary, and seems to grow worse with each successive generation.

Khirdetans are a tall, pale people, and all have haunted or brutal expressions. A few burly individuals exist; these are invariably made shock troops or hound-masters. Khirdetans wear little if any clothing, even in the coldest months, and the loss of toes or even limbs to frostbite is not uncommon. Ritualistic tattoos, scari-fication and piercing of the flesh with bone, stone or metal decorations is also widespread.

Daily life in Khirdet is a sick mirror of that of the elves of the Ganjus. Every waking activity and thought is devoted to Mormo, in the hope that the combined spiritual energy of an entire nation might somehow reconstitute and resurrect the lost titaness. Khirdetan hunters scour the woods for prey, from small animals to the cannibals' preferred food — members of the divine races. Plants and vegetables are not consumed in Khirdet, which may account for its people's sickly demeanor.

## Culture

Khirdet is a place of horror and blood, where the weak are preyed upon by the strong. At the top of the ladder are the druids of Mormo, powerful spellcasters served by their acolytes and warriors. Ordinary peasants are expected to provide food for the settlement, or become food themselves. Sorcerers, necromancers and other spellcasters who can raise or command the dead are especially respected.

Religious ceremonies invariably include some form of living sacrifice, combined with orgiastic rites in memory of Mormo. Snakes and ophidian creatures



are considered sacred, and allowed to move freely through the city. Death by snakebite is considered an especially honorable death, and many of the druids' captives meet their end in this fashion.

Most activity in the city is directed at raids on the outside world, patrols of the forest, and actual hunting for food. The druids and soldiers of Khirdet are aided in this by the hound-masters, elite fighters chosen from among the strongest of the cannibals, each of whom is accompanied by two deadly skin-hounds, powerful mastiff-like beasts with the strength and abilities of dire wolves, the result of careful breeding and the infusion of Mormo's blood with that of ordinary hounds.

## Crime and Punishment

There is no formal legal code in Khirdet. Both crime and punishment are whatever the druids say they are. Punishment is almost always ritual murder and consumption of the victim's flesh by the other cannibals. Druids usually don't even make a pretense of accusing anyone of a crime when they need new victims — they simply seize folk at random and have them dragged off.

## Religion

Mormo is everything to the druids of Khirdet. Here the worship of the titans is practiced as it was in the distant past, with mortals abasing themselves to the Serpentmother's will, and obeying her druids as they would the titaness herself. The rites of Mormo are, if anything, even more depraved than they were in the past, with their participants fired by rage and desire for revenge against the treacherous gods who slew their beloved patroness.

The druids claim that they still commune with the Serpentmother, through dreams and visions induced by the consumption of hallucinogenic fungi. Acts of self-mutilation and bloodletting are also common in the Khirdetans' worship ceremonies, for pain is said to bring one closer to Mormo, and the scarring of one's own flesh is believed to replicate the agony that Mormo felt upon her dismemberment. Demons and outsiders are sometimes summoned during rituals, and bound to the druids' service by Khirdetan sorcerers. Half-fiends and other abominations are often born after especially bloody or orgiastic rituals, and these creatures are immediately recruited as elite warriors.

Some of the other titans, particularly Chern and Gulaben, are spoken of reverently, but no rites take place in their honor. While the cannibals hate the gods with a deep and abiding passion, special hatred is reserved for Denev, a titan herself who, in the Khirdetans' view, betrayed her siblings in favor of the upstart deities. Even more than the other divine races, the Khirdetans hate the elves of Vera-Tre and seek to desecrate utterly the Earth Mother's resting place, and destroy her chosen people.

## Armed Forces

Every Khirdetan is expected to fight, and the blood-maddened cannibals can form a very effective military force if need be. Driven by fanaticism and

burning for vengeance, the druids' armies came close to their goal of destroying Vera-Tre during the Druid War and, when stopped, contented themselves with the despoilment of Amalthea.

Druids lead bodies of fanatical troops numbering from a few dozen to several hundred. Stronger Khirdetans are recruited as shock troops or hound-masters, and advance behind the main body of troops hoping to exploit any gaps in an enemy line. The Khirdetans do not use missile weapons, and their warriors engage in bloody rites of self-mutilation and consume numerous hallucinogens before battle, enabling them to ignore pain and advance even with horrific wounds. An army is usually preceded by thousands of poisonous snakes, summoned by the druids.

Whenever possible, the druids utilize undead or outsiders to absorb losses or terrorize foes. A number of half-fiends dwell in the city, pampered and worshipped by the people; these monstrosities are among the most dangerous of Khirdet's warriors. Sorcerers also serve with the armed forces of Khirdet, providing magical support.

On occasion, Mormo's hags aid the Khirdetans in battle, and there are rumors that a large number of these creatures have settled in the region lately. Tales also circulate that the hags have formally allied with the cannibals, and a few fearful individuals have even gone so far as to suggest that Queen Geleeda of Calastia is involved, but so far these stories can only be considered speculation.

## The City of Khirdet

An abomination in the midst of a wasteland, Khirdet is a nightmarish place of twisted trees, crude stone altars and wattle-and-daub huts where the cannibals carve out a demented existence. A few larger buildings house elite druids, half-fiend auxiliaries, sorcerers and other important individuals.

**Fountain of Serpents:** In the center of the settlement lies the Fountain of Serpents, a construct of stone that may date to pre-war days. In the center of the fountain is a towering statue of the Serpentmother herself and it is said that when powerful druids call upon the spirit of Mormo, the fountain gushes forth with thousands of poisonous snakes and runs with venom, which the Khirdetan warriors use to treat their weapons.

**Shrine of Mormo:** The largest structure in Khirdet. Popular legend claims that the shrine holds actual pieces of Mormo's flesh. The truth of these stories cannot be confirmed, but it is known that horrific rites take place within the shrine's walls, and those few who have managed to escape from this nightmarish city claim that the screams of sacrificial victims echo from the place for days or weeks.

## Krakadöm

**Name:** The Forsaken City of Krakadöm

**Population:** 100,000 (Dwarf 100%)

**Government:** Council of Elders with a strong judicial system

**Ruler:** Originally Josephus Tamor, currently unknown

**Language:** Dwarvish

**Religion:** None

**Currency:** Dalvel (10 gp sapphire), ducet (1 gp topaz), silver shekel (1 sp), copper binni (1 cp)

**Resources:** Gemstones, copper, iron, finished metal goods (not exported)

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** The dwarves of Krakadöm consider every trespasser an enemy.

### History

Once ordinary dwarves like those who dwell in the mountain fastness of Burok Torn, the forsaken dwarves of Krakadöm are possessed of a deep and abiding bitterness, and a sadness that is possibly more profound than that of the dark elves of Dier Drendal. Abandoned by both god and titan, they have turned inward, growing evil and hateful in the process.

Like so many others, the forsaken dwarves trace their troubles back to the days of the Titanswar. Near the beginning of the conflict, a dwarven stonecutter named Josephus Tamor had a vision. The titan Denev presented him this charge:

*"Son of the Earth, blood of my blood, heed my words. A dark time comes for every living creature of Scarn. As the heavens clash, great strife and destruction await. Soon the land will forever change, and I with it. Go forth, and gather your brothers and sisters of the earth. There is solace for the faithful. A new home awaits where I shall care for you, and someday, you for me."*

Josephus was originally from the Gascar Peaks. From there, he traveled to different countries and territories of Scarn, telling dwarves of his vision. His story was first met with disbelief and ridicule. Some dwarves even considered it blasphemous, especially in Burok Torn where the implications of Denev's supposed words to Josephus were taken very seriously. However, it was not long before people started listening.

The Divine War began. Many dwarves remembered the prophetic words of Josephus and went seeking the pious dwarf, who had returned to his war-torn homeland. In less than a year's time, Josephus' following grew from a handful to several thousand, as many dwarves had lost their homes to the war. Josephus had more visions, each guiding the dwarf and his followers closer to the promised city. They had faith that Denev would protect them during the war, for those who accepted Josephus' visions were chosen for a higher service in the future.

Near the height of the war, Josephus had his final vision of Denev:

*"Journey to the greatest peak to the north. The city of the faithful shall be guarded until my final rest."*

The final leg of this pilgrimage included many historical events that are too long and detailed to be told here. The dwarves had become more aware of the theological and religious implications of every event which they encountered and thus chronicled their travels throughout Scarn to their promised city. These records are called *The Pilgrimage Tome*. At the end of this book lies one of the few hints about the dark transformation of the dwarves:

*"It is now at the time of our greatest need that Denev gives us no hope. We cannot traverse the Kelders. Titanspawn swarm the mountains, and our numbers dwindle daily. It is as if Denev is testing our faith, ensuring our worthiness and devotion on this final leg of our pilgrimage. If she be not there for us, let us be there for another."*

The next few pages make no more references to Denev, but only of the hardships and death that plagued the dwarves while entering the Kelders.

The last page simply reads:

*"The promise was empty. We are forsaken."*

The interpretation of this passage has generally been that there was no sign of any city within the Kelders. However, those old enough to remember claim that the dwarves disappeared into the mountain immediately—certainly before any construction of such vast proportions could have begun. Whether there were simply caves for the dwarves to retreat into, or actual ruins from some ancient or even divinely created city already standing, only the dwarves know for certain. There is no knowledge or record of an ancient city in the Kelders.

What few glimpses outsiders have had of the forsaken dwarves are frightening. Something deeper than ordinary sadness at betrayal has gnawed at their souls, twisting them into dark beings with an infinite appetite for suffering. They dwell alone, and woe unto the traveler who encounters them, for few return to tell their tale. Something has changed the dwarves... something ancient and terrible that dwells in the heart of Krakadöm. Or worse—something that dwells in the twisted hearts of the dwarves themselves.

The elves of Vera-Tre feel a great pity for the forsaken dwarves, hypothesizing about the truth of Josephus Tamor's visions many years ago. Some feel they may have been a trick by one of the other titans. Others question Josephus' sanity. The dwarves stopped all contact with outsiders once Krakadöm was settled, which fuels the argument that the physical location has some dark connection to the dwarves' corruption.

Certainly the elves do not believe that Denev purposely betrayed the dwarves. It may be that the visions were genuine but that, in her weakened state,

Denev cannot help her children. Or that the power in the mountains shields them from her healing mercy. None can say, but it is certain that the dwarves dwell in silent isolation, nursing fearful angers, rejecting gods and titans alike. They are truly forsaken — a people who believe in nothing, and who hate all others.

## People

The dwarves of Krakadöm are a surprisingly somber and quiet people within their own community, but most believe this is simply because they nurse their hatreds in silence. They lead a simple existence within their mountain, mining and smelting the metals that they need for tools, weapons and armor, raising underground tubers and fungi for food, and trading among themselves, using a variety of gemstones as currency.

While this may seem like an ascetic, and in many ways admirable, existence, the dwarves' attitude toward the outside world belies their seemingly peaceful ways. Anyone who comes within a few miles of the mountain is fair game, either slain outright or dragged back to the mountain for interrogation and death. The dwarves are highly paranoid, and believe that all outside peoples are conspiring against them, seeking to drive them from their home and destroy them in the name of either the gods or the titans — the forsakens make little distinction.

## Culture

The very simplicity of the forsakens' culture seems to revolve around their hatred and paranoia. Consumed by rage and feelings of betrayal, the dwarves have very little of the materialism or arrogance associated with their cousins in Burok Torn. Hatred burns pure and bright in them, incinerating all but a dogged defiance of the world outside, and a rejection of every trapping of civilization, be it divine or titanspawn.

Forsaken dwarves wake up angry, take their meals angry, go about their daily business — metalsmithing, farming, weaving, animal breeding, buying and selling, overseeing the daily life of their fellows — angry, and go to bed at night angry. Their anger is ingrained into their character, and has become as natural as breathing.

Clothing, food, philosophy and the arts are all simple and, in a strange and evil way, quite beautiful. All design is minimized, with form following function. Decoration is minimal, limited to highly stylized variations on ancient dwarven clan crests and symbols. Weapons and armor are relatively unadorned, but almost all are of masterwork quality. Magic is commonly used, but never with any excessive flash or dazzling effects. The forsaken see magic as a tool, rather than a gift from the gods, and use it as such.

Dwarven wizards and nobles descended from the old rulers occupy the highest rung in forsaken society, but this comes with few privileges and many responsibilities. There are a few forsaken sorcerers, but wizardry is their preferred form of magic.

## Crime and Punishment

As odd as it may seem, there is apparently no crime among the forsaken dwarves. Even if the rare infraction occurs, it is usually forgiven and put down to bursts of rage or antisocial behavior, and blamed on the gods or titans. True criminals are almost unheard of, but habitual troublemakers are probably simply killed out of hand, thus guaranteeing the behavior of other citizens.

Being an outsider is, of course, a capital offense, punishable by instant death at the hands of Krakadöm's military for the lucky ones, or interrogation and painful death while the populace of the city looks on with enthusiasm, for the less fortunate. A bare handful of prisoners has escaped from the mountain, and they are the only source of real information about the dwarves.

## Religion

The forsaken dwarves worship nothing and believe in nothing. Life is pain, they believe, followed by either blessed oblivion — so say the optimists — or, in the view of more pessimistic dwarves, eternal punishment and torment at the hands of the wicked gods or titans. The closest thing to a religion is the forsaken's attention to the wisdom and words of their ancestors who, though they are gone, have attained a certain sort of immortality in the hearts and minds of their descendants. But even the most positively minded forsaken dwarf believes that their ancestors are gone forever, their existence totally snuffed out. There are no religious ceremonies, icons or shrines in Krakadöm and, of course, no priests or druids.

## Armed Forces

Patrols of forsaken warriors patrol both the corridors of Krakadöm and the surrounding lands. Chief among them are the Stonehammers, elite warhammer-armed dwarves habitually clad in heavy plate armor. Some Stonehammers are said to be literally bolted into their armor, and never remove it (leading to many rather obscene suggestions regarding miscellaneous private body functions). They are aided by the Black Quarrels, crossbowmen armed with a variety of missiles, including bolts with explosive or poisoned tips, and bolts attached to strong wire used to capture and drag back fleeing foes. Scouting duties are carried out by the Cliff Crawlers, nimble dwarves in light armor armed with throwing axes or short swords. The forsaken dwarves are said to use a deviant variation of the rune magic of the Burok Torn dwarves, possibly learned from the black sorcerers of the Ukrudan Desert.

## The City of Krakadöm

Located in the largest peak of the Kelders, the city of Krakadöm is entirely underground. Any traveler must traverse the worst of the Kelders to reach the entrance to the dwarven city. There is only one

## Lokil

main entrance to Krakadöm facing the south; there are much smaller passages that will lead to the city, but nothing big enough to accept anything larger than a man. Like the other dwarf city of Burok Torn, Krakadöm is built within a single mountain peak.

The city features small but comfortable dwellings, extensive chambers for twisted rune-mages, and large gathering places where the dwarves discuss important issues, debate or — as is their favorite pastime — watch the torture and interrogation of captives.

Krakadöm boasts other, deeper chambers, whose existence is only whispered of by those who have seen them and survived. Old things are said to linger here — things that may predate even the titans. It is believed that the ancient forces at the heart of Krakadöm are the source of the dwarves' corruption, but no one knows for sure, and most do not want to.

**Spiral Passage:** Once inside the entrance at the base of the mountain, a passage spirals up, with landings and gates to allow access to each level of the city. The Spiral Tunnel also leads down to mining and farming levels and deeper, though to where no one can say.

**Central Chamber:** A grand central chamber holds statues of the dwarves' ancient leaders. Lacking gods, the forsakens worship their own forebears as the ultimate source of wisdom and guidance.

**Name:** Library of Lokil

**Population:** 50,000 (Human 100%)

**Government:** Appointed council of loremasters

**Ruler:** Master of Lore Alliki Nebega (*human male Div9/Lor10, LN*)

**Language:** Ledean

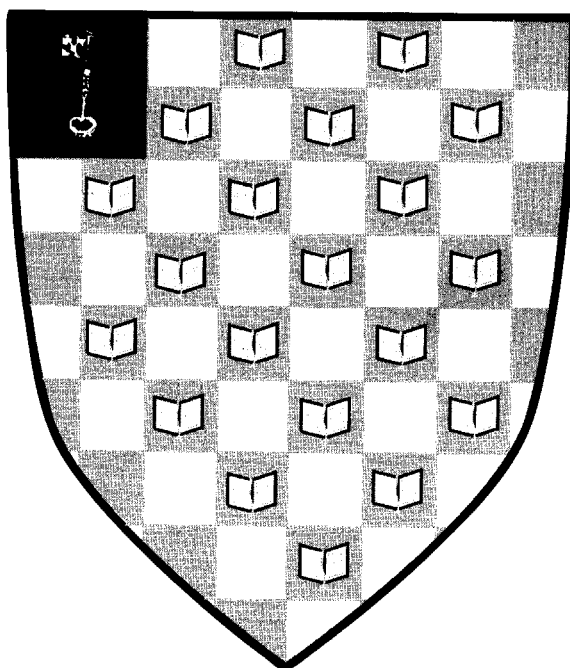
**Religion:** Hedrada

**Currency:** None official; all coins are accepted at base value. Several Lokil scholars specialize in numismatics and maintain extensive knowledge of Ghelspadian currencies.

**Resources:** Paper, books, ink, obsidian

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** None



## History

Before the Titanswar, Lokil was a small but flourishing city in northwestern Zathiske among the Gascar Peaks. The city's most notable feature was its large library atop Mount Hederest. It was rumored that the library held a complete history since the birth of Hedrada, who served as the library's patron.

As a small city, Lokil took little part in the Titanswar until the war came to it on one flaming day. It is unknown which Titan destroyed the city of Lokil, but from the method of its destruction, the loremasters there guess that it was either Kadum or Thulkas. Earthquakes and landslides swallowed the city. As the huge walls of lava from the mountain washed over the library, the building emitted a silent golden light. The lava parted as it touched the light, passing by the surprised loremasters. As the smoke cleared the following day, the city was a charred ruin surrounded by the ever-expanding Ukrudan Desert,

## The Catacombs of Lokil

About five years ago, deep below the lowest inhabited portions of Lokil, obsidian miners discovered a horrible secret. They stumbled upon the ancient remains of a vast slarecian settlement. Unable to restrain their curiosity, the loremasters swarmed over the ruins, eager to rediscover the secrets of this forgotten culture. Unfortunately, their clumsy tampering unleashed and activated a number of ancient horrors. The loremasters in the ruins were soon slaughtered by the reawakening *memory spheres*, ioun beholders, and other defensive constructs. Quickly, the Order of the Closed Book worked to secure the catacombs leading to the ruins to contain the slarecian horrors. Ever since, a hidden war has been waged beneath the placid libraries of Lokil to prevent the slarecian forces from invading the rest of the library. Recently, the slarecian attacks have been gaining in number and ferocity. Some among the loremasters suggest that the creatures are being led by some powerful, recently reawakened force, such as a slarecian dragon. The council has made every attempt to hide this secret from the rest of Ghelspad. As far as the stoic people of Lokil are concerned, this is an internal matter, and they must depend on their discipline and faith to sustain them.

but the Library of Lokil stood untouched upon the peak of Mount Hederest. Although most loremasters and students of Lokil believe that the city was saved by Hedrada, it is whispered in the darkest corners that there is some other reason for the library's survival. Only Alliki Nebega, the leader of the council since the Titanswar, knows for sure.

Since the Divine War, Lokil has attracted scholars throughout Ghelspad as both an incredible repository of knowledge and a holy shrine to Hedrada. The library has expanded steadily into the mountain itself rather than outward onto the blasted mountain and the desert beyond. It has been rather isolationist, trading only when necessary with Hollowfaust, Darakeene, and occasionally Calastia. To outsiders, Lokil's history might seem uneventful since the Titanswar. Unlike its neighbor Hollowfaust, Lokil has not had much conflict with the desert-dwelling *sutak*. Similarly, Lokil refuses to involve itself in the political matters or petty wars of other nations. But there is a watchfulness, a sense of desperate urgency that pervades the aura of the secretive loremasters. Fearful sages whisper that in the depths of Mount Hederest the loremasters of Lokil have unearthed a dark and dangerous secret.

## Geography

The Library of Lokil sits atop Mount Hederesh at the southern end of the Gascar Peaks. To the north and west of the mountain, the harsh Ukrudan Desert stretches to the horizon. The abundant plains of the Devil's March lie to the southwest. Lokil is separated from Calastia to the southeast and east by the Festering Fields. The closest significant settlement to Lokil is the city-state of Hollowfaust to the northeast. Lokil has maintained excellent trade relations with this unique city, and occasionally, the two have acted for mutual defense.

Mount Hederesh itself is an extinct volcano, part of the same chain as the Faust that stands above Hollowfaust. The mountain and area surrounding it is arid, rocky, and barren. Fortunately, the previous fiery explosions of Mount Hederest have made this area an excellent source of obsidian, which is used to create high-quality inks.

## Flora and Fauna

The barren environment of Lokil prevents the growth of any but the hardiest lichen or mountain scrub. Because Lokil is not capable of producing its own food, it must usually import such material from Darakeene, Hollowfaust, or Calastia. Similarly, there are few animals in the area around Lokil. Occasionally, *sutak* raiders or some other horror from the Ukrudan Desert wander near Lokil and have to be repelled by the Order of the Closed Book.

## The Order of the Closed Book

*There comes a time when even the meekest among us must close our books and draw up our weapons of war.*

—Master of Lore Alliki Nebega

Soon after the Titanswar, the renowned exemplar Daralie undertook a pilgrimage to Hedrada's famed library in the Gascar Peaks. Realizing that the scholars there had little means of protecting the assembled knowledge of Ghelspad, Daralie began to train the more physical academics in the ways of discipline and physical combat. This group of monks, named the Order of the Closed Book in honor of Alliki Nebega, grew and developed even after Daralie returned to Onn. The Order combines scholastic knowledge with physical prowess to achieve a new and unique monastic discipline. Currently, the Order guards the knowledge of Lokil and protects it from dangers, within and without.

Members of the Order of the Closed Book may freely multi-class with the wizard, cleric, or loremaster classes and continue to gain levels as a monk.





*An Order of the Closed Book monk, a loremaster, an acolyte, a cleric of Hedrada*

## People

Lokilites are a stoic and taciturn people. They come from the same racial stock as the residents of Hollowfaust and Dunahnae, appearing very pale with dark hair. The people tend to be tall and spindly, focusing more on scholarly pursuits than athletic development. Lokilites tend to be rather slow and deliberate decision makers; they feel they must know all possible aspects of a situation before reaching any conclusions. Citizens of Lokil dress in plain robes with stiff collars, the colors of which denote rank. Acolytes and servants wear black robes, which fade to bleached white as one's rank increases. Personal ornamentation such as jewelry is frowned upon unless it has some obvious magic or historical significance.

Lokil has very strict laws restricting outsiders and access to the libraries. Outsiders must apply for admission to the library, and official permission may take months to obtain. When a researcher is allowed into the library, he must be accompanied by a guard who makes sure that he does not damage or steal anything. Followers of gods besides Hedrada are regarded coolly, especially chaotic gods such as Enkili. Visitors should be aware that no weapon larger than a dagger may be brought into the libraries themselves.

## Culture

Lokil is a merit-driven society where knowledge and general competence are highly admired. All children are given a certain amount of basic education, and those who show a magical aptitude and scholarly nature are trained as acolytes by the loremaster of the library. After ten years in training, the acolyte becomes a scholar and specializes in a particular field of inquiry. Most scholars pursue the study of magic or monastic discipline in addition to their private studies. Technically, all scholars are of equal rank, but those with more experience and more interesting specializations tend to hold more sway. The eldest and most respected scholars are elevated to the rank of Master of Lore by a majority vote of the council. They are then allowed to participate and vote on the council.

The majority of Lokilites lack the extraordinary aptitude or desire to become scholars. They take a variety of occupations, from obsidian miners, library servants, merchants, and monks. Such folk manufacture the goods Lokil trades for food and gather the continuing history of Ghelspad, allowing the library to survive and grow.

One of the most distinctive features of Lokil is its unique books. Lokilite books made since the Titanswar are very large, making them difficult to steal or misplace. Such books are composed of light Ganjuspaper pages compressed between heavy obsidian covers mined from Mount Hederest itself. Similarly, the thick black ink with which the monks and scholars copy the books is made from powdered obsidian. More artistic Lokilites decorate the pages with incredibly detailed illustrations. Lokil's books are a great source of pride among the citizens for both the knowledge they contain and their artistic value.

The library contains countless ordinary volumes as well, books collected and carried to the library over centuries. These take the form of individual parchments, scrolls, bound volumes, stone tablets, elaborately folded map-books from the old Ledean Empire, and the strange multi-paneled books of the ancient asaatthi, cunning constructs of wood, metal, crystal and stone.

Lokil's libraries contain a detailed collection with broad range of topics. The focus of the library is arguably history; it is said that Lokil contains a complete history of Ghelspad since the birth of Hedrada, centuries before the Titanswar. Also well represented are books detailing arcane and magical knowledge. Each school is present in some detail, but since wizards in Lokil tend to become diviners, that field is more heavily represented. Outsiders are allowed into Lokil's libraries only under extremely rare circumstances. Usually visitors must present knowledge to the library equal in value to that which they seek, although exceptions may be made for other followers of Hedrada.

## Crime and Punishment

Lokil is a strict and rule-oriented society. Most of the citizenry would never think of breaking a law; they would see it as an affront against Hedrada. Minor crimes are punished harshly in order to discourage future bad behavior. Lokil is policed by the Order of the Closed Book, and the council pronounces judgments.

**Petty Crimes and Misdemeanors:** Period of one to six months of work in the obsidian mines, loss of library privileges, or assigned academic research.

**Serious Crimes and Felonies:** Exile, which in this region is tantamount to a death sentence.

## Religion

The Library of Lokil is both a storehouse of knowledge and a shrine to Hedrada the Lawgiver. The vast majority of the city attends worship services offered each morning before beginning work. Worship consists of ritual chanting interspersed with formalized prayers and responses from the flock. Holidays are quite common and are held according to a complex schedule that only the clergy really understands. The major holiday of the year is the Blessing

of the Books, which is held in Hedrer and represents the presentation of the collected knowledge of that year to Hedrada.

## Armed Forces

Lokil has no true standing army. Defense is normally handled by the Order of the Closed Book, although the people of the city will join together to protect their homes if the city is truly endangered. Scholars, loremasters, and priests are usually willing and able to provide magical support in battle when necessary. However, since their magic is intended more for scholarly pursuits, this aid is often not as successful as intended. Because of the ongoing, secretive war in the depths of Lokil, the overall security of Lokil has declined considerably.

The only weapon unique to Lokil is the handhammer, which is often used by monks of the Order. Similar to nunchaku, these weapons are traditionally made of obsidian, making them brittle and difficult to use for the untrained, and likely to shatter on a fumble.

## The Library of Lokil

The Library of Lokil is located high upon Mount Hederest of the Gaspar Peaks. The city is located mostly within the mountain itself, with only mines and the ancient library on the mountain surface. Those buildings visible are composed mainly of white marble. Inhabited caverns within the mountain are lined with granite blocks in order to make them more secure and comfortable. The city has a comparably advanced level of technology, with working pulley-driven elevators, a telescope, and excellent plumbing.

**1. Library of Lokil:** An ancient columned building that serves as the main library and meeting place for the council. The building is an architectural marvel, standing fully four stories and constructed from white marble.

**2. Observatory:** Contains an advanced telescope, said to be a gift from Hedrada himself. This building is also the support for the lift that transports citizens about the mountain.

**3. Archives:** These levels contain books that are rare or rarely accessed, as well reading areas and research laboratories.

**4. Great Hall:** This huge meeting room an enormous window in the mountainside overlooking the desert and ruins below. This hall also contains a large altar to Hedrada.

**5. Temple of the Closed Book:** This temple, built into the mountainside, serves as the barracks and main training ground for the Order of the Closed Book.

**6. Main Entrance:** Sitting midway up the mountain face, this small marble building serves as the only easily accessible entrance to the library.

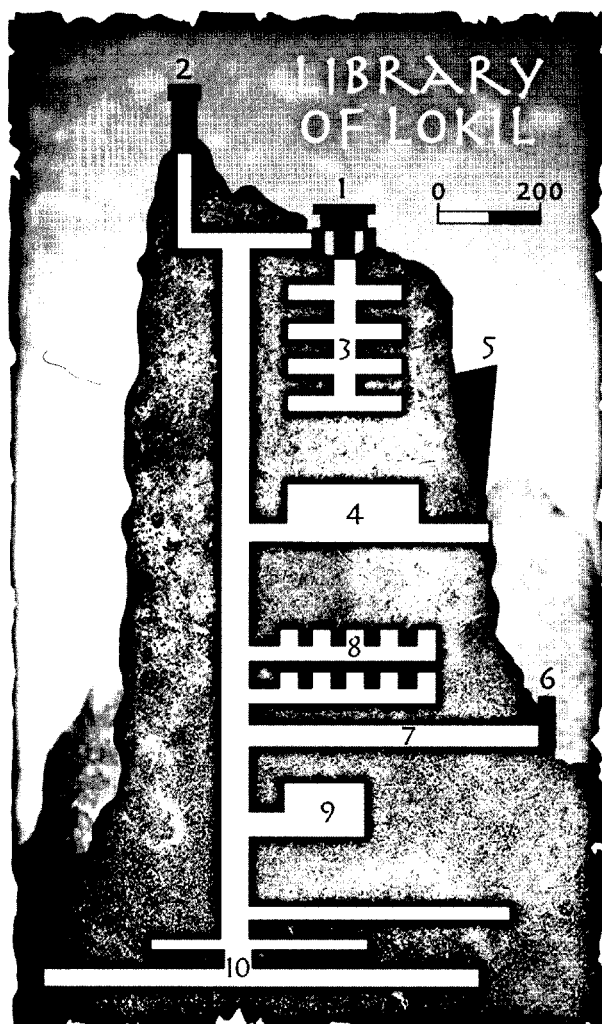
**7. Grand Entryway:** This magnificent hallway stretches from the main entrance to the central lift. It is decorated with a dazzling array of art and marble statues of each previous and current council member of Lokil.

**8. Living Quarters:** The majority of Lokil's population resides in these caverns, which also feature various shops, temples, and storage rooms.

**9. Artifact Storage:** This rough-hewn cavern was excavated to store the artifacts taken from the newly discovered slarecian ruins. It now serves as a garrison point against the ancient terrors below.

**10. Obsidian Mines:** Small mines dot the surface of Mount Hederest. The miners do not dig very deep, for fear of breaking into inhabited portions of the mountain.

**11. Ruins of the City of Lokil:** Scorched and obsidian-coated ruins destroyed over 150 years ago in a conflict with an unknown Titan. Occasionally undead arise in the village and have to be laid to rest.



## The Lost City of Asaatthi

**Name:** The Jewel of the Serpentmother

**Population:** 15,000 (100% Asaatthi)

**Government:** Magocracy

**Ruler:** The High Council of Asaatthi

**Language:** Titan Speech, Ledean

**Religion:** Mormo

**Currency:** Gold scale (1 gp), silver fang (5 sp), silver scale (1 sp), copper eye (1 cp)

**Resources:** None

**Allies:** Ukrudan asaatthi

**Enemies:** Fangsfall, Shelzar, Hollowfaust, Darakeene

### History

*For the thousandth time! I don't wanna go! I don't care if you found a whole bleedin' ship full o' the crap ya been wavin' in front of me all night. By Enkili! Leave me'n peace and let me finish my pint. Damn swamp is dangerous'nuff without ya makin' up stories 'bout a whole city o' jools, with some damnable titanspawn livin' in it.*

— overheard in a Shelzari pub.

The "Jewel of the Serpentmother," as it is approximately translated from Mormo's Tongue to Ledean, is most likely the oldest asaatthi settlement in Ghelspad. The city was constructed over a period of eight years, from roughly -5618 OC to -5610 OC. This date was extrapolated from a set of bronze calendar tablets recovered from one of the many asaatthi ruins inhabiting the Swamps of Kan Thet. When it was completed, the city covered more than two and a half square miles of swamp and was easily the most decadent and resplendent city that the asaatthi would build. The city was dedicated to the glory of Mormo and, after only a few months, became the headquarters for the fourteen clans of asaatthi.

The city prospered under the watchful eye of the Serpentmother and the careful administration of its leaders. From it sprang the great empire of the asaatthi. The beginning of the end was marked when Mormo and her serpentine warrior-wizards fought and lost to the combined army of the human clans that now inhabit Darakeene, Hollowfaust and Dunahnae, in what is now Devil's March. Since that time, the once mighty Asaatthi Empire has steadily declined. By -2500 OC, twelve of the original fourteen peaks of the city stood above the swampy tree line. Now, 150 years after the defeat of the titans, the seat of power for an entire empire is all but devoured by the swamp that surrounds it. Only one spire remains above the tree line; however, it is so encrusted with natural foliage that it is impossible to spot from afar or from the air.

Just as their capital city plunged into glorious ruin, so too did the asaatthi. Cut off from their empire and sealed in their swamp by the hated armies of men, the asaatthi were left with no choice but to ignore the outside world. This worked for a time, until supplies and vital resources began to run low. Those of noble birth began to band together.

Over the course of five centuries, beginning in 2485 OC, they became more and more closely knit, until they announced the dissolution of the traditional clans and created a new system of clans based upon birthright. The three resulting clans, Sssruutek, Mormus and Callek, were established in approximately 3000 OC. There was much opposition to this new clan system at first, but by 3150 OC the remnants of the asaathi race living in the Jewel of the Serpentmother had accepted and integrated the new three-clan system. They persist to this day and consist of nobles, druids of Mormo, and the rest of the race, respectively.

## People

Millennia after their decline, the serpent-men are still masterful spellcasters and item crafters. They have also greatly increased their warrior heritage over the years. The people live in the shroud of past glories, still trying to perpetuate a lifestyle that became impossible the moment their army was scattered by humans. All are extremely well educated and versed in current events, despite being locked off from the rest of Ghelspad. Most asaath living in the lost city have deep green hides with mottled brown speckling. They wear loose-fitting robes which keep the humidity out and allow their appendages, most notably their long whip-like tails, freedom of movement. All asaath, even the poorest, adorn their bodies in jewelry, the most common being precious metals inlaid with huge, neatly faceted gems.

## Culture

Much of traditional asaathi culture has been lost to the ages and ravages of war. However, the serpent-people still maintain a proud heritage and maintain a level of decadence that they are hard pressed to support. Their lifestyle is only possible through the exploitation of slaves, a commodity always coveted by the asaathi. Slaves are used for menial labor and, in times of great hardship, as a food source. The majority of the slave population consists of lizardfolk and troglodytes, although the occasional elf or dwarf is not altogether uncommon. It is forbidden, however, to take humans as slaves; after their atrocities, man flesh is only good for blood sport and food.

Most of the old asaathi holy days have been lost or forgotten, but in the Jewel of the Serpentmother, they have been replaced. In 2 AV, the High Council decreed that new holy days would be established for each piece of the Serpentmother that was recovered. Since that decree, almost fifty holy days have been established.

As mentioned earlier, the typical asaath enjoys numerous forms of blood sport. The most popular involve pitting captured humans against asaathi, against each other, and against magical beasts, in the hopes of winning their freedom. If the human does win the game, it is usually slaughtered out of hand instead of being set free, to the delight of the asaathi.

Asaathi do not mate for life; much like their reptilian predecessors, they enter periods of heat twice a year. During these times, the asaathi males cluster upon the females in what can only be described as large mating balls. At times

there may be as many as five males to one female, all trying to impregnate her. Once a female is impregnated, she lays anywhere from two to two dozen eggs, which gestate in sixteen weeks. As soon as they are born, the young are collected and raised by the entire community. It is considered the gravest of all sins to kill an infant, whether through direct action or simple neglect.

When asaathi die, they are given elaborate last rights in front of Mormo's Vault and are then carried approximately ten miles from the city and sunk into a bog. The reason for burying the dead so far from the city has nothing to do with religious practices: It is pragmatic to keep the dead far from the city, lest plague or hungry creatures decide to visit the serpent-men.

## Crime and Punishment

Crimes are rarely committed in asaathi society, primarily because the punishments are so dire. However, when a crime does occur, the two parties involved are brought before the High Council of Asaath, or a duly appointed representative. Each is asked to tell their story in a zone of truth (as per the spell) while the subject of a *detect lies* spell. If an asaath refuses to answer a question or enter the zone of truth, they are immediately assumed guilty and subject to punishment befitting their crimes.

**Petty Theft (50 gp or under):** Amputation of left arm at the elbow.

**Grand Theft (51 gp or higher):** Expulsion from the city and the asaathi way of life.

**Giving Away Asaathi Secrets:** Removal of tongue.

**Fraternizing with Humans:** Death by flensing (skinning).

**Murder:** A death chosen by the victim's surviving relatives.

**Treason:** Death by poison.

**Killing of an Asaathi Infant:** Death by ritual torture. This can last up to two weeks as the victim slowly dies.

## Religion

Mormo is venerated in all that the asaathi of the Jeweled City do. The Mormus Clan consists of her devoted druids. They are the ones who interpret the Serpentmother's will and see that the rest of the asaathi carry it out. Despite what may be said and what other races may think, the asaathi still know they are Mormo's chosen race.

The high priests of the race, consisting of a member of the High Council of Asaath and four lesser druids, regularly meet and meditate, trying to create scenarios that will bring about Mormo's resurrection. They also occasionally sample the vitae from the slain titaness, in order to enhance their communion with her. During the time her blood flows through her druids they are gifted with visions and increased powers. Similar happenings are reported on certain holy days. These visions often lead to the establishment of holy days, the beginning of a crusade, or the whereabouts of another piece of the Serpentmother.

While the druidic followers of Mormo are not truly nobles, they still garner the lion's share of respect and recognition within the city, which is why, four centuries ago, bloodline replaced free will with regard to joining the priesthood. Those of a union between two members of Clan Mormus have no choice but to become druids of the Hag Queen. Likewise, when a member of Clan Mormus mates with a member of Clan Calllek, or vice versa, the offspring are always indoctrinated into the druidic order. Only when the mating is between Clans Sssruutek and Mormus does the offspring have a choice: join the ranks of the nobles or become a devotee of Mormo.

## Armed Forces

After their defeat at the hands of the armies of men centuries ago, the asaathti have not been able to keep a standing army. There are just not enough of them to warrant such an enterprise. Rather, all asaathti are raised with knowledge of warfare and martial conduct. Even the spellcasters are taught how to unleash their arcane power to the most devastating effect. Therefore it is foolhardy to assume that the asaathti are defenseless.

In times of dire need, the asaathti have been known to conscript the best, brightest, and strongest from all three castes to defend the city. Add to this the lizard men and troglodyte slaves who fanatically serve their masters and are conscripted as shock troops, and the asaathti have quite an impressive force, which can be readied in as little as a week's notice.

## The Lost City of Asaatthi

The lost city, in its heyday, was laid out like a gigantic serpent coiled around itself; a spiral of ever-broadening rings that ended in a huge open-air court. Each of the fourteen original clans maintained a tower in the innermost ring before the court. One tower is still maintained and is where the High Council of Asaatthi presides. Even though the city is, for the most part, in ruins, it is still functional and relatively safe for the asaathti living there.

**Mormo's Vault:** In the center of the lost city, where the open-air court once stood, unmarred, is a large obsidian structure, carved to look like the Serpentmother. Interred within are all of the vitae and hunks of the dismembered titaness that the Asaatthi have found to date. This most holy of places also doubles as a temple to the Queen of Snakes and is jealously guarded by warriors and druids alike. No one not of asaathti blood has ever seen this terrifying sight.

**The Imperial Treasury:** Somewhere within the city is a small, nondescript wooden door. Beyond it is a long corridor littered with all manner of traps. At the end of the hallway is another, slightly larger wooden door. Inside is what remains of the vast wealth of the Asaatthi Empire.



*An asaathti warrior, a druid of Mormo, and a High Council Member*

## Mansk

**Name:** The Riders of Mansk

**Population:** 35,000 (Human 100%)

**Government:** Various tribes loosely allied under a single warlord

**Ruler:** Warlord Tivvien Klesh (*human male Bbn14, CG*)

**Language:** Veshian

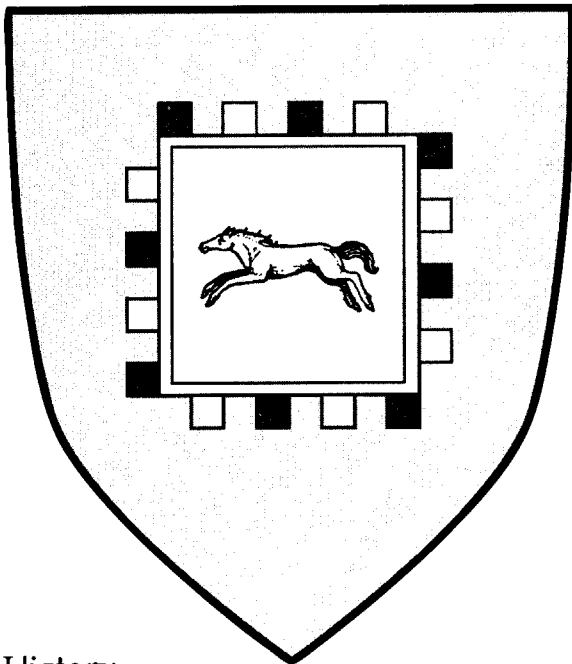
**Religion:** Enkili

**Currency:** None. Mansk barbarians still rely on barter and coins from other realms.

**Resources:** Horses, cattle, wheat, leather goods

**Allies:** Vesh

**Enemies:** None



### History

Depending on whom you ask, Mansk is either a sickening blight on the Kelder Steppes or a shining beacon of civilization that promises a new day of prosperity and expansion. Since the Divine War, the Kelder Steppes have been home to several tribes of barbarian horseman — wild riders who love nothing more than the wind in their hair and the thrill of battle. Mansk is the first city erected by these people.

After the Divine War, other civilizations rallied, improved themselves, and built something new. The riders of the Kelder Steppes only regressed. United during the Divine War as a single nation, by 50 AV blood feuds, rivalries, and simmering jealousies erupted into open warfare. Clan battled clan for supremacy of the steppes, leading to an almost constant state of warfare.

In 112 AV, the Blood Monsoon struck, destroying many of the weaker tribes and leaving all vulnerable to gorgons, slitheren, and other

titanspawn. Many orc tribes crossed the Hornswythe to ravage the steppes, interpreting the Blood Monsoon as a call to arms from the fallen Titans that they worshipped.

Klesh started as a minor chieftain. Slowly, his military conquests and epic victories against the invading titanspawn gained him respect from all the barbarian clans. Klesh was determined to ensure that the titanspawn never again threatened his people. To this end, he founded Mansk in 130 AV in hopes of establishing trade with the civilized world, uniting his people as a single nation, and providing a central defensive point against raiders. While many proud riders sneer at Mansk as an aberration, others view it as the key to making the steppes an important power in the region. Some say that Klesh intends to declare himself king and Mansk his capital, but so far he has not done so.

### People

The people of Mansk are wild, untamed, and fearless. They are slow to trust strangers, but once they give their friendship they form a bond that lasts a lifetime. A barbarian's word is his life, and few give their word without careful, deliberate consideration. Barbarians rarely back down if their courage or manhood are challenged, and they have garnered a reputation as pugnacious brawlers in the more civilized regions of Ghelspad.

The riders of Mansk favor utilitarian clothing, wearing leather armor even in times of peace, and thick, woolen cloaks. Metal is rare on the steppes, and heavy or metal armor is considered cowardly by many Mansk clans.

### Culture

The struggle between barbarian tribes creates palpable tension in Mansk. While the emerging merchant class believes the city is an important element in their goal of modernizing the steppes and uniting the barbarian clans, many warriors and traditionalist nomads insist that the place is a blight on the steppes that should be destroyed. These conservative clansmen view Klesh as an upstart who seeks to tear the warrior heart from the chest of his people. Brawls between the two factions frequently erupt in Mansk.

In comparison to Mithril or Bridged City, Mansk is a sprawl of stinking chaos. Cattle, horses, and other beasts walk the streets, and the streets are often literally rivers of filth. Many herdsmen ferry their cattle into the city in order to load them aboard barges heading south to Mullis Town. Owing to the barbarian love for horses, those animals are allowed free access to all points in the city, further befouling the streets and the water supply. The buildings here are poorly constructed, built by inexperienced barbarian carpenters or hastily erected to meet the demand for shelter.



## Crime and Punishment

The law in Mansk is swift and brutal, as befits a barbarian culture not known for its tolerance or mercy. Most crimes result in a blood feud, as the riders prefer to settle matters with a scimitar rather than a court of law. When needed, a council of tribal elders meets to decide a criminal's fate. No formal laws exist here. Instead, the elders weigh the evidence, question witnesses, and mete out appropriate punishment.

**Theft:** The elders often decree that the criminal give his victim personal items worth several times the stolen item's value. A pauper or anyone else without wealth is usually sentenced to a lifetime of slavery in service to his victim.

**Rape:** The riders of Mansk have little tolerance for this crime, and rapists rarely appear before the elders. Typically, an accused is castrated by an enraged mob, and sometimes killed. The elders are scarcely more merciful — rapists are usually punished in painful or crippling ways, such as removal of one or more limbs, followed by exile to the steppes, where orcs or other predators finish the job.

**Murder:** This crime also rarely makes its way before a council, as most barbarians believe in settling such matters with their own means. Some barbarians challenge their foe to a duel, while others use ambushes, assassination, or other means to slay their rival. Death in a duel of honor is never considered murder, only justice.

## Religion

Enkili is the most popular deity in Mansk, as the barbarians view the freedom-loving trickster as a kindred spirit. His high priest in Mansk, Doraho (*hum male Clr15, CN*), has been the cause of endless trouble and scandal. Recently, to replace animals lost in a minor epidemic, he invented a magical item called the *spectral yoke* that created ghostly beasts of burden, and now the city is constantly plagued by herds of spectral cattle and goats. The priest is quite mercenary in creating magic items for others, particularly *potions of love*. Unfortunately, his last batch backfired, causing ordinary animals to fall desperately in love with the imbibers. Many lovelorn youths

found themselves pursued by lustful cows, horses and, on one occasion, a vengaurak.

Tanil is the second most popular deity in Mansk, particularly amongst the riders who battle orcs and watch over the herds. The demigod Volskalka the Rider commands at least a simple prayer from each rider, as legend has it that he once rode across the steppes in mortal life. A small sect devoted to Vangal festers in the city, centered around a shadowy warrior known as the Crimson Blade (*hum male Brb12, CE*) who leads a small group of Horsemen of Vangal.

## Armed Forces

Mansk is patrolled and defended by Warlord Klesh's personal contingent of warriors. Numbering less than 500, these guards more than compensate for their small numbers with great skill and unmatched ferocity. They patrol the city from horseback and are merciless toward criminals. In times of war, the various barbarian groups can band together and muster a cavalry army numbering in the tens of thousands.

## The City of Mansk

Mansk is a sprawling, crude settlement. It has little order to its layout, as the city developed more by accident and the whims of individuals than by any central design.

**Trading Market:** This large town square serves as a central meeting place and shopping district for the sprawling city.

**Tent City:** This open field is a camping ground for nomadic tribes and clans that come to Mansk for trade or entertainment.

**Temple Hill:** Located in the center of Mansk, this tall hill hosts the main temple of Enkili and smaller shrines to Tanil and Volskalka the Rider.

**Merchant Quarter:** Known as Outland Town to the native barbarians, this small area hosts merchants and workers from the outside world. In contrast to the rest of Mansk, this place is fairly neat, clean, and orderly.

**Fort Klesh:** Named for Mansk's ruler, this stone castle serves as Klesh's personal abode and as the military command post for the Mansk region.

## Mithril

**Name:** Corean's City of the Mithril Golem

**Population:** 50,000 (Human 74%, Dwarf 8%, Elf 6%, Halfling 6%, Half-elf 3%, Half-orc 3%)

**Government:** The high priest of Corean rules this theocracy as a spiritual and civic leader.

**Ruler:** High Priest Emili Derigesh (*human male* Clr18, LG)

**Language:** Veshian

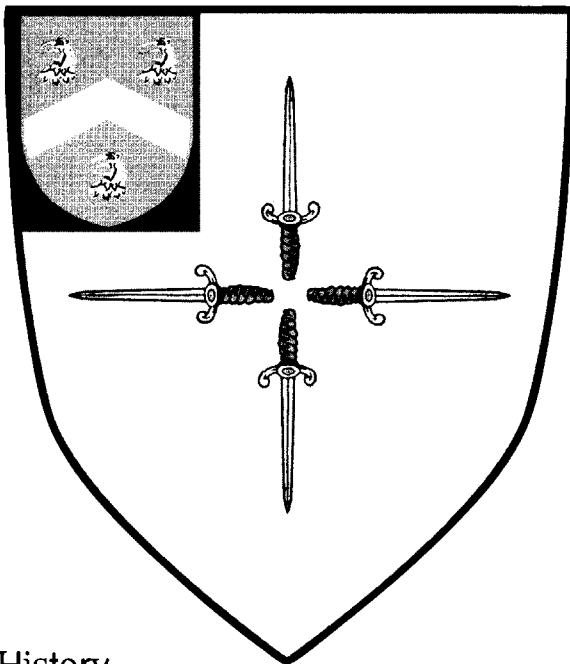
**Religion:** Corean

**Currency:** Gold golem (10 gp), gold blade (1 gp), silver shield (5 sp), silver stallion (1 sp), copper penny (1 cp)

**Resources:** Fish, wheat, finished goods

**Allies:** Hedrad, Mullis Town, Vesh

**Enemies:** Calastian Hegemony



### History

Shortly after Corean's great mithril golem came to rest on the shores of the Blood Sea, the city of Mithril sprang up around it. At first a militarized settlement of clerics and paladins, by 16 AV the city had begun to attract an ever-growing civilian population. By 26 AV, Mithril's population had grown so quickly that it spilled out to the Plains of Lede.

In an effort to expand into the rugged plains, Mithril's greatest clerics devised a system of structures called Wind Towers that magically tamed the fierce, brutal storms that plagued Lede. Slowly, settlers built farming communities under the protection of frontier forts manned by Mithril's soldiers and paladins. In addition, the paladins launched ambitious campaigns against the titanspawn and hags that lurked in the region, driving back those monsters and securing the Mithril region for settlers. For many years, the Mithril region was amongst the safest, most secure on Ghelspad.

By 110 AV, the paladins of Mithril experienced the first of a series of setbacks. The sudden appearance of vengauraks in the Plains of Lede caught the paladins off guard. By 111 AV, Mithril's outlying settlements were shattered by the advance of the burrowing vengauraks, as the fearsome beasts tunneled beneath forts and settlements, bursting through the ground to fall upon and massacre the defenders within. Compounding matters, the Blood Monsoon struck in 112 AV, forcing Mithril to divert troops and resources to repel assaults of pisceans and worse from the Blood Sea. In a few short years, the reach of civilization had been driven back from the Plains of Lede to the doorstep of Mithril itself.

Today, Mithril is a city in flux. Some paladins and clerics of Corean call for a second wave of crusades and settlement in Lede. A strange cult dedicated to worshipping the mithril golem as a god has arisen in Harbor City, while resentment from the city quarter's working poor towards the priests of Temple City continues to grow.

### Flora and Fauna

While little wildlife beyond pigeons and sea gulls lives in Mithril, the Blood Sea holds dire sharks, vicious pisceans and worse, lurking beneath the waves, eager to pounce on shipping.

### People

The divide between Temple City and Harbor City runs far deeper than the walls that separate the two. The denizens of Temple City are dedicated followers of the gods, genuinely moved by a desire to improve the world and hold back the titanspawn. However, while the clerics live in comfort, the desperate folk of Harbor City struggle mightily to sustain themselves. Such poverty within sight of Corean's supposedly righteous and just followers causes much anger and resentment amongst the commoners, who see the paladins as ineffectual and self-absorbed.

For their part, Corean's followers are genuine in their concern, but the threat of titanspawn, Calastian expansion, and the machinations of a secretive cabal of wizards led by the mysterious Dar'Tan all serve to keep Corean's paladins too busy fighting to secure Mithril's safety to see to the prosperity and security of Harbor City.

### Culture

The bulk of Temple City is dedicated to the gods. Great, marble temples to Corean soar to the sky, leaving even the most jaded observer gasping in wonder. At the same time, the decrepit shanties of Harbor City tell a tale of desperate poverty all too common across the Scarred Lands.

Founding Day, the last day of the month of Corer, is the city's most important holiday and a good illustration of the fundamental divide in Mithril. The paladins of the city march in full, gleaming battle dress to honor their god and the city they founded in

his name, while the temples are adorned in flowers and colorful decorations. Temple City stands awash in the sweet scent of fresh flowers, perfume, and incense as the city's elite gathers to celebrate. Meanwhile, in Harbor City the few laborers, fishermen, and outlaws who acknowledge the holiday engage in drunken debauches, wild brawls, and long parties. The few commoners who glimpse the wonder of Temple City on this day usually do so as servants or hired laborers charged with cleaning the streets or serving revelers food and drink.

## Crime and Punishment

Law enforcement varies wildly across Mithril. The guards who patrol Temple City are highly trained, well-paid professionals, while those who watch over the poorest sections of Harbor City are little more than legitimized thugs who shake down their victims for bribes.

**Theft:** In Temple City, theft is punishable with up to five years of hard labor. In Harbor City, the offender must pay a bribe or fine that varies depending upon the amount of the theft, from 15 gp for petty theft to hundreds of gp's for more serious offenses.

**Murder:** A murderer caught in Temple City faces a lifetime in chains. Most murders in Harbor City go unreported. Those that come to the attention of the guard are rarely investigated unless the victim's

friends or family offer a 50 gp or more bribe to the guard.

## Religion

Obviously, Corean's faith dwarfs all others in Mithril. Temple City is essentially a giant stretch of holy ground dedicated to that deity. While all the gods have at least token shrines erected in their honor, Corean stands supreme here. Recently, a splinter sect of his faithful has taken to worshipping the mithril golem as a god. This group agitates for greater military action against the titanspawn and could create a cataclysmic rift among Corean's faithful.

## Armed Forces

The core of Mithril's army revolves around the 900 paladins and 100 elite members of the Order of Mithril who call the city their home. Supplementing these holy warriors are several smaller companies of elite warriors and a large contingent of Crimson Legionnaires. Every able-bodied citizen of Mithril spends one day per month training in basic combat techniques, allowing the city to field a large, though poorly trained, defensive force. This militia is only deployed under the most dire circumstances and serves as a stopgap measure until more mercenaries or allied soldiers can rally to defend the city.



*A cleric of Corean, a Harbor City cutthroat, an ambitious merchant captain and a Coreanic paladin on the docks of Mithril.*

## The City of Mithril

The city of Mithril grew at the feet of Corean's golem. Originally composed of a few log huts and a crude palisade huddled within the golem's protective shadow, today it is a bustling metropolis.

**Temple City:** Mithril originally grew around the feet of the mithril golem. This section of the city hosts the temples and guard towers of Corean's faithful. Richly appointed and heavily patrolled, this entire area of the city is a majestic tribute to the gods.

**Harbor City:** Standing in stark contrast to the neat and ordered Temple City, Harbor City is a grim, gritty urban sprawl populated by laborers, merchants, and rogues.

**Leeside:** The western region of Harbor City is home to the merchant class and successful adventurers. The streets here are safer, though not as well-kept as in Temple City.

**Stormside:** The wildest portion of Harbor City, this area hosts many rough and ready sailors, thugs, and worse.

## Mullis Town

**Name:** Kingdom of Mullis

**Population:** 15,000 (Human 78%, Half-orc 10%, Dwarf 8%, Elf 2%, Half-elf 1%, Halfling 1%)

**Government:** Open-bidding monarchy.

**Ruler:** King Donad Jaren (*human male Exp7, LG*)

**Language:** Veshian

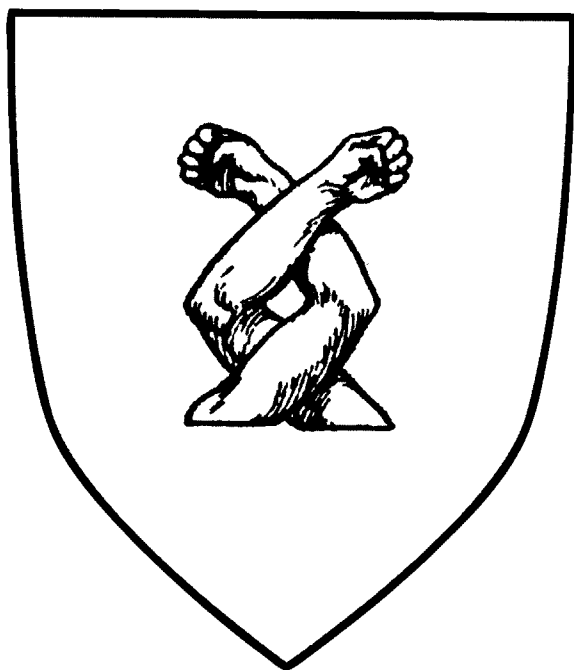
**Religion:** Tanil

**Currency:** Gold eagle (1 gp), silver falcon (5 sp), silver dove (1 sp), copper owl (5 cp), copper duck (1 cp)

**Resources:** Wheat, oats, barley, hops, iron, copper

**Allies:** Bridged City, Mansk, Mithril and Vesh.

**Enemies:** While business sense dictates that Mullis Town try its best to avoid making enemies, the Calastian Hegemony's territorial designs on this region makes it a potential enemy.



## History

Mullis Town is a product of the Divine War. In that titanic struggle's aftermath, many humans found themselves homeless and alone. A few isolated settlements arose on the Kelder Steppes despite raids by orcs and fierce barbarian horsemen, and by 20 AV the warlord Mullis had established the trading center that would one day bear his name. Originally, Mullis Town served as a central stopover place for merchants who wished to do business with the smaller settlements dotting the steppes. Lord Mullis and his men provided safety against raiders, though not without a price in the form of taxes and tribute.

Mullis Town's location at the southwestern end of the Serpentine Pass always made it an important gateway for overland trade to Mithril, yet even in

comparison to the fearsome Blood Sea the pass was a dangerous, difficult path. However, with Cordrada's announcement in 65 AV of his plans to build a heavily guarded stone road through the pass, Mullis Town transformed into a boomtown. Craftsmen and mercenaries flooded in, while traders and other merchants swiftly pulled up roots from other settlements in order to establish shop in the newly prosperous city. The completion of the Cordrada Corridor in 87 AV officially transformed Mullis Town from a sleepy regional trading center to an important link in north-eastern Ghelspad's economic chain.

The second major change to Mullis Town came in 92 AV with the discovery of tin in the hills north of town. While the tin mine soon played itself out, dwarven immigrants from the embattled realm of Burok Torn discovered iron and copper deposits south of the city. To this day, ore from those deposits helps keep caravans flowing to and from the city.

Today, Mullis Town is a prosperous trading center. King Jaren is a fair monarch who takes care to balance his desire to make Mullis Town an active force for good with the ambitions of its merchants. Recently, Jaren has made it city policy to accept trade with peaceful orcs and to allow half-orcs to settle in the city. The half-orc population of Mullis Town has swelled considerably, and the Gravelfist orcs can now be seen venturing into town to purchase goods and trade the hides of exotic animals and monsters.

The most exciting news of late is the engagement of King Jaren to Princess Hannatha of Bridged City, a match sure to increase both cities' prosperity. Rumor has it that some powerful forces are determined to thwart the alliance, but so far, with the exception of a botched attempt to steal Hannatha's engagement ring, no solid evidence of the conspiracy's existence has been found.

## People

The people of Mullis Town are ambitious, opportunistic and hardworking. Anyone with a strong work ethic and a dollop of wits can make a good living in Mullis Town, as money flows through here like a river. Catching part of the economic boom is the goal of most everyone who calls Mullis Town home.

## Culture

In Mullis Town, everything has its price, including a position with the government. The king earns his post by bidding against competing pretenders, then winning approval from a majority of the town's citizens. To become a citizen, one must only pay 10 gp per year to the city in exchange for voting rights. The city's seven ministers, each of whom oversees an important aspect of the city (agriculture, defense, development, diplomacy, health, justice and trade), must also bid for the position and win votes. Each bidder receives a tenth of a vote per gp value of his

bid, and the candidate with the highest total votes wins the election.

Rather than levy taxes, the government nominates businessmen to fund civic projects. These nominees then bid on public-works projects or offer to donate money to fund the army or other institutions. Those who fund a project are given preferential treatment by the government, and the renown and honor that goes with funding a major project make it an attractive proposition to those who do business here.

## Crime and Punishment

Mullis Town relies on a large corps of Crimson Legionnaires to serve both as defenders and law enforcers in the city. As the nobles and merchants directly fund the Legion, they tend to patrol the more prosperous parts of town with an extraordinary zeal. Furthermore, many of the top thieves in town use their gains to fuel runs for office or fund civic projects, particularly the town guard. Thus, many well-connected thieves find the guard little more than an annoyance. More than a few exasperated visitors have found themselves arrested for disturbing the peace after witnessing a petty crime and calling for the guard.

**Theft:** Upon conviction by the king's justice (if possible, a priest of Hedrada, though clerics of Corean are also often chosen), the criminal must pay a total amount of gold into the city treasury equal to the goods stolen. The victim may also choose either to accept an equal payment from the guilty party or demand one year of service from him per 1,000 gp stolen, up to a maximum of five years.

**Banditry:** Distinguishable from petty theft by its scale and level of organization, anyone caught and convicted of preying on caravans is hung.

**Murder:** Death by a method chosen by the survivor's next of kin, or burning at the stake.

## Religion

Tanil's devotees outnumber the adherents of other religions, though most Mullis Towners treat religion with a respectful apathy. All of the gods, even Belsameth, Chardun, Enkili, and Vangal, have small shrines in town, each sponsored by the government. Mullis Town's merchants care little about the gods so long as profits remain high. Priests or officials of Hedrada and Corean are often called upon to adjudicate disputes, due to their honest and lawful natures, but these two gods are considered far too rigid and serious by the people of the town, and neither is very popular here.

## Armed Forces

The Crimson Legion provides the bulk of Mullis Town's defense, though the legionnaires are typically outfitted and supplied by the city. In times of crisis,

the government holds the right to call for a general muster of all able-bodied men. The last time this happened was when King Jaren dispatched a sizable force of Crimson Legion warriors to help break a siege of Bridged City. The town guard's hunger for bribes is well known, and most petty crimes are excused with a few gold pieces. Many one-time robbers join up in order to boost their profits and keep a close eye on how the guard operates.

## Mullis Town

Mullis Town is a small settlement that has slowly grown up around a cluster of rude, timber buildings. It is divided into several distinct neighborhoods, each of which hosts a particular segment of society. The older portions of town tend to be the poorest.

**Traders' Town:** This impromptu gathering of traders and merchants exists within a gray area of Mullis Town law. No official guards patrol here, allowing the merchants to do as they please. The orcs that trade with Mullis Town do business here.

**Market Square:** This bustling market is the prime trading spot in Mullis Town.

**The Agora:** The smaller market here caters to the rich, whose townhouses surround it.

**Old Town:** These log cabins and crude buildings house Mullis Town's laborers and servants.

**West Town:** The most newly developed part of town, the latest generation of successful merchants and adventurers live here.

**University Town:** Scholars and archaeologists who study several finds near Mullis Town set up shop here.

**Miners' Town:** The dwarves, humans, and half-orcs who work Mullis Town's mines live here in crude shanties and cabins.

## Rahoch

**Name:** The Free City of Rahoch-by-the-Sea (former name)

**Population:** 40,000 (Human 91%, Halfling 7%, Half-elf 1%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Dictatorship: The "mayor" is appointed by King Virduk of Calastia.

**Ruler:** His Eminence Mayor Erdil Trotila (*human male Ar10, LE*)

**Language:** Calastian

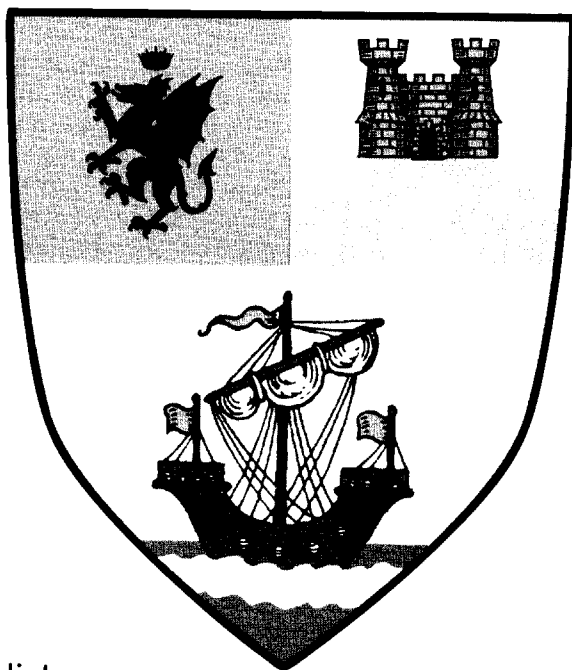
**Religion:** Manawe

**Currency:** Rahoch now officially uses Calastian currency, though coins of other lands are often accepted.

**Resources:** Fish, transport, trade

**Allies:** All nations of the Calastian Hegemony

**Enemies:** Burok Torn and Durrover



## History

This aged city was known as Rahail during the reign of the Ledeian empire. Even the Empire of Lede never conquered it, instead accepting tribute from the prosperous sea-lords who called it home. After the Divine War, the lord of the city openly declared Manawe its official deity, and renamed the city Rahoch. The descendants of Lord Vrail ruled the city for generations, as their forefathers had done before them. King Virduk launched a surprise attack against the city in 126 AV, counting upon the ravages of the Blood Monsoon to weaken its rulers. The then-current Lord Killian Vrail narrowly escaped with his life, evading pursuit by seizing a flotilla of ships in the harbor and sailing westwards. Lord Vrail ultimately landed in the distant city of Fangsfall, and though he took control of that metropolis, he still wishes to return home someday.



Once his conquest was complete, Virduk immediately set about winning the hearts and minds of the Rahoch citizens, and within a few years many began to wonder what all that “independence” talk was all about. Ruthless with his enemies, but equally generous with his friends, Virduk lavished public works, festivals and gold on the city, reestablishing it as one of the most important ports in southern Ghelspad. Most inhabitants today dismiss the tales of Virduk’s evil as Veshian propaganda, and many are willing to fight rather than allow anyone to defame the reputation of the beloved Queen Geleeda. A tiny handful plot the overthrow of the Calastian regime, but these are few, and are widely considered to be troublemakers by law-abiding Rahochans.

## People

The Rahochans are of mixed stock, due to the fact that people from dozens of nations have traded here over the years. The city’s new rulers are almost exclusively of Calastian ancestry, but most Rahochans ignore this fact and try to enjoy the prosperity and security that Calastia has brought.

## Culture

The sea has always been vital to Rahoch, and always will be. Originally fishermen, the people who would become the Rahochans became supreme mariners, charting the oceans and journeying to far continents. As the city grew more prosperous, however, the life of sailors gave way to the life of merchants and traders, and Rahoch maritime traditions began to be forgotten.

Today, most of the sailing is left to hired mariners, and the Rahochans content themselves with owning the ships and buying cargoes. More and more the Rahochans are becoming Calastians, though a few mourn the passing of the old ways. A small number of native sea-folk remains, but most of these live in the waterfront region at the foot of the Sea Walk. Many of those who fled the city with King Vrail were traditional Rahochan sailors, further depleting the stock of those who still sail and fish as their ancestors did.

Some traditions survive. Rahochans still worship Mother Manawe, the sea goddess, and the art and architecture of the city retains a distinctly nautical flavor. Buildings have portholes instead of windows; the figureheads, spars and other parts of ships are incorporated into structures; and even the somewhat nightmarish sprawl of the mayor’s manse boasts three tall spires, said to resemble the masts of a ship.

## Crime and Punishment

Rahoch has adopted the Calastian code of justice, such as it is, and all justice is administered by Calastian magistrates.

## Religion

The fisherfolk who first dwelled here were among the earliest worshippers of Manawe, the sea goddess. This tradition continues, but loyalty to Calastia de-

mands that most Rahochans also revere the Great General, Chardun.

In traditional Rahochan homes, each day begins with prayers for good weather, and each day ends with brief words of thanks to Manawe for the sea’s bounty. On the first day of Belot each year, Rahochans gather to read the names of citizens who have died at sea. The day is devoted to solemn remembrance and ends with a requiem at sunset, followed by a feast in honor of the departed. All Rahochan ships, however small, bear a small shrine to Manawe, and sea witches continue to serve on larger vessels, despite the decline of traditional Rahochan maritime culture.

Chardun is a relative newcomer here, but is gaining popularity as Rahochans embrace their Calastian conquerors’ culture. Numerous temples to the Great General can be found throughout the city, and services are usually well-attended.

## Armed Forces

One of the best things about the Calastian conquest, at least according to many Rahochans, is the fact that now King Virduk provides for the city’s defense. Most citizens do not discuss the downside of the occupation, at least not in public. About 500 of Virduk’s troops occupy the city, backed up by hundreds of mercenaries from the Legion of Crimson and similar knockabout groups. While they are under orders not to misbehave (or if they do, to leave no witnesses), the garrison members are an arrogant, undisciplined lot, unlikely to aid the city in times of crisis. All the same, King Virduk is paying their salaries and expenses, so few in the city complain.

## The City of Rahoch

The port is constantly jammed with cargo and passenger vessels, for a land boom in distant Termana is underway. Promised land in Termana if they choose to settle there, the poor and downtrodden of Calastia have flocked to Rahoch in hopes of a better life in the south, little knowing that their journey will end in virtual servitude on a miserable plot, expected to labor ceaselessly to feed Virduk’s armies.

**Sea Walk:** Rahoch is located on a high cliff above the Blossoming Sea, with access to the sea-level docks along an impressive series of switchbacks and thoroughfares known as the Sea Walk. The walk is busy at all hours of the day and night, when it is illuminated by innumerable oil lamps, and is quite picturesque.

**Mayor’s Manse:** The most impressive structure in Rahoch is a rather nightmarish construct of black, green and white marble that overlooks the sea. One of King Virduk’s many public works, the manse required the labor of many hundreds of unemployed civilians, and is probably so huge and sprawling because of the vast amount of graft and corruption that went on, keeping construction going for years. The mayor and his family live here, but occupy only a small portion of the building, leaving the rest empty, or allowing cronies to set up housekeeping.

## Shelzar

**Name:** The Pleasure City of Shelzar

**Population:** 100,000 (Human 76%, Halfling 10%, Half-elf 7%, Elf 3%, Half-orc 3%, Dwarf 1%)

**Government:** From an elected council of officials, the minister is the council member who receives the most votes, which generally means whoever has the most money to buy the votes.

**Ruler:** His Most Gracious Host, Minister Fratrel (human male Exp7/Ari8, CN)

**Language:** Shelzari, Calastian

**Religion:** Enkili

**Currency:** Platinum ayam-kebir (1 pp), gold kebir (5 gp), gold ordu (1 gp), gold argenti (5 sp), silver sayar-argenti (1 sp), copper ouda (1 cp)

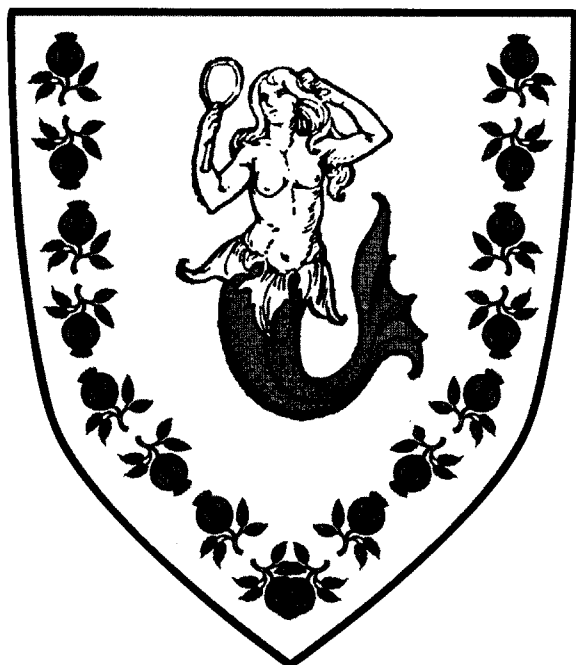
**Resources:** Figs, dates, oranges, coffee, cheese, goats, fish, silk, satin, cotton, linen, arrows

**Allies:** None

**Enemies:** None

### History

In the centuries before the Divine War, the Empire of Elz was rivaled in size and power only by Zathiske empire — with which it was almost unceasingly involved in wars over territory. Even before the Divine War ravaged the lands of Ghelspad, the Elzan empire had disintegrated into competing city-states, destroyed by the hedonism and decadence of its citizens.



Each of the Seven Cities of Elzan, as they became known, specialized in a different form of excess. The city of Wahid held elaborate gladiatorial combats, with body-counts rivaling some real battles. Elz was known for its vast and decadent feasts, where citizens could gorge themselves endlessly. And no Elzan city was better at fulfilling the need for carnal gratification than Shelzar.

When the Divine War scourged the land, six of the seven cities were consumed by the Sweltering Plains. Only Shelzar survived, though floods of refugees and other chaos created by the war almost overwhelmed the city. The wealthy and powerful of Shelzar formed a council, headed by a grand minister elected from their ranks, to govern the city in the interim. Now, some 150 years, later the council still rules the city and there is little indication that they will be ceding power any time soon.

Shelzar thrived as refugees from other lands sought a new home. The city expanded dramatically in the decades following the war, forcing construction of a new city wall, and vast slums beyond it to handle the population explosion.

Commerce has once more become the lifeblood of Ghelspad as merchants and traders seek their fortunes beyond their nation's borders. Shelzar is perfectly situated to be the preeminent port trading city in southern Ghelspad. Most major merchant houses have either relocated their main operations here or set up a major trading office. Shelzar is the predominant center for both business and pleasure in all the Scarred Lands.

### People

A hedonistic and uninhibited people, the Shelzari are open, friendly and lascivious in the extreme. Trade is their lifeblood and Shelzaris are friendliest to those with a pouch full of coin. Given the often extreme heat, both nobility and commoners alike dress in variations of the traditional light and loose-fitting garb, though where the peasantry craft theirs from common cotton and linen fabric the nobles and merchants wear fine silks and satins. The people are dark-haired and dark-skinned with large, round eyes and fine, often beak-like, noses. Beards are the norm among Shelzari men.

### Culture

Due to its nature as a trading crossroads and home to numerous refugees, Shelzar has become used to adopting the practices of other cultures. Despite this, most Shelzari believe their way of life is superior to all others, and traditional culture doggedly continues to be practiced.

The most popular game among the citizens of Shelzar is hago, a deceptively simple board game involving shifting stones around a 20x20 board to conquer territory. It is said to take only moments to learn but a lifetime to master. Invariably, every coffee

house in Shelzar has a few old men huddled over a hago board.

As might be expected, the Shelzari are very open and unashamed about sex, and it is not at all uncommon to find people coupling in places as public as taverns, parks or even the central marketplace. Shelzari exhibitionism reaches its height on the Night of Masks, a festival borrowed from the dour necromancers' city of Hollowfaust. During this festival, citizens hide their identity behind elaborate masks and the city goes wild. Food, liquor and drugs are consumed openly and in abundance, and wild public fornication with numerous anonymous strangers is the rule of the day.

For a people so open about their sexuality, the Shelzari are surprisingly prudish when it comes to strong drink. It is technically illegal to display public drunkenness or to drink in a public place other than a restaurant or tavern, though these laws are rarely enforced save in the more upscale parts of town. These laws are relaxed or ignored altogether on the Night of Masks, of course.

The month of Enkilot is the holiest to the people of Shelzar. During the day shops are closed and people pray at home or in temples and shrines, fasting from dawn to dusk. The night is a different story altogether. From sundown to sunup there are raucous celebrations and feasts in all corners of the city, some rivaling those of the Night of Masks in exuberance and outrageousness.

There are two Enkili's Days in the Shelzari calendar: the first day of Enkilot and Enker respectively. Shelzari citizens visit temples, make offerings and renew their devotion to Enkili. These are days for

family and loved ones, and the giving of gifts and familial feasts are the order of the day.

The Shelzari prefer stringed instruments and boisterous, raucous music. The rich prefer opera and theatre and the more cultured entertainments of other lands. The commoners like traditional plays, farces and histories, the bloodier and more overplayed the better.

The Shelzari enjoy spicy food to a degree rivaled only by the people of Zathiske. As such, Shelzar is a major destination for exotic spice shipments. There is a growing trend towards food from other lands, particularly in dockside cafes and upper-class restaurants. The most famous Shelzari dish is marinated goat or lamb skewers. Called zatai, it can be bought from any of a thousand vendors in the streets of the Shelzar for a ouda per skewer. It is normally served with kamadhis, a mixture of wheat grains and rice.

There is very little in the way of overland travel from Shelzar as the Sweltering Plains restrict access to the rest of Ghelspad. The caravan route to Zathiske is an exception, but even this road is not heavily traveled: most traffic between the two realms is by ship.

Local trade and fishing is conducted using the ubiquitous Shelzari dhow, a small but versatile coastal ship. The majority of travel within the city itself is conducted by foot or sedan chair as the streets are generally too crowded and narrow to use carts, save for transportation of good and cargo. Sedan chairs can carry up to two humans and may be hired for three ouda per quarter-mile (minimum five ouda).

Literacy is common among the rich and noble but rare among the lower classes. Virtually all educated Shelzari can read, write and speak several



tongues including Zathiskan, Ledean and Ancient Elzan.

Shelzar is the best surviving example of the Elzan style of architecture. Palaces of dwarven-quarried stone and fine colored marble, gilt domes and elegant spires make Shelzar one of the most beautiful cities of Ghelspad.

The most famous work of Shelzari literature is the *1001 Shelzari Nights*. The story tells of a nobleman who grows tired of his wife and tells her that he will have her put to death as soon as she is no longer able to pleasure him carnally. Distraught, the wife prays to Idra for guidance, and with the help of the goddess, pleases her husband for a thousand nights with more and more elaborate sexual techniques, until on the 1001st night, overwhelmed by every imaginable excess, her husband dies with a smile on his face, leaving her all his possessions. The book contains details and illustrations of all the techniques she employed and is the standard manual for the carnal arts in Shelzar, and indeed the rest of Ghelspad.

What surprises outsiders most is that marriage is taken very seriously among the Shelzari. Both men and women may charge for divorce on the grounds of infidelity, though as with most things this varies to a great degree. Among the wealthy it is common for both men and women to openly take lovers of both genders, but divorce laws are only enforced if one of the partners grows dissatisfied.

Cremation is the norm in Shelzar. When possible, foreigners' remains are returned to their home nations or — barring that — are buried at sea.

Halflings are the most populous non-human race in Shelzar. Many halflings in the city make their living as shopkeepers and servants. The majority of Shelzari dwarves are descended from dwarves who were brought to the city as slaves. Slavery was officially banned in Shelzar many centuries ago and they have since worked as free Shelzari citizens. Most Shelzari dwarves wear ornamental iron collars and/or bracers as a reminder of their slave ancestry.

## Crime and Punishment

Though it is a wild and, in the opinion of many, lawless place, Shelzar has a well established system of justice. City magistrates, appointed by the Host, see to the investigation and punishment of crimes. If a city guard witnesses a crime, there is no investigation and judgment is passed summarily by the magistrates. However, if the guilt of the individual is in question — or if he is wealthy enough — the magistrates launch an investigation into the crime. Outside investigators are often used to collect evidence and witness statements, all of which is returned to the magistrates within a pre-determined period of time. Evidence is then assessed and judgment is passed. It is an unfortunate reality that the rich rarely pay for anything but the most serious of crimes where their guilt is indisputable.

In all cases where criminals are put to death, their souls are dedicated to Enkili. Any attempts to raise or resurrect the criminal are entirely dependant on Enkili's will to release their soul.

**Theft:** Remuneration or prison term, and loss of a hand.

**Rape:** Castration. Despite the fact that the people of Shelzar are so open sexually — or perhaps because of it — rape is considered a serious crime and is dealt with most severely. Just as a thief loses a hand to prevent further transgressions, so too does the rapist lose the offending appendage.

**Blasphemy:** Public flogging. The number of lashes is based on the degree of blasphemy, ten being most common, though the number can go as high as 100 lashes for denying Enkili's existence. The crime of blasphemy is a serious one, surprisingly not concerned only with Enkili. Blasphemy is the crime of openly slandering any of the gods. Simply worshipping one over another, or even espousing one's own deities as superior is not considered blasphemy, but actively disparaging a god or her worship is. Though serious, this crime is rarely enforced save on holy days.

**Trespass:** One to six months in prison.

**Assault:** Variable (one week per hp of damage dealt divided by character level). Crimes such as assault or even murder can be mitigated if the accused can prove that her actions were in self defense, which includes defense of her person, immediate family, home or assets.

**Casting Harmful Magics:** Variable (one month per individual hp of damage dealt).

**Casting Mind-Affecting Magics:** One to five years in prison, depending on the severity.

**Raising or Commanding Undead:** Death by quartering, and the pieces burnt.

**Arson:** Death by burning.

**Murder:** Death by beheading.

**Treason:** Death by quartering.

## Religion

Enkili reigns supreme in the city of pleasure. The god's chaotic, near-mad nature dictates that the worship of other gods is not only allowed, but encouraged, though most Shelzari hold the Jester in the greatest esteem. Other popular gods of the city include Manawe the Sea Queen, Idra, Madriel and Chardun, whose worship was exported here by the Calastians, hoping to gain a toehold in the prosperous metropolis.

## Armed Forces

Shelzar has no standing army as such. There are some 1,700 or so guardsmen who patrol and protect the city, not counting the mercenaries and private guards hired many of Shelzar's wealthier citizens. During times of trouble, the city can also raise a

militia. There are currently nearly 5,000 citizens registered with the militia — including seven sorcerers — and many more may be conscripted in an emergency. Mercenaries from the Legions of Ash and Crimson patrol the routes in and out of the city, and hopefully stop invaders before they reach the city walls.

## The City of Shelzar

Shelzar is described in the famous tome *The Sundered Realm* as having “great spires of jade and ivory, of stone cut and carried from the halls of Burok Torn,” and as “a place where merchants rule and peoples of all lands live and work together.” Taking a slightly different view of the city, the Darakeene bard Ionae describes the city this way, in his travelogue *Travels and Travails*: “a festering pit, a rats-maze of alleys and dead ends, a place where death can come at any time and no man who lives long there does so but with his eyes open while he takes his rest.” Both descriptions are true — Shelzar is a place of variety and extremes. The wealthy live and work in buildings of marble with gilt roofs, eating the finest food from across the world and partaking in all manner of pleasurable distractions. The poor live in utter squalor both inside Shelzar’s walls and in the slums that spread beyond them.

Within the city walls, even the poorest areas of Shelzar have paved streets and alleys, as an ancient law requires building owners to construct and maintain any streets which their buildings adjoin. Since Shelzar’s early days street paving has been the province of the Brunwyn Craft Guild, a collective of dwarven stonemasons specializing in such work.

Most Shelzari houses are in the form of a simple square building, constructed around a central open courtyard and bounded on all sides by streets or alleys. While much of the maze is like this, there are also numerous multi-story tenements and apartment blocks built side-by-side with no space between them.

The city has two walls. The Old Wall was the boundary of the original city. There are no longer any proper gates to this wall, and it is pierced in dozens of locations by doors, roads and foot-paths. The Old Wall is a potent psychological border though, dividing the old town’s foreign quarter, merchant quarter and north docks from the rest of the city. North of the Old Wall is the realm of the wealthy and powerful.

A vast subterranean network of old tunnels, crypts, catacombs and sewers stretches beneath the city, but no one has ever been able to fully explore or map them. This allows the tunnels to be used by Shelzar’s most dangerous denizens, particularly the dread Cult of Ancients whose headquarters — the Temple of Shadows — are located in these tunnels. One can travel the length and breadth of the city through this tunnel network, popping up in any district from any of a hundred different secret openings. Some tunnels even open into the cellars and

sub-basements of Shelzar’s most wealthy and influential citizens. So far the efforts of the thieves guild to find an exit into the cellars of House Asuras have come to naught, but they keep trying and are convinced they will eventually succeed in looting that famed house.

**1. Shalamar:** The seat of government and home of the prime minister, currently Minister Fratrel. This sprawling complex is the size of a village and houses hundreds of people. Save for a few public spaces, the vast majority of the complex is off-limits to common citizens and outsiders. Trespassing in Shalamar is harshly punished.

**2. Enkili’s Way:** The original main street encircling the city, Enkili’s way is broad and pleasant, tree-lined and caressed by breezes from the sea. The vast majority of Shelzar’s temples and shrines are to be found on this street along with dozens of restaurants and coffee houses. The city has grown well beyond the street’s original boundaries and, like the god that it is named for, the street is meandering, chaotic and confusing to outsiders.

**3. Belsameth’s Bliss:** A rather nondescript pleasure house, seemingly no different than a hundred others like it in the city. This is exactly the illusion the owners hope to achieve, for the Bliss is the main portal to the Temple of Shadows, the headquarters for that most feared group of assassins, the Cult of Ancients. The bloodthirsty mistress of the Cult of Ancients, Talina Som (*human female Rog9/Clr7, LE*, see **The Wise and the Wicked**) spends much time here, and the structure serves as the cult’s de facto headquarters.

**4. Grand Temple:** Enkili encourages the worship of other gods, and doesn’t even get upset if his followers change their allegiance periodically. This great marble structure houses shrines and priests of all the other major gods, including Denev. It is not entirely a religious structure, however, for unused rooms and chambers are rented out by the city to anyone who wants them. In reality, the Grand Temple houses numerous small taverns, gambling houses, brothels, drug dens and similar businesses. The priests of the more lawful gods such as Hedrada, Chardun and Corean find this sort of thing distasteful, but accept it as part of life in the City of Pleasure.

**5. The Fortress:** Originally built to aid in the defense of the city during the Divine War, this huge and grim structure is now in disrepair and houses the small Shelzari army. Grand Commander Ismal Khemari (*human male Ari5/Ftr4, CN*) is a political appointee with minimal military skill. The army occasionally marches through the streets and drills, but patrols and the real defense of the city are left to mercenary units that are billeted in various villages and forts near the city.

**6. The Fiend’s Folly:** An infamous inn and brothel, this building has been destroyed under mysterious circumstances on no less than five separate

occasions over the years, each time reopening with a new name and a new owner. Its previous incarnation as the Knight's Crossing was burned to the ground last year in an incident involving an invasion by charfiends. Despite its cursed reputation, or perhaps because of it, the inn is always a favored locale for adventurers and other such unsavory types. The new owner Gellorian (*half-elf male Exp6, NE*) expects to make his fortune from the Folly and runs a tight ship. Its most exclusive tables have a magnificent view of the Blossoming Sea. Gellorian also has a huge information-gathering network throughout the city. If you need information in Shelzar he is the man to see, but only if you have a full purse and a relaxed attitude toward the law.

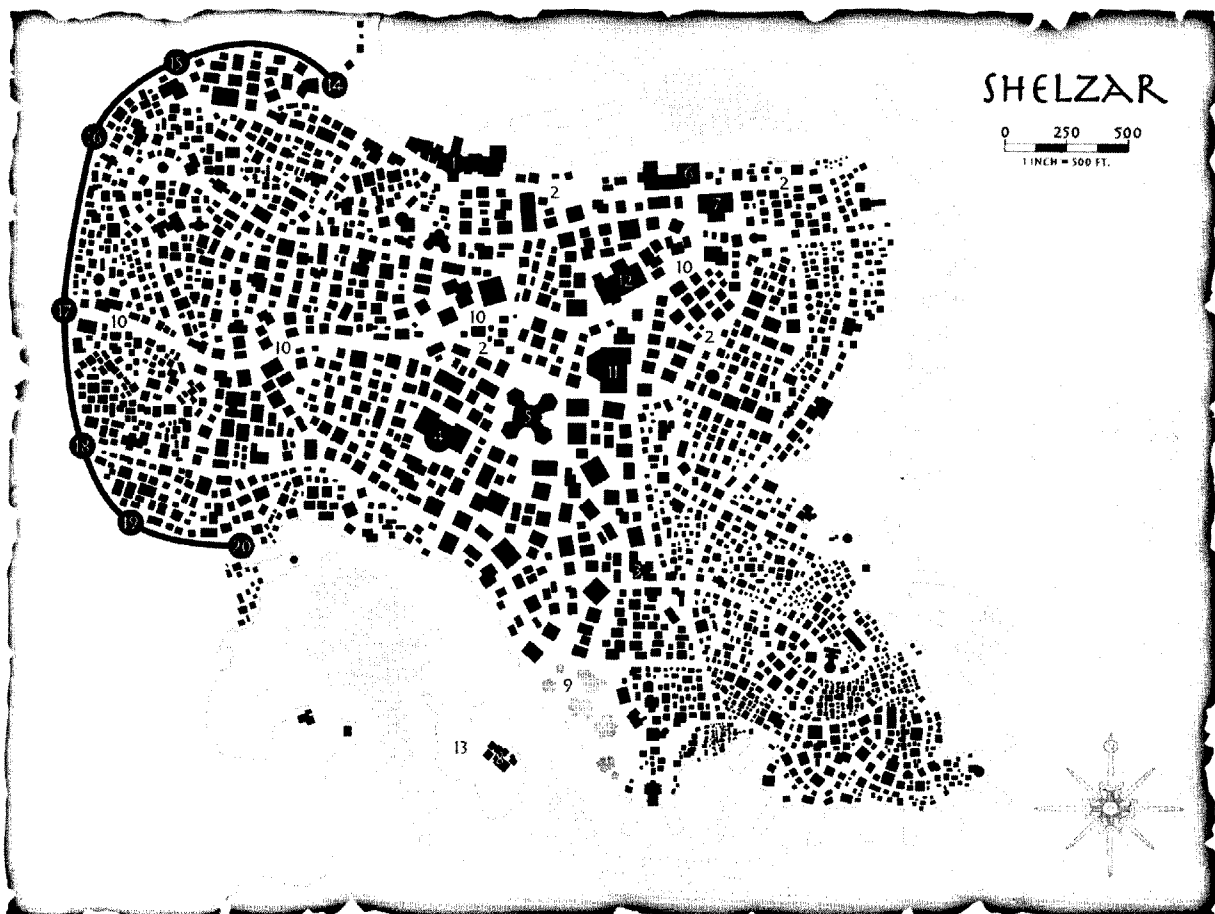
**7. Jester's Warren:** Gambling and games of chance are considered sacred activities by the faithful of Enkili. Shelzar, where the Trickster rules supreme, is probably the best example of this sentiment. The Jester's Warren is an enormous gambling house, where virtually any game can be played and anything wagered. Interestingly enough, Enkili worshippers frown on cheating, either for the house or against it, as this disrupts the natural forces of chance that are blessed by the deity. As with other gambling houses in Shelzar, many other pleasures are available, from exotic intoxicants and intoxicants to paid companions of all sexes and races. The house master Inigal (*human male Rog14, CN*) was once a student at

Darakeene's Plague War College, but abandoned a military career in favor of serving his god as a master of games.

**8. House Asuras:** The nexus of the Asuras trade empire. Possibly the most powerful and extensive mercantile group in the Scarred Lands, Asuras made its fortune by supplying both sides during the Divine War and is known for its ruthless business practices. There are many merchants who would pay a king's ransom to know what goes on within these walls. The infamous patriarch Telos Asuras (*human male Exp16, CE*, see **The Wise and the Wicked**) lives here, surrounded by fanatical bodyguards and traps.

**9. The Park:** The biggest draw in the Park is the Menagerie, a vast collection of animals and monsters from every corner of Ghelspad and — thanks to a few daring traders — Termana as well. The highlight of the menagerie is a very young black dragon, the only one known on Ghelspad. The creature was raised from an egg, but as it matures and grows more restless and destructive, debate rages as to what to do with the beast.

**10. Grand Boulevard:** Second in splendor only to Enkili's Way, the Grand Boulevard travels the entire length of the city. Its broad, marble-paved expanse is lined with fragrant shade-trees and is a true marvel to behold in the spring. The boulevard used to curve up and end near Enkili's Gate, but since the





creation of Newgate the boulevard has been extended to end at that portal.

**11. Temple of Enkili:** Next to the palace of Shalamar and the sprawling estates of the wealthy, this is the largest structure in the city. Its seven silver-gilt spires, each bearing a statue of Enkili, reach nearly 300 feet into the air. The Jester's high priestess Ayshella (*human female Rog6/Clr11, CN*) is also known to be a worshipper of Idra (and, it is rumored, Belsameth) and an enthusiastic participant in the city's most excessive and orgiastic rites.

**12. Calastian Embassy:** In an effort to keep Virduk at bay, Fratrel and his council have a deal with Calastia. The authorities turn a blind eye to shipments of goods into and out of the embassy, in exchange for a sizable "donation" to the city coffers. However, so many mysterious shipments have been coming in of late that even Fratrel fears the worst, and is considering breaking the pact. This vast and luxurious manse houses the Calastian mission, and is well-guarded by elite Calastian troops.

**13. Ismarhi Island:** An enclave of the wealthiest citizens in Shelzar. Minister Fratrel's private home is here, as is the House Asuras compound. A huge lighthouse of polished bronze stands on the southern-most promontory of the island, standing as a beacon to sailors both day and night.

**14. Old Gate:** The old gate is, unsurprisingly, the oldest of the gates, and it shows. The style of architecture obviously predates the Elzan style prevalent everywhere else in the city. Legend maintains that the gate stood here even before the founding of the city, hinting at either magical influence or the possibility that another city once stood on the site that Shelzar occupies. If the massive size of the portals is an indication, the citizens of that ancient city must have been giants.

**15. Padaweh Gate:** The Padaweh was the university that once stood on Shelzar's eastern edge. The university was moved to the Elzan imperial capital shortly before the Divine War and thus destroyed in the chaos that followed. While no such grand seat of learning exists here now, there are numerous smaller magical and mundane colleges in the city, and most

guilds maintain a college to school members in the world beyond their craft.

**16. Enkili's Gate:** This gate is always left open — indeed it has no doors to speak of, simply ornamental shutters attached to the walls, with the implication that all who follow Enkili are welcome in Shelzar. A few have commented on the obvious defensive problems with a nonexistent gate, but no one has attacked Shelzar in so long that few are concerned about it.

**17. Belsameth's Gate:** Identical in every way to Enkili's gate save that the doors are always shut. Actually, there is no real gate here at all, simply a wall carved to look like one. This is meant to be very symbolic, of course, but no one seems to remember of what.

**18. Newgate:** Five years ago a massive firestorm blew in from the Sweltering Plains, withering fields, killing citizens and finally punching a hole through the sandwall. The dwarves of the Brunwyn Craft Guild successfully lobbied the city to allow them to craft a new gate rather than simply patching the wall, and it is a glory to behold. Intricate carvings cover every inch of the grand gate, relating the history of Shelzar from its founding to today. The gates themselves are cut from two solid pieces of granite shipped from Burok Torn. Each weighs more than 15 tons, but one man can swing them easily and silently open or closed.

**19. Hedrada's Gate:** The Hedradan church has a surprisingly devout and robust presence in the city of Shelzar, and this gate commemorates the great contribution that the church and Shelzar's Hedradan citizens have made to the city over the years. In addition to the main Hedradan church on Enkili's Way near Shalamar, there is a smaller shrine to Hedrad built into this gate which is the favored place of worship for Hedradans living in the poorer districts of the city.

**20. Beggar's Gate:** The southernmost of the city's gates. No one seems to recall the origin of the name, but it is unique among all the gates in that the portal is only large enough to admit a person on foot; no horses or vehicles may pass this way.

## Vera-Tre

**Name:** The Virgin Woods of Denev

**Population:** Not known; most estimate 100,000-200,000 (100% Elf)

**Government:** Reincarnational monarchy

**Ruler:** Lord of the Verdant Seat Olithtagard of the Fiery Wing (*elf male Dru10/Inc10, N*)

**Language:** Middle Elvish

**Religion:** Denev, Tanil

**Currency:** None known; most transactions among the elves are by barter or exchange of valued possessions, artwork, gems, etc.

**Resources:** None that the elves will allow to be exploited.

**Allies:** Amalthea, Vesh

**Enemies:** Khirdet



### History

The elves of Vera-Tre, literally “Virgin Woods,” were different from their brethren on Termana. Like the titans, they felt tied to the land itself, and revered the living embodiment of Scarn, the titaness Denev. Faithful servants of the Earth Mother, the Vera-Trean elves cared for her forests, tended her beasts, and paid her homage in the peaceful harmony that

they felt with the living world. The great forest of the Ganjus was the center of their existence, and the tree-city of Vera-Tre their beloved home.

When the Titanswar erupted, these elves struggled to continue serving Denev, and to preserve their forests from the bloody carnage that warped the lands elsewhere. Denev herself finally decided to join the war on the side of the gods, but told her people to stay in their forest and defend it against those who would pollute it.

When the destruction of Mormo resulted in the corruption of the peaceful Broadreach Forest, the Vera-Trean elves’ fellow Denev-worshippers were forced to flee. The pain of the Broadreach was felt in the depths of the Ganjus, and the elves’ determination to keep their land unpolluted was redoubled. Titanspawn armies approached the great forest, but the determined defenders held them at bay. When the war finally ended, the Ganjus was one of few regions relatively untouched by the violence.

There were still problems, however. Bands of titanspawn lurked in the woods and had to be hunted down. The fallout from magical catastrophes and powerful rituals threatened to do what the titans had failed to do, and the Vera-Trean elves, aided by the Incarnates and the Jordeh druids, cast numerous healing rituals to help keep the forest healthy.

Though she slumbered beneath the ground, merged with the land itself, Denev’s presence was still felt in the forest, for many believed that her final resting place was in the Ganjus. It is known that the titaness once manifested herself in the Ganjus more than any other place on Scarn, which tends to support this theory.

Since the war, the realm has remained isolated, though the followers of Denev are welcome regardless of their species and nationality. Those truly loyal to the Earth Mother keep the land’s secrets, however, and little is truly known about what lies in the heart of the Ganjus. A few trusted members of the Veshian vigils have also been allowed into the forest, but these lucky individuals are also keeping mum about what they know.

### People

With the exception of non-elven Denev worshippers and druids, Ganjus’ population is exclusively elvish. Virtually unchanged since the days before the Divine War, the elves of Vera-Tre are a proud, handsome people with golden hair, pale skin and clear gold, blue or — rarely — green eyes. Both males and females wear only breeches or loincloths in warmer months, buckskin or furs when it grows colder. Tattoos are common, in geometric or naturalistic patterns.

Insular and, in some cases, downright isolationist, the Vera-Trean elves are not terribly warm or friendly, even to their allies. The long years and hardships of the Divine War, and the troubles that it

caused, have combined to increase the elves' distrust of the outside world. The friendship of a Vera-Trean elf is a hard thing to earn, and once earned should not be taken lightly; but a handful of outsiders have actually succeeded in winning the elves' trust. These few, known as the Mother's Blessed Ones, have full freedom of travel in the forest and can count on the elves' aid should it ever be needed.

## Culture

Life in Vera-Tre is one of natural, unhurried rhythm. The elves see it as their duty to live harmoniously with the world around them, and all things are carried out in accordance with Denev's own cycle of life and death. Daily activities are geared toward the task of preserving and defending the forest.

This is not to say that the elves do not engage in leisure activities or entertainment. Holidays take place at the two equinoxes and two solstices of the year, and are accompanied by singing, dancing, feasting, and ceremonies dedicated to Denev. In spring and summer, the joys of life are celebrated, while in autumn and fall the elves give thanks for the eternal cycle, and ceremonies all recognize the transitory nature of mortal existence. All elves hope that their lives are useful and productive, and that after their death and reincarnation, their mortal remains will serve the land well.

Elves enjoy songs and stories, though their tales always emphasize the blessings of Denev and the natural order. The bards of Denev are known as the Chorus of the Ages, and though they are rare, their reputation extends well beyond the Ganjus. They wander the land, receiving food and shelter in exchange for songs and news of the outside world, and, besides the incarnates, are the most likely wood elves to be encountered outside the forest. Each year, at summer solstice, called the Festival of the Sun, members of the Chorus gather in the Grove of the Mother and exchange information, so that all will know what is happening in the Ganjus and the world beyond.

The forest's best-known, or at least most widely traveled, inhabitants are the incarnates. These mystical warrior-spellcasters are druids who have been reincarnated numerous times, and remember many, if not all, of their previous lives. The wisdom learned in countless lifetimes is turned to aiding the cause of Denev, the preservation of the forest, and the cause of absolute neutrality. Incarnates have been known to leave the Ganjus and wander Ghelspad, seeking wisdom and defending nature when it is in peril, and also trying to learn of their own previous incarnations.

The druids of Vera-Tre are an especially powerful group, known as the Jordeh. Their duties are somewhat more esoteric than those of the incarnates: seeing to the spiritual well-being of the forest and its inhabitants. This does not mean that they are necessarily kind, for the natural world can often be cruel.

The Jordeh see it as their duty to keep the natural order functioning, and maintain the balance of Denev's world. In addition to this, the Jordeh are responsible for finding the incarnates who rule Vera-Tre.

Vera-Tre's leader is an incarnate who recalls a life as one of the Four Eldest Beasts: Wings-of-Fire the hawk, Moon-in-the-Eyes the wolf, Stag-of-Seven-Tines the stag, or Fur-Like-Dusk, the bear. Succession takes place when a wood-elven child remembers a life as one of the Four Beasts in a ceremony overseen by senior Jordeh. The ruler, known as the Lord of the Verdant Seat, is aided by senior incarnates called keepers, each of whom oversees a different aspect of the forest's health. These individuals include the Keeper of the Forest, Keeper of the Seeds, Keeper of Streams, Keeper of Beasts and Keeper of Birds.

## Crime and Punishment

Crime is rare in Vera-Tre, since the strict adherence to the ways of nature make any attempt to impose an artificial code of laws all but useless. There is no formal list of crimes or punishments — the only real offense is harming the forest or its inhabitants unnecessarily, and anyone accused of such a crime is expected to justify his actions to the Jordeh or face the consequences. These can vary from a sort of internal exile, in which the criminal is shunned and avoided by other elves for a time, to banishment from the Ganjus for anywhere from a month to life, and finally execution and "reunion" with the Earth Mother. This last is reserved for the most heinous of crimes — consorting with titanspawn, murder of a Jordeh, destruction of the forest, war against Vera-Tre or Denev. Even in such cases, the elves do not consider execution a true death sentence. The soul, liberated from the misjudgments and errors of its current incarnation, is allowed to move on and atone for its errors, while the criminal's physical body is returned to the embrace of the Earth Mother, where the elves hope that it will serve the land better.

Outsiders are dealt with firmly, though the elves do not kill intruders without cause. Those who enter the Ganjus unbidden usually simply find themselves rendered unconscious and awaken well away from the forest. Those who don't get the hint and attempt to return are issued strong warnings, and told that future incursions will be punished harshly, before they are once more rendered helpless and removed. Those who persist in entering the forest have been known to end up in a different part of Ghelspad with a large portion of their memories missing.

Others, especially those who insist on cutting down the region's trees, hunting its animals, or plundering its riches, often end up as deer, rabbits or even mice — all the better, the elves claim, to teach them to live in harmony with Denev.

Invaders, or those who enter the Ganjus intent on violence, meet with stiff resistance from the region's

defenders and usually simply disappear, swallowed up by the land itself. The eventual fate of these individuals is not known, but it is probably quite unpleasant.

## Religion

The titaness Denev is more than just a goddess. To the elves she *is* the land, part of Scarn and part of themselves. It is said that she actually slumbers beneath the forest, and that the Grove of the Mother is the place where she began her sleep. All daily activity is dedicated to furthering her vision of natural harmony, and the eternal balance of the wild.

The Jordeh are the titaness' living representatives in the forest. They wander the realm, seeing to the spiritual well-being of both the elves and the living things of the Ganjus. Ceremonies and rituals are generally performed with individuals or small groups, save on festival days, when solstice or equinox rituals are intended to affect and benefit the entire nation.

## Armed Forces

The realm has no formal military force, but its inhabitants are so accustomed to defending their forests that they can instantly forge themselves into a potent defensive army. The incarnates and Jordeh take the lead in such instances, providing scouting, magical support and a command infrastructure. Wood-elf rangers and hunters form the bulk of the troops who will oppose invaders.

The elite archers of the forest, the Lilliandeli, act as officers and roaming guerilla forces engaging in hit-and-run attacks. The Lilliandeli are known across the continent and not limited to the Ganjus, and outside the forest include half-elves and elf-friends in their ranks.

## The City of Vera-Tre

Vera-Tre is not a city so much as a portion of the forest reserved for the elves' habitation. An outside observer should not be blamed for failing to see any city at all. Art and architecture in this remarkable settlement are all highly naturalistic, incorporating the normal shapes of the trees, rocks and streams. Here, the great trees of Ganjus grow as they did before the Divine War, and some have attained an enormous girth. These gargantuan trees are used as dwellings, with chambers magically grown to blend into the living wood. Entrances and windows are natural-looking, like gaps or knots in the wood, or tangles of roots leading to passages or rooms.

**Druidic Groves:** Several important groves dot the settlement, including the twin Sunlight and Moonlight Groves, used respectively for day- and night-based rituals, and the Grove of Silver and the Grove of Gold, where many important ceremonies take place, including the rituals of contemplation, where incarnates discover their previous incarnations, and the summoning of the beasts, in which the incarnates commune with the spirits of the Four Eldest Beasts.

**The Verdant Seat:** The eldest incarnate, who bears the spirit of one of the Four Eldest Beasts, normally oversees the realm from this massive tree near the center of the settlement. Massive and unbelievably ancient, the tree itself is thought by the elves to be directly connected to Denev's physical body. The Seat rises above the forest, and near its crown the branches form a sort of amphitheater, where numerous elves can sit and converse. The Lord of the Verdant Seat uses this place to meet with his advisors and receives news of the realm from members of the Chorus of the Ages.

# Chapter Five: Important Locations in



Vast sections of Ghelspad remain sparsely populated, shunned or unclaimed. These regions may be too wild or barren for anyone to want them, or they may maintain their independence through the ferocity of their inhabitants. Other regions are cursed, and avoided by all. These regions are detailed in this chapter.

Where appropriate, information on population, rulers, economies, etc., is included. These statistics are not provided if populations are unknown, resources unexploited, government chaotic or nonexistent, and so on. Explorers and adventurers might be able to determine the exact nature of this information, and many rulers such as the power-hungry King Virduk of Calastia, might be willing to sponsor or reward anyone who can learn more about such things.

## Adurn's Tear

### History

*It would seem that Virduk's depredations know no bounds. I am deeply and saddened by the death of Adurn. We have seen your valiant fighting on our behalf and I personally applaud your tenacity and spirit. While no one in recent history has ever earned the right to invoke this privilege, I give it to you now, good people: Let it therefore be known that any man, woman or child who is a part of this army shall be named honorary dwarves and be afforded all of the rights, privileges and honors associated with such a declaration.*

— Taken from the speech given by King Thain to the Army of Adurn, seven days after the Battle of Twisted Timbers, 93 AV

The story of how Adurn's Tear received its name is perhaps best told by the renown warrior-turned-bard Juliana Vasili, who was present at the Battle of Twisted Timbers. She was the soldier who rushed to her dying general's side, dragging him out of reach of the hail of arrows, taking two in the left shoulder for her efforts. His smiling face and the quiet dignity with which he greeted death inspired her to record the events of the following days. The "Ballad of Twisted Tears" has become her most famous work.

"When warrior-hero Adurn of Vesh fell,  
His body pierced by dozens of arrows,  
He uttered not a sound, but smiled up at me.  
Grieving, we fought  
With a vengeance we knew not that we had,  
Driving the boy-king and his dragon back.  
We won the day but lost our spirit;  
The dwarves were safe, but at a terrible cost,  
For without Adurn, we could not fight.  
Our knights and soldiers, crying all,  
Set Adurn upon the funeral pyre,  
And I silently watched and wept,  
As his body drifted onto Mountain's Tear Loch.  
Knowing the dragon would soon return,  
We prayed to the Paladin to light our way,  
But we had taken a fight that was not ours,  
And the Champion could not herald our cause.  
In desperation, the Redeemer was begged  
To send a new champion to guide our hand.  
And lo,  
When the pyre that bore our general  
Should have faded and expired,  
It burned on,  
Seven days and nights of brilliance.  
And the light from the fire,  
Took the shape and sound of a swan in flight.  
On the seventh night, Thain, King of the  
Dwarves,  
Came to give us praise,

Visions of swans filling his dreams,  
Heralding the savior of his people.  
At that very moment, the funeral pyre flared.  
A majestic swan took wing  
From the last embers of Adurn's pyre,  
And disappeared over the horizon.  
It was then that the priests knew  
Their salvation was at hand.  
Thain adopted us, and we him,  
Forging a new alliance between dwarf and man  
That eventually defeated the great Black Dragon  
King.

It is said that Juliana has played this ballad twice for the King of the Dwarves since that day. Both times, he openly wept.

### Geography

Formerly known as Mountain's Tear Loch, this large mountain lake, located in the Kelders, was famously renamed to honor the memory of Adurn of Vesh in 93 AV. Since that time, the lake has remained pure and pristine, despite the ravages that occurred in other areas of the Kelders and Ghelspad as a whole. The lake is roughly one half mile across and almost two miles long. From above, it vaguely resembles a tear. It is fed by five small streams that channel melting snow directly into it. It is also fed from a subterranean aquifer that some believe contains a portion of Denev's vital essence. In places, the lake is almost 300 feet deep. Due to its height above sea level and its underground water source, the water is always near freezing, despite the season. This also lends to the crystal clarity of the water; on a good day the bottom can be seen almost an eighth of a mile from shore.

**Denev's Aquifer:** At the center of Adurn's Tear, almost at the exact point where Adurn's pyre extinguished and sank, there is a crack in the lakebed. There, the clearest, purest water flows up from the earth and into the Tear. This is what allows the lake to maintain its pristine nature, despite the events of the last several decades. Should anyone bottle water from this source, they will find themselves refreshed and rested, no matter how little actual rest they may have had.

### Flora and Fauna

Lush water hyacinths grow in and around Adurn's Tear, as well as many non-tainted species of freshwater bass and salmon; the latter migrating upstream when it is time to spawn. The Tear is also home to a small variety of freshwater porpoise. Evergreens surround the area immediately beyond the shores of the lake and low grasses and scrub run almost straight to the water's edge. An increasing number of birds of prey have begun making nests in the area. It is even rumored that, somewhere in the vicinity of Adurn's Tear, the Great Swan has its nest. The Tear holds the



safest drinking water in all the Kelders and is occasionally patrolled by druidic covens dedicated to Denev, as well as some remnants of Adurn's army who volunteered to stay behind and assure that the final resting-place of their mighty general was never disturbed.

## Bleak Savannah

### History

In 2 AV, the repatriation of the surviving proud of western Ghelspad began. The mass migration quickly overwhelmed what meager resources were left in the land; combined with the loss of Hrinruuk, the leonids descended into anarchy and cannibalism. Filling the power vacuum were the unitaurs who, though diminished no less by the War, were psychologically more intact than their cousins. Unitaur ranging grounds expanded tenfold at the proud's expense until they bordered directly upon the settlements of the Maktarque, Ashnosi, and Khuun-do. Scattered and still recovering from the War, the divine races could mount little opposition, and the cities known as the Eight Jewels of Khuun were sacked and destroyed in the span of a generation. The Convention of Vera-Tre and Amalthea's intercession prevented slaughter from becoming genocide, but in the years leading to the Druid War, the existence of the humans of the Bleak was very much in doubt.

Then spring came once more.

In 82 AV the unitaurs marched against the Ganjus, smashing headlong against the bulwark of the elves. Horn and sinew met arrow and guile, but could break neither. As their losses mounted their advance slowed, and though they never ran out of conviction, they ran out of lives. In 86 AV the unitaurs' reign was broken, and the Bleak breathed once again.

The rebirth was twofold. First there were the humans, especially the Khuun-do, who began reassembling the shards of their shattered civilization. Hiata was resettled in 87 AV, and Nisidi in 89 AV, but even today the other six capitals remain home only to ghosts. Second were the proud, who regrouped and rediscovered civilization altogether. Their hierarchies reformed with amazing speed until in 97 AV they were a potent force once more. Though they could not fully forgive the wrongs of the unitaurs, their descent taught them much, and the leonids welcomed the beastmen as worthy allies. They also recognized the futility of frontally assaulting the divine races and turned to their instincts when cunning was needed. The peace then that has been established is a peculiar one, and the peoples of the savannah wonder, quite rightly, when winter will come again.

### Geography

The greatest feature of the plains is one that now lives only in legend. The Fountain of Corean supposedly lies somewhere within the vast grasslands, guarded by the Coreanic steeds. The devoted still search, disregarding the dangers, in the hopes of finding it. Outside a few temperate zones, the savannah remains an inhospitable place, the undisputed dominion of the proud.

**Chendero River:** Flowing north from Clarity Lake, this wide and lazy river forms the Savannah's defacto frontier. Land to the south remains rolling and grassy, but it is not considered part of the Bleak Savannah, since its climate is somewhat milder, and fewer dangerous creatures dwell there.

**The Mahaar:** The mildest region of the savannah, the Mahaar is the heartland of the Khuun nation. Densely populated and possessing the only arable land in the region, the Mahaar also serves, by virtue of its location, as the crossroads of the plains. Ashnosi and Maktarque traders frequent the Mahaar, as do proud and unitaurs, albeit with more malicious intent.

**Asha-No Sa'ai:** The homeland of the Ashnosi, these mountains form the western border of the savannah. A place of untamed beauty, the magenta-tinged slopes are covered with all manner of flowering shrubs. The air is cooler here and reliably so, which helps to keep away the warmth-loving titanspawn of the plains below.

**Vana'irkand:** A string of oases stretching north of the Mahaar, this corridor was once heavily populated and led to the northern provinces of Khuun. With the fall of Arrat and the expansion of the Red Mane prides, the Vana'irkand has since been abandoned to titanspawn and ghosts.

### Flora and Fauna

With a barely functional ecosystem of its own, surrounded on all sides by high mountains or uncrossable waters, the Bleak Savannah's flora and fauna are scant in the extreme. In this respect the savannah is not unlike its only "living" neighbor, the Scrub Forest. Having said this, a few things have managed to survive in the plains. Hardy grasses and succulent cacti cover the land in vast swaths, punctuated by the odd tree. As a general rule of thumb, everything on the plains is inedible — not poisoned, just either very bitter or very hard to digest. With the exception of a few strains of maize and tubers which sustain the human and elven populations, agriculture in all its forms is impossible.

Animals have a slightly better time on the savannah, if for no other reason than that the proud, being mindful hunters, are careful to maintain large "wild stocks." These quasi-natural herds of gazelles, antelope, and even desert stags descended from the great stags of the more temperate south exist out of

proportion with the surrounding grazing lands and sustain the vast titanspawn nation. Only the Coreanic steeds range freely, unbound by either side and carrying whatever holy mandates the Avenger has given them.

## People

Gifted with the lion's heart, the proud are the greatest of the savannah's people. Numbering well into the hundreds of thousands at the very least, they stride the plains like giants many times their size. When the race recreated itself over half a century ago, they resurrected their ancient clan-structure known as *prides*. Like the prides of the great cats, these are matriarchies held together through lineage and loyalty. Males remain welcome but their presence is often transitory, their true purpose lying elsewhere as raiders who stalk the divine races.

Fallen from grace are the unitaurs, the second-ranking titanspawn of the region. Allied now to, or tamed by, as some wags claim, the proud, the traditionally patriarchal beastmen have learned to adopt much of the leonids' culture.

Three races represent the divine peoples of the savannah. The first are the Khuun-do, descendants of the original Mersai humans and the great city builders of the plains. They tend to be tall, bronze skinned, and amazing in their athletic prowess. Second in number and age are the Ashnosi, the nomadic sand-

runner peoples birthed in the union of early Kelder and Albadian explorers. Finally there are the Maktarque, elves who centuries ago left the Ganjus and intermingled with the Mersai and proto-Ashnosi. They have all the usual elven grace but also a hard, chiseled complexion to match their adopted homeland.

Finally, the Horsemen of Vangal bear mentioning, as their presence is felt even by the great prides of the savannah. The most dangerous of fighters on the plains, the Horsemen's terror knows few bounds. Hurak, the Page of Vangal, personally leads the horde's genocidal attacks. Ironically, it is likely this threat more than any other which has led to the "peaceful" *detente* of the other savannah groups.

## Culture

The Bleak Savannah is a place of extremes, the mirror of Tanil's troubled emotions. Blinding sandstorms with freezing winds can be followed by wilting heat waves of stagnant air. Savannah dress is therefore warm but easily removed, the most common sight being the *avashi*, a full-length hooded cloak tied at the waist which can be closed at the front during inclement times but folded down and left hanging by the belt during hotter times.

Though not crafters in the Coreanic sense, all savannah peoples are makers of trinkets. These serve as foci of pride and as a means to externalize internal passion.



Originally they were made under the auspices of Golthagga and Mesos, who were credited with gifting the Mersai with the knowledge of their construction. However, such early works were whimsical at best, given to the same lack of moral focus that characterized their Titanic origins. It was only much later when Corean, Enkili, and Belsameth arrived on the scene that the traditions of trinket-making were codified and their practice brought under moral restraint.

Trinkets serve myriad purposes, from the purely decorative to the utilitarian. Most settlements still judge a person by their ability to make them.

### Music and the Sand Runners

The fluidity of form of Ashnosi music is an enigma as old as the race. Lacking codification, this remarkably complex art form has remained intact for generations. Music occupies a central role in all sand-runner rites and rituals. Even their mages discard all other foci in favor of song and music.

Not surprisingly, musicians are accorded the highest place in Ashnosi society. Their leaders are invariably skilled performers, adept at half-a-dozen instruments or more and capable of picking up foreign ones in a matter of days. Their voices, trained and refined over the years, carry light melodies and hidden harmonics, magnifying their presence many times over.

In battle, Ashnosi warriors sing to each other, using the rhythm and meter of their songs to coordinate their own movements and to combine attacks with fellow soldiers. Their generals abandon spoken words altogether, relying on a coterie of musicians to "conduct" their orchestra that is the army.

### Crime and Punishment

Justice on the savannah is highly variable. Guided by local customs and mores, what is legal or even encouraged by one group might be a capital offense to another. Theft, for instance, is a grave offense in the cities of Khuun, punishable by public lashing and heavy fines. By contrast, the Maktarque view such acts as "transitory borrowing" and promote the practice as a means of sharpening the wits. Many Ashnosi tribes have no concept of personal possession at all and consider it a non-issue, while the proud have specially crafted urns whose only purpose is to be stolen to signify a declaration of challenge.

The one crime that is a crime throughout the savannah, for which the punishment universally is death, is the rape of a woman. Even the titanspawn races refrain from the act, and woe to the uncouth visitor who lays an uninvited hand on a woman's body.

### Religion

The Bleak Savannah is a montage of the Divine War in stasis. Neither the divine worshippers of Tanil and Idra nor the titanspawn devotees of Hrinruuk can move past the tragic events that led to the War and transpired during the conflict. This has left Corean and his followers as well as Vangal's hordes in the middle ground, a very odd arrangement indeed. Despite this, and perhaps in strange irony, both sides celebrate their respective deities in fairly similar ways.

The holiest of celebrations is the Festival of Life, a month-long time of revelry to mark the coming of spring in the savannah. Always twenty days after the vernal equinox, the Festival sees the savannah come to life both on the plains and in its few streets. Khuun, Ashnosi, Maktarque, even some of the proud, take pieces of colored cloth and weave them into their hair, their clothes, and even their weapons.

Divinities Day is also important, as Vangal and Corean are paid their due respect. Tame by comparison to the Festival of Life, this holiday sees mock (or in the Ashnosi's case, not so mock) duels between contestants. Bloodletting is frowned upon as it furthers the power of Vangal. As the priests put it, "Let your sweat be your blood in this battle, and may the fury of your actions bring blessing from the Avenger and not his brother."

### Armed Forces

#### The Divine Military

Even before the tragic loss of the Eight Capitals of Khuun, the Khuun-do were the most militant among the humans of the savannah. The war-like Maktarque spoke highly of the "ever-skilled, ever-deadly spearmen of Khuun." Though decimated by the unitaurs' attacks of the second and third decades After Victory, the city builders of the Bleak Savannah have once again rallied for battle.

Nearly a third of the Khuun-do are mobilized at any one time, a feat outstripped only by the proud.

The Maktarque lag far behind in the science of war, but in skill they are unrivaled. Deadly in melee, the Maktarque's body is more potent than any sword. Were it not for their small numbers — a few hundred Maktarque warriors at most — they might have been able to claim the savannah for the divine.

Ashnosi abhor war as an exercise of killing, but revel in war as an exercise of spirit. Their warriors are fearless, viewing grand conflicts as a game. In this respect they have managed to inherit the innocent levity that once characterized Tanil and her father Hrinruuk.

#### The Leonid Military

In a region where martial prowess is commonplace, the proud, a.k.a. the leonids, have taken things a step further. There is a society on the move and a nation which at a moment's notice can convert every last member into an agent of war. This constant readiness comes easily to the spawn of Hrinruuk and

is as much an extension of their being as it is an extension of their faith.

The greatest of the warriors become the pride mothers, commanders of the clan in peace and war. The average pride — not to be confused with a grand pride — can muster upwards of 200 soldiers, all fiercely loyal to the pride mother. In times of open warfare, multiple prides can act in concert. In such cases, the pride mothers undergo a ritualized combat known as the *clovenning* to decide leadership. The ritual can be foregone in cases where the contesting pride mothers are blood relatives or bonded by oaths of sisterhood. This exception has led to the practice, especially amongst the Red Manes, of rearing potential pride-mother candidates together at an early age in hopes of promoting such bonds.

More so than any other ground troop in Ghelspad, the armies of the leonids can move with lightning speed. Made as they are by Hrinruuk's hand, the proud can stalk and out-manuever any adversary of their choosing. The proud army is exclusively infantry. Individually, the proud have few equals, and when organized have fewer equals still. Every proud warrior should be viewed as an elite operative, adept at all aspects of the hunt.

## Blood Basin

### History

Blood Basin was another unremarkable part of the Kelder Steppes before the Titanswar. The land was as beaten and broken as the rest of the area, destroyed under the feet of titans.

Then the gods started purging Scarn of their parents, and they found a use for the land besieged by the titans.

When the triumvirate of Belsameth, Chardun and Vangal, aided by the grip of the Mithril golem, rid the land of Kadum, they pulled the stone bed he now lies chained to from the center of the Kelder Steppes, leaving a gaping wound that the spring rains and the Hornswythe River rushed to fill. The Riders say Chardun's fingerprints can be seen in the land north of Blood Basin.

The gash was wide and deep, as a massive stone was needed to hold Kadum at the bottom of the Blood Sea. Denev's displeasure was allayed in 112 AV when the Blood Monsoon turned the scar into a lake, and pure spring water running out of the Kelders made Blood Basin a boon to the animals living in the steppes.

Kadum remains far more angry at his sentence and the part Denev's precious land played in it. His thrashings drive the waters to a frenzy. The waves carry his anger, sending the Hornswythe River against its flow during monsoons, bringing his hatred to taint the basin's waters.

## Flora and Fauna

Blood Basin is a fertile and nurturing lake sustaining the wildlife of the Kelder Steppes. Despite its sanguineous name, the small lake provides fresh mountain stream water that the creatures of the steppes and, lately, the Riders of Mansk, rely on.

Most of the time, that is.

For Blood Basin is also a place of death and lurking madness when the Hornswythe River backwashes, bringing with it the silt and corruption of the Blood Sea. After a blood monsoon, it is best to avoid the basin entirely, as even the most harmless of forest animals tends toward rabid madness.

Despite the threat, however, the Riders of the Kelder Steppes regularly water their animals at Blood Basin, although they are usually long gone before the weather turns foul and brings the threat of a storm. The snows falling across the steppes are often a bloody pink, containing bits of the Blood Sea drawn into the atmosphere. The taint lasts until the snows melt and the spring rains and mountain runoff return Blood Basin to normal. Animals instinctively avoid the area during winter, hibernating if possible.

When the Hornswythe River backwashes to fill the Blood Basin, creatures normally seen only nearer the Blood Sea appear on the small lake. Red colony grows on the surface, and even the occasional chuul scrambles ashore to attack horses. Drowned ladies seeking a meal swim into the lake and await animals approaching for a drink.

**Blood Spire:** The Blood Spire is said to rise from Blood Basin during the worst of the monsoons. Very few have witnessed this spire, but enough reports have been made to lend it credibility. One story claims it is the forked tail of Kadum, and that the Titan is free and hiding in the depths of Blood Basin.

**The Fingers:** The Fingers are small offshoots of Blood Basin that curl away from the northern edge of the lake. These are rumored to be where Chardun dug his fingers into the Kelder Steppes to pull the land away and chain Kadum.

## Blood Sea

**Name:** Hegemony of Kiccooma

**Population:** Unknown; estimates run as high as 1,000,000 total. Precise numbers of pisceans, merfolk and blood krakens not certain.

**Government:** Absolute monarchy

**Ruler:** Kiccooma, Devil Lord of the Deep (*black piscean male, Ftr20, NE*); opposed by Queen Ran (*blood kraken female Wiz10/Blood Witch 10, CE*)

**Language:** Piscean, Kraken, Aquan

**Religion:** Kadum, Lethene

**Resources:** Fish (only in coastal regions; elsewhere fish are tainted by Kadum's blood)

## History

The Blood Sea was not always as it is now. Once a vast and beautiful place, it was transformed into an ocean of polluted crimson when the titan Kadum was defeated and chained beneath the surface, his blood staining the waters. But the history of the region did not begin there.

At some time before even the Old Calendar, according to Ledean histories, what is now the Blood Sea was home to a race of undersea elves. Their empire covered much of the sea east of Ghelspad, and they demanded tribute from all coastal settlements. All this came to an end when the titan Gaurak, after sunning himself on the surface of the water, dove down and consumed the entire empire, leaving no trace of it behind. Though strange artifacts have been discovered in the eastern sea, most Ledean scholars conclude this is mere legend, possibly related to tales of the origin of merfolk. The rise of the pisceans has prevented any substantive investigation of the matter.

It is unclear when the pisceans first began demanding tribute. The first mention of the practice comes from about 300 OC in Ledean and some elvish texts in Termana. Since the Divine War, the pisceans have become increasingly erratic. Ships traveling the Blood Sea must go forth ready for battle at a moment's notice, against pisceans, pirates, blood krakens, and any number of other potential foes. Though tribute is paid, vessels manage to "violate" piscean laws more frequently. Hedradans have better luck negotiating the rules and strictures of pisceans, and experienced Hedradan "interpreters" are desirable aboard ships throughout the Blood Sea.

The region was once ruled by the powerful kraken Queen Ran, who defeated her brother for control soon after the Divine War. In those days, the pisceans were her allies and all worked together to restore the power of Kadum. When she overstepped her powers and unleashed the Blood Monsoon, however, the pisceans and black krakens rebelled. Although she succeeded in maintaining power and still rules in the southern reaches of the ocean, Ran lost power over much of the Blood Sea, where the pisceans now hold sway.

The Blood Sea is a place of conflict, where the pirates of the surface contend with the pisceans for a share of the rich mercantile traffic. For their part, the merchants fight back, sometimes with the aid of a tough group of hold-out merfolk, who continue to oppose the pollution of their ocean by the titan Kadum and his twisted minions. The blood krakens of Queen Ran remain something of a wild card in the region. Her former piscean allies are now her foes, but her control of the actual body of Kadum may give her power as yet undreamed of.

## Geography

All that the folk of the surface know of the Blood Sea's geography is what they can see. Along the sea's perimeter, where the domain of the pisceans is weakest, the other sea races regularly attack their settlements. Under the banner of Manawe, they seek to destroy the traitors, and free brethren trapped under piscean oppression. These rebels, led by the merfolk, sometimes offer assistance to mariners in danger.

Little is known about the deep reaches of the Blood Sea, except that Kadum's body is chained to a boulder in a particularly deep abyss called the Maw of Glory. Queen Ran rules here, holding the titan's remains against ferocious attacks by her former allies, the pisceans.

## Flora and Fauna

Near shore, sea birds and aquatic mammals are fairly common. Fish congregate in shallower areas, where nutrients from the deep sea well up and feed plankton. Since Kadum's blood contaminated the sea, however, most of its species have grown twisted and horrific.

Common monsters in the coastal shallows include lurkers below, blood maidens, blood barnacles and blood zombies, razorfin dolphin (also found farther out to sea), and foamer ratmen. Not all of the dangers of the Blood Sea are associated with Kadum's taint — ebon eels are also a hazard, as are sea sparks.

Common monsters in the deep sea include blood-sea jellyfish, keel crushers, flayed giants, Kadum's leviathans, blood kraken, and sea hags.

## People

There are three breeds of pisceans, with the greens being the least affected by Kadum's blood, and closest to their species' original appearance. The black pisceans rule, allowing only those green pisceans that sufficiently prove themselves to have a chance at joining their ranks. Red pisceans, driven to mindlessness by the blood of Kadum, serve as shock troops.

There are a number of races that serve or have been enslaved by the pisceans, the most numerous of which are the merfolk. They are brutally tormented and oppressed, with severe physical punishments for most transgressions. Pisceans also enjoy using merfolk in their sadistic rituals. Some of the merfolk are transformed by Kadum's blood, and then used for entertainment or other even less savory purposes. Others fight a desperate fight along the edges of the Blood Sea, hoping to push the foe back eventually and rid their waters of the titan's taint.

In the south, Queen Ran and her blood krakens hold sway, with aid from the forces of Blood Bayou in Termana. This small but powerful hold has kept Kiccooma at bay for years, enraging the sea tyrant and making him even more determined to make the krakens pay.

## Culture

The pisceans are a highly stratified race, with traditions going back many ages. They are deeply spiritual, seeing themselves as a vital and important part of the world around them, created to be rulers. Celebrations feature food, music, and complex dances, and frequent ceremonial (or actual) battle. Pisceans love jewelry of all sorts, particularly those with enchantments.

The coral watchtowers of the pisceans serve as outposts. Bands of pisceans, traveling throughout their territory, make stops at the watchtowers to rest and exchange information. Piscean settlements are found primarily in the cooler waters below seamounts or in the cold submarine canyons in between.

There is little distinction between male and female pisceans. Females are slightly bigger, and will demand that males go through elaborate methods to secure spawning rights. Both male and female pisceans may force lower-ranked pisceans to mate with them, but there is more prestige by acquiring higher spawning ranks.

## Crime and Punishment

Magic is commonly used among the pisceans to determine guilt, if it is an important matter. There are elaborate regulations and strictures, and most pisceans break them daily. Almost anything imaginable is a crime. A system of traded punishment acts as a method of currency, with slaves and other goods sometimes confiscated or destroyed to settle accounts. Those without the credit to transfer blame are often subject to harsh punishment, including the cutting of fins, blinding, or enslavement. Note that a highly placed piscean can murder others without being punished, if the piscean has appropriate credit.

## Religion

The pisceans worship Kadum, believing that, after his imprisonment beneath the sea, they are his true chosen people. The black pisceans are rulers and priests, and are often sorcerers or druidic spellcasters as well. Worship is part of daily life, embraced as part of their strictures. Ritual consumption of the bodies of strong individuals or enemies is common, and so the effects of Kadum's blood is a natural extension of the nature of a titan, from the piscean perspective.

The renegade merfolk worship Manawe, and seek the friendship and alliance of like-minded surface dwellers.

Though Queen Ran pays lip service to Kadum, it is known that she worships only herself, and the power that she craves. Once ruler of the entire region, she seeks to once more reclaim it, and if "service" to Kadum is the route to power, so be it. The pisceans, whose faith in Kadum is somewhat more spiritual in nature, hate Queen Ran for her hypocrisy, and seek to destroy her utterly.

## Blood Steppes

**Name:** The Blood Steppes

**Population:** Unknown, but includes humans, bat devils, manticora, slitheren, various humanoid and giant races

**Language:** Titan Speech, Slitheren, Vangal's Tongue, Veshian

**Religion:** Kadum, Vangal, Belsameth, Gormoth (among the spider-eye goblins)

**Resources:** Metals, particularly iron and gold

## History

The Blood Steppes have become one of the most lethal regions in Ghelspad, and their history is likewise one of violence and hideous sorceries. During the Divine War, the armies of the gods and titans frequently clashed here, and it was on the Blood Steppes that two Titans met their doom.

Somewhere near the center of the steppes, Corean tore Thulkas from the ground, re-forged him as an arrow, and shot him into the sun. Because the remaining part of Thulkas sank back into the ground, the earth of the Blood Steppes is rich in metals, particularly iron and gold. Smiths throughout Ghelspad have found that iron from the Blood Steppes is excellent for the creation of high-quality armor and weapons.

The Blood Steppes are also where it is thought that Gormoth the Writhing Lord was interred. While legends may be wrong, many of the Twisted, followers of Gormoth who are dedicated to his return, believe that in one of the many chasms that slice through the steppes they will find the Writhing Lord's body, severed in twain and hungering for reunion.

The 150 years following the Divine War saw a series of unsuccessful attempts to clear the area of titanspawn. Immediately after the War, the dwarves of Burok Torn marched upon the region in hopes of establishing a trade route west and claiming the area's vast iron deposits. They fought a fierce war with the Kadum-spawned giants of the steppes. Though in the decisive battle of Adrin's Sorrow they killed the last of the spider giants and what was hopefully the last of the ironwrack dragons, their losses were too great to remain in the steppes, and they retreated back to their home in the Kelders.

The Druid War brought a large number of titanspawn out of the region to aid the forces of Khet. In the period following the war, the steppes attracted followers of Vangal, who hoped to recruit the Kadum-worshipping giant hordes to the service of the Ravager. Duke Virduk, desiring the metal resources of the steppes, has sent several expeditionary forces into the region, but all have been annihilated.



## Geography

The Blood Steppes are a region of steep rolling hills, weird rock formations, sharp crevasses, chasms, geysers, sink holes, and strange plant life. They stretch from the cursed Hornsaw Forest in the west to the untamed Kelder Mountains in the east. The chasms and crevasses are steep enough that mounted travel is almost impossible.

Dotted around the steppes are formations called *fangs* — sharp, twisted spires of rock that rise up to two hundred feet in height. A large system of caverns stretches beneath the region. Their exact extent is unknown, but there is speculation that they run from the easternmost regions of the Haggard Hills all the way to the Kelder Mountains. Weather on the steppes is radical and can be as deadly as the titanspawn and Vangal-worshipping hordes that inhabit the region. Finally, the steppes are wracked by frequent earthquakes.

**Blood Fang:** This prominent fang in the northwestern part of the steppes is the tallest of the fangs, rising to over 500 feet in height. It gets its name, not from the bat-devil clan that lives there, but from the huge number of dire bats that congregate around its peak. In fact, the clan leader Jeekzob chose the region as his base of operations both because of its name, and because the jagged fang and the many cliffs around it make a defensible roosting place for his people.

**Cleft of Madness:** This is a deep chasm located southeast of the Hornsaw Forest. Gigantic, ancient gnarled oaks have grown across the chasm, creating a tangled bridge. The wind that rages through the cleft makes eerie wails that sound like the screams of the insane. What is more terrible, however, are the answering screams that travelers claim to hear from the things at the bottom of the chasm.

**North Fang:** This craggy fang of basalt towers about 150 feet high. Beneath this is a series of caves in which the firewrack dragon of the northern fang makes its lair. Over the years, this dragon has reputedly gained the aid of an insane forsaken dwarf in the construction of its lair's defenses — many ruinous traps, both magical and mundane, as well as several arcane constructs, await any would-be attackers.

**South Fang:** Beneath this squat, 150-foot fang is the cavernous lair of the firewrack dragon of the southern fang. Over the years, it has linked its lair into the warrens of some of the slitheren of the region, and it frequently buys allegiance from these creatures.

**Thulkas' Ghost:** In the middle of a three-mile-wide region of geysers is the powerful geyser known as Thulkas' Ghost. It erupts regularly each day, when the sun is at its zenith.

**Womb of Gormoth:** Hidden somewhere near the center of the steppes is the entrance to the cavern known as the Womb of Gormoth. Fierce and strange titanspawn issue forth from the mouth of the cavern.



A hill giant Kadum druid casting frog tongue, a twisted spider goblin, a barbarian of the Demon's Wrath clan, a manticora and a Blood-Drenched Mound slitheren.

## Flora and Fauna

Edible plant life includes steppes leaf, a large, bristly wild red cabbage; sour grass, a tall, pointed round bitter grass; onions, and numerous tubers such as turnips and potatoes. The gigantic, twisted oak trees that dot the area provide acorns. Other notable plants include occasional patches of thorny wild roses and blackberries. Finally, in the shadows of the various crevasses and chasms grow all manner of mushrooms, which range from edible chanterelles to poisonous or hallucinogenic amanita.

Game is relatively scarce on the Blood Steppes because of the large number of predators, and that which does exist is hardy and cunning. Rats, bats, vultures, dire weasels, dire rats, dire bats, dire apes, crescent elk, and a reddish-furred variety of muskhorn are the most common prey animals. These are hunted by blight wolves, hill howlers, dire bears, wolfrats, shockbats, wyrmspawn, and the humanoid tribes and titanspawn that roam the region.

## People

The population of the Blood Steppes is made up of a diverse collection of clans, hordes and tribes all enmeshed in an ever-shifting web of feuds and alliances. The major races that make up the most "civilized" of the clans are hill giants, bat devils, humans, manticora, coal goblins, spider goblins, and slitheren. In addition to the clans, there are some individuals that are of great power—a pair of firewrack dragons feud with one another, buying what aid they can amongst the tribes, and Kanus, a powerful cleric of Vangal (*human male Chr16, CE*) plays a game of betrayal, genocide and conversion with the inhabitants of the region.

## Tribes and Clans of the Blood Steppes

Below are listed some of the more prominent clans and tribes of the Blood Steppes. Where possible, their tribal or clan names have been translated from the Dark Tongue.

**Broken Skull:** Leader Fongmaw (*hill giant male Drd5, NE*). These nomadic Kadum worshippers are an example of a typical hill-giant tribe of the Blood Steppes.

**Flayed Meat:** Leader Kadumgror (*hill giant male Brb9, CE*). This once-powerful hill-giant clan is at low strength due to its frequent battles with neighboring groups. They are nomadic Kadum worshippers and their leader wields a powerful magic battle axe. The tribe would dominate the giant clans if it were not frequently under attack by Kanus and his manticora allies.

**Giant Bloody Hand:** Leader Morztrog (*hill giant male Chr3, CE*). These giants are Vangal-worshippers converted by missionaries sent by Kanus. They occupy a fortress in the southern part of the steppes.

**Demon's Wrath Clan:** Leader Durgoth (*human male Brb16, CE*). This barbaric human horde num-

bers about 400. Women and men are both equally likely to be front-line fighters. The clan frequently offers aid and succor to priests and warriors of Vangal who travel to the region.

**Jeekz' Clan:** Leader Jeekzob (*bat-devil male Brb4/Rog3, N*). This clan of about 100 bat devils is named for its infamous outlaw leader, and is based in the northeast region of the Blood Steppes. The clan learned to survive by preying on slitheren messengers and traders from the Hornsaw Forest, and by working for the North Fang dragon.

**Death Spirit Tribe:** Leader Eater-of-Souls (*hum/were-jackal female Sor9/Clr1/Brb1, NE*). This tribe consists entirely of were-jackals who worship Belsameth. They have been known to trick other clans into fighting one another so that they can feast off the remains of the dead.

**Red Moons:** Leader Kjarak (*red-witch slitheren female Wiz13, NE*). This cult of 13 red-witch slitheren makes its home in a chasm on the southwestern end of the steppes, near the Hornsaw Forest. They trade black-magic paraphernalia and components, including sacrificial victims, with the inhabitants of the Hornsaw and Glivid-Autel.

**The Twisted:** Leader Froblak (*spider-eye goblin male Drd13, NE*). Froblak is the high priest of the Twisted, a group of titan worshippers dedicated to locating the sundered corpse of Gormoth. His followers include about 200 spider-eye goblins and an odd collection of titanspawn cultists, including at least one ettin. They are frequently at war with the slitheren and coal goblins as they search for Gormoth in the deep crevasses where these races make their home.

**The Wrack Dragons of the Fangs:** The North and South Fangs are the roosts of two firewrack dragons, survivors of the Divine War. They have been feuding with one another for the last 150 years over grievances based on military decisions made when they were generals of titans' armies.

## Bloodrain Woods

### History

*In the clutch of blood shadows,  
the very earth seeps,  
the trees weep lifeblood  
to grasping plants beneath.  
So goes life in the Bloodrain.*

—From the ballad "Bleeding Trees East" by Justrom the Song-Speaker, 32 AV

Before the Titanswar, Bloodrain Woods was a fertile plain stretching from the coast to the base of the Kelders. Bountiful and fruitful, the plain was a natural paradise of sweet fruits and succulent melons that grew plentifully along the coastline.

As late as 3528 OC, merchant ships from distant lands visited the shores of the region to claim its sweet prizes. The land fed many nations, its bounty never lacking.

The fertility readily explains why the Bloodrain Woods sprang to life virtually overnight after the destruction of the gods. Splashes of Kadum's blood fell into the plain as Belsameth sliced the titan's heart from his chest, twisting the land and instilling a thirst for blood in its creatures. The land gets plenty of blood now, thanks to its proximity to the newly formed Blood Sea, and it drinks deeply when a monsoon brings even more bloody water inland.

While many at first saw this quick-growing forest as a blessing to the newly scarred continent, ideas of capitalizing on the forest's timber were soon dashed. Bloodrain Wood trees and plants quickly absorbed the heavy taint of the Blood Sea, their colors darkening to a deep crimson. Walking through the thickest parts of the forest is akin to stepping into an alien landscape, where the trees, scrub growth and the clinging plants share the same blood-red tint. What is worse, the trees and plants carry the corruption of the Blood Sea and readily pass that contagion to animals and people who eat within the forest's spreading boundaries. The fruits growing in the Bloodrain Woods are tainted and poisonous. Animals in the woods feeding upon these fruit are a step closer to madness than normal animals. Lumber made from these trees passes on their taint, leading to madness and murder in nearby settlements.

Often during the day, the trees "weep," as the bard Justrom called it when he viewed the natural occurrence, shedding excess moisture from their leaves in beads of reddish water that splash to the ground to be absorbed again by myriad roots. Stories say the trees weep for their innocence, lost to the gods for the sake of the Titans' destruction.

## Flora and Fauna

Bloodrain Woods stretches along the eastern coast of the Blood Sea, a lush and near-tropical expanse of trees and mossy nets strung above a discolored landscape. While many of the forests on the eastern coast of Ghelspad suffered through the blood monsoons thrown off by the Blood Sea, the Bloodrain Woods prospered. Trees and plants bask in the heavy rains and grow more vibrant because of these brief and thankfully rare storms. As the forest lies so near the Blood Sea, it gets a heavy taint of Kadum's blood even from the normal storms blowing off the sea to the east.

Bloodrain Woods is an area of rapid growth, with trees and clinging vines shielding all manner of creatures from the outside world. One common bond links everything within the Bloodrain Woods: a red tint to fur, leaves or feathers. Everything living in the woods has adopted the reddish coloration, allowing them to hide from prey or to sneak up on the unsuspecting. Anyone entering the woods in other colors stands out readily to the inhabitants camouflaged within.

All manner of plant life, from red colony and assassin vines to shambling mounds and tendriculos,



live within the woods. Native animals twisted by the blood taint still make dens within, including swamp gobblers, night terrors and twisted hamadryads, who once aided the land but now seek to destroy invaders.

One creature not native to Ghelspad has found a home within the Bloodrain Woods: deadly swamp tyrants.

**The Shallow:** The Shallow is a lowland within the Bloodrain Woods where water pools after heavy storms. Rumor claims that during a Blood Monsoon a clear bubble of magic protects the Shallow from the raging wind, but allows the waters to seep inside. Histories relate that this is the remnant of a protection spell cast by Holtak, a priest of Madriel, to protect himself from a deadly storm shortly after the Titanswar. Whether this is true is unknown, as few are willing to risk standing within the Bloodrain Woods as a Blood Monsoon bears down on them. The Shallow fills with bloody water during a monsoon, but this water clears as it passes through the shielding spell. This clarified water purportedly has the ability to heal the sick and dying and bestows immunities to the Blood-Sea taint for a month afterward. The special benefits can be gained only if the water is drunk during a Blood Monsoon, however. Vigils do know that many animals miraculously survive in the open here during a monsoon and appear none the worse for the experience.

**Ashen Legion Camp:** Seeking to cut off Corean's Cleft and choke off the flow of supplies to Durrover, about 500 Ashen Legionnaires maintain a camp at the southern tip of the peninsula, well-fortified and supplied, equipped with powerful siege and anti-ship weaponry.

## The Blossoming Sea

**Population:** 2,500 scattered throughout the southern islands (Human 99%, Other 1%)

**Language:** Many; mostly an obscure and barely intelligible dialect of Shelzari, and heavily accented Ledean

**Religion:** Manawe, Enkili (as the storm goddess)

**Resources:** Fish, pearls, edible seaweed, shellfish

## History

An invaluable resource to Ghelspad, due to amazing luxuries such as untainted natural fish and an almost complete lack of deadly monsters, the Blossoming Sea has seen nothing but growth in the years since the Divine War's end. Fishing villages continue to spring up along the coast, and boat traffic lights up the shoreline at night as fishing boats return home and great ships glide in and out of the major ports.

Several important events have altered this region besides increasing fishing traffic on the waters in the last fifty years. Not only has the Drifting Isle

stopped drifting and the island of Tarrak begun to be civilized, but traffic to and from Termana has begun to increase, making the sea a major trade route.

While most of the developments in the Blossoming Sea seem to have been advantageous for everyone, the native tribes of the southern islands are unhappy with the constant encroachment of civilization from all sides. Already decimated by the events of the Divine War, three decades ago these people were forced from all the islands bordering the Calastian Hegemony, which were the most fertile of their fishing grounds. Confined now to the much less hospitable islands south of the swamps of Kan Thet, their already small population is continually diminishing as young people move to the cities of the mainland or are killed by mysterious ailments brought back from Liar's Sound. The culture of these islanders is fast dying, and they are increasingly inhospitable to the outsiders that they blame for their misfortune.

## Geography

Surrounding Ghelspad to the west and south, the Blossoming Sea is a fairly typical healthy ocean. Millions of species of fish and plant as well as a few mammals make their homes in various parts of this sea, and it spans such a large area that very few generalizations about climate or wildlife can be made. Suffice it to say that, compared to the Blood Sea, the Blossoming Sea is a miraculous paradise, and every land it touches is richer for it.

However, this is not to say that the Blossoming Sea is without dangers. All manner of strange and deadly creatures have always lurked in the depths of Scarn's oceans, and it is hardly likely that the aftereffects of the Titanswar could lessen this. The Blossoming Sea is much less dangerous than the Blood Sea but, healthy or not, it is not a place for the inexperienced. While rumors of bronze dragons living off the coast of Uria are completely unfounded, most of the other rumors about strange great beasts in the Blossoming Sea are at the very least worth some care and caution.

## People

Resembling the peoples of Ghelspad's southern coast, the islanders are very hostile to anyone who looks, dresses or speaks like an outsider, i.e. anyone not native to the islands. They are a simple people and wear very little clothing. Jewelry is handmade of shell and bone, and weaponry is crude indeed. They have no access to metals of any kind, and seem to have no desire to trade with outsiders for anything, since anything not made by islanders holds demon taint in their eyes. Body piercings and scarifications are common. They have very little concept of armor, real magic, or basic cleanliness, though their boats are quite seaworthy for their small size (at most, large enough for up to 20 warriors). Sorcerers born in the

tribes are usually killed at the first signs of strangeness, and shamans only rarely have any real power as clerics. For the most part, every male is a fighter, aside from the shamans, who are bards. If outsiders are obviously more powerful or numerous, islanders will run away and hide until the intruders leave. Otherwise, they attack on sight. The population of the islands drops every year, and many believe that the inhabitants will be extinct within a century or so.

## Religion

Manawe and occasionally the goddess aspect of Enkili are worshipped with animal sacrifice and a great deal of dancing and chanting. Elaborate ritual costumes are constructed from common local materials, and shamans sing songs and tell stories, often while under the influence of hallucinogenic herbs. Everything is considered religious in this culture, and the shamans are usually the de facto rulers, even though they officially have no chiefs.

Almost any crime is punishable by death or slavery, especially if committed by a woman, and the shamans serve as both judge and executioner for the tribe. Decisions are made either by consensus or by obscure and superstitious forms of divination, very few of which are actually magical.

Shamans are usually orphans that were raised by the shaman before them. Women have occasionally been shamans or warriors, and there are no religious taboos against women holding power, but they almost never do anything but raise babies, in spite of this.

Among the islanders, sexual practices are fairly open, marriage is unheard of, and all adult men are considered to be the fathers of every child in a village. Villages rarely consist of more than 200 people, and they usually have a great deal of difficulty fighting as allies, since every village and its shaman has a slightly different way of performing religious rituals.

## The Celestial Shelf

**Population:** 20,000 (Human 87%, Half-orc 7%, Halfling 4%, Other 1%)

**Government:** Towns and communities govern themselves.

**Language:** Veshian

**Religion:** Enkili, Belsameth

**Resources:** Granite, beef, pork

## History

Once part of the Camini province in Ledean times, the Celestial Shelf enjoyed great importance as the hub of the Hornswhyte Kingdom. The Divine War devastated the region, however, destroying the kingdom utterly. Since then, the population has slowly expanded from settlements near Lake Repose.

## Geography

The Celestial Shelf is a high plateau. Before the Divine War, seasonal rains kept the region fertile, and rich crops were grown there. With the changes wrought by the War, the area has become quite arid, and the only significant storms are horrific creations of the Blood Sea.

There are a few small rivers around which towns spring up, but for the most part it is a vast area of scrub and ruins, with occasional small copses of stunted trees.

## Flora and Fauna

The animals of the Celestial Shelf are mainly small rodents, ground-nesting birds, and some small oxen. Most of the habitable grassland is dominated by herdsmen, keeping cattle and swine where they can. Monsters are relatively rare, though scythe falcons have become a problem among herders. Carnivorous trees are thought to grow in the more remote areas of the shelf.

## People

Most inhabitants of the shelf are descended from the same ethnic stock as Vesh and Hedrad. They tend to be a bit more solid and burly, perhaps from orc or Durrover ancestry. A suspicious and insular people, they are more likely to murder travelers in their sleep than offer them aid. Still, they are cautious, and do not take unnecessary risks. Well-armed travelers will usually only be harassed when townsfolk inform brigand relatives about their passage.

Half-orcs have established smaller communities mainly in the north. They frequently mount raids on horseback, fomenting chaos and violence. Humans in the area want to purge the area of half-orcs, but lack the resources to do it. Those in the south care nothing either way.

Halflings live mainly in the south. Most halflings are the descendants of criminals who fled Calastia or Lake Repose.

## Religion

The inhabitants of the Celestial Shelf are passionate about celebration. Every holiday is honored, and every god is praised. This is only lip service to most of the gods, as an excuse to revel, throw dice, and get roaring drunk on various types of foul-smelling beer.

Clerics are not greatly respected in the region, save for their power and ability to heal. A few have managed to establish congregations dedicated to Belsameth or, more rarely, Vangal. For the most part, Shelfdwellers want little interference from the gods. Enkili, the most popular god, asks little of his followers, and Shelfdwellers are happy to give it.

## Corean's Cleft

**Name:** Corean's Cleft

**Population:** 8,000 (45% Human, 45% Dwarves, 10% Other)

**Government:** None. Corean's Cleft is claimed by Durrover, Lageni and Calastia.

**Language:** Calastian, Veshian, Dwarven

**Religion:** Tanil, Goran, Chardun, Hrinruuk.

**Currency:** Officially, none. Currency is a mix of that found in Calastia, Lageni, Durrover, Burok Torn and Darakeene.

**Resources:** Iron, Titans' blood, rubies, diamonds, silver, mithril

### History

For many years, the nation of Durrover's only easy routes to the outside world were the Irontooth Pass and the Dardale River. During the Divine War, however, the god Corean struck Hrinruuk the Hunter with a blow so terrible that it tore the titan's head from his body and rent the earth asunder for miles. The sea rushed into the resulting chasm and the Dardale turned forever from its course, leaving the capital of Durrover on a dry plain. In honor of the mighty god and his part in the defeat of Hrinruuk, the vast fissure was named Corean's Cleft. Had the Divine War ended then, the citizens of Durrover might have come to appreciate the wide canyon which led to the sea, but the fall of Kadum and the corruption of the Blood Sea changed all that.

As the echoes of the Divine War faded, the exposed bedrock of Corean's Cleft beckoned with promises of suddenly revealed veins of silver, rubies and iron. The discovery of perfect diamonds, believed to be the fallen tears of Hedrada, and even a vein of mithril, led to a boom of raucous prospectors hungry for mineral fortunes.

Then the titan Kadum was bound beneath the sea with his heart torn from his body, and his blood gushed forth, tainting the ocean for leagues in every direction. As the blood of Kadum seeped into Corean's Cleft, so did death seep into the communities formed around its unearthed riches. Monstrous creatures crept into the cleft, forcing the more faint-hearted to flee and seek their fortunes elsewhere. Those who survived were especially hardy, banding together into communities such as Ruby Cavern for defense and support.

The region soon faced a new challenge. In 112 AV, the Blood Monsoon struck, causing the waters of the Cleft to swell with the blood of Kadum as they flooded upriver into the Dardale basin. Twisted creatures sprang from the water and from whatever it touched, writhing across the Durrover plains in a deadly wave of terror. Luckily for Durroverians the capital no longer sat upon the river, cut off by the change in route wrought by the chasm of Corean.

Denied access to Durrover for fourteen years by the Blood Monsoon, Calastian forces assaulted the kingdom unrepentantly. For centuries the landscape of Durrover had protected it from outside attacks. Now that same geography left the kingdom a prisoner to the siege of Calastia. The Kelder Mountains cut off all reasonable traffic except that allowed by the Irontooth Pass, which was controlled by their enemies. The only remaining open passage was Corean's Cleft.

In 132 AV, Vesh organized a maritime relief effort aimed at breaking the Calastian stranglehold upon Durrover, delivering men and supplies across Corean's Cleft. From Vigil bases in the Bloodrain Woods, aid flowed into Durrover via boats which braved the brief voyage across the Cleft or foraged north to cross the Dardale River ford. At first the plan succeeded, but as the Bloodrain Woods grew more and more tainted and dangerous, the Vigils relocated to a large island at the southern tip of the peninsula, an island that eventually gained the name Vigil's Cove.

Once he learned of the existence of the cove, King Virduk moved swiftly, hiring elements of the Legion of Ash to blockade Corean's Cleft. The Eighth Ashen Cohort was dispatched to the area, and camped on the facing shores of the Cleft, using ballistae, catapults and keelboats to harass naval traffic.

The legion's pressure has begun to affect trade and travel in the region. Daring bands of Veshian and Mithrilite sailors brave the blockade, smuggling supplies to Durrover in exchange for ore and gemstones from the Cleft miners. The situation remains tense, and the entire Cleft area may be the site of major confrontations between Vesh and Calastia in years to come.

### Geography

Corean's Cleft is a deep canyon where the waters of the Dardale River and the Blood Sea blend in a stagnant mixture. The high cliff walls of the Cleft continue to reveal the mineral wealth of millennia bared by the mighty blow of Corean only 150 years ago. As one sails the waters of the Cleft, the multi-colored layers of earth are visible in the canyon walls, while the viscous water occasionally reveals deadly creatures twisted by the blood of Kadum and Hrinruuk.

**The Ashen Horns:** The tips of these two peninsulae reach out into the Cleft farther than any other branch of land. Each contains one of the two camps of the Ashen Legion company which oversees the entrance to the Cleft and seeks to guard it against entry by non-Calastian vessels.

### Flora and Fauna

The corruption of Kadum's blood and the influx of natural life forms attracted by the seawater which filled Corean's wound upon the earth share near-equal credit in Corean's Cleft. Sea gulls and fish of



innumerable sorts fill the Cleft, as do stagnant-water species such as catfish, ducks and grebes. With the influx of seawater, kelp of many varieties clogs the cavernous canyon.

The region has never truly escaped its heritage as the battlefield in which Hrinruuk lost his head, nor the fact that it is infested with Kadum's blood. Strange creatures ranging from twisted catfish grown to gigantic size, known as lurkers below, to odd canyon-spanning arachnids, known as shard spiders, have terrorized the divine races inhabiting the chasm and its caves. The marine creatures and their freshwater cousins are terribly corrupted by the blood of Kadum, while the cavernous walls of the Cleft continue to offer succor to creatures spawned by Hrinruuk. Particularly prevalent are the bloodlings which sprang from Hrinruuk's remains.

## People

The dominant human inhabitants of Corean's Cleft are dark-toned, as befits their heritage from Durrover or Calastia. Eyes range from the deep browns of the Kelder Mountain tribes to the flashing greens of Calastian citizenry. The vast majority of the dwarven population stems from Burok Torn ancestry and shares the features of the mountain dwarves. This motley assortment of races and cultures has led to a chaotic, freewheeling society where all adventurous souls are welcome.

## Devil's March

### History

*Death and demons. That pretty much sums up the region known as Devil's March. It had another name once, but I don't really remember what it was. It was prettier though, that's for sure. So please, listen to your grandfather when he says it's too dangerous to play your absurd adventure games there, even if you're only on the edge of the march. I know you think I spend too much time in my books, but at my age, I'm just happy to be alive. I would be happier if I could live to see you grow up just a little more, instead of having your lives cut short by youthful foolishness. Now go about your business, and STAY AWAY FROM THE MARCH!*

— A portion of a diary entry taken from the journals of Neb Aieff, a librarian of Lokil

In the eons before the Divine War, Devil's March was a lush savannah teeming with verdant life. Nomadic tribes went about their business and here and there homesteads cropped up, harvesting the bounty of the land.

Enter Mormo, the Mother of Serpents. Fancying a new servitor race, the Hag Queen created the serpent-men known as asaatthi and loosed them upon the swampy region to the south of the march, in what is now known as the Swamps of Kan Thet. Within the span of approximately two centuries, the asaatthi had built a magnificent empire within the swamplands. Not content merely to live within the

swamps, due in part to their pride as well as their decreasing living space, asaatthi began to move out into the march.

When they encountered those who were not favorite children of Mormo, the serpent-men began a decades-long campaign to rid the march of its inhabitants. This allowed the asaatthi to transplant new species created by the Serpentmother to the fields. In no time at all, the fields were populated by vipers, constrictors and various other snakes, almost a hundred lizard species, gorgons, medusae, and so forth. Anything that did not resemble a serpent or pay absolute homage to Mormo was destroyed on sight. Humanity in western Ghelspad was wedged into the landmasses that now make up Darakeene and a portion of the Perforated Plains.

Then came the end of Mormo's Epoch, and the beginning of Devil's March's current incarnation. No scholar knows the exact date, but all remember the horrific ramifications of the day the backbone of Mormo's army was broken. She faced the pitiful sea of humanity arrayed against her might. Angry at having been driven from their ancestral homelands generations ago, every able-bodied human stood against the Serpent Queen, spoiling for a fight. Mormo was joined by her warrior-wizard children, the asaatthi, the entire might of their empire behind them. Even so, the Mother of Serpents was grossly outnumbered. Seeing this, her asaatthi called upon their most powerful magics, summoning legions of demons and devils to battle the army of the humans. And so it began.

The fighting was so fierce and terrible, words can scarcely do it justice. For a while, it seemed as if the human generals were outmatched, as if they had made a horrible miscalculation of the strength of their cold-blooded opponents. Slowly but inexorably, the army of Mormo began to press the advantage, the combined might of the asaatthi and demons seeming to be more than a match for the pitiful human forces. Then, when it seemed as if Mormo's army would only have to make one more concentrated push to breach the line, slaying the generals and flanking the remnants of the army, the generals finished a true ritual, raising the dead. *All of the dead.*

Suddenly, the remaining forces of Mormo were very much outnumbered. What was worse, they were surrounded. The tides turned so quickly, the Serpentmother barely had time to react before most of her army was cut out from underneath her. Fearing the worst, she fled with what little remaining forces she had left, plowing through the ranks of the undead as she did so. To this day, Devil's March is marred by the battle, where both demon and titan blood was spilled. It is a place of death and demons.

### Geography

For all of its history, the Devil's March remains geographically unremarkable. Devil's March is a blighted plain. It is also the topographical boundary which separates

the Swamps of Kan Thet from the Ukrudan Desert. From a distance, the plains almost seem verdant. It is not until travelers are less than a day's journey away that the smell begins. Virtually no divine races call the march home, although merchants from Fangsfall will sometimes traverse the westernmost portion of the march in order to shave off both time and shipping costs. These ventures usually meet with disaster.

## Flora and Fauna

With soil that has been poisoned by titan blood and an atmosphere that teems with restless undead, Devil's March is all but incapable of supporting life. From a safe distance, the plain appears grassy and healthy. However, everything down to the grasses are blighted. Nothing that is natural exists on the march; much of what does is undead. Travelers and those merchants desperate enough to brave the march should beware.

## Festering Fields

### History

The area now comprising the Festering Fields was once the westernmost portion of the great nation of Zathiske. During the Titanswar, this region served as a major battlefield between the titanspawn armies from the north and west and the divine armies from the east. Countless mortals expired on these fields, locked in deadly combat for the glory of their patrons. In the years since the Divine War, the minions of the titans and the gods have begun to rise again, animated by some dark necromantic force emanating from the fields. Some sages have speculated that this energy originates in the Mounds of Man in the southern portion, where an ancient genocide took place during the Titanswar. Whatever its source, this region remains a dangerous wasteland where the dead roam freely.

### Geography

Located between the scorching Sweltering Plains and the Ukrudan Desert, the Festering Fields are more of an arid and bleak wasteland than any sort of field. The ground is blackened and broken by ancient spells of mass destruction, and the earth is littered with the bones of Divine War combatants. As the Festering Fields approaches the Mounds of Man in the south, it becomes more rocky and uneven. In the north, the fields turn sandy and gradually fade into the gray dust of the Ukrudan.

**Chasm of the Lost:** Just north of the Mounds of Man, this chasm scars the blasted ground like a gaping maw in the earth. The chasm faces are riddled with monster-infested caves and small rivers infused with necromantic residue. It is rumored that some ancient cataclysm, perhaps even the destruction of a Titan, split the land here and released some horrible necromantic evil that slowly claws its way towards the heart of Denev. Undead, demons, and other abominations regu-

larly arise from this dark pit to plague the rest of the Festering Fields and the regions beyond.

**The Last Watchtower:** Toward the southern end of the Festering Fields and to the east of the Mounds of Man, the Last Watchtower stands against the wastes like a beacon of dark energy. Said to be a remnant of ancient Velanon, the watchtower now houses some enigmatic and secretive evil. Sages have speculated that the tower holds the awesome necromantic force that destroyed great Velanon, and perhaps even the remains of the treacherous clerics that doomed the city. The unholy rays emanating from the tower are known to strengthen the already potent undead that roam the fields. When the dark light shines, any undead in the area functions as if it were under the effect of a double-strength *desecrate* spell.

## Flora and Fauna

There are a few hardy scrubs that manage to subsist among the wild necromantic energies and the arid bleakness of the Festering Fields. The most prevalent form of plant life is a black moss called blackweed that seems to thrive on death, rapidly covering undead and fresh corpses. Although there are few natural animals in this region, there are several forms of amorphous creatures, such as bonelords and unlikes. Otherwise, undead and night-touched roam this wasteland, slaughtering any foolish enough to travel here.

## Ganjus Forest

**Population:** Unknown. All known information on the people of the Ganjus is included in the section on Vera-Tre.

**Language:** Middle Elvish

**Religion:** Denev

**Resources:** Rare herbs

### History

Like Vera-Tre, the nation that occupies these woods, very little is known about the Ganjus' history. That it remained remarkably untouched by the ravages of the Titanswar is well known, though whether by chance or design only the elves might know for certain.

Because of elven secrecy, the Ganjus did not become the bastion for refugees that most other healthy regions were in the first decades after victory. Even other elves who tried to find shelter in these woods were carefully examined by the druids of Vera-Tre before being admitted as settlers, and only a few desperate members of the other races were even considered. This is not to say that the denizens of the Ganjus were selfish with their plentiful forest. Quite to the contrary — food, goods and healing were gladly distributed to all who approached the forest's borders. But few were allowed inside.

The Convention of Vera-Tre marked the first unveiling of the Ganjus' unmarred splendor, and patrols around the outer edges of the forest lessened in both frequency and rigor. Denev-worshippers of all sorts were allowed to hunt, gather, and even settle in miles-wide border regions. Allied diplomats were and are allowed to see a small sample of the forest's glorious sacred groves and traditional elven villages. The occasional all-important mission is carefully guided through the woods to speed its quest — though, of course, no quest has ever been weighty enough that the elves can't take time to lead the party well around the forest's oft-speculated mysteries.

The Druid War showed all Ghelspad another of the Ganjus' powers when the forest was awakened to fight the invading titanspawn alongside the elves. Though Denev's druids claim that any healthy forest could be aroused to protect itself in dire need, one must take into consideration how many healthy, navigable forests Ghelspad has left. The Ganjus' health alone makes it a powerful place.

To date, no outsider has succeeded at penetrating whatever secrets may lie at the heart of the Ganjus. Though the elves use force to turn away the curious only when polite requests, pleas, stern demands and threats have all been tried and have failed, the fact remains that they always manage to apprehend unauthorized visitors, even vigilants, and one way or another, those visitors always leave knowing no more than when they entered.

The outer edges of the Ganjus are fantastically lovely by the standards of the crippled Scarred Lands, however, and one need not penetrate the forest's heart to fall in love with the majestic trees and find solace in their silent strength. Whatever the central Ganjus conceals, it can only be something good and lovely. No forest could soothe and comfort as the Ganjus does, were it not pure and perfect all the way to the core.

## Geography

A veritable cathedral of enormous ancient trees, the Ganjus lies in the foothills of the Kelders, and the gently rolling hills and dales beneath the majestic groves make it a perfect home for life of all sorts. On the other hand, the hills and trees make navigation extremely tricky to any who are not well-experienced with the lands. It is a perfect place to hide — even for something as large as a dragon in places — but also an easy place to get lost.

Two main rivers run through the Ganjus, both draining out of Clarity Lake just to the north, one of Ghelspad's more pristine large lakes. The eastern river flows directly through Vera-Tre and is known as the Elfboon River. The western river is called Clarity Creek, and several smaller streams feed into each of these waterways before they disappear beneath the Haggard Hills. Though the greenish waters of the Elfboon are perfectly safe and pleasant to drink once filtered through linen, the water of the smaller and

faster Clarity Creek is known as the most delicious in Ghelspad.

Near the center of the forest, not far from the great elf-city of Vera-Tre is the most sacred druidic grove on Ghelspad. The Grove of the Mother is believed by the Jordeh druids to be the place where Denev herself merged with the land and began her slumber. Here the most significant and solemn of the elves' religious rituals takes place.

Other details of the forest are known only in the form of rumor and legend. It is said, for example, that there is a secret city somewhere in the forest, a city that serves as a repository for ancient elven wisdom and magical secrets.

## Flora and Fauna

The Ganjus teems with the healthiest wildlife on the continent. All manner of natural birds and beasts make these woods their home, from deer and rabbits to majestic owls to great wolves and towering bears. The trees range from oak and beech in the south to various pines in the north, and while the shade of the mighty branches keeps the forest floor clear of tangled undergrowth, the Ganjus is nevertheless home to hundreds of varieties of herbs, berries and delicious mushrooms. Natural insects too, thrive here, a welcome change in comparison with the terrifying pests in many other parts of the Scarred Lands.

Magical beasts also make the Ganjus their home, however, and while many of these are good and benevolent, and while evil and destructive creatures are usually driven out before they do much harm, the forest nevertheless provides shelter and sustenance for many dangerous and unpredictable things. Magical wildlife, like the mundane if not more so, is wild by definition and requires caution and respect if one wants to continue breathing. In addition, even the plants of the Ganjus are sometimes equipped with severe defenses and disturbing nutritional requirements, so it is inadvisable to go picking unknown flowers or to stray from the beaten paths.

Another rumor claims that ancient beasts lurk in the Ganjus, hiding from the chaos of the Titanswar and the prying eyes of outsiders. These creatures, so the story goes, are nurtured and protected by the incarnates, as they too hold incarnate souls. Scholars who have investigated the stories either dismiss them out of hand, or speculate that the mysterious creatures are actually dragons, beasts who perished or went into hiding during the divine conflict.

## Haggard Hills

**Population:** 1,000 (Elf 96%, Half-elf 3%, Other 1%)

**Language:** Middle Elvish

**Religion:** Denev

**Resources:** None. Farming is growing more common, but nothing has been exported yet.

## History

Though nearly all life in the Haggard Hills was destroyed by Vangal during the Divine War, it seems that the land here avoided any kind of deep or permanent scarring. Though healing is slow, the hills seem to be reacting more as if recovering from a natural disaster, rather than a divine one. Even before the incarnates gathered to perform the great *restore the land* ritual of 58 AV, the Haggard Hills were already showing signs of recovery, such as small patches of grass and wildflowers in some areas.

With the help of Denev's druids, the healing has increased by leaps and bounds, and the site of the Healing Circle is able to support adequate subsistence farming for a growing village of caretaker druids, as well as a herd of deer, and a great variety of healthy grasses, flowers and grasslands animals. Seeds from the healed areas are spreading little by little to the barren hillsides, stabilizing and replenishing the soil, and encouraging larger and larger animal populations. Even in areas well outside the healed region, natural healing has invited plants and animals to return to the hillsides, and though these areas are still rough and struggling, they move visitors with the miracle of Denev's resilience.

Most of the hills will probably never see verdant forest, but the druids have high hopes for the region supporting a few small, carefully managed farming villages, in addition to great restored herds and a few natural predators. Forest, so the druids claim, is not what a good portion of the hills were made for, being more of a rolling plain, at least in the southeastern areas, so the scarcity of trees, even in the healed areas, is not a discouraging sign. Blasted though they were, the hills are recovering well, and as such stand as a beacon of optimism for all of Ghelspad.

Indeed, the druid villagers that have overseen and encouraged the hills' healing ever since the great ritual, have recently declared themselves to be a permanent settlement and organized a basic government. The population is only barely large enough to require government at all, but the druids are optimistic that their town will grow and be known as the most permanently sustainable and Denev-friendly settlement on the continent. They are merely planning ahead. Appropriately, the village is called Hope.

## Geography

Located south of the magnificent Ganjus Forest, just north of the hideous Hornsaw Forest and the terrifying Blood Steppes, and curving around to sandwich themselves between the Ganjus and the Stricken Forests in the west, the Haggard Hills have the dubious distinction of acting as a buffer between Ghelspad's precious, thriving Ganjus and three of the land's stranger, more wounded areas. Needless to say, the Ganjus owes a lot of its health and safety to the struggling Haggard Hills, so it seems only right that many of the Ganjus' druids make healing pilgrimages

to this region, aiding it in its constant battle for life in the face of devastation.

**The Healing Circle:** In the northwestern Haggard Hills, where the land is embraced on three sides by the arms of the Ganjus Forest, a growing group of druids and incarnates has been hard at work for several decades. This picturesque valley, usually referred to as the Healing Circle, surrounds the site of the first ever *restore the land* ritual, and is by far the most recovered area of the Haggard Hills. Currently just under a nine-mile radius, the Healing Circle grows a little bit every year, with the help of its druid and incarnate caretakers. The village of Hope lies at the southernmost end of the valley and is populated almost exclusively by druids of Denev and incarnates.

Unlike the rest of the Haggard Hills, the Healing Circle is perfectly healthy, supporting a large herd of deer and hundreds of species of plant and small animals. The druids here keep very strict immigration policies, both for sentient and non-sentient life forms, and nothing unnatural or destructive finds its way across the borders for long. Only those sentient creatures who worship Denev can even apply for the right to settle here, and land-use and -care laws are strict and all pervasive. The druids here are nothing if not obsessive, but one has to admit that their methods have worked marvelously. No one can visit the Healing Circle without being deeply moved by Denev's resilient generosity. It is a very hopeful place.

## Flora and Fauna

Though the Healing Circle is a perfectly ordinary rolling plain, with tall grasses, luxuriant wildflowers, deer, rabbits and quail, small predators, and so forth, the rest of the Haggard Hills support very little wildlife indeed. A few hardy grasses cling to most of the hillsides, tenaciously refusing to abandon the region to lifeless desert. Here and there a tired hawk circles over a scrawny, determined field mouse. An undernourished snake or lizard may sometimes be caught sunbathing on a lonely rock, or a beetle questing for any sort of meal besides tough, bitter weeds. In addition, the occasional truly destructive beast wanders through the area, sometimes making it seem that for every two steps forward the land takes on the route to recovery, something happens to force it one step back.

Water is scarce in the Haggard Hills as well. Most of the streams that trickle along the valley floors are mildly toxic to all but the hardiest of creatures and plants, due to the unbalanced minerals and bacteria of the local soil. Most creatures must get their water from the rare untainted rain puddle — nearer to the hilltops — or filtered through the roots and stems of the hearty grasses. Most of the time, Haggard Hills water is disgusting and almost undrinkable, but a few streams are unpolluted and safe to drink from.

The Haggard Hills, though they grow stronger every year, are barely alive, and in the southern

border regions the dead sunless valleys can be safer and more pleasant than the twisted life that dominates the hilltops. The southeastern Haggard Hills are the most frightening, since there is no concrete boundary between the hills and the horrifying Blood Steppes. The druids say that the point at which you turn around and run screaming back toward the Ganjus is the point where the Haggard Hills end and the Blood Steppes begin. The creatures of the forest regions rarely venture into the hills, however, so the western hills are safe enough most of the time.

## Hornsaw Forest

**Population:** 15,000 (Elf 98%, Dwarf 2%); titanspawn are too numerous to determine.

**Language:** Titan Speech, Ledean, Middle Elven, Calastian (in the Borderwood)

**Religion:** Mormo and Denev

**Resources:** Lumber, rare herbs

## History

Back in the days of the Old Calendar, the Hornsaw was a very different place. It was the vast forest of Broadreach, home of a kindly folk and a place of both plenty and beauty. The elves and their dwarven allies worked the verdant woodland with immaculate care, using their powers to aid those within and outside their domain. Then one day, the earth drowned in blood.

Mormo's fall should have ended with jubilation, but in one horrific counterstroke the Serpentmother spat her dark essence upon the wood and transformed it into the Hornsaw. Almost immediately calamity befell the forests' people, and by 3 AV their population, far from recovering, had dropped to one-tenth its pre-War level. This decline continued until, in 12 AV, the Grand Moot of Kalan decreed the Broadreach lost, at least temporarily, and disbanded the population. The Broadreach dwarves, as a people, ceased to exist. Most of the woods' dwarves relocated to Burok Torn.

Over three-quarters of the humans left with their dwarven allies, the majority of whom settled the nearby Gascars. Recognizing that even with their magics they could not escape eventual dispersion, the Broadreach elves instead enacted a true ritual and merged themselves with the forest, disappearing from the material world. Abandoned and lifeless, the forest was easy pickings for the scions of Mormo. Her children flourished, overrunning all natural life in a matter of months.

Embroided in their own problems, no divine force came to the aid of the wood. With most of its divine population gone, and infested as it was with titanic influences, there was little incentive and considerable risk. As late as 47 AV, not a single god-touched soul had returned to replace the legions that had left. It is believed that it was during this time that

the titanspawn reorganized themselves within the forest depths, and agencies such as the high gorgon cabals and the Blood Crone set their roots.

Even with the trickle of new settlers, the Hornsaw remained an isolated corner of Ghelspad until the start of the Druid War. Eager to test their claws on more formidable prey, its titanspawn poured out of the wood and laid waste to the southern Ganjus and northern Gascars. Yet, ferocious though they were, they were no match for the discipline of the Hollow Knights or the cunning of the Vera-Trean elves, both of whom repelled the enemy in a series of stunning victories. By the war's conclusion, the strength of the Hornsaw titanspawn was essentially broken. Still licking their wounds, they retreated into the deep forest.

Even the Blood Crone, for all her prowess, was unable to stem the decline of her peers. Her abortive attack on Glivid-Autel in 112 AV in fact did much to cripple what real power the titanspawn of the region had left. It was during this ebb in titanic power that the old tenants of the wood returned. On Grim Day of 115 AV, the elves of Broadreach ended their ritual and returned in force to the Scarred Lands.

The elves, however, had been tainted by their union with the corrupted forest. In some ways they were half-titanspawn, linked as they had been with the blood of Mormo for nearly a century. Yet, just as the union had exposed them to evil, so too did it grant the elves some immunity from it. Now the titanspawn and elves prepare for all-out conflict, as the last battle for the forest nears.

## Geography

Much like the living wood, the unliving foundation of the forest is a twisted, patchwork thing. Ancient mountains cut obscenely through the canopy, isolated and seemingly scattered through the trees without rhyme or reason. Chasms where the earth has simply given up supporting itself lie insidiously for the unwary to stray too near. Rivers and marshes crisscross like fresh wounds, their black, tarry waters the color of coagulating blood. Attempts at remapping the Hornsaw after the War were abandoned following the Ritual of Tears, and many geographical details remain unknown. No one is planning to change this anytime soon. As the paladin Barconius once said, "I do not begrudge the gods for turning their eyes from the Hornsaw, for to behold it in its entirety as the gods must do from heaven's vantage must be to view the face of an unsurpassed horror."

**The Borderwood:** Along the very southern border of the Hornsaw, where Mormo's taint is weakest, the trees grow strong on magic but remain by and large safe to approach. Due to their magical properties, the timbers of this region are highly prized. Nightwood, ironwood, soulwood and venomwood can all be found here in vast quantities, and their

harvest drives the economies of nearly two-dozen settlements just outside the wood's reach.

**Broadreach Horizon:** The Horizon groves of the north were the ancient heartland of Broadreach elves and have once again come under divine dominion. Though constant raids winnow down the defenders daily, the elves have managed to maintain this haven for over two decades now. Until recently, the Horizon was even expanding, reclaiming territory from the clutches of the gorgons, hags, and serpent creatures that festoon its borders. Now the region is holding its own, but *only* holding its own.

**Broadreach River:** The greatest of the Hornsaw's rivers and one of the few places in the wood to retain its pre-War name, the Broadreach meanders from its source in the northern Gascars along the mountains' eastern edge. There it veers sharply into the Hornsaw, dividing the Specters' Wood from the rest of the forest before continuing onwards into the Blossoming Sea. Though its shores are home to countless titanspawn, its course remains, for the most part, unfouled. That is little consolation, though, for those who wish to cross this mighty waterway. Its raging waters are fraught with rapids, falls, and hidden eddies.

**Vale of Sorrows:** Sunken nearly fifty meters below sea level, the Vale was once the Ledean province of Lyria and stage for one of that empire's greatest tragedies. Though the specifics of the tale are now lost, patricide, betrayal and revelation are commonly agreed-upon themes. Modern peoples need only know that the place is a wellspring of negative emotions and teeming with wrack.

## Flora and Fauna

The Hornsaw is the most dangerous woodland in the Scarred Lands. The blood of Mormo is everywhere. Its rot eats through the best of defenses, oozing from every broken branch or creature crushed underfoot. Its insidious miasma creeps into the soul, and turns one's self against oneself. It is a place of destruction, of hatred, of unmitigated evil, and all but the noblest who go there will die — or





be warped, as the Hornsaw's creatures have been.

Moths, willows, unicorns, and dragons — anywhere else they are things of innocence, beauty and grace, but in the Hornsaw they are creatures of the blood, and deadly before all else. Add to them the great gorgon cabals, hag covens, and reaper dens. Add to them the myriad other things twisted by Mormo's taint. Add to them the countless spirits driven mad by the decay of the forest's heart, and one begins to comprehend the living, horrific menagerie of the forest's creatures.

An hour's passing without seeing the spawn is good fortune. An afternoon's passing of the same is divine grace. A night's passing, though, means death is nigh, for an evil greater even than they has scared them, and you alone remain to catch its interest.

## People

The issue of the Hornsaw's sentient inhabitants is a difficult and broad subject. The region is simply too vast and encompasses too many "nations." Two groups though, dominate the wood — one serving the light, the other the dark. It is by their struggle that the wood's tale is best told.

## The Gorgons

No one knows just how many gorgons, high or low, reside within the Hornsaw. Twisted and disgusting but still a people, the gorgons have no culture of their own and so adopt that of others. Everything gorgon, their dress, such as it is, their festivities, even their icons of worship, are perversions of their elven, human, and dwarven predecessors.

With near-endless forces at their disposal, the high gorgons have every reason to be sloppy. History, though, is an effective if cruel teacher, and the humiliation of the Torn Womb's ill-fated Second Siege of Hollowfaust, the Blood Crone's raid on Glivid-Autel, and the entire Druid War, has done much to temper these otherwise conceited beings. The modern gorgon horde is a well-oiled fighting machine. Nowhere near as organized as the Vigils of Vesh or the Legion of Ash, it is still a far cry from the rabble of earlier centuries.

A noteworthy cabal can muster as many as 20 armies, half of which will be professionals trained in the arts of war. Of these, both trained and conscripted, two-thirds will be true titanspawn while demi-humans and divine collaborators comprise the remainder. With each such army numbering anywhere from a thousand to five thousand troops, a gorgon horde fully mobilized is a frightful thing indeed. Even more worrisome to divine defenders, no one knows just how many such cabals exist, and the more powerful ones, such as the Stranglers or Fouled Eye cabals, can bring even larger numbers to bear.

## The Elves

Reborn amidst horror, the elves of Broadreach were immediately beset by an internal enemy. Bound as they had been in the Heart of the Wood, they were now complicit in the taint of Mormo. A lesser people would have given in and been turned into half-wretched beings neither divine nor titanic, but the elves survived and arrayed their very souls for battle. Originally a peaceful, sylvan race akin to the elves of Vera-Tre, the Broadreach elves are today a more conflicted and violent people, constantly struggling against the taint of titans' blood, while carrying on the struggle for good within the forest. While they still revere Denev, the Broadreach elves have been forced to abandon the stance of true neutrality; many also worship Tanil and some have even adopted Madriel as a third goddess, creating a new Broadreach triumvirate of patron deities.

This constant hymn of struggle against the dark is the foundation of modern elven society. All things are designed to remind the elven people of their heritage and the need to protect it. Their once fanciful dress is now simple and plain, their flowing hair bound back or cut short. Even their architecture, once slender and elegant, now favors girth as a symbol of stability. What have remained unchanged are the cultural institutions of the elves, the demarcations of rank and duty that defined their people before the War and defines them still.

## Irontooth Pass

### History

King Virduk's assault upon Burok Torn led his armies through the treacherous Irontooth Pass, long a bastion of the dwarven people. And King Virduk found what other invaders had already discovered — the pass was still in dwarven hands because of its defenses.

In 2106 OC, the dwarven people followed the Marked King Alathin to Burok Torn. During their long march, the dwarves camped in many spots, with the Irontooth Pass one that has lasted to this day.

Originally a small settlers' camp, the pass grew over the years as the dwarves built numerous strongholds in the mountains. The dwarven leaders recognized early on the defense the bottleneck afforded the burgeoning peak of Burok Torn. By itself, the narrow pass to Burok Torn would have deterred many armies.

But the dwarves were still not comfortable with the possibility that an army might try to attack Burok Torn. When the dwarves had passed through the area the first time, they were taken by the many 10-foot iron, glass and stone spikes littering the area. Some claimed they were castoff teeth from Gaurak the Glutton or fragments of Thulkas' body. Harder than the toughest steel the dwarves could produce, the

spikes became the perfect defense for the Irontooth, and led to the name adopted throughout Ghelspad. In 2202, the dwarves used the spikes as a defensive ring about the main keeps, building elaborate mechanisms to thrust the spikes from the ground to impale invaders crossing the terrain.

The dwarves held the pass from its founding until 92 AV, when King Virduk's forces marched on Burok Torn. Virduk's battle mages led the main forces against the pass, magically stopping the spikes and allowing Virduk's forces to fight their way past the dwarven defenders. But the death of the Irontooth Pass dwarves finally came when Anteus, King Virduk's wizard adviser, planted his deadly serpent root about the last holdout stronghold, and the terrible vines sucked the life from the dwarves trapped within. The pass fell overnight, and the Calastians moved in, gaining control of the strongholds that controlled the lethal iron spikes in enough time to use them against a force that soon marched from Burok Torn.

Nearly 1,500 dwarves, including King Thune, died in Irontooth Pass at the hands of the Calastians and their own defensive spikes. The bodies were left impaled upon the spikes as a symbol to any who stood in the path of the Calastian war machine.

## Flora and Fauna

Many beasts and aggressive plants claim niches and fight for survival in the rugged terrain. The pass is more dangerous under Calastian control, and not solely because of their war-like attitude toward anything trying to make the deadly crossing. When the dwarves held the area, they made sure to cleanse the mountains around the pass regularly to ensure that no deadly threats greeted travelers. Now, under Calastian control, the mountains are returning to their natural state, with monstrous creatures finding caves to call home. Rocs have been sighted flying above the peaks seeking meals to pluck from the ground, and giant eagles and giant owls maintain aeries within the peaks. Feral dwarf hounds, animals abandoned when Calastia slew the dwarves who maintained the pass, roam the hills, hunting mountain goats for food. More deadly predators, like the magically created quicksilver stalkers, hunt through the hills, slaying silently. The dwarves secretly hope that the dark-elf creations will get rid of the Calastians for them. Some creatures, however, find homes in caverns and refuse to leave. Behir have been sighted, and a vengaurak has attacked a scouting party surveying modifications the Calastian soldiers made to the dwarves' formidable defenses. The gorgons still exist, and some say they are working with the Calastians in a deal brokered by the dark elves.

## Kelder Mountains

### History

Cutting across the continent, effectively dividing Ghelspad in two, the Kelder Mountains are known as a hotbed of titanspawn activity, and one of the most imposing barriers to trade and travel.

The Kelders have played an important role in Ghelspad's history since the birth of the divine races. It is said that the mountains themselves were a result of a quarrel between Kadum and Thulkas. Intrigued by the immutability of stone, Thulkas crafted the land into a series of great blocks of ever-increasing size and mass. So fascinated was he that he disregarded Kadum's calls to council. Enraged at being ignored, Kadum shattered Thulkas' creation, splintering the stone into the shapes we know today, and earning the title "Mountainshaker." Thulkas was infuriated and struck back, and for many days the two titans fought, further shattering the mountains, and creating the tangle of peaks, ravines, valleys and passes now called the Kelder Mountains.

During the Divine War, the Kelders served as a base and refuge for titanspawn, particularly gorgons, as they struggled against the gods and their mortal armies. Even after the titans were vanquished, die-hard spawn fought on, lurking in the Kelders' crags and hiding in the caves and canyons, safe from the overextended divine forces. The dwarven city of Burok Torn suffered particularly during this period, as armies of gorgons assaulted the citadel, and the Titan Chern himself, fleeing from his divine foes, sought refuge nearby.

The end of the Titanswar did little to improve the Kelders' reputation, but its location astride routes from eastern to western Ghelspad has kept traffic through its few passes flowing. With Calastia blocking southern routes into Vesh, Hedrad, Mithril and the Plains of Lede, merchants and travelers are less fearful of the hazards of the Bleak Savannah, Haggard Hills and Blood Steppes. The elven nation of Vera-Tre does not allow outsiders passage, so the Ganjus Forest's welcoming depths are off-limits to travelers.

### Geography

Although some believe that the story of the Kelders' creation is a myth, their chaotic geography certainly seems to confirm some of the tale. The lower reaches of the Kelders are rugged, with passes often choked with talus and landslides. Higher up, the mountains are inhospitable, cold and dangerous.

Only two major passes can reliably be expected to be open. Irontooth Pass, once a major highway through the mountains, is held by the Calastians, who seek to use it to choke off trade with Durrover and Vesh. The Canyon of Souls is controlled by the Ontenazans, who will guide travelers through for a price (see Ontenazu entry).

It is possible to cross the mountains by other routes, but these are hazardous in the extreme. Landslides, avalanches, sudden storms and, of course, the ever-present threat of titanspawn are enough to discourage all but the hardiest of travelers. Just the same, every year at least a dozen caravans set out across the Kelders, hoping to make it to Vesh or Mithril, and so guarantee their owners' fortune. And every year, nearly all are lost. It is said that a fortune in trade goods lies at the bottom of the Kelder ravines, but so far those who have sought it have met with a fate similar to that of the caravans.

## Flora and Fauna

The Kelders are nothing if not diverse, but no real authority rules here. Most of the mountains' inhabitants are of the wild variety, including sheep, mountain lions, birds of all sorts, and a host of rodents and other small mammals. It is not these mundane creatures that keep people out of the Kelders, however.

Titanspawn swarm in these mountains like no other place on Ghelspad. Chief among the creatures here are the fearsome gorgons, children of Mormo. Both high and low gorgons have been sighted here, preying on travelers or planning mischief against the divine inhabitants of the lowlands. Stormchaser slitheren are also known to inhabit the region, as are various species of hags and their servants.

The region is infamous for its monsters, which include but are not limited to shockbats, thunder kites, hill howlers, giant spiders and dire creatures of all sorts. All in all, the region represents a challenge to even the most competent adventurer, and a potent reminder that, although the titans may be gone, they are unlikely ever to be forgotten.

## People

Intelligent inhabitants of the Kelders include a wide range of peoples, from small tribes of hardy humans, mountain guides of a variety of races, hunters and rangers, and bands of dwarves who choose life in the wild over the corridors of Burok Torn. As noted, there is no central authority here, and those who live in the Kelders are all tough and independent souls, highly competent and self-reliant.

## Kelder Steppes

### History

*From the Chronicles of Durvshen concerning the Kelder Steppes, written 14 AV:*

The Kelder Steppes suffered greatly from the Titans' predilection for violence and destruction.

In 2872 OC, before the Titanswar was a glimmer in the eye of the youngest godling, a sprawling forest of massive oaks rose into the sky. The lumber cut laboriously from these trees was strong as steel and resisted the fires of the fiercest forge.

Perhaps that is why the Titans took their anger out upon the trees.

Chern struck first, trees withering as he passed. Where he stepped, roots drank deeply of corruption and blight spread to the magnificent trunks. Next came Golthagga, wielding his hammer; the stoutest trees took two swings for even the Shaper to fell. Others followed: Lethene with lightning and storms; Mesos with bursts of powerful magic; and Thulkas, who burned trees in pyres that darkened the sky with ash and caused the sun to hide in the glare. In the end, a trod-upon land remained, with not one of the massive trees remaining. Even the stumps were pulled from the ground and cast into Thulkas' pyres. We tree-dwellers fared little better; only a handful of us away from our homes when disaster struck escaped with our lives. The few of us to survive have found a new home above the treetops in the Bridged City.

Why was such violence visited upon our forest? A comment overheard by Belsameth hints that the trees held the means of truly destroying a titan. The rumor carries weight considering what the Titans did to the land, but we all know it is unwise to trust completely the words of the Slayer.

New growths blooming since the Titanswar bear none of the strength of their ancestors, although this might be caused by the taint of the Blood Sea when the Hornswythe River overflows. Those gathering the brittle acorns claim they grow much better away from the Blood Sea, but no one has yet produced a tree to rival the great stands in which we made our homes.

## Flora and Fauna

Low, rolling hills ramble across the Kelder Steppes, with stunted trees filling in the low spots. Vegetation carpets the rocky ridges and hilltops, but has worn away near the ridgelines. Animals maintain sprawling dens and nests, looking for high spots to escape flood waters should they come. Burrowing animals claim entire mounds as their homes, digging in much like the dwarves have carved homes from Burok Torn to the south.

Foxes and moles live in abundance in burrows within the low hills, with the foxes sitting at the top of the "natural" food chain. Small deer tend to the southern border, bedding in boughs of low trees. Elk and caribou range into the northern reaches, pushed south in herds by the expanding and vicious orc tribes of the Plains of Lede. The Riders of the Kelder Steppes also maintain large herds of grazing animals to feed their migrant populations. Large orc tribes, including the Thornhides, the Scorchskulls and the Gravelfists, now control much of the steppes to Blood Basin. The orcs hunt the steppes heavily for its deer, elk and caribou populations, and sometimes the herds kept by the Riders to the south.



Crescent elk travel within the elk populations, and predators — from prechasers and goblin bears to more unnatural ankhegs and bullettes — make dens in the land not patrolled by the Riders. Grotesque herders and their bizarre menageries linger in the uncontrolled areas. The Riders of the Kelder Steppes share stories that these demons enjoy the area because it reminds them of their forsaken world. The population of migratory beasts has brought one other menace: flesh strippers. Whole populations of the deadly rodents live in massive burrows awaiting herds to pass.

The steppes are harsh during winter, when biting winds whip the barren landscape. Pinkish snows move in silent drifts carrying a Blood Sea taint, and a frenzy erupts from animals that eat the snow for water during winter. Animals find dens in which to weather the winters, with only the desperate venturing out in the midst of Belsamer and Hedrer.

**Herd Plain:** These expanses are controlled by the Riders for their herds. The Riders patrol these regularly to protect their food sources from predators and the growing orc tribes.

**Scorched Rock:** The Scorchkull orc tribe currently maintains this rocky rise in the middle of the tribal lands controlled by the orcs. The Scorched Plain is alternately called the Gravel Rise and the Ridge of Thorn when the other tribes gain the ground. Fighting is often heavy and frequent around this land mass, although why the orcs fight for control of the rocky ridge is unknown.

## Lake Repose

**Name:** The Homesteads of Lake Repose

**Population:** 20,000 (Human 88%, Elf 6%, Halfling 4%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%)

**Government:** Southern part is under the jurisdiction of Hedrad, northern settlements a protectorate of Vesh. Most of the communities are independent.

**Language:** Veshian

**Religion:** Madriel, Tanil, Hedrad

**Resources:** Wheat, yams, fish, wood, shipbuilding

**Allies:** Vesh, Hedrad, Mansk

**Enemies:** Calastia

## History

The history of this region is tied closely to the history of Hedrad. The Ledean province of Camini ruled over most of this region until 2411 OC, at which point the area was overrun by warring factions. The Hornswythe kingdom held the eastern portion of the area until the Divine War. Since then, it has been loosely under the control of both Vesh and Hedrad, who manage an uneasy truce over the area.

## Geography

Lake Repose is the largest inland body of water in Ghelspad. By virtue of its geography, it is free from the blood taint common out to sea. Though fed by numerous small rivers, it is uncertain where most of its water comes from. Some have suggested that there is a portal to the elemental plane of water underneath

the lake (a fact that would disturb the gods, who believe all access to the elemental planes was cut off during the Divine War), while others think it is merely a deep reservoir of water coming to the surface. In any case, the waters of the lake flow east into the Hornswythe, and south past Hedrad to empty into the Blood Sea. Waterfalls and rapids help keep contaminants or tainted fish from moving into the lake.

The lake is vast, and home to a wide range of freshwater animals and plants. Though not without dangers, it is a fertile resource for those along its shore. Surrounding the lake are woods, which provide another vital resource. Some of the best lumber in northeastern Ghelspad can be found here, and shipwrights find good business up the Hornswythe for their craft. Near the Sheer Falls, a few also work on sea-going vessels. The forests are dotted with farmsteads, causing some displeasure on the part of local elves. These elves are careful not to protest too openly, lest they endanger their relatively good relations with the humans.

## Flora and Fauna

The lake itself is home to many freshwater fish, some growing to exceptional size. The fishermen in the area take painstaking and, some contend, overly restrictive care to ensure no fish are tainted by the Mourning Marshes or Blood Sea. Along the shore, a variety of tubers are raised in muddy, loose soil, as are cranberries, squash, and a few other plants. These are a popular source of produce, with large areas of shoreline walled and carefully tended to keep the soil at optimal levels. Legend has it that elves taught these techniques to the first human visitors.

Various freshwater monsters such as chuul, water naga, scrag (aquatic trolls) and a variety of freshwater sea lion have been encountered in the lake, making fishing an occasionally hazardous undertaking. It is said that a powerful hag lairs near the lake, but most dismiss this as a tale used to frighten children.

The forests lack any large mundane animals other than deer and a few wolves. They are mainly oak and beech, though some stands of elm are found in the south. As for unusual residents, the most common are dryads and hamadryads. It is one of the safest forests in Ghelspad to travel through.

## Religion

Lakesiders worship much like Vesh, though in a quieter, more introspective manner. There are numerous local icons and rituals for various celebrations, often with bright costumes and good food. Evil gods are disliked and discouraged. Unlike many other regions, followers of Denev find wide acceptance here, even amongst humans. Priests provide leadership for communities; most worship Hedrada, especially in the south, though their rituals and practices differ somewhat from the priests of Hedrad.

# Mourning Marshes

## History

Once known as the Flourishing Flats, the place today called the Mourning Marshes is said to be the final resting place of the diseased Titan, Chem. It is a foul, stinking wasteland, alive with fearful creatures, and a major base of operations for the deadly slitheren.

It was soon after the Titanswar that the corruption of the Flats began, with poisoned vapors and filth seeping up from below. Soon, normal life was forced from the Flats, and the entire place was renamed the Mourning Marshes. Deemed unfit for habitation, the Marshes were instead patrolled and sealed off by the Veshian Vigils. The slitheren, ordinary rats corrupted and transformed by their exposure to the titans, were first encountered nearly a century ago, and as the years pass, they have grown stronger in the fastness of the marshes, safe from massive Veshian incursions.

Initially, the swamp was occupied by ratmen of the Diseased brood, presumably drawn there by the proximity of their patron deity's corpse. By the end of the first century AV, they had grown strong enough to raid into Vesh, taking captives and loot, and leaving destruction and disease in their wake. Soon, Veshian scouts returned from the Marshes with frightening reports — the Diseased had been joined by other broods. The White Wraiths, Forge Crawlers, Foamers, Red Witches, and even an occasional Daywalker — a brood normally found only in the depths of the Ukrudan Desert — had formed what appeared to be an alliance, attempting to create a true nation-state in the depths of the marshes.

Several disastrous engagements followed. A mixed force of Veshians, Hedradans and Mithrilites was defeated at the Battle of Two Rivers in 97 AV, and several years of heavy raids followed, with the slitheren encroaching steadily on southern Vesh. The Blood Monsoon of 112 AV proved a boon, confining the ratmen to their swamps and giving the Veshians a chance to recover. By 126 AV the Veshians had discovered that the swamp was under the control of a Diseased priest-king, and immediately began concerted operations against the ratmen.

The slitheren were defeated at the Battle of Moor in 136 AV, and three years later the epic Battle of Treestand ended in a standoff, with both sides experiencing heavy losses. The Arcernoth Delta Vigil, one of the best-known Veshian units, was detailed to keep watch on the ratmen, and whenever to possible strike back. The marshes remain a hotbed of slitheren activity, and may yet threaten the security of Vesh and surrounding lands.

## Flora and Fauna

In addition to a bizarre alliance of slitheren broods, the Mourning Marshes harbor numerous deadly creatures. There are few natural animals in the swamp and

those that are there — serpents, insects, leeches, alligators and the like — are hardy and dangerous in the extreme. The giant or dire version of these creatures are sometimes encountered. Rats of all sorts thrive here with their slitheren cousins — ordinary rats, giant rats and dire rats, in addition to wolfrats and horserats bred by the Diseased. Chern's presence draws deadly spirits of the plague, and a substantial portion of the swamp is controlled by skein, spider-like creatures said to have once been citizens of the city of Hedrad, cursed by their god because of their corruption. Other dangerous species include giant spiders of various species, oozes, and the deadly mire wyrm, a powerful serpentine predator.

Worst by far are the swamp's intelligent denizens. The slitheren share the marshes with small bands of slime reavers, spider-eye goblins and even a few mire dwellers. The swamp hag Addeirus, an especially foul member of her species, has taken up residence in the Mourning Marshes as well, though how she intends to serve her mistress, the titan Mormo, no one can yet say.

## Lands of Non

### History

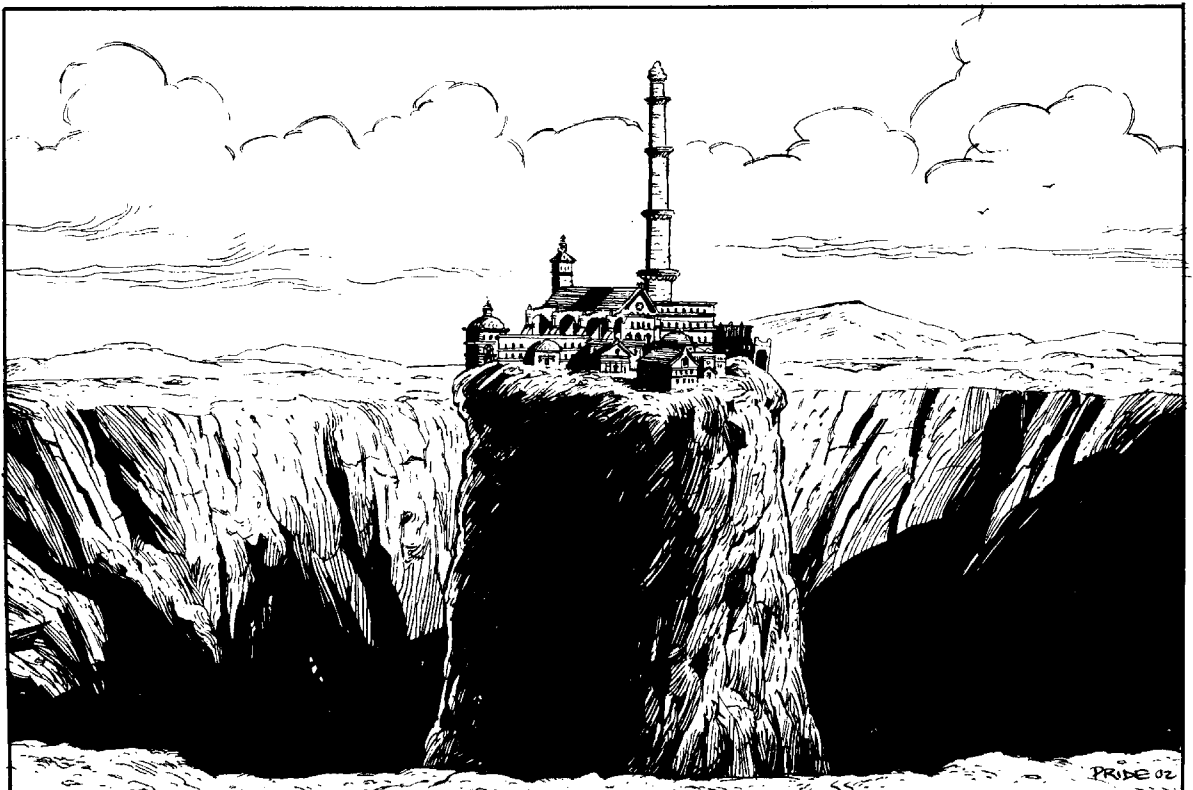
Once, there was only mighty Aurimar, capital of the Ledean Empire. Aurimar was the center of all civilization and culture, highest and first of the mighty cities of Ghelspad. The founding of Aurimar marked the first true rise of humans into a formidable nation of people, rather than just scattered settlements. It

was only a short time between the founding of this single city and the rise of the Empire of Lede.

Though empires have risen and fallen around Aurimar, the city itself remained for the most part inviolate. This all changed with the coming of the Titanswar. As the Titans' armies closed on the city of Aurimar itself, Vangal, Madriel and Tanil themselves strode onto the field, turning the full force of their wrath upon the city, sinking it into the ground and laying waste to the remnants of the empire. Only Madriel prevented Vangal from slaying every citizen of the empire. The seat of power destroyed, the gods left the few sad refugees to eke out an existence as best they could.

### The Summoners of Aurimar

During the time of the Empire of the Wheel, this cabal of sorcerers, male renegades who had fled Albadia, delved into the intricacies of planar lore. Rather than traveling those lost dimensions, however, the Summoners of Aurimar sought to craft deals with the mighty beings of those planes, allowing them to summon the minions and servitors of those beings with greater power. To this day, remnants of that knowledge still exist, carried on by those strange magicians who learn the secrets of the Summoners. Rumors among such magicians suggest that there exist secrets yet to be uncovered in the ruins of lost Aurimar.





## Geography

The blasted, blighted territory surrounding the remains of the city of Aurimar are called the Lands of Non, an old Ledean word that literally translates as “none” or “nothing,” so called due to the superstitious belief that invoking the name of a place so cursed by the gods is to invite utter nonexistence.

At the center of this wasteland is the Pillar of Non, the column of solid ground that supports the remains of lost Aurimar, the rest of which crumbled into the Sinkhole of Non, the great pit opened beneath the city, which still yawns hungrily on all sides of the Pillar. A few towers and crumbling buildings yet stand atop the Pillar and those who stand at the lip of the Sinkhole can often hear the tolling of the dreaded *Bells of Non* (see *Relics & Rituals* pg. 211), rung from the tallest of those remaining towers.

## Obsidian Pyre

### History

The Obsidian Pyre is located at the heart of the desolate Stricken Woods. It is the object of power, and perhaps worship for a group of wizards rather banally known as the Obsidian Pyre wizards. The Pyre is a monument of standing black stones, which are broken and lean against one another to remain standing. These smooth ebony stones burn always, never consuming the rock and with no apparent fuel for the fire. It is not known for certain if this is residual energy from whatever destroyed the Stricken Woods, or if the Wizards have tapped into some otherworldly source to power arcane spells and summonings. The Pyre is relatively new, first sighted just after the destruction of the Stricken Woods, which occurred just before the Druid Wars, around 80 AV. The Obsidian Pyre has not been studied in detail by any nation or race. Most do not consider it of any significant worth when weighed against the vehemence with which the Pyre wizards guard their secrets, whatever they may be.

### Geography

The Pyre is simply a cleared area roughly 40 or 50 yards around, with the Obsidian Pyre as its centerpiece. The Pyre itself is but 12 feet high and about 30 feet across. Nobody has ever been close enough to examine if the stones are the tops of some enormous formation, or if they are even some sort of magical sculpture. There is no record of the Pyre existing before the wizards destroyed the Stricken Woods surrounding it. Whether the wood needed to be destroyed to summon the Pyre or the destruction was a side effect is unknown. Some armchair magical theorists believe the Pyre simply needed a proper atmosphere in which to be summoned and maintained.

## People

Many guess at the motives and goals of the Pyre wizards other than the quest for raw arcane power and knowledge. The destruction of the Stricken Woods was an irreverent and powerful display of disrespect for what little land was left after the Divine War. With this in mind, most presume the wizards stand against the good and just gods. Whatever their goals, the wizards seem content to keep their desires and power away from the politics and national disputes that still trouble much of the Scarred Lands. Some territories (nearby Khirdet, for one) have tried to establish contact with the wizards to inquire about some sort of pact or partnership to raise their place in the world order. However, the wizards do not appear to reside near the Pyre or even in the Stricken Woods (regardless of how unseemly that many sound), and proved to be impossible to contact as an entity. Again, the occasional upstart wizard has sought to join the clandestine group and perhaps glean some of the secrets of the Pyre, but with similar results. The Pyre wizards are, as far as can be told, a closed group with no methods for obtaining membership and no new pledges.

There are also few detailed reports about the wizards themselves. Some are most definitely not human, having reptilian features beneath their shiny black robes. As far as formidability, the upper level of the wizards' power is also unknown. There have been minor altercations between the wizards and adventurers in the Stricken Woods in which the wizards demonstrated the ability to cast powerful spells, but nothing else of specific value was determined during these skirmishes. More academic researches suggest that, while the Pyre wizards are not the most powerful group of mages in the Scarred Lands, they may rank somewhere near there. The power and knowledge needed to use and maintain a power source — as the Obsidian Pyre is suspected to be — is no small amount. Journeyman wizards would find the Pyre out of their control, no matter how devout.

As far as theories, there are as many as there are theorists. However, the most prevalent, likely, and educated guesses arrive at one of these conclusions:

The Pyre is a shrine and limited portico for Belsameth. The wizards demonstrate many signs of being worshippers of the Goddess of Darkness, and perhaps they facilitate the summoning of her creatures through this Pyre. This would also account for the exceptionally high number of creatures in the Stricken Wood. However, all of these creatures fear and stay clear of the Pyre.

Many historians and theologians believe that the Pyre wizards have located one of the pieces of a felled titan, and discovered a way to tap arcane power from this piece. The two most likely candidates are Mesos, whose parts were “flung to the farthest reaches of existence,” or Gaurak's teeth. There is strong evidence for the Pyre to be the remains of either of

these two titans. Mesos' remains would be most likely to radiate arcane energies usable by those willing to pay the price. The teeth of Gaurak taint and spoil the land wherever they come to rest. If a tooth were brought to this land for some insidious purpose, surely the Stricken Woods would have paid the price.

Finally, there are a few somewhat credible rumors that the wizards seek to raise one of the fallen Titans, or even create a new being of power. While many authorities on the subject claim this is impossible, believers in this radical theory point out that the titans were thought impossible to kill before the Divine War. Lucian Dane, the man known as the Black Messiah, has risen to power within the Pyre, and now seeks to expand its influence, with the aid of his allies in Glivid-Autel.

## Perforated Plains

The Perforated Plains are a barren wasteland known for their pock-marked surface, a legacy of the Titanswar, when the cast-aside teeth of Gaurak rained down upon this once verdant plain as a hail of boulders and stones. Even now, the plants and animals are only just beginning to recover from this devastation, a process slowed by the influx of titanspawn into the area in the years following the Divine War.

## History

The history of the Perforated Plains is important to the whole of Ghelspad, for these plains were the birthplace of one of the greatest empires in the whole of the continent, a civilization that left its mark on everything, from the common language to the war colleges that still exist today — the Empire of Lede. But the history of the Perforated Plains is not told in that tale. Rather, the history of the Perforated Plains begins near the end of the Titanswar.

On the fertile plains and river banks that made up this land sat the Empire of the Wheel, a poor descendant of mighty Lede, but still a powerful land in its own right. The Empire of the Wheel was founded by a cabal of male sorcerers, fleeing Albadia and its hatred of male witches. This cabal came upon the city of Aurimar and made it their home. In a short time, they came to rule the city as Sorcerer-Kings, expanding their rule outward around the city until they commanded the fealty of cities and communities for many weeks' ride around the hub of their empire.

Though the sorcerer founders of the Empire of the Wheel were worshippers of Mesos, the Sorcerer-Kings themselves revered no being, neither titan nor god. After all, they drew upon their own mastery of magic and made direct deals with beings of many planes — how was that any different from what clerics and Titans did? The lands of the Empire of the Wheel were prosperous, defended and supported by both the mighty summoners of the Empire and their elite warrior forces.

From the founding of the Empire, it was plagued by violence and dissent. From internal difficulties such as summoners falling to the corruption of malicious extra-planar creatures, to external affairs such as war with the expanding charduni nation, which eventually resulted in the Empire of the Wheel negotiating a role as a client-state of the charduni, there seemed to be little peace for the Sorcerer-Kings. In particular, the barbarian tribes of Albadia never forgot the nature of the Empire of the Wheel's founding and routinely attacked its outlying settlements and caravans. Despite this, the tribes of Albadia had never proven a genuine threat to the good of the Empire of the Wheel — their attacks were always on the level of banditry, little else.

This all changed in 3467 OC. The Barbarian King of Albadia, Yngolf the Witchblooded, declared war against the Empire of the Wheel, rallying the disparate and chaotic tribes of the frozen north to his side. He was aided in this by the tattooed witches of the tribes. In a short time, it became clear that this was no mere martial endeavor — rather, it was supported and encouraged by the Albadian sorceresses, who, for the first time in history, actually rode into battle with their tribal minions. What began as a barbarian horde descending on a civilized nation rapidly turned into an arcane war between two sorcerer factions.

This war, called the Witchwar in the remaining records of the Empire of the Wheel, was waged for twelve years. Then the war took a turn for the unexpected. Suddenly, all arcane magic became dangerously volatile, burning with a sheer elemental power that left its wielders and those too near them dead. Though they did not know it at the time, the destruction of Mesos had drastically affected the magic used so freely during that war, causing it to burn out of control of its casters. Both sides, afraid that the other had managed to affect their very magic, fled the field of battle, ending the Witchwar rapidly.

The Titanswar came upon the Empire of the Wheel quickly. Though the Sorcerer-Kings originally attempted to remain aloof from either side of the conflict, they were undermined from within. A hidden faction among them still worshipped Mesos and believed that, if the gods could be destroyed, Mesos might return. To this end, they manipulated events within their own empire to lend aid to the forces of the titans. By the time the other Sorcerer-Kings discovered their perfidy, the damage was done — the Empire of the Wheel was considered a place of Titan worship and the divine armies laid siege to the empire.

For years, the armies of Vangal, Madriel and Tanil laid waste to the outer edges of the empire. Steadily, the empire shrank, until little was left save Aurimar itself. Then, the tribes of Albadia entered the fray. The Crow King, a tribal ruler in the service of the titans, led his armies against the troops of the

gods camped in the northern plains of the empire. The Sorcerer-Kings watched in horror as Albadian sorceresses, hags and other monstrous titanspawn threw themselves into battle ostensibly to aid them. Before they could make a decision to aid either side, however, the Herald of Vangal arrived on the scene, leading a mighty slaughter of the Albadian forces. The tribesmen were routed, and fled back across the Arnjulf River.

As their armies closed on the city of Aurimar, Vangal, Madriel and Tanil themselves strode onto the field, turning the full force of their wrath upon the city, sinking it into the ground and laying waste to the remnants of the empire. Only Madriel prevented Vangal from slaying every citizen of the empire. With the empire's seat of power destroyed, the gods left the few sad refugees to eke out an existence as best they could.

A few of the empire's strong elements, including some of its noble sorcerer houses, yet remained. Driven by the survival urge, these folk threw themselves into worship of the gods and began to pull together to attempt to recover their lives.

Sadly, this was not to be. The end of existence in these fertile plains came quickly and brutally with the destruction of Gaurak. As the gods pulled his teeth and cast them away, they crashed into these plains as a hail of mighty stones and boulders. Most folk who yet dwelled here were slain by this catastrophe. Those who somehow managed to survive struggled across the Arnjulf River into Albadia. Most of the folk were given sanctuary, save for the male sorcerers who led them. These men, the last remaining scions of the Sorcerer-Kings of Aurimar, were slain on the order of the Albadian ruler as the Savior King.

What remains of the Empire of the Wheel is now called the Perforated Plains. Where once it was a vast area of fish-filled rivers and fertile, green fields, now it is bare, riven rock and scraggly weed-trees, pock-marked by massive craters and sinkholes that make travel through it a dangerous and uncertain thing. Dotted with the ruined remains of settlements whose history could be traced all the way back to the Ledeian Empire, these plains attract nothing more than treasure hunters and hungry beasts drawn by the lingering energies of Gaurak that taint the place.

## Geography

One of the most extreme and inhospitable environments in all of Ghelspad, the Perforated Plains consist of miles of dead, barren rock, interrupted only by the hardiest of scrub grass, stunted trees and stagnant pools of water. The most noticeable feature — indeed, those features that give these plains its name — are the sinkholes and craters that mar its surface.

Travel through the Perforated Plains is dangerous and unsure, to say the least. Aside from the many dangerous beasts that dwell here, the very land itself

is a danger. It can be difficult to navigate around some of the larger sinkholes, causing many travelers to lose their way, and the barren rock and dirt can sometimes cover pits waiting to collapse and dump those who foolishly tread on them for quite a fall, sometimes into the lair of creatures or onto sharp stones below.

Though once these plains were as varied as any other place, with myriad rivers, farmlands and the like, now, it is only a great swathe of broken, shattered terrain, littered with the ruins of the civilizations that once stood upon it. There are a few distinctive features to this wasteland, however.

**The Lands of Non:** Once the mighty capital Aurimar, now the Sinkhole and Pillar of Non are all that remain. (See the Lands of Non entry).

**The Ruins of Farith-Lul:** The city of Farith-Lul was known as the City of Arms in old Lede, the place from which the Empire drew its armies. As the birthplace of the Ledeian Colleges, Farith-Lul was the very center of Lede's defenses, housing its finest armorers and providing a home to the high Towers of Defense, the center of Lede's arcane military training. Now, however, Farith-Lul is only ruins. Set high upon a mesa with nearly sheer cliffs, Farith-Lul is known to house all manner of foul beasts. Rumor has it that once the ruins housed a fatling priest of Gaurak, a renegade from Fang Mount, but it and its vengaurak pets were slain by the party of the Albadian and Vera-Trean ambassadors as they sought shelter there on their way to Vera-Tre.

**Fang Mount:** Fang Mount is easily one of the most jarring sights of the Perforated Plains, save perhaps for the Lands of Non. Originally a flat-topped mesa, it was impacted by a nearly mountain-sized chunk of rock during the hail of stone that marked the defeat of Gaurak. This chunk of rock is distinctly fang-shaped and juts upwards into the bleak skies over the plains. Those who have actually visited the place say that it is used as a holy site by the worshippers of Gaurak, who have hollowed out sections of Fang Mount and dwell within it, led by a cabal of fatling high priests of the Glutton.

**The Sunken Lake:** When the lands surrounding Lake Marith were shattered, the shores of the lake sank beneath the ground, collapsing in on its source. The spring that fed the lake has not dried up, however — still it feeds the ruined lake, which is now entirely subterranean. Run-off from the tainted lands of the Perforated Plains gathers here, causing the waters of the Sunken Lake to glisten unwholesomely. Those who drink from it risk being poisoned by the vile substances found in it. There are creatures, however, that dwell within its lightless depths, perfectly accustomed to its uncleanness. Indeed, tales relate that most of them share its poisonous nature.

**Deeping Crypt:** During the hail of stone that destroyed these plains, a sinkhole opened beneath the better part of the city of Abringard, collapsing it into the caverns beneath. Now the ruins of the

mighty stone buildings of Abringard sit in the shadows lent by the high walls that surround them. Sun-fearing undead walk the shattered streets, only forced to avoid being out in the open when the sun is directly overhead for a few hours each day. More undead have arrived in recent years from the Scrub Forest. They seem to be searching for something, though what may have survived the destruction wrought at the close of the Divine War is unknown.

## Flora and Fauna

The creatures of the Perforated Plains have learned to live in its harsh environment, often by dwelling within the sinkholes and tunnels that honeycomb its barren terrain. The plants that grow here are hardy things, from mosses and lichens to sturdy weeds and tough vines. Many of the plants are poisonous, even those that might not be so in places outside of the Perforated Plains, as they are tainted by the nature of this place. It is said that the Perforated Plains are the most common place to find the greasy, rancid melons that are holy to Gaurak's worshippers.

Animals of the plains include a number of small rodent-like creatures, from rats and groundhogs to the rarer ratroos, which often come swarming up out of the cracks and holes of the Perforated Plains when they smell food. Larger animals such as boars and deer are fairly common, as are large hunting cats and packs of wild dogs.

There are many monstrous creatures that might be found in the Perforated Plains. Many of them are legacies of Gaurak's taint in the area, especially around Fang Mount, where fatlings lead congregations of gorgor ratmen and keep nests of semi-tame vengaurak. Gaurak trolls, butcher spirits and even the occasional gauntling can be found here as well. The Perforated Plains are also home to many other types of creatures, including normal trolls, bloodmoths and swarms of Chern's children. Titanspawn (and everyone else for that matter) are hunted by Vangal's Horsemen, who ride these plains in search of battle and bloodshed, under the leadership of the Horsewoman Vananda (*human female Bbn13/HoV 4, CE, see Secrets and Societies*).

The various sinkholes and craters of these plains also offer homes to innumerable creatures, including shard spiders and various kinds of undead that seek shelter from the sunlight within them. Other monstrous subterranean beasts that hide here including ankhegs and umber hulks.

## Plains of Lede

**Population:** Unknown numbers of orcs, proud, gorgons, and worse. The Horsemen of Vangal number at least 13,000.

**Government:** A few isolated human settlements usually directed by military commanders appointed

by Barconius of Mithril. Titanspawn tend to follow the strongest and most skilled warriors among their kind. The Horsemen of Vangal follow the undead Galdor the Deathless (*male undead Ftr12/Clr8, CE*).

**Resources:** Wheat, farm products

## History

In the aftermath of the Divine War, the once fertile Plains of Lede were transformed into a storm-wracked, titanspawn-infested wasteland. Orc tribes, gorgon clutches, and small bands of the proud openly wandered the land, slaughtering all they encountered, battling each other for control of the plains. However, soon after the foundation of the city of Mithril, the brave paladins of that city resolved to tame the wild plains.

In 41 AV, the city of Mithril completed construction of a series of plinths called Wind Towers. These magical constructs helped moderate the terrible weather that plagued Lede, allowing farmers and other homesteaders to move into the region. In 64 AV, the Northern Protectorate was formed. This series of fortified outposts served to defend settlers and push back the titanspawn hordes. For almost fifty years, the Northern Protectorate stood, producing boundless crops that fed Mithril and many cities beyond. However, in 110 AV a massive influx of vengauraks appeared on the plains. These terrible, burrowing creatures dug tunnels into farmlands and destroyed settlement after settlement. By 112 AV, only a few isolated coastal towns remained.

Orcs have long dominated the plains. For over a century after the Divine War, they kept their fighting among themselves. The few times they stood against Mithril's expansion, that city's brave paladins easily beat them back. But in the aftermath of the Blood Monsoon, orc raids skyrocketed, as many tribes interpreted the terrible storms as a call to arms from their Titan creators.

The orcs contend with the murderous Horsemen of Vangal. Once a collection of nomadic tribes, the Horsemen were conquered or absorbed into the horde of the warlord Galdor around 75 AV. Converted to the worship of Vangal, they represented a deadly threat; but when Galdor was slain in 90 AV, most thought the menace of the horsemen was over. It was not, for Vangal brought his servant back from the dead, and today Galdor, known as "the Deathless," once more leads the horde, ravaging the land and battling the servants of god and Titan alike.

## Geography

The grassy plains host many bizarre and threatening features.

**Denev's Triangle:** This fertile crescent, carefully tended by the druids of Denev, is the last viable farmland on the plains.

**Hag Coast:** The eastern coast of the plains is rife with hags and their followers, including ogres and worse.

**Northern Perimeter:** The three fortified settlements of Artere, Maridon and Sobidaal are the last bastions of civilization on the northern plains.

**Plains of the Proud:** Great bands of the proud wander this territory, sweeping south to raid settlements and carry off treasure, iron weapons, and food.

**Ruins of the Northern Protectorate:** The ruins of forts and small towns dot this region of the plains.

**Vengaurak Tunnels:** The terrible vengauraks have established a gigantic network of tunnels, slowly spreading out to threaten the remaining settlements on the plains. Spider-eye goblins occupy many of the older tunnels abandoned by the advancing vengauraks.

## Flora and Fauna

Aside from short, tough grass and the isolated trees, little grows on the plains. Herds of buffalo and antelope survive despite the presence of titanspawn. The proud, spider-eye goblins, vengauraks, and orcs all exist here in great numbers. Lions, hyena and wolves (both dire and mundane) hunt the land, competing with more monstrous creatures such as barghest, hell hounds and dragonne.

## People

The remaining human settlers are dour, quiet, and brave. They know all too well the fate that befell those who came before them, and toil to ensure that they do not meet a similar end. Those who volunteer to live along the Northern Perimeter tend to be independent-minded, stubborn, and stalwart.

The half-orcs of the plains are wild, reckless, and hungry to prove themselves. Half-orcs usually face derision and oppression from their full-blooded orc relatives, driving many to seek their fortunes in the civilized regions to the south. Word of Mullis Town's move to accept half-orcs has reached even here, driving still greater numbers of half-breeds from the plains.

The nomads of the region were welded together into a single entity by the ruthless Galdor the Deathless. Today, they are the most numerous humans in the region, though a few non-humans have managed to carve out a place in their ranks. These Horsemen of Vangal live for slaughter and destruction, and are one of the chief obstacles to recolonizing the plains.

## Culture

The human settlements of the Northern Perimeter resemble military encampments more than



*A wild orc warrior, one of the bloodthirsty proud, a crusading paladin, and a resolute settler from Mithril*

frontier towns. Most who live here are members of Mithril's military, though a few stubborn homesteaders toil on. Between titanspawn raids and the cruel environment, the human settlers here live under virtual siege conditions and have little time for holidays or other frivolity.

The orcs of the plains are a wild, violent lot. Driven by their ruthless environment, they seek to rip from the soft hands of humanity whatever supplies, tools, or weapons they need. While some orc tribes, such as the Gravelfists, yearn for something more from life, the fearsome Scorchskulls are closer to the orcish norm. Those fearsome brutes revel in combat and consider it their divine duty to ceaselessly war against all who helped defeat the titans.

The Horsemen of Vangal have little culture save for a common desire to slaughter and destroy in their patron god's name. Ruthless, chaotic and utterly fearless in battle, the horsemen ride across the plains, following a virtually random path, leaving the caravans, travelers and settlers on the plains with no clue as to where they will strike next.

## Crime and Punishment

In the human settlements, the law of the military rules. All matters are handled by the commanding officers according to the regulations of Mithril's army. Considering the thin line between death and survival on the plains, most crimes are met with harsh punishments.

The orcs have no law aside from the rule of strength. Whoever is strong enough to force his will on others makes the tribe's laws and rules. Fair play and morality are alien concepts to most orcs, and members of that titanspawn race lust for the strength and combat skill necessary to bully and beat their fellows.

As might be expected, justice among the Horsemen of Vangal is all but non-existent. Bloody and chaotic, the horsemen feel that a strong individual does what he must do to survive and glorify Vangal, and those who do not are weaklings deserving of death. The horsemen do not understand the concept of crime, nor do they have any uniform code of punishment.

## Religion

While the titans no longer walk Scarn, their influence is still clearly felt in the Plains of Lede. The proud venerate Hrinruuk, while the orcs commonly worship their creator Gaurak. Many orc druids and shamans actively seek a method to bring back their foul lord, and most view the coming of the vengauraks as a powerful omen of the titan's return. Some orc tribes have converted to the worship of Chardun, and a small number have even begun to contemplate coexistence with the humans of the south: most notably the Gravelfists under the leadership of Chieftain Donnager (*orc male Rgr 14, CN, see Mithril: City of the Golem*) This is not a popular position, however, and the plains don't seem likely to see peace any time soon.

The humans who struggle on the plains typically worship Corean, though many who honor the dark gods Belsameth, Vangal, and Chardun, lurk upon the plains, endlessly plotting against the shining city of Mithril and other bastions of the good deities. The Horsemen of Vangal are among that god's few true followers on Ghelspad.

## Armed Forces

The warriors of the Northern Perimeter are organized in the same fashion as the military forces of Mithril. The orc tribes and the proud show few tendencies in weapons and organization, as each titanspawn warlord tends to organize his followers according to his own tactical biases. Some orcs favor longbows and swift raids, while others stockpile heavy armor and battleaxes, attacking with steady, implacable advances.

The Horsemen favor mass cavalry tactics, and consider those who do not ride to be unworthy of continued mortal existence. They don't like missile weapons, preferring to ride in and attack at close quarters.

## Scrub Forest

### History

*We've tried flushing them out, luring them out, setting fires in that damnable wood. We've tried everything short of going in after them. Looks like we're down to our last option.*

— *Basthalot of Madriel's Faithful, speaking of the Dead Tide of Agavir in the Scrub Forest, 3529 OC*

Once a grove sacred to Denev, the Scrub Forest is now a lonely place claimed by undead, occupied by the remnants of the Dead Tide of Agavir that survived the purges of Madriel's healers.

During the Titanswar, Madriel's forces pursued the dead, who fled into the woods, intending to exterminate them. What the undead found so attractive about the woods remains a mystery, but healers attempting to remove them found them stubborn and ready to fight. Madriel's forces retreated to nurse their wounds and wonder what had so invigorated the undead. As the healers waited, the land grew withered and blighted, as if an early winter was upon them. The undead didn't care, continuing to roam the woods and surrounding territory.

An uneasy stalemate developed. The healers were unable to take the woods, for while the undead proved incapable of leaving it in any numbers, still they held their ground, digging in against the forces ringing them. Few expected the undead to win, but that was the eventual outcome. As the Titanswar raged, more pressing matters called Madriel's forces away; the healers departed, leaving the undead in possession of the field.

The dead were not idle. They erected fortifications in 5 AV around the whole of the Scrub Forest,



and established sentry posts at intervals. Connecting trenches protected by low barriers link these positions, allowing the undead to cross from post to post without being seen.

The dead tolerate excursions close to their borders, but anyone foolish enough to cross the Tralvarit Trench becomes a target of an undead force with a single-minded mission: Destroy the invader. In 22 AV, for example, 50 cultists of Kadum thought to undo the Titanswar's damage through dark sorcery, but were decimated as they journeyed through the Scrub Forest on their trek from the Bleak Savannah to the Sinkhole of Non. The remains of the Dead Tide are quite practiced at repelling or capturing invaders. Many Vigils approaching the woods swear a malign intelligence directs the undead, as their actions are too direct and purposeful for supposedly mindless creatures.

## Flora and Fauna

The Scrub Forest is a forest of near-dead, stunted trees where discolored leaves hang limply from gnarled, broken branches. The forest is a mere 150 miles wide at most, but within its boundaries no living thing stirs. The land is dead and barren for the most part, a perfect complement to the undead that still dwell there. The vegetation that covers the rocky soil is sickly in appearance, with lichens and pallid mosses ever-present beneath what few plants do push out of the ground.

While other forests are alive with the sounds of the animals, no beasts other than monstrosities nest within the Scrub Forest. No true birds alight within the woods for fear of a skeletal hand grasping from below. Bonewings, the closest thing to "natural" birds in this unnatural landscape, make their homes in the trees.

Skeletons, zombies and other undead pour forth from the underground tunnel network wearing an assortment of cast-off armor and brandishing a variety of weapons. Most weapons are mundane, taken from "new recruits" into the undead army. Others carry more powerful weapons, lending credence to rumors of an underground cache of magic items beneath the woods or, worse, an evil intelligence that commands the undead.

**The Tralvarit Trench:** Named for the Vigilant that literally stumbled upon it while exploring the woods, the Tralvarit Trench rings the Scrub Forest with a six-foot-deep trench. Sentry posts of berms of packed dirt covered by a roof of dead limbs and grasses allow the undead a clear field of view of anyone advancing on the position. The remnants of the Dead Tide are quite proficient with bows, and the trenches and sentry lookout posts provide ample cover from which to fend off invaders. At certain points within the trench, openings beckon into the dark earth. Vigils who gained entry into the trenches made it within sight of these dark openings, but were quickly

repulsed as waves of shambling undead poured from the openings. The Vigils retreated before they were overwhelmed.

An extensive tunnel network extends under the Scrub Forest, but how many undead reside within is unknown. Members of the Order of the Morning Sky did once enter the tunnels with orders to remove the Dead Tide once and for all, but never returned — at least alive. Undead wearing remnants of Morning Sky armor were spotted manning the sentry points not long after the group failed to return.

Entrance into the woods is generally thought to be a most unpleasant form of suicide. Entire bands of adventurers and whole armies have vanished after crossing the Tralvarit Trench, pulled into the ground by grasping, skeletal hands. Whether these victims are added to the ranks of the undead is uncertain, but many believe this is true. Watchful Vigils claim a "death general" moves about the undead occasionally, but whether a corpse whisperer or some other form of undead is a matter of speculation. Given the strong undead presence in the woods, it is unlikely a living corpse whisperer, who might usurp control, would be allowed inside its borders.

**The Southern Copse:** The southern half of the Scrub Forest is controlled by the lich Axen-Malak (*lich male Sor14, LE*), who hailed from Agavir before his death, when he turned to serve the Dead Tide. He has a multi-tiered home in deep caves beneath the woods, from which he directs his undead servitors. Axen-Malak watches his land with crystal balls and wizard eyes. Axen-Malak was a commander in the Dead Tide and blames Mahk Hentr for treachery to undermine his authority.

**The Northern Copse:** To the north is the realm of Mahk Hentr (*lich male Wiz13, CE*), a necromancer who grew too close to his servants and eventually joined them. Hentr resides in an underground pit lined with the cages of beings captured on his land. All are subject to the necromantic arts he still perfects. Like a child squabbling over a precious bauble, Hentr competes for the whole of the sorry Scrub Forest with Axen-Malak.

**The Imag:** Near the heart of the Scrub Forest stand eight faceless, featureless statues. A ninth lies crumbled, smashed into fragments of multicolored rock near the pedestal where it stood. These statues predate the coming of the Dead Tide, but little is known about them. Historians point out that eight gods and a titan remain, but they have little to say about why one is fallen and destroyed. Doomsayers claim the statues herald the death of a god. Others say the Dead Tide destroyed Madriel's statue as a demand to leave them be. This would seem the obvious answer, given the undead's antipathy toward the Healer, but the remnants of the Dead Tide avoid the area, fighting to their second deaths to keep others from reaching the spot.

## Spine Forest

### History

The curiously fertile Spine Forest stretches along the northeastern edge of the Kelder Mountains. Once called Denev's Spine, these woods serve several important functions for the surrounding areas and communities. The forest provides a surprising number of resources beyond that of a lumber source and hunting ground for nearby cities.

The Spine Forest serves as a natural buffer for Bridged City and other city-states nearby. While orcs and titanspawn that occupy the Plains of Lede are relatively close, the Spine Forest routes larger forces around to the south, allowing more preparation time to these nearby communities. Since before the Divine War, people from all over Scarn have traveled to the Spine to obtain some of the rare lotus flowers and other narcotics that the forest has to offer.

While this forest survived the Divine War, that does not mean it was not spoiled in several ways. What was once a quite safe and mundane forest, free from titanspawn and man-eating trees, is now a far less picturesque wooded area.

### Flora and Fauna

The Spine Forest is host to nearly every mundane animal common to deciduous forests. Bears, deer, foxes, skunk, and even boar all run wild. Additionally, magical creatures of various origins and titanspawn also call the Spine Forest home. Most noticeable, however, is the lively nature of the forest itself. Almost every manner of living tree or nature element calls the Spine Forest home. Treants, nymphs, and even a forest walker all flourish in this wood. People that frequent the Spine, such as Bridge City citizens, often say, "The Spine has few monsters, but beware the trees." Unwarned or ignorant travelers are much more likely to wander into a treant, while keeping an eye out for creatures bearing fangs and claws.

### People

There are inhabitants of the Spine Forest, although they don't necessarily want you to know this. Towards the end of the first Calastian advance, a captain from Virduk by the name of Thomes Lyndin (*human male Ftr8, CG*) abandoned his troops on the field. Eyewitnesses report that he wandered away from the battle, stuck his sword in the ground and removed his helmet. That was the last time Lyndin was seen outside of the Spine Forest. Three years after his disappearance at the battle, other soldiers from several different countries were seen traveling into the Spine. Lyndin had started a small community somewhere within the Spine based on community, sharing, and pacifism. Lyndin's group (dubbed the "Vagabonds" by several military authorities) is re-

ported now to number over a hundred, but nobody has ever discovered the community. It is thought to be either in the trees themselves, built above the forest, or a wandering camp.

Lyndin's group has scouting parties throughout the forest, looking for new recruits and hunting Rippers. Although they espouse pacifism, the group will fight if threatened with return to their former militaries. Since many of these deserters have been gone for nearly forty years, this happens very infrequently. Many of the Vagabonds are wizards and priests, and will use non-damaging spells to incapacitate aggressors.

The only group that could be considered an enemy of the Vagabonds is a peculiar thieving group called the "Rippers." The Rippers swarm in gangs of 10 or 20 over an area that is known to contain julka weed or lotus flowers, and quickly cut all usable blossoms and roots, taking them from the forest, presumably for sale elsewhere. While the Rippers are not technically thieves, since the plants grow in the wild, they generally react as if they are about to be captured or beset at any time. They rarely stop running while in the wood, and then only to cut a root or blossom. Many of the Rippers are wanted men from various parts of the continent who no longer consider city crime a viable option. The Vagabonds make considerable use of the abundance of wild drugs in the Spine, and will try to stop Rippers whenever possible.

## Stricken Forest

### History

Of all the treacherous and deadly places where one can travel, the Stricken Forest ranks particularly high in danger and uncertainty. While the woods actually survived the Divine War, they were unfortunately destroyed by a group of wizards who sought to make their own way. It's not clear if the woods were destroyed by necessity, as a show of power, or were merely a casualty of war. Regardless, the damage has been done, and almost every form of healthy, natural life within the woods is no more.

The woods lie just east of Khirdet and just north of the Hornsaw Forest. So while the woods are located near Khirdet, the country lays little claim to this wasted forest filled with unimaginable horrors. There is little in the way of natural resources to be found here anymore, and most of the creatures are not particularly trainable. While well over half the trees remain standing, most of them are dead, and nearly all the undergrowth died many years ago. So while some usable timber is here, the perils of the woods far exceed the free raw materials. Mundane and regular forest creatures have all died or fled long ago. What the wood does have to offer is an alarmingly varied and vicious list of denizens. Creatures that may not be seen for hundreds of miles around can be found in the Stricken Woods. It is not known if the Obsidian Pyre

## Rare Plants of the Spine Forest

Perhaps in tandem with the active plant life, the Spine is also host to all of the Scarred Lands' mind-altering substances and plants. Lotus flowers, julka weed, and several yet-undiscovered hallucinogenic or narcotic plants and roots grow wild. The orcs from the plains make regular treks into the forest to collect many of these plants for medicinal, ceremonial and social use. There are also a few plants native only to the Spine.

**P'tarri Root:** This small, thin-leafed, innocuous-looking plant grows in every part of the Spine. It can always be found in very little time. The roots of this plant act as a moderate sedative when dried and smoked. The user will become very calm and mellow, yet easily distracted. Fighting or spellcasting becomes somewhat difficult while under the influence of p'tarri. Attack rolls will be at a -3, and spellcasters must make a concentration check to remember their semantic and verbal components. The effects last 1d2 hours. The cost of a whole p'tarri root in cities ranges from 2 sp to 1 gp.

**Terraloca Sap:** The terraloca tree is a somewhat rare, smallish tree with very large leaves, which produces a mildly toxic sap. The orcs from the Plains of Lede commonly use this very thick, dark brown sap when preparing for battle. When chewed, the sap of the terraloca tree gives the user lots of energy. They become easily agitated, and usually violent. The user will also ignore minor wounds while the sap is at its peak effect. Extended use of the sap can have detrimental effects on the user. Damaged eyesight and loss of memory are the most commonly reported side effects from extended use.

The sap can also be boiled and diluted with tea to stave off fatigue.

If chewed raw, the user is granted 1d3 temporary hit points, which only last 1 turn. The user is also at +1 on their Fortitude saves for the same duration. After the turn, the user will feel very fatigued, and be at -1 on both Fortitude and Reflex saves for 1 hour. One dose of sap costs 5-10 gp.

**Chuckleberries:** Named for the bright yellow berries it bears, the chuckleberry bush is somewhat rare, even in the Spine Forest. The bush can grow as large as 8 feet tall and 12 feet around. During the first few weeks of autumn, the chuckleberry bush sprouts a juicy berry, the size of a very large grape. These berries are a favorite food of the various animals native to the Spine, who seem not to be affected by the berry. However, when consumed by humanoids (orcs, elves, humans, goblins, dwarves, and halflings are all affected), the berry has drastic and debilitating results. The berry induces feelings of extraordinary joy and elation. Many users laugh uncontrollably when under the influence of the berries, hence their name. The user is very dreamy and unfocused, and actions such as fighting and spellcasting are out of the question. Attempts could be made, but attacks are all made at -10, and concentration checks are made at -15. Besides, fighting is usually the last thing on a person's mind when using a chuckleberry. The entire large chuckleberry must be consumed, thus, simply getting the juice into someone's bloodstream will not "inflict" chuckleberry effects on a person.

The effects of a chuckleberry last for 1d4+1 hours. A single chuckleberry usually costs 10 gp in larger cities.

**Wishrooms:** The most rare, sought-after, and dangerous drug in the Spine Forest is the so-called "wishroom." This thin, light-purple mushroom grows in very small groups of 4 or 5. The wishroom is a very potent hallucinogenic (and arguably magical) that makes the user feel as if all of his wildest dreams and desires have come true. The user perceives full visual and audio hallucinations at all times, and has almost no awareness of the real world, but experiences total euphoria. The user may do nothing but experience the wishroom for 1d2+3 hours.

After one month of regular use of wishrooms, characters must make a Will-saving throw. Failure means that the character has become addicted, and must seek more wishrooms immediately. They will be at -1 on all their ability checks and -3 on Will saves until they've taken another wishroom. Regular extended use of wishrooms can result in a total mental departure from the real world, and the user effectively lives in his fantasy world forever. Magical cures such as *remove disease*, and *remove curse* have no effect, however the *heal* spell will cure the addict, which leads some to believe the wishroom has semi-magical properties.

Plants such as child traps, gallows vines, and serpent root will often be near wishrooms. A single wishroom sells for 100 gp.

*The material in this boxed text is designated Open Game Content.*

draws them near, as if for protection, or if this is perhaps a natural migration point for deviant and fiendish creatures.

## People

Other than the unspeakably nightmarish creatures, the forest does see a *few* other visitors. The wizards of the Obsidian Pyre have been seen traveling through the wood towards its heart, where their namesake burns eternally. Additionally, there is a group of hunters that frequents the woods that could best be described as a loosely knit association or club. The Fraternal Order of Waltonians is not an organization that squabbles over hierarchy, finances or power. All members are passionate hunters who have found that the Stricken Woods provide a seemingly endless list of beasts and “prey” as their ultimate proving ground.

The group was founded by one Argyl Faebinder (*human male Rgr 16, CG*), a strapping woodsman who took to hunting professionally in his autumn years. Argyl has become such a legend over the past fifteen years that other rangers and hunters come out of the woodwork to meet and perhaps hunt with this extroverted, self-made man. Argyle proposed that the group keep tally of the beasts that they bested in the Stricken Woods. They would become a public service, dealing with any beasts astray from the woods, or alerting travelers and caravans of what threats were in the area. The only base of operations the group has is some small cabins immediately west of the Stricken Woods in the Haggard Hills.

Membership varies radically in the Order of Waltonians, even in purpose. Argyle and other purists hunt alone, something very dangerous indeed in the Stricken Woods. Lesser hunters who don't yet feel they're in the same league as the likes of Argyl are accompanied by groups of 3-6 longbowmen who assist in the hunt.

## Sweltering Plains

### History

Deadly temperatures, vastly higher than those of surrounding areas, ravage these plains, rendering them incapable of sustaining normal life. Numerous unnatural beasts have adapted to the heat, making the place even more hazardous. While fables speak of the intact ruins of ancient cultures, preserved by the dry heat, unfortunate treasure seekers have instead found mirages, heat stroke, and violent death.

### Geography

The plains are bordered by the Mounds of Man and the Festering Fields to the north, the Broadreach River and Lake Zath to the east, the Blossoming Sea to the south and the Ukrudan Desert and Swamps of Kan Thet to the west.

Dotted throughout the plains are the remnants of the Elzan empire, the crumbling, sand-blasted and fire-scorched remains of its six great cities.

**The Scar:** Even in this most inhospitable realm can be found refuge and life. Deep within the plains lies a valley known as the Scar, extending nearly halfway from the Mounds of Man to the city of Shelzar. At its widest the Scar is only 10 miles or so across. Its depth varies, but at its deepest the bottom is more than a mile down. Shielded from the heat of the plains, and with access to the water that lies locked below the surface, life flourishes in the Scar, most notably the Urkhadi.

## Flora and Fauna

Few creatures can stand the ungodly heat of the plains, and those that can are dangerous in the extreme. The presence of creatures such as salamanders and magmin suggests an opening to the elemental plane of fire exists somewhere on the plains — an opening that may be unknown even to the gods, who supposedly closed all access to the elemental realms during the Divine War. The Urkhadi are uniquely adapted to the Sweltering Plains and can easily endure its unbearable heat.

Numerous plants and animals thrive in the Scar. Pools teem with fish and the banks are lined with berries and edible plants, while small rodents, lagomorphs and a few ungulates make their living here. Predators are rare, for there is only enough prey to sustain a very small population. It is said that a number of dire lions are the region's top predators, but no one has been able to confirm this.

## People

The Urkhadi are a unique tribe of half orcs — dark-skinned and black-haired — who through some unknown magic or other phenomenon breed true and have become a wholly distinctive people. Culturally they draw much from their Elzan heritage but are much more like the fierce Albadian barbarians of the north in temperament. In combat they favor double weapons such as the spiked chain and their own version of the dwarven urgrosh. Until recently the Urkhadi were entirely unique to the plains, but as their numbers have grown, some have braved the hazardous journey from the Scar to experience the outside world.

Urkhadi legend relates that the plains were the forge of Corean during the Divine War, and that the Scar valley is the wound caused by Vangal's axes when the god clove Corean's anvil in two in a fit of anger. Those few non-Urkhadi who have heard this legend dismiss it as foolishness, claiming that Vangal and Corean never came to blows during the Divine War, but if the history of Scarn has proven one thing, it is that truth is often stranger than any fantasy.

## Religion

The Urkhadi worship a number of local nature-spirits and tribal deities, but they ultimately pay



homage to Denev the earth-mother, whom they call the Mother of Spirits.

## Titanshome Mountains

### History

While the Titanshome Mountains have probably existed since the birth of Scarn, they have become much more isolated since the advent of the Divine War. With the rising of the Devouring Reef and the formation of the Perforated Plains, this mountain range has become almost completely inaccessible to the rest of Ghelspad. During the Divine War, the Titanshome Mountains served as a stronghold for those forces loyal to the titans. Indeed, it is rumored that after the War surviving titanspawn from all parts of Ghelspad fled to this haven.

Among the most prevalent rumors of the titanspawn that swarm in these mountains is the tale that the two flailing halves of Gormoth lie hidden somewhere among the Titanshome's peaks. Consequently, Gormoth's followers flock to Titanshome to find any trace of their lost master in the faint hope of resurrecting him.

Also during the Titanswar, these mountains became home to the mysterious thulkans who fled from southern Ghelspad. Suffering from grievous defeats after the loss of their master, the thulkans hid deep under the earth in the most remote portions of the mountains. It is rumored that they subsist there to this day, forging weapons for the day when the armies of the titans will once again arise to conquer all of Scarn.

### Geography

Like much of northwestern Ghelspad, the Titanshome Mountains are a harsh and brutal region. The mountains' extreme isolation has made them the subject of much debate among the more heavily inhabited regions of the continent. Titanshome is secluded from the south by the treacherous Perforated Plains, from the west by the Devouring Reef, and from the north by the continuously frozen Stiffened Sea. The closest civilized nation is barbarous Albadia, which rarely sends forays into the mountains for fear of the titanspawn that dwell here.

The Titanshome Mountains are both precarious and near-impassible, making travel in this region exceedingly dangerous. In addition, travelers have to deal with heavy and persistent attack from titanspawn boiling out of the region's many hidden caves. The most

dangerous feature of the mountains, however, are the horrible snowstorms and gales which regularly sweep across the peaks. The narrow ledges and cliffs of the mountains are continually coated in layer upon layer of frost, and snow will quickly obscure even the most clearly cut pass. It is believed that the titanspawn who thrive here are able to move about through an elaborate honeycomb of passages below the mountains.

**The Twisted Path:** These broken patches of blood-red snow appear sporadically throughout the Titanshorne Mountains. Originally created by an unknown ritual of the Twisted of Gormoth, the paths slowly writhe and wend their way through the mountains as if they were seeking some hidden goal. Titanspawn and the followers of Gormoth use these paths as a sort of haven, as it is said that inclement weather cannot touch them. Any follower of a god who sets foot upon one of these paths is said to meet a horrible and bloody end — whether from a potent curse or from the titanspawn that flock to them, none is sure.

## Flora and Fauna

Very few plants can survive the extreme altitude and cold of the Titanshorne. There are a few rare lichens and mosses that adorn the insides of shallow caves, and sages speculate that the titanspawn who live here must subsist on some form of vegetation that survives deep underground, possibly off the heat of magma flows.

Although natural animals are also rare, these mountains abound with tribal titanspawn. Runnks, slitheren, ice ghouls, trolls, thulkans, and even occasional taurons can be found in the labyrinths that honeycomb these mountains. The different tribes of titanspawn seem to war continually for limited shelter and food, with little indication of any greater purpose or direction.

## Religion

Each tribe of titanspawn has its own patron Titan, venerated to the exclusion of all others. While tribes that follow the same titan sometimes band for massive rituals or raids, bands following different titans rarely cooperate. Recently, rumors have begun to circulate that these mountains are the resting place of Gormoth, the Writhing Lord, causing his druids to flock to the region. Calling themselves the “Twisted,” these druids scour the mountains for any trace of their lost master.

## Toe Islands

## History

While many scholars are openly skeptical of the tale that the Toe Islands are actually the toes of the vanquished Kadum, it is known that they first came into existence in the maelstroms and disturbances that followed the Mountainshaker’s imprisonment.



*A thulka, a Twisted druid, an ice hag, a runnk and an Albadian explorer keeping a safe distance.*



Among the few hospitable points of land in the Blood Sea, they were soon visited by Ghelspadians and, by 16 AV, a Mithrilite marble quarry had been established on the island of Thalien, followed by mining operations on Cyri and Roh Ahnon. The islands were prosperous for a time, but eventually the mines were exhausted and the islands' economy began to grind to a halt. All this came to a head in 37 AV, when disgruntled quarrymen seized a group of House Asuras administrators and held them hostage, triggering retaliation by the angered trade house, ending in a bloody massacre of the prisoners and independence for the now poverty-stricken islands.

Their mines exhausted, most of the fisheries hopelessly tainted, and their economy in a state of collapse, the islanders turned to piracy, preying on merchant traffic to and from Mithril. Now divided among several different pirate bands — the fractious corsairs of Algos; the infamous Empire of the Sea, based on the island of Roh Ahnon; and the newcomers known as the League of Hydros, a powerful alliance of pirates who appear to have obtained a number of flying sky-ships. The most famous of the pirate leaders is the so-called Empress Kariosa Nephantaros (*human female Rog5/Ftr5, CN*), the beautiful and deadly queen of the Roh Ahnon corsairs.

The pirates of the Toe Islands are one of many hazards of sailing the Blood Sea, and must compete with the pisceans and the blood krakens of Queen Ran when hunting their prey. For their part, merchants have responded strongly, sending out heavily armed ships with experienced mercenary crews, and even sponsoring expeditions to hunt down and destroy individual corsair ships and fleets. So far, the Toe Islands have remained relatively untouched, though a massive assault by the powers of eastern Ghelspad is always a possibility.

## Geography

There are, unsurprisingly, five Toe Islands, each with its own character and environment.

**Algos:** Rugged, with some patches of forest, this island is home to small bands of relatively weak pirates, and is constantly covered in mist.

**Cyri:** Home of an active volcano and numerous earth tremors, Cyri is a place of broken terrain, lava flows, volcanic vents and other hazards. No one lives on the island, but a few come, drawn by rumors of gems and other treasures.

**Mori:** Unexplored, Mori is covered in jungle and said to be home to a strange tribe of humans literally able to run on the surface of the water.

**Roh Ahnon:** Rocky and dry, Roh Ahnon ("Broken Blade" in an ancient Ledean dialect) is home to the most powerful of the pirate bands. New recruits of the Empire of the Sea are expected to traverse the entire island and reach the empire's Citadel of Resolution in order to qualify for membership.

**Thalien:** The largest of the islands is the site of the old Mithrilite marble quarry, thick tropical forests and treacherous swamps. Few pirates call this island home due to its cursed past and its dangerous fauna, but the League of Hydros has established itself in a citadel along the southern cliffs.

## Flora and Fauna

Algos harbors few large animal species, and is known primarily for its huge flocks of sea birds. Unnatural species such as salamanders and heat-loving outsiders have been sighted here, and a small tribe of fire giants is said to make its home somewhere in the interior. Mori appears to hold more birds, as well as various reptile and amphibian species, but the lack of exploration has prevented any comprehensive catalog of its inhabitants. Roh Ahnon's dry canyons are full of snakes and poisonous reptiles, and would-be members of the Empire of the Broken Blade must beware of the harpies that dwell here. Thalien has a well-established ecology, with deer, rodents and many birds. A pack of wolves once roamed this island, and although they were reportedly wiped out decades ago, reports of large predators continue to circulate. Few live here, so tales of fey and enchanted creatures such as untainted unicorns and satyrs cannot be confirmed.

## Ukrudan Desert

**Name:** Ukrudan Desert

**Population:** 100,000 (Human 88%, Half-orc 5%, Halfling 5%, Other 2%)

**Government:** Each tribe has a council of elders.

**Major Cities:** Akrud (4,000), Dunael (1,500)

**Language:** Ukrudan

**Religion:** Thulkas, Enkili

**Resources:** Horses, livestock

## History

Before the Titanswar, the Ukrudan Desert was much smaller than it is today. The desert, like others across Scarn, was full of hardy life, thriving in a fragile desert environment. However, soon after the War began, Thulkas strode across the burning sands, fleeing from the divine armies gathering in the east to his refuge in the peninsula of Dunahnae. As he advanced, he nursed a growing rage. How could those petty gods turn against him? How could they dare defy the will of Fire itself? The Iron God glowed brighter and brighter as the land around him withered and died. The Father of Fire is said to have left naught but wasteland in his wake, creating the Ukrudan Desert we know today.

It is said that on Thulkas' lonely journey, he came upon a group of human tribesman. He gazed at them with disgust as they huddled before him, fearful of his terrible heat. With but a moment's concentration, the titan merged the tribesmen with their

livestock as they screamed in agony, taking a portion of their creator's terrible burning body. The result of this horrid mutation is the militaristic and fanatical sutak, who continue to harass those in and around the desert to this day. A repulsive blend of human and animal, the sutak embody Thulkas' destructive impulse and hatred toward the divine races.

The Ukrudan remained uninvolved in mortal affairs due to its harsh conditions and location. The only exception is the incident known as the Rune War. In the midst of the Titanswar, the dwarves of Burok Torn discovered that a cabal of humans called the Black Sorcerers were using stolen runic magic against the divine races in general, and the dwarven city in particular. Dispatching a huge army, the dwarves defeated the sorcerers, but at such a great cost that they were forced to suspend their support of the divine armies, leading to great resentment by the humans, elves and halflings.

Since those days, Ukrudan remains relatively untouched, though from time to time it disgorges armies of tribesmen, sutak, or other horrors to trouble surrounding lands.

## Geography

The Ukrudan Desert is a bleak wasteland. Landmarks are few and far between amid the shifting grayish sands. The desert stretches from Dunahnae's Wall of Bones in the west to the Gascar Peaks and Festering Fields in the east. To the south, the desert slowly fades into the lush plains of the Devil's March. The northern border of the desert is the plentiful nation of Darakeene. It is said that the desert expands slowly each year, eating away at southern Darakeene and the Festering Fields.

**Desert Paradise of Asaath:** Near the center of Ukrudan, in the desert's hottest region sits the lost paradise of Asaath. It is said that the city was once part of a huge asaathi empire, which was swallowed by the growth of the Ukrudan Desert. The asaathi are able to survive in this golden city by using ancient and unknowable magics. Very few who have seen the city even from a distance manage to survive the terrible fury of the asaathi.

## Flora and Fauna

The Ukrudan Desert is a bleak region containing little in the way of plants or animals. Desert scrubs and cacti are prevalent in the inhabited regions around the edges of the desert. This vegetation decreases markedly as one moves into the interior of the desert. Sutak tribes occupy the exterior areas of the desert, often coming into conflict with desert tribes. The interior of the Ukrudan is controlled primarily by the asaathi and the Daywalker slitheren, Thulkas-worshipping ratmen who walk about in the full heat of the sun.

## People

Although they arise from the same racial stock as the inhabitants of Dunahnae, Lokil, and Hollowfaust, it can be said that the Ukrudan tribesmen are truly a people unto themselves. The fierce desert warriors show little evidence of the scholarly nature present in these other people. Instead, Ukrudan tribesmen are known for their tenacity, talent with their camels, and their incredible ability to thrive in a hostile environment. Ukrudans tend to very insular and distrustful of outsiders.

Ukrudan tribesmen tend to be tall and thin with swarthy, weathered complexions and dark hair. They dress in heavy gray or beige hooded robes in order to protect delicate skin from the sun and to blend in with the gray desert sands.

## Culture

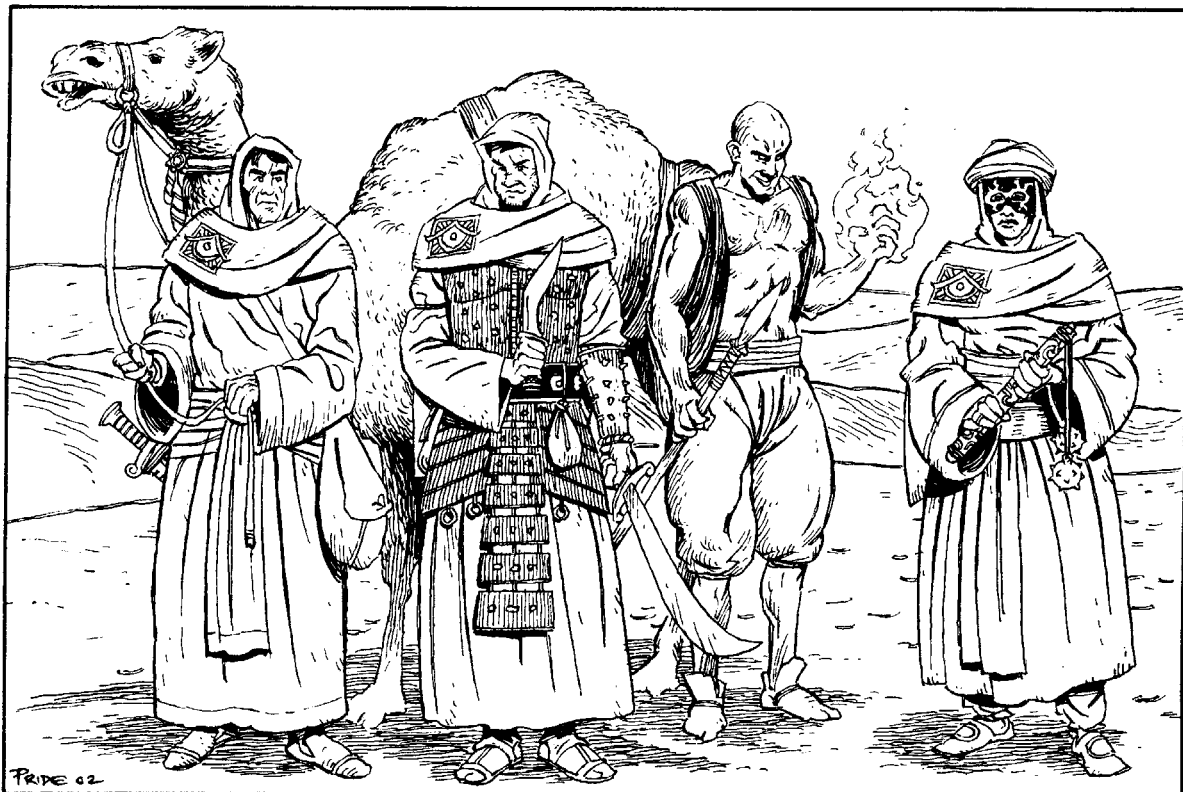
Ukrudans live in nomadic tribes numbering from a few dozen to over a thousand. The tribes survive through careful coexistence with their livestock, mainly camels. Camels provide milk, fur for clothing, and even meat when the need arises. The tribesmen are also known for their magnificent gray desert horses, which they often sell to surrounding nations in exchange for food and equipment.

The Ukrudan tribesmen are the remnants of an ancient civilization that once occupied the area now overrun by desert. Although most of their culture has been lost or corrupted with time, the tribesmen still possess hints of their ancestors' legacy. Among their most distinctive features are the Ukrudan's scarves, which are used to keep the fine desert dust from their throats. Traditionally, all tribesmen wear pure white scarves adorned with unique tribal symbols that date from millennia before the Divine War. Tribal priests are responsible for maintaining the tribal symbols and for awarding them to the young upon coming of age. It is said that aspects of the symbol will describe a young tribesman's character as he enters adulthood.

The Ukrudan people's other exceptional trait is their vast array of complex folksongs. Sung in a mixture of modern Ukrudan and fragments of some ancient tongue, Ukrudan folksongs are usually a lament of unimaginable loss and mysterious beauty. Travelers in the Ukrudan Desert are often surprised by the forlorn and haunted melodies drifting through the cold desert air over the wastes.

## Religion

Enkili is worshipped by tribal shamans in his male aspect as the Bringer of Rain and Storms. Tribesmen see Enkili as a fickle god who gives and takes life at a whim. Enkili's terrible wrath is appeased through animal sacrifices, prayer, and ritual. In Ukrudan mythology, Enkili not only provides physical rain, his storms provide shade from the omnipresent light of the sun, representing Thulkas. Thus, Enkilitite



*A camel herder, a tribal warrior, a Speaker of Fire, and a tribal shaman*

shamans play a major role in opposing the earthly minions of Thulkas.

Many tribesmen also pay homage to a god they call D'shan the Desert Wind. Some believe this deity to be a surviving fragment of either Gulaben or Lethene, but others see it as simply another aspect of Enkili, in her guise as the mistress of storms.

Although the Ukrudan tribal shamans fervently espouse the word of Enkili, not all of tribes follow the new gods. In obscure places or hidden among the more disreputable tribes, the Titan Thulkas has not been forgotten. A large number of sorcerers with a penchant for fire magic arise among the tribesman. Many such magi, known as the Speakers of Fire, become hermits to prophesy and carry out the will of Thulkas. Speakers of Fire are often deranged and dangerous, with ties to the sutak and even more dangerous Ukrudan beasts.

## Armed Forces

All tribesmen are trained to fight from an early age, and when the need arises, the entire tribe will go to war. Ukrudan warriors prefer curved blades when they are available, especially the kukri, a sharp and wickedly curved knife. Scimitar-wielding Ukrudan

horsemen are feared throughout the region. Enkilate shamans also participate in the tribe's defense, wielding awe-inspiring storms and untamed flails with equal facility.

## Cities

**Akrud:** Set upon the easternmost edge of the Splintered River as it descends from the Gascar Peaks, Akrud serves as a gathering place among the various tribes of the Ukrudan. Merchants from Lokil, Hollowfaust, Calastia, and eastern countries often visit this armed encampment to trade with the tribes in relatively safe territory. Akrud is luxurious by desert standards, and so tribesmen that choose to dwell permanently here are often viewed with disdain by their desert brethren.

**Dunael:** Dunael serves both as trading post between unscrupulous Ukrudan tribes and the nation of Dunahnae and a staging point for Dunahnae's eventual expansion. This encampment is located about 10 miles east of the Wall of Bones along the Splintered River. Most of the overland trade entering Dunahnae must pass through Dunael, and it serves as one of the few places where the Wall of Bones regularly opens.



## The Border River

A strong, quick-flowing river, the aptly named Border River marks the eastern border of Darakeene. In the past, it was called the Boundary River because Darakeene counted anything beyond it to be of little importance. Since becoming more watchful and wary of the remainder of the continent, Darakeene changed the river's name.

The Border River stretches many hundreds of miles southwest from the Titanshome Mountains until it meets the Blossoming Sea just north of the Ukruan Desert. When the Spires of Gaurak were created, the river's course was diverted slightly to the west, destroying the Darakeene city of Meathe and creating the Wurrum Falls, which mark the northernmost navigable point on the river.

The river teems with fish and holds few unpleasant beasts or monsters. Many a fisherman draws a comfortable living from the river.

## Cliffs of Constancy

The Cliffs were featured in many ancient Ledeian histories. Numerous attempts to establish trade routes failed, due to a lack of safe harbors and to dangerous weather along the cliffs. Lede became convinced that a port along the Cliffs was vital and profitable, particularly considering how defensible such a city would be. Their theories were eventually realized in Hedrad (then Epis).

It is not clear what gives the Cliffs their remarkable endurance. In Ledeian times, creative scholars claimed that they were made of mithril. This proved untrue — the cliffs are, in fact, primarily composed of granite.

Other than Hedrad, with its river and seasteeps, most of the cliffs feature a sheer 3,500 foot drop (at their highest point) to the Blood Sea.

## Cordrada Corridor

This stone road provides a vital link between Mithril and Mullis Town. The first stones of the road were put in place in 65 AV, and by 87 AV the entire road was complete, along with a series of watch towers and guard stations designed to leave no section of the corridor unwatched by Mithril's defenders.

The Cordrada Corridor carries the vast majority of land traffic heading to Mithril, primarily trade caravans from Vesh and points west. Mounted squads of Crimson Legion warriors in the pay of Mullis Town patrol the Corridor's southern reaches. Given Mullis Town's reliance on trade for its continued prosperity, only the most skilled and dedicated freelance warriors are selected for this duty.

Fortified towers are set along the corridor, spaced roughly 10 to 12 miles apart. Each of those fortified points consists of a three-story stone tower surrounded by a 10-foot high wall. Atop the roof of each tower is

a great brazier used for signal fires to help guide travelers and to signal all clear at each fort.

The towers maintained by Mithril boast 24 1st-level warriors commanded by two 2nd-level paladin lieutenants and a 6th-level paladin captain. Those under the command of Mullis Town are staffed by 16 1st-level warriors commanded by a pair of 2nd-level warriors and a 4th-level warrior. In addition, wandering bands of scouts composed of 2-8 1st-level rangers patrol the wilderness along the corridor. Despite these precautions, raids by orcs, gorgons, and other monsters from the Plains of Lede and the Moanscars are all too common.

## The Devouring Reef

The Devouring Reef came into being during the Divine War, though how or why remain a mystery. Some believe that the gods created the reef to keep the divine races from gaining access to the ruins of drowned slarecian cities thought to lie beneath the ocean just off Ghelspad's northwest coast.

The waters within the reef are nominally ruled by the black kraken Ul-Tak-Mu (*kraken male Sor15, CE*). King Mu claimed rulership about 50 years ago, when he first migrated to the region from the Blood Sea after renouncing his loyalty to Queen Ran. He commands a small army of blood krakens and other sea creatures, but his rulership of the region is mostly in name only.

The Devouring Reef stretches some 400 hundred miles around the northwest tip of Ghelspad. In some places, the reef rises nearly 100 feet out of the water, providing a well known mark for navigators. Foolhardy ship captains sometimes sail close to the reef to cut time off their journeys, but this is generally considered madness, as ferocious winds can spring up out of nowhere, driving unwary vessels to destruction. The reef consists of jagged coral and rock — simply walking on it can result in serious injury, and the wrecks of numerous ships are strewn across the region, giving the reef its name.

The oceans around the inner and outer walls of the reef teem with life, attracting many dangerous creatures such as dire sharks and ebon eels. The many sunken ships along the reef's outer wall are homes to brine hags, nagas, and other creatures. The waters protected by the reef are filled with brightly colored fish of many shapes and with gigantic forests of seaweed. Among the seaweed forests can be found octopi and reef anemones, as well as other more strange and powerful creatures.

## Fouled Forest

Despite its name and unlike so many of Ghelspad's ravaged forests, this forest enjoys quite respectable health. In fact, its extreme age and overgrowth, rather than its corruption, are the reasons for its name. Many people and armies have become entangled in this wood, and it is now common knowledge

that passage through this forest is difficult at best. While the wood seems normal and healthy, its growth rate is considerably faster than what is normally expected of a forest — the reason for this remains unknown, and all are now aware that paths cut through the Fouled Forest will be completely overgrown in a matter of days.

The Fouled Forest is a long, narrow stretch of ancient woodland wedged between the Border River, the Spires of Gaurak, the Gascar Peaks, and the Ukruadan Desert. Growing over the foothills of two major mountain ranges, the ground beneath the forest's thick overgrowth is hilly and uneven. Numerous small streams and tributaries flow through the forest to join the Border River to the west. There are no significant geographical distinctions within, for the forest itself is a single vast mass of trees and undergrowth.

Life in the forest is surprisingly untainted and normal, including numerous woodland mammals, birds, and insects. Some monsters are known to dwell here, including ettercaps and owlbears, and some fey creatures such as satyrs, dryads, and the deadly dananshee make their home here. Dangerous plants seem largely absent, but occasional stories of carnivorous trees are told. Orcs, goblins, kobolds, and other titanspawn races are known to use the forest as a hiding place and base from which to launch attacks on Darakeene. At least one gang of bandits, the infamous Forest Marauders, led by the half-orc Thruxxallu (*half-orc female Ftr6/Rog5, NE*) is known to make its home in the forest as well.

## Gascar Peaks

Largely unknown and unexplored, the Gascar Peaks are, in many places, unchanged since the end of the Titanswar. Their better known locations — the Gleaming Valley, Hollowfaust, and the Murmur Pass — are the only places frequented by visitors from the divine races. The remainder of the mountains is given over to wild animals, titanspawn, and the elements.

Needless to say, this makes the place a perfect haven for the followers of the titans, and rumors abound of many secret and dangerous groups lurking there. The Dreadclaw slitheren, hill howlers, goblins (both coal goblins and ordinary ones), Gaurak trolls, surged giants, thunder kites, and shock bats have all been sighted (thankfully, from a distance) in these mountains, and those few expeditions that ventured here have never come back.

## Geleeda's Grove

What is the seductive Queen of Calastia hiding in the vast forest (modestly called a "grove") that her husband gave her as a wedding present? Once a wild stretch of forest occasionally visited by woodsmen and licensed hunters, today the place is closed, its borders patrolled by King Virduk's soldiers, and the

heads of those who have dared enter are mounted on stakes to decorate the vicinity. Obviously, neither Virduk nor Geleeda wants anyone to see what lies inside the grove.

What is known is that it is an old and magically active forest, seemingly untouched by the ravages of the Titanswar. The few tales of those who visited tell of a woodland teeming with life both mundane and unnatural, including an impressive species of black elk that hunters once found particularly challenging. Darker stories are whispered, however, of a coven of hags that secretly rules the forest and casts foul magics using a well filled with Mormo's blood, and of gore-soaked creatures such as blood reapers, blood maidens, swarms of haglings, and demons of all sorts lurking in the peaceful shadows, serving the hags and plotting the Serpentmother's return. Legend speaks of things far older and more powerful than hags and demons, as well, but no one has ever seen fit to put a name or identity to these unknown forces.

Geleeda herself dismisses these rumors with a high, lilting laugh and a shake of her golden tresses, then changes the subject (but not after first having those who spread the rumors dealt with harshly). Virduk also laughs off these stories as fables and fairy tales, calling upon his ministers — even the battle-mage Antreas, who has seen some of the forest's horrors first-hand — to focus on more important and "wholesome" subjects. Of course, this fools no one, and even Virduk's most loyal courtiers suspect that something terrible lurks in Geleeda's grove, though none are brave enough to speculate what it is.

## Gluttonous Caves

A collection of yawning openings in the southern slopes of the Titanshome Mountains, the Gluttonous Caves are so-called due to their apparent appetite for adventurers and explorers. Virtually nothing is known about them, and no one has ever returned from them alive. Of course, many scholars claim that this is because no one has ever really bothered to explore the region, replete as it is with titanspawn, hazardous weather, and treacherous terrain. Rumors swirl around the place like Titanshome snowstorms, with some saying that the caves are merely shallow pitted holes in the mountains left by some ancient titan's passing, others claiming that the caves are an extensive lair for a powerful band of titanspawn or monsters, and still others suggesting that the caves may be a route to a vast tunnel complex inside the Titanshome Mountains. Yugman the Sage suggests that all of these are wrong and that the truth is known only to him, though no one has yet met the price he sets for revealing it.

## Godsface Cliffs

The Godsface Cliffs are reputed to be tied to the birth of the gods themselves. When each one came to be, the visage of that god supposedly appeared on the



cliffs. The Ledean write of an ancient cult that worshipped a being known as Umr Atwa, the “gate at the edge.” The cult maintained that its patron was a being that existed wherever the land met the surf and was responsible for the Cliffs. The details are lost, as the cult was wiped out long before accurate histories were set down by humans.

Most scholars believe that the faces were carved by dwarves. If so, it must have been an exceedingly difficult process, even for dwarves. Some believe they were created through arcane or divine will, possibly in homage to the gods, or as a “signature” left by the gods themselves.

The cliffs reach about 1,000 feet high along most of their length. The faces of the gods are intact, despite at least 2,000 years of weathering and the ravages of the Divine War.

Weather is somewhat milder along the sea here, and this area is sometimes known as “Peace Crossing.” Fish here are less likely to be tainted, and fishing vessels from Mithril and Hedrad take advantage of the shoals near the cliffs. Ships may moor nearby, resting during the difficult run around the cliffs.

Caverns lie throughout the area. Planar gates and other strange phenomena are more common here than elsewhere. Stories circulate about ruins and treasures to be found in the caverns, and also of the painful death (or worse) that awaits failed explorers.

Plants and animals are much like those in the Celestial Shelf, plus a truly large number of sea birds nesting in the cliffs. Most avoid the carved faces, but there are numerous other crevices. The fish along the cliffs gather to spawn and then migrate north and west.

The sea itself is remarkably clear of monsters, at least within sight of the cliffs. The land near the edge, however, is another matter. It is filled with bizarre creatures of many types and with many outsiders. Few of them have a strong link to the gods or titans, but are more frequently “independent.” Whatever force brings or allows them to come here seems to prevent or discourage them from traveling outside the confines of the cliffs.

The planar gates and phenomena that occur in the caverns often bring deadly creatures such as demons, devils, and dangerous outsiders. These beasts often figure in the frightening tales told about unlucky treasure seekers.

## Hornswythe River

The winding Hornswythe is an important travel route for all traders who seek to do business with northeastern Ghelspad’s interior. Patrolled by riverboats from both Mansk and Mullis Town, the Hornswythe is largely safe for most travelers. When rough weather such as a strong thunderstorm or monsoon rolls in from the Blood Sea, however, the river can suddenly reverse its flow, spilling floodwa-

ters over its banks and often swamping or overturning boats. The Hornswythe is normally a slow, placid river, but when it changes course it becomes a swift, dangerous waterway. A fully prepared captain can use this change to his advantage despite the danger, making the upriver journey in a fraction of the time.

Recently, a band of pisceans has been sighted at the mouth of the Hornswythe, demanding tribute from all who make their way up or down the river. Rumor has it that Mullis Town and Mansk are currently negotiating an alliance to destroy these titanspawn, but the pisceans’ control of the Blood Sea has left Mullis Town reluctant to strike out at the creatures. The wild warriors of Mansk, on the other hand, are all too eager to ride south and slaughter the impudent creatures. Many observers believe that this disagreement may lead to increased tensions between the two cities.

## Inferno Gulf

Some unpleasant natural (or, some suggest, unnatural) component in the local environment creates an oily film across the waters of this channel, and from time to time phenomena such as lighting storms set large portions of the water ablaze. A spectacular sight, this unique event also discourages shipping in the region, and Inferno Gulf remains lightly traveled. It is said that the Dunahnaens actually extract the oily residue from the water and bottle it, possibly for use as incendiary devices, yet no one but the Dunahneans themselves know the truth of the matter.

The Gulf is home to an interesting assortment of plant and animal life. Marine mammals are almost totally absent, as the oily water prevents them from surfacing and breathing without extreme difficulty. Beneath the surface is another story, as vast schools of silvery mackerel and smelt dart to and fro, preyed upon by sharks, wolf eels, and occasional barracuda. The fearsome keel crusher has been sighted here on occasion, but the lack of shipping probably frustrates such creatures.

## Khet

The forest of Khet represents dangers far in excess of its tiny size. Harboring the druidic city of Khirdet, the region has often disgorged great hordes of cannibals (or, as they like to call themselves, “traditional druidic worshippers of the true ruler of Scarn”). Those few who have come here and returned to tell the tale describe the place as an ancient, haunted forest with trees that were old when the gods were young, overhung with moss and creepers, standing guard over a land that reeks of evil magic.

In addition to the mad cannibal-druids who call the place home, Khet harbors some of the most fearful creatures on the continent. The usual forest horrors — dire creatures, lycanthropes, assassin vines, chuul, ettercaps, owl bears, shambling mounds, and

tendriculos — are found here in abundance. The forest seems to harbor more than its share of titan-spawned monstrosities, however, including blight wolves, charfiends, hags, murdersprites, bonewings, naga, and other abominations. Carnivorous plants are common as well, and it is said that everything that grows carries the taint of titans' blood. The hallucinogenic mushroom called the corpse's crown is harvested by the cannibals, who use it in their foul rites and claim that it enables them to see visions of the slain titans.

## Liar's Sound

*When I said any port in a storm, I didn't actually mean Liar's Sound!*

— Last words of a doomed ship captain.

Liar's Sound is aptly cursed as one thing by those not familiar with it: a mariner's worst nightmare. It is a ship graveyard of sorts, with strong, unpredictable currents; sandbars; and barely submerged rock and dead coral formations that make for some of the most naturally hazardous waters in all of Ghelspad. Those ship captains who have "survived the Lie" (as runs on Liar's Sound are colloquially called), would argue that it is the most dangerous waterway in all of Scarn.

The remains of hundreds of boats litter the sound, some closing off otherwise serviceable waterways and so making it all the harder to navigate. Moreover, the locals will not do anything about it out of fear or indifference. Tides here also occur very quickly: instead of the normal 16-hour cycle experienced elsewhere in Scarn, tides in the sound ebb and flow every four hours, dramatically changing the water level. The only "safe" time to traverse the sound is at dead high tide. Likewise, the only time to search wrecks safely is at dead low tide. Merchants are advised to keep their cargo light or sparse when traveling the sound: this increases the odds that the ship will survive the journey.

The entrance to Liar's Sound, known as the Mouth of the Liar, has some of the strongest water currents in all of Ghelspad, including those around the Celestial Shelf. At 6 to 20 fathoms (depending on the time of day), the mouth contains the deepest, safest waters of the whole sound.

Most of the exposed rocks and coral are worn and sharpened, littering the sound in sometimes very regular patterns, commonly called the Teeth of the Liar. When a ship runs aground on the rocks or glances off unseen sunken reefs, it is these patterns that so often make it look like some huge leviathan took a bite out of the hull. The very best way to avoid them is not to sail in the sound. If that is not an option, however, then having two to three lookouts posted bow forward, port, and starboard usually does the trick.

Liar's Sound is the spawning grounds for several types of marine life not polluted by Kadum's blood. As well, because of its proximity, many marshy crea-

tures and insects from the Kan Thet swamps also call the sound their home. During the summer months, seeing both divine races and the more peaceful titanspawn knee deep in brackish water harvesting fish roe and fry is not uncommon. Some larger creatures make their home in Liar's Sound, and at least two types of reef shark are known to live there exclusively. The mangroves, low rushes, and marshy/estuarine nature of the borders that Liar's Sound shares with the swamps of Kan Thet allows for more varied plant life and the occasional crocodile swimming in the sound. Twice since the end of the Divine War, coastal villagers have purportedly seen seawrack dragons emerging from the swamp; these sightings have always been disproved. And, of course, there are the shipwrecks. For the most part, the people of Fangsfall avoid the wrecks for the fear of pestilence being visited upon them. The nearby asaathii, however, enjoy the wrecks because they provide supplies and fresh sacrifices to Mormo.

## Moanscar Mountains

Torn from the earth by the dying spasms of Kadum, these forbidding peaks are passable only through the Serpentine Pass. Legend has it that Kadum's dying agonies bathed this range in distorted magical energy. While titanspawn are no more common here than in other mountain ranges, travelers and explorers insist that some unnatural forces are at work here. According to several bands of adventurers, mountain trails shift, disappear, and twist on their own. An east-west path a party used a week before might disappear, while another trusted trail might suddenly twist to lead straight to a cliff face. These same witnesses claim that paths change overnight and that an unwary explorer could spend days walking the same territory as a path leads back onto itself over and over again.

Merchants and others traveling the Serpentine Pass have reported seeing strange ruins in the distance, high in the upper peaks. Given that the Moanscars rose from the depths of the earth, these sites could be the remains of some ancient civilization that predates the Divine War. As yet, no expedition to the mountains has been able to locate the ruins, and many have never returned at all. The Moanscars are thick with bandits who prey on merchants journeying along the Cordera Corridor. Several reports of a brigand gang wielding strange weapons and unknown magic items have caused many to speculate that a bandit chief has plundered one of these mysterious ruins and now uses the weapons that he found there against his hapless victims.

## Mounds of Man

These hills, situated between the Festering Fields and the Sweltering Plains, were once the location of a bustling Zathiskan metropolis called Velanon. Velanon had always been a wealthy and powerful

city, and for a time the citizens believed they could avoid the Titanswar altogether by professing their complete neutrality. When the followers of titans promised them riches beyond compare, the Velanons just laughed. When the clerics of the gods preached from the street corners, they were spat upon. Yet the Velanons did not realize that none could escape the terrible carnage of the Divine War.

The storm arose from the Ukrudan Desert. Thulkas himself strode toward the city, scorching the ground around him like a flaming mountain. Thousands upon thousands of sutaks and goblins swarmed about him like fleas, eager to plunder Velanon and the lands beyond. The Father of Fire's flaming bulk could be seen approaching the city for three days before the army arrived. The people of Velanon did not panic or prepare to fight, certain that their restraint and neutrality would save them. On the night before the carnage began, six dark robed figures, each powerful priests of Chardun, rode into the city. It is said each of the priests had been imbued with the power of arch devil allies of the Great General from the depths of hell. All night the dark priests worked, their death magic cutting great swaths through the city and transforming life to death and death to unlife. In the morning, the cowardly people of Velanon were no more, and in their place stood the largest army of undead Scarn had ever seen.

The tides of Thulkas' army fell upon the undead ranks like a wave of fire, only to be driven back by the cold, relentless might of the dead. The goblins and skeletons fell upon the ground in lifeless heaps as the once-proud city burned and crumbled around them. It is said that the six great priests of Chardun died driving back Thulkas himself by directly channeling the power of the Overlord. In the end, however, Thulkas was driven back into the desert and prevented from reaching the rich eastern lands. With no one left to care for the thousands of dead, they were left in huge piles amid the ruins. Gradually, the corpses were covered by the sands of time, forming the dread hills found there today.

It is said that the wild necromantic energies of this place cause the dead to rise with an alarming frequency. Others whisper that perhaps the chosen of Chardun yet exist in some state, planning and slowly rebuilding their army of the dead. It is known that the Mounds of Man are dangerous and should be avoided by those wishing to retain their sanity and lives.

## Murmur Pass

A pass in name only, this treacherous path through the unexplored Moanscar Mountains is dangerous in the extreme and traveled only by a foolhardy few. The Vigils of Vesh have occasionally attempted to map the pass, but this endeavor has proved almost impossible, as constant landslides, avalanches, and shifts in terrain render the place utterly chaotic and changeable. Its utility as a pass is limited in any event,

for it connects the tangled reaches of the Fouled Forest and the wasteland known as the Perforated Plains to the north with the inhospitable sands of the Ukrudan Desert to the south, and is all but useless for trade purposes. The Murmur may have once carried considerable traffic in the old Empire of Lede (in fact, legends of lost caravans and endless riches hidden in the pass are one of the few temptations that draw anyone here), but today it is a curiosity only, avoided by most and dreaded by all.

## Placid River

Notable for the peaceful fishing communities along its banks, the Placid River is well named, for it is broad, slow moving, and quite peaceful to travel on or watch. This placidity can be dangerous, for villagers and travelers lulled into peaceful slumber often receive a rude awakening when slitheren from the Mourning Marshes come to call. The fishing towns are defended by members of the Vigils of Vesh, small mercenary bands (including units from the ubiquitous Legion of Crimson), and their own militia, who have become quite skilled at turning the simple tools of the farmer and fisherman into weapons of war.

## Sapphire Lake

Nestled among the peaks of the Moanscar Mountains, this vivid blue glacial lake is like a gemstone among ordinary rocks. Few have actually laid eyes on the place, since the twisting and treacherous paths of the Moanscars often frustrate (and sometimes kill) unwary adventurers, but those who have report that it is a serene and peaceful place, apparently untouched by either god or titan in eons. No one knows what, if anything dwells in or around the lake, but legend holds that it is an enchanted place, and that drinking its water will help ease the pain of existence.

## Serpentine Pass

Named for the often torturous route it follows through the Moanscars, the Serpentine Pass is the only known reliable route across that mountain range. Years ago, the city of Mithril built the paved Cordrada Corridor through this pass, establishing it as an important thoroughfare for merchants, travelers, and military units.

While the Serpentine Pass provides a route through the mountains, it is by no means an easy trip. Even with the construction of the Cordrada Corridor, the pass remains a difficult journey. The pass steadily slopes upward from both ends, reaching a high point roughly halfway through. The first portion of any trip through the Serpentine Pass is a tremendous challenge. Even the downward journey poses danger, as a poorly led wagon can hurdle out of control.

Bandits, particularly ambitious gangs of orcs and gorgons, are a continuing problem in the pass. Its windy twists create many sharp corners and tight

stretches that serve as ideal spots for ambushes. Attackers often drag large boulders up the slopes surrounding the pass, putting them into place to roll them down upon travelers and to smash wagons and carts to pieces. For many years, diligent patrols prevented such attacks, but in recent times the increased orc and titanspawn activity in the Plains of Lede has forced Mithril to shift troops from the pass to points to the north.

## Skykeep Ruins

*Wildday, 12 Vangalot, AV 126 —*

*The rains have increased in intensity and the outer courtyards are taking on water. Tomof was struck this morning by lightning. He is not expected to live through the night. I fear for my life, for if Tomof passes, then it is up to me to steer this castle through the worst part of the storm. I still do not know what that fool Urani was thinking. He knew the dangers of flying toward eastern Ghelspad. I am just glad we were able to wrest control . . .*

*Vanday, 23 Vangalot, AV 126 —*

*I have asked one of the acolytes to monitor our flight while I take a brief respite. This is the first time I have been to my quarters in over two days. I feel muzzy from lack of sleep. Another four days and we should be free of the Kelders and of this accursed storm. Then I can rest.*

*Madraday, 25 Vangalot, AV 126*

*How bitterly appropriate that on the last day of Vangalot, the Lord of Destruction has chosen to pluck us out of the sky. I know not what treachery destroyed the acolyte and the guidance chamber. I only know bitterness at having seen our salvation in sight. Outside I can hear the screams of . . .*

— Portion of an unidentified journal recovered approximately 15 miles from the Skykeep Ruins by a Metyrian Vigilant.

No one knows from where the flying castle called Skykeep first came. No one who saw it traverse the Kelders into the heart of the Blood Monsoon doubts that the wizards at the helm were quite insane; no one debates that the Blood Monsoon ended just days after the Skykeep crashed into the Kelder Mountains. Nothing else concrete, however, is known about this



enigma of the Kelders — for no one who has attempted to gain entrance to the ruins has ever returned. Based on components required to perform the true ritual that undoubtedly created Skykeep, scholars believe that the castle hailed from Termana or far, far to the south of Scarn. Legend holds that the Skykeep was once home to a vast fleet of sky-ships capable of raining destruction down on its enemies, but no final proof of this tale has ever been found.

The ruined castle lies half buried in a vast crater or valley in the northernmost section of the Kelders. Surrounded on all sides by steep peaks and undoubtedly teeming with titanspawn, there is no easy way to access the ruins. Even if they could be accessed, finding a way into the castle would take months. From reports on the crater's width, some sages wonder how there is anything left to the castle. Dirigible reconnaissance, however, has shown that there are in fact at least two towers still mostly whole above ground — but still, no one knows the condition of the castle's interior or what lies embedded in the mountain range.

## Sorporatra Swamp

Literally poisonous to those who venture here, the Sorporatra is a place of foul winds, noxious gases, and endless stinking marshes. Vigilant investigation of the region is limited by the terrain's toxic nature, but those who have visited report that not even the hardy ratmen can tolerate staying in the swamp for long. Those who sail nearby are always careful to keep the place downwind, for many of the poisonous vapors of the swamp are deadly — some claim that the assassins of the Cult of Ancients actually bottle the fumes for use in their fatal trade. A few mad or foolhardy explorers have braved the swamp using magical means for protection, and these individuals tell of hardy, poisonous creatures that are like their fellows in Ghelspad, but made even more deadly by the swamp itself. Poisonous versions of the deadly swamp tyrant and naga are said to be found here, and one crazed visitor claims that a tribe of slime reavers inhabits the swamp as well, but this information has not been confirmed (nor is it likely to be anytime soon).

## The Spires of Gaurak

The fearsome Spires of Gaurak shield Darakeene from the desolation of the Perforated Plains. Formed when many of Gaurak's teeth were cast down prior to the Glutton's entombment, it takes little imagination to see the titan's fangs in the silhouette of these preternaturally steep mountains. Certainly, the imprisoned titan's essence taints the region, which is infested with titanspawn — most notably with vengaurak, who originate from nearby Vengaurak Vale.

It is obvious to even the most casual observer that the Spires are not a natural feature. These jagged

peaks rise on the western edge of the Perforated Plains as if they were casually tossed there with no thought as to where they might land (which is indeed the case, if the legends are true). Aside from occasional bands of humanoids and monsters that stray into Darakeene, these mountains help to form a very secure border that shields Darakeene from its enemies. The exception comes in the form of periodic attacks by hordes of vengaurak, which Darakeene's armed forces must contend with every few years.

Those foolish enough to attempt travel across the mountains — and who manage to survive the monstrous beasts that inhabit the region — are faced with dead-end valleys, blind sheer drops, avalanches, rockslides, and earthquakes

## Splintered River

It is unknown whether this mysterious river has always existed in its shattered state or whether it was once whole. The Splintered River originates in the Gascar Peaks and wends down into the Ukrudan Desert. Then, however, the river seems to disappear, flowing into a great chasm and leaving the central portion of the Ukrudan without any obvious source of water. On the western edge of the desert, the river once again emerges from the ground before flowing into Dunahnae and on toward the Blossoming Sea.

The path of the great river under the desert is completely unknown, as it travels through the exact center of the desert where the asaatthi are known to exist. Some sages speculate that the asaatthi have managed to use some ancient magic to draw up the water of the river in order to survive in the barren desert. Regardless, strange artifacts and unidentifiable body parts have turned up in the river's western portion. While the true origin of these remains is a mystery, they lead many to speculate that there is some vast and ancient terror lurking beneath the burning sands of the Ukrudan Desert.

## Swamps of Kan Thet

Unlike many other locations in the Scarred Lands, the Swamps of Kan Thet have always been a swamp, at least as far as scholars can ascertain. It is also one of the few marshlands left on Ghelspad that is not tainted by the Mountainshaker's blood. While most human scholars have no idea where the name of the swamp originated, the asaatthi who inhabit the swamp remember, for it is named after the progenitor of their race.

Kan Thet is actually a bastardization of the name Kathech, who, asaatth legend holds, was the first of their species to be created by Mormo the Serpentmother. Kathech founded their empire; Kathech spread the will of Mormo. Thus, the asaatthi immortalized Kathech by naming their homeland after him. Asaatthi sages debate as to whether Kathech was actually an asaatth or (as is the popular belief among the nobles in the Jewel of the Serpentmother)

an elder dragon. He is viewed as the pinnacle of asaatthi culture; much of the swamp's verdant lethality is owed directly to his influence.

The Swamps of Kan Thet take up most of the southwestern continent. Seven hundred and seventy-five miles long and almost four hundred miles wide, it is the single largest marshland on all of Ghelspad. Being situated on the western end of the continent ensures that the swamp is almost completely free of Kadum's taint. Nevertheless, the terrain is still extraordinarily rugged: brackish waters, fathoms deep in some areas and mere inches in others, make up the majority of the swamp. Here and there lie patches of high ground, some containing ruins, some home to ferocious beasts. Most of the time spent in the swamp is done so slogging through muddy, brackish water, two to three feet deep.

The swamp was, and still is, home to the Asaatthi Empire (or what is left of it). Dozens of ruins litter the swamps, most still jealously guarded by the asaatthi who inhabit them. Passage through the swamp is perilous; nonetheless, it is the fastest overland trade route between Fangsfall and numerous other countries and city-states. Internal topography remains largely a mystery, as none of the surveying parties have ever returned.

Reptiles and insects swarm through the swamp. Kan Thet is home to virtually every species of snake and lizard on Ghelspad, if not Scarn — not to mention over 200 species of biting insects. Growth along the swamp's border with the sea includes brine reeds and mangrove stands; further inland, the growth consists mainly of water hyacinths and stunted coniferous trees. Scattered throughout the swamp are at least two dozen asaatthi ruins. The asaatthi still maintain a large presence in their ancestral homeland and should not be trifled with. Merrow and scrag abound, along with swamp tyrants and swamp fishers. Woe to the traveler who does not respect the swamp: it will most likely be the last mistake they ever make.

## Vengaurak Vale

A brutal tear in the landscape, this valley is infested with untold hordes of vile vengaurak. Beyond this valley, vengaurak tunnels riddle the region of the Spires of Gaurak. When their numbers grow too great, the vengaurak use these tunnels to pass through the mountains and launch attacks against Darakeene.

Whether the vengaurak were created in the vale, are attracted there from elsewhere, or some combination of the two is unknown, but it is certain that the vale presents an ever-present and growing danger not only to Darakeene but to Ghelspad at large. This many servants of Gaurak gathered in one place bodes ill for all of Ghelspad and the divine races.

## Wall of Bones

Coming from the Ukrudan Desert toward the country of Dunahnae, the first thing one notices is a huge, bleach-white wall running north and south as far as one can see. Only upon walking closer can the traveler begin to discern the individual bones that make up the wall and the hundreds of slaves constantly adding to it. A truly lucky visitor will see a white-robed Dunahnaen necromancer part the wall to usher forth a unit of black armored soldiers or patrol of slaves.

The Wall of Bones is constructed and maintained under the direction of the necromancers of the School of Bones. Drove of slaves mine for bones among the major western battlefields of Ghelspad, including the Devil's March, the Ukrudan Desert, and even as far as the Festering Fields. The wall is constructed according to advanced Dunahnaen architectural techniques and held together with tar refined from the Burning Swamp. With an average width of 5 feet, the wall's height ranges from 5 to 15 feet. The wall is more built up in dangerous regions, such as in the northern area near Darakeene or bordering the Ukrudan.

Although the Dunahnaens have never revealed their purpose in building the Wall of Bones, it serves as an effective barrier against dangerous desert denizens such as the sutak. The wall further serves to protect Dunahnae from intruders and prevent slaves from escaping into regions beyond. Those who know the secrets of necromancy, however, whisper that the wall may have a deeper and more insidious purpose. Perhaps the wall is to be animated en masse in the inevitable event of war, providing a dark and terrible army to be led by the Great General himself. Or maybe the wall is to serve as a giant font of necromantic energy to be tapped by Dunahnaen necromancers as they wage war in foreign lands. Unfortunately for the rest of Ghelspad, the true purpose of the Wall of Bones is likely not to be revealed until the armies of the Great General march forth.



# Appendix: Prestige Classes



The Divine War and its aftermath influenced and shaped the people of Ghelspad like no other event. Nowhere is this more evident than in the land's secret societies, elite warriors and religious orders. Created to battle the titans and their minions, or to help heal the damage they did, these groups, including the knightly orders of Corean, the harrier-riders of Uria, the Forgemasters of the Gleaming Valley and even the godless Brothers of the Scarred Hand, are nothing short of legendary to the people of Ghelspad, and their influence spreads well beyond the shores of the continent.

This chapter details several of the most prominent prestige classes available to adventurers on Ghelspad. Note that many of them have stringent rules for admission and membership, and those who agree to join them should be aware that their new elite status comes with considerable responsibility. These classes are known throughout the continent, and only the best, bravest and most skilled are members.

## Aerial Cavalier (Acv)

The aerial cavalier is an expert at fighting on an aerial mount. Common aerial mounts in Ghelspad include the great harriers that are ridden by the harrier knights of Uria, and the valravens that are occasionally granted to Paladins of Corean, and to Tani's greatest hunters. Most often an aerial cavalier is part of a noble household with access to a stable of such mounts, but cavaliers by virtue of loan are also known. In addition to their martial training, aerial cavaliers are frequently used as envoys and couriers, and thus they are versed in the skills of statecraft.

**Hit Die:** d10

### Requirements

To qualify to become an aerial cavalier, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

**Skills:** Ride (any aerial mount) 8 ranks, Handle Animal 8 ranks

**Feats:** Mounted Combat, Lightning Reflexes

**Special:** The character must own or have access to a mount of the type chosen for Ride above.

### Class Skills

The aerial cavalier's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Geography) (Int), Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the aerial-cavalier prestige class:

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Aerial cavaliers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They are proficient with light and medium armor, and with shields.

**Aerial Defense (Ex):** Beginning at 1st level, whenever an aerial cavalier's flying mount is required to make a Reflex saving throw, the aerial cavalier may substitute her own Reflex saving throw, if her bonus is greater than the mount's.

**Flyby Attack (Ex):** Beginning at 1st level, while flying upon her aerial mount, an aerial cavalier and her mount both benefit from the Flyby Attack feat (See MM, Introduction) — they may attack before, during, or after the mount's move.

**Paladin's Mount:** A paladin whose special mount is also an aerial mount may add

her aerial cavalier levels to her paladin levels when determining the abilities of her special mount.

**Aerial Evasion (Ex):** At 2nd level, the mounted aerial cavalier gains the ability to use her mount's three-dimensional movement capabilities to avoid magical and unusual attacks. If, while flying on her mount, the cavalier makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, the cavalier instead takes no damage from the attack. While the cavalier is mounted on her flying mount, the mount also benefits from this ability — if the mount makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful Reflex saving, the mount takes no damage from the attack.



**Aerial Archery (Ex):** Beginning at 3rd level, while flying upon her aerial mount, the penalty that an aerial cavalier suffers when using a ranged weapon is halved. Typically, this penalty drops from -4 to -2 if the mount is taking a double move, and -8 to -4 if the mount is attempting difficult maneuvers (loops, barrel rolls).

**Enhanced Maneuverability (Ex):** At 4th level, the aerial cavalier can increase her mount's flying maneuverability rating (see *DMG*, Chapter 3) by one rank, so that a maneuverability rating of clumsy becomes poor, poor becomes average, average becomes good, and both good and perfect become perfect. At 8th level this ability improves so that the cavalier increases her mount's rating by 2 ranks (maximum is still perfect).

**Crash Land (Ex):** At 5th level the aerial cavalier whose mount is blinded, blown away, dazed, deafened, disabled, dying, entangled, held, paralyzed, stunned, or unconscious may have her mount continue to move when it might not otherwise be able to do so. The mount may continue to make single-move partial actions (see *PHB*, Chapter 8) for one round per level of the aerial cavalier. While moving in this manner, the mount's maneuverability rating is reduced one rank, so for example a rating of average becomes poor (a mount that is clumsy remains clumsy).

If the mount is still aloft after the time limit has passed and it could not otherwise remain flying, it will fall.

**Empathic Link (Su):** At 6th level, the aerial cavalier may establish an Empathic Link with a single aerial mount. This is treated exactly like a paladin's Empathic Link with her special mount (see *PHB*, Chapter 3). If the aerial mount is killed, the cavalier must wait a year before establishing an Empathic Link with another mount.

**Spirited Charge (Ex):** At 7th level the aerial cavalier gains the Spirited Charge feat for use from her flying mount. If she already has the Spirited Charge feat, she may increase their Spirited Charge to 3x damage with melee weapon, and 4x damage with a lance.

**Extended Empathic Link (Su):** At 9th level, the aerial cavalier's Empathic Link with her mount improves. It now has an unlimited range, provided that both the cavalier and the mount are on the same plane of existence.

**Improved Aerial Evasion (Ex):** At 10th level, an aerial cavalier's mounted Aerial Evasion ability improves. She and her mount still take no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw against attacks such as *fireball*, but now take only half damage if they fail their saving throw.

Table A-1: The Aerial Cavalier

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Aerial defense, flyby attack, paladin's mount
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Aerial evasion
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Aerial archery
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Enhanced maneuverability I
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Crash land
6th	+6	+4	+4	+2	Empathic link
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Spirited charge
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Enhanced maneuverability II
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Extended empathic link
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Improved aerial evasion

## Brother of the Scarred Hand (Bsh)

After the devastation of the Titanswar, many among both the titanspawn and divine races had tired of constant warfare. A particularly large sect among the followers of the more gentle titans, such as Golthain, Denev, and Mesos, dedicated themselves to curing some of the harm done by the war. The members of the Brotherhood of the Scarred Hand wander the Scarred Lands, using their unique magic and insight to aid those against whom they once fought.

The brothers employ a special form of healing magic that relies upon the sacrifice of the user's own life energy in order to aid others. As they practice tapping their own inner energies, the breadth of the brothers' power expands until they gain power to control the energies of life and death freely. Although the members of the Brotherhood profess that they simply wish to atone for the sins of their past, they are accepted only reluctantly by the victors of the Divine War. The brothers have eschewed worshipping any of the gods, instead focusing on their own internal perfection. This has caused some mistrust among the divine races, but as the brothers themselves recognize, only a fool would turn down a healing hand when in need.

The path of the Brotherhood of the Scarred Hand is rigid and difficult, requiring an inner discipline that few can achieve. Usually monks, druids, and sorcerers take up this path, although wizards and rangers may also learn to become brothers. Any of these classes may benefit from the healing and combat capabilities inherent in the class.

**Hit Die:** d8

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Brother of the Scarred Hand, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any lawful

**Skills:** Concentration 10 ranks, Knowledge (Arcana) 10 ranks, Heal 5 ranks, Alchemy 5 ranks

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Concentration), Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness

**Special:** May not worship any god or demigod.

### Class Skills

The Brother of the Scarred Hand's skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), and Profession (Wis).

**Skill points at each level:** 2 + Int modifier

### Class Features

All of the following are features of the Brother of the Scarred Hand prestige class:

**Weapons and Armor:** Brothers of the Scarred Hand gain no proficiency in any weapon or armor.

**Altruism (Su):** The Brother of the Scarred Hand gains the ability to channel life energy itself. The amount of hit points that can be transferred is equal to the brother's Wis modifier x class level x his



level of altruism. For example, a 5th-level brother with an 18 Wis would be able to channel 40 hit points per day. Hit points may be taken from the brother's total and given to any other living creature, taken from a creature and added to the brother's total, or transferred between two different creatures touched at the same time. An unwilling creature may make a Fort save (DC 10 + Bsh's level + Bsh's Wis modifier) to negate any transfer. Hit points may be transferred as part of a normal unarmed attack or a touch attack. A brother may not hold or drain hit points above his normal maximum. Any transfer of hit points requires a Concentration skill check (DC 10 + number of points transferred) in order to control the life energy. A failed check indicates that no energy is transferred and the brother takes 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage.

**Minor Sacrifice (Su):** At will, the brother may cast either *cure light wounds* or *inflict light wounds* by touch. These spell-like abilities are cast as if by a cleric of equal level. A brother is able to make unarmed attacks and use this ability at the same time. Each use of this power drains one temporary Constitution point. This ability damage may only be healed naturally.

**Discipline:** The brother's base attack bonus applies to unarmed attacks as well as melee attacks as per the Monk Unarmed Attack Bonus Table, as described in Chapter 3 of the *PHB*.

**Major Sacrifice (Su):** As per minor sacrifice except that the brother may now sacrifice 2 temporary Constitution points in order to use *cure serious wounds* or *inflict serious wounds*.

**Absorb Illness (Su):** The brother is able to transfer disease from one living being to another. Upon a successful touch attack, the Brother of the Scarred Hand may either absorb an illness from another creature (thus suffering the disease's effects) or transfer an illness from himself to the victim. If the victim is unwilling, he receives a Fort save (DC 10 + Bsh's level + Bsh's Wis modifier). A person who is infected with a disease through the use of this ability ignores the normal incubation period; the disease affects him immediately. Any person so infected may be cured normally.

**Phoenix Touch (Su):** The brother has achieved mastery over life and death itself. Once per day, he may restore life to slain creatures by touch. The creature must have been dead for a number of hours no greater than the brother's Wisdom modifier. The slain creature is treated as if affected by the spell *raise dead*. This drains an incredible amount of energy from the brother, however, and he must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 25) or die. If he succeeds, treat the brother as if he had been affected by a successful *harm* spell.

Table A-2: Brother of the Scarred Hand

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Altruism 1
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Minor Sacrifice
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Altruism 2
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Discipline
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Altruism 3
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Major Sacrifice
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Altruism 4
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Absorb Illness
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Altruism 5
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Phoenix Touch

## Forgemaster (Fms)

Members of this order, known as the Tier of Forges, are known as forgemasters, and universally venerated within the Gleaming Valley. Entrusted with the greatest secrets of craftwork and blessed with divine inspiration by Corean, these human inhabitants of the valley toil with base elements to create items that can only be described as heavenly.

To be a forgemaster is not to become a creator of magic. It means instead to understand truly the spirit of a weapon and to make of it the perfect expression of its creator's and its wielder's wills. The works of these dedicated few are not arcane contrivances of brimstone and starfire, but are instead simple and elegant pieces made with conviction, to be used with conviction.

Most forgemasters start as experts, being exceptional artisans long before they enter the Tier. A few are clerics of Corean or Hedrada, as the holy nature of this class meshes well with their divine duties. Rare though they are outside of the Gleaming Valley, forgemasters are occasionally found abroad. Most are apprenticed to other forgemasters, referred to as smith exemplars, in Hedrad or Termana, and a few have even been known to join the ranks of adventurers.

**Hit Die:** d6

### Requirements

To qualify to become a forgemaster, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Lawful good

**Skills:** Craft (Weaponsmith) 8 ranks

### Class Skills

The forgemaster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), and Profession (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the forgemaster prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Forgemasters are proficient with all simple weapons, light armor and shields.

**Maker of Virtue (Su):** Items made by a forgemaster carry within them the divine spark. They become good, and will suffer not the touch of evil. Evil-aligned creatures suffer 1 point of damage every round they hold the item.

**Forge Blessing (Ex/Su):** The anointed of Corean, forgemasters are granted a small complement of abilities, which allow them to transcend

mortal failings. As his skill increases, so too do the forgemaster's options. At first and second level, and at every alternate level thereafter, the Keeper may choose one of the following abilities. His forgemaster level and Wisdom determine the secrets he can choose — he may not choose from those secrets with a number greater than the sum of his level and Wisdom modifier. No blessing can be taken more than once, unless noted otherwise.

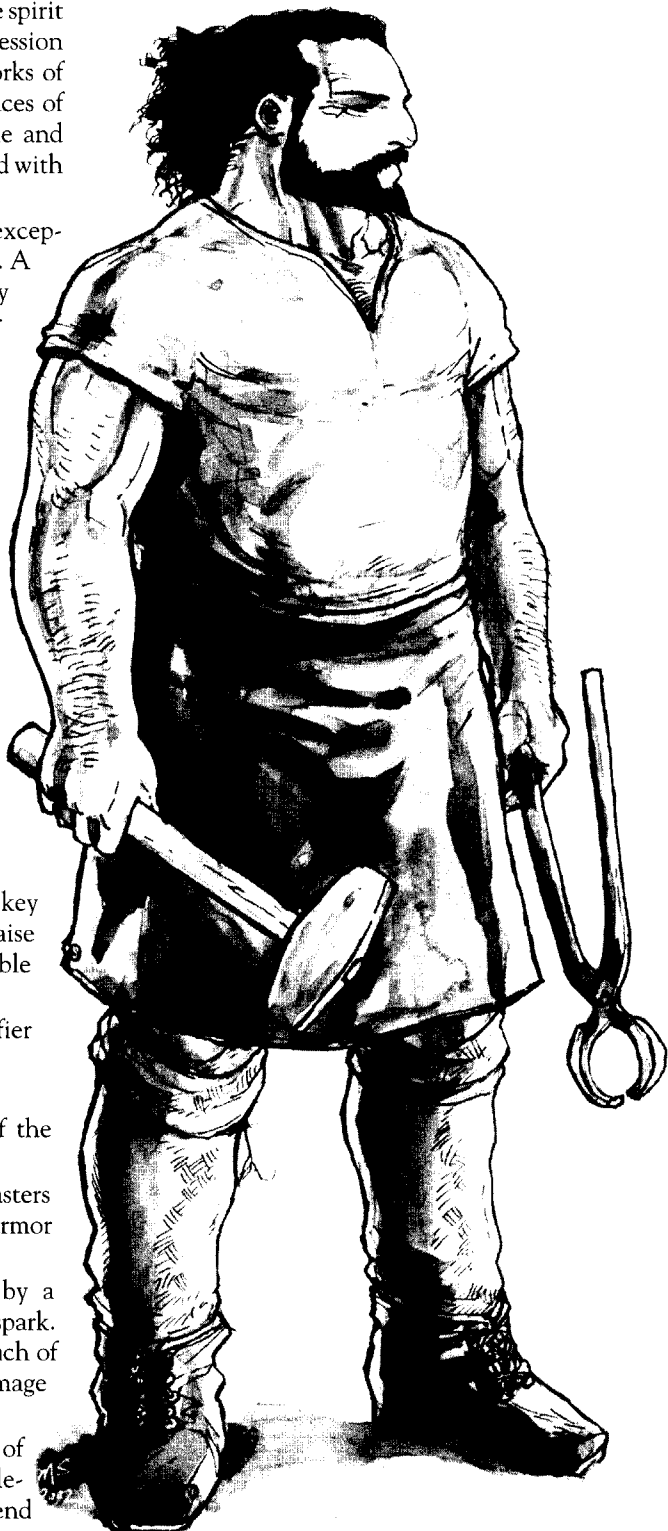




Table A-3: Forge Blessings

Level + Wis modifier	Blessing
1	Master of the Smithy
2	Catchcraft
3	Vigilance by the Fire
4	Grandmaster Craftsman
5	Divine Tool
6	Personalize Creation
7	Aesthetic Touch
8	Enduring Creation
9	Iron Body
10	Friend of the Flame
11+	Flawless Body

### Forge Blessings

- *Master of the Smithy*: Characters aiding the forgemaster in his creation endeavors (see PHB, Chapter 4) gain a +2 competence bonus to their skill rolls. Note that this only applies to skill rolls made to give the forgemaster an aiding bonus to his own Craft roll.

- *Catchcraft*: The forgemaster can stud his works with barbs and spurs, improving their ability to snag other weapons and even people. Such weapons have a +2 circumstance bonus to all disarm and trip attempts.

- *Vigilance by the Fire*: The forgemaster needs no rest while working at the forge and suffers no ill effects from this exertion afterwards. This effectively doubles the forgemaster's Craft roll when creating items, but only for the purpose of determining how many silver pieces toward completion the item is. (See PHB, Chapter 4.)

- *Grandmaster Craftsman*: The forgemaster has the ability to create grand-masterwork items. Such items are costlier than masterwork items, though this additional cost is not figured in for the forgemaster — every time he creates a masterwork item, the item is simply grand-masterwork. Grand-masterwork weapons are like masterwork weapons, save that they have either an additional +1 to attack (for a total of +2), or a +1 to damage; these items cost 700 gp over the cost of the weapon. Grand-masterwork armors have their armor-check penalties reduced by two; these items cost 300 gp over the cost of the armor. Grand-masterwork tools grant a +4 competency bonus to the use of any associated skill, and these items cost 100 gp over the normal cost of the tool.

- *Divine Tool*: The forgemaster needs but one tool, a unique item forevermore attuned to him alone, in order to work his arts (a fire is still needed, though it need only be a bonfire).

- *Personalize Creation*: The forgemaster may designate an owner for each item he crafts. It will only bear the use of that person and her heir(s), all others receive a -1 penalty to all rolls while using it. The heir to an item is chosen by the owner, and need not be a member of her family.

- *Aesthetic Touch*: The forgemaster may create items of such beauty that they bias others in favor of the wielder. Those who possess or use such items gain a +2 circumstance bonus to a specific Charisma based skill, specified at the time of creation. This may be used on any item that is worn, including weapons and armor. Note that these items count towards the limit on magic items that a character can wear (see DMG, Chapter 8).

- *Enduring Creation*: The forgemaster may spend extra time to imbue his items with "extra lives". Each time the item would normally be destroyed, it instead loses one of its lives. The number of total lives an item will have is determined at item creation, and creation time is multiplied by that total. An item with three lives, for example, takes three times longer to create than an ordinary item.

- *Iron Body*: The forgemaster's body hardens like well-worked steel, becoming immune to subdual damage.

- *Friend of the Flame*: The forgemaster gains immunity to non-magical fire, up to the intensity of a blacksmith's forge (non-magical-fire resistance 20).

- *Flawless Body*: The forgemaster's body gains the perfection of his own creations, becoming immune to critical strikes.

**Turn or Rebuke Constructs (Su):** Beginning at 3rd level, the forgemaster gains the ability to turn evil constructs and rebuke good constructs. Neutral constructs are turned or rebuked depending on their tendency towards good or evil. This ability is identical to the cleric's ability to turn/rebuke undead but applies to constructs instead.

**Weapon Link (Sp):** The attunement between creator and creation becomes manifest, allowing the forgemaster to flawlessly wield weapons that she herself created. When wielding a weapon that she created, the forgemaster receives a +1 divine bonus to all attack and damage rolls. This bonus is in addition to any that the weapon might already have for being masterwork or grand-masterwork, but does not stack with magical bonuses, making it useless on enchanted weapons.

**Weapon Union (Sp):** The forgemaster's link to the spirit of her weapons is further increased (divine bonus increased to +2, applied to all weapons made by the character; this bonus is in addition to any that the weapon might already have for being masterwork or grand-masterwork). Once per day, the forgemaster can also use this ability to convert intelligent evil weapons. To do this, the forgemaster makes a will

check, against a DC equal to 10 plus the weapon's ego, as described in Chapter 8 of the DMG. If the forgemaster's Will roll is unsuccessful, he is instantly knocked unconscious and may not be awakened for one full day except by magical means. Otherwise, the weapon permanently becomes of good alignment, inflicting a negative level on any evil being who tries to use it. This negative level never actually results in permanent level loss, but cannot be lifted by any means until the weapon is relinquished.

**Physical Antipathy (Ex):** Able to grasp the flaws in all things, the forgemaster becomes as skilled at destruction as she is at creation. Hardness is never applied against damage dealt by the forgemaster (see PHB, Chapter 8). The only exception occurs with magic items, which retain their bonus to hardness granted by their enhancement bonus.

**Investiture (Su):** The noblest of forgemasters are granted upon death the choice of serving Corean once more. These few become hollow knights, shedding whatever mortal form they once possessed to don the sacred armor of the Avenger. They retain all the experience and abilities of their former lives and gain one level in the fighter class. From then on, the character may only take additional levels as a fighter.

Table A-4: The Forgemaster

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Maker of virtue, forge blessing
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Forge blessing
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Turn/rebuke constructs
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Forge blessing
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Weapon link
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Forge blessing
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Weapon union
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Forge blessing
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Physical antipathy
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Forge blessing, investiture

## Gold Knight (GKn)

Paladins of the Order of Gold act as missionaries and wandering healers in Corean's name. The Gold Knights usually serve to aid folk who are in need of their healing and protection.

Gold Knights can often be found wandering the Scarred Lands, acting as defenders of Coreanic or Madrielist missionaries, healers and priests. Through their association with the healers of the gods, the Gold Knights learn to master their own arts of healing, developing their abilities in the laying-on of hands and disease removal.

The Gold Knights are known for the gold shield device emblazoned with the Swords of Corean that many sew onto their clothing or wear around their necks. Many paladins and cleric/paladins take up this badge as part of their calling.

**Hit Die:** d10

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Gold Knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

**Ability:** The character must have the ability to *lay on hands* and *remove disease*.

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Deity:** Corean

**Skill:** Concentration 4 ranks, Heal 8 ranks, Knowledge (Religion) 3 ranks

**Spellcasting:** Must be able to cast *cure light wounds*.

**Special:** Must be part of the Order of Gold.

### Class Skills

The Gold Knight's class skills are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Ritual Casting (Con, exclusive skill).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Gold Knight prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Gold Knights are proficient with simple and martial weapons and all types of armor (heavy, medium and light) and with shields. Note that armor-check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armor and equipment carried.

**Spellcasting:** The Gold Knight continues to advance in his mastery of paladin's magic. Every

level, the Gold Knight gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a paladin level.

In addition, the following spells are added to the spells available for preparation by the Gold Knight:

1st — *Deathwatch*, *shield other*

2nd — *Cure moderate wounds*, *lesser restoration*

3rd — *Cure serious wounds*, *life-force transfer\**



4th—*Cure critical wounds, death ward, holy channel\**, *restoration*

\* From *Relics & Rituals*.

**Healer's Touch:** The Gold Knight's levels stack with those of the paladin for the purposes of determining the number of hit points per day he may heal with *lay on hands*. Additionally, at every odd level, he receives a bonus (as indicated on Table A-5) to his Charisma modifier for the purposes of determining the number of points per day he may heal with *lay on hands*.

For instance, Lady Garia (a Pal7/Gkn3 with a Charisma of 17) can heal 50 hit points per day (+3 Charisma modifier, +2 Healer's Touch bonus, 10 total levels: [3 + 2] x 10 total hit points per day).

**Master Healer:** The Gold Knight has the ability to Take 10 on Heal skill checks, even in stressful situations.

**Remove Disease:** Beginning at 2nd level, a Gold Knight can remove disease, as per the spell *remove disease*, once per week. *Remove disease* is a spell-like ability for Gold Knights. Every even level thereafter, the Gold Knight gains the ability to use *remove disease* one additional time per week.

**Toughness:** At 2nd level, the Gold Knight receives Toughness as a bonus feat.

**Token of Gold:** At 3rd level, the Gold Knight is able to consecrate holy symbols of Corean to act as channels for curative magic he casts. Doing so costs him 50 XP and imbues the holy symbol with a golden sheen. The Gold Knight may channel healing energy, whether through a *cure* spell or that of *lay on hands*, through the token from a distance of up to 90 ft., in essence allowing him to cast *cure* spells and use *lay on hands* from a distance, but only on those who are wearing one of his tokens.

The Gold Knight also has an imprecise knowledge of how healthy those wearing the tokens are, even if they are

outside of that 90 ft. area - his knowledge is limited to knowing that the target is *healthy* (full hit points), *wounded* (between half and full hit points), *grievously wounded* (between half and zero hit points) and *dying* (between zero and -10 hit points).

The Gold Knight may only have a number of tokens active equal to his levels in this prestige class. If he consecrates one over his limit, the first one he created is rendered powerless.

**Spontaneous Curing:** At 4th level, Gold Knights learn to channel stored spell energy into healing spells that they haven't prepared ahead of time. Instead of casting a normal spell, a Gold Knight can expend the spell and cast a *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

**Empowered Curing:** At 5th level, the Gold Knight gains the ability to boost his *cure* spells with positive energy. By expending a Turn Undead use when casting a *cure* spell, that spell is treated as though it were augmented with the Empower Spell feat.

**Curative Enchanter:** At 7th level, the Gold Knight's ability to enchant items that contain healing magic improves. Though this ability does not grant any ability to craft magic items in and of itself, if the Gold Knight already possesses such feats and uses them to create items that require *cure* spells as part of their creation, the cost on these items in both gp and XP is reduced by 25%. This includes wands, potions and scrolls as well as other items. Note that if an item has multiple functions, only reduce the cost for enchanting the part of the item that deals with curative magic.

**Maximized Curing:** At 9th level, the Gold Knight gains the ability to boost his *cure* spells with positive energy. By expending a Turn Undead use when casting a *cure* spell, that spell is treated as though it were augmented with the Maximize Spell feat. This ability may be stacked with Empowered Curing (see above), but costs two uses of the Turn Undead ability.

Table A-5: Gold Knight

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Healer's touch +1, master healer	+1 level of paladin class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Remove disease 1/week, toughness	+1 level of paladin class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Healer's touch +2, token of gold	+1 level of paladin class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Remove disease 2/week, spontaneous curing	+1 level of paladin class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Healer's touch +3, empowered curing	+1 level of paladin class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Remove disease 3/week	+1 level of paladin class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Healer's touch +4, curative enchanter	+1 level of paladin class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Remove disease 4/week	+1 level of paladin class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Healer's touch +5, maximized curing	+1 level of paladin class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Remove disease 5/week	+1 level of paladin class

## Iron Knights (IKn)

The Iron Knights of Corean are elite masters of forge and siege warfare. Resplendent in their finely crafted armor, the Iron Knights contribute to the efforts of righteous warfare both on the battlefield and off.

The Iron Knights make many contributions to Corean's eternal war against the minions of the titans, from their mastery of forge secrets that allow them to improve the weapons of the divine forces, to their ability to direct siege weapon assaults skillfully, and their prowess with enchanted blades on the field of battle.

The Order of Iron's champions do not limit themselves to the fields of war, however — Iron Knights can be found traveling the Scarred Lands, carrying out their missions for justice, whether they are acting as part of an adventuring company, teaching an apprentice smith the finer points of sword-edge chiseling, or leading villagers against bandits or titanspawn.

**Hit Die:** d10

### Requirements

To qualify to become an Iron Knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Deity:** Corean

**Skill:** Craft (armorsmith or weaponsmith) 8 ranks, Craft (siege weaponry) 3 ranks, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) 2 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 3 ranks, Profession (siege engineer) 3 ranks

**Feats:** Skill Focus (Craft — armorsmith or weaponsmith)

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast the divine spell *magic weapon*.

**Special:** Must be part of the Order of Iron.

### Class Skills

The Iron Knight's class skills are: Appraise (Int), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (architecture & engineering) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Iron Knight prestige class:

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Iron Knights are proficient with all simple and martial weapons and all types of armor (heavy, medium and light) and with shields. Note that armor-check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armor and equipment carried.

**Spellcasting:** The Iron Knight continues to advance in his mastery of divine magic. The Iron Knight's study favors paladin spellcasting: On those levels marked *+1 level of paladin class*, the Iron Knight gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a paladin level, even if he could never cast spells as a paladin prior to this. If the character has never cast spells as a paladin, he must gain four levels of spellcasting ability even to begin casting paladin spells. The Iron Knight does not gain any other benefit a character of the paladin class would have gained.

On those levels marked *+1 level of existing class*, the Iron Knight gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before becoming an Iron Knight. Note that those who have gained levels of paladin spellcasting through the earlier accumulation of Iron Knight levels may choose to make these new levels paladin spellcasting levels. The Iron Knight does not gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained.

**Bless Forge:** The Iron Knight learns the arts of sanctifying and purifying a forge in the name of Corean. This process costs the Iron Knight 50 XP. The forge is treated as though it had been enchanted with a *minor symbol of divinity* (see *Relics & Rituals*, pg. 93). Those within 30 ft. of the forge gain a +2 to Will saves, as well as a +1 to Craft rolls that involve smithing of some kind. This process takes one full hour and requires a Concentration roll if it is interrupted in any way.

**Forge of Corean:** To utilize this power, the Iron Knight must have access to a forge empowered with the Bless Forge ability (see above). At this forge, the Iron Knight may "forge" weapon- or armor-affecting spells into weapons or armor, causing the magics to hold more surely than normal. In game terms, the Iron Knight extends the duration of spells that affect weapons or armor to a full day, if the normal duration is shorter. A sword affected by the spell *magic weapon*, for example, will gain a +1 bonus for one full day if it is treated by an Iron Knight with this ability. As the Iron Knight increases in level, he learns to forge more powerful spells into weapons: At 1st level, he may imbue weapons with up to 1st level spells. This increases to 2nd level spells at 3rd level, 3rd level spells at 5th level and 4th level spells at 7th level.

**Master Craftsman:** The ability of the Iron Knight to produce the finest of arms and armor is almost legendary, thanks in great part to this ability. The Iron Knight gains the ability to craft weapons and armor of masterwork quality much more quickly. In game terms, the Iron Knight adds a +5 to his Craft roll. This bonus is only added to the result after the roll determines success or failure, and only applies for the purpose of determining the amount of work completed (i.e. added to the total rolled and then multiplied by the Craft DC to determine the number of silver pieces worth of work completed; see *PHB* Chapter 4).

**Balancing the Steel:** The Iron Knight becomes knowledgeable not only in crafting weapons and armor of the finest quality, but also in techniques that allow him to get the most out of any weapon or armor. With ten minutes of work, the Iron Knight can sharpen any normal weapon and adjust the grip and balance, or specially adjust the fit of any armor he is proficient in, effectively turning it into a masterwork item for one day/rank he possesses in the appropriate Craft skill (i.e. Weaponsmith or Armorsmith). These adjustments are obviously temporary ones, as they wear out. This is an extraordinary ability, involving not only physical changes, but whispered blessings. A simple Appraise rolls (DC 10) will reveal the temporary nature of the item's masterwork status. Such items are not suitable for the creation of magic items which require masterwork items as a component.

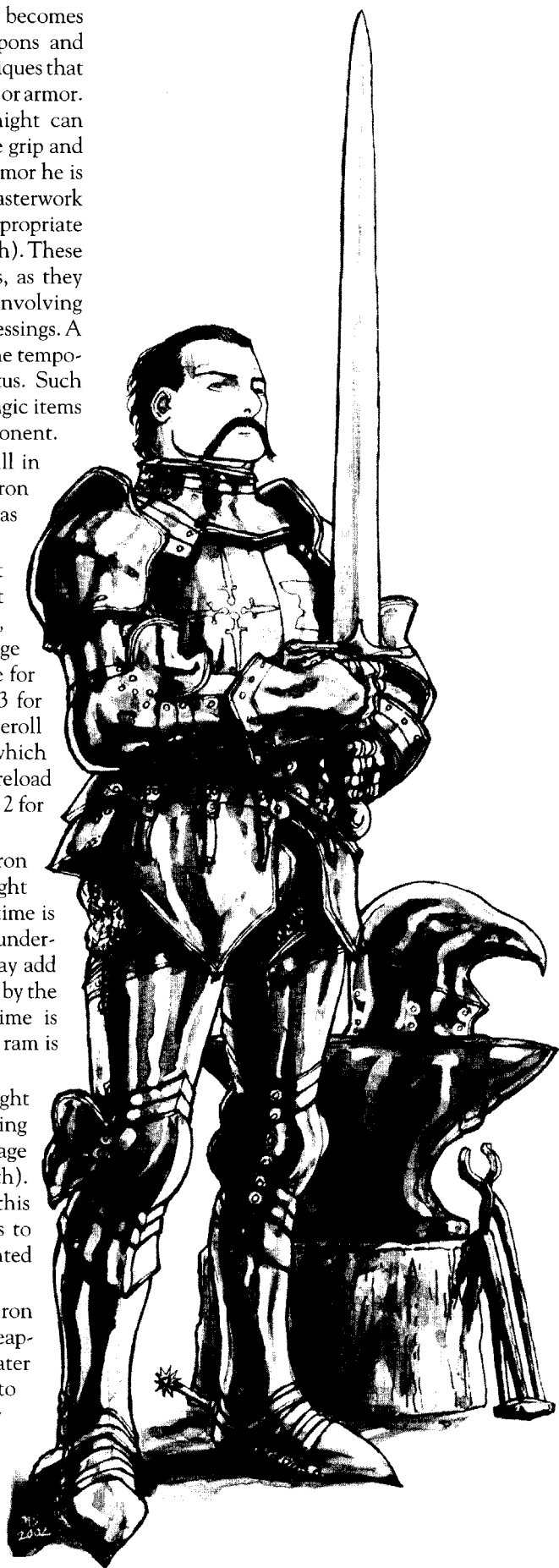
**Siege Mastery:** The Iron Knight's skill in the art of siege warfare is legendary. The Iron Knight's skill with siege weapons increases as follows:

**Catapults:** At 2nd level, the Iron Knight may reroll on the Deviation Diagram chart and choose which roll applies (see *DMG*, Chapter 5) on a successful Profession (siege engineer) roll; additionally the reload time for catapults is reduced (6 rounds for heavy, 3 for light). At 4th level, the Iron Knight can reroll twice (for a total of three rolls) and choose which roll he wants to apply. At 9th level, the reload time is reduced further (4 rounds for heavy, 2 for light).

**Ballista and Ram:** At 2nd level, the Iron Knight may add his class levels in Iron Knight to the attack roll; additionally, the reload time is reduced to 2 rounds (4 rounds if the ram is undermanned). At 4th level, the Iron Knight may add his Wisdom modifier to the damage inflicted by the siege engine. At 9th level, the reload time is reduced further to 1 round (2 rounds if the ram is undermanned).

**Killing Edge:** At 3rd level, the Iron Knight learns techniques of sharpening and blessing masterwork items, granting them +1 to damage rolls for one day/rank in Craft (weaponsmith). Like the masterwork bonus on attack rolls, this does not stack with enhancement bonuses to damage, making this ability useless on enchanted weapons.

**Vessel of Faith:** At 4th level, the Iron Knight learns to forge 1st-level spells into weapons and armor, preserving those spells for later use. He requires a blessed forge (see above) to use this ability. The Iron Knight may only imbue weapons and armor with spells that affect him or the item thus imbued (such as *magic weapon*) and only Iron Knights capable of using Vessel of Faith may call upon these stored spells. The XP cost for





this is the level of the spell x caster level x 40 XP. There is no monetary cost for this, but the items so forged must be non-magical masterwork items. Spells so stored may be called up by the wielder as a free action.

The level of spells that he may forge into his weapons and armor increases with level: The Iron Knight can forge 2nd-level spells into weapons and armor at 6th level, 3rd-level spells at 8th level and 4th-level spells at 10th level.

**Craft Magic Arms and Armor:** At 5th level, the Iron Knight gains the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat for free. Iron Knight levels stack with cleric and paladin levels for determining caster level for this feat; indeed, Iron Knights do not halve their paladin levels as normal for determining caster level for this feat (though they do if the character gains this feat before 5th level).

**Skill Focus:** At 6th level, the Iron Knight gains a bonus Skill Focus feat for Craft (armorsmith, siege weaponry or weaponsmith).

**Enchantment Mastery:** At 8th level, the Iron Knight's skill in enchanting magical arms and armor improves, reducing the XP and gp cost for magical arms and armor by 25%. Alternately, the Iron Knight may forgo this bonus in exchange for ignoring a single non-feat, non-alignment prerequisite for enchanting magical arms and armor. If this prerequisite is a spell, the Iron Knight's total caster levels must be equal to that normally necessary for casting that spell.

For instance, Khrellan of the Iron Blade (Pal6/Ikn8) wishes to enchant a blade with the *wounding* enhancement. This requires the *Mord's sword* spell, a Sor7/Wiz7 spell, requiring a caster of 13th level. Khrellan's total caster level is 14th level, however, so he uses his Enchantment Mastery to ignore this requirement, enchanting the item as normal. He cannot, however, create a *luck blade*, which requires a *wish* or *miracle*, requiring a 17th-level caster.

Table A-6: Iron Knight

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bless forge, forge of Corean (1st)	+1 level of existing class master craftsman
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Balancing the steel, siege mastery	+1 level of paladin class
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Forge of Corean (2nd), killing edge	+1 level of existing class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Siege mastery, vessel of faith (1st)	+1 level of paladin class
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Craft magic arms & armor, forge of Corean (3rd)	+1 level of existing class
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Skill focus (Craft), vessel of faith (2nd)	+1 level of paladin class
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Forge of Corean (4th)	+1 level of existing class
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Enchantment mastery, vessel of faith (3rd)	+1 level of paladin class
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Siege mastery	+1 level of existing class
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Vessel of faith (4th)	+1 level of paladin class

## Keeper of the Eternal Flame (KEF)

Born out of a conflict between the followers of Madriel and those of Corean in the wake of the Divine War, the order of the Eternal Flame was founded by the two deities themselves in order to symbolize the need for eternal friendship and cooperation among their followers. The ever-burning Eternal Flame itself today lies in the order's main temple in Bridged City. The flame has been carried to all corners of Ghelspad, and small shrines exist across the continent, each with its own keeper, who is dedicated to the fight against the titanspawn, to healing and succor for the weak, and to the pursuit of justice tempered with mercy.

When a worshipper of Madriel or Corean wishes to become a keeper, she must pray for guidance. If deemed worthy, she is given a vision that shows the location of a shrine of the Eternal Flame. She must then journey to the site, known as the Pilgrimage of Light, aiding all those in need whom she encounters. Upon reaching the shrine, she then maintains an all-night vigil, and with the first rays of dawn, places her hand into the flame. If the gods determine that she has done well on her quest, the flame does not burn, heals all damage that the seeker has taken and cures all diseases. The seeker is then allowed to join the ranks of the Keepers of the Eternal Flame. If not, she suffers minor burns, and must once more pray for guidance, and be sent to a different shrine.

**Hit Die:** d8

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Keeper of the Eternal Flame (Kef), a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

**Ability:** Must be able to turn undead.

**Alignment:** Any good.

**Deity:** Corean or Madriel.

**Skills:** Concentration 5 ranks, Heal 5 ranks, Knowledge (Religion) 8 ranks.

**Spellcasting:** Must be able to cast divine version of *resist elements*.

**Special:** Must make the Pilgrimage of Light (see below).

### Class Skills

The Keeper of the Eternal Flame's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ritual Casting (Con, exclusive skill), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Keeper of the Eternal Flame prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The Keeper of the Eternal Flame gains proficiency in all armor and shields, as well as the longspear and longsword, if she did not have them previously.

**Spell Advancement:** Each time the character gains a level in Keeper of the Eternal Flame, she gains addi-



tional spell slots and casting ability as if going up a level in her original class.

**Turn Undead:** The keeper can turn undead as if she were a cleric of equivalent level. This is in addition to any turn undead ability that the character had in her existing class. A 5th level cleric/3rd level Keeper, for example turns undead as an 8th level cleric, while a 7th level paladin/4th level Keeper turns undead at 9th level.

**Blessings of the Eternal Flame:** The power of the Eternal Flame grants several abilities to all keepers. Once per day, a keeper may touch any Eternal Flame and be healed of an amount of damage equal to  $d8 \times$  his Wisdom modifier.

In addition, at each odd level beginning at 1st, the Keeper may choose one of the following abilities (see Table A-7). Her Keeper level + Wisdom bonus determines the secrets she can choose – she may not choose a secret whose number is greater than the sum of her class level and Wisdom bonus. No blessing can be taken more than once. Note that only the character's base Wisdom bonus is used for determining blessings; bonuses gained from magic items and the like do not count towards this ability.

Table A-7: Blessings of the Eternal Flame

Level + Wis modifier	Blessing
1	Blessing of Light
2	Eyes of the Flame
3	Blessing of Flame, Blessing of Sun
4	Flow of Fire, Limning Flame
5	Greater Resistance
6	Burning Wrath, Greater Limnal
7	Holy Flame
8	Flames of Purity
9	Arcane Fire, Wrath of the Sun
10	Fire of the Will
11+	Spirit of Flame

**Healing Flame:** If fire is at hand, the Keeper is able to effectively Take 20 on Heal rolls. Doing so takes ten minus his Heal ranks in rounds, however.

**Inner Fire:** At 4th and 8th level, the Keeper's inner strength is emboldened by the Eternal Fire, granting him a +3 additional hit points (as though he had gained the Toughness feat).

**Sovereignty of the Flame:** This ability grants the Keeper a +2 sacred bonus to Will saves against mind-affecting spells.

**Pilgrimage of Fire:** At 10th level, the Keeper can create new Shrines of the Eternal Flame. To do so, the Keeper places his hand within an Eternal Fire (either at Bridged city or elsewhere) and absorbs some of its essence. While the Keeper maintains the Eternal Fire within him, one of his highest level spell slots is considered in use. The Eternal Fire can then be used to create another shrine. This shrine must be at an altar to Madriel or Corean that has had the *consecrate* spell cast on it. The Keeper then touches the altar and expends 500 XP. A portion of the Eternal Flame then begins to burn on the altar. The altar can then function as a shrine of the Eternal Flame in regard to pilgrimages, and is treated as if it had the spell *hallow* cast upon it. If an *unhallow* spell is successfully cast on the altar, it extinguishes the Eternal Fire but does not banish the *hallow* effect. The *unhallow* is destroyed in the process of extinguishing the Eternal Fire. A second *unhallow* spell must be cast in order to destroy the *hallow* effects.

Table A-8: Keeper of the Eternal Flame

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Blessings of the Eternal Flame	+1 spellcasting level
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Healing Flame	+1 spellcasting level
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Blessings of the Eternal Flame	+1 spellcasting level
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Inner Fire	+1 spellcasting level
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Blessings of the Eternal Flame	+1 spellcasting level
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Sovereignty of the Flame	+1 spellcasting level
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Blessings of the Eternal Flame	+1 spellcasting level
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Inner Fire	+1 spellcasting level
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Blessings of the Eternal Flame	+1 spellcasting level
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Pilgrimage of Fire	+1 spellcasting level

## Blessings of the Eternal Flame

- *Blessing of Light*: The Keeper is capable of casting *continual flame* as a spell-like ability once per day.
- *Eyes of the Flame*: The Keeper is capable of using *detect evil* at will as a spell-like ability.
- *Blessing of the Flame*: The Keeper gains access to the Fire domain (see *PHB*, Chapter 11). The character gains the special ability of the domain as normal, as well as the ability to prepare spells from it as domain spells. Keepers who cast spells as paladins gain the ability to prepare a single spell of each level from this domain list. This spell is still counted towards their daily total for a spell caster of their level.
  - *Blessing of Sun*: As *Blessing of the Flame*, but applies to the Sun domain.
  - *Flow of Fire*: The Keeper learns to cause fire to flow around her, allowing her to better avoid harm from it. The Keeper is assumed to have the Improved Evasion ability in regard to spells with the [fire] descriptor.
  - *Limning Flame*: The Keeper learns to channel the Eternal Flame into a weapon, granting it a +1 sacred bonus to hit. This can only be performed on a longsword or longspear. Using this ability requires the use of a single Turn Undead use and lasts for one round per Keeper class level. This bonus stacks with any existing magic bonus.
  - *Greater Resistance*: When the Keeper casts *resist elements* for fire, the duration of the spell is 24 hours.
  - *Burning Wrath*: By expending a Turn Undead use, the Keeper is able to sheathe either a longsword or longspear in flame, granting it +1d6 fire damage. This lasts for one round per Keeper class level.
  - *Greater Liminal*: As *Limning Flame*, but granting a +3 sacred bonus.
  - *Holy Flame*: Any spells cast by the Keeper with the [fire] descriptor are empowered with divine energy. Half of the damage inflicted by such spells is assumed to be divine power, allowing the caster to affect creatures resistant or immune to fire. Thus, a flame strike that inflicts 24 points of damage still inflicts 12 points on a fire elemental or red dragon. The caster must still overcome any spell resistance that the target has.
  - *Flames of Purity*: Once per day, the Keeper can cast any spell – even arcane ones, if she has that ability to do so – with the [fire] descriptor and imbue it with the healing properties of the Eternal Flame. Rather than inflicting damage, such spells heal a number of hit points equal to half the amount of damage they would normally inflict. The area of effect of these spells does not change, allowing the caster to affect multiple targets. Doing so expends one Turn Undead attempt.
  - *Arcane Fire*: The Keeper may choose a single arcane spell with the [fire] descriptor. He is then able to prepare that spell as a divine spell of the same level. The caster must choose a spell of a level that he is able to cast.
  - *Wrath of the Sun*: As *Burning Wrath*, but this ability also grants the weapon the *keen* and *flaming burst* enhancements (see *DMG*, Chapter 8). This requires the expenditure of two Turn Undead uses.
  - *Fire of the Will*: The Keeper is able to spontaneously cast spells from either the Fire or Sun domains (see *PHB*, Chapter 10). The domain must be selected upon choosing this blessing and cannot be changed once the choice has been made. This ability may be taken by paladins; additionally, it may be taken more than once in order to choose the other domain. Note that this power must be chosen for a domain that the caster actually possesses, requiring paladins to first choose the *Blessings of the Fire/Sun* power.
  - *Spirit of Flame*: The Keeper's type changes to 'Elemental (Fire)' (see *MM*, Introduction). He becomes immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and attacks that require that the target be living, such as critical hits and sneak attacks. He gains 60 ft. darkvision and immunity to fire damage. Only a *wish* or *miracle* can raise him from the dead if he is slain, however and he takes double damage from cold attacks as described in the *MM*.

## Knight of the Morning Sky (Kms)

The Order of the Morning Sky is known for its fanatical devotion to its dual causes of eradicating disease and contagion and destroying the undead, all in Madriel's name. The most dedicated of its members often become Knights of the Morning Sky, the very embodiment of the Order's ideals; it is also these folk who are responsible for the Order of the Morning Sky's reputation as a gathering of "chaotic paladins."

The Knights of the Morning Sky aren't necessarily the leaders of the Order. Rather, they are the champions that embody its goals in the most straightforward manner possible — direct action. Those who administer the Order are fairly unlikely to possess levels in this prestige class, save for the most basic of training. Only those who are out in the Scarred Lands fighting the good fight reach the highest levels of this class; only they are worthy of the highest of Madriel's blessings in this philosophy.

This prestige class is normally pursued mainly by clerics and fighters, though some particularly dedicated rangers, rogues, sorcerers and bards are known to have joined its ranks.

**Hit Die:** d10

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Knight of the Morning Sky, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Neutral Good or Chaotic Good

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Deity:** Madriel

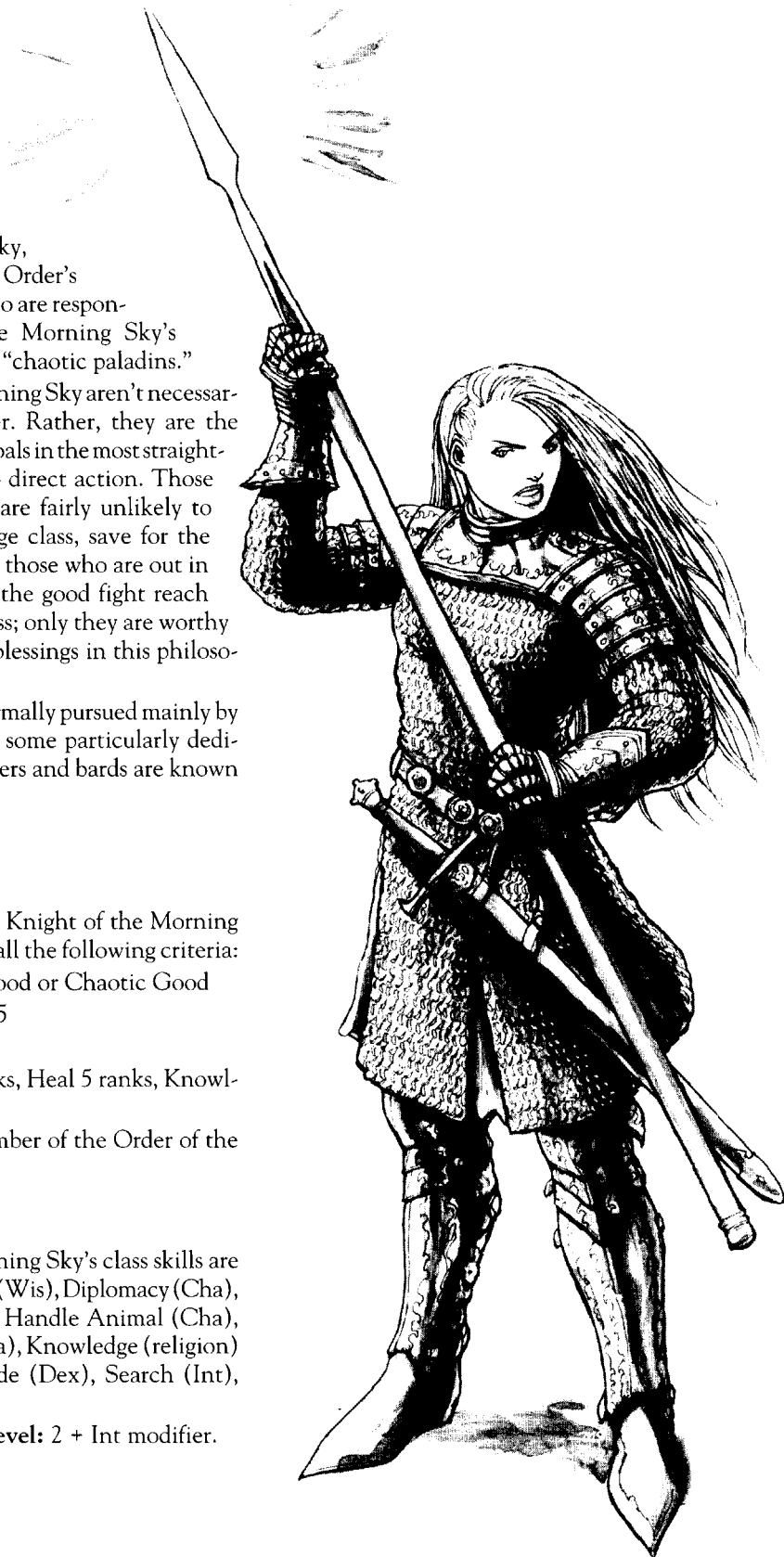
**Skill:** Diplomacy 3 ranks, Heal 5 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks

**Special:** Must be a member of the Order of the Morning Sky.

### Class Skills

The Knight of the Morning Sky's class skills are Concentration (Con), Craft (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.



## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Knight of the Morning Sky prestige class:

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Knights of the Morning Sky are proficient with simple and martial weapons and all types of armors (heavy, medium and light) and with shields. Note that armor-check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armor and equipment carried.

**Spells:** A Knight of the Morning Sky has the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the Knight of the Morning Sky must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a Knight of the Morning Sky with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Knight of the Morning Sky bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the Knight of the Morning Sky's Wisdom modifier.

When the Knight of the Morning Sky gets 0 spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, he gets only bonus spells. A Knight of the Morning Sky without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. The Knight of the Morning Sky's spell list appears below. A knight has access to any spell on the list and can freely choose which to prepare, just like a cleric. A Morning-Sky Knight prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does, though the knight cannot spontaneously cast *cure* or *inflict* spells.

**Divine Health:** A Knight of the Morning Sky is immune to all diseases, including magical diseases.

**Lay on Hands:** Each day a Knight of the Morning Sky can cure a total number of hit points equal to the Knight's Charisma bonus (if any) times his level. The Knight of the Morning Sky may use this ability to cure herself, or choose to divide her curing among multiple recipients. She doesn't have to use it all at once. Lay on Hands is a spell-like ability whose use is a standard action.

**Turn Undead:** A Knight of the Morning Sky has the supernatural ability to Turn Undead. A knight may attempt to *turn* or *rebuke undead* a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier. The Knight of the Morning Sky Turns Undead as a cleric of his level.

**Redeemer's Blessings:** Any time a Knight of the Morning Sky invokes the aid of Madriel (see *The Divine & the Defeated*, pg. 34), he gains a +1 additional bonus to the bonus granted, whether to increase his save against negative energy attacks or to increase the amount of healing he grants. The maximum bonus is +4, gained through three full rounds of invocation.

**Extra Turning:** A Knight of the Morning Sky may take the Extra Turning Feat. This feat allows the knight to Turn Undead four more times per day than normal. A Knight of the Morning Sky can take this feat multiple times, gaining four extra daily turning attempts each time.

**Great Fortitude:** At 2nd level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the Great Fortitude feat free.

**Remove Disease:** Beginning at 2nd level, a Knight of the Morning Sky can Remove Disease, as per the spell *remove disease*, once per week. Remove Disease is a spell-like ability for Knights of the Morning Sky. As she advances in level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains additional uses of this ability per week (twice per week at 4th, three times per week at 6th, four times per week at 8th and five times per week at 10th).

**Smite Undead:** At 3rd level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the ability to Smite Undead with one normal melee attack. She adds her Charisma modifier (if positive) to her attack roll and deals 1 extra point of damage per class level. This attack only works on undead creatures; it has no effect on other kinds of creatures. Smite Undead is a supernatural ability, and may be used a number of times per day equal to 1 + the Knight's Charisma modifier (if positive).

**Spontaneous Curing:** At 4th level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the ability to channel stored spell energy into healing spells not prepared ahead of time. The Knight of the Morning Sky can expend a spell and instead cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

**Greater Turning:** At 5th level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the Greater Turning ability, which acts as the granted power of the Sun Domain in all ways (see PHB, Chapter 11). All uses of the Greater Turning ability are accompanied by a momentary display of white light, similar to a solar flare.

**Weapon of the Sun:** At 7th level, the Knight of the Morning Sky may use one of his Smite Undead uses per day to enchant his weapon with white-hot holy power. When striking undead with a weapon so enchanted, the Knight of the Morning Sky inflicts +2d6 holy damage to the creature for that strike only. This is a supernatural ability.

**Circle of Sunlight:** At 9th level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the ability to fill a 20-foot radius, centered on the knight, with white light, which is treated as sunlight in regard to effects upon undead. Additionally, this circle of light is treated as the spell *healing circle* for everyone (including the undead) within it. This circle of light is treated as a *magic circle against evil*, as well. This healing and damaging effect fades after the first round, though the light and warding effects remain for another four rounds. This is a spell-like ability usable once per day.



**Redeemer's Avatar:** At 10th level, the Knight of the Morning Sky gains the ability to cast the spell *avatar* (see *Relics & Rituals*, pg. 50). This is a spell-like ability usable once per week.

## Knight of the Morning Sky's Spell List

Knights of the Morning Sky choose their spells from the following list:

**1st level** — *bless*, *bless water*, *cure light wounds*, *detect undead*, *endure elements*, *ephod of melee*, *light*, *Madriel's empathic resonance\**, *magic weapon*

**2nd level** — *consecrate*, *cure moderate wounds*, *endurance*, *heat metal*, *lesser restoration*, *resist elements*, *shield other*

**3rd level** — *banish shadow\**, *continual flame*, *cure serious wounds*, *daylight*, *invigorate dead\**, *negative energy protection*, *remove disease*, *sunspear\**

**4th level** — *cure critical wounds*, *cloak of righteousness\**, *holy channel\**, *holy sword\**, *purifying flames\**, *restoration*, *searing light*, *soul of mercy*

\* See *Relics & Rituals*

Table A-9: Knight of the Morning Sky

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day			
						1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Divine health, lay on hands, Redeemer's blessings, turn undead	0	-	-	-
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Great fortitude, remove disease	1	-	-	-
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Smite undead	1	0	-	-
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Remove disease 2/week, spontaneous curing	1	1	-	-
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Greater turning	1	1	0	-
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	Remove disease 3/week	1	1	1	-
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Weapon of the Sun	2	1	1	0
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Remove disease 4/week	2	1	1	1
9th	+9	+6	+2	+6	Circle of sunlight	2	2	1	1
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Redeemer's avatar, remove disease 5/week	2	2	2	1

## Renewer (Rnw) Class Skills

The titanswar permanently altered the face of Scarn, warping and corrupting both the land and the animals. After the war ended and the once fertile land of Scarn had become the broken and wasted Scarred Lands, a sect of druids known as the Renewers dedicated themselves to restoring their master, Denev, and the bounty the land once knew. The only way, they say, to restore Denev to wakefulness and vitality is to restore the land that provides her power. Considered somewhat radical by other druids, the Renewers of Denev have committed themselves to fighting against both the remaining titanspawn that plague the Scarred Lands and the mutated natural creatures that are the legacy of the titanswar. Once this corruption of nature has been eliminated, the Renewers believe Denev will awaken to restore the world to its former glory.

The Renewers are known for carrying *hornsaw blades*, the horns of the vicious hornsaw unicorns that they slay as a rite of passage. Operating primarily out of the Hornsaw Forest, the Renewers are respected in local communities for the aid they grant in pushing back titanspawn and eliminating monstrous abominations. Other communities are distrustful of the fanaticism and intolerance the Renewers show towards titanspawn, fearful that such conduct will bring the Titan's wrath upon their villages. Finally, Renewers have been known to wander the breadth of Ghelspad, bringing life to areas desolated by the Divine War. It is during these forays that the Renewers most often recruit prospective members and spread their message of hope for the Scarred Lands.

Rangers and druids most often become Renewers, although the sect will admit any who are able to fulfill their entrance requirements and show a propensity for destroying titanspawn. Druids and rangers taking this class will focus their combat abilities upon the destruction of titanspawn while continuing to hone their magical capabilities.

**Hit Die:** d8

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Renewer, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any Good

**Base Attack:** +5

**Faith:** Denev

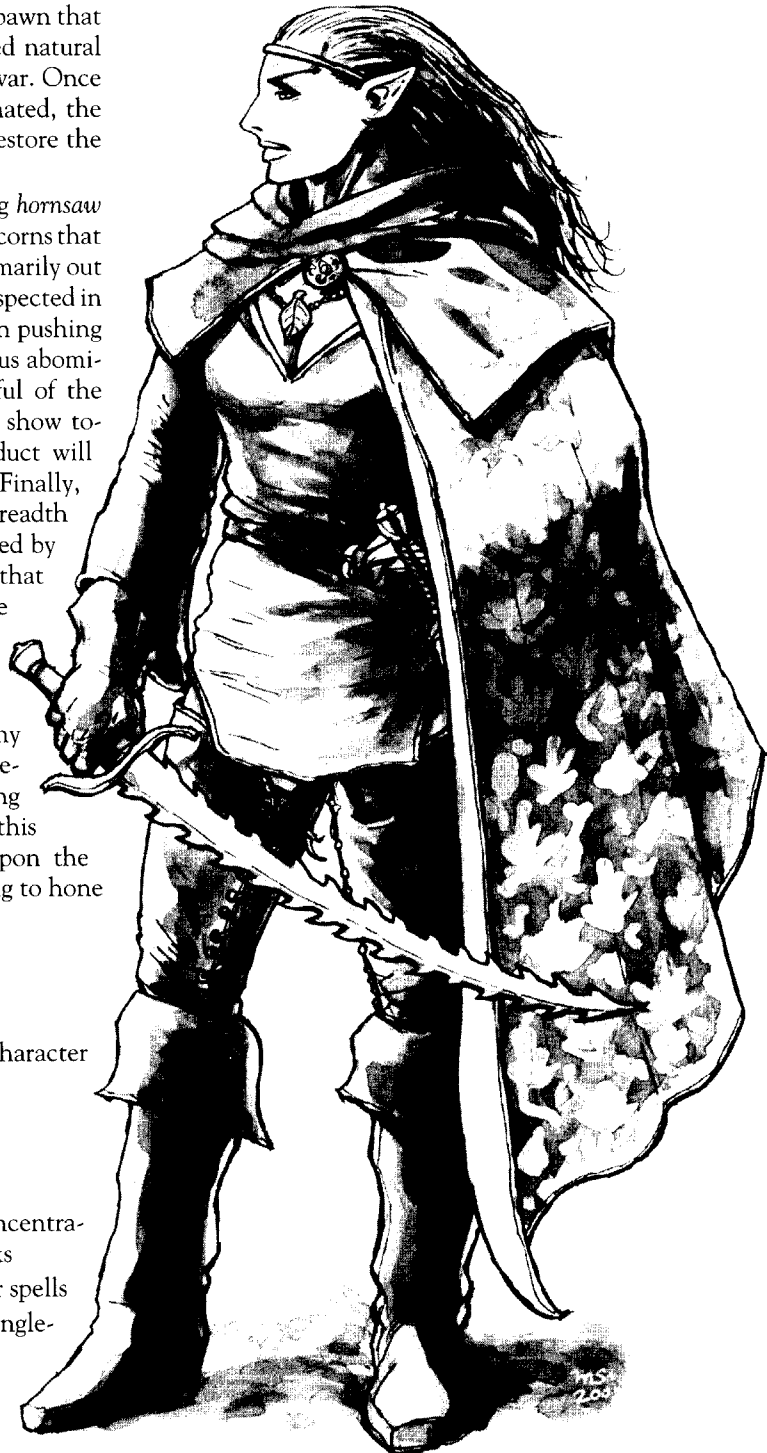
**Skills:** Wilderness Lore 10 ranks, Concentration 10 ranks, Knowledge (Nature) 5 ranks

**Spellcasting:** 1st-level druid or ranger spells

**Special:** Must slay a hornsaw unicorn single-handedly.

The Renewer's class skills (and the key ability associated with each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (Nature) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Scry (Int), Spellcraft (Int), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

**Skill points at each level:** 4 + Int modifier



## Class Features

All of the following are features of the Renewer prestige class:

**Weapons and Armor:** A Renewer gains no additional proficiencies over and above those of her original class. Upon joining the ranks of the Renewers, however, the character may be gifted with a *hornsaw blade*, a magical scimitar and symbol of the Renewers.

**Spells per Day:** A Renewer continues training in magic as she advances. At each indicated level, the Renewer gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class she belonged to before advancing as a Renewer (either druid or ranger). If the Renewer had both druid and ranger levels, she must choose to add her Renewer spellcasting levels to one of those classes, and may not later alter this choice.

**Verdant Restoration (Su):** The Renewer may sacrifice two points of temporary Constitution at will to cast the *plant growth* spell. This requires a standard action.

**Favored Enemy (Ex):** Denev grants her avengers a great understanding of her enemies' natures and weaknesses. At 2nd level, the Renewer may choose a favored enemy in the same fashion as a ranger (see PHB, Chapter 3). At 6th level and again at 10th level, the Renewer may choose an additional favored enemy. She gains a +1 bonus versus the new type of favored enemy and previous bonuses increase by +1.

**Call Upon Nature (Ex):** At 3rd level the Renewer is able to call upon the power of the land to imbue himself with a dedicated fury once per day. While in this rage, the Renewer's martial abilities increase dramatically, granting him a +2 bonus to his Strength and Constitution scores. In addition, the saving throw DC for all the Renewer's spells increases by +2 while in the rage. The rage lasts for 3 + Cha modifier rounds, and may be invoked as a free action. After the rage ends, the Renewer has temporarily

exhausted his tie to the land, becoming unable to cast spells for one full day.

**Smite Foe(Su):** At 4th level, a Renewer may attempt to smite a favored enemy with one normal melee attack once per day. This smiting ability affects any pre-existing favored enemy. The Renewer adds her Charisma modifier (if positive) to her attack roll, and deals one extra point of damage per class level.

**Nature's Favor (Ex):** Starting at 5th level, the Renewer may apply her Charisma modifier as a bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of her favored enemies.

**Restore the Land:** Beginning at 7th level, the Renewer is able to participate in the *restore the land* druidic true ritual (see *Relics and Rituals*, pg. 141) as a caster, even if she is not normally able to cast the spell. She must still sacrifice the requisite amount of experience points.

**Craft Nature Magic:** At 8th level, the Renewer gains the ability to craft magical items relating to nature without further need for other creation feats. This includes items such as the *hornsaw blade*, *stormseeker*, *sylvan scimitar*, *ring of animal friendship*, *staff of woodlands*, and *druid's vestments*. Other items may be allowed at the GM's discretion. The character must still meet the caster level and requisite spells in order to craft such items.

**Warrior of Nature (Su):** At 9th level, the Renewer is able to further focus his ability to draw upon the power of the land. When the Renewer chooses to rage as per call upon nature, her Strength and Constitution scores increase by +4 each. In addition, all spells cast by the Renewer are treated as if her caster level were one level higher. At the end of the rage, the Renewer's tie to the land is not as severely disrupted. She is able to cast spells, but for the next day, her caster level is treated as two levels lower and every spell has a -2 penalty to its saving throw DC.

Table A-10: The Renewer

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Verdant restoration	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Nature's vengeance, favored enemy	
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Call upon nature	+1 level of existing class
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Smite Abomination	
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Nature's favor	+1 level of existing class
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Nature's vengeance, favored enemy	
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Restore the land	+1 level of existing class
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Craft nature magic	
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Warrior of nature	+1 level of existing class
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Nature's vengeance, favored enemy	



BLOSSOMING SEA

THE DEVILING ICE

HIGH SNOWS

URIA

DARAK

KARRIA

ABADIA

BILAAGWYNDEL

UBLEK

STORMHOLD

DRIFTING ISLE

DARAKEENE

PERFORATED PLAINS

FOULED FOREST

STRICKEN FOREST

DUNAHNAE

UKRUDAN DESERT

INFERNO GULF

DEVIL'S MARCH

FESTERING FIELDS

SWELTERING PLAINS

SWAMPS OF KAN THET

LIAR'S SOUND

BLOSSOMING SEA

DISTANCE SCALE IN MILES







STIFFENED SEA

PLAINS OF THE PROUD

PLAINS OF LEDE

BLEAK SAVANNAH

ORC TRIBE  
VANCA/RAK  
NORTHERN  
PASS/DEEP

RAK COAST

THALIEN

BRIDGED CITY

MITHRIL

ROH ANNON

THE MAHAR  
CHENDERO RIVER

SKY KEEP  
RUINS

BLOOD SPINE

BENEVI  
TRIANGLE

ALGOS

EVRI

TOE ISLANDS

THE IMAG

KELDGR  
MOUNTAINS

BLOOD SPIRE  
SCORCHED ROCK

SERPENTINE  
PASS

CORRADA  
CORRIDOR

MORI

CANJUS

VEESH

HORNWAYTHE RIVER

SHEER  
FALLS

CELESTIAL  
SHELF

HEALING  
CIRCLE

CANYON  
OF SOULS

LAVE

LAKE REPOSE

CONFENCE  
CLIFF

ANGARD HILLS

FEATHERWEB  
BRIDGE

MOUNTAIN  
PASS

PLAGUE  
RIVER

HEDRAD

CLIFFS OF  
CONFRATRY

BLOOD STEPPES

ADURN'S  
TEAR

SUROK  
TORN

CORCAN'S  
CRAG

NEW VENIR

IRONTOOTH  
PASS

ROCKVALE

DURLOVE

BLOOD  
SEA

GORCAN'S  
CLEFT

CELESTA'S  
GROVE

LAGENI

KELDERMOUNTAINS

ASHEN LEGION CAMP

ASHEN HORNS

MERIAN

QADRI

ON RIVER

DURM

ARACH'S REST

TRENK

BARDALE

FORT ANMIL

ANGEL'S  
GATE

ENIG

AGVNIR  
OUTPOST

EIRA

CALASTIA

PAHRAE

VASHON

LAKE VASHON

DELIS

ELDMADREN

HEDRONIK

ARDENA

WHILE

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ANKILA

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# SCARRED LANDS

CAMPAIGN SETTING

# GHELSPAD™

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