

The Gazetteer of Lingusia

Note: This gazetteer is, of course, hardly complete, and some of the regions below have a great deal more about which can be or has been written, but they shall receive full treatment in their own chapters in due time. For now, this will provide an adequate introduction to the many splendored lands of Lingusia and the unique places to go to.

Some entries include kingdom profile information and others do not. Generally, in those areas for which such information has either not been authenticated, is suspect, or cannot be readily verified by appropriate scholars and explorers, it shall be left out.

Autrengard

Frigid land of dour northern jarldoms

Population: **1.2 million**

Government: regional fiefdoms ruled by jarls

Capital: No unifying capitol, though Minathor has been a seat of power at times in the past.

Rulers: the greatest ruler is Drosos Ul'Drom of Minathor. The jarl Grohan Vor of Urstad is prominent, as is jarl Meridas Tadaman of Shargarad.

Religions: The northron pantheon. Hargameth is revered above all others, followed by Phonatas, Wishupar, and Ashturak.

Language: The Northron Tongue

Social Titles: outcast, thrall, commoner, professional tradesman, warrior, skald, landowner, merchant, lesser jarl, common jarl, greater jarl.

Allies: The Autrengardians are hardly unified among themselves, but they do trade with the Zarnians when they aren't at war with them, as well as the Nak'ivk and the Steppelanders. The Autrengardians claim to have trade routes to fabled Il'Madhar, but they do not share these routes with outsiders.

Enemies: Almost all border kingdoms are at war sooner or later with Autrengard. They are very hostile to the Middle Kingdoms at large, and are always at war with the Vyrkashans in the untamed Northern Wilderness.

Background

The ancient settlers of Autrengard are said in tales to have been the most dour and unpleasant of all men. They were once of a distant southern tribe, which

was so warlike and unruly, that they driven from the home of man in a particularly fearsome war, exiled from the Middle Kingdoms for all time. The tribes wandered north, and some found the mountainous wilderlands of the Nordaman Coast to their liking, founding the lands that would one day be called Yllmar, Hettanar, and Zarn. The most die-hard tribesmen were unsatisfied with these lands, and did not stop until they looked upon the harshest, most frigid realm of the north, where they were at last content. Thus the tales of the jarls of Autrengard claim that the people of this land were content only with a life of perpetual hardship.

The lands of Autrengard have, indeed, been settled for many millennia now, but the people of the land are so remotely connected to their southern cousins that very little remains in terms of cultural similarity.

Life In Autrengard

The northlanders of Autrengard are Nordic in appearance, burly, hairy men and robust women of fair complexion with blonde and red hair being most common.

The northern style of dress is warm. They go for heavy furs, hides, and plenty of insulation to keep the cold out. The Autrengardians are also very practical, and even the nobility tends to favor more useful garb or decorative. Colors seem to be in absence among the Autrengardian lifestyle; everything is grey, brown, dark. Only the furs themselves tend to have a little color in them, assuming the animal in question had a colorful pelt.

The Autrengardians live in stone and wood houses which are built on solid earthen foundations. These long houses have been common practice for ages, and only the most prestigious of domiciles in major cities along the coast have any serious stone fortifications. The Autrengardians favor a straight-up fight over siege defense; they don't like to hide behind walls.

Major Geography

The Baldaric Sea: The northern sea which provides the principle source of trade, commerce, and war for the Northron Kingdoms. The Baldaric is a frigid body of water in the northern regions, and during the winter periods it's northern tracks stretching deep inland freeze over and remain such until spring thaw, at which time the great chunks of melting icer break up and create a whole new set of obstacles and dangers for seafarers.

The Untamed Tracks: A great expanse of largely uninhabited wilderness, the Tracks are the site of many small jarldoms and communities, as well as of the wildermen called the **Uriks**. The Uriks are a harsh culture of barbarians who live like beasts, engage in cannibalism, and fight both the Autregardian towns of the north and the Vyrkasha beastmen of the south. They are said to worship the spirits and recognize no god.

Ethak Mountains: The northern mountains provide a great barrier between northern and southern lands for trade and war. The Ethaks are riddled with mountainous species, especially the giant kin, who often engage in war with the distant dragon lands further north as well as the Steppelanders.

Aelen Pass: This is the safest pass through the western Ethaks. The city of Drakal acts as a lone defense of the pass, and is the only overland city along the northern trade route.

The White Plains: The enigmatic Nak'Ivk have their southernmost tribes in this great wintery tract, which is frozen year round, endless tundra land walled in by the frozen Ethak Mountains. The Nak'Ivk are a mongoloid people who are extremely reclusive and do not like to interact with outsiders. They have a complicated hierarchy of spirits that they worship, and seem to revere a version of the god Trimelin, as well.

Important Sites

Minathor: The largest city of Autregard, ruled by the great jarl Drosos Ul'Drom, a warrior without peer who rules most of the coastal land along the Baldaric Sea. Minathor is one of the few Autregardian cities to contain great stonework battlements, but visitors of some knowledge have observed that the oldest foundations of the venerable city show an unknown architecture of some forgotten culture, which was probably destroyed by the first Autregardians to arrive.

Urstad: The coastal city off of the fabled Northern Ocean is ruled by the great jarl Grohan Vor. Vor is a brutal and efficient leader, who's rulership is feared by all but contested by none, lest he impale you on his stockade battlements overlooking the sea. The city of Urstad is known for its sea raiders and merchants, and when the raiders are not plying their trade up and down the Endless Coast, the merchants of Urstad are welcomed for their rare and valuable metalwork, hides, and art. Urstad is also known for its direct trade with fabled Il'Madhar.

Kalazar: The northernmost city of the jarls, ruled by Kozos Drumon, a dour and classic Autregardian as any, but one who dislikes war and sees himself as the peacekeeper of the north. Kalazar is a major source

of trade with the enigmatic Nak'Ivk, as well as a principle source of whale meat and blubber.

Shargarad: Ruled by Meridas Tarmadan, the most powerful of warrior queens among the jarls. She founded her little kingdom after slaying the former jarl, who would have taken her as his bride after she was seized in a raid on the city of Artaeus where her family was slain in battle Meridas rose up, supported by a strong following of the cult of Phonatas, who saw her as divinely appointed, and she has kept her rule ever since.

Drakal: This is the northernmost overland trade city, ruled by the lesser jarl Homgrun Urthk, a disciplined warrior and scholar who is at once ruthless and protective with his people. Urthk is said to worship strange gods of which only ancient tablets left over in the ruins of the pre-Autregardian city which Drakal was built atop speak of. He permits a certain amount of trade with the remote Sylveinurien elves of Eilen in the Ethak Mountains, and his military tactics for dealing with the hostile giants of the mountains are legendary.

Eilen: A remote elvish colony of northern Sylveinurien elves, sometimes called the Authreinuriens (or Elves of the North). The community of Eilen is nestled in a sylvan valley within the Ethaks that is well-protected from the hostile environment of the lands around it. The queen of the Authreinuriens is a gentle elvish woman named Aelyth Mithyr, a priestess of Phonatas.

Avilin

Wilderlands of forgotten sorcerer kings

Population: 1 million

Government: a mix of city states, ruled by warlords and magiocracts.

Capitol: The spiritual capitol is Foreven.

Rulers: Foreven is ruled today by Queen Riethe Amanielle and the immortal sorceress Zyida.

Religions: A mix of belief: The Eight Immortals of Takkai in Kozaka, the Cult of the Seraphim in Foreven, Poltrieti worship in Koetralli, and Kathack in the Scabren Lands.

Language: Avilinian (a strange Esperanto dialect, with strong Northron Tongue ties), Thaygiri (the ancient dialect of sorcerers), Kozakani

Social Titles: variable, but most commonly; slave, serf, commoner, wealthy commoner, knight, baron, lord, highlord, king, sorcerer king.

Allies: The Zymhar are regular trade partners, as are the Khozakani and distant Zued.

Enemies: Starthias has always been opposed to Avilin and engages in regular sea battle; Tai'Kong has mandated that Avilin is an enemy, harboring the

renegade families of the Yi'Chang political prisoners as it did.

Background

Avilin is a region stretching across more than fifteen hundred miles of of largely untamed northern land. Located on a sub-continental region along the northern shores of the Salien Sea, the first men of Avilin settled here five thousand years ago, as part of the Thaygiran civilization that sprang up during a very early period of cultural migration in Linguisia. From the Thaygiran civilization arose a magiocacy of scholars, a society dedicated to esoteric studies in arcane and the divine. This culture, though ready to defend itself from foreign incursion, was more skilled in disguising its presence from those who would seek to pass through their lands.

The Thaygiran Empire was strong in its early years, as it developed powerful magical teachings in elemental and planar lore. About three millennia ago, a great conflict described as the Elemental Wars occurred, and the land was blasted by the magic of its sorcerer kings in terrible conflict. The Thaygiri suffered, and the empire crumbled.

Over the millennia, the Thaygiran city states grew progressively more decadent and insular, and its people grew scarce, for too many of the Thaygiri were addicted to their planar studies and arcane experiments, lost to the daily affairs of their own land. Eventually, they suffered a devastating blow when a great horde of barbarian Steppelander plundered the region, and slaughtered most of the thaygiri. The Steppelander, oddly, did not stay, driven back to their wintry plains by unknown fears of the haunted Thaygiri lands they had wronged.

For centuries, a handful of men, some descended from Thaygiran blood, continued to dwell in the remote vastness of Avilin. At last, about a thousand years ago, new colonists began to arrive.

Avilin is now marked by a diverse cultural assemblage, brought forth by the migratory descendants of several migrant groups which all arrived in the region over the last millennia. Over the course of these various migrant incursions, the land has taken on a distinct flavor and look that is unique to the region, as eastern and southern cultural groups mix with the original northern colonists.

The first migration was brought about by Zarnian and Caelernin tribes which were driven from their native lands in a period of great war. They arrive about a thousand years ago, and for a century they built their towns and communities in a rough, unexploited land, safe from the war of their own native soil.

About one hundred and fifty years later, colonists from the Middle Kingdoms arrived, led by the queen

Therenile, a Hyrkanian woman who was exiled from her native land for heretical practices in the name of the esoteric pantheon of the Seraphim. She was followed by an elvish paramour and his kin, who founded the elvish communities of the Koetralli Forest.

Therenile and her kind occupied the ruins of ancient Foreven, with the blessing of its last living Thaygiri inhabitant, the ancient sorceress Zyida. A new era for Avilin had begun, and the name of Avilin was coined to describe this land at that time.

Over the centuries, the other lost cities of the old Thaygiran kingdoms were reoccupied by various settlers, and about six centuries ago, an eastern incursion of invaders led to the founding the coastal city states of Kozaka.

Today, Avilin is a mixture of city states, some ruled by Thaygiri descendants, others by the blooded colonists who inhabited the lands they fought so hard to attain. Avilin has no common unity, but most people look at Foreven as the figurative center of the kingdom, it's heart, if you will.

Major Geography

Koetralli Forest: vast tracks of forestland which hold the kingdom of the enigmatic Koetralthian elves. The Koetralthians are a subtle but important presence in the age-old politics of the land, and are said to have migrated here from their elvish homelands in the Middle Kingdoms about nine elvish generations ago (approximately 9 centuries). In the founding tales of their kingdom, it is said that the first king of the Koetralli was named Eridas Sylvinaris, and that he was smitten with the human queen Therenile who founded the first city of Foreven. He followed her, and with him came many kinsmen to explore the new land. Eirdas is said to yet live, but in a hidden enclave of worship for the forest god Poltrietie.

Fragghulen Mountains: Within these great rocky mountains are the hidden kingdoms of the northern dwarves, who are said to have dwelt inside their subterranean lands for as long as time. The Fragghulen dwarves (called the Fraghendur) are of iron dwarven stock, and are locked in a permanent regular war with the giants of the mountain peaks, most of whom are migrant tribes coming from the westerk Ethaks and Dragonmounts. Many other subterranean species are to be found in the Fragghulens Mountains as well, especially kobolds, goblins, troglodytes, and orcs.

Shanghir: Dominated by the Shanghir Horselords, a cultural branch of the great Takkain horseclans, the Shanghir plains are ruled by the so-called horselords. The Takkain clans arrived about four centuries ago, during the last great conflict and migration of their

people to struggle westward, and their hordes fell upon the battlements of Avilian defenses until they were at last shattered. Those who remained behind founded the new clans of the Shanghir Plains. Their current ruler is the **Khan Grhatos**.

Palladorn: Known throughout Avilin as the Swordmasters, the people of Palladorn claim to have been descended of the very first colonists to come here a thousand years ago, men who were of mixed blood from Zarnian and Caelernin lands, driven from their native kingdoms by warfare and civil strife. The Palladorni are very mercenary, warriors and merchants who will sell their services and wares to the highest bidder. Among the city states of Avilin, they are prized for their mercenary nature.

The Scabren Lands: The predatory, insectoid Scabren are rulers of this region. The Scabren seem to group themselves in ant-like colonies surrounding hereditary kings and queens which are distinctly more monstrous than their thralls. But for the constant warfare they engage among themselves, the city states would be in dire danger of the Scabren hordes. There is a legend among the Scabren that one day a Great Queen of their kind will be born, one whose will is so great she will unite all of the colonies into one nation and rise up to destroy the humans, whom the Scabren describe as "foodbeasts." Needless to say, Scabren are one of the few threats that instantly unite all of the diverse people of Avilin into a united force.

Kozaka: The men of Kozaka first came to the eastern shores of Avilin in a failed invasion about six centuries ago from the Khozakani kingdom of Takkai. The warlord of the time, Jun Hayako, was slain in his attempted invasion, and the armies were defeated. The Avilian king at the time, Carto Vasper, offered amnesty to the Khokani survivors, who had already been entrenched for years, and whose ships had been burned in battle. In exchange, they swore allegiance to the Avilian king and eventually took Avilian brides.

About four centuries ago, the Kozaka people rebelled in a civil war brought on by the warlord Nogura, who sought to reclaim his people's heritage. His rebellion succeeded, and the people ruled under him for a generation.

About three centuries ago, political refugees from distant Tai'Kong, called he Yi'Chang, arrived at Kozaka and petitioned the land for sanctuary from the wars of persecution in their own empire. This brought an influx of Tai'Kongese into the land, bringing with them the teachings of the Eight Immortals.

The end result is a unique mix of Takkain and Lingusian cultures, a blend which has persevered for six centuries now. The cities of Kozaka have been at

times under the rule of Avilian kings, but presently are under no single rulership, instead divided up amongst a variety of warlords, all seeking to bring their land under one rule.

Important Sites

Blackwell: In the Burning Wastes, Blackwell exists as one of the only safe passages through this region said to be a relic of the Elemental Wars. Blackwell is a strange city state, and has the most traffic of merchants and cultural exchange of the Avilian cities.

Blackwell is also home to an ancient Thaygiri sorcerer-king, who dwells in a five-hundred foot tall obsidian tower about five miles south of the Great Oasis. There, the self-proclaimed god-mage **Tabirius the Contemplator** engages in arcane research of the planes, rarely dabbling in the affairs of men save when he needs something of importance. Blackwell's king, **Koldar Makvaris**, fears Tabirius, for he has been in the tower and knows what horrors it contains.

Foreven: Westernmost of the ancient Avilian cities, Foreven has a strong presence of migratory Shanaghir horselords, who set up temporary camp outside the city wall during the summer months. The city itself is a great center of trade and barter for the western lands of Avilin.

Nestled in the center of Foreven is a squat but immense pyramid, around which is an ancient, cultivated garden of eden. It is here which the immortal sorceress **Zyida** dwells. At the eastern base of her pyramid is the great palace of Foreven, where **Queen Riethe Amanielle** dwells.

Foreven is nestled along the edge of the Anklian Mountains a small but rocky range which is rife with mines of metal and gold. Nestled at the height of the tallest Anklian peak is the citadel of the god-mage Shandhirn, Imparter of Wisdom, a great immortal Thaygiran prophet. Said by some to be the one who has seen all history and time pass in the lands of Avilin, he is known to answer important questions for a price. Some daring souls who entered his domain have noted a large volume of writing which was identified as being in the ancient Prehunate script by the legendary antiquarian Lord Chalidane of Midas.

Donikkar: Called the City of a Thousand Demons, Donikkar is located in the northern periphery of a region called the Beastlands, Donikkar is a city of chaos and sin, where no pious soul of goodness sets foot. Once a bastion of Chaos, Donikkar was hardly slowed by the Great Reckoning, and indeed, it seems as if the esoteric chaos cults of this land are unimpeded, as they seem to be as strong as ever in the City of A Thousand Demons.

At the center of the city lies the eight-sided tower of the immortal god-mage **Spikratus The Insane**, a

terrible Thaygiri immortal who is said to be the source of chaos and corruption both in Donikkar and the Beastlands.

Shazalin: This cold northern city is isolated by its location from the rest of the land. Said to have been built and then abandoned by the Thaygirians after the Elemental War, Shazalin has become the home to northern colonists, outcasts, and those seeking hardship in the extreme north.

Though none in the city communicate with the god-mage of the glacier, about ten leagues from the city dwells **Bastapar the Artificer**, a Thaygiri sorcerer locked in a great, ancient glacier which has formed over and around his ancient fortress. Within this glacial expanse is said to be buried the most ancient and immense city of all, built by the Thaygirians to be a great capitol of their empire, and destroyed by the Elemental Wars. Shazalin is said to be but the tip of it.

Balladrast: This city state is ruled by a council of local land owning nobles, most of whom claim territory along the Greylor Mountains. The population of Balladrast is mixed, containing descendants from all of the various cultures which came to dwell in the lands of Avilin.

Bellspont: The people of Bellspont are a mystery which no historical documentation can solve. They appear Takkain, perhaps even of mongoloid descent from the Horsetribes or the Shanghir, but they are culturally advanced and dedicated to a civilization which seeks to restore the glory of the ancient Thaygiri Empire. The city itself has a Great Library, in which a great repository of ancient Thaygiri lore can be found, and the city itself is built upon the ruins of an even older Thaygiri ruin, though no immortal dwells nearby. Bellspont emulates the old empire, by maintaining a magiocracy and respecting the practitioners of arcane arts first and foremost. Those who cannot practice magic are relegated to rolls as workers and warriors, never to climb in social rank.

Belladas

The Great Jungle Kingdom of Amech

Population: 6 million

Government: feudal chiefdom with a high king.

Capital: The Capitol is Kichattamek

Rulers: The Great King, Arushmana.

Religions: The Amechian Pantheon.

Language: Amechian

Social Titles: Various, but common social stratification breaks up among slaves, commoners, the wealthy, warriors, warlords, chieftains, and the great king.

Coinage: no common coinage, plenty of trade.

Allies: Hyrkania, Covarte, and Cretea, as well as Zued in the east, are all known allies and trade partners.

Enemies: The Hoteptalans, Codam T'Kezzu, and Hadrosians are all regular enemies.

Background

The kingdom of Belladas is centered in the Amechian forests, where the venerable kingdom struggles against the encroaching Hadrosian Empire in the south, the Codam-T'kezzu in the east, and the slavers of Southern Hyrkania and Trog in the west.

Belladas is part of the greater culture of the Amech basin that was descended from the Kadantanian Empire, and although it is not ruled by sorcerer-kings, the spirit shamans of the land are venerated as being just as powerful.

The people of Belladas value war and strength as a matter of survival, and every child of the land is taught the art of combat and the ways of war. Despite this focus, Belladas is also a rich trading nation and it harvests the many lucrative resources of the Amech Jungles for sale and export to the Middle Kingdoms and beyond. Immense caravans of two or three hundred servants, traders and beasts can be found heading out from Belladas, guarded by the fiercely dedicated **Order of Hanahook**, the guardians of the land.

Major Geography

Lake Hoderion: The largest local body of water in a basin land pock-marked with cisterns and hidden lakes (there are thousands of lakes and bogs in Belladas), Lake Hoderion is a centerpoint of village life for many belladasians. Rumors abound that beneath the deep lake waters lies submerged an ancient, prehuman city.

Ki'Indi Mountains: Dominated by Amenanyu orc tribes, these mountains and the Ki'Indi valley in between are a major southerly trade route. Every year, dozens of skirmishes and some full scale battles take place between the Order of Hanahook, the militia regulars of Belladas, and the wild tribes of the orcs. Even more recently, the garrisons have been reinforced in the wake of invading Hadrosians.

Important Sites

Kichattamek: The capitol of Belladas, seat of the High King's throne. A diverse metropolis built upon the foundation of much more ancient cities, with ancient Kadantanian architecture poking out from more modern designs. The Arenas of Hanahook are a sight to behold, and daily drills with the twelve hundred elephant cavalry of the king are spectacles many travel to see.

Caelernin

The Wildmen of Vagendar's Woods

Population: 200,000

Government: loose clanships.

Capital: None.

Rulers: The current great Clanlord is Cull'Dhalug.

Religions: The Caelernin worship Zingar, Wolfon, Hargameth, Phonatas, Set, Haro, Seth, Mitra, and Niras.

Language: Caelernin

Social Titles: outcast, thrall, commoner, professional tradesman, warrior, skald, landowner, merchant, lesser jarl, common jarl, greater jarl.

Coinage: No common coinage; they prefer trade.

Allies: The Caelernin are hostile and insular. They trade a bit with the Zarnians and the Zymhar, but not much.

Enemies: The Caelernin see everyone around them as a potential enemy, and especially despise civilized men, including the city of Karan, which they feel it is the destiny of their people to destroy.

Background

Caelernin is an ancient woodland dominated by twelve major tribes of barbarian men, united by culture and religion. The region is volatile and dangerous, and in two thousand years of recorded history, the chiefdoms of Caelernin have never shown civilization or ceased hostilities against foreigners.

Though the tribes lack unity, one chief amongst them stands out. He is called **Brannak Damon**, and he rules the largest of the tribes, the **Ael**. His word is respected by all others, and his force in the woods keeps the peace.

Major Geography

Vagendar's Woods: These ancient woods are named after a legendary wizard of the ancient past, a man who is revered by the Caelernin for being the founder of their culture. To this day, it is said that a mysterious keep in the woods will appear to those questing for eldritch knowledge, a keep belonging to the ancient Spirit of Vagendar.

The Sylvan Vales: The network of valleys running from the eastern mountains of Caelernin are home to many strange and mysterious fae being. The tribes avoid this area as much as possible, though Sylveinurien elves who dwell in the region will periodically trade with men.

The Draugan Spear: An ancient and mysterious mountain range which stands apart in the woods, The Draugan Spear is a haunted land, feared by the ancient tribes. Rumors of demons are often proven by

questing warriors who venture forth and engage in combat with the mysterious and hostile beings of the mountains.

Important Sites

Ael Lands: The region dominated by the largest Caelernin tribe, the Ael. Uosos is the chiefdom from which Brannak Damon rules. Even as the largest such tribe, the total population of the Ael is not more than twelve thousand.

Chigros Tribelands

The Barbarians of Southern Amech

Population: 100,000

Government: loose chiefdoms with no unity

Capital: No major cities or capitols

Rulers: A variety of lesser chiefs

Religions: Amechian Pantheon

Language: The Middle Tongue

Social Titles: none; warriors, workers, chieftains, shamans

Coinage: No coinage used (trade and barter only)

Allies: Loose trade with Belladas, Naminthia, Cretea

Enemies: The Hadros, who seek to conquer the tribes.

Background

The Chigros are an ancient alliance of semi-nomadic tribelancers in south eastern Amech, where the more arid, dryer landscape makes for harsher living conditions. The Chigros are truly aboriginal, and are a people descended from indigenous groups who were living the simple life long before the Kadantanian Empire arose.

Important Sites

Urdanne: This independent, ancient city is now ruled by Hadros, but it still trades with the Chigros when possible.

Babakalu: This ancient subterranean ruin is the remains of a much more ancient prehunatic tomb, from which many more ancient horrors have been released over the centuries. Lord Chalidane once traveled this region, and recorded tales of a hideous beast beneath the ruins which may have been one of the dreaded Krakens.

Kharkon: This ancient citadel in the mountains is ruled by an exiled Hotepsalan lord named Vaskadro, a were-jaguar who rules the local tribes in a strange sort of alliance.

Codam Empire

Reptillian Empire of Evil

Population: about 100,000 Codam T'Kezzu and as many humanoid slaves

Government: supreme rule by the High Theocrat.

Capital: The Capitol is Tizkon.

Rulers: The High Theocrat Erz'k't Kyakatha

Religions: The Codam T'Kezzu worship

Language: The Codam language, a bastardization of old Kadantanian; Codam T'Kezzu also write their arcane books and spells in Old Kadantanian, and draconic.

Social Titles: V'kazr (slaves), T'kezzu (commoners), Kaled (warriors), Erkzar (mages and priests), Z'hrik (nobles), Erz'k't (high theocrat, king).

Allies: None, save for some mercenaries among the Terkithyi and Talanabros, and some minor trade alliances with Hotepsala.

Enemies: All surrounding them, especially Belladas.

Background

Probably the foulest serpentine species to ever spring forth from the cesspools of creation, the dreadful Codam T'Kezzu (Codam means kingdom in their language, and T'Kezzu means sons of Kezzu) are said to be mutated beings spawned from the laboratories of the ancient Kadantanian sorcerer kings. With elongated necks lick ostriches, immense heads with beak-like snouts, and powerful, spurred legs balanced by spiked tails, the Codam are fiersome warriors and masters of magic.

The cunning and intellect of the Codam allowed them to eventually break free of the shackles of Kadantian slavery, and forge a small but powerful kingdom east of Belladas. There they found the ruins of an ancient T'Komode city and established their new city of Tizkon.

The Codam T'Kezzu have long relied on shock troop mercenaries from the Terkithyi and Talanabros, and occasionally even the Amenanyu (though they prefer them for food stock). They prefer taking slaves from their neighbors, and rely on their drug-controlled slave power to keep things running.

While the Codam lust after power, they desire security and hedonistic pleasures even more. Rather than seek to expand their empire, the Codam have sought to reinforce their existing power base, and protect themselves from all enemies.

The Codam have a strange religion. They venerate a deity called Kezzu, which is said to be the immortalized god-king of the first of their kind to break free of Kadantanian shackles. Kezzu is worshipped by a small but powerful cult of priests, who advocate the interests of the people and the exploitation of all non Codam T'Kezzu. The High

Theocrat, Erz'k't Kyakatha, is the current ruler of the land and head of the priesthood.

Major Geography

The Codam Empire is itself nestled within a mountainous valley that is a great, swelting swamp land and mud pit. They have cultivated many damns and diversions to bring water in to the valley, and cleared many trees to open up the land, making it a very unpleasant domain for non-Codam to dwell in.

Covarte

The River Kingdom

Population: 100,000

Government: feudal monarchy.

Capital: The Capitol is Carapas.

Rulers: King Mezhyr Droman,

Religions: The Covarte revere many gods, especially the Amechian deity Nanok'tin, but their patron god is She'Sek, the river serpent.

Language: The Covarte speak a bastardized form of Amechian with a lot of Middle Tongue influence; it's Covarte for all purposes, but a speaker may make a intelligence check at DC 15 to see if he or she understands a speaker of Amechian or Middle Tongue in their native language.

Social Titles: There are no slave castes. There are commoners (eseki), land owners (marusek), barons (katus), high lords (retukus), and the king (Elevus).

Coinage: the copper zinj, the silver draem, the gold pilaek, and the amber truckk. They engage in barter.

Allies: The Covarte trade with the Yllmarians, Plainsmen, Belladas, and Hyrkanians. They have close alliances with the Belladas and Plainsmen.

Enemies: The Covarte are a friendly people, and avoid making war when possible. They have nonetheless come to mistrust the Tolohagros, Hadrosians, Uthadans, and Starthians.

Background

Covarte is a quiet community of rivermen who ply their trade up and down the great north-flowing river of She'Sek. Named after the serpent god of the rains which is said to dwell within its waters, the rivermen provide an important link in the trade networks from south to north.

Covarte is ruled by a king named Mazhyr Droman, a kindly man who despises war and seeks only to protect his people. Droman's strengths are in his ability to negotiate treaties and trade agreements with almost anyone, and his cultural familiarity with so many other lands.

The Covarte people are reverent to many gods, especially the thousand gods of Nanok'Tin, but

She'Sek, patron of the very river that is Covarte's lifeblood, is most venerated of all.

The people of Covarte are a mix of plainsmen, Amechian, and Hyrkanian cultures and language. They are of both fair and dark skin, intermarry with Belladasians easily, and wear garb which is somewhere between the simple outfits of the Amech and the more ornate style of the Hyrkanians. They are a friendly people, by and large, but prone to superstitions, and not a warrior culture, preferring to flee or negotiate over fighting.

Major Geography

The River She'Sek: This great half-mile wide river runs northward, pouring from the highland Lake Hoderion and pouring out eventually in to the Lake Vurilek, which in turn eventually empties in to Lake Kaos, and atlast in to the Marshes of Mist. This passage allows for a flow of river trade from the Yllmarian city of Majord all the way back to Belladas. Overland traders at Rajam, off lake Vurilek, make their way to the Uthadan territory, the River Lords, and other cultures of the plains.

Lake Vurilek: This ancient lake is dotted with river towns on it's southern and eastern shores, but bereft of life in the west, where the haunted city of Sylmaran lies. The lake itself is said to hold the spirits of the dead soldiers of Covarte who foght off the ordes of Anharak many centuries ago.

Important Sites

Rajam: This is the port city along Lake Vurilek. Ruled by lord Droman Vir, Rajam has the strongest navy and a formidable cavalry, for it is expected to defend the land should Uthadan raiders threaten the kingdom. Rajam is a central trade port for the passage of goods to the plainsmen and Yllmar.

Sablen: This river port is a central community of the Covarte kingdom, and is the location of the chief temple to the god She'Sek. It is a place of pilgrimage for Covarteans who are down on their luck.

Carapas: The capitol of the land and seat of the king's palace, Carapas is a beautiful city of fine architecture, built on both sides of the half-mile wide river.

Cretea

Population: 500,000

Government: Confederacy of democratic city-states

Capital: Each city of Cretea has its own body of rule. The Senate of the Land meets at Helios.

Rulers: Each city has an elected governor. The Regent of Cretea is a position held for five years, then filled by a citizen vote of the city states. Current regent is Kryitos Hyapides.

Religions: Creteans revere a curious mix of myths, some of which are heard of nowhere else save in their lands. Creteans revere their hero-figures more than any gods, and venerate these immortalized ancestors, including Derigos the Bull, Rachivar the Unstoppable, Aleema the Seductress, Taliva the Stormbringer, and Esheba the Gorgon.

Language: The Cretean language

Social Titles: The people of Cretea claim not to have special roles, but their society is stratified in to the roles of slaves, landless commoners, property-owning citizens, governing elected rulers, and the regent.

Coinage: The Dramas (gold), the silver (kryt), and the copper (tuk). Platinum is rare but called mynat.

Allies: Cretea is allied with Sendral, Naminthia, and sometimes Zued. Trading with most coastal nations is frequent.

Enemies: Cretea is at war with Hadros and Argosea.

Background

Cretea is one of the most benevolent, and possibly quietest regions of Lingusia. The coastal kingdoms of this lush, Mediterranean land are a series of city-states ruled by a common democratic process. Each city state has a body of elected voters, citizens who participate in electing governors and making laws. These citizens must own land and have wealth, allowing them to vote. Women are not allowed to participate. Through their efforts, a governor and representatives are voted on and elected. In turn, the representatives of each city-state meet at the city of Helios, where an elected regent rules. The collective body at Helios dictates laws considered common in all city-states, though disagreements between different cities are common, leading to regional warfare and sometimes even civil war.

Cretea is as much a coastal seafaring culture as it is landed, and is one of the five great seafaring empires in Lingusia. They are always at war with the Argoseans of Karaktu, but manage friendly trade (most of the time) with all other Lingusian kingdoms.

Major Geography

Thracyllia: This island off the coast is the heart of the Thracyllian League, which refuses to participate in the rule of the regent. It is also the center of activity for the rarely seen culture of Mishrag bullmen, who rule a quasi-subterranean realm on this island.

Mount Heliossar: Upon this mountain rests an ancient city atop which the immortals of Cretean myth are said to have retired to rule as envoys of the goddess Ga'Thika. Near the base of this mountain is the Cavern of Enlightenment, where the Oracle of Cretea dwells, providing mystical knowledge to the regent and those in need.

Important Sites

Necropolon: The ruined city of Necropolon fell centuries ago to a dark invasion by otherworldly forces, and is now a demon-haunted ruin. Little is known of its mysteries, though the tales say that the city-builders unleashed the darkness upon themselves when an excavation for the governor's palace unwittingly opened a hidden passage that led to a subterranean realm beneath the city, from which countless horrors emerged...

Helios: The capitol from which the regent rules, Helios is a mecca of civilization and a boon to monumental architecture throughout the world. The Library of Helios is said to be as magnificent as the Librarium of Midas in Octzel. The Temple of the Immortals is said to be as grand as the Temple of Naril in Hyrkan'ien. The palace of the regent is said to be more impressive than the Emperor's Palace of Persedonia. Helios is guarded by a military dedicated to the regent, but the city is considered a civic monument shared by all of Cretea's city states.

Cymeer

Population: 1 million or less

Government: Rulership by steward

Capital: The Capitol is Bodlon

Rulers: The current steward is Lord Eraman

Religions: The Spirit of Amehwy

Language: The Eastron Tongue

Social Titles: commoners, lesser nobles, knights, greater nobles, lord governors, steward, the prophetic king.

Allies: Cymeer hold alliance with Karan, Zymhar, Naminthia and Zued.

Enemies: Cymeer is perpetually at war with Hotepsala and the Confederates of Draskis.

Background

Cymeer is an ancient land, founded long ago by the ancient Zuedian tribes which colonized most of the eastern coast, a curious mixture of local people and somewhat more complex eastern Takkain belief systems. The tribes which founded Cymeer worshipped a monotheistic deity named Amehwy.

Cymeer ruled in various forms for two thousand and more years, eventually becoming the kingdom it was recognized as about five hundred years ago. Its crusading knights were famous throughout the lands, and its pious dedication to the destruction of evil within Draskis, Hotepsala and beyond was tireless and effective.

Draskis was a diabolical kingdom which sprang forth from the demonic worship of Belphegor. The cults of Draskis began somewhere in the west and

moved out of the old Kadantanian Empire, eventually assaulting and taking control of the lands which Cymeer once ruled. The war between these two kingdoms would be centuries' long.

The war ended when, in a climactic battle, the demiurge Amehwy materialized on the battle field to stop the physical summoning of Belphegor. The demon god appeared and killed the demiurge, and Cymeer was crushed when its protector was slain. Not a full deity (but still immortal) Amehwy materialized as a sort of protecting spirit, providing guidance but with no ability to thwart the evil in his lands.

During the time of the Reckoning, The Lords of Chaos were thwarted, and Belphegor was entrapped within his own Necropolis. The Cymeeri rose up and overthrew the Draskis oppressors, many of whom where struck with the curse of the sherigras. The kingdom of Draskis fell overnight. This was four hundred years ago. Cymeer has been a new kingdom ever since.

Because Cymeer is so dedicated to its one deity, very few priests exist in this land. Paladins and monks are far more commonly found serving the protector spirit, but only truly talented men (Wisdom of 16 or better) are found as real clerics of the god-spirit. This is partly due to the fact that, as the centuries go by, the essence of the dead demiurge fades, and one day will be nothing more than a memory. But as will all things divine, the fervor of worship keeps the spirit alive.

Major Geography

Kinisthare Forest: This mysterious forest holds tribes of wild elves, sylvan elves who appear long ago to have severed ties with more traditional elvish culture, and indeed have embraced the life style of the Kahuni'Lakwha plainsmen.

The Cliffs of Law: Here, at the great mouth of the Nardurha River, are etched the laws of Amehwy in a Lex Talionis. The two hundred laws have been preserved forever in great letters by the ancient founders of Cymeer, and these laws remain unchanged. Even when Draskis ruled, efforts to destroy the laws were met with horrible misfortune, as powerful magic protects the region.

Important Sites

Stealindor: The central city of Cymeer is the heart of military activity and trade. The Shrine and Tomb of Amehwy can be found here as well.

Bodlon: The capitol and founding city of Cymeer, Bodlon exudes a venerable aura about it. Here, the steward of the land rules. It is said that the true king of Cymeer will be a child who will be born with the reincarnated spirit of Amehwy, and that that child

will become the next true immortal king of the land. **Mordain:** Formerly a capitol of Draskis, Mordain is now a hive of thievery and dark magic. It is ruled by force, and the governor appointed to manage the city allows his pureblood soldiers of Cymeer to abuse the largely Draskis-descended population. **Necropolis Draskis:** Here lies the awakening body of Belphegor. See the deity entry on Belphegor for more about this dark god, which begins to awaken in the wake of the Red Dragon Comet.

Dra'in

Haunted Kingdom of the Middle North

Population: about 55,000

Government: loose confederacy of city states.

Capital: The principle city is Yvisk.

Rulers: Danadon is ruled by Draem Orivales. Matre'er is ruled by Draem Dhurvik Kharam. Yvisk is ruled by Quaetor Cheram Treador.

Religions: The people of Dra'in are a curiously godless lot, with a nominal dedication to Zingar, the Wid Hunt, and Death, the Nameless One.

Language: The Middle Tongue and Northron Tongue are common. Many merchants know tradespeak and the Plainsspeak.

Social Titles: Murdos (commoner), Dan (Knight), Elas (Baron of lesser noble), Draem (Duke), Quaetor (lord ruler, king).

Allies: Dra'in maintains many alliances with the plainsmen, as well as the River Lords, Yllmar, and the fabled Free City of Karan.

Enemies: Dra'in is always at war with the Jannen across the Ladarallis Expanse, as well as the orc hordes of the Silver Mountains.

Background

Visitors to Dra'in describe the land as haunted, both by demons and other foul beings. The fairly modest stretch of land is not more than 250 miles across, walled in by the Silver Mountains to the south, the Laddaralys Expanse to the north, and the Alfar Mountains to the west.

The fertile belt of woodland created by the mountain ranges of the region are the center of the townships and baronies which dot the land. Dra'in is dominated by three city-states, each ruled by a noble who proclaims hereditary rulership, but the king, Quetor Cheram Treador, of Yvisk is seen as rightful ruler. However, Yvisk's military is weak, and unable to enforce the king's rule, and the other city states nominally recognize his right while ignoring all taxes and requests. Local conflicts between nobles and the cities are common, but rarely amount to more than posturing. It is as if no single nobleman can muster an army strong enough to do more than look

threatening.

The legacy of Dra'in is centered in antiquity. At many times over the last thousands of years, Dra'in has been occupied and ruled by different forces, both from the north and the Middle Kingdoms, and occasionally from the kingdoms of the Great Plains to the east. Always, the valued lands of Yllmar have been a prize, and when war would come, the conflicts would be settled in the region of Dra'in.

Over time, the land became rife with the haunte dead of countless battlefields, and cults dedicated to these spirits arose. The old druids of the land built many stone monuments, the henges, which were used to commune with the dead. In turn, the worship of the hunt lord Zingar came in to practice, as did the Nameless One.

Some five centuries ago, Anharak the mad wizard sought to destroy the kingdoms of the Silver Dwarves in the southern mountains and amassed a great army of orcs. He sought to find the True Forge of Ashturak and unleash untold evil on the land. This conflict spilled over in to the land of Dra'in in the north and Covarte in the south. The southern lands were decimated, rendering all cities ruinous graveyards right up to the edge of Lake Vurilek. In Dra'in, the fighting was intense and constant, but it was the fortune of the men in that land that they pushed back the hordes until Anharak was at last consumed by his own madness and destroyed. The hero of that day was Erik Kharam, first Quaetor of the land, and ancestor of the current king of Yvisk. He and his many men who died were all eventually buried with their ancestors and the countless warriors of prior generations in the Barrow Lands north of Yvisk.

The tales of this victory are not unblemished, however, for the bards of Dra'in say that Erik Kharam earned his victory by making a pact with the Banshee Liawnenshe, a diabolical spirit of the Silver Mountains who knew the secrets to Anharak's defeat. She offered them to Kharam, for a price. He was to take her as his wife, thus freeing her of her curse.

Kharam agreed, but could not bring himself to marry the hideous spirit, and reneged on his agreement after Anharak was defeated (some say Anharak was defeated by a knight errant of the Yllmar, as well, and that Kharam didn't even accomplish this much). Liawnenshe was mortified, and cursed Kharam and his kingdom to an eternity of haunted strife. So it is said, the tale goes, that Dra'in became the damnable place it is.

In fact, Dra'in might not seem so terrible to those who have visited some other, harsher realms, but the troubles of living in a domain where all warriors seemed doomed to fall in battle and rise as restless undead seem very much difficult to an everyday peasant. The people of the land are fearful of their

very shadows, and take special measures to seal corpses in to coffins, or enact elaborate rituals to put the restless spirits to rest. The dead return to life all too easily in this land.

Major Geography

Laddaralis Expanse: The great expanse of Ladarallis is an immense canyon carved deep in to the earth by the fast-running waters below. Difficult to navigate by boat due to the rapids and rocks, the Ladarallis is more a hindrance than aid, but it serves the purpose of providing a barrier for Dra'in and Yllmar from the warlords of Jannen. A famous castle is built in the walls of the expanse, called Gastelheim. Gargoyles are said to guard this castle which is built impossibly along a great cliff, and no adventurers who have entered have ever returned. Bards tell plenty of tales about the place, but no one knows if any are true.

The Silver Mountains: The great circular mountain range which once held the seat of the Suethendur Empire is now a wasteland of warring orcish tribes and smoldering volcanoes which erupted as a result of Anharak's blasted magic.

The Silver Mountains are riddled with subterranean caverns, mines, dwarven fortresses, and orcish cities. The center of the mountains is a volcanic valley centered on the great Mount Kiurgst, in which Anharak supposedly dwelled until his demise and the eruption of the mountain. In the east of the range is the Valley of the Dwarves, where the largest number of abandoned and overrun suethendur cities and mines can be found. Here, many centuries ago, the silver dwarves were driven from their homes forever more, and nearly destroyed as a race and culture.

The southern mountains contain the orcish stronghold of Chagenkor, and the western range contains the Temple to the demon god Vaprak. Three major tribes of orcs wander the land, being the Halkgraen, the Spittgamor, and the Gustornin tribes. Finally, in the mountains to the north, the dreaded immortal banshee queen Liawnenshe dwells.

Tinurn Forest: This forested land in Dra'in's heartland nestles up against the Alfar Mountains. The forest is dominated by the venerable heirophant Meledarchus, who leads the druidic cults of the dead that pervade the land. These druids have adopted a strange form of cultic undead worship, and for their unusual pagan beliefs, they have been cast out of the more conventional druidic circles. The cult of the undead endorses the return from undeath as a natural process, which is thwarted by the living, and that the ultimate goal of the cult is to force the world of the living and the dead to merge in to a synergistic whole.

Most of the cultists in Tinurn dwell in a network of caverns along the foothills of the Alfars, but there are a handful of sympathetic villages, very superstitious peasantry under the rule of Elas Donner Treledon, of Lanangan Keep, a baron of the land who oversees much of the logging in the area. His men are constantly in conflict with the mischief of the druid cults.

The Alfar Mountains: This dense, high-peaked range is a jagged and nigh-impassable expanse at the western edge and center of the Dra'in region. The Alfars are haunted by many hideous beasts, and the mountains are said to contain a dense network of ancient caverns, inhabited by Darendur, Ashtarh, and other underworld denizens, as well as a number of goblin tribes which almost never leave the darkness of their lairs save for an occasional raid in to the Tinurn Forest.

The Defiled Henge: The focus of the druidic cults of death, the great ring of stones comprising the Defiled Henge is said to be a principle gathering place for the hideous cultists to carry out their many sacrifices in worship of the dead. It is said that Liawnanshe herself attends these ceremonies on occasion. The region is haunted with ghosts and other undead, and is said to have been founded on top of a battlefield dating back to the War of the Gods. It is said that several divine beings fell in battle here, and that a powerful lord of chaos, perhaps even Dalroth himself, died in his corporeal form upon the unhallowed ground. Rumors of a hidden entrance to a terrible catacomb beneath the henge persist, but none have ever found it. Tremors beneath the earth, and occasional, inexplicable earthquakes rock the land.

Lake Spirit Trap: This deep lake is said to have gotten its name from the time of the War of the Gods, when the armies of order forged northward to contain the abyssal spawn which erupted from the region. During a fierce battle against the demonic dragon Alkuvar Destriganumos, the beast was slain and plunged in to the earth, forming the deep crater that became Lake Spirit Trap. The tale goes on, saying that the blood of the dragon tainted the waters which filled the crater, turning it red on certain evil days, and that the ghosts of the soldiers which fell in battle against the dragon were trapped forever more, unable to escape their watery graves. Indeed, strange things seem to haunt the lake, and the handful of men who ply their trade as fishermen and bargers on the lake are a nervous, stoic lot. Even stranger rumors suggest that the draconic, undead form of the dragon still dwells within the lake, surfacing on those days of Sanguine tide, to seek out new victims to sustain its unlife.

The Barrowlands: This immense sprawl of ancient

burial grounds covers miles and miles of terrain. It is said that here, in the final days and hours of the great War of the Gods, fell over three-hundred thousand soldiers both divine and infernal, mortal and immortal, in the war to end all wars. The bodies of these warriors on all sides were interred in large, standing graves and barrow mounds erected in honor of their sacrifice. The bodies of the soldiers of chaos and the devonin that fell were buried in immense mass graves, and it is said that blackened, deathly sink-holes opening in to fetid, charnel caverns of the damned formed from these burial sites, creating a weird network of caverns and tombs in the region. Rumors also persist of a small congregation of humans, ashtarh and sherigras that dwell in the area, operating a reclusive temple to the highly secretive Order of the Black Circle. Here, necromancers learn their trade in the midst of one of the most corrupted sinkholes of evil and undeath known. They are enemies of even the druid death cults, which see necromancers as blasphemers that would seek to control and use undead, rather than let the undead overrun the world. The leader of this order is the necromancer Olan Devar, a half-ashtarh whose human mother was also a necromancer, and whose father was a slave purchased from the Alfar Mountain ashtarh. His father was slain in a sacrificial ritual performed by his mother to imbue her son with more power. The seneschal of the order's keep is a sherigras named Loparin Dom.

Important Sites

Estoar: The only notable community in the Alfar Mountains is Estoar, located in the lowest habitable valley. This community is dominated by a clan of silver elves who call themselves the mithireinur, which translates in to the "first ones who seek knowledge." Their clan descended from wandering suetheinuriens who left their homeland long ago and settled within this valley, to found an impressively elaborate and maze-like monastery along the lengths of the rocky canyon dedicated to Huaarl, the lord of time, and Nistur, the lord of knowledge. Some members of the Order of the White Robe trek to this monastery to study the library and meditate, and a handful of such humans have never left. In addition to the elves and men, a small clan of gnomes dwells here, who have been mining the valley for precious metals now for a thousand years. The lord of Estoar is the elvish knight, Elas Drymarin Syldanar.

Lanangan Keep: The chief barony of the Tinurn Forest, where the modest but vital logging trade prospers. Ruled by Elas Donner Treledon, Lanangan Keep is a bastion of safety in the middle of a hostile region of reclusive, backwoods villages and hidden druidic cults. The keep is usually reinforced by a

garrison of mercenaries supplied by Yvisk to insure the safety of the local workers, and to fight the local cults of the dead.

Yvisk: The unofficial capitol of the region, Yvisk is a sprawling metropolis by local standards, with a population of some 12,000 people in the immediate region. The city is surprisingly large for its population, and there are whole neighborhoods with only a handful individuals, and some are completely abandoned. Once, Yvisk was a much larger urban center, but time, war, and the lingering sense of dread inspired by the curse of Erik Kharam have combined to drive many prospective settlers away.

Yvisk is divided in to six districts, including the Quateor's District where Kharam Palace lies, as well as the Merchant's District, Lake District, the Commons, Industrial District, and Old Yvisk. Old Yvisk is the largest percentage of sprawl, where whole neighborhoods lie fallow and empty save for handfuls of roving squatters. More than half of the city is desolate and unkept in this manner. The Quateor has been known to provide for his army using this empty housing, though the lack of maintenance over time makes many of the vacant buildings dangerous structures to inhabit. Furthermore, the locals will tell tales of persistent hauntings in these areas by the undead, both ghostly and corporeal, a side effect, it is said, of the curse of Liawnanshe.

Yvisk has two primary temples in the Quateor's District, one dedicated to Zingar, the lord of the hunt and patron of Yvisk, and the other to the death god Koth'os, the Nameless One. Death is seen as a patron of the land as a whole, the guardian of the gates whose efforts to contain the undead released by Liawnanshe's curse keeps Dra'in from being overrun. The Walkers of Final Night who operate the temple are all fierce Templars and knights of the land, sworn in to duty by the Quateor to destroy the undead and find, one day, a way to end the curse on the land, even if it means destroying Liawnanshe herself.

Yvisk's most famous establishment is the **Skull and Bones**, a tavern and inn which caters to the rougher crowd and adventurers. Mercenaries, undead hunters, and proepsectors alike will meet at the Skull and Bones for a drink and to swap tales, as well as seek employment. Most merchants and caravaneers know to frequent this tavern if they need hired muscle.

Danadon: Ruled by Draem Lenire Orivales, Danadon prospers in the heart of a dangerous land primarily as a means of providing protection for those overland caravans which travel the great trade road to the east and back. Danadon is as much a military encampment, a squat stone fortress surrounded by a thick moat in what is regarded as perpetually hostile

territory. The community of 4,300 serves primarily as support for the overland trade network, offering a stable local garrison of troops to defend against orcish attacks from the south, undead threats from the forest, and Darendur, goblin, and Ashtarh threats from the Alfar Mountains. Of the many precarious regions the east-west trade route passes through, this region is regarded as most dangerous.

Draem Lenire Orivales is a widowed lady, whose father and husband died in an attempted orcish invasion three years ago. She has four young sons, and some have suggested she seek the hand of commander Gulmaden in marriage (for she is yet young at 33), but Orivales cannot bring herself to remarry, and so her stewardship of the fortress is tempered by sound advice from her council of soldiers and local barons.

Danadon itself is a sturdy stone fortress with a modest local township built around it and defended by a shorter, very long stone wall for defense. The inner fortress is surrounded by a deep and wide moat off of the local river, and the fortress is said to hold at least 800 soldiers at any given time for local defense and patrols. The commander of the Danadon army is Elas Trevor Gulmaden, a young but blooded veteran who is regarded as a tactical genius for having repelled a massive invasion of Gustornin orcs three years ago with only a few hundred stout volunteers encamped in Chambers Pass, the narrow and precarious route in to the heart of the Silver Mountains. His bold action in stopping the horde before it reached the city saved the community from being razed to the ground.

Matre'er: The city of Matre'er rests on the easternmost edge of the region of Dra'in, guarding the eastern edge of the Gap of Sonnen, the only safe place of passage across the steep walls of Laddaralis Canyon. Ruled by Draem Dhurvik Kharam, the direct descendant of the founding Quaetor, Matre'er is a local center of trade and culture for the Plainsland kingdoms and Dra'in, which serves as a tether to the Middle Kingdoms. Within Matre'er, friendly merchants from Jannen and Sjenrak, entrepreneurs from the clans of the River Lords, traders from Karan and other plainsland kingdoms such as Uthadan, Covarte, Evarios and Colhan can all be found offering goods for trade to the west. Caravans heading to and from Zymhar and Starthias can also be found, carrying exotic oriental goods, as well.

Dahik

Little is known of the mysterious underworld kingdom of Dahik. Ruled by the Black Circle, a

society of thaumaturges and necromancers dedicated to chaos, the Ashtarh dark elves of Dahik are united only by their common hatreds. Rumor is that the houses of Dahik are currently in service to Lord Xauraun of Trog, but others claim that a civil war has broken out, between those houses who are dedicated to Dalroth and Slithotep, and those who choose to cast away the old Lords of Chaos in favor of the new.

Galonia

Population: 1.3 million

Government: Oligarchic rule by ancient monarchs called pharaohs.

Capital: Bezantor is the seat of power.

Rulers: Pharaoh Anuktan III

Religions: **Language:** Galonian (A Southron variant)

Allies: Galonia is currently a client state to Persedonia, and is in service to that more politically and militarily active land.

Enemies: Galonia has always been opposed to the Karaktuan kingdoms of Argosea and Shillarth. Galonians really don't like anybody, actually.

Background

Galonia is one of the most ancient kingdoms in the world. Said to have been the birth place of Xauraun Vestillios in his first incarnation, Galonia has long been identified with its ancient line of pharaoh-kings, who aspire to demigodhood. The heyday of Galonia is long past, however, and the land is usually thought of as two parts: Old Galonia, mostly in the north, where the impressive pyramids of the ancient pharaohs can be found, and New Galonia in the south, where most of the still living cities live. The astounding ancient architecture of Old Galonia, rivaled only by Hyrkania's ancient monuments, are a site to behold.

Today, Galonia is a client state to Persedonia, and the pharaoh has given his land and people to that empire after a brief and largely bloodless invasion.

Major Geography

The Dead Sea: This ancient sea of salt is known to flood once in a generation, but the harsh land quickly dilutes it in to a salty sludge. Still, it is the best place in the world to export for salt.

Important Sites

Bezantor: The capitol of Galonia, this ancient city stands in the midst of greater and more impressive monuments from thousands of years ago. Bezantor is steeped in mystery and intrigue, and is a dangerous place for a foreigner to visit.

The Necropolis: This is the venerable burial land of the dead, where thousands of tombs and monuments

lie in the shadow of the most impressive pyramids of Old Galonia. The Necroplois runs literally the length and breadth of the Western and Eastern Galon rivers. Many strange, haunting tales can be heard and experienced about these tombs.

Galvonar

The south-western people of the Middle Kingdoms are a rough, arabesque lot divided between the cultured coastal farmers and traders, who dwell in beautiful cities which depend entirely on trade along the coast, and the inland, rugged nomads who struggle daily with the rigors of a harsh life, coupled with a firm sense of independence. There are many ancient ruins and landmarks throughout Galvonar, which was long ago the site of an ancient, forgotten civilization to rival Old Galon in the east.

The Great Plains

The people of the great plains are a diverse lot of small city-states and minor kingdoms, sometimes interspersed widely in regions where no law or ruler presides. The sparse resources of the Great Plains make for a hard life, and as a result, few conquerors see it as a fitting domain for rule. The politics and culture of the region often change due to local incursions of nomadic groups, and the southern nomads of the region, called the Kahuni'lakwa, are known to be the strongest force in the land, even if they are united only as clans and culture.

Hadros

Little has yet been revealed about this young upstart nation of dark sorcerers led by the mysterious king Hatanak. Rumors abound as to its intent, which is presently to engage in border warfare with the Belladasians while enslaving local tribes of Amechians, and it is said that the city of Baraka has been taken and made as the capitol, but some suspect that the founders of this strange horde sweeping the eastern jungle kingdoms stem from the southern Chigros lands, and that a great many of the fanatical soldiers in the service of Hadros are driven as much by their need for dark, addicting hallucinogenic drugs produced from the leaves of the Black Lotus as they are out of any sense of loyalty or patriotism. Other rumors suggest that the Hadrosian elite believe they are rightfully descended from the ancient Kadantanian Empire, and seek to restore it's long lost glory.

Hazer-Phennis

Population: 250,000

Government: The magiocracy of the Cult of Set
Capitol: Hazer-Phennis is the capitol, and its underworld realms are held in thrall.

Rulers: The current lords of Hazer-Phennis are General Zypharis Halistrak, High-Priest Phaegra Servauntis, and the Serpent Queen Elehysria Zin'thanna.

Religions: Set rules supreme.

Language: The serpent tongue.

Social Titles: slaves, warrior-thralls, minions, warriors, merchants, priests, templars, inquisitors, high priests, generals, the queen.

Coinage: The copper asp, silver serpent, gold cobra, and platinum constrictor.

Allies: Hazer-Phennis has been known to ally itself with the forces of the Caves of Chaos, as well as Dahik, on occasion.

Enemies: The Hyshkorrid are strongly opposed to Hazer-Phennis, Dahik is prone to backstabbing them (and vice versa), and the City State of Trog is on a jihad against the kingdom dedicated to the evil lord of order, Set.

Background

In the predawn mists of time, Set, the dark lord of evil and deception, was born in to the world, and he is said to have tricked a mortal human woman in to birthing his first sons, a horde of serpent men which sprang from her loins and devoured her. These were the first of the setite, the serpent-race which owes its perverse existence to their dark god.

Set is a lord of order, and is opposed to chaos, for the lies of his creed are meaningless in the face of chaos. Set's power as a deceiver and corrupter cannot exist without a firm foundation in the rules of order and the will of the good. As such, Hazer-Phennis has ever sought to undermine and corrupt the lands of men, but never to seek their destruction. Indeed, the greatest wars of Hazer-Phennis have always been fought behind the scenes, through assassination, backstabbing, political coups, and other devilry. The great force of warriors and thrall slaves stationed in the immense pit of Hazer-Phennis serve as the defense of the city against those whom the setite would seek to undermine, such as the dark elves of Dahik, the Hyshkorrid, and the chaos forces of Trog.

Hazer-Phennis is a great, subterranean city built around an immense rift in the earth, a crater nearly a quarter-mile wide, dug in to the earth and downward, around which the countless hives of the city spread out in to the underworld. This great crater is similar to the one in Trog, also a great trench of earth

hollowed out in a crater-like cone. It is said in the annals of dark lore that these great trenches are remnants of planar rifts which opened in the earth during the War of the Gods, and from which hordes of planar beings surged forth to fight for or against the forces of order and chaos. Indeed, it is said that there is an immense capstone in the heart of Hazer-Phennis that seals a permanent entry in to the Infernal Domain of Hell, where Set and his devilish minions dwell in a desert palace made of human bones.

Hazer-Phennis is a magiocracy, and those with the sorcerous powers rule with an iron fist. All sorcerers of Hazer-Phennis must also belong to the priest sect, and no setite is allowed to worship any god other than Set; commoners who seek to follow other gods are usually rooted out and killed, if they do not try to escape and impose exile on themselves. The priests and mages of Set have been known to suffer terrible fates if they go against Set's will, and it is said that any being which defies his worship will be inflicted with a vampiric curse, insuring that they perpetuate Set's will forever whether they want to, or not. Some setite and human followers of Set willingly petition the god for this infliction, to become members of his Chosen flock.

Hazer-Phennis has three major rules, each sharing power in tandem, in a treacherous web of deceits and intrigue. General Zypharis Kalistrak, of the Kalistrak clan, has maintained his power for decades by honing his serpent men armies in to a mean force to defend against encroaching chaos cults. He is descended from the famous line of his forebears, which go back to his ancestor, a general during the War of the Gods, who is said to have first secured the ancient empire of Hazer-Phennis for setite rule. The Kalistrak clan has fallen in and out of power many times, but Zypharis is the strongest general in many generations.

High-Priest Phaegra Servauntis is a direct descendant of the elder Serpent King Servauntis, who helped fulfill the prophecy that led to the Reckoning by bringing down the nascent seed of the Moon-World of Poltrietie, Phaegra is not as grand in vision as his elder, but he is a true servant of Set, and is said to have hundreds of hidden minions, both setite and human, seeded throughout Hyrkania and Octzel, seeking to undermine the human kingdoms.

The Serpent Queen Elehysria Zin'thanna is the new queen of Hazer-Phennis. She earned her title and position by first marrying, then assassinating the elder Serpent King Servauntis in a hidden pact with his nephew, Phaegra. Since then, the two have secretly shared power, working sometimes at odds with the more practically-minded Zypharis. Elehysria seeks to perpetuate the glory of Set everywhere in the world, and has grand plans of the subjugation of men, elf, and dwarf. She is worried about the recent return

of the forces of chaos, and efforts to establish a spy network and discover what happened the setite embassy in Trog have met only with failure, or the hideous return of twisted, mutated setite minions attempting to wreak havoc in Hazer-Phennis.

Important Sites

The Great Pit: This is the immense, quarter-mile wide pit in the desert of Hyrkania which spirals down, like a cone, to the bottom, where the capstone in to the infernal realms can be found. Nestled in the western wall of the pit, like a great blemish, is the impact crater of the Hammer, the great meteor which the Serpent King Servauntis called down upon the land to destroy his foes and reclaim his throne during the era of the War of Strife.

The City of Serpents: The maze of passages and grand tunnels which comprise the living quarters of the Hazer-Phennis underworld is usually called by this name. Here, the safest and most prominent underworld domain for trade and commerce can be found, second only to the city of Bargan in Mitra's Forest.

The Temple of Set: This is the grandest of all temples to Set, an immense cavern containing a colossal pyramid, deep beneath the very bowels of the City, protected by a thousand undead beings and cared for by the Chosen of Set, an army of setite vampires.

Hettanar

The people of Hettanar are borderlanders, a culture of warring chief-kings who hail from the northern tribes of Zarn and beyond, but who have adopted some of the southern ways of civilization in the Middle Kingdoms. The Hettanar are often at war with Dra'in, Yllmar, and the territory of Karan. They trade (and sometimes fight) their northern brethren in Zarn.

Hotepsala

The Hotepsalans are a north eastern jungle kingdom that is dominated by the worship of the darker Amechian deities such as Lako. They are a priestly hierarchy of divinely appointed kings who drive the local population into religious frenzy. They are a xenophobic lot, and war regularly with their only local enemy, the vicious cannibalistic Bloodpoint Indians. Some of the darker elements of Draskis, to the east, are said to have been influenced, aided and abetted by the priest-kings of Hotepsala.

Hubinde Tribelands

Not much is known of these aboriginal tribelander in the south western lands of Amech. They are a fierce lot, and while they willingly trade with outsiders, they maintain an insular culture that shuns outside interference.

The Hubinde are in close proximity to the Beast Lands, where the Neanderthal lords of that land maintain a constant state of war with the Hubinde. Rumors abound that the Terkithyi lizard men have conquered some of the Hubinde lands, as well, as the Hadrosian Empire grows.

The Hubinde prefer to live in towns along the riverine regions, where the huts are built on stilts to avoid flooding, but some maintain extensive communities on the strange plateaulands of the region, a side effect of the ancient devastation that created the great sink-hole basin of the Amech lands. These towns on the plateaus are especially defensible, and provide the best protection against Beast Man, Terkithyi and slaver encroachment.

The Hubinde region also contains some of the last Baltorklani (Ape Man) tribes, who struggle to survive as a species. The Baltorklani are very passive and do not like war, though they are certainly capable of it if necessary, but it is said that their species suffers from an ancient curse cast by the Kadantanians, who despised the Baltorklani for a revolution that led to the downfall of that ancient, evil empire.

Interestingly, Hadros must believe some of the myths, for their soldiers actively seek to hunt down and kill Baltorklani, as if they fear the ape men are capable of doing the same to their own aspiring empire.

Finally, the Hubinde have long fought the encroachment of Southern Hyrkanian slavers in to their lands, as their people are regularly plucked for fodder in the thane armies of Blackholm.

The Hyrkanian Empire

The First Empire of Man

Population: **3.5 million**

Government: imperial monarchy dedicated to a blessed emperor or empress. Hyrkania has operated on the principle of imperialism for as long as history has been recorded, even in the most ancient tales it is said that the Hyrkanian kings sought dominance or recognition as imperial rulers of the Middle Kingdoms. This claim to the land has diminished, and the glory of the ancient empire receded two thousand years ago with the War of the Gods, but Hyrkania itself remains the strongest single empire in the world.

Capitol: The Capitol is Hyrkan'ien, where the fable Emerald Palace can be found.

Rulers: Former regent Taeliyas Mandragora, and returning immortal Empress Phyxillus Usyllyses

Religions: The Church of Naril is the dominant religion, but all gods of the Middle Kingdoms pantheon are venerated.

Language: The Middle Tongue

Social Titles: Rahe (slave), Rathenan (indentured servant), Eslas (commoner), Midan (land owner), Edas (Knight), Kelan (Baron of lesser noble), Gonn (Duke), Sacrimori Eleva (high priest), Kalan (praetor), Hyrkana'kalan (grand magistrate), Dysam'kalan (chief generals), Elevasos (King or Regent), Ela'kalam (Emperor), Ele'Kahil (Empress).

Coinage: Kantad (royal crown), Dakur (gold piece), Benem (silver piece), Krip (copper piece).

Allies: Hyrkania has close alliances with Yllmar, Belladas, Sendral, Sylvias, and the Iron Kingdom. It has mixed relations with its chief competition, Octzel, and is open to trade with the northern kingdoms, even if war occasionally erupts.

Enemies: Persedonia, Trog, Southern Hyrkania, Hadros, and Zarn are regular foes of Hyrkania, and the empire is actively at war with both Persedonia and Trog at this time.

Background

Hyrkania is regarded as the most venerable of all human realms. The most ancient of tales speak of Hyrkania as the cradle of human civilization for ten thousand years, the nation from which all other lands of men were birthed. In the days before the War of the Gods, the vast tracts of the Hyrkanian Desert were instead known as the Fertile Kingdoms, and the fabled city of the gods, Corti'Zahn, was a living, breathing monument to the divine.

Hyrkania as a realm was founded in 5,400 bw, a small cluster of united city states which grew up around the Nyarlith River, stretching through the land to unite the Inner Sea with the Baldrick. These ancient

cities founded the first dynasty, and over time, the old kingdom spread outward, in to the Fertile Lands, to become a much greater kingdom.

The old kingdom of Hyrkania grew strong, and was at it's height, some say, when the War of the Gods commenced. This year-long event devastated the empire, and it was decades before the land recovered. Thereafter, the empire was factionalized, as the will of the people was damaged by the loss of their mortal gods and the sacking of the city Corti'Zahn. Evidence of this appeared in 500 aw when the Wars of Religion were fought. The Church of Naril would eventually emerge as the principle religion of the and, but not before much conflict and dissention. It was during this time that the penal colony of Octzel fought for freedom and provided a sanctuary for Hyrkanians seeking escape from persecution, eventually forming the western kingdom of Octzel.

Hyrkania has long been the subject of Xauraun Vestillios' fascination. This immortal agent of chaos has manifested and attempted to conquer Hyrkania numerous times, and was responsible for many of the disastrous conflicts in the nation's history. He had a hand in the Wars of Religion, and was responsible for the eventual sundering of Northern and Southern Hyrkania in to two distinct empires. He became aware of his status as immortal champion of Chaos and made his greatest bid to unleash the hordes of the Abyss upon the mortal plane in 1960 aw, and later initiated the War of Strife in 2085. His greatest act ever was to restore the power of the Lords of Chaos in the city of Trog, about which more can be read in that entry.

Hyrkania's legacy of rule had been one of divinely appointed leaders, recognized for their ancient heritage stemming from the greatest surviving warriors of the War of the Gods. The last great king of such a heritage was Usyllyses, who proved unable to bear further children. The elvish king of Slyvias granted Usyllyses his youngest daughter as an adopted child, and so Phyxillus, greatest empress of Hyrkania, came to the land. The unorthodox rule of an adopted elvish daughter was endorsed by the Sacrimori of Naril at that time, for the prophecies of the Idean Codex of Light stated that such a queen was destiny, proof of the cyclical nature of Naril (lord of man and the sun) and Selene (goddess of elves and the night).

Phyxillus chose the avatar Gilrad to be her regent emperor, and during the period of their reign, the Lords of Chaos were greatly diminished, and even Southern Hyrkania was subdued and brought back in to the kingdom for a time.

When the immortal avatars were eventually called away by the will of the gods, they left their son, the half-elven scion Aroth Usyllyses, who seemed for a time as wise as his mother and father. The empress

and her regent consort, at that time sailed off in to the outer realms on the divine Ship of Dreams.

Unfortunately, Aroth was not as wise, and grew fascinated with the whispered promises of a woman, Lady Etheriel Strallikus, of Kymir, who lured him in to the worship of the Divinate and the Courts of Chaos. Aroth's fall in to diablerie brought the kingdom with him, and the unity between Northern and Southern Hyrkania was ended. Not long thereafter, Aroth is assassinated (by agents of Etheriel, some claim) and the empire erupts in civil war around 2050 aw.

By 2083, new forces of evil were at work, all part of an unseen and little known prophecy that, misinterpreted by many, was supposed to lead to the conclusion of the war between Chaos and Order. The Lords of Chaos were certain that their minions would insure they won, but in fact, the prophecy would lead to the Reckoning, and the triumph of Order. The empire was very important throughout this period of conflict, beginning with the War of Strife in 2086. By 2114, the empress Phyxillus had returned, but Gilrad was no longer with her, and she initiated a great crusade against the Troll Queen Invidia, who had supposedly killed the emperor-regent. Phyxillus fell in to a trap, and her crusaders and the troll city of Hoggoth were all locked in a powerful spell of chaos, which froze the greatest Hyrkanian soldiers and knights of the land in a magical suspension that lasted until 2475.

The wars continued, culminating in the final war between the two divine factions and their mortal minions in 2116. When it was over, the very nature of the land had been irrevocably altered, it seemed. The southern city states of Hyrkania were in disarray and leaderless, the Solarian Knights of Naril were devastating the armies of chaos that had survived the Reckoning, and the empire was triumphant.

But not all worked out as expected. The Hyrkanian Empire prospered, but many of its greatest warriors traveled south, to the Sendral Basin, where the general Davin Kormak waged a war against the surviving bastion of evil in the south. During this time, the only leadership on the throne was given to Nerevan Hyrador, a man who made a better politician than general.

In 2130, Hyrkan'ien, the Capitol, was sieged by an encroaching horde of northern invaders, called the Nordaman, comprised of the many kings of the north who were united under the great warlord Sigurd. His horde takes the city, then overwhelms the war-weakened and unprepared Hyrkanian Empire.

Sigurd renamed the Capitol Sigurd'ien, and placed his warrior-princess, Agrimias, in control of the southern lands while his Horde turned to the Great Plains kingdoms, saving the Southern Hyrkanians

and Octzellans from a great war. Agrimias ruled for many years until her death in 2184, and during this time, a new cultural infusion of northern and southern attitudes mixed in the venerable empire.

Agrimnias' eldest son, Githrard, had married a Hyrkanian noblewoman named Hylanys, and when he took the throne, her influence on him led to a series of policy changes in which many of the restrictions placed on Hyrkanian rights were lifted. Githrard was also a convert to Naril, and adopted the Empire's religion as the state religion again, after decades of Agrimias' veneration of the northern gods. Ironically, this switch in faith to the traditions of the empire was met with less enthusiasm than expected, for the northern religions were popular among commoners, and over time, the mystery cults of the north would continue to dominate the faith of the common man. Phonatas, Hargameth, and other northern gods continue to have a cult following in Hyrkania to the present.

By 2253, a new war of Religious Persecution erupts, as the Church of Naril comes to conflict with the explosion of mystery cults dedicated to the new demiurges of the land. This conflict lasts for decades, and strengthens the Inquisition of the church.

By 2330, the arrival of the first Persedonian invasion along the coast of the Inner Sea gives a new focus for the fighting, as the Southern Hyrkanian city states beg for aid from the Empire. The first invasion is stopped, but Eastonia remains in Persedonian control.

By 2470, the greatest threats seemed to be the incursions of warbands from the mysterious Amechian kingdom of Hadros. But by 2474, the Hadrosian and Hyrkanian armies have fought to a standstill, and suddenly, the Persedonians begin to renew their interest in conquering the Middle Kingdoms. During this time, many events transpire which mark the coming of a new age of conflict and adventure.

Xauraun Vestillios, most ancient of Hyrkania's foes, returns, his arrival presaged by the ill omen of the Red Dragon Comet. Xauraun conquers the factions of the monstrous city of Trog, and assaulting forces by Empress Taelyias Mandragora of Hyrkania are shattered, and the empress is presumed dead.

Phyxillus Usyllyes, also long believed gone, is reawakened from her magical slumber, along with her army of crusaders from centuries past, by a new band of Chosen Ones, avatars of the gods.

By 2476 Phyxillis' first act is to siege and regain control of the city Hyrkan'ien, and return the Emerald Throne to the rule of a proper Empress. She refuses the throne for herself, however, and insists that it be handed to Prince Hovalos Mandragora, who has ruled at Hyrmyskos in the wake of his mother's

defeat at Trog. The Nordaman kingships have little fight left in them after a century and more of assimilation and complacency. Prince Hovalos' first act is to restore the Hyrkanian Calendrical System, and restore the family rights of lost territory to disenfranchised Hyrkanian Houses. This instigates a brief civil rebellion amongst the Nordaman, which is quickly put down. In Honor of this time, the new Emperor declares this period the Era of Rebirth, and (er) is used to mark this period henceforth.

Life In Hyrkania

Hyrkanians are a mix of swarthy, tanned men and women of dark complexion, with auburn, dark hair, often running black and rarely red. The Nordaman infusion has added to the number of fair skinned, blonde Hyrkanians there are.

Hyrkanian dress is pragmatic, and it seems that the empire as a whole favors washed-out colors, in greys, dusky blues, soft earthen reds and browns. The average man dresses in a tunic and shorts, while many women wear a loose shift or toga. Hyrkanian nobles can afford extravagant garb, often decorated with jewelry, especially head, neck, and arm bands. The noble form of dress favors stronger colors, as well as the integration of much ceremonial pomp.

The Hyrkanian Empire, being the northern domain of the greater Hyrkanian realm, is located along the balmy, warm coast of the Baldrick Sea. The highlands of Niras are forested, and often much cooler in climate, while the western regions north of the Slithotendan Mountains remain fertile farm and grass lands, but with a dominance of bogs and marshes in the northern Tedermissa Peninsula.

The Slithotendans are seemingly the most desolate, hard-bitten mountains in the world, but south of this range is the forbidding Hyrkanian Desert, a blasted land of shifting sand dunes and hidden entrances to the Underworld that supports no living civilization of men, and hides many monstrous kingdoms. The deserts are littered with the ancient ruins of Hyrkanian cities that existed before the War of the Gods, as well as occasional ruined fortresses from the time when the Empire sought to contain the menaces of the deserts.

The social system of Hyrkania is similar to the Octzellan system, but noticeably more complex. Even within specific social ranks, there are additional sub ranks and deferential notations according to the age, wealth, and history of one's family.

The knight-hoods of Hyrkania are famous, and are some of the principle defenders of the Empire. The Emerald Knights are the Imperial order, an army of cavalry dedicated to the protection of the land. The Solarian Knights are an order of Paladins who revere Naril and uphold both the empire and the church in

the name of the sun god. The Order of Kasdalan is a small sect of knights, but they serve the cause of justice, and work as the wardens and protectors of the empire, metting out justice in the name of Kaviskhar, god of judgement in the afterlife.

Major Geography

Slithotendan Mountains: The ancient, immense mountain range that was once the northern border of the ancient Fertile Kingdom, and now serves as a great tombstone to Corti'Zahn. Filled with demonic beings left over from the War of the Gods, riddled with the tombs of the gods' mortal bodies, the ruins of lost cities, and more. It is a vast trove of undiscovered adventure and nearly certain death.

The Hyrkanian Desert: This region of blasted lands and shifting dunes contain many evil underworld empires, such as Hazer'phennis of the serpent men, Dahik of the ashtarh dark elves, and the subterranean kingdoms of the Kattachi scorpion men. The city of Trog is nestled in it's southwestern reaches, where the new demigod of Chaos rules, and countless ruins fo lost cities can be found, submerged in its sandy reaches. For all of its desolation, the desert is a cold region, with chilly winds and sand storms year round, and a harsh sun beating down in a region where no rain ever falls.

Niras Forest: The incredible expanse of this great forest is difficult for any one person to track and measure, and within it's depths can be found the cultural group of the Niras people, the druid circles of Treeholm, the hobgoblin kingdom of Saggrahoth, the ranger enclave of Kom'Huandyr, and the mythic Cave of the Gods, from which all mortal avatars are said to have sprung. North of the forest and partially enshrouded by it are the Troll Mountains.

Troll Mountains: Here was the greatest Troll Empire, the Thargonid Empire, ever to exist. Now collapsed in to ruin and a place for explorers, pilgrims, and treasure hunters, the ancient ruins of Hoggoth and other troll fortresses ar slowly being encapsulated by the immense trees of the forested interior of the mountains.

Important Sites

Hyrkan'ien: The immense capitol of Hyrkania, nestled along both banks of the great river delta, and site of what may possibly be the cradle of civilization. Over the centuries, Hyrkan'ien has been divided in to three regions: Sigurd'ian, the northern city which received much influence from the time of the Nordamani invasions; New Hyrkan'ien, the seat of the throne of the Empire and center of the impressive Emerald Palace Dome; and Old Hyrkan'ien, the center of commerce and trade in the land, and host to the Empire's great naval yards, as

well as the fabled Temple of Naril, where the Solarian Paladins train.

Neval'ien: The site of one of the greater seaports of Hyrkania, and center of the Order of Kavishkar, the justicars and road marshals of Hyrkania who enforce law and order.

Hyrmyskos: The center of the great empire and chief city along the southern great road, as well as the defense point for Anaryk Pass over the lowest point of the Slithotendan Mountains. Hyrkyskos is known for its impressive arenas, which are said to host dragons in their festivities.

Kymir: The western city of Kymir was once the ruling center of th Strallikus clan, and the source of rebellion which sparked the War of Strife. It was here that the northern lands were pressed by threat from the Lords of Chaos and their minions during that time, and even today the city is wracked with the haunt of its ancient reputation for evil.

The Iron Kingdom of Undermount

Kingdom of the Dwarves

Population: 300,000 dwarves

Government: hereditary monarchy of the Underkings.

Capitol: The Capitol is Halvanor, the City of Undermount.

Rulers: The present king is Egos Volmarhan.

Religions: The dwarves venerate Ashturak, the forger god, as well as Hargameth, lord of war.

Language: The Maddendur dwarven tongue.

Social Titles: commoner, laborer, merchant, warrior, knight, baron, lord, king.

Allies: The Iron Kingdom is allied with Sendral and the Hyrkanian Empire, and trades with Cretea, Octzel, Jhahn, Zued and Shillarth.

Enemies: The forces of the Black Tower, the Southern Hyrkanians, Persedonia, Argosea, and most anyone the dwarves dislike are enemies. They are cool about Sylvias, and avoid the elves if they can.

Background

The dwarves of the Iron Kingdom have a great record hall in the deepest bowels of Hagor where it is said that the lineage of every dwarven clansman has been chiseled since time immemorial, when they sprang from the fiery sparks of Ashutrak's Anvil in to the world. Since that forgotten age, the maddendur, the iron dwarves, have dwelt in the depths of the greatest mountains of the world, and their kingdom has centered in the Iron Mountains.

The Iron Mountains are too treacherous for any army to cross, too difficult for trade passages, and so inhospitable that no one would want to live there, anyway. The northern range, near the vicinity of the eternal Black Tower, harbor untold armies of goblinoids, orcs, troglodytes, and trolls locked in a perpetual struggle in the underworld of the mountains. This great horde has been kept at bay for millennia now by the dedicated warriors of the Iron Kingdom, which holds all southern territories of the peninsula of the Iron Mountains. This stalemate of power has lasted for as long as the city of Hagar has kept its watch.

Throughout the Middle Kingdoms and Lingusia as a whole, iron dwarves may be found in small kingdoms beneath the earth. Although many of these communities are fully independent and consider themselves independent kingdoms, all pay at least ritual homage to the true king of Undermount, the high king of Halvanor and ruler of the Iron Kingdom. That dwarf is presently Egos Volmarhan, a taciturn warrior, the hero of the battle of Glimmerrift.

The maddendur value gold and the wealth of the earth above all else, and each of the lesser kingdoms throughout the realms of the underworld and beyond are expected to send tribute at least once in a decade to the Iron Kingdom of Undermount. Those which seem defiant or imperious eventually earn the wrath of the king, and war results. It is said that the Darendur were once defiant in this manner, and their exile led them to the path of chaos.

The Iron Kingdom is almost all mountains and treacherous underworld passageways, punctuated by massive dwarven architectural marvels and mines. The heart of the peninsula includes some open-air communities as well. There is an exterior fortress on the face of the Undermount capitol of Halvanor, for example, and the seafaring dwarves of the isle of Vedron have all taken to living in outdoor coastal towns. The maddendur of Vedron are sometimes called the “minuendur,” which means means something like “those who are touched in the head,” in dwarvish. In fact, the dwarves of Vedron are said to have started as a colony of maddendur who did, indeed, suffer from something considered most dangerous and maddening to dwarves: claustrophobia.

Major Geography

The Black Mountains: Called such by the Sendral men, and known as such for the goblinoids which hold them, the Black Mountains are the northernmost range of the Iron Mountains. Countless conflicts and wars have been fought by crusading dwarves attempting to drive the goblins forever from these ranges, and in addition to countless subterranean

monter lairs, the ruins of many maddendur fortresses can be found.

Vedron: This isle to the east of the peninsula is the heartlands of the minuendur dwarves, the small but noteworthy communities of dwarven kind who have chosen the life of the sea and open air. There are dozens of small coastal towns, and one large community, a well-known harbor town called Port Shoalin.

Valley of a Thousand Mines: This great valley in the heart of the Iron Mountains is said to have a thousand mining entrances to some of the greatest veins ever discovered. Though the dwarves have mined out many of these veins over the generations, the valley is still heart of many dwarven towns.

Important Sites

Hagar: The fortress of Hagar is the second most ancient city of the dwarves, and the training ground of the Iron Guard, the dwarven knights that perpetually defend against the threat from the Black Mountains. Hagar is ruled by Lord Halen Grimor, a venerable warrior of the Iron Guard and a well known diplomat. He has personally hammered out many friendly treaties with the kingdom of Sendral. Hagar is also the site of the dwarven Hall of Records, where the clan ancestry of every dwarf is recorded in stone.

Halvamor: The capitol of the Iron Kingdom, and seat of the Palace of Undermount. Here, the great king Volmarhan rules, along with his wife Erisa and seven sons (indeed, his is one of the most prolific of dwarven clans on record). Halvamor is famed for its immense halls, stonework monuments to the dwarven gods Ashturak, Hargameth, Elisin, Trimelin, Zingar, and The Nameless One.

Gorath: The ancient ruins of Gorath mark one of the forgotten dwarven cities, sacked and pillaged five centuries ago by the forces of the Black Tower in the name of Xauraun Vestillios. Gorath has since been abandoned, never to be reclaimed by the dwarves, though young dwarven war parties regularly enjoy entering the ruins to try and purge the monstrous entities which lurk within.

The City-States of Jhahn

Ancient Republic of the Middle Kingdoms

Population: approximately 1.1 million

Government: Local Democracy operating under Octzel as a client state. Jhahn were the first to devise a republican democratic system (not unlike republican Rome) in which a ruling body was elected by the people to make decisions for the good of all.

The Ruling Council would elect a regent who held a position for five to ten years as the spiritual and political figurehead. Today, the Jhaknians still maintain this structure in its essence, but Octzellan nobles have a rule of veto over the regional elected officials. Likewise, since Octzellan occupation, the King of Octzel may choose to veto any choice of local regent, or appoint his own man as he sees fit.

Capital: Jnril

Ruler: Maddaros Gonn Hasperat is appointed Regent, but Gavin Dalespis is the Popular Leader.

Religions: Jhakn follows a unique druidism of elemental spirit worship, and shuns the gods as being too remote and uncaring for human interests. This tradition harkens back to the ancient origins of the Jhaknian way, adopted from indigenous natives who integrated with the original colonists of Jhakn.

Languages: Southron Tongue, Takonori, Tradespeak, Glythanyu.

Social Titles: Jhaknians are simple in social dynamics, and you are either a slave or a freeman. Among freemen, landowners are more powerful, and merchants can become princes through wealth. Nomads in the region, and the cultural group of the Takonori are considered second-class citizens by Jhaknians.

Coinage: Drenari (gold piece), Capiri (silver piece), Dumi (copper piece).

Allies: Jhakn is a client state of Octzel, and so is supposed to receive its protection. Jhaknians have long had an alliance with the Nomads of Galantyr, and the people of Ocentash, as well as good trade relations with Silvias, Cretea, Karaktu, Porondor, and the Colonies of Mataclan.

Enemies: Jhaknian patriots see Octzel as an invader. Internally, Jhaknians have always been in conflict with the indigenous Taknonorians. Persedonia is a threat, but considered welcome compared to rule under the regent of Octzel.

Background

Jhakn was founded in the early years of Hyrkanian expansionism, sometime around 500 awi, not long after Octzel's roots took hold. The tales of old claim that the first colony of Jhakn, founded around the city of Jnril, was created by shipwrecked sailors who took quickly to the local barbarians and brought a mix of civilization and regional barbarism in to a unique synergy. With time, as more colonial efforts from Hyrkania and elsewhere arrived, the region became populated with a small but independent menagerie of people. The local sense of community and spiritualism was so compelling to all arrivals, however, that most colonists readily shed their old ways and embraced the new.

Jhakn's cultural development reflects two cultural groups over time (more if you count the other neighboring tribal powers in the region, from which the Galantyr, Cimmerans, Persedonians, and Ocentashians sprang). The Takonorians are most prevalent in the southern lands, and are regarded as deterministic, old-world descendants of the native cultures who did not embrace the colonials. The Jhaknian cultural element reflects the progressives, the culturally flexible people who even adopted a form of republican government, the first of its kind in the Middle Kingdoms. The history of Jhakn has been one of war and conflict between these two groups, and culminated in the 2000's with the utter collapse of the Takonorian people during a period of widespread conflict fueled by especially fanatical religious cults. The Jhaknians are not proud of this time, as their warriors went to battle against the Takonorians in a crusade, and many atrocities were inflicted on their peculiar neighbors. In the end, the Takonorians survived, barely, as a mixed culture with only a few strong, independent tribes in the south still clinging to the old ways and trying to stay as far away from Jhaknian lands as possible while still maintaining a necessary harmony.

During the Two Hundred Year War, Jhakn became the focus, numerous times, of Octzellan interests, and many battles were fought, some with great forces commanded by Valance, Halale, or the King of Octzel both with and against the Jhaknian forces. In the end, Jhakn was conquered by Valance. Now officially a client-regency of Octzel, the people of Jhakn are seething with rebellion. Civil conflicts against their Octzellan conquerors erupt every year. Some deposed rulers of Jhakn are even suggesting an offer of fealty to Persedonia. Such an alliance would allow the much greater empire to destroy Valance and sever the connection to Octzel, although whether or not Persedonia would be a greater threat is a different matter entirely.

Life in Jhakn

Jhaknians are a very Mediterranean people, with rusty, sun-darkened skin, black beards and long hair being most common. Still, many different variations in appearance mark the mixed ancestry of Jhaknian people. The pureblooded Takonorians are darkest and swarthiest of all, and are reminiscent of somewhere between the Basques and Spanish Moors in demeanor and appearance.

Jhaknian clothing is a mixture of whites and other light colors. They dress loosely, with a tendency towards the plain and unadorned. The balmy, perpetually warm seasons of Jhakn insure that only in the short, stormy winters do the Jhaknians have need of warm dress.

Jhakn is located in a seasonally temperate region, not unlike the Puget Sound of Washington, in which perpetually warm winds blow up through the Endless Ocean and in to the land-belt between the coast and the mountains to create a lush, fertile region for farming. The temperature is always humid but comfortable, and on the winters the great storms that come south almost never deposit snow anywhere except in the mountains. Because of its good weather, this means that Jhakn has some of the finest crop exports in the Middle Kingdoms, and is famous for its vineyards.

The Jhakians have a simple social class system, determined by their system of politics. Men are defined by their value, measured through family, wealth, and holdings. Property owners are granted voting rights; a nobleman in Jhaknian terms is simply a wealthy and generous man. Property holders can vote people in to offices. These offices include the Ruling Council, which has one representative from each region (totaling 23, presently), as well as more regional offices, such as Chief Protector, City Mayor, Justicar, and so forth. The Chief Protector is the elected ruler of the military arm of a region's militia, and is usually chosen from one who pursues the path of the warrior as a living.

If you are a woman, do not own property, have been cast out of the process due to a crime, or are a foreigner, than you are not a voting citizen, and have no participatory rights. The communities of Jhakn do allow slavery, and slavery plays a role in Jhaknian imports and exports, but it is dependent on the slave either offering his or herself in to slavery, or being placed there by a justicar due to a crime. Slaves also come from captured warriors in battle, and a thriving black market brings slaves in captured illegally in Octzel.

Jhaknian religion is a form of spiritual animism, but is entirely unrelated to the more conventional deity worship of the rest of the Middle Kingdoms. The old traditions of the first barbarians to dwell in the region have persisted throughout the ages, and the people of Jhakn have resisted efforts at conversion to other faiths.

Jhaknians worship spirits of conventional things: the trees, land, ancestors and the dead, animals, and so forth. This animism stems from a belief that all such beings are extensions of Ga'Thika, the mother-spirit of the land, and that all such beings are moving onwards to the lands of the dead. Some spirits are already there, and so are revered for having ended their journey. Such spirits are appeased on three annual holidays to venerate the fallen in battle, the ancestral dead, and the *dead who are lost*, as a way of fending off their interests in the living, since it is felt that the dead are often either envious of the

living, or eager to bring the living with the,. Ultimately, in the great spiritual circle of life, the dead will transit back to the earth-spirit and be reborn; such is the wheel of creation as the Jhaknians see it. To the Jhaknians, the gods of the Middle Kingdoms are just powerful spirits who are too enraptured with power to let go and move on along the Wheel of Life. That is why they do not choose to worship these gods.

Major Geography

Macabeth's Mountains: The ancient range of Macabeth's Mountains were named after the venerable scholar and alchemist, Macabeth, first civilized man to have dwelt within the misty range thousands of years ago. Some claim he was not a man, but some lesser demigod sentenced to life in the mortal realm, expunged from the heavens for his cowardice in the War of the Gods. Others claim he was merely an eccentric alchemist who had discovered the secrets of the Philosopher's Stone and immortality along with it, but who's quest for greater and greater knowledge drove him to distraction. No one really knows; the natives have always revered him as a spirit of the mountains.

The mountains themselves are steep, harsh, and difficult to cross. The mountains create a sort of elemental barrier against the hurricanes of the Endless Ocean, and the backwash creates a lush environment for the Jhaknian region, a fertile band of perpetual growth and rainfall year round. Small groups of men and dwarves ply the mountains for precious metals in the highlands, where little villages of these hardy folk can be found. The city-states seek wealth in the lower lands, and rely on a brisk trade in lumber for the famous Jhaknian shipyards.

The Nakamura Islands: Off the coast of Jhakn, the Nakamura Isles are a stretch of a dozen or more small islands inhabited by a hearty sea folk. The Nakamurans are a ruddy-skinned, jovial sort of people who are clearly descended from the original natives of the mainland. They thrive on their trade relations with passing ships, and live peacefully with their neighbors, a bird-like humanoid species called the Araek. Nakamurans are also known for their famous capoeira-like style of fighting.

Porondor is the largest of the islands in the chain, with an active volcano at its center. The Freeport of Porondor is a sprawling seaport that profits from being centered along the center of the north-south currents of the ocean; it gets sea traffic going both ways from its advantageous center point. Porondor is said to have a hidden Temple of Set on the island, near the volcano, which draws some odd attention from adventurers or suspicious worshippers once in a while.

Al'Ad Hills: The southernmost end of the Jhaknian territory, The Al'Ad Hills are the dusty, dry domain of the angry and independent Takonorians who have withdrawn in to their own nomadic communities. The Al'Ad Hills are an essential point of travel for those moving overland to and from the south, but the danger of raids is high. Haikyndyr lizardfolk are also known to dwell in this region, and rumors abound of a hidden city of a fabled lizard king being hidden beneath the hills.

Cimmeran Mountains: Easternmost along the Valley of Ocentash, the Cimmeran range is as harsh, tall, and unforgiving as the Macabeth range to the west. The Cimmerans cover much more territory in the highlands, however, and so a more active local ecosystem thrives. The Cimmeran barbarians are a rough mountain folk, given to an ages old dislike of civilization. The dozen or so Cimmeran tribes have united often to strike against Persedonian incursions in to their territory, just as they once did against Eastonians when the city was still unconquered. Mining interests will still work hard to send expeditions in to the mountains and try to negotiate prospecting rights in exchange for valuables and goods, however, as the Cimmeran range remains a largely untapped wealth of resources. It is also said that the depths of the mountains contain another subterranean underworld of unexplored wonders and deviltry, one that is only peripherally connected to the other subterranean kingdoms.

Valley of Ocentash: The Valley of Ocentash contains many different co-habiting groups, all relying on the river lands for life in this harsh, dry dust belt between two great mountain ranges. The Glythanyu beast tribes are a largely docile orcish set converted to peaceful ways by the worship of Set. They are even said to maintain a rare order of paladins dedicated to Set. Cities in the north are a mix of Valancians and others who seek to subjugate the land. Cities in the south are a mix of Jhaknian independents and Galvonarian entrepreneurs looking for tax-free trade and safety from the Persedonian empire. Meanwhile, Dedderashi Horseriders, relatives of the Cimmeran tribe landers, ply their horse trade and gather for annual events at their only established community in Dedderash. Frequent minor conflicts and occasional large-scale battles erupt regularly in this hotly contested land.

Important Sites

Jnril: The great capitol city of Jhakn, seat of the Council, and center of rule for the established Regent Madderos Gonn Hasperat. Jnril is centered on an island formed between two forks of the great delta of the Meddari River. More of an inlet carved deep in to the land than a river, the Meddari runs right up to the

northern tip of the mountains, and is fed from multiple cascading waterfalls which descend from great heights. It is considered a true wonder.

Jnril itself is divided in to eight sections, two of which are currently suffering from erosion where the delta has shifted course and now cuts through the island. The center of Jnril holds the Great Pantheon of Discourse, where all debates are held in public. Other famous regions of the city include the Spiritwood Sanctuary, where the shrines of the old gods are held, and the Grand Markets, where goods from a hundred lands can be found.

Grastes: The second largest city in Jhakn, Grastes is very cooperative with the rule of the regent, but in fact strongly independent and well defended. It keeps the peace through cooperation, and so it keeps its strength. Grastes is located along the coast, and is the site of some of the most impressive shipyards in the Middle Kingdoms. Even Hettanar nobles have come this far south to commission Grastes-crafted vessels.

Valancar: Built near the ruins of old Takonor, this enterprising effort is sponsored by the house of Kaspalos, which has long been charged with the duty of protecting the southern trade routes from banditry. In spite of the suggestion that the lands near Takonor were cursed long ago by Devonin, Valancar was founded and has thrived for more than a century. Visitors do tend to agree that there is an aura of unease about the community, and the park at the center of the city with the strange statue of an unspoken spirit god which looks disturbingly like Orcus send some more pious individuals packing.

Old Takonor: Only a dozen miles from Valancar, the Ruins of Old Takonor are a great wasteland of a once fantastic city brought low by treachery, warfare, and perhaps even a dire curse. The legends of devonin worship to Orcus and other foul darklords might well be true, as an immense collapsed idol to the demonlord of death rests in the center of the ruined city, and the necropolis is plagued with monsters and the undead. Takonorian exiles gave up hope of repopulating their sacred city long ago. Rumors abound that the ancient curse relates to the substance of the ancient statue, a black ore that was mined from a forgotten land deep in the southern realms across the ocean.

Jherigist: This community is one of the only Jhaknian cities to allow Takonorian nomads entry for trade and commerce. The leading families of Jherigist are believed to have mixed blood among them, and this helps promote a tentative peace. It is also the only city at the gateway to one of the few safe routes east across the mountains.

Artalia: At the southern end of the Valley of Ocentash, Artalia is a relatively new city, once nothing more than a meeting place for caravan

traders and local tribes. Now, Artaia is a sprawling city with rapid growth, ruled by a council of families from both Jhaknian and Galvonarian lands. Most of those who come to Artaia have fled either Octzellan or Persedonian incursions in their own kingdoms, and now seek to ply their own trades without interference from foreign invaders in a land which is widely regarded as not worth conquering.

Ocentash: The city of Ocentash is smaller than it once was, and whole sections of the city are abandoned, left for squatters and beasts to inhabit. A determined but small population of locals, men and glythanyu, still dwell in the dying city, which suffers regularly from draught. The temple of Seth is still prominent on the hill overlooking the city, as is a small order of orcish monastics that become paladins in the service of Seth.

Argus: This northern fortress-city represents the heart of Valancian interests in the Ocentashian region. In recent years, efforts to conquer the rabidly independent cultures of the land have given way to trade and acceptance, as the futility of militant control has been at last recognized. Now, Argus' main military interest is in looking out for the threat of Persedonian incursion.

Tower of the Alchemist: The esoteric order of the Alchemists is widespread but very secretive throughout the Middle Kingdoms and even in to the Eastern Realms. The order gets its origins here, in a tower atop one of the highest peaks of Macabeth's Mountains, where it is rumored that the immortal wizard Macabeth might still live (rumors of his death in 1980 are notwithstanding). At its peak, this order was almost a cult, as it attracted followers willing to do anything to achieve immortality.

Today, the Alchemists do not like visitors, and their tower is as much a ruse to dissuade unwelcome guests, as it is a symbol of their venerable power. The real complex of the order lies beneath the earth, where a handful of dedicated servants to the pursuit of alchemical magic seek to recover the lost knowledge of forgotten age.

The Free City of Karan

City State of The Council of Twelve

Population: 45,000

Government: A magiocracy in which commerce and trade are favored over all else. The ruling body is the elite Council of Twelve.

Rulers: The Council of Twelve

Religions: various religions are worshipped at this intersection of kingdoms and cultures.

Language: The Middle Tongue and Northron Tongue are both common here.

Allies: Karan is, on the surface, allies with all and enemy to none. It has especially favorable relations with Hyrkania, Yllmar, Dra'in, Zarn, Avilin, Zymhar and Autregard.

Enemies: Karan has often had trouble with Starthias, which would love to capture the city. The standing army of Karan regularly spars with the Caelernin tribes. Some of the southern kingdoms of the Great Plains are not friendly to Karan, disliking the tariffs and control on trade it holds from north to south.

Background

Karan's venerable history begins a thousand years in the past, when it was a small regional kingdom of hearty folk who were descended from a mix of northern and Hyrkanian stock. The city grew around the appearance of a great tower, commissioned by the eccentric and (some say) mad wizard Therias Karan. Karan founded his tower as a center of thought, a place to unite the diaspora of sorcerers and wizards across Lingusia with one voice. The Council of Twelve was created to provide this instrument of communication and shared knowledge, and Karan was the first wizard to host it.

A thousand years later, the city has become the principle center of overland trade, and is the meeting point between all regions of the continent and beyond. Karan is an impressively large city, and is the thriving centerpoint to a sort of perpetual renaissance in magic and technology.

The orcish kingdom of Starthias in the east has attempted many times to conquer Karan, but each time the active military, mercenaries and war mages of the city have driven the attackers back. Still, the coffers of the city are known to be replete with the most fabulous treasury in the world, and raiders, orcs, and other beings driven by greed would desperately like to get their hands on it.

The current Head of the Council of Twelve is the wizard Cheridas Karan VI, descendant of the original Karan. He is a kindly man in his late forties, though his true age may be much greater. He is respected by almost all of the other council members, who herald from all over the world. The growing crisis in the city fo Trog with Lord Vestillios' return is currently foremost on the minds of the council.

Mataclan

Mataclan is a distant continent in the utter west, beyond the Stormy Expanse of the Endless Ocean, where Octzel, Hyrkania, Autregard and even Galvonar now have outposts and colonies. The land itself is ruled by several cultures, including the Haxitol, Talay, Talanabros, and others, who worship a unique pantheon. Mataclan's lands are currently

riven with strife as the eastern colonizers arrive and seek to gain political or military ties with the local kingdoms. The foreigners are sometimes embraced, other times fought vehemently. The Mataclani people are very alien to Lingusian cultures, and efforts to “civilize” the locals are frequent but usually fruitless.

More about Mataclan can be found in its own treatment elsewhere.

Nak’Ivk

Sacred Clans of the Distant North

Population: probably no more than 50,000

Government: loose egalitarian clans

Capital: none. The Nak’Ivk dwell in semi-nomadic communities.

Rulers: No common rulers, though a great shaman called Irhit’ Yakul is revered by all for his wisdom.

Religions: The Nak’Ivk worship the spirits, and revere Trimelin for being the lord of their land. They call him Isakwa.

Language: Nak’Ivk.

Social Titles: No social titles. There are men, women, shamans, great men (heroes, leaders), and tribal chiefs.

Coinage: The Nak’Ivk do not take coins, and engage only in trade.

Allies: They trade with those they trust, such as the Autregardians of Kalazar and some Steppelander tribes.

Enemies: They war against rival clans and any outsider they do not trust, as well as the giants of the Ethak Mountains, The Dragons of the north, and the sea-dwelling beings they contend with for food.

Background

The Nak’Ivk are a reculsive race of primitive people, northern barbarians who have taken to a life on the frigid tundra lands of the Endless Northern Coast. They live a life of perpetual hardship and strife, subsisting off of their coastal hunting for seal, whale, and polar bear while seeking to understand the mysteries of the northern spirits.

The Nak’Ivk are unrelated to all Lingusian people, and are believed to have once descended from the eastern Khozakani lands of Takkai, hardy souls who migrated here long ago across the northern bridge between the two continents, to eventually settle down in a land that, compared to the rest of the distant north, seemed quite hospitable to them. Their reasons for migrating are unknown, though their worship of strange spirits may have had something to do with it.

Life In Nak’Ivk

The people of this land do not use metal tools, unless they get them in trade, and lack the skills to make such implements. They are excellent hunters using bone, some wood, and the hides and parts of the animals they kill for food. They use sleds, raise great, wolf-like hounds for pets and guardians, and are excellent skiers. They craft fine boats, and are respected by the Autregardians to the south for their willingness to take on killer whales in canoes.

Major Geography

The White Plains: This region of flat tundra land is the southern-most expanse of Nak’Ivk territory, and some hearty clans dwell in this region.

The Ukhar Lakes: This region of perpetually frozen lakes rests along the southern stretch of the Dragonmounts in the north. In spite of the presence of numerous dragons which will descend to hunt the icelands for polar bear, whale, and seal as food, the Nak’Ivk ply the region for their hunt anyway, and are professional ice fishermen.

The Northern Coast: Most all of the Nak’Ivk can be found in this region, small coastal clans which make ice huts and hide long houses, and move where the game is thick. They migrate up and down the coast year round, making their southernmost stop not many leagues from the city of Kalazar, and their northernmost range an unknown area beyond the Dragonmounts. Many aquatic beings contend with them for food in this region, including Sahuagin which dwell beneath the waters, and sea skrags.

The Dragonmounts: bordering the northern expanse of Nak’Ivk is a great, impenetrable range of glacial mountains which prove to be a seemingly impossible and very dangerous range to cross. In the heart of the mountains rests the Valley of the Dragons, a nearly legendary land said to contain a kingdom of Marlack dragonkin which serve a northern dragon lord called Kazhitarak Erekoniums, the Great White Wyrms of the North.

A few Nak’Ivk are famous rangers and claim to know paths through the Dragonmounts which are relatively safe, although most Nak’Ivk would tell you to travel along the coast.

Important Sites

Nak’Ivk as a land has no urban cities, no permanent communities, and no easily identified regular gathering spots. Finding a clan in this region means knowing their path of seasonal migration, and a lot of patience and luck.

Naminthia

Population: 43,000

Government: The Vizier Aramud Vashran and his dynasty rule Naminthia

Religions: Naminthia recognizes the Zuedian Eastern pantheon

Language: The Eastron Tongue

Allies: Naminthia pays tribute to Zued, and is allied with Cymeer and Cretea. It has strong political ties to Al'jhira.

Enemies: Naminthia is opposed to Starthias, and has bad relations with Kozakan and Zymhar. It has cool relations with Argosea, but trades anyway.

Background

Naminthia was founded some seven centuries ago by the first of the Vashran lords to travel south during a time of exodus and rebellion from Zued. Long after the conflict had died down, the budding city had sprung forth, and good relations with Zued allowed it to blossom. Today, Naminthia remains one of the premiere independent ports in the Blood Sea region, and is a major gateway to the Takkain kingdoms.

The Northern Wilderness

Population: perhaps 20,000 humans, and maybe 1.8 million native Vyrkashans, elves, marlacks, and others.

Government: Local governors of small colonies, and lots of local clanships ruled by chieftains and warlords.

Capital: none.

Rulers: Eredas Gonn Vestos is the Octzellan noble who has invested the most in the Northward expansion. Lorgahr is the greatest Vyrkashan warlord.

Religions: The Vyrkashans worship Wolfon.

Language: The colonists speak the Middle Tongue; other languages include elvish, Vyrkashan, draconic.

Social Titles: The titles of Octzel and Hyrkania apply among the colonists. The Vyrkashans identify themselves as warriors, hunters, priests, traders, warlords, and chieftains.

Coinage: Middle Kingdoms' coinage in the colonies, barter only among the Vyrkashans and wild elves.

Allies: The colonies get all the help they can from their homelands.

Enemies: The Vyrkashan are an unending force of opposition to the colonies, as are the marlacks, their dragon masters, and the wild elves.

Background

The Northern Wilderness is a vast, perpetually untamed track of land which, while rife with natural resources, is so impenetrable and hostile to foreign incursion that it has never, in four thousand years, been successfully colonized by the men of the Middle Kingdoms. At times, colonists have successfully built whole towns and occasionally even fortresses and cities, but these are inevitable swallowed up by the great wilderness after a Vyrkashan horde, a great dragon, or uprising of wild sylveurien elves sweep down upon the impudent humans and annihilate them. This has been attempted, time and again, always with the same results. Some suggest that the Vyrkashan beast god Wolfon might well have cursed the land against men, to insure that no humans ever inhabit the sacred territory of his chosen people. Others, usually scholars and mages, suspect that the dark queen of the dragons has worked Machiavellian schemes over the ages to insure that the land and brood remain undisturbed. Many cite the great rampage of the dragons in 1964 as proof of this, when mercenaries allegedly stole in to the heartland of the Dragon Queen and stole any eggs away; had the Avatars of the Gods not returned the eggs, the elder dragons might well have burnt the lands of man to the ground.

The Great Northern Wilderness is divided in to regions occupied by different prominent native forces. The western coastlands and northern forests are dominated by the shapeshifting Vyrkashan, beast-men who can transform in to wolves at will. The Vyrkashan are a fierce race, who claim their heritage as rightful rulers of the land by warring against all other species that seek to claim it.

The Vyrkashans trade on occasion with the Autregardians to the north, whom they grudgingly respect, but they despise the gnoll clans and attempt to kill the colonists of the Middle Kingdoms whenever possible. They leave the dragon lands alone, and often pay homage to the Dragon Queen.

The southern forests are dominated by fierce gnoll tribes, immigrant beasts who came to the Northern Wilderness millennia ago, led by a prophet of Wolfon to the so-called promised land. Here, they have struggled with glee against the Vyrkashans and other denizens to carve out their territory. They are ruthless, and will take no quarter against anyone, going to so far as to even attack the Marlack dragon men, though they will not penetrate the dragon brood territory.

Tempest: The Asarth have a small but dedicated group of their kin who dwell deep in the Northern Wilderness. This enclave, called the Tempest, is dedicated to discerning the hidden secrets of the Northern Wilderness, where they have found some evidence of a very, very ancient civilization, which

might even have existed and fallen before the Prehunate empire.

Major Geography

Harshwood: The Harshwood is a famous track of uninhabited land, which many aspiring young Autregardian jarls have sought to conquer over the centuries, but the ancient wood remains impenetrable, even to Vyrkashan tribes, which consider it taboo and will not enter. The only colonies in the region are supported by dedicated Hyrkanian merchants at Kharamain and Asterlain, two fairly new colonies which trade regularly with local coastal towns of Autregard. They are expected to eventually whither and die as the many horrors of the Harshwood hunt them down.

The legends of the Harshwood claim that somewhere in it's heart lies the fabled breeding ground and palace of the Queen of the Dragons, a beast said to go by many names, but called Tiamat by some and Tiraniskis by others. She rules her lands and her clutch with a single-minded determination, and seeks to destroy all who would seek entrance to her domain.

The Bitter Coast: This rough, unpleasant coastland contains no friendly harbors, only jagged, rough rock and a coast which is beaten by the rough water and storms of the Baldaric. Only a few colonies have persevered in this region in recent years.

The Endless Coast: This great stretch of rocky coastland along the shores of the great Endless Ocean marks the principle paths of trade for the Middle Kingdoms to the northern Autregardians and back. Many small coastal towns spring up along this coast, though few last more than a generation before being abandoned or destroyed.

Sielwood: The Sielwood is a fierce track of land in which some human settlers have now established towns. There is a tense peace between the men and the sylveinuriens of the wood, but so far, no violence has erupted since a treaty was established.

Important Sites

Tempest: The Asarth have a small but dedicated group of their kin who dwell deep in the Northern Wilderness. This enclave, called the Tempest, is dedicated to discerning the hidden secrets of the Northern Wilderness, where they have found some evidence of a very, very ancient civilization, which might even have existed and fallen before the Prehunate empire

Kharamain and Asterlain: These two Hyrkanian colonies, ruled by the nobleman Praedas Hyrlakam, are the most successful Hyrkanian colonies in years. Both are well fortified, defended by hired mercenaries, and protective of a local population of

some ten thousand settlers who seek to prospect and farm the land. The sylveinuriens of the Sielwood have fought at times with the colonies, but Praeas has negotiated a treaty with the elves, and trade is now common.

Northshore: The island on which this prosperous island rests is the most venerable of all settlements. The harbor town has been active for three centuries, and was built on the ashes of earlier efforts. It remains a favored stopping point for ships moving southward for trade from Autregard.

Kalatnay: This old community has been active for two generations, and is dominated by antiquarians of the Guild of the White Robes, servants of Nistur. The town was built after the discover of nearby ruins, buried in the earth and stone of the Sielwood valley, which predate mankind and possibly even the Prehunates (of which only a handful of scholars in all the world can say anything about, anyway!) The leader of the community is the guildsman and senior member of the Council of Twelve, **Randivas Questarios**. Randivas is a man in his mid forties, very fit and adventurous, and not nearly as dottering and elderly as many of his guild tend to be. His proficiency in magic lies with divination, and his fascination for history is limitless.

Old Hazyk's Brood: The domain of Hazyk is famous, for this elder dragon is said to have been a favored son of Tiamat in the days before men had even met dragons, and when time came for him to mate with the greater queen, it is said that he defied her, and instead stole away with the finest young daughters of Tiamat that he could find. He started his own brood, with himself as a king, and in spite of a great war of their kind to annihilate him, Hazyk held fast. At last, Tiamat herself rose from slumber, and sought out the errant breeder king, to destroy him. Hazyk tricked her once more, revealing his three young brides and threatening to kill them, her daughters, if she did not let him be. Tiamat could not bring herself to kill her favorites, and so a compromise was passed.

Now, ten thousand years later, Hazyk lies dreaming in his eons-long sleep, while his sons and daughters stir ever so quietly, preparing to awaken for a new time of hunting and migration.

Mirudon: The Fortress Mirudon is an indomitable tower in the heart of the Northern Wilderness, built by a sorcerer so ancient and evil that none even know his name. Though the sorcerer passed on, the experiments of his work still live, and his ghostly presence can be felt. A liche named Erigast took up residence in the tower centuries ago, and has sought to uncover the dark secrets it holds, though all that has happened is his slow descent in to madness.

Mirudon is said to contain planar gateways, as well as a great illusory map of the world which also shows the lands as they were centuries and millennia ago.

Aelyspar: The elvish city of the wild sylveinurien elves of the Northern Wilderness, Aelyspar is a great enclave of sculpted trees and stone architecture to rival the works of more civilized elves. The sylveinuriens of this land renounced the ways of their more civilized folk long ago, and have reverted to barbarism and druidic worship of Niras long ago. They disdain writing, and maintain only an oral tradition. Their tales suggest that they came to the Northern Wilderness sometime shortly after the War of the Gods, led by an elvish prophet who spoke of a new, untouched land of pure forests for their people.

Botan: This daring colony is located in territory disputed by both gnolls, ashtarh, and marlacks alike. It rests on the northern tip of the Bitterwood, a forest land which has swallowed all settlers who entered it, and is said to hold the lair of a legendary hag, known only as **Eregas**, who is said to have tamed a brood of green dragons from Hazyk's domain. It is also known that trolls are rife through the Bitterwood region.

The people of Botan are almost all cutthroats, wanted men, pirates, smugglers, and slavers who find the land as safe a harbor as any. The city has been sacked by denizens multiple times, and each time it has come back to life within a few years as new scoundrels seeking a safe harbor return to populate it. The city of about 2,000 is called home by all sorts of beings, and its current lord is a half-orc wizard named Kalagar Despon, who claims to have been the bastard son of the king of Octzel, though none take him seriously. His wife is a tiefling woman named Legenre', a sorceress in her own right and former member of the Hyrkanian thieves' guild of the Black Fang, who was driven out for being too cruel in her ways. In Botan, she has formed a society of pain-worshipping cultists dedicated to Baragnagor.

The Kingdom of Octzel

The kingdom of renaissance

Population: over 2.2 million

Government: Republican Monarchy; an established body of noble houses nominate key representatives in to the Senate, and the Senate provides council and votes to the King, who is part of the royal line. Each province provides a voting body, which in turn casts its vote and presents its opinion to their representative senator. The king maintains final veto power, but the nation has two other regions, Halale and Valance, each with a recognized local Regent, second only to the King in decision making.

Capital: The Capitol is Octzel in the north.

Rulers: King Arvale Octzoror-Tendrosos VI; Tinaro Drakanis is Regent of Valance; Halale's Regent is Alderos Hroder.

Religions: The State religion is the Church of Enki. Second most worshipped deity is Mitra. Others are Amasyr, Haro, Herme, Ogron, Seth, Trimelin, Set, Slithotep, Hella, and Death.

Language: The Middle Tongue

Social Titles: Dan (Knight), Elas (Baron of lesser noble), Gonn (Duke), Impera (senator elect), Elevasos (King or Regent).

Coinage: Kantad (royal crown), Dakur (gold piece), Benem (silver piece), Krip (copper piece).

Allies: Jhahn is a client state of Octzel. Galvonar is a long time ally. The city-states of Porondor are unreliable allies. Trade alliances with Argosea, Al'jhira, the Colonies of Mataclan, Sylvias, Cretea, Autrengard, Tai'Kong and Zued exist.

Enemies: Persedonia is a major enemy for territory and sea travel. Hyrkania has always been an unsteady opponent. Zarn, Hettanar, and Yllmar have always been antagonistic. Galonia and the Cimmeran Tribes are long time enemies.

Background

Octzel was founded nearly two thousand years ago, as a small penal colony used to transport prisoners from Hyrkania during a period of strong religious persecution. The Capitol was the first major colony established in the untamed wilderness of the time, and was man's first foray in to regions previously held only by monstrous beings.

Octzel received its name from its founder, a young priest of Enki named Octzel Venn-Ta, who led the revolt which brought freedom to the colony, and created a safe haven for those who were being killed and imprisoned for their beliefs in war-torn Hyrkania. Fortune and circumstance allowed the region to remain free and grow strong, and the rest is history. (See the City of Octzel setting material for a detailed historical account of the period and beyond.)

As a kingdom, Octzel was founded through grassroots efforts, and so it has always held some tribute to that heritage. There are approximately 100 noble houses throughout Octzel, each house able to trace its roots to the founding families of the kingdom. While Octzel adopted a system of nobility and feudal interaction for many centuries, it retained a clear and different mechanism for the management of law making. Each house was allowed to vote in public bodies, and then send a nominated senator to the Council, in which the Court of the people would serve as a voice to the King. Over time, the Council became the Senate body, and of that body, twelve senators were to be elected from amongst their peers

to join the Council of Twelve, which became the King's Council (The Council of Gonns), a much more personal body of representatives.

The purpose of this voting structure in Octzel was to allow the founding houses of the kingdom to have a say in the political direction of the land, but it was never doubted that the King would always have veto power. Nonetheless, the notion that the King would disregard the will of his closest supporters was always seen as unlikely at best. Unfortunately, most periods of political strife and civil war over the last millennia have been due to just this sort of schism between the King and his Council.

The most recent such schism led to the Two Hundred Wars, a lengthy period in which the country was divided in to three regions, being the Northern Kingdom, Halale in the east and Valance in the south. This conflict began with the opportunistic intentions of House Draskis in Valance, which began to conquer the southern lands of Ocentash, but soon used its might to fan the fires of old conflict between it's supporting houses and those in the provinces which became Halale. Halale eventually was forced to unite against the Valancian assaults, and soon all three regions were embroiled in conflict. Only within the last few years has this conflict receded, and a unity returned, at least tentatively, to the now reunited kingdom. In it's place, a new power structure has risen, with each region granted a Regent who serves as the principle local ruler of the area, but subservient, at least in theory, to the King himself. Nonetheless, each Regent still claims strong local support and maintain active legions for defense.

Life in Octzel

Octzellans are an Iberian sort of people, ranging from dark and swarthy skin tones to fair and very Caucasian. Octzellan hair colors are wide and varied, but it's in vogue for noble women to dye their hair blonde and keep it very curly. Men tend to prefer goatees and other shaped beards, and often have rather long and curly manes of hair, as well. Still, Octzel's major position in sea trade insures that a wealth of cultural variety comes to its seaport shores, and so fashions can change more frequently than elsewhere.

Octzellans favor loose, comfortable, colorful and finely tailored clothing. As it is a rich nation, even the lowliest commoner tends to be at least nice looking. Octzellan standards of dress for women are reminiscent of Earth's Crete, and a woman's finer dresses tend to have a push-up bustier, which exposes and accents her bosom, but does not hide it. This has often been an embarrassing circumstance for people of more prudish regions such as the Northern Kingdoms.

Most of Octzel falls within a warm, temperate climate, and much of the nation consists of low hill lands, plains, and a few sparse mountain ranges. The lands of greatest habitation have long since been cleared of forest land, but in the East, towards the Nyarlith Delta, the great and untamed expanses of Mitra's Forest loom, an untapped reserve which is the home of the Orcish Nations.

Summers in Octzel are warm and humid, but far and away more comfortable than the forbiddingly hot inland climates of Hyrkania. Winters are driven by harsh western storms and rains, and can include vast snowstorms which blanket the land in winter white, but tend not to last more than a few days before warmer weather blows in. Octzel is possibly gifted with the best year-round weather in the Middle Kingdoms.

Octzel's social structure contains commoners of a variety of stations, but most men are either freemen who can work a trade or landed commoners who own a small plot of property and owe fealty to a local Elas, or lesser noble. The man (or woman) who earns a rank in the military or who is born of a lesser house becomes a Dann, an equestrian knight who is expected to serve his or her Elas devoutly. The greater nobles of the old houses, the Gonns, are the upper class, and own most of the wealth of the land.

Women do not receive the traditional rights of men, but may receive them by becoming emancipated. An emancipator woman is said to be a *Manatyr*, and she is expected to adopt the role of a man in all respects. Most Danns who are women are Manatyrs, although noble kin are exempted from this requirement (and can vote if they wish). Manatyrs must also pay taxes and vote, but are not expected to marry. This right of women to choose one or another life is inherent in the religious doctrines of the kingdom, which worships two female deities and therefore honors the role of women in family and society.

Octzellan religious beliefs focus on Enki, the goddess of life, birth, the sea, and good will. The Church of Enki is pervasive and in control of all schooling for young children, and many young priests spends their first years teaching to the children of commoners or nobles (schools are segregated by social class). On the other side of the fence is Mitra, the goddess of chance, ill will, bad happenings, and misfortune of all sorts. She is seen as the antipathy of Enki, and the counterpart to the good will of the goddess. A small cult of followers honor her, and once in the past she was blessed with a great temple in the heart of the forest named after her as a warning to any who would dare tame that land.

Finally, Enki and Mitra have a small group of gods, which are worshipped by smaller cults, seen as relatives, sons and daughters of the divine pair.

Amasyr is Enki's husband, while Ogron, Trimelin, and Seth are her children. Mitra's brood are called the Nemesis Gods, and include Death, Set, Slithotep, Haro, Herme, and (oddly) Hella. Hella, goddess of healing in Hyrkania, is seen as a blessed god, but forces a price to maintain cosmic balance.

Major Geography

Faerie Woods: On the westernmost peninsula of Octzel, these deep and untamed woodlands are the home to the Kythian Elves, as well as many undiscovered Fae secrets. Vellsoth'ien Manor is located here; the great secluded Keep of the legendary adventurer and King's Man Wormi Vellsoth. In the heart of the woods rest the Fae Mountains, where it is said that a perpetual struggle between Kythians and goblins has gone on for centuries.

Verragen Mountains: East of the Capitol lie the rich Verragen ranges, a great circle of active volcanoes in which most of the kingdom's wealth has been mined from over the last millennia. Great veins of silver and gold are still found untapped within the mountains, which are laced with tunnels from Suethendur who have sought out wealth in the mountains for centuries. The mountains are also riddled with beasts, including a venerable great red wyrm, which has not been seen since the last major eruption of the mountains about three hundred years ago. Devilspire is a major secluded keep in this area, a fortress of mystery that has been owned by many unusual wizards over the centuries. No one has approached it in more than a decade, however, as the spire atop which it rests is guarded by terrible fiends.

Loroden Hills: A great expanse of rough hill lands cut through what would otherwise be fine farmland, creating unsuitable farming turf. Instead, shepherds run their flocks and ranchers keep their cattle in the region, which itself is still a dangerous land, even this close to the heart of civilization, as the vast network of volcanic tunnels beneath the hills have been expanded and modified by the ancient Mihidir Troll race which still dwells in darkness beneath the earth.

Kedrion Forest: Beautiful forestlands and some of the oldest inhabited land of the entire Kingdom are found here. The locals are a proud, ancient folk who can rightfully claim ancestry that predates anyone who dwells in the Capitol.

Umian Hills: Vast tracts of jagged wild hill lands, filled with volcanic tunnels and rife with all sorts of monsters, the Umian Hills are the remains of a massive caldera, said to have been a bubbling sea of lava eons ago during the fall of the ancient Prehunate Empire. Now, it is a dangerous territory, which has never been successfully tamed in two thousand years,

and marks the frontier boundary between human lands and orc territories.

Mitra's Forest: This is an immense untamed wilderness, in which no fewer than thirty great tribes of orcs and other monstrous beings dwell in both peace and war. Long ago, the whole of the Octzellan land was like Mitra's Forest, but men managed to drive the beasts back as far as they could, and then they would budge no more. Much like the Hyrkanian Deserts to the east, Mitra's Forest is rife with Underworld tunnels and complexes, and so while many orcish tribes can appear on the surface, most all of them are in fact found underground. Some of the more famous subterranean communities include Kordon, Blaarg, Levant, Arkalor, Anarak, Chegga, Kragath, Basar, and Bargan, not to mention the riddle of mazes inside the Chaos Mountains (see next). Bargan is especially famous, one of the largest communal gathering sites of the subterranean realms. In addition to the many underground complexes, Mitra's Forest is riddled with the ruins of fortresses, settlements, and castles from past ages of men, which tried, and failed, to conquer the untamed lands.

The Chaos Mountains: If ever there were a single, more famous maze of caverns and dungeons, this is the land to hold it. The multitudinous Caverns of Chaos were so named for the persistent worship of the Courts of Chaos by its denizens, and the supposition that the dread gods did, indeed, once use these very mountains as their thrones in the days of yore. In fact, there is a peak for each of the gods of the Courts of Chaos, and it is said that when a new god emerges, a volcanic eruption sprouts forth a new mountain in that god's honor. The Caverns themselves consist of thousands of miles of corridor, chamber, and worked area, containing perhaps more foul beasts, orcs, and other creatures than Halale has men.

Ocentash: This great corridor between two mountain ranges was once a land of loosely aligned city-states and communities, but Valance conquered it and brought the people of the land under Octzellan rule. Ocentash is a mixture of humans and glythanyu orcs, the much more timid and somewhat less malevolent orcish sub race, which was converted to the worship of Seth, the agrarian god. This land is still troubled by civil conflict, and its people are not granted the same rights as Octzellan citizens. Worse yet, it is said that Valancians have dabbled in the slave trade, selling Ocentashians to other kingdoms.

Important Sites

Capitol Octzel: The great Capitol of the North is so important that it gets its own section (see the City of Octzel Setting). With a population of nearly 300,000 and a prime location for all trade in and out of the

Baldric Sea, the Capitol is a turbulent, exciting place to adventure.

Lancaster: The city of Lancaster has long served as the principle garrison of defense for the northern lands, and is where the Danns of the King receive their tactical experience in the fields of war. Lancaster is home to several companies of soldiers and mercenary companies which specialize in rooting out and destroying the Mihidir Trolls that infest the region of the Loroden Hills.

Baldric Castle: Near Lancaster, Baldric Castle stands, a powerful memorial to the conflict of old between the great Immortals. A powerful saurian gold dragon known as Drakanis Smygaunus is said to make it's home deep beneath the castle.

Drama: This island city has a quiet and secluded demeanor, but it is said to have ancient secrets and a network of water-carved grottos that go deep in to the island and harbor ancient aquatic secrets. Drama contains an ancient, possibly prehuman temple to Trimelin, lord of the deep.

Galent: The Capital of Halale, the Hroder family has ruled here for many generations. Alderos Hroder has become the most recent in a long line of rulers to ascend the local throne. Galent is well fortified, as it has always been the first line of defense against the inimitable threat from Mitra's Forest. Other threats can be found within it's graveyards, where it is said an infestation of vampires once erupted; some even say the Hroder family is cursed with a legacy of vampirism that goes back to a day when Karukithyak, an ancient Haikyndyr priest of Set came to the land, cursed with vampirism, and settled in nearby Old Chegga. The first Hroder to seek the defeat of this being was bitten and brought the curse to the Hroder clan.

The Temple of Mitra: Within Mitra's Forest, this great tower is an abandoned place of worship, surrounded by four orc-built lesser temples to the Nemesis gods. It is said to be guarded by an abominable undead dragon, and that the tower itself is haunted, visited only rarely by the solitary priestly servants of Mitra.

Pheralin: Capital of Valance, here rests the seat of power for the Draskis family. Pheralin is the chief benefactor of overland trade routes, and is built along the expanse of the Great Old Road, the monumental architectural remnant of an ancient civilization from long ago. Pheralin is known for its Temple to Amasyr from which the Paladin Order of the Sewn Earth comes.

Midas: The resplendent city of Midas is said by some to be the seat of knowledge, and the Grand Palomar Librarium of Midas is perhaps the greatest such archive of knowledge in the world. The Antiquarians' Guild, as well as the Astronomical

Union are two local societies of sages and wizards who gather semi-annually within the walls of Midas to speak of matters both cosmic and profane.

Pelsetern: A peaceful and quiet city, located in a narrow but deep bay. Pelsetern receives many vessels from the south that wish to conduct business with Octzel, but avoid the bureaucratic hang-ups to be found in Urlu and the Capitol. Such vessels appreciate the clean, well-run shipyards and docks of the city. Enki's second largest temple, the Temple of Plenty, is found here.

Dagger Falls: Once the capital of the provincial region, Dagger Falls suffered horribly during the Two Hundred wars. It has changed hands, been occupied and re-occupied by invading armies, and brutalized by conflict so often that little of its old character remains. To this day, the locals who have survived are a tough, mean-spirited lot who dislike all factions of the war intensely. A great legacy of the Two Hundred Wars stands here, the famous Dragon's fire Fortress, from which a dozen mercenary companies of the king insure peace in the south. Many ruins, graveyards, and sullen battlefields dot the region, and the desiccated mansions and keeps of the old, extinct ruling families can be found, said to be haunted by the vengeful undead.

Persedonia

Empire of a new age

Population: About 1.5 million in the heartland, with another 2-3 million in conquered territories.

Government: An imperial monarchy ruled by Emperor Denedan Palithas V. Each region is appointed a different regent by the Emperor, who is usually a general of prominent politician of Persedonia. The emperor receives council from a politician of each territory, the governor or regent of that land, or an appointee. While the council can discuss, vote upon and advise the emperor in any matter, the emperor has final say and veto on all decisions. The Emperor is considered a divine position, and the Persedonian Scepter of Law is said to be a sacred artifact of Order, given to the emperor in a dream, but manifested in reality. With this scepter, his rule is considered absolute and predestined, and his dreams dictate a mandate of conquest of the world, and the enforcement of the rule of Order.

Capitol: Archades

Ruler: Emperor Denedan Palithas V. Regents appointed to conquered lands, including Tamalian Canosus of the Inner Seas region, Maladar Panhitas of the Galonian region, Dromedan Parthenor or the

Galvonarian region, and General Kerkak Chor of the Harad Region.

Religions: The Persedonians venerate only their emperor by decree, but conquered territories are allowed to maintain existing religious practices so long as the emperor is also venerated. All gods of order are permitted under this system, but worship of chaos gods is forbidden, and efforts are made to demolish places of worship and to subjugate, covert, or destroy the followers. This includes chaotic good deities popular in the Middle Kingdoms such as Phonatas, Herme, and Hargameth. Gods seen as the spiritual advisors of the emperor include Vishannu, Ashturak, Naryl, and Huaarl. Female gods are given little precedence, as Persedonians are male-dominant. Languages: Southern (spoken in Harad, Persedonia, and Galvonar), and Old Galonian.

Social Titles: Commoners, Landed Men, Centurions (soldiers), Decurians (captains), Equestes (knights), gentry, generals, governors, regents, Emperor.

Coinage: The Drake (gold piece), Wyvern (silver), Imp (copper), and Dragon (platinum). Persedonian coinage is some of the finest, purest mint in the Middle Kingdoms.

Allies: The only current Persedonian allies are distant at this time: Zued, Naminthia, Argos, and Al' Jhira all have trade relations.

Enemies: Hyrkanians, Octzellans, Jhaknians, Suetheinuriens, all are enemies of Persedonia.

Background

While founded in Eastern Galvonar, Persedonia owes its roots to the influence of Southern Hyrkanian sailors and explorers. These early travelers from the Inner Sea region would pass through the riverine deltas that connect the Iron Seas to their native waters, and en route would make regular stops and trade with the coastal communities of Eastern Galvonar. A mix of Galonian and Harad heritage, these original people were called the Menedi. Over time, the Menedi became heavily influenced by the regular contact with the Hyrkanians, and during the time of the Third War or Faith in Hyrkania, an exodus of disenfranchised merchants and pilgrims traveled to the coasts of Eastern Galvonar, welcomed by the Menedi people with open arms. This cultural infusion created a distinctly new people over time, which came to call themselves the Persedonians. The first truly Persedonian city of this unity to be founded was Archades, which went on to become the eventual capitol.

The Persedonian lands were rarely more than a loose collection of city-states up until around 1,980 aw, when the rise of strife in the land with the coming of a new war between the avatars of order and chaos led to conflict in the Southron lands. Old

Galon was the site of the tomb, which held Xauraun Vestillios' last buried remains, as well as his apocalyptic Armor of Chaos. His minions subjugated the will of the Galonians once more, and they in turn assaulted the Persedonians and Galvonarians to build a labor pool to begin a new conquering army for the old Lord of Chaos, while excavating his lost tomb. During this time, the Persedonians were severely persecuted.

When Warenis and his avatars sought out and destroyed Xauraun's resurrection, they also freed the people. Warenis' sacrifice had a profound effect on the Persedonians, and in subsequent years, missionaries of the Middle Kingdoms once more were able to rekindle the faith of the gods in the Persedonians, who developed their own church, dedicated strongly to the Rule of Law.

In 2115 aw, the end of the old era with the Time of the Reckoning proved to be a predominantly joyous experience for Persedonia. The clearly divine signal of triumph from the Divinity of Order was a sign from the people that they were the blessed chosen, and a national sense of pride united the people in to a true kingdom. They proclaimed their first ruler, Therados, as Emperor.

Within a decade, a young prince was born, Palithas I, who claimed he had a vision of a great unity of order. In he dream, he was granted a Scepter of Law, an artifact of order left behind by the passing of the pantheon of gods in to the realms of higher divinity. When he awoke, the scepter was with him, no longer merely a dream, and through it he could channel great visions. Palithas I did indeed bring order and security to the land, and worked hard to secure the empire's borders from invasion or threat. But it was not until Palithas III, when the scepter was handed to him that an Emperor with visions of conquest came in to power. Under Palithas III, Galonia was conquered, and became the first client state. A war against Southern Hyrkania was mounted, and Malas and Eastonia fell, but all advancement was halted at Hyrendan.

When Palithas V took the throne, he revealed a vision of conquest unlike his predecessors, and spoke of the guiding voice of the Scepter, as well as his destiny as god among men. It was time for anew order of gods, he said, one to carry the tradition of the venerable pantheon, which had won the war against Chaos. Furthermore, he said that Chaos would return, and an army of strength was needed to oppose it. He prophesied the coming of the Red Dragon, the great comet that would descend upon the earth, and initiated a new war of conquest, taking Galvonar in the west and remounting the assault in to Hyrkanian lands. When the Red Dragon did indeed appear, and then rain a thousand meteors upon the earth, his

people were bolstered in to a true belief of his divinity. Today, Persedonia is the single most dangerous warring nation in the Middle Kingdoms, driven by the will of the righteous and the determined.

Life In Persedonia

Persedonia is a militant land. It is dedicated to the well-oiled machine, which is designed to carry out the vision of the Emperor, and the people (by and large) believe strongly in this vision. Children are taught in disciplined schools about the destiny of their people. Teens are conscripted in to the military, nobility receiving officer training, and commoners in the general ranks. All men must serve for a minimum of four years in the service. Women are not expected to serve in any service, but do carry a burden at home while the men are on duty. Many men do not return, opting for a permanent, lucrative military career.

Persedonians are a rugged mixture of the distinctly Middle-Eastern appearance of the Galvonarian people and the more Mediterranean, Romanesque Southern Hyrkanians. There is a strong look to the men and women of this land, with sharp edges to their features. While they can readily grow thick beards, Persedonian men prefer to go clean-shaven, and often bald. The women let their hair grow long, preferring to keep it braided or curled. Most Persedonians are dark of hair as well as skin, but women often dye their hair blonde.

Clothing is loose, white, and sometimes in the form of a wrap or toga. They have a mix of clothing styles, both Galonian and Hyrkanian in form. The men wear skirted armor, shaped plating with a stylistic suggestion of the human form.

As a practical people, the Persedonians are not easily bothered by matters of religion. The state religion is recognized, and indeed a driving force in the lives of all the people of the land, but as much so for their sense of patriotism as their theistic faith. The thought that their emperor is a god on earth, chosen by the Scepter of Law, is enough for them. The temples of the land are splendid affairs commissioned by the emperor to venerate him and the handful of gods he chooses to have recognized as his divine council. The priesthood is almost exclusively picked from young nobles, men and women. Still, no Persedonian will ever let a sense of piety get in the way of practicality.

The practical attitude of the people also applies to magic. There are a handful of magical orders in the land, and the one endorsed by the emperor is the Guild of the Ebon Fist, a society of battle mages who have learned to hone their spellcraft to the art of war. They are considered elite officers and living artillery for the Persedonian war machine.

Major Geography

Hidden Lands: The blasted, craterous basalt hills of the Hidden Lands are considered nearly uninhabitable by most. Still, rumors of ancient ruinous cities half-buried under ancient lava flows, miles of lava tube tunnels inhabited by degenerate half-men, and other tales abound. Few people are crazy enough to venture in to this hellish land, however. In the southern regions, in a valley region only just barely passable is the Valley of the Dead Kings, the sacred stretch in which the old Menedi kings and chiefs first buried their dead in hidden tombs. The tradition continued right up until the time of the first Persedonian Emperor, when the Ziggurats of Archades became common practice to bury the divine rulers.

Haunted Pass: This is one of the safest passages through and around the rough hill lands of the Persedonian Empire. The Haunted Pass was the site of a major battle during the days of Old Galonian rule, and it is said one hundred thousand men died here in a battle between ancient sorcerers. It is a powerful necromantic site.

The King-Deserts of the Hashykaristyr Segami: The only successful resistance to Persedonian rule in their homeland has always come from the Hashykaristyr Segami, the desert-dwelling lizardfolk of the King Deserts. It is said that there are countless lizardfolk dwelling in caverns beneath the shifting sands of the deserts, and that they suffer no man to pass through or claim rulership of their land. The Persedonians learned long ago to bypass this region, and leave the Haikyndyr beneath the sands well enough alone. They do occasionally come to the periphery and offer trade goods and valuables in exchange for mercenary services, which the lizardfolk will offer, enjoying warfare for its own sake.

Face of the Mountains: This great pass from north to south, a relic of Old Galonia, contains immense carved figures along the walls of forgotten pharaohs, ancient gods, and even more venerable figures lost to time. Many tombs are found in this pass as well, though many have been looted already.

The Nomad Drifts of Harad: General Kerkak Chor was assigned regent of this land, and he continues a long-standing tradition of operating the military garrisons out of the Oasis of Memnech to keep the warlike Harad in check. The Harad are the single greatest source of new troops, both conscript and mercenary, for the Persedonian armies. The people of this region are rough, nomadic, and dedicated to Seth. They dislike all outsiders, but only the persistent threat of force from the Persedonians over time has kept them in a cooperative spirit.

The Coils of Set: This labyrinthine stretch of river valley is a deadly place to raft down, and is another famous site of ancient Galonian tombs and monuments. A legendary Temple of the Damned, dedicated to the Galonian dark gods, is said to rest in the mountains along the valley, but none have ever found it. On clear nights, a strange, luminal energy can be seen cascading like northern lights from the mountains along the valley, and this celestial ghostfire keeps local villages very, very frightened. When the Red Dragon comet crashed to the earth in pieces, it is said a piece of the comet landed in the Coils region.

Important Sites

Archades: Seat of power for Persedonia, the capitol Archades is a wondrous city to behold. Three hundred years of emperors have worked hard to add their touch to the land, each building bigger and better monuments to top the last. The Emperor's Palace, the Coliseum of War, the Pantheon of Law, and the Emperor's Temple are some of the more amazing sites to be found. Outside of the city, the Necropolis of the Divine can be found, which contains over a dozen monumental ziggurats and pyramids dedicated to the Persedonian Emperors of the last three centuries. Countless imported slaves and laborers from conquered lands were used to craft each great temple, though none are as large as the smallest of the ancient pyramids of Old Galonia.

Corlis'Dalral: The second greatest city of the Persedonian Empire, Corlis'Dalral is the center of the Empire's Military Training Center, where the ground forces of the centurions are trained to become lethal fighters. Corlis'Dalral has a prominent state temple, as well as a Temple of Vishannu, lord of war, which is operated by sacred prostitutes to the god. They are a pale shadow of the Vyrindian Amazons, who would be horrified to see this variant of Vishannu worship.

Dabbania: The smallest of the coastal cities, Dabbania is a place of retreat and meditation for the emperor, as well as other nobles. Twice annually great conferences are held among the advisory council of politicians for the emperor in the Dabbanian Palaces of Debate.

Trastoria: Trastoria is the heart of the Persedonian naval yards, and the shipyards of the great naval fleets are here. Trastoria is very well defended with a great artificial sea wall.

Meneden: The northernmost native city of Persedonia, Meneden is a bustling city of commerce and trade, and the port from which all northern and southern traffic in the war against Hyrkania sets sail. Meneden is also the center point of western overland traffic, to Harad, Jhahn, and Galvonar.

Nylaladina: Southernmost city of Persedonia, Nylaladina was once Hephah, of Old Galonia, but was annexed in a dispute centuries ago, even before the rise of the Empire. Nylaladina is a city far larger in size than its population, a monument to the excess of building, which the old Galonians once were known for. The city is filled with tombs, monuments, and structures, the meanings of which have been lost to time. Now, it is the chief port to the south and west, and heart of the imperial garrisons which stand ready to keep the peace against any Galonian or Galvonarian uprisings.

The Regional Territories: Persedonia holds control through regents over several territories. Each of these conquered lands is dealt with in their own sections, but they include Eastonia, Malas, Galonia, and Galvonar. Harad is mentioned in the Nomad Drifts section, above.

Sendral

Population: 300,000

Government:

Capital: The Capitol is nominally Blackholm, but the city-states are all considered independent

Rulers: The Dark Queen of Blackholm,

Religions: The Church of the Divinate, Order of the Red Robes, and the Cults of the Kraken

Language: The Middle Tongue, orcish

Social Titles: Dan (Knight), Elas (Baron of lesser noble), Gonn (Duke), Impera (senator elect), Elevasos (King or Regent).

Allies: Southern Hyrkania was at war with Persedonia, but is struggling to make an alliance. Trog, by virtue of its ruler, is an ally. The Hadrosian Empire is allied to Hyrendan and Blackholm.

Enemies: Northern Hyrkania and Sendral remain strong enemies, as they seek to bring the Southern Hyrkanian city states back in to the Empire.

Background

The Sendralites were united centuries ago by crusading Hyrkanian Knights, and a people who had long suffered under the vile leadership of the Black Tower came to be free at last. The founder of Sendral was Davin Kormak, an Emerald Knight, who eventually became regent of the land. His heirs were later proclaimed proper kings.

Sendral is a curious mix of Cretean and Hyrkanian culture. The people dress in a mediterranean style, but conduct business and politics much as the northerners of Hyrkania. They see themselves as a unity of two distinct cultures.

The threat of Velvithron Sitor:

Lord Sitor (Human Liche; Wizard Lvl 23; Chaotic Evil) is the last true inheritor of the legacy of Xauraun Vestillios. Born in 1889 aw, Sitor was taken in as Xauraun Vestillios' apprentice and taught the sorcerous arts by the Eternal Master of Chaos himself. Sitor learned to harness sorceries most sorcerers are only vaguely aware exist, and in time, he came to command his own military garrison, acting as overlord of the Sendral Basin in 1962, when Xauraun began his conquest of the Hyrkanian Empire. Eventually, Xauraun was defeated while excavating the seat of his ancient Throne and Tomb in Old Galonia, and would not reappear in a new incarnation until the 2080's, but Velvithron Sitor managed to retain control of the Black Tower, and negotiated an alliance with the forces of Hellgate Keep. He managed to retain an iron grip over the land until it was broken in rebellion by the Emerald Knight Davin Kormak in 2120. It was during this time that Sitor fell in the field of war, while seiging Allendar, at the hands of Kormak's elvish wizard and advisor, Saralys Nathylien.

Sitor had long prepared for his death, however, and the Cult of the Undying, a group that had formed over the last century of mages who worshipped him, held the phylactery into which his spirit transferred on death. Unfortunately for him, this cult was hunted and nearly destroyed by Emerald Knights, and the phylactery was deposited in an ancient tomb for safety. Now until 301 he was the tomb looted and the unwitting tomb robbers possessed by the ghosts of the Cutists of the Undying. Seeking to restore the greatness of their demigod wizard, they continued the ritual of rebirth. The sacrifice of a young, virile body was made that he might inhabit the new form.

Now an undead liche, Sitor has plotted quietly, residing within the ruins of the Black Tower (Called Azerathe in the Old Tongue). He has seen Davin Kormak's descendants carry on their rule, and still Saralys Nathylien walks the earth, serving as aide to the line of Kormaks.

Sitor seeks revenge as well as he recovery of his lost territories. His minions have sought to negotiate an alliance with the scattered Mihidir tribes that once held Hellgate Pass. He has also worked to negotiate favorable deals with the shadier nobility and Prince of Thieves in Blackholm, though he fears the Dark Queen, who is much more powerful than him.

One of Sitor's major quests is to recover lost artifacts of his mentor, Xauraun. He seeks to locate the diary of Kalidane Riftspar, the son of another apprentice mage to Xauraun who fell in the first great War. Kalidane sought to recover the scattered pieces of the powerful artifact, the Helix Throne, but what happened to him and his quest is unknown. Also, Xauraun's armor, which embodied the Armor of

Chaos, as well as the captured essence of Xauraun's magic, was Sitor's biggest prize until the armor was recovered and Xauraun was resurrected as the new dark god of Chaos. Sitor has now sent diplomats to Trog, where he has pledged his loyalty to Xauraun once more, although he secretly despises his former master and seeks to topple him from his position as deity.

Sitor has many cronies which he uses to accomplish his dirty deeds. His major minions have limited summoning abilities, and often hold devonin summoning charms to use if they need assistance in their sundry quests. The major minions of Sitor include:

Vaeger Ny'Saghan, Mihidir Prince of the Trolls
Troll, Fighter 10, Rogue 8; CE

The only living descendant of the old Ny'Saghan family which ruled Hellgate Pass, Vaeger and his scheming cohorts have placed their alliance with Sitor for now. They dwell in the Ruins of Maddendrei, the Dwarf Home, old seat of the Northern King's Power, and have also pledged allegiance to The old Dragon King Pyranothare who drove the dwarves away centuries ago.

Darksed, Death Knight commander of the Black Tower.

Death Knight, Fighter 10, Rogue 6, Mage 6; CE

Darksed is an old Chaos Knight serving Xauraun Vestillios from the Great War of the 1960's. He has long since passed on into the greater service of Dalroth and Slithotep as an undead servitor with arcane magics. Darksed was present during the rebirth of Xauraun from his incarnation as Serivan the Prophet in 2084, and was later thought to have been destroyed. Sitor called his spirit back to service, and he now inhabits a half-flesh, half-metal body concocted out of dark necromancies, and acts as commander of the Black Tower. Darksed was scared severely in trans-dimensional events about a century back which granted him freedom once more from the abyssal realms and to walk the earth anew as an undead being.

Baskabulos, Baron of the Abyss, enslaved by Sitor
Balor, CE

Little is known of this lesser Devonin noble, save that his soul gem is in the possession of Sitor and has been for four centuries. Baskabulos is said to have ruled beneath Degalthor at one time, but lost favor in the Abyss and now hold territory only on the first layer. His image is that of a great, black night-gaunt with four screaming heads, a nine-tipped tail, and four great membranous wings. He appears in human form to Sitor, as a dwarf that seems to constantly

shift in an out of reality, and only speaks in broken Old Tongue.

Aegeris, Thief Lord of Blackholm

Aegeris seeks to undermine the Prince of Thieve's position of power in the city of Blackholm, and has been granted many followers and magics by Sitor in order to accomplish this task. He is a cunning half-elf, of mixed Asarth and Sylveinurian descent, who's mother died in childbirth. Aegeris is a cruel machine-like assassin, as well as leader of thieves.

Asyndra Malythir, Mistress of Chaos

Asyndra is Sitor's Asarth wife, and liason with the Black Circle. Other agents of Sitor's inner circle suspect her of being a clever spy who takes advantage of the wizard's loneliness, but in truth, she is as devoted to him as she is to her Asarth house. Asyndra sees Sitor as a means to an end, admittedly, but it also appears to be a very long road, and she has worked herself into believing strongly in him, going so far as to even sublimate herself to him at times, something a noble asarth woman would never do.

Unknown to Asyndra, Sitor was once betrothed to her grandmother several centuries ago, but he killed her in a jealous rage when she was found to be pregnant with another asarth's seed. Her mother was the child born, sent away to grow up to be her mother, and elder in the Black Circle. Asyndra would desire revenge if these secrets were discovered by her.

Holdings

Velvithron Sitor has many specific holdings, including the following:

The Black Tower: His center of power, it is from here, which the Cult of the Undying operates, and the dark forces of Sitor have long held power.

The bulk of his undead and living armies are used to enforce the ruins of the Tower, which are slowly rebuilding it using freshly-acquired slave labor.

The Ruins of Maddendre: Actually ruled by the Dragon King Pyranothare, but currently the base of the Mihidir tribes, the Ruins act as a gathering point of Sitor's Chaos Forces.

The Rogue's Guild of Aegeris: This rival guild in Blackholm serves Sitor's interests implicitly.

The Merchant House of Agraketel: With operations in Easton, Blackholm, and even the Sendral Basin, the Merchants of Agraketel are loyalists to the Cult of the Undying, and its core members are granted longer life through their loyalty to Sitor. They are undiscovered so far, and work behind the scenes, appearing outwardly to be a normal spice trading company.

The Murokoni Mines: These Mines are owned wholly by Sitor, and are the major exploiters of the Bluesky ranges for gold and other precious metals. They are also slavers.

Southern Hyrkania

Population: approximately 1.1 million

Government: feudal cluster of city-states with regents who pay loose homage to the dark queen of Blackholm.

Capitol: Blackholm is the center of power.

Rulers: Queen Nialle of Blackholm and King

Religions: Language: The Middle Tongue

Social Titles: Dan (Knight), Elas (Baron of lesser noble), Gonn (Duke), Impera (senator elect), Elevasos (King or Regent).

Coinage: same as Northern Hyrkania

Allies: Blackholm seeks tentative alliances with Hadros, The Black Tower, and is trying to negotiate peace with Persedonia.

Enemies: Despite some common goals, Blackholm stands defiant against the rule of Trog, and is staunchly opposed to any alliance with Northern Hyrkania or Octzel. They war with all Amechian tribes, the Iron Kingdoms, and Sendral as well

Background

Southern Hyrkania is really best described as two city states united by common threat and interest. To the south, Blackholm lies nestled in a well-defended mountain-shrouded port and is ruled by the Dark Queen who is sometimes called Nialle, a sorceress who has lived for centuries beyond her normal life span and who some claim is a liche. The Regency of Blackholm is an alliance united by the mutual fear each lord of each city feels for the rule of the Black Queen. Her ageless reign has kept the small unity working for decades at a time before rebellion rises, and she has squashed more than one rebellion. The Regency currently alternates between trade and warfare with Persedonia, depending upon the season and the generals involved.

To the northern end of the Bluesky Mountains lies Hyrendan, recently ruled by the surprisingly gentle king Dan'Nasharab, a reformer who has struggled mightily to bring law and order to a city which was long the heart of the priesthood of Chaos, called the Divinates. The city has come under siege from both the Persedonians and the forces of Trog, and in an act of desperation, the king made a pact with the demon lord Pazzuzzu to defend the city from its attackers. In exchange, he agreed to give up his daughter to the demon, but later recanted and had her spirited away to possible safety. In turn, Pazzuzzu betrayed the

king and let the Persedonians overrun the city, which is now under provincial control of the southern conquerors.

Southern Hyrkania has long been marked as a center for Chaos worship and evil cults. The Order of the Red Robes are centered in the region, the enigmatic sect of chaos mages who broke away from the Wizard's Guild long ago. Elements of the Black Circle can be found in the region, as can other vile cults such as the Nihilists.

Starthias

Little is known about the eastern Orc Kingdom of Starthias. Said to have been named after the first orcish king to unite the eastern tribes, Starthias has remained apart from much of the politics and war of the recent ages. Still, Cymeeri and Zymharian bordermen would beg to differ, and more than a dozen wars have erupted between these nations and the orcs of Starthias over the last two hundred years.

While most of the threat from Starthias comes from raiding, the fact that it remains the only continuously united empire of orcs in the land is a forbidding thought to many. Spies of Karan regularly seek to infiltrate the kingdom, to keep watch on its activities. Likewise, piracy along the coasts of the Blood Sea dominated by Starthias is rampant, forcing most merchant vessels to travel through the region well-armed.

Though little is truly known about the kingdom, Starthias is known to have a large population of blyskanyu and thyzzakoni orcs, as well as refugee thargonid trolls who are now in exile with the collapse of their ancient empire near Hyrkania. Goblins and kobolds are also rife within the borders of Starthias, as well as the mysterious Varakun minotaurs and Kolgathir shape shifters.

Steppelands

Another land about which more mysteries than truths can be told, the frigid northern Steppelands are a broad expanse at the northernmost region of Lingusia, and even include the great land bridge that stretches out to connect Takkai and Lingusia together.

The steppelands are home to a handful of fierce northern tribes, which in Lingusia are mostly a sort of Nordic, rough blonde and dark haired sort who are known for caribou herding, and in the easternmost end are more Siberian and regarded for their horses. These many tribes form a sort of superculture of barbarians who are united by their common struggle with the frigid environment.

The steppelands are also home to the Marlack

dragonkin, humanoid descendants of true dragons who make their home within the Dragonmounts, and claim to serve the enigmatic King of the Dragons. Many Fell Manorg tribes of orcs also roam the steppelands, warring with the human barbarians of the north.

One of Hyrkania's legendary kings was a foreign steppelander named Gilrad Hyradson. He traveled from the frozen north after his tribe was assaulted and his father killed by a minion of the Divinate, and eventually joined the ranks of the Chosen Ones, thwarting Xauraun's rise around 1960-1980 aw. He eventually married the adopted elvish daughter of then king Usyllyses, and together he and Phyxillys became two of the first and greatest foreign-born rulers of Hyrkania.

Sylvias

Sylvias is the southern coastal kingdom of the silver elves, the Sylveinurien. Much about the silver elves and their many houses can be found in the section on player character races.

Sylvias is divided in to a number of high houses, each representing a specific tenet, philosophy, or elemental force which the elves feel they preside over as a legacy for their ancient fae heritage. The kingdom of Sylvias is similarly aligned with quiet, natural communities of ancient architecture intermingled with naturally grown houses and structures from the very trees to create a unique symmetry of nature and design.

The current capitol of Sylvias is Thylanilien, a coastal port where trade and commerce with the outside world is regularly conducted. The elves rule by a council of elders, one from each of the great houses, and every one hundred years select a leader from among the council elders to represent their people. The current lord of Sylvias is Sylas Nathilien, a venerable general of the Dark Wars, who has earned the trust of Sylvias at large due to his many military victories against the Astharth of Baal'Hyriath.

Indeed, several centuries ago, during the time of the prophet Sherzade, an uprising of Astharth dark elves migrated to the shores of Sylvias, unwelcomed by the local people at first, to seek the forgiveness of their kin for the chaotic ways of their kind. Unfortunately, unscrupulous agents of the Black Circle saw the opportunity, and used this innocent migration of defectors to instigate an uprising, and gained a foothold in Sylvias at Baal'Hyriath, which they have held to this day. In the early days of the Dark War, the astharth used the hordes of the marsh goblins in the western Systilien Forest and delta region to siege and lay low many elvish cities, including the old

capitol, Thystivianis, which now lies in ruins, a goblin-infested, demon-haunted city tentatively held by some ashtarh and orc forces, but said to be too dangerous even for them.

There are many other unique features of Sylvias, but the ever-present sense of the fae nature of the realm is considered eerie and oppressive to all but its native. Few humans travel the region, and few are welcome.

Eflin is a neighboring region worth mentioning. The quiet sylvan land of the elves known as Eflin are a dense, forested region surrounded by a thick ring of protective mountains on the easternmost end of Sylvias. Here, the sylveinurien elves thrive as a small but proud culture of inquisitive elvish folk who make their homes in the trees and abstain from as much civilization as possible. It is an idyllic life, which is ironically the reason so many woodland elves make their way out in to the wide world at a young age, as their curiosity and wanderlust exceeds the limits of the natural paradise their elders crave.

Trog

Population: 125,000 various species

Government: autotheistic monarchy

Rulers: Xauraun Vestillios is supreme ruler

Religions: Language: orcish, ashtarh elvish, hyshkorrid, setite, kobold, abyssal

Trog is most easily reached by sailing vessel, braving the deep canyons of the vast Nyarlith Riverine Delta which cuts like a deep knife through the Middle Kingdoms and serves as the only bridge between the Inner Sea and the Gulf of the Baldric.

It is possible to travel to the city of chaos overland, but such a journey would be taken in the chilling wastes of the Hyrkanian Desert, following ill-marked nomadic trails which are intentionally left unkempt. The underworld denizens of the land make regular hunting forays in to the night, and death is a strong risk.

The city itself is small, not much more than a squat stone castle of about 600x900 feet in dimension with walls reaching 60 feet. The four great towers stretch almost 90 feet in to the sky. It rests atop an ancient tell mound, on which countless millenia of debris from prior cities has been heaped. It is said that Trog was first founded by the Cults of Chaos in the wake of the First War of the Gods, but some believe it did not appear until centuries later, atop the ruins of the older Hyrkanian cities beneath. Either way, it is evident that the mound represents at least ten thousand years of ancient occupation.

The occupants of the last two millennia have been many and varied. Four hundred years ago, before the Great Reckoning when the War of Law and Chaos

ended, the forces of the city were equally divided between the Hyshkorrid, Ashtarh, Blyskanyu, and Settee. Four centuries later, the politics of the region have become much more confusing. Part of this is due to the terrible damage that was done to the servants of Chaos during the Reckoning. Another part is the rise of the squabbling, competitive Demiurges of the land. And lastly, the newest event in the night sky, the return of the Dreaded Red Dragon Comet, not seen since the collapse of the Prehunate Empire, has created a great upwelling amongst the masses of those chaos followers who seek redemption and revenge.

The Layout of the City

The city is layered in several areas. Because its denizens are often injured or adverse to light, much of the city is actually layered in the ancient catacombs which run through countless millennia of older buildings, all caved in, hollowed out, and re-used indefinitely. In the deepest levels of the catacombs are passages, veritable roadways, which carry denizens and merchants to and from other regions of the underworld.

On the surface, the squat stone castle rests atop the mound, surrounded by cavernous entrances riddling the earth. Further from it, along the reverie stretch that runs from it to the Nyarlith Delta (about a thirteen mile stretch) is the sprawl of crude villages, not much more than squatters camps, founded by the accursed Sherigras.

Harbor town

At the deeps along the Nyarlith coast, a small but well-established community of hardy pirates, rogues, and truly scurvy individuals dwell, providing a way point for any who are willing to brave the community. The town is called Harbor town, and it is ruled by Balo Strallikus, the sherigras ancestor of the long-dead Bellasco Strallikus, who died in the War of Strife.

Balo is a dedicated servant of the old gods, and believes that Slithotep still speaks to him. He knows of the rumors that the Mad God still dwells as a living structure in the deserts, and he has tried twice to find the elusive god-city. He has lately discovered that the immortal Xauraun may yet walk again, and serve as harbinger to the return of the Chaos Lords.

Squattersville

From along the coast to the rough riverine finger that stretches to within a mile of Trog, a great sprawl of thousands of outcasts, criminals, and dangerous folk have accumulated, all lured by the siren call of promises that they will, soon, be restored to glory and granted the right to join the new Armies of Chaos. This shantytown is a mix of humans, sherigras, blue and grey orcs, half-orcs, hobgoblins, trolls, and giant

kin of all sorts. By far the largest concentration of humanity in Trog can be found here.

The fervor of religious worship is evident as you move through Squatters ville. Crude shacks serve as homes, while ornate shrines to the many gods of Chaos are scattered around, lovingly tended to by sherigras priests and others who have taken up the faith of what was once called the Divinate. Countless pilgrims await an opportunity to enter the walls of the city and pledge their devotion to Dalroth himself at his blasted idol which peers longingly from its mount as if it seeks escape at last.

Catacombs

The actual viability of the great fortress-like castle is compromised by the hundreds of tunnel and cavern entrances riddling the city mound. However, an army trying to siege the catacombs would quickly be devastated by the countless thousands of proficient subterranean warriors from many species, as well as traps, pitfalls, collapses, and other siege defense tactics in place to protect the catacombs should an army attack,

The catacombs themselves are a massive, confusing warren of tunnels, chambers, and "hubs" (large, neighborhood hollows) linking together a complex society of numerous underworld denizens. Each hub has a series of primary tunnels radiating out from the center, called the Spokes, and all are joined in the city center where a great and ancient tunnel that some say goes through the heart of the world can be found. This hole is called the Maw of Chaos, and the great, ominous winds which roar up from the unseen depths sound like a perpetual howl from the Abyss. By day, city dwellers above go about their business, and at night, the gates of each subterranean hub is opened and the hordes of the dark are released to conduct their inhuman business, rites, and politics.

There is one common factor linking most all of these otherwise hostile and dangerous beings: their need to promote their religious values and restore the faith of the forgotten gods. Now, with the coming of the new Courts of Chaos and Xauraun's ascension to godhood, this unity is stronger than ever before. The Catacombs break up in to the following "types":

Warrens-Dens of activity for a particular neighborhood or species. Often built in the remnants of older, submerged ruinous expanses of the upper city that have since been buried. It is possible to get lost in the warrens and never escape.

Hubs-Large market/temple districts, hollows beneath the earth several hundred feet across, bustling with commerce and worship.

Spokes-Each Hub is connected to several spokes, subterranean tunnel-streets along which the communities, businesses, and temples of the dark reside.

Chambers-Individual residences, shops, or centers of a community with a variety of purposes.

The Maw of Chaos-The central hollow that runs straight in to the depths, along which great stone stairs run along the length of it to each gated entry in to one of the many hubs.

The Castle

The Castle which is the center of Trog has the appearance of being heavily guarded, laden with a mix of dedicated volunteer troops from each of the four dominant powers, and with only a single, heavily defended entry way, it would be a perilous army indeed that would try to siege such a fortress.

At one time, a Council of Four ruled the city, but no longer. The city has been ruled for many years now by a single child and his mysterious caretaker. The child is known only as Pale, which means "The Trueborn" in the Old Tongue. His caretaker is a strange individual called Pelgaster, and some claim he was once the last king of the city of Kymir before it fell to siege.....which was a very, very long time ago, so it is also believed he is undead.

Though few realize this in Trog, Pale is actually the child-god Dalroth reborn, the infant conceived from the wake of the Reckoning and protected by Slithotep. Pelgaster was chosen by Slithotep to be his Avatar, and he wields the Scepter of Madness to validate that fact!

Pale and his court rule from the The Bubbling Tower, the tower which appears to constantly flow and melt in the moon light. It is Slithotep's strongest tether to the mortal real plane, and while Balo looks for the mythic city of Slithotep, it is in fact here, in this tower, where the essence of the Mad God dwells.....

In 2476, Xauraun Vestillios remade the Courts of Chaos in his own image, first by recovering his ancient armor and regaining his powers, then using his powers to siphon the godling Pale's energies in to his own form, and directing it at the Red Dragon, a great and ancient comet from the dawn of creation, filled with the primal force of entropy. The comet was gutted, and spewed forth a rain of chaotic energy upon Lingusia, and inundated Xauraun. He declared himself the Lord of the New Order, and now rules from the entrapped form of Slithotep as his throne, using the forces of Trog to amass a great army of darkness. He keeps Pale, a shadow of Dalroth's former self, as a pathetic boy-servant by his side.

The other three towers are each ruled by the remaining three forces of the city, and all now swear fealty to the god who walks among them. The Asarth have long held sway in Trog, and continue to rule from the Tower of the Abyss, atop which rests a great gargoyle-like entity sculpted in the likeness of

Orcus. Once blasted in to oblivion during the reckoning, this statue has been restored and is now the guardian of the tower, a Golem of immense strength, ready to swoop down on any who would assault the city. Displaying his sense of egotism, Xauraun has sent forth his dark minions to uncover the true Orcus, that he might bond the demon lord who once served him to become permanent guardian of the city.

From the Abyssal Tower, the ancient and very evil Mistress of the Black Circle, the High Queen of the Ashtarh Magi, continues to rule. Eristra Colanon, Referred to by most citizens as "The Bitch of the Gallows," continues to maintain her lengthy and charnel rule from the tower, and she is considered the most loyal servant of Xauraun.

The Tower of Serpents is the headquarters of the Setites and their representative of the Council of Four, the serpent sorceress Dysadda Gyristia, great great grand-daughter or the long-dead Dysadda Benn. She is a cruel manipulator, sorceress, and schemer, and has for the time being sworn her undying loyalty to Xauraun, that she be spared, as thousands of her kin were slaughtered or driven from the city on the day he ascended to power. She is now considered a traitor to Set, and has begun to develop vampiric traits as fits the curse which overcomes Set's most loyal minions who betray him.

The third tower, the Tower of the Ibis belongs currently to the forces of the Chaos Tribes of the Blyskanyu, and the General who sits upon the council is Lord Kerogg Beshgalor, a humongous Black Anyu assigned to represent the best interests of the tribes. This tower once belonged to the Kattachi, who have lost much of their power and representation in Trog over the last century, and have been reduced to second class citizens in the slums of the city.____® Now, thanks to Xauraun's need for a great horde to begin his war anew, Beshgalor has become a senior general in the armies of the damned.

There is some interesting history behind the Throne Tower, the Bubbling Tower. Once, this tower was held by the ominous and mistrusted Hyshkorrid of the Slithotendan Mountains, dreadful brain-eaters who have the backing of the Black Circle, and some claim are the most diabolical threat to come into the midst of the Forces of Chaos in centuries, due to their unscrupulous lust for power. Their presence was small, though more of the tentacled mollusk-faced beings arrived every day, backed by their twisted Helkyrion guardians (hybrid warriors, usually hooked horrors and lion-vampire beings). When Pale arrives, however, the Hyshkorrid presence was destroyed in civil war, and the ancient inhuman beings were driven from the tower.

Centuries ago the tower belonged to the troll lords,

who had lost much interest in the city and abandoned it over four hundred and eighty years ago. The Thargonid troll-lord Corlabon was persuaded to leave the tower to the Hyshkorrid after being bribed a healthy sum. He now dwells in a ruined castle about twenty miles distant into the desert, hidden mostly by the sands. In his place, the Hyshkorrid had elected Karvax, a particularly frightening-looking Hyshkorrid, to represent them on the Council of Four. When Pale and his servants encroached upon the tower, a civil war erupted and Karvax and his minions were driven in to the darkness, where he and a handful of loyalists continue to plot and scheme in the under city.

Another prominent, lesser force in the city, which is a longstanding presence, is the Miniglr tribes of Kobolds. The squat, diminutive beast men are horribly deformed, and naturally leprous looking but are habitual workers as city maintenance, and they willingly sell themselves out as servants and aides, seeking forever to advance in status and rank by snagging on to the potentially successful and rich. The leader of the Miniglr tribes is a Greater Kobold named Cajoin, whom some claim can physically transform into a lesser dragon. He dwells deep within the Kobold Catacombs, and some claim qualifies as a fifth member of the Council of Four.

Vyrindia

The mysterious, secluded mountain kingdom of Vyrindia is actually as much a vast city of temples and priestess-warriors dedicated to Vishannu, god of war, as it is anything else. The mysterious amazons of Vyrindia live a society dominated by women in all aspects of life, while men are subservient cattle. Once every few years, the god Vishannu demands that the amazons seek out a new male to be his mortal vessel, through which the possessing spirit of the war god may act in the mortal plane. Through this bond, he provides a human mate for the able and ready amazons to give birth to a new generation of warrior women. The Amazons themselves, born of the divine aspect of Vishannu, are immortal beings, and some of the Vyrindian Amazons have become famous throughout Lingusia for having the greatest prowess of all beings in battle.

The Vyrindians rarely venture out in to the rest of the world save on personal quests of fulfillment. Occasionally, a war party with a specific goal, usually provided by Vishannu in the form of a dream or vision, will venture out. Once in a while, the warrior women will amass an army some ten thousand strong and march out to battle the Codam T'Kezzu, Hotepsalans, Hadrosians, Terkithiyi or

Amenanyu orcs. These battles serve to honor the god of war as well as remind the world that they are not to be messed with. The Vyrindians have an ancient alliance with Belladas and Covarte, and will honor any pleas for help from these long-standing neighbors and trade partners.

Yllmar

Yllmar is a cluster of coastal cities ruled by the regent Karish Denevar, who is appointed by the Emperor of Hyrkania to hold and protect the land. Yllmar is effectively a client state of Hyrkania, though few think of it as being anything other than an extension of the empire. Yllmar itself as a region has changed hands many times, as it is centered along the land and sea corridor for invasion by Hettanar forces and any other irate northerners who come down along the coast. As a result, the Yllmarians have become famous for two professions: mercenaries and traveling merchants.

The region is noted for the famously impenetrable **Marshes of Mist**, haunted by strange beings and lizard men. At the center of the marshes is the Temple of Naril, a magical location dedicated to the god of man and the sun. This temple is situated atop a mountainous spire that erupts from the land as a most unnatural formation, and at its height is a temple and tomb, where Naril's body was laid to rest after the War of the Gods. When no avatar of Naril's walks the land, his fabled artifact, the gauntleted Star of Naril, is taken to rest here until another Chosen One is called to claim it. Currently, the gauntlet lies unclaimed. A mysterious elite priesthood and order of paladins, separate from the Hyrkanian church, maintain this temple.

Zarn

The northerners of Zarn are a brutish lot of barbarian kings and chiefdoms who inhabit a long stretch of coastland and mountainous regions. They are of such a diverse lot that few ever have a chance to unify in to a coherent kingdom for long, and only the Nordamani ever succeeded in doing so. The Zarnians are firm believers in the hard and unfortunate nature of life, and live it to the fullest in as brutal a manner as possible. They rever the gods of the north, especially Hargameth.

Zued

Much can be said of the eastern kingdom of Zued, ruled by the great Caliph and a massive center of trade for the Bloodsea region. As such, more shall be provided later on this immense power in the east of Lingusia.

Zymhar

The Zymharians are mounted along the northeastern coastlands of Lingusia, southern neighbors to the realms of Avilin, and frequent

traders with the eastern kingdoms of Takkai. While there is much yet to be explored and discovered in this region, few Middle Kingdoms scholars have written upon this mysterious track of land.